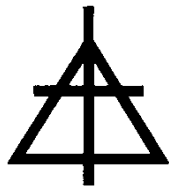


MANUAL FOR SYNODICAL DEPUTIES

SERVING THE
CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH
IN NORTH AMERICA



Updated: August 2022

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FOREWORD

Prior to the early 1990s, the actions and the reports of synodical deputies were marked by a lack of uniformity and consistency, a situation largely attributable to the regular turnover of persons who serve as deputies and to the many and various circumstances calling for their services. From time to time, synods noted the need for guidance for synodical deputies and for greater uniformity in their reports. Synod 1993 adopted a recommendation that a handbook or manual for synodical deputies be developed.

The Manual for Synodical Deputies, first prepared in 1995 by Rev. Leonard J. Hofman, is designed to provide synodical deputies with ready access to the information necessary to address the various situations requiring their concurring advice. It also provides help to the stated clerks of classes, who have the responsibility of calling upon synodical deputies for their services. This Manual is intended to simplify the task of the synodical deputies and regularize the reporting process throughout the denomination. The assistance of synodical deputies and stated clerks to help make this happen is deeply appreciated.

The enclosed edition reflects decisions through the meeting of Synod 2022 and is always accessible and available on the CRC website at crcna.org/SynodicalDeputies. Updates made to this Manual in summer 2022 are highlighted to note the specific changes as reference for those who use the Manual regularly. When the Manual does not provide the information needed for a particular circumstance, the reader is encouraged to contact the Office of Synodical Services for further guidance and advice.

Dee Recker
Director of Synodical Services
Christian Reformed Church in North America
August 2022

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Synodical Deputy Report Forms

MANUAL FOR SYNODICAL DEPUTIES
serving the
Christian Reformed Church in North America
2022 Edition

I. History

Assemblies of Reformed churches have from the beginning appointed individuals and/or committees to carry out their decisions and to act in their behalf (cf. Church Order Art. 33-a). Synodical deputies are one such committee through which assemblies do their work. In fulfilling their mandates, committees act in the name of and as representatives of the assembly that appoints them. They exercise whatever authority the appointing body confers on them but they may not exceed the limits of that authority. This representative role is not easily over-emphasized. Synodical deputies are not merely individuals appointed to do as they think best. Rather, deputies represent the synod of the whole church and must be guided to speak what, in their best judgment, would be the mind of the synod in a particular matter.

For the current status of synodical deputies in the Christian Reformed Church, the *Manual of Christian Reformed Church Government 2019* (Grand Rapids: Christian Reformed Church in North America, 2017) should be consulted. References to this *Manual* will be from the 2019 updated edition.¹ The *Manual of Christian Reformed Church Government 2019* is available for purchase through Faith Alive Christian Resources (1-800-333-8300) or free in the Digital Library. The following Manual for Synodical Deputies incorporates decisions of synod through **Synod 2022**.

II. Title

“Synodical deputies” have been known by a variety of names. The Dutch-Latin phrase *deputaten ad examina* was in common use among us in former years, designating the synodical deputies’ specific (and primary) role as representing the synod at the examination of persons seeking admission to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church. Later they became known as “synodical examiners,” a title with similar signification. They were also referred to as “synodical delegates.” This was, however, a confusing term since the phrase was also used to designate persons delegated by classes to the synod. In more recent years the present name, “synodical deputies,” has been used. The term was first officially used in the Revised Church Order of 1965. The name is intended to distinguish the functions of synodical deputies from those of other synodical committees and appointees.

III. Church Order Article 48

Church Order Article 48 and its Supplement defines the election, tasks, purpose, and responsibilities of synodical deputies.

- a. Upon the nomination of the classes, synod shall appoint ministers, one from each classis, to serve as synodical deputies for a term designated by synod.

¹ See also the *Acts of Synod 1969*, Overture 2, pp. 70-71, 497-500, and *Acts of Synod 1970*, Report 4, pp. 53-54, 145-53, for the problems faced by synodical deputies (Overture 2) and a study of the functioning of Article 7 in the Christian Reformed Church to that date.

- b. When the cooperation of the synodical deputies is required as stipulated in the Church Order, the presence of at least three deputies from the nearest classes shall be prescribed.
- c. 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.²
- d. The synodical deputies shall submit a complete report of their actions to the next synod.

Supplement, Article 48-a

A classis may appoint a female minister to serve as a synodical deputy as long as, out of consideration for neighboring classes, a male minister is the alternate.

(*Acts of Synod 2007*, p. 612)

IV. The Church Order and duties of synodical deputies

Article 48 states that the duties of synodical deputies are specified in various Church Order articles. These articles can be classified as follows:

A. Articles regarding admission to the ministry of the Word

- 1. Article 7: Admission of persons who have not had the prescribed theological training to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church and who are recommended for ordination by the Candidacy Committee
- 2. Article 8: Admission of ministers ordained outside of the CRCNA to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church and who are recommended by the Candidacy Committee
- 3. Article 10: Admission of candidates who have completed the requirements for admission to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church and who have been declared to be candidates by synod

B. Articles regarding the tasks of ministers

- 1. Article 12: Permission for a minister to enter a specialized field of ministerial work
- 2. Article 13: Permission for a minister to be loaned to another denomination

C. Articles regarding the release and readmission of ministers

- 1. Article 14: Release of a minister to enter a non-ministerial vocation
- 2. Article 14: Release of a minister who resigns to enter a ministry outside the denomination
- 3. Article 14: Readmission of a released minister

² Although Church Order Article 48 states that the synodical deputies “shall upon request help the classes in the event of difficulties in order that proper unity, order, and sound doctrine may be maintained,” the main focus of their responsibility is the ministry of the Word: admission to ministry, specialized ministries, release from office, discipline, etc. In other matters the Council of Delegates of the Christian Reformed Church in North America as the interim committee of synod (cf. Church Order Article 33-b) represents the synod in matters not included in mandates given to special committees and boards.

4. Article 17: Release from ministerial service in a congregation through action initiated by the ministry, council, or jointly
5. Article 17: Extension of eligibility for call or release from ministerial office when a minister has been released from ministerial service in a congregation through action initiated by the ministry, council, or jointly

D. Articles regarding discipline of ministers

1. Articles 82 and 83; Supplement, Articles 82-84: Deposition of a minister
2. Article 84; Supplement, Articles 82-84; Supplement, Article 84: Readmission to the ministry of a deposed minister

E. Articles regarding commissioned pastors

Articles 23 and 24; Supplement, Article 23-a: Declaration that a commissioned pastor's position fits the guidelines adopted by Synod 2001; Supplement, Article 24-a: Calling a commissioned pastor as a solo pastor; Supplement, Article 24-b: Calling a commissioned pastor to a specified term call as a bridge toward candidacy as minister of the Word.

V. Synodical deputies' relationship to classis

A. Nomination of synodical deputies by classis

A synodical deputy is nominated by a classis and appointed by synod (or in some cases, appointed in the interim by the Council of Delegates). Synodical deputies should be people of un-questioned wisdom, good judgment, integrity, and credibility. Classis also nominates an alternate synodical deputy. The following regulations apply:

1. The terms of both the deputy and the alternate coincide—beginning July 1, and ending June 30.
2. Only ministers of the Word are eligible to be nominated and to serve as deputies.
3. The synodical deputy's appointment ceases when the deputy departs from the appointing classis to go to another classis.

B. Synodical deputies serve classis, not the congregation

Synodical deputies serve classes, not congregations, and serve the classis only when they are requested to do so or are assigned a special task by synod. Ordinarily it is the deputy who serves when requested by a classis. In practice, however, the alternate may serve in the deputy's place, but only when the deputy makes that request or when the deputy is unable to function. The alternate may not be approached to serve without a request first being made to the deputy.

1. Classes should notify the deputies in sufficient time so that, if an alternative arrangement must be made, the full complement of deputies will be present.

2. In a specific case, Synod 1966 ruled that “it is not within the province of synodical deputies to approve an appointment by a board of trustees of an educational institution. They can only concur or not concur in a decision made by classis.” Synod 1966 further stated, “Such a decision cannot be made by a combined meeting of a classical committee and synodical deputies. Classis makes the decision; the synodical deputies are only to concur or not concur in that decision” (*Acts of Synod 1966*, p. 30).

C. Notification of need for synodical deputies

Deputies should be notified sufficiently ahead of time in order to prepare adequately for their assignments. To assist them in their preparation, the classis should also provide them with the background materials needed (e.g., reports, recommendations, documents, credentials, agenda, etc.—anything bearing on the matter to be considered) before the meeting of classis. Deputies must be well informed to do their task well.

D. Decisions rendered independently of classis

The deputies and the classis make their decisions independently. Deputies ought to have opportunity to hear and participate in the entire discussion up to the close of debate. When the classis ceases debate, the deputies withdraw to formulate their advice prior to the vote by classis.³

VI. Synodical deputies' relationship to synod

A. Election

Synodical deputies and their alternates are appointed by synod from nominations made by each classis. A single nomination is made by the classis for each position. In the event a vacancy occurs, a classis may submit the name of a nominee to the Council of Delegates of the Christian Reformed Church (COD) for interim approval. No deputy may function without appointment by synod or the COD.

A classis may appoint a female minister to serve as a synodical deputy as long as, out of consideration for neighboring classes, a male minister is the alternate.

B. Term

Deputies and their alternates serve for three years and are eligible for a second three-year term (maximum, six years). Terms begin and terminate on July 1 of the year of appointment or termination.

C. Expenses

The expenses of the deputies are paid out of synodical funds. The deputies are responsible for sending an itemized list of expenses along with receipts to the director of

³ Synod 1966 was informed by a group of synodical deputies that there is often debate on procedure in connection with the work of the synodical deputies. They stated as their opinion that “it is their task to concur or not concur in the action of classis only *after* classis has taken a decision in the matter at hand.” A recommendation of the advisory committee to this effect was defeated by synod. The regulations for the classis' examination of candidates clearly state that the deputies withdraw before the classis votes and that the deputies reach their decision independently of that of the classis (cf. *Acts of Synod 1966*, p. 31; Church Order Supplement, Article 10, section 8, c).

synodical services. Expense forms can be obtained on the stated clerk/synodical deputy web page (www.crcna.org/SynodicalDeputies).

D. Reports

Deputies are to submit a complete report of all their actions to the next synod. It is appropriate for the reports of deputies to include grounds for their action, especially in cases of nonconcurrence (see *Acts of Synod 1992*, pp. 632-33, and *Acts of Synod 1969*, p. 30).

Deputies are required to submit their advice to the classis in duplicate at the time that the decision/advice is rendered. One copy is retained in the classis' file; the other copy must be sent by the stated clerk of classis to the director of synodical services of the CRC. It is not out of order for the deputies to inquire whether the stated clerk of the classis has forwarded a copy of their decision/advice to the denominational office. Synod 1959, in reference to a colloquium doctum (doctrinal conversation), informed its deputies that "the reports must be signed by all the [deputies], should give the full name of the minister examined, the denomination from which [the minister] came, and the congregation to which [the minister] has been called" (*Acts of Synod 1959*, p. 107). The report should also include the date of the meeting of classis.

All activities of synodical deputies are reported to synod through the office of the executive director, who provides the appropriate advisory committee a compilation of synodical deputies' reports.

