

RULES FOR SYNODICAL PROCEDURE



CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH
Approved by Synod 2026

I. Introduction

A. *Synod: What It Is and What It Does*

What is synod?

The CRCNA *synod* is an ecclesiastical assembly of delegates that provides governance and leadership for the members, congregations, classes, agencies, and ministries of the Christian Reformed Church in North America. The term *synod* is derived from the Greek σύνοδος (*sýnodos*), meaning “assembly” or “meeting.”

What does synod do?

The CRCNA *synod* fills an essential denomination-wide governance and leadership role alongside the regionally delegated authority of the church *classes* and the locally elected church *councils*.

1. The functions of synod include, but are not necessarily restricted to, the following primary responsibilities:
 - a. Elect officers to lead the synod meeting.
 - b. Provide a context for deliberative assembly, both in the form of advisory groups and in plenary meetings.
 - c. Receive reports from the various denominational agencies, ministries, and institutions and take appropriate action with regard to their mandates, bylaws, and articles of incorporation, relying on the Council of Delegates, as specified in the COD Governance Handbook.
 - d. Receive and act upon the reports of study committees appointed by synod.
 - e. Appoint representatives to denominational boards, committees, and other working groups.
 - f. Appoint or ratify the appointment of certain staff and leadership positions, including seminary faculty, seminary president, and the general secretary of the denomination.
 - g. Provide direction and instruction for denominational administration through the Office of General Secretary.
 - h. Decide on issues of Church Order, liturgical forms, and confessional matters (cf. Church Order Art. 47).
 - i. Review denominational budgets and feedback to agencies, ministries, and their boards. Review and approve changes to the ministry-share system and inform CRCNA classes and councils.
 - j. Receive, discuss, and process overtures, communications, and appeals from classes, congregations, and individuals.
 - k. Adjudicate judicial code matters and address appeals and recommendations brought before synod by way of the Judicial Code Committee.

- l. Supervise and advance ecumenical relations by way of the Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee.
 - m. Oversee the archival work of the denomination by way of the Historical Committee.
 - n. Approve candidates for ministry in the CRCNA and oversee other work of the Candidacy Committee.
 - o. Ratify the appointment of synodical deputies and review and approve their work.
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. Occasionally make known, via letters or other forms of communication, the denomination's position on current issues or affairs.

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. The virtual convening session will include a condensed time of worship and the election of officers.
- B. Each synod shall designate a convening church with the following duties:
 1. Provide a president pro tem, the minister (or counselor in the event of a vacancy), to:
 - 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 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.
- C. While synod is in session, its members may not withdraw from the assembly and return home without the consent of officers.
 - D. Synod shall adjourn no later than mid-afternoon 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.
 - E. 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.
 - F. Prayer is central to worship and shall be an intentional feature of synod's work sessions.
 - G. Synod should be intentional about providing opportunity for purposeful dialogue.
 - 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 work together to lead the delegates through each session of synod, making decisions around 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. Determine executive and strict executive sessions
4. Appointment of a Minutes Review Committee
5. Appointment of the Sergeant-at-arms

A. The President

1. The president shall request the delegates and the advisory members of synod to arise, read the "Public Declaration of Agreement with the Beliefs of the Christian Reformed Church in North America" and request them to express their agreement in unison. A delegate who assumes a seat at a later time shall be requested to express individual agreement at the time of seating.
2. The president shall call the meeting to order at the appointed time, and shall see that each session is properly opened and closed.
3. The president shall see to it that business is transacted in the proper order and expedited as much as possible, and that members observe the rules of order and decorum.
4. The president shall welcome ecumenical delegates, or other guests of synod, respond to greetings received, or appoint members of synod for this purpose.
5. The president shall place before synod every motion that is made and seconded. Every question shall be clearly stated before a vote is taken.
6. When the president feels compelled to express an opinion on a pending question, the chair shall be relinquished and given to the vice president for the duration of the president's remarks. The president may speak, while holding the chair, to state matters of fact or to inform synod regarding points of order.
7. The president shall have, and duly receive, the prerogative of declaring a motion or person out of order. When such a ruling is disputed, synod shall sustain or reject the ruling of the chair by majority vote.
8. When a vote is tie, the president may cast the deciding vote, if the president has not already voted.
9. The president shall not preside in any matter that involves the president personally.
10. The president rules on all points of order. A ruling may be reversed by a majority of synod if any member is dissatisfied with the ruling of the chair and makes an appeal to the floor.
11. The president shall close the synodical assembly with appropriate remarks and with prayer.