E. Synodical approval

The work of the deputies is carefully evaluated by an advisory committee at the following synod and either approved or disapproved. The decision/advice of the deputies becomes final when synod gives its approval. Synod retains the right to approve, disapprove, amend, and give instructions on each matter coming before it by way of synodical deputy reports.

F. Overtures

Synodical deputies may present an overture and/or communication to synod with respect to their work and questions relating to it (see *Acts of Synod 1969*, pp. 70-71, 497-500).

G. Unanimity

Great care should be taken that the deputies render unanimous decisions/advice to the classis. When deputies do not agree (e.g., two against one), both synod and classis are placed in a difficult position (cf. VII, E below).

VII. Guidelines governing activities of synodical deputies

A. Deputies within their own classis

Synod 1936 ruled that no synodical deputy "may serve within the boundary of [their] own classis" (*Acts of Synod 1936*, p. 90).

B. Number of and attendance by deputies

When the presence of synodical deputies is required, at least three deputies from the nearest classes must be present. This selection is usually made by the classical interim committee or by the classis itself. If any of the three chosen deputies cannot serve, the classis must seek the help of deputies from other classes.

Although the presence of deputies is essential in most situations, in certain cases the expense involved in bringing deputies together from great distances is unwarranted.

For example, if extension of eligibility for call is requested under Article 17 or if honorable release of a minister is being considered in a case where a minister has, for good reason and with the blessing of all parties involved, decided to leave the ministry of the Christian Reformed Church to minister in another denomination, it would seem adequate to provide the deputies with documentation and receive their concurring advice based on a telephone conference call. The action of the deputies is important in these and other cases and their careful review of materials is necessary, but their presence may not be absolutely necessary when the classis will not require the presence of the person involved for interview or when there appears to be no question regarding either the request or the procedure followed. A written report, signed by all the deputies, must still be submitted to classis and the office of synodical services.

This is not to suggest, however, that the presence of deputies may be taken lightly. It is required that they be present in keeping with the provisions of the Church Order and its supplements. Exceptions should be rare and in keeping with good order.

C. Independent decisions

The classis votes on the specific motion legally before the assembly after the deputies have withdrawn. The deputies render their advice on the basis of the motion before the classis.

D. Resolution of differing decisions

If the advice of the deputies differs from the decision of the classis, an attempt must be made to resolve the difference. This can be done by way of additional discussion or even a new motion. If all attempts to resolve the difference fail, the matter is automatically placed on the agenda of the next synod for adjudication. In the meantime, the status quo remains until synod renders its decision.⁴ Both the classis and the deputies should share with each other all materials that will be presented to the synod.

E. Unanimity of decision

The advice which synodical deputies render ought to be unanimous. Synod has not ruled on what procedure must be followed in case the deputies are unable to render unanimous advice but differ among themselves with respect to concurrence or non-concurrence in a decision of classis. In his *New Revised Church Order Commentary*, M. Monsma states, "Should there be a difference of opinion among the three deputies, the majority opinion is the opinion and the advice of the committee of deputies."⁵ In one specific case, however, synod approved the advice of a deputy in the minority rather than the advice of the majority. To proceed with

⁴ Acts of Synod 1908, pp. 36-37; Acts of Synod 1988, p. 603; Manual, p. 193.

⁵ M. Monsma, *The Revised Church Order Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1967), p. 190.

classical action while there is disagreement among the deputies places synod in the untenable position of making an ex post facto declaration. In cases, therefore, where the deputies are unable to come to a unanimous decision, the matter ought to remain in status quo until either the classis reconsiders the matter and the deputies render unanimous advice or until the synod renders its decision.

F. Deputies as advisers to classes

The duties of synodical deputies are not limited to those specifically mentioned in the Church Order. Church Order Article 48-c indicates a broader range of helpfulness: "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." Synod 1969 reminded its deputies of "the high priority to be given to requests to serve as advisers to classes" (*Acts of Synod 1969*, p. 30).

G. Deviations from rules

Deputies are required to ensure "that all synodical rules are observed in matters that concern their advice to classis, and that when such rules are violated, explicit reason for the allowance of such deviations be given to synod" (*Acts of Synod 1969*, p. 30).

H. Wisdom and good judgment

Synodical deputies should be people of un-questioned wisdom, good judgment, integrity, and credibility.

Synodical deputies will demonstrate good leadership. They should take care not to exert undue influence on the decisions of a classis. For example, although synodical deputies have opportunity to ask additional questions of candidates for the ministry during their classical examination in practica, and may be given the privilege of asking additional questions relative to the candidates' biblical and theological position, they must remember that they are not the examiners and are present to listen, to observe, to assist classis, and to represent synod.

Complaints have been received when

- deputies have "taken over" and have gone beyond the bounds of propriety, asking questions which reflect their own personal agenda or point of view.
- individual deputies have in some instances revealed their thinking relative to concurrence or non-concurrence prior to the classical decision.

VIII. The nature of synodical deputies' decisions

The Church Order and synodical decisions are not consistent about the character of the decisions made by synodical deputies. Various terms are quite imprecisely used: advice, approbation, concurrence, recommendation, and concurring advice.

These terms suggest a wide range of possible actions, from simple "advice" without binding authority on the classis, to "approval" or "concurrence" with the classis on a matter to "binding judgment and recommendation." It is clear that some decisions of synodical deputies have as much authority as the decision of the classis itself. In instances requiring the advice of

synodical deputies, “a classis cannot take a contemplated affirmative action contrary to the advice of the synodical deputies.”⁶

Synod 1966 clearly specified that it is the responsibility of synodical deputies to concur or not concur in the decisions of classes. The Church Order also speaks repeatedly of the concurring advice of the synodical deputies. Church Order Supplement, Article 8 states that “a written specification of the need will be a part of the report of the synodical deputies.” This would suggest that the responsibility of the deputies in some instances includes more than simple concurrence or non-concurrence.

In the event of non-concurrence, the deputies may consider it necessary to provide grounds for their decision. The grounds supplied or advice rendered must become part of their report submitted to synod for review and approval.

In some cases synodical deputies present recommendations to classis as advice or assistance, along with the report of their concurrence. If this is done, the recommendations should be presented to classis for adoption. If the recommendations are adopted, the deputies may report their concurrence in the revised decision of classis. If the classis has not acted on the deputies’ recommendations, there is no mutual concurrence. Reports submitted for synodical approval should not include recommendations on which classes have not acted.

IX. Specific Church Order articles and supplements regarding the duties of synodical deputies

A. Article 7: Admittance to the ministry without the prescribed training

1. Church Order Article 7 (text)

- a. Those who have not received the prescribed theological training but who give evidence that they are singularly gifted as to godliness, humility, spiritual discretion, wisdom, and the native ability to preach the Word, may, by way of exception, be admitted to the ministry of the Word.
- b. Those preparing for the ordained ministry under the provisions of this article are required to complete the Modified Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy (MEPMC).

2. Supplement, Article 7

Admittance to the ministry by way of Article 7:

1) Examination for licensure to exhort

If anyone wishes to be admitted to the ministry of the Word in accordance with Article 7, the procedure described in “The Journey to Ministry: Article 7” available from the Candidacy Committee and online at www.crcna.org/candidacy must be carefully followed. The home classis of the applicant will examine the candidate in the presence of synodical deputies when a favorable recommendation from the Candidacy Committee has been received.

⁶ M. Monsma, *The New Revised Church Order Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1967), p. 189.

2) Examination for eligibility for a call

The classical exam for an Article 7 applicant shall include the following subjects:

- a. Exegesis of the Old and New Testaments
- b. Bible History
- c. Dogmatics
- d. General and American Church History
- e. If the examination is favorable, the applicant shall be declared eligible for a call.
- f. When the candidate receives and accepts a call, a pre-ordination exam shall be administered, in the presence of synodical deputies, by the home classis of the calling church. This exam shall be in accordance with existing regulations, excepting the ancient languages.

*(Agenda 1920, pp. 26-27; Acts of Synod 1922, pp. 72-73)
(Amended Acts of Synod 1996, p. 581)*

3. Declarations re admittance by way of Article 7

The Candidacy Committee, in determining the suitability of an applicant for ordination by way of Article 7, shall be guided by the following criteria:

1. The “gifts” mentioned in Article 7 should be possessed by an applicant in a very exceptional measure. No one should be considered unless the applicant has extraordinary qualities.
2. Not only the qualifications mentioned in Article 7 should be considered but such an applicant should also possess exceptional knowledge of the Word, knowledge of spiritual needs, and native ability to apply the Word.
3. This article should never be used as a means to ordain lay workers who may desire such, and whose prestige would be increased by such action. The churches are reminded that the regular door to the ministry is a thorough academic training. This must be maintained in theory and practice.

(Adapted from the Acts of Synod 1947, p. 94)

4. 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)

5. “Urgent need” deleted

Synod 2005 deleted the phrase “especially when the need is urgent” from Article 7. It did so for the following reasons:

Grounds:

- a. When candidates for ministry are declared by way of Article 6, there is no official declaration of need. By providing the education necessary for a well-equipped ministry, the church has already determined that a need exists. Those who become candidates by means of their exceptional gifts (Article 7) should not have an extra criterion added.
- b. Synod 2001 adopted as a guideline: “In ordination, the church recognizes that a person has the appropriate excellencies for ministry, the callings of Christ and the people of God, and a call to a role of pastoral responsibility” (*Acts of Synod 2001*, p. 504). If someone gives evidence of calling and extraordinary gifts for the office of the minister of the Word, yet lacks the prescribed theological training, the church is wise to recognize that such gifts are God’s gifts to the church and that such gifts, when exercised, only enrich the church’s ministry. Indeed, as Monsma and Van Dellen write in *The Revised Church Order Commentary* (1967 edition):

When God qualifies a [person] for the ministry by endowing [them] with excellent and extraordinary gifts for that office, then to be sure the Church of Christ is in duty bound to recognize this fact with appreciation.

(*The Revised Church Order Commentary*, p. 45)

6. Standards for ministry positions and personnel

Synod 2006 adopted several SMCC (renamed Candidacy Committee) proposals re ministry in the CRC including a set of standards for all positions and personnel. Those standards are found in Appendix A of this Manual and should be referenced in all situations when persons are being examined for ministry.

7. Application of Article 7 in multiethnic settings

a. Need for indigenous leadership

Synod declared that

for multicultural or ethnic minority churches the need for indigenous leadership shall constitute the criterion for meeting the “need” requirements of Article 7 and Article 8 of the Church Order.

Ground: Some multicultural or ethnic minority pastors will seek affiliation with the CRC through Article 7 or through Article 8-b. Both of these articles or decisions of synod regulating their use call for the establishing of need as a requirement for eligibility. The need for the multicultural or ethnic minority churches is significantly different from that of the rest of the churches.

(*Acts of Synod 1985*, p. 752)

b. Misapplication of Article 7

Synod 1987 adopted the following recommendations regarding the preparation and placement of students from multiracial groups:

- a. That synod instruct classes to avoid using Church Order Article 7 for seminary graduates who wish to enter the ministry of the CRC.
- b. That synod declare that such persons desiring to serve in the ordained ministry of the CRC should do so through the M.Div., M. Min., or SPMC programs of Calvin Seminary.
- c. That synod call the attention of the classes and synodical deputies to the above declaration relating to the admission of persons to the ministry of the CRC.

(*Acts of Synod 1987*, p. 620)

c. Presence of a resource person

Synod 1985 urged

that at every examination of an ethnic minority person, under Church Order Articles 7 and 8, a resource person of that ethnic minority group be present for consultation with classis.