B. The Vice President

1. In the absence of the president the vice president shall assume all the duties and privileges of the president.
2. The vice president shall render all possible assistance to the president as circumstances may require.

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 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 communicating the results to the president of synod.
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

A. General Secretary

The general secretary shall:

1. Make the physical arrangements for synod and function as the operations officer during the meetings of synod.
2. Serve synod with information and advice as requested regarding matters that come to the floor of synod.
3. Edit and have published such official publications the synod or the Council of Delegates shall authorize.
4. Have the privilege of the floor at synodical meetings in all matters relating to the exercise of this office and be present during all executive sessions of synod.

B. Advisers to Synod

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 available faculty.
 - 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 non-voting 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 chairman of the committee.
 - i. 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.
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 non-voting 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.

V. Matters Legally Before Synod

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

1. 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 report of a committee or board appointed by a previous synod.

2. 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.
- c. 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.
- d. Overtures and communications which have failed to gain adoption of a council and/or classis may also be judged as legally before synod when an individual or council desire 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.

- e. 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*.

3. 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)

4. Gravamina

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

5. Unprocessed Overtures or Communications

Overtures or communications of an individual or group of individuals when such a person has been unable first to present such to council and classis. Such matters shall be received as information, provided that the general secretary receives evidence that it was impossible for the communicant to present the matter to council and classis. Synod shall decide whether to act upon such matters received as information.

6. Late Reports and Overtures

No study reports or recommendations from boards or standing committees which affect doctrinal or ethical statements or Church Order provisions received by the general secretary after November 15 or overtures received after March 15 shall be considered by synod, with the exception of overtures which deal with matters relevant to reports found in the published *Agenda*. Any other overture or study report shall be considered only by special decision of synod on the basis of most weighty grounds.

9. The Published *Agenda* and Study Committee Reports

Study committee reports shall be filed with the general secretary on or before November 15, and the general secretary shall distribute them to the churches no later than 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 non-published appeals; a list of communications; the name 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: 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.

10. Supplementary Reports

The Council of Delegates of the CRCNA, including reports by ReFrame Ministries, and Resonate Global Mission, and Thrive; the Board of Trustees of Calvin Theological Seminary; the Board of Trustees of Calvin University; the Board of World Renew; the Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee; the Historical Committee; and the Candidacy Committee are permitted to file a supplementary report after March 15. These boards and standing committees are expected to incorporate as much of their materials as possible in the published *Agenda*, and matters for the supplementary reports must be kept to a minimum.

11. Confidential Matters

Non-published appeals, communications, or other materials legally before synod judged by the general secretary, in consultation with the Program Committee or Council of Delegates, to be confidential in nature, will be distributed only to the advisory committee to which they are assigned. Any disclosure of names in cases where such disclosure is judged to be potentially damaging to their reputation will be removed from the document, and the matter will be dealt with by the advisory committee in executive session.

12. Other Matters

All other matters may be considered which synod by a majority vote declares acceptable.

13. Nondenominational Organizations

Nondenominational organizations receiving denominational support shall not ordinarily send speakers to synod. They may place displays at synod in designated areas.