(*Acts of Synod 1985*, pp. 752-53)

B. Article 8: Ministers eligible for call

1. Church Order Article 8 (text)

- a. Ministers of the Christian Reformed Church are eligible for call, with due observance of the relevant rules.
- b. Ministers of the Reformed Church in America are eligible for call to serve in the Christian Reformed Church, with due observance of the relevant rules.
- c. Ministers ordained outside of the CRCNA who desire to become ministers in the Christian Reformed Church shall be required to complete a learning plan endorsed by the Candidacy Committee.
- d. Ministers ordained outside of the CRCNA who have not been declared eligible for a call shall not be called unless all synodical requirements have been met.
—Cf. Supplement, Article 8

2. Calling ministers of the Christian Reformed Church

The classis and the counselor of a vacant church who acts in behalf of classis are responsible for seeing that the synodical regulations governing the calling of ministers are observed and that, when exceptions are made, the classis is informed so that it may add its approval. The synodical deputies are involved only when a minister is called to a specialized (non-congregational) ministry (cf. Article 12-c and its Supplement) or for temporary loan to another denomination (cf. Article 13-c and its Supplement). Such a call requires the concurring advice of the synodical deputies.⁷

3. Conclusion of *term* calls: Supplement, Article 8, C, 3

When a [*term*] call is terminated following the procedure agreed to in the letter of call, the minister shall be eligible for call for a period of two years, after which time the classis, with the concurring advice of the synodical deputies, shall declare the minister to be released from the

⁷ See also under Church Order Articles 12 and 13.

ministerial office. For valid reasons the classis, with the concurring advice of the synodical deputies, may extend the eligibility for call on a yearly basis.⁸

4. Process for Affiliation of Congregations and their Pastors with the Christian Reformed Church in North America

Synod 2016 adopted updates to the “Process for Affiliation of Congregations and their Pastors with the Christian Reformed Church in North America” document. These guidelines are extremely helpful in the process of mentoring, orienting, and ordaining a minister from another denomination who is entering the CRC ministry by way of Article 8 due to the desire for affiliation by the congregation in which he/she serves. The process document is included as Appendix B for your reference.

5. Church Order Supplement, Article 8, D (Calling Ministers from the Reformed Church in America)

D. *Calling Ministers from the Reformed Church in America*

1. A church may call a minister of the Reformed Church in America (RCA) with due observance of the relevant rules that govern the Orderly Exchange of Ordained Ministers (Cf. *Acts of Synod 2005*, p. 741). This shall apply only to a church that continues to have a viable ministry.
2. Orderly exchange is intended for ordained ministers of the other denomination to engage in extended service with an indefinite or long-term call in a church (the inviting church) while remaining a member of their own church that holds their ministerial credentials.
3. An ordained minister of the CRC, in good standing, is eligible to engage in extended service (a call) in the RCA and an ordained minister of the RCA, in good standing, is eligible to engage in extended service (a call) in the CRC.
4. Extended service is understood to mean that an ordained minister of the CRC may be invited to serve as a minister of an RCA congregation for an extended period of time while maintaining status as an ordained minister of the CRC, and, vice versa, a minister of the RCA may be invited to serve as a minister of a CRC congregation for an extended period of time while maintaining status as an ordained minister of the RCA. Such a person would preach, teach, and administer the sacraments in a manner consistent with the polity of the inviting church.
5. Orderly exchange allows an ordained minister to express the desire, through appropriate channels, to serve in another denomination as an ecumenical witness. However, orderly exchange is always at the invitation of the inviting church and subject to that church's polity.
6. To be able to serve in another church, an ordained minister will demonstrate to the appropriate body of the inviting church a knowledge of and appreciation for the theological and liturgical identity, history, polity, and discipline of the church.
7. Approval for extended service must be done in consultation with and with the concurrence of the sending body. (In the CRC, the sending body is the calling church council; in the RCA, it is the classis holding the pastor's membership.) The minister remains accountable to the sending body for continuation of ministerial status. In the event of termination of a call, the polity of the calling church shall be followed, in consultation with the sending church.

(*Acts of Synod 2014*, pp. 564-65)

⁸ *Acts of Synod 1987*, p. 575; *Manual*, pp. 41, 45.

8. Responsibility for the pastoral care of ordained ministers and their families is to be initiated by the served congregation, which will also inform both the sending and inviting bodies of the CRC and the RCA, which will then share in that pastoral care.
9. The ordained minister is subject to the supervision of the sending body with regard to matters of discipline. The inviting body shall have oversight of the congregation in which the minister serves. Both the inviting and sending bodies shall be in communication and participate as appropriate.
10. Each church will make provision for an ordained minister's being granted participation in the appropriate bodies of the church in which he/she is serving (the inviting church). (Cf. Article 38-g and its Supplement.)
11. All ordained ministers shall continue to participate in the pension and benefits program of the denomination that holds their ministerial credentials (the sending church). The inviting church has the obligation to cover the pension and benefit costs. (Cf. Article 38-g and its Supplement.)

(Acts of Synod 2005, pp. 741-42)

12. It is important to the faithful and orderly exchange of ordained ministers that one who would serve in a congregation of another church first be formed and educated for ministry in one's own tradition and have experience in serving in that church's ordained ministry. Such experience and grounding in one's own tradition are seen to be essential prior to serving in a setting of another tradition; therefore, such service is not intended for a first call.

(Acts of Synod 2011, p. 824)

Note: Due to unknown factors, this statement currently does not appear in the RCA Book of Order, yet it is accepted as valid within the CRC.

Synod 2014 adopted the following "Observations and Advice from the Synodical Candidacy Committee" with respect to the Supplement, Article 8, D, 12 above for inclusion in the Manual for Synodical Deputies:

Upon review of recent situations and actions of CRC classes called to the attention of the Candidacy Committee, the committee offers the following advice to the classes and synodical deputies when candidates are being considered for call by other denominations. This advice is not intended to diminish the guidelines adopted by Synod 2011 as found in Church Order Supplement, Article 8, D, 12.

- a. There is sound reasoning behind the statement in Church Order Supplement, Article 8, D, 12. The differences between RCA and CRC polity are more than minor, and it makes sense to have a "default practice" that requires gaining an acquaintance with the practices of one's "home denomination" before serving in a sister denomination.
- b. There are also compelling reasons for the potential use of Church Order Article 13-c for candidates. These reasons include (1) a lack of opportunity within the CRCNA for waiting candidates of ethnic minority groups, (2) the desirability of allowing certain waiting candidates to participate in residency opportunities offered in the RCA and elsewhere, and (3) the significant number of candidates that are currently waiting for a call.
- c. For all these reasons and more, it may be judged by a classis and the synodical deputies to be in the denomination's best interest, by way of exception to Church Order Supplement, Article 8, D, 12, to use Church Order Article 13-c in order to keep relationship with candidates who desire to be affiliated with the CRCNA while serving a denomination other than the CRCNA. Some of these uses of Article 13-c may appear to be contradictory to the statement of Church Article Supplement, Article 8, D, 12, but may, in fact, be wise.
- d. In all cases of the use of Church Order Article 13-c, especially in cases involving candidates, it is wise for classes and calling congregations to establish a meaningful mechanism for active relationship with the person placed "on loan" so that they can both continue to learn about the CRCNA and its polity and contribute to the CRCNA as persons ordained within our denomination.

- e. The ambiguity and challenges identified in this discussion are also present in cases in which candidates (and pastors) are called to parachurch, chaplaincy, and mission ministry under Church Order Articles 12-b and 12-c.

(*Acts of Synod 2014*, pp. 544-45)

E. *Calling Ministers Ordained Outside of the Christian Reformed Church*

1. A church may consider calling a minister of another denomination only if it has put forth a sustained and realistic effort to obtain a minister from within the Christian Reformed Church or the Reformed Church in America. This shall apply only to a church which continues to have a viable ministry.
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. Once the application has been filed, the procedures prescribed by the Candidacy Committee 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. Once the council, pastor, classis, and Candidacy Committee all agree to the proposed call, the affiliation process and procedures prescribed in the Journey Toward Ordination document shall be followed.
4. At the completion of the affiliation process the classis, with authorization from the Candidacy Committee, shall conduct a colloquium doctum inquiring into the applicant’s soundness of doctrine, sanctity of life, and knowledge and appreciation of Christian Reformed practice and usage. Synodical deputies must be present, and a successful examination will require the approval of classis and the concurrence of the synodical deputies.
5. The approved nominee or applicant may now be called or declared eligible for call, as the case may be. No further examination or colloquium doctum will be required.

(Adapted from *Acts of Synod 1984*, pp. 642-43)

(*Acts of Synod 2019*, p. 783)

Note: Please ensure that written approval by the Candidacy Committee has been received by the classis before conducting the colloquium doctum.

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).

(*Acts of Synod 2019*, p. 783)

The Candidacy Committee website (www.crcna.org/candidacy) has available for reference and download the Journey Toward Ordination document, providing valuable information regarding the processes for ordination.

6. Establishing a joint ministry of ministers from churches in ecclesiastical fellowship (Supplement, Article 8, G)

Synod 1997 gave classes permission to approve the joint ministry of a Christian Reformed congregation with a congregation of a “church in ecclesiastical fellowship.” This arrangement also allows for a minister from the “church in ecclesiastical fellowship” to serve as pastor of the joint ministry with official standing in the classis (see *Acts of Synod 1997*, p. 663).

Church Order Supplement, Article 8, G reads as follows:

Ministers of denominations in **communion** with the Christian Reformed Church may be called by way of exception to serve in the Christian Reformed Church while jointly serving ministries within their own denominations. This arrangement requires the approval of classis and the concurrence of the synodical deputies. The specific need for their services must be demonstrated and the pension fund arrangements must be satisfactorily met in the denomination holding the minister's credentials.

Ministers of denominations in **communion** who so serve churches in the Christian Reformed Church will be accorded the right of delegation to classis and participation in classical committee work for the duration of their time of service in the Christian Reformed Church. This right of delegation and participation shall not extend beyond the boundaries of the classis.

The Christian Reformed Church will by way of exception allow its ministers to be called by a congregation of a denomination in **communion** if such a minister jointly serves in a congregation of the denomination in ecclesiastical fellowship and in a congregation of the Christian Reformed Church.

(*Acts of Synod 1997*, p. 663)

(*Acts of Synod 2022*, pp. 936-37)

Synod 2022 adopted new text as, proposed by Synod 2019, for the above Supplement, Article 8, G. Reference to *denominations in ecclesiastical fellowship* has been changed to *denominations in communion*.

7. Wording of synodical deputies' reports

Reports of synodical deputies use various expressions to refer to ministers ordained outside of the CRCNA coming into the ministry of the Word in the CRC, for example,

“admit _____ to the office of minister of the Word”;
 “declare _____ eligible for call”;
 “receive _____ into the ministry of the CRC”;
 “concur in the decision that _____ be declared eligible for call”;
 “declare _____ to be a minister of the Word.”

Church Order Supplement, Article 8, E, 5 specifies that a nominee or applicant, having sustained a classical examination and having received the approbation of the synodical deputies, may be declared *eligible for call*. This language is to be preferred. It is more accurate, and it avoids misunderstanding on the part of ministers who come from denominations that retain the ecclesiastical credentials of a minister in the classis or presbytery.