VI. Synodical Committees

A. Program Committee

1. Members

- a. The Program Committee shall be composed of the officers of the previous synod and the general secretary of the Christian Reformed Church. The director of ecclesiastical governance shall serve as an ex officio, non-voting member.
- b. In case of a vacancy on this committee, the Council of Delegates shall appoint another member.

2. The Appointment of Advisory Committees
 - a. The Program Committee shall meet to make tentative appointments of the various advisory committees prior to May 1.
 - b. The Program Committee shall classify all the reports, overtures, and other communications into various groups, and advise which matters shall be laid directly before synod, and which shall be placed in the hands of advisory committees.
 - c. In the event that a given delegate cannot attend synod, the alternate accepts the appointed assignment subject to revision by synod.
3. The General Secretary shall:
 - a. Receive and tabulate the information sheet on the synodical delegates.
 - b. Inform the delegates of their tentative assignments prior to May 15.
 - c. Suggest to the chairs and delegates sources of background information relative to their assignment.
 - d. Provide committee members with copies of background materials that are not readily available in previous *Acts of Synod*.
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 Re-formed 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) Of what denominational boards, standing committees, classical and/or local committees, or study committees are you or have you been a member?
 - 3) What are your areas of special interest in the work of synod?
 - 4) 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 15.

- b. This report shall be submitted for possible change and adoption as one of the initial items of synodical business.

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 facilitating 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 Program Committee will designate the chair and reporter for each committee. An alternate chair and an alternate reporter will be named for each committee to fill the role if the assigned chairperson or reporter are elected to serve as an officer.
 - b. The chair 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.
 - 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 persons named in the Program Committee Report.
 - e. Committee reports shall be signed by the chair and the reporter of the committee. If there is both a majority and minority report from the committee, each report must be signed by the members who favor it.

Note: Committee members may not speak publicly against their committee's report unless they have submitted a minority report or have received permission from the chairperson of the committee to voice a minor disagreement.
 - f. The report of the majority shall be considered the report of the committee. After the committee's report has been read and the motion to adopt has been made and seconded, the minority report shall be read and received as information.
 - g. When the report of a committee has been previously distributed to synod in published form, and the members of synod have had sufficient time to examine it, the first reading of the report is not required. In such case the reporter, when the president calls for the re-

port, shall state that the report has been placed in the hands of synod in published form and shall move that the report be accepted for consideration.

- h. During the discussion the task of defending the report shall rest primarily upon the chairperson and the reporter of the committee. These shall have precedence over every other speaker and shall not be limited as to the number and length of their speeches. Other committee members shall be subject to the accepted rules.
 - i. A recommendation of a committee may be recommitted whenever the work of synod can be thus expedited.
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, Art. 30-c). The committee largely functions as a normal advisory committee of synod.

D. Special Committees

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

E. Study Committees

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 spokesperson 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

1. 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).
2. 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.
3. Nominations of officers, functionaries, synodical deputies, boards, and standing committees shall be compiled through the office of general secretary.
4. 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).
5. 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.

- 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.
- 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.

VII. Pension Matters At Synod

Synod shall defer action on overtures, 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. 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.

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.

A. Closed Sessions of Synod

1. *Executive Session:* Synod may enter an executive session in unusual or delicate situations. In such sessions, only the delegates, the staff consultants, the seminary advisers, the president and one other member of the executive committee of the Council of Delegates, and such others as determined by synod upon the recommendation of the general secretary, shall be present. If delegates from fully recognized churches in communion are at synod, they also may remain in this session.
2. *Strict Executive Session:* Synod may enter a strict executive session in very unusual situations when such a course is dictated by due regard for

- personal honor or for the welfare of the church. In such sessions, only the delegates, any staff consultant that may be needed upon the recommendation of the general secretary, the seminary advisers, and the president and one other member of the executive committee of the Council of Delegates shall be present. If any of the above mentioned persons are personally involved in the matter under discussion, they will absent themselves voluntarily or by synodical ruling.
3. Any report and decision addressed in executive or strict executive session should include a recommendation regarding what is to be included in the public record, subject to approval by the body.