8. Special regulations with respect to ethnic-minority and pastors from diverse cultures

- a. For multicultural or ethnic-minority churches the need for indigenous leadership shall constitute the criterion for meeting the “need” requirements of Article 8 of the Church Order.
- b. Synod urged the classes that at every examination of an ethnic-minority person under Church Order Articles 7 and 8 a resource person of that ethnic-minority group be present for consultation with classis (*Acts of Synod 1985*, pp. 752-53).

9. Admission/ordination in contravention of synodical requirements

Synod 1988 considered its options on what courses of action are open to synod when a classis, with the concurring advice of the synodical deputies, proceeds with an admission or ordination in contravention of the synodical requirements.

The following two options are available when a classis and synodical deputies do not conform to synodical regulations:

- a. Declare the action of classis and the concurrence of the synodical deputies to be invalid, or
- b. Specify which requirements must be met to bring about compliance with synodical regulations and hold the decision in abeyance until the synodical deputies have verified that the requirements have been met.

Grounds:

- 1) This corresponds with the synodical policy for interim declaration of candidacy.
- 2) Action taken in contravention to the synodical regulations ought not to be implemented as though it had synodical approval.

(*Acts of Synod 1988*, p. 603)

Church Order Article 8-d clearly specifies that a minister ordained outside of the CRCNA may not be called or declared eligible for call unless the synodical regulations have first been met. Because the synodical deputies must be involved together with the classis in such instances, it is imperative that deputies carefully determine whether all regulations have been followed and met *before* such a person is declared eligible for a call from any Christian Reformed church. Unfortunately, at times considerable haste and pressure have been associated with such requests, and very sad developments could have been avoided if both the classis and the deputies had first conducted and completed a careful investigation.

10. Immigration status and dual ordination of Article 8 pastors

In fall 2018, the synodical services office shared with stated clerks and synodical deputies concerns brought before the Council of Delegates with respect to immigration status of Article 8 pastors. It is our hope that, by sharing them with stated clerks and synodical deputies, you can be attentive to these situations to as you go about your work within the classes, specifically as it relates to the ordination of ministers from other denominations (via Church Order Article 8). Our polity does not address these matters at present (the Candidacy Committee is aware of the situations).

The first matter concerns the country of residency for pastors, specifically those entering from a country outside of Canada or the United States. Advise your congregations to be aware of potential immigration issues. The immigration process is a long and arduous process and may end with a rejection of the necessary immigration status or visa to live out the call to ministry in North America. This can be a cause of anguish for the calling church.

Occasionally, pastors entering the CRCNA via Church Order Article 8 will retain ordination in his/her previous denomination. This can pose as a significant challenge and potential conflict of interest for the pastor. Sharing this note of caution with you we hope will heighten your awareness of the potential for conflict.

11. Reinstatement of ministers who have previously resigned from the ministry in the CRC to enter a ministry outside the denomination (Church Order Article 14-b)

Synod 1994 reminded councils and classes that Article 8-c (formerly 8-b)—not Article 14-e—is to be followed for reinstatement of a minister who has previously resigned from the CRC in order to enter a ministry outside the CRC (see *Acts of Synod 1994*, p. 492).

C. Article 10: Admission of candidates who have completed the requirements for admission to the ministry in the Christian Reformed Church

1. Church Order Article 10 (text)

- a. The ordination of a candidate for the ministry of the Word requires the approval of the classis of the calling church and of the synodical deputies. The classis, in the presence of the deputies, shall examine the candidate concerning the candidate's doctrine and life in accordance with synodical regulations. The ordination shall be accompanied by the laying on of hands by the officiating minister.

- b. The installation of a minister shall require the approval of the classis of the calling church or its interim committee, to which the minister shall have previously presented good ecclesiastical testimonials of doctrine and life which have been provided by the former council and classis.

—Cf. Supplement, Article 10

2. General observations

Synodical deputies are closely involved in the admission of candidates to the ministry of the Word in the CRC. This part of their assignment has always been a primary focus of their duty. Even though the synod declares persons to be candidates, admission to the ministry is contingent on a candidate's demonstrating competence and preparedness for ministry via a classical examination and interview. The deputies have a very important role on behalf of the synod and represent the interest of the entire denomination in this process.

- a. Synod may declare students who have a combination of four or fewer uncompleted units in their seminary program as candidates, contingent upon completion of all remaining requirements. An asterisk next to the candidate's name on the Candidacy

Committee's website indicates that requirements have not yet been fulfilled (see Supplement, Article 6, C).⁹

- b. Only those who have been declared and announced as candidates and who have received and accepted a call are eligible for a classical examination.
- c. A classis interviews and examines the candidate at the request of the council of the church which has extended the call. The deputies are more than observers, but they are not the examiners, even though they are also given opportunity to ask questions of the candidate.
- d. Synodical deputies are involved at an early stage in the process and should receive all the materials, such as sermons and the sermon evaluations, in sufficient time to review them carefully.
- e. Synod 1961 emphasized the importance of the examination for ordination by the classis in which the calling church is located. "This examination is an integral part of the lawful calling as outlined in Article 4 of the Church Order" (*Acts of Synod 1961*, p. 55). Although synod declares candidacy after a review of documents submitted by the Candidacy Committee, it does not examine the applicants. Thus, the roles of the classes and of the synodical deputies are very important. This is especially true when the documents submitted indicate areas to which the church should address itself as it examines candidates for ministry. The interests of the denomination and the welfare of the church must be placed above a desire to reduce the time devoted to the examination out of deference to a heavy agenda or even sympathy for the candidate.

3. Classical examiners

Four classical delegates shall be appointed as the official examiners, two to function as sermon critics and to be present at the worship service in which the total sermon is being preached, and two to conduct the actual examination at the time classis meets.¹⁰

4. Credentials required by classis

Synod advises the classes, with reference to the credentials required by classes, that synod's declaration of candidacy may be taken to certify that the candidates have met the requirements for candidacy. No further inquiry into these matters need ordinarily be made by a classis at the examination for ordination.¹¹

⁹ Improper procedure: In one case a classis proceeded to examine a seminarian who had been declared a candidate contingent upon the completion of . . . academic requirements. Furthermore, with the concurrence of the synodical deputies, classis declared [the candidate] admitted to the ministry of the Word contingent upon the completion of . . . academic requirements. However, at the time of [the] examination the seminarian had not completed [the] academic requirements. Synod did not approve the action of the deputies in concurring with the action of classis, on the following ground: "Church Order and synodical regulations make no provision for a classical examination or admittance to the ministry contingent upon completion of academic work" (*Acts of Synod 1988*, p. 619).

¹⁰ *Acts of Synod 1972*, p. 45; *Manual*, p. 50.

¹¹ *Acts of Synod 1978*, p. 24; *Amended Acts of Synod 2009*, p. 583; *Manual*, p. 50.

5. The classical sermon

- a. The candidate is to prepare a sermon on a text assigned by classis. A copy of this sermon is to be submitted to the sermon critics two weeks before the examination [*Acts of Synod 1961*, p. 56].
- b. The candidate shall preach a sermon on a text assigned by classis in an official worship service in the presence of classical representatives, preferably on the Sunday preceding the meeting of classis and in the church to which [the candidate] has been called.¹²

Note: Synod has recognized that a classis assigns the text for the candidate's sermon rather than agrees to the text.

- c. A copy of the candidate's sermon shall be provided by classis to the synodical deputies and to the delegates to classis. This will be conducive to a thorough examination of the contents of the sermon by all who are called upon to pass judgment at classis [*Acts of Synod 1975*, p. 89].
- d. In addition to the required sermon on an assigned text, the candidate shall submit to each of the sermon critics of classis copies of two other sermons which [were] preached as a student, one based on a Scripture text and the other on a Lord's Day of the Heidelberg Catechism. The combination of Scripture texts should include both the Old Testament and the New Testament. These sermons shall not include those which have been used in practice preaching, or for academic evaluation, in the seminary.¹³
- e. The sermon critics shall report to classis prior to the examination in the biblical and theological areas.¹⁴

6. Standards for sermon evaluation

The following standards of evaluation have been prepared by Calvin Theological Seminary and its Center for Excellence in Preaching as a guide for evaluating sermons:

The Sermon

1. Biblical: Because God's Word lies at the center of all preaching, sermons should demonstrate that the Bible (and the specific portion of Scripture on which the sermon was based) determined the main message of the sermon. What's more, if Scripture truly is *God's* revelation, then the sermon should reveal God's active presence (and above all his saving grace) in any given passage as well as throughout the whole of Scripture. With this in mind, the following questions may be used to evaluate a sermon:
 - a. Was the sermon content was derived from Scripture?
 - b. Did the sermon help you understand the text better?
 - c. Did the sermon reveal how God is at work in the text?
 - d. Did the sermon display the grace of God in Scripture?
 - e. What was the main point of the specific biblical text as this sermon presented it?
2. Authentic: All Christians have, and so should display, union with Christ. But preachers in particular should exhibit their own commitment to the faith and to the Savior at that faith's core. Preachers should show that they are convicted by the truths they preach, that they are committed to living out this message in their own lives, and that they are pastorally sensitive to (and are honest about) the challenges that face believers in living out the Christian faith. With this in mind, the following questions may be used to evaluate a sermon.

¹² *Acts of Synod 1972*, p. 45; *Manual*, p. 49.

¹³ *Acts of Synod 1975*, p. 90; *Manual*, p. 49.

¹⁴ *Acts of Synod 1970*, p. 69; *Manual*, p. 50.

- a. Did the preacher display passion and enthusiasm for the message?
 - b. Did the preacher's demeanor show conviction?
 - c. Did the preacher display honesty/integrity in applying the message?
 - d. Did the preacher show pastoral sensitivity in the sermon?
 - e. What did the preacher do that revealed his/her passion for the text/sermon or detracted from your sense that the preacher was committed to the message of the sermon?
3. Contextual: The *content* of every sermon comes from God's unchanging Word in Scripture. But the *context* in which that Word must be applied is always changing. Preachers must demonstrate an awareness of the culture, the issues of the day, and the particulars of a given congregation (if the preacher is in a position to be familiar with the congregation). With this in mind, the following questions may be used to evaluate a sermon.
- a. Did the sermon make a connection between the biblical world and our current situation?
 - b. Did the sermon show an awareness of contemporary issues?
 - c. Was the sermon delivered in language that fits our contemporary world and that was, therefore, communicatively effective?
 - d. Did the sermon reveal God's active presence and grace in our world today and in the situations people face today?
 - e. Was the sermon communicated effectively through compelling use of illustrations and examples?
 - f. How did this sermon demonstrate that it was written for this current time and place?
4. Life Changing: The Apostle Paul declared that he was not ashamed of the gospel because it is nothing less than the very "power of God for salvation" (Romans 1:16). The result of presenting that powerful gospel should be changed lives. Those outside of the faith should feel joyfully called to believe in Jesus as Lord. Longtime believers should feel energized for service and bolstered in their hope and joy. With this in mind, the following questions may be used to evaluate a sermon.
- a. Did this sermon remind you of God's grace?
 - b. Through this sermon, did God create, or strengthen, the hope that God is actively at work in our lives every day?
 - c. Did this sermon suggest specific ways to look for and see God's work in our world and even in our struggles?
 - d. Did the sermon provide practical examples/advice?
 - e. Did the sermon communicate God's grace in a way that could reach out to unbelievers or those unfamiliar with the Christian faith?
 - f. How did this sermon show the preacher's desire that the message would affect people's real lives by giving hope and direction? By listening to the sermon, could you sense God's Spirit challenging you to new obedience, strengthening your commitment to serve Jesus as your Lord?

The Worship Service and Sermon Delivery

The following questions may be used to evaluate a preacher in relationship to the actual leading of the worship service and delivery of the sermon:

- a. Did the preacher lead the service confidently and pastorally?
- b. Was the preacher organized and so help the service to flow smoothly and without distractions?
- c. Was the worship service unified with an appropriate selection of songs/hymns, litanies, and other readings?
- d. Did the prayers demonstrate pastoral sensitivity and a good balance among thanksgiving, petition, lament, and praise?
- e. Did the preacher make good eye contact throughout the service and make use of appropriate facial expressions and gestures?
- f. Did the preacher use a variety of voice tones and vary the speed of his/her speech in the sermon?

- g. Did the sermon display a structure that was easy to follow (that is, did it have a recognizable beginning, middle, and end)?¹⁵

7. Schedule for the classical examination

- a. Introduction: A classical examiner shall introduce the candidate to the classis.
- b. The examination proper shall consist of inquiry into the following three main areas:
 - 1) Practica (no time limit)
 - a) The classical examiner shall inquire into the candidate's relationship to God, commitment to the ministry, the candidate's understanding of the meaning and relevance of the ministry for our times, loyalty to the church, and related matters.
 - b) The synodical deputies and delegates shall have opportunity to ask additional questions.
 - c) Before proceeding to the next area of inquiry, a motion to proceed shall carry.
 - 2) Sermon Evaluation
 - a) In the presence of the candidate the written sermon shall be evaluated, and attention shall be given to the candidate's manner of conducting a worship service.
 - b) Additional questions with reference to the sermon and its delivery shall be allowed.
 - c) Before proceeding to the next area, a motion to proceed shall carry with the concurrence of the synodical deputies.
 - 3) Biblical and Theological Position (minimum, 30 minutes per candidate)
 - a) The examiner shall inquire into the candidate's biblical and theological judgment, competence, and soundness.
 - b) Opportunity shall be provided for additional questions (no specific time limit).
- c. Procedure for admitting to the ministry:
 - 1) A motion to admit shall be received and given preliminary consideration in executive session.
 - 2) Prayer for the guidance of the Holy Spirit shall be offered.
 - 3) The synodical deputies shall leave the floor to prepare their recommendation.
 - 4) The classis shall vote by ballot.
 - 5) The synodical deputies shall offer their written statement, from which it will become evident whether or not they can concur with the decision of classis.
 - 6) In the event they do not concur, the classis and the synodical deputies may try to reach a unified decision.
 - 7) In the event that an agreement cannot be reached between them, the matter is automatically referred to the synod for final adjudication.

Grounds:

 - a) This procedure will allow both the classis and the synodical deputies to arrive at their decisions independently.
 - b) The procedure previously adopted [prior to 1972] can influence the classis unduly.

¹⁵ Standards provided by Calvin Theological Seminary.

- c) The Church Order consistently speaks about “concurring advice of the synodical deputies.” There can be no concurring advice if the classis does not reach its decision at the same time as the synodical deputies (*Acts of Synod 1972*, pp. 45-46).¹⁶

Note: In the case of disagreement between a classis and the synodical deputies the candidate involved may not be called by another church nor may another classis examine the candidate until synod has adjudicated the matter (see *Acts of Synod 1912*, p. 54).

8. Reexamination of a candidate

If a candidate does not pass the examination, [the candidate] may be given another opportunity at the following classical meeting to be examined in the areas in which [the candidate] has failed.

The classis and the synodical deputies may recommend a reexamination and specify its nature. Since an examination is conducted at the request of the calling council, a reexamination should also take place at the request of this council. Since the call of a candidate is tentative and provisional upon the passing of the examination, the council must officially request a reexamination, or the candidate is left without a call. In this sense failure of the council officially to request a reexamination implies withdrawal of the call.

If a candidate fails to pass [the] classical examination and/or reexamination, [their] candidacy terminates.

(*Manual*, p. 51)

D. Article 12: Specialized ministries and calling of ministers of the Word

1. Church Order Article 12-c (text)

- c. A minister of the Word may also serve the church in other work which relates directly to the calling of a minister, but only after the calling church has demonstrated to the satisfaction of classis, with the concurring advice of the synodical deputies, that said work is consistent with the calling of a minister of the Word.

Article 12-c recognizes that ministers legitimately serve in a variety of settings and in widely diversified ministries in addition to serving as pastors of churches. In every case, however, a minister must be legally called and installed in a local congregation and come under the supervision of the council of that church (in cooperation with the employing agency), even though the minister labors outside the context of that local congregation (see Church Order Article 13-c).

Various synods have adopted regulations to guide the churches, classes, and synodical deputies in dealing with the calling of ministers to serve in specialized ministries.¹⁷ There have been occasions when councils, classes, and deputies gave their approval in violation of synodical requirements. When such has occurred in a number of instances synod has either not approved the work of the deputies or returned the matter to the classis for reconsideration.¹⁸ The importance of following synodical regulations cannot be over-emphasized.

¹⁶ Supplement, Article 10; see also *Manual*, pp. 49-51.

¹⁷ See under Church Order Articles 12 and 48; *Manual*, pp. 56-57.

¹⁸ *Manual*, p. 192; regarding a pastor serving in a private counseling practice, *Acts of Synod 1985*, p. 740.

2. Prerequisites for calling ministers for specialized ministries

a. Approval of the position by the assemblies

Before a minister of the Word may serve the church in a specialized ministry, the assemblies of the church must determine that the task is consistent with the calling of a minister of the Word. All the assemblies must assume their responsibility in the above determination. The calling church is required to demonstrate this consistency, the classis must express satisfaction, and the synod through its synodical deputies must concur.

b. Concurrence of the synodical deputies

The approval of classis must receive the concurrence of the synodical deputies before the approval of the position can be declared or announced.

c. Suitable pension-cost arrangements

Synod instructed “the synodical deputies, in granting permission to ministers to engage in specialized service, to determine that suitable arrangements have been made for defraying the cost of [the minister’s] pension.”¹⁹

3. Regulations for the application of Article 12-c

a. Prior approval of classis

The calling church shall secure the prior approval of classis, with the concurring advice of the synodical deputies, for each new ministerial position by providing classis with the following information:

- a) The description of the official position (purposes, duties, qualifications, etc.) as determined by the calling church in consultation with cooperating agencies as applicable.
- b) The evidence that the minister will be directly accountable to the calling church, including an outline of requirements for reporting to the calling church and supervision by the calling church, in consultation with cooperating agencies as applicable.
- c) The demonstration that the position will be consistent with the calling as a minister of the Word.
- d) When any position having been declared by a classis to be “spiritual in character and directly related to the ministerial calling” prior to June 1978, becomes vacant, this position shall be reviewed in the light of Articles 11 -14 of the Church Order before another call is issued.²⁰

b. Provisional approval

When a new ministry opportunity can be met only by immediate action, the calling church (and the appropriate denominational agency) may obtain provisional approval from the classical committee, subject to subsequent approval by classis with the concurring advice of the synodical deputies. In the event that the provisional approval is not sustained and the minister desires to continue in the position, the minister may be honorably released

¹⁹ *Acts of Synod 1969*, p. 48; *Manual*, p. 60.

²⁰ *Acts of Synod 1978*, p. 47; Supplement, Article 12-c; *Manual*, pp. 56-57.

from office and may be readmitted according to the regulations of the Church Order (cf. Church Order Art. 14-d and -e).²¹

c. Chaplaincy and Care Ministries endorsement

All ordained ministers serving in chaplaincy ministries are required to be endorsed by Chaplaincy Ministries . . . [*Acts of Synod 1998*, p. 391]. The calling church, the classis, and the synodical deputies must all ensure that this process is followed.

Synod authorizes Chaplaincy and Care Ministries to enlarge the scope of responsibility to include institutional chaplaincies, to the extent of investigating openings and opportunities wherever chaplains are appointed or needed and of recruiting qualified ministers and seminarians. Councils, when contemplating the beginning of a new chaplaincy field, should seek the endorsement of Chaplaincy and Care Ministries appointed by synod for this purpose. Synod has also reminded the churches that all new positions for extraordinary ministerial tasks do require the approval of the classis with the concurring advice of the synodical deputies (*Acts of Synod 1976*, p. 48). *Note:* As stated above, such concurrence is not required for chaplaincy positions that are routine, but such approval is needed for new and extraordinary positions.²²

d. Supervision by the calling church

The church visitors of classis shall inquire annually into the supervision of the calling church toward said minister(s), as well as the reporting of said minister(s) to the calling church. The church visitors shall inform classis of departure from the approved provisions for supervision and reporting.

(*Acts of Synod 1978*, p. 48)

Synod 1982 observed “that there is a significant number of ministers whose present employment raises questions as to the legitimacy of their current status as ministers of the Word” and issued special instructions concerning this situation to classes and church visitors.²³ Since these positions were also approved by synodical deputies, whose work in turn was reviewed and approved by synod, both synod and the synodical deputies must accept responsibility for this irregularity, along with the classes. However, it is difficult to reverse decisions which have been initiated on the basis of approval given by classis and deputies without hardship to the minister concerned. In doubtful cases it is advisable either to refer the matter directly to synod or to decline approval on adequate grounds and allow the matter to be decided upon appeal to synod if the parties concerned so choose.

E. Article 13-c: Ministers on loan to other denominations

1. Church Order Article 13-c (text)

c. A minister of the Word may be loaned temporarily by the calling church to serve as pastor of a congregation outside of the Christian Reformed Church, but only with the approval of classis, the concurring advice of the synodical deputies, and in accordance with the synodical regulations. Although the specific duties may be regulated in cooperation with the other congregation, the supervision of doctrine and life rests with the calling church.

²¹ *Acts of Synod 1978*, p. 48; *Manual*, p. 57.

²² *Manual*, p. 60.

²³ *Acts of Synod 1982*, p. 72; *Manual*, pp. 57-58.

Article 13-c has a limited focus. It does not apply to ministers who serve other denominations through mission boards or other denominational agencies. Its reference is to a contractual arrangement contemplated by an individual minister and another denomination. It does not apply, for example, to ministers serving theological schools of other denominations. Such cases are covered by the provisions of Church Order Articles 12-b and 12-c.