B. A Main Motion

This is a motion that presents a matter to synod for its consideration or action.

1. A main motion is acceptable under the following conditions:
 - a. If the mover has been recognized by the president;
 - b. If it is seconded by a member of synod;
 - c. If the motion has been recognized as acceptable by the president;
 - d. If, at the request of the president, the motion has been presented in written form.
2. A main motion is not acceptable under the following conditions:
 - a. If it conflicts with the Church Order or is contrary to Scripture as interpreted in our forms of unity;
 - b. If another motion is before synod or if it conflicts with any decision already made by synod;
 - c. If it is verbally or substantially the same as a motion already rejected by synod or if it interferes with the freedom of action by synod in a matter that was previously introduced but of which no disposal was made.

C A Motion to Amend

This is a proposal to alter a main motion in language or in meaning before final action is taken on the motion.

1. A motion to amend may propose any of the following: to strike out, to insert, or to substitute certain words, phrases, sentences, or paragraphs.
2. A motion to amend is not a proper motion if it nullifies the main motion or is not germane to it.
3. A motion to amend is permissible and is called a secondary motion. (Only one motion to amend a pending amendment is in order at one time.)
4. A motion to amend must be recognized as acceptable by the chair and seconded by a member of synod. Such a motion is open to debate.

5. If a minor amendment is judged properly before the assembly by the chair, is acceptable to the maker of the main motion, and finds no objections from any delegates, the chair may declare the amendment adopted (sometimes referred to as a “friendly amendment”). If the amendment is not acceptable to all, it shall be subject to debate and vote.

D. A Motion to Defer or Withhold Action

1. When synod deems it advisable, it may decide to table a motion temporarily. Tabling a motion implies that the assembly will resume consideration on the motion at a later hour or date. A motion to table is not debatable.
2. If a matter has been deferred to a definite time and synod is at that time busy with an undecided question, synod need not be disturbed or interrupted in its work by the consideration of postponed matters, if this matter can wait until the question before synod has been disposed of.
3. If synod prefers not to take action regarding a matter, it may adopt a motion to withhold action. A motion to withhold action is debatable.
4. A motion to refer a matter to an advisory committee for further discussion and possible revision may be debated and amended.

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.

F. Right of Protest

It is the right of any member to protest against any decision of synod. Protests should be registered immediately, or during the session in which the matter concerned was acted upon. Protests must be registered individually and not in groups. Members may, if they feel the need, ask to have their negative vote recorded. Such requests must be made immediately after the vote is taken. The reasons given for recording a negative vote will not normally be published in the *Acts of Synod* unless otherwise specifically decided by synod.

G. Call for a Division of the Question

At the request of one or more members of synod, a motion consisting of more than one part must be divided and voted upon separately, unless synod decides that this is not necessary. A call for division of a question must be seconded to be considered, and is not open to debate.

H. Procedural Inquiry

Any member of synod may request advice of the president as to how to accomplish a purpose for which that delegate does not know the proper means.

I. Motions to Bring Matters Once Decided Again Before Synod

If any member of synod for weighty reasons desires reconsideration of a matter once decided, the following course may be pursued:

1. A motion may be offered to *reconsider* the matter. The purpose of this motion is to propose a new discussion and a new vote. (The motion must be made by one who voted with the prevailing side when the decision was made.) A motion to reconsider must be seconded to be considered, can be debated, cannot be amended, and requires a simple majority to pass.
2. A motion may be made to rescind a previous decision. The purpose of this motion is to annul or reverse a previous decision. (Rescinding applies to decisions taken by the synod in session; it does not apply to decisions taken by previous synods. A succeeding synod may alter the stand of a previous synod; it may reach a conclusion which is at variance with a conclusion reached by an earlier synod. In such cases the most recent decision invalidates all previous decisions in conflict with it.) A motion to rescind a previous decision made by the same assembly must be made and seconded by delegates who voted previously with the prevailing side. It can be debated and amended, and it requires a two thirds majority to pass.