2. Supplement, Article 13-c

Regulations Pertaining to Article 13-c of the Church Order

A minister whose service is requested by a congregation outside the Christian Reformed Church may be loaned temporarily to serve such a church while still retaining ministerial status in the Christian Reformed Church in keeping with the following regulations:

- a. The congregation seeking the services of the Christian Reformed minister is desirous of the Reformed faith and seriously contemplates affiliation with the Christian Reformed Church or some other Reformed denomination, or is already in a Reformed denomination and seeks to be strengthened in the Reformed faith.
- b. The minister contemplating service in an undenominational church acknowledges this as an opportunity to encourage such a church to affiliate with either the Christian Reformed Church or a Reformed denomination similar to the Christian Reformed Church.
- c. The duties of the minister are spiritual in character and directly related to the ministerial calling, and such duties do not conflict with the minister's commitment to the faith and practice of the Christian Reformed Church as required by one's signature to the Covenant for Officebearers.
- d. If the congregation to be served is in close proximity to a Christian Reformed congregation of another classis, the approval of that classis shall be required, in addition to the approval of the classis of the minister's calling church and the synodical deputies.
- e. The loaning of such ministerial services may be for a period of time not to exceed two years. Extensions of not more than two years each may be granted if circumstances warrant, with the approval of classis and the synodical deputies.
- f. Should the minister become subject to discipline, the non-Christian Reformed congregation which is being served shall have the right to suspend the minister from serving that church, but suspension from office and deposition may be applied only by the Christian Reformed Church.
- g. Continuation under the Christian Reformed Church Pension Plan shall require that the minister, or the non-Christian Reformed church which is being served, shall contribute to the Ministers' Pension Fund the amount which is determined annually by the Ministers' Pension Fund Committee for ministers serving in extraordinary positions outside of our denomination.²⁴

Classes and synodical deputies are asked to note that Regulations d and e to Supplement, Article 13-c above also require approval of classis with the concurrence of the synodical deputies—with respect to the proximity of the congregation to which the minister is being called, as well as consideration of extension of service to the congregation beyond the two-year loan period.

²⁴ *Acts of Synod 1976*, pp. 33-34; *Acts of Synod 2011*, p. 872; *Manual*, p. 63; see also under Article 12-c re pension arrangements.

F. Article 14: Release from ministerial office

1. Church Order Article 14 (text)

a. A minister of the Word shall not leave the congregation with which the minister is connected for another church without the consent of the council.

b. A minister of the Word who resigns from the ministry in the Christian Reformed Church to enter a ministry outside the denomination shall be released from office by the classis with an appropriate declaration reflecting the resigned minister's status and with the concurring advice of the synodical deputies.

—Cf. Supplement Article 14-b

c. A minister of the Word, once lawfully called, may not forsake the office. A minister may, however, be released from office to enter upon a non-ministerial vocation for such weighty reasons as shall receive the approval of the classis with the concurring advice of the synodical deputies.

—Cf. Supplement Article 14-c

d. A minister of the Word who has entered upon a vocation which classis judges to be non-ministerial shall be released from office within one year of that judgment. The concurring advice of the synodical deputies shall be obtained at the time of the judgment.

e. A former minister of the Word who was released from office may be declared eligible for call upon approval of the classis by which such action was taken, with the concurring advice of the synodical deputies. The classis, in the presence of the deputies, shall conduct an interview that examines the circumstances surrounding the release and the renewed desire to serve in ministry. Upon acceptance of a call, the person shall be re-ordained.

—Cf. Supplement Article 14-e

The principle underlying this article is that the relationship entered into by a minister is a form of mutual contract between a minister and the church which issued the call and publicly ordained or installed in office. Release from that contract is, therefore, not an individual judgment or choice, but concerns all parties involved—the minister, the local congregation, the classis, and the denomination.

The appropriate assemblies should take care not to utilize faulty terminology and procedure in releases or when dealing with resignations (*Manual*, pp. 67-69).

“Synod 1977 ruled that when a minister of the Christian Reformed Church resigns, ministerial status [of the minister] in the Christian Reformed Church shall terminate on the date on which [the council] and/or classis determines that [the] resignation shall become effective.”²⁵

2. Concurring advice in four situations

Synodical deputies must give their concurring advice in four situations regarding ministerial release or reinstatement.

- a. Article 14-b: Release from office to enter a ministry outside the Christian Reformed Church

²⁵ *Acts of Synod 1977*, p. 66; *Manual*, p. 68.

- 1) Until 1994 the Church Order contained no direct guidelines on how classes should proceed when ministers resign from the ministry in the Christian Reformed Church to enter ministries outside the denomination. Article 14-b was adopted to deal directly with this situation. The decision of Synod 1994 also helped to clarify the procedure by which such ministers may reenter the ministry of the Christian Reformed Church (*Acts of Synod 1994*, pp. 491-92).
- 2) Church Order Supplement, Article 14-b (text)

Declaration regarding ministers who resign from the Christian Reformed Church

- a. Synod directed the churches and classes dealing with ministers who depart from the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA) in order to seek ordination in the ministry of the Word in another church to take note of the statement made by Synod 1978 that "Synod has instructed all our churches and classes that in all cases of resignation a proper resolution of dismissal must be adopted with the concurring advice of synodical deputies" and to realize that this statement allows for a broad degree of flexibility in responding to such situations (cf. *Acts of Synod 1978*, p. 73).
- b. Synod directed the churches and classes to take into account the manner and spirit in which a minister has acted during the time leading up to and including departure from office when determining what action to take. (Some situations may require a deposition; others may require only a simple release from office.)
- c. Synod encouraged the churches and classes
 - 1) To recognize carefully the conditions and circumstances of a particular case that may come to their attention (e.g., whether it be a formal or a de facto resignation) and, having done so,
 - 2) To make a declaration reflecting the resigned minister's status that is appropriate to the way and spirit in which the minister acted during the time leading up to and including resignation from office. Such a declaration could reflect one of the following:
 - a) The resigned minister is honorably released.
 - b) The resigned minister is released.
 - c) The resigned minister is dismissed.
 - d) The resigned minister is in the status of one deposed.

Note: In distinction from a minister who retires, any resigned minister no longer retains the honor and title of "minister of the Word" in, nor has an official connection with, the CRCNA (cf. Church Order Article 18-b).

- d. Synod encouraged churches and classes to prayerfully consider the following principles in their deliberations:
 - 1) Schismatic activities are to be considered a serious violation of the sacred trust associated with ordination and a dishonoring of God which results in pain and brokenness in the body of Christ.
 - 2) All declarations by churches and classes should clearly evidence hope for the possibility of restoration and mutual reconciliation.²⁶
(*Acts of Synod 1993*, pp. 581-82)

²⁶ *Acts of Synod 1993*, pp. 581-82; Supplement, Article 14-b; *Manual*, p. 66.

b. Article 14-c: Release from office to enter a non-ministerial vocation

- 1) Article 14-c declares that ministers are bound to their calling as ministers of the Word. They may not forsake their calling lightly. However, if they desire to enter upon a non-ministerial vocation, they may do so. Synod has defined a non-ministerial vocation as one “that lies entirely outside of the sphere of the Ministry of the Gospel and does not have its purpose in that Ministry” (*Acts of Synod 1932*, p. 165).

Ministers of the Word who feel that they must temporarily or permanently enter upon a non-ministerial vocation should consult with the council and give good reason for that decision. If the reason is judged sufficient by the council, the classis and the synodical deputies are called upon to take official action in declaring that a given minister is released from ministerial office.

The synodical study committee which proposed revisions of Church Order Articles 11 through 14 to Synod 1978 addressed the question of the legitimacy of an honorable release from the ministry of the Word for a non-ministerial vocation.²⁷

- 2) Supplement, Article 14-c (text)

The provisions of Supplement, Article 14-b also apply to Article 14-c, especially in those situations when ministers resign under discipline or to avoid discipline.

c. Article 14-d: Termination of the ministerial office of persons whose vocation has not been approved by the assemblies

Whenever a minister of the Word enters upon a vocation which is not properly within the scope of the ministry of the Word, the church holding [the minister's] credentials incurs a responsibility to investigate the matter. Synod 1982 instructed the [Council of Delegates of the CRCNA] through the [executive director] to call attention of both the councils and the classes to all cases where questions arise relating to the validity of the status of a minister of the Word.

(*Acts of Synod 1982*, p. 72)

Article 14-d specifies that action shall be taken promptly by councils and classes with respect to termination of the ministerial office of pastors whose vocation is non-ministerial, within one year of that judgment. The concurring advice of the synodical deputies shall be obtained at the time of the judgment.

d. Article 14-e: Return to office of a former minister who was honorably released

Article 14-e makes provision for a former minister to return to the office of minister of the Word after having been honorably released to enter into a non-ministerial vocation.

The following steps provide a process to follow when reinstatement to office is sought:

²⁷ *Acts of Synod 1978*, pp. 479-80; *Manual*, p. 67.

- 1) Application to the classis which granted the honorable release.
- 2) Investigation by the classis, *including an interview with the applicant*, as to the reasons for return, commitment to ministry, etc.
- 3) The concurring advice of the synodical deputies at the time the classis interviews the former minister.
- 4) Declaration of eligibility for call if the classis and the deputies concur. The status of one declared eligible for call is similar to that of a person declared to be a candidate.
- 5) Re-ordination if a call is received and accepted.
- 6) If a call is not received within two years (cf. Art. 17-c), the eligibility for call will no longer be in effect.

Upon acceptance of a call, a former minister of the Word shall be re-ordained. In accord with the scriptural teaching that “ordination should be understood as the appointment or setting apart of certain members of the church for particular ministries.”²⁸ Article 14-e provides that ministers of the Word, like elders, deacons, and commissioned pastors may be re-ordained after periods of release from office.

e. Supplement, Article 14-e

The provisions of Supplement, Article 84 related to reinstatement of ministers who have been deposed also apply to ministers who resign under discipline or to avoid discipline and later seek reordination by way of Article 14-e.

(*Acts of Synod 2016*, p. 866)

Synod 2016 adopted the above new Supplement to Article 14-e. Just as deposed officebearers are not allowed reinstatement to office in certain circumstances related to sexual misconduct, so also ministers who resign from office in certain cases of sexual misconduct should not be allowed to be reordained in those same circumstances. This procedure is also included in the *Manual of Christian Reformed Church Government* as a recommended practice.²⁹

3. Reinstatement of a person who has resigned from the ministry in the CRC to enter a ministry outside the denomination

Synod 1994 reminded councils and classes that Church Order Article 8-c—not Article 14-e—is to be followed when ministers who have previously resigned from the ministry in the Christian Reformed Church to enter a ministry outside the denomination wish to reenter the ministry of the Christian Reformed Church (see *Acts of Synod 1994*, p. 492).

G. *Article 17: Release from ministry in a congregation*

1. Church Order Article 17 (text)

- a. Ministers who are neither eligible for retirement nor worthy of discipline may be, for weighty reasons, released from active ministerial service in a congregation through action initiated by themselves, by a council, or jointly. Such release shall be given only with the approval of classis, with the concurring advice of the synodical deputies, and in accordance with synodical regulations.

²⁸ *Acts of Synod 1973*, Guideline 9 re Office and Ordination, p. 63; *Manual*, pp. 68-69.

²⁹ *Acts of Synod 2016*, p. 866.

b. The council shall provide for the support of a released minister in such a way and for such a time as shall receive the approval of classis.

c. A minister of the Word who has been released from active ministerial service in a congregation shall be eligible for call for a period of two years, after which time the classis, with the concurring advice of the synodical deputies, shall declare the minister to be released from the ministerial office. For weighty reasons the classis, with the concurring advice of the synodical deputies, may extend the eligibility for call on a yearly basis.

d. In some situations, the classis may decide that it cannot declare the released minister eligible for call after the minister has completed the process of evaluation and assistance. The classis, with the concurring advice of the synodical deputies, shall then declare the minister to be released from ministerial office.

2. Specific application

Article 17 provides for the release of a minister who is neither eligible for retirement nor worthy of discipline. The intent of this article is to provide for the proper separation of a minister from a congregation. Such a separation may take place for “weighty reasons” and with the intention that the minister will seek another call. The judgment as to what constitutes a “weighty reason” must be determined by the assemblies involved, and should be noted in the assemblies’ minutes. “Weighty” or valid reasons include, but are not limited to, when the minister wants to pursue additional education, when the minister needs a medical leave of unspecified length or a family care leave, when a minister’s family moves due to a spouse’s job change, when the church the minister has been serving disbands, or when relationships in the church have become so strained that effective ministry has become impossible.

This article is not to be used for:

- a. A temporary leave of absence as provided for in Article 16.
- b. Ministers who, either for illness or age, are eligible for retirement (cf. Art. 18).
- c. Ministers whose doctrine or conduct makes them objects of formal discipline (cf. Arts. 82-84).

3. Procedure

Because ministers serve not only local congregations but also classes and the denomination, they may be released from active ministerial service in a congregation only after classis gives its approval and the synodical deputies concur. No council may release its pastor under the provisions of Article 17 without such approval. It should be noted that the involvement of classis and the synodical deputies serves the best interests of both the council and the minister. The Guidelines for the Separation of Pastor and Congregation as adopted by Synod 1998 (*Acts of Synod 1998*, pp. 392-96) are found in Appendix C of this Manual. Please note that Synod 2010 amended Regulation 8 of the guidelines—the compensation package “may not apply in every circumstance of separation such as when a pastor leaves for purely personal reasons” (*Acts of Synod 2010*, p. 916).

- a. The classis must receive a document detailing the “weighty reasons” along with recommendations and grounds for the release of the minister.

- b. The classis, satisfied that it has adequate information and that the matter has been pursued out of pastoral concern for both the congregation and the pastor involved, renders its judgment on the matter.
- c. The synodical deputies are called upon to concur with the decision of the classis. If they concur, the minister is released from service to the congregation.
- d. The classis, with the concurrence of the synodical deputies, must specify at the time of release what stipulations, if any, the minister must meet before he/she may receive and accept a call and what stipulations a congregation must meet before it may call another minister. The provisions of Supplement 17-a are as follows:

Provisions regulating release from ministerial service in a congregation

- a. If a classis decides a released minister needs evaluation and assistance before accepting another call, it shall specify at the time of release what is required before the minister is declared eligible for call.
 - 1) The classis shall appoint an oversight committee of no fewer than three persons to plan and monitor an evaluation of readiness for the ministry that focuses on professional competence and personal/emotional status. An evaluator or evaluators mutually agreed upon by the classis and the oversight committee shall conduct the evaluation. (Pastor Church Resources is able to recommend appropriate evaluators.) Classis shall determine who is responsible for any costs of evaluation or stipulated personal counseling.
 - a) The committee, composed of both laity and clergy, may include one council member of the congregation involved in the separation.
 - b) The committee, in consultation with the interim committee of classis, shall develop specific expectations for the minister and shall monitor progress toward established goals. The issues addressed shall be determined by concerns raised by the council and the classis in collaboration with the minister.
 - c) The committee shall present a progress report at each regularly scheduled classis meeting.
 - d) After it has received the report of the evaluator(s), the committee shall make a recommendation to classis regarding the minister's eligibility for call.
 - 2) The minister shall participate in the evaluation and assistance process as follows:
 - a) The minister shall consent to the release of a detailed report, with recommendations, from the evaluator(s) to the oversight committee.
 - b) In addition to the evaluation stipulated above, the minister shall engage in any personal counseling required by classis with a therapist mutually agreed upon by the minister and the oversight committee.
 - 3) Based upon the recommendation of its oversight committee, the classis shall make the final decision concerning the minister's readiness to be declared eligible for call.
 - 4) If the classis does not declare the minister eligible for call, it shall, with the concurrence of the synodical deputies, release the minister from office.

- 5) With the approval of classis, a minister who has been released from service in a congregation may transfer his/her membership and ministerial credentials to a neighboring council within the classis during the evaluation process. If classis declares the minister eligible for call, the council that holds the minister's credentials shall publicize the minister's availability.
 - 6) With the approval of classis, a minister who has been released from service in a congregation may transfer his/her membership and ministerial credentials to a council in another classis after the classis in which the separation occurred declares the minister eligible for call. The council that holds the minister's credentials shall publicize the minister's availability.
- b. If a classis decides a congregation that has been separated from its minister needs a time of evaluation and assistance before extending another call, it shall specify at the time of separation what is required before the congregation calls another minister.
- 1) The classis shall appoint an oversight committee composed of the council's classical counselor and at least two other persons to plan and monitor the evaluation process.
 - 2) In conjunction with the church council, the committee shall secure interim pastoral leadership, preferably a specialized interim pastor, and set goals. (Pastor Church Resources is able to assist with securing pastoral leadership.)
 - 3) The committee shall present a progress report at each regularly scheduled classis meeting.
 - 4) Based upon the recommendation of its oversight committee, the classis shall make the final decision concerning the congregation's readiness to extend a call.

(*Acts of Synod 2003*, pp. 623-24)

e. The classis considers the support arrangements for approval (cf. Art. 17-b).

4. Status of a released minister

When a minister has been released, it becomes the responsibility of the releasing congregation to declare the minister available for a call to another church.

A minister who has been released from service to a congregation does not immediately lose ministerial status. The minister continues in good standing and is available for a call to another congregation. Because there is no disciplinary matter involved when Article 17 is employed, the council should be able in good conscience to recommend the released pastor for a call to another church (see *Acts of Synod 1960*, pp. 45-46).

5. Transfer of credentials

- 5) With the approval of classis, a minister who has been released from service in a congregation may transfer his/her membership and ministerial credentials to a neighboring council within the classis during the evaluation process. If classis declares the minister eligible for call, the council that holds the minister's credentials shall publicize the minister's availability.
- 6) With the approval of classis, a minister who has been released from service in a congregation may transfer his/her membership and ministerial credentials to a council in another classis after the classis in which the separation occurred declared the minister to

be eligible for call. The council that holds the minister's credentials shall publicize the minister's availability.³⁰

(*Acts of Synod 2003*, p. 623)

It is important that the sending classis inform the receiving classis/council of the date of the release so that the provisions of Article 17-c may be properly observed.

6. Procedure when no call is received

Article 17-c provides that if no call is received and accepted within a period of two years, a minister released from a congregation should be released from the ministerial office as well. "For weighty reasons the classis, with the concurring advice of the synodical deputies, may extend the eligibility for call on a yearly basis" (Church Order Art. 17-c).

Release from ministerial office is not a direct consequence of the situation which led to the minister's release from active service in the congregation. Release from office takes place because no call was received after a sufficiently long period of time so that there is no outward confirmation of the internal call to the ministry of the Word.

H. *Article 23: Task and function of commissioned pastors*

1. Church Order Article 23 (text)

a. The task of the commissioned pastor is to 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. Commissioned pastors shall function under the direct supervision of the council, giving regular reports to it and being present at its meetings, particularly when their work is under consideration.

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.

2. Church Order Supplement, Article 23-a (text)

The office of commissioned pastor is applicable to a variety of ministries, provided that these ministries fit the following guidelines adopted by Synod 2001:

The office 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. . . . 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, 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.]

³⁰ *Acts of Synod 1973*, p. 35; Supplement, Article 17-a, provisions a, 5) and 6).

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)

Commissioned pastor job descriptions related to the ministry of chaplaincy must be approved in consultation with Chaplaincy and Care Ministry. The mandate, characteristics, and guiding principles that define chaplains ordained as ministers of the Word are applicable to chaplains ordained under Article 23.

(*Acts of Synod 2003*, p. 613)

3. Role of synodical deputies

The role of synodical deputies is more limited with regard to the ordination of commissioned pastors than it is with regard to a minister of the Word. As the Supplement, Article 23-a indicates, the deputies' role focuses on determining whether or not the position to which the person is being called fits the guidelines adopted by Synod 2001 (see Appendix D of this Manual or *Acts of Synod 2001*, pp. 507-508).

Basically, the classis and deputies need to answer the following kind of question: Does this person need to be ordained as a commissioned pastor for this position? *or* Why does this person need to be ordained as a commissioned pastor for this position? The guidelines regarding mission, leadership, the "official acts of ministry," ordination, and office adopted by Synod 2001 provide the foundation for the answer to the above questions.

Since the guidelines adopted are somewhat general, there are likely to be some questions and occasional disputes about whether a particular church position fits the guidelines or not. The Candidacy Committee presented a report to Synod 2016 titled "Clarification Regarding Church Order Article 23" (see *Agenda for Synod 2016*, pp. 262-75) at the request of Synod 2015. Synod 2016 received the report and recommended it "to the congregations and classes for review as helpful advice in the administration of Church Order Article 23. The report was added to the Commissioned Pastor Handbook on the Candidacy website (www.crcna.org/candidacy) for future reference.

Synod 2017 adopted a change to Supplement, Article 23-a, requiring synodical deputies to affirm through their written report to synod that a learning plan has been approved by the classis and the Candidacy Committee for the person being considered for a solo pastor position in either an emerging or organized church *prior to* any examination.

Approval of most commissioned pastor positions will be done via Church Order Article 23-a (see the synodical deputy form in this manual). Approval of positions for which a person will be called for service in an organized church as a solo pastor **or in a senior leadership position** should be done via Church Order Article 24-a. Note that this article includes a variety of potential scenarios that were formerly listed in the Church Order but are now listed in the Commissioned Pastor Handbook. On occasion a commissioned pastor position will be approved for a specific *term of service* in order to hold the person

and church accountable in making progress toward completing the requirements of candidacy as a minister of the Word. In these cases Church Order Article 24-b is used. (Note that there are synodical deputy forms for Art 24-a and -b included this Manual. Deputies may be called upon to advise the classis regarding which article is most appropriate for a given situation.)

Note that Synod 2019 adopted changes to Articles 23-24 and their Supplements, transferring guidelines regarding commissioned pastor ordination, examination, and learning plans to the Commissioned Pastor Handbook (www.crcna.org/candidacy). Opportunity is given on the appropriate synodical deputy forms for deputies to affirm that the required learning plans are in place (see forms for Church Order Art. 23-a, 24-a and -b).

I. Article 24: The Calling of a Commissioned Pastor

Revisions to Articles 23 and 24, mentioned in the final paragraph in the preceding section, are reflected in the new text for Article 24 and its Supplement that follow. It is advisable that the user/reader of this Manual have access to and reference the Commissioned Pastor Handbook as a companion to this particular section of the Manual (download from www.crcna.org/candidacy). Synodical deputies and the leadership of the classis (i.e., stated clerks) will gain a better understanding of synodically adopted rules for ordination of a commissioned pastor and regarding when *learning plans are required*. It is important to involve the Candidacy Committee in the appropriate steps as outlined in Articles 23 and 24.

When a commissioned pastor as solo pastor or for a senior leadership position via Article 24-a is being considered by the classis and the synodical deputies, it is *not* necessary to also process the position approval by way of Article 23-a. The approval of the Article 24-a position calling is sufficient as long as the appropriate learning plans are in place in coordination with the Candidacy Committee as noted on the synodical deputy report form.

1. Church Order Article 24 (text)

a. Commissioned pastors may serve in a solo or senior leadership position in an organized church only with the permission of classis and the concurrence of synodical deputies, following the synodically approved rules for such an arrangement, which are explained in the Commissioned Pastor Handbook.