J. Discussion

1. A speaker to obtain the floor must be recognized by the president.
2. The length of speeches during plenary deliberation and debate shall be limited to a maximum of three minutes per person.
3. If a member having the floor should fail to adhere to the point under discussion, the president shall call attention to this fault and insist that the main point be made and that brevity be achieved.
4. If any member has spoken twice on a pending issue, others who have not yet spoken twice shall ordinarily be given priority by the president.
5. The officers of synod may assign a time limit for debate on issues they think will be debated longer than one hour. This time limit will be announced prior to the presentation of the report. The delegates may vote to extend debate for half-hour intervals when the time limit has been reached.
6. When it is believed that a motion under consideration has been debated sufficiently, the president may propose cessation of debate. If a majority of synod sustains this proposal, discussion shall cease and the vote shall be taken. No further speakers will be allowed.

7. When any member of synod deems a matter to have been debated sufficiently, that delegate, without speaking for or against the main motion, may move to cease debate (also known as “calling the question”). Those who move to cease debate shall be recognized in the same manner as others who gain the floor of synod, that is, by taking their turn on the list of those who have requested the privilege of the floor. The vote on the motion to cease debate is not debatable and shall be taken at once. Should a majority be in favor of ceasing debate, the vote on the matter before synod shall be taken only after those who had previously requested the floor have had the opportunity to address the motion that is being discussed. However, once the motion to cease debate has been adopted by synod, no motion to amend the main motion will be permitted.

K. Social Media

Delegates and advisers shall follow guidelines to avoid inappropriate use of social media contact with nondelegates during plenary sessions of synod, because such use might compromise the transparency and integrity of the deliberative process.

L. Precedence and Procedures for Addressing Reports

1. When there is a substantial difference between the recommendations in a report from a synodical study committee and those of the advisory committee, the recommendations of the original committee report receive precedence for consideration by the assembly (cf. section VI, E, 2).
2. When there is a majority report and a minority report from the same advisory committee, the recommendations from the majority report are presented first, followed by a for-information reading of the recommendations from the minority report. Precedence for consideration is given to the majority report. A motion to table the majority report, or a defeat of the majority report’s recommendations, would be required in order to move to a consideration of the minority report (cf. section VI, B, 2, e).

M. Voting

The various methods of voting are:

1. *By voice* (Yes or No). This is a frequent method of voting.
2. By electronic balloting.
 - a. Whenever the president is unable to determine from the yes and no votes which opinion has prevailed, or if the president’s judgment is questioned by any member of synod, the president shall request the delegates to re-vote electronically. The outcome of the electronic vote shall constitute the official decision of synod on the matter.

- b. This method may be used for any vote and at any time, but it is advisable that electronic voting be used in delicate cases of discipline and other matters that are of a critical nature and of great importance.

IX. Amendments

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

We are assembled as delegates to the synod of the Christian Reformed Church in North America to deliberate and decide on the issues here presented as synod's agenda. We promise to do this work in obedience to the revealed will of our Lord Jesus Christ and in full agreement with what the congregations of the Christian Reformed Church in North America confess.

We believe that the Old and New Testaments are the inspired Word of God, the only infallible rule for faith and life. We affirm three creeds — the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Athanasian Creed — as ecumenical expressions of the Christian faith. 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.

Along with these historic creeds and confessions, we recognize the witness of *Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony*, adopted by synod as a current Reformed expression of the Christian faith.

As we deliberate and make decisions consistent with these beliefs, to the best of our ability and with the help of the Holy Spirit, we promise to seek the unity and well-being of the church of Jesus Christ, who prayed that all his own may be one in him (John 17:20-23).

[After the reading of these words, delegates are asked to indicate their agreement with the beliefs of the Christian Reformed Church in North America.]

Adopted by Synod 2013