—Cf. Supplement, Article 24-a

b. Commissioned pastors may be called to a position in which the call is for a specified term contingent upon accountable progress toward completion of the requirements for ordination as a minister of the Word. Approval of the classis, with the concurrence of synodical deputies, is required as to the terms of such a call and the accountability of progress in the proposed learning plan.

—Cf. Supplement, Article 24-b

c. Commissioned pastors who desire to serve beyond their specific field of labor must secure the approval of their councils and classes.

—Cf. Supplement, Article 24-c

d. A commissioned pastor position may be eliminated and a commissioned pastor may be released only with the concurrence of the classis that approved the position, with attention to the rules and processes approved by synod.

—Cf. Supplement, Article 24-d

e. A commissioned pastor who has reached retirement age may, upon the judgment of classis, be given the title of commissioned pastor emeritus.

—Cf. Supplement, Article 24-e

An area in which the synodical deputies can be of service with respect to Church Order Articles 24-a and -b has to do with required contextualized learning plans. Such learning plans are to be developed in consultation with the classis and require the approval of the Candidacy Committee (see *Acts of Synod 2013*, p. 557).

2. Church Order Supplement, Article 24-a (text)

Commissioned pastors may serve in positions of solo leadership in an established church only in specified circumstances. Three of these circumstances were specified before 2019 in Church Order Articles 23-b, 23-c, and 23-d. A fourth was adopted by Synod 2018. All four are now presented and explained in the Commissioned Pastor Handbook. A classis may decide to make such appointments contingent upon implementation of a learning plan leading toward meeting the qualifications for minister of the Word, as described in Church Order Article 24-b. In all cases in which a commissioned pastor serves in a solo leadership position in an emerging or organized church, it is mandatory that such a person, in cooperation with classis, shall develop and complete a contextualized learning plan for denominational orientation, adopted by classis and approved by the Candidacy Committee, as described in the Commissioned Pastor Handbook.

(*Acts of Synod 2019*, p. 783)

(*Acts of Synod 2022*, pp. 837-38)

Synod 2022 adopted the above changes to Supplement, Article 24-a upon recommendation by the Candidacy Committee. The Commissioned Pastor Handbook, section IV, will also be updated to include the following: “To summarize, there are three scenarios, formerly noted in the Church Order and still valid, by which a commissioned pastor may serve as a lead or solo pastor in an established church. There is also a fourth scenario, referred to unofficially as a ‘bridge ordination,’ to which we now turn our attention.”

3. Church Order Supplement, Article 24-b (text)

In various cases a commissioned pastor may desire or be encouraged to seek ordination as a minister of the Word, following the process prescribed in Article 6, including the required education. Though not expected in all circumstances of persons serving as commissioned pastors, a plan toward candidacy as a minister of the Word may be beneficial for the pastor and the church. Local ministries in partnership with their classis and synodical deputies may consider the advisability of constructing such a plan, and of using a renewable “term call” for such cases as a way to hold the commissioned pastor accountable to making progress in the plan.

(*Acts of Synod 2019*, p. 783)

J. Supplement, Article 30-a; Section A, 3

Synod 2022 took action to clarify and strengthen the appeal process as provided in the Church Order Supplement, Article 30-a, adding the involvement of classis church visitors at the council level in situations of abuse by a church leader, and the involvement of synodical deputies as advisers at the classis level.

1. Article 30-a (text)

Assemblies and church members may appeal to the assembly next in order if they believe that injustice has been done or that a decision conflicts with the Word of God or the Church Order. Appellants shall observe all ecclesiastical regulations regarding the manner and time of appeal. —Cf. Supplement, Article 30-a

2. Supplement, Article 30-a; Section A, (text)

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

1. *Time Limit.* An appeal must be made within six (6) months of the decision or action appealed from. If, however, the action or decision appealed from creates a continuous or repeating practice, the appeal is timely if filed within six (6) months after the practice is exercised. A classis may accept a late appeal if classis is satisfied that the appellant has reasonable cause for being late.

2. *Oral Presentation.* When classis considers the appeal, both appellant and respondent shall be allowed reasonable time to make an oral presentation with respect to the appeal.

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

Involvement of Synodical Deputies. When an appeal of a council decision involving allegations of abuse against a church leader comes before classis, the synodical deputies will advise the classis in order that fair process and proper respect and care for all involved may be maintained (per Church Order Art. 48-c).

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 Ministry orientation and training on due process, abuse awareness, and response.

Independent Investigations. If an investigation hasn't already been done, classes or their interim committees may choose to arrange for an independent investigation into the allegations claimed. An independent investigation is strongly recommended in the following situations:

- The accused or claimant is a prominent leader in the community or region such that impartiality is especially elusive.
- The accusations consist of multiple victims or multiple jurisdictions.
- Real or perceived conflicts of interest make impartiality especially elusive.
- The case is appealed to classis because of alleged irregularities or mishandling of the allegations.

Responsibilities to the Claimant and the Accused.

- Orientation to the process:* Classes or their interim committees shall ensure that the claimant and the accused are familiar with the process, understand what is expected of them, and know how best to prepare.
- Commitment to confidentiality:* Delegates to the classis meeting addressing the appeal will commit to holding all matters of the testimony and discussion, including the identity of persons involved, in confidence according to the Rules for Synodical Procedure (section V, B, 11). Breaches of confidentiality will be reported to the councils of any delegates who violate this commitment.
- Communication:* The clerk of the classis that is taking up the appeal will communicate in a timely fashion the decisions of the classis to the claimant and the accused.

Follow-up Care. After the proceedings are finished, the church visitors and/or the classis Safe Church coordinator will arrange for restorative circle conversations to be made available to the persons most affected by the allegations of abuse and by the appeal process, to provide a pathway forward for healing and restoration to the community.

Classes are also strongly encouraged to set aside funds for follow-up counseling for affected parties.

4. *Action by Classis.* The classis shall consider and decide every appeal properly submitted to it. Classis shall decide on the appeal within one (1) year from the date the appeal is received by the stated clerk of classis. If classis has not decided an appeal within the one (1)-year period allowed, either the appellant or the respondent has the right to appeal the matter to synod without waiting for decision of classis.

5. *Appeal to Synod.* Both the appellant and the respondent have the right to appeal the decision of classis to synod.

(Acts of Synod 2022, pp. 851-52)

K. *Article 38-h: Affiliation with another denomination*

1. Church Order Article 38-h (text)

Particular churches of the Christian Reformed Church in North America may affiliate with one or more additional denominations in ecclesiastical fellowship, with the approval of classis and with the concurring advice of the synodical deputies.

—Cf. Supplement, Article 38-h

Synod 2015 adopted a new Church Order Article 38-h and its Supplement regarding the formation of multiaffiliated churches—a new designation of churches (*Acts of Synod 2015*, pp. 648-49). Upon the recommendation of the advisory committee of synod, the approval for such an affiliation requires the approval of the classis with the concurrence of synodical deputies.

2. Supplement, Article 38-h, section a of Plan for Affiliation

The following plan for affiliation shall be adopted by a particular church to affiliate with one or more denominations in ecclesiastical fellowship:

- a. The following plan is adopted by the _____ Christian Reformed Church of _____, effective as of the date when the congregation has approved the plan by a two-thirds majority of those present at a regularly called congregational meeting with such notice and quorum as is required by its rules of procedure and when the local classis of the CRC and the local governing body of the additional denomination has approved the particular plan of affiliation.

Note: Classes should review the full plan for affiliation of a congregation with another denomination as outlined in Church Order Supplement, Article 38-h when considering the request of a congregation to ensure that the guidelines adopted by synod are followed.

L. *Article 82: Special discipline*

1. Church Order Article 82 (text)

All officebearers, in addition to being subject to general discipline, are subject to special discipline, which consists of suspension and deposition from office.

2. Relevant portions of Supplement, Articles 82-84

- f. Suspension/deposition of ministers
 - 1) The suspension of a minister of the Word shall 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) If the neighboring council fails to concur in the position of the council of the minister involved, the latter council shall either alter its original judgment or present the case to classis.
 - 3) The deposition of a minister shall not be effected without the approval of classis together with the concurring advice of the synodical deputies.
- j. When a minister resigns under discipline or to avoid discipline, he or she should be released from office per Article 14-c, noting that the provisions of Supplement, Article 14-b also apply to Article 14-c, especially in these situations.

—Cf. Supplement, Article 14-c

Suspension is the temporary exclusion of a minister from exercising the duties of office. Suspension is often a disciplinary act and preliminary to deposition but is not necessarily so in every situation. *Deposition* from office involves removal of a minister from the office of minister of the Word (see *Manual*, p. 271). Synod 2016 adopted a new Supplement, Articles 82-84, section j to provide a cross-reference to Supplement, Article 14 and to aid churches in dealing with situations of resignation (*Acts of Synod 2016*, p. 864).

Although synodical deputies are not involved in suspension, they are involved in the deposition of ministers at the classical level. So that synodical deputies may determine whether or not proper procedure has been followed in the disciplinary process, the roles of the council, classis, and deputies are detailed in the Guidelines for the Suspension and/or Deposition of Pastors as adopted by Synod 1998 (see *Acts of Synod 1998*, pp. 396-99) and are found as Appendix E in this Manual. Sections 3 and 4 below are in keeping with the Guidelines, but not intended as a substitute for them.

3. Role of the council

- a. The council of the church which holds the minister's ecclesiastical credentials initiates the process, namely by suspending the minister. In abnormal situations this may be done by the classis or synod on the grounds that "the authority which such [broader] assemblies exercise in the name of Christ is also of a disciplinary nature."³¹
- b. The council imposes the suspension with the concurring judgment of the council of the nearest church in the same classis.³²
- c. If the council believes that the minister should be deposed, it must recommend deposition to classis for its approval.

³¹ *Acts of Synod 1926*, p. 324; see also *Manual*, p. 271.

³² See Supplement, Articles 82-84, d and e.

- d. The council's announcement of suspension is made by notifying the stated clerk of its classis. While churches with the classis may be informed of the suspension, there is no need to announce the action more broadly.³³
- e. The council must continue the support of the minister during the time of suspension.³⁴

4. Role of the classis

- a. Under normal circumstances, the classis is notified as soon as possible of the suspension of a minister. Suspension should not be allowed to drag on indefinitely, but steps should be taken either to lift the suspension or move toward deposition. If the council believes that the minister should be deposed, it must recommend deposition to classis for its approval.
- b. In abnormal situations, the classis itself has "the right to begin suspension proceedings."³⁵ Synod 1982 also judged "that it is indeed proper according to Reformed church polity for . . . classis . . . to intervene in the affairs of a local congregation if the welfare of the congregation is at stake."³⁶
- c. The classis (as well as the council) in reaching its decision must follow the general regulations concerning discipline as defined in Church Order Articles 78-84; Supplement, Articles 78-84; and Supplement, Articles 82-84.
- d. Supplement, Articles 82-84, f, (3) clearly states that "the deposition of a minister shall not be effected without the approval of classis together with the concurring advice of the synodical deputies." This means that the council of the minister concerned carries out the formal deposition of the minister. The classis needs to approve the recommendation of the local council. This rule also applies when the disciplinary action is initiated by classis or synod.

5. Role of the synodical deputies

- a. The role of the synodical deputies is crucial. Since the synodical deputies represent the denomination as a whole, their concurrence in the decision of the classis is necessary because the minister was declared eligible for office by a classis with the concurring advice of the deputies and because the minister was ordained and/or installed into office by a local church. The other offices of the church are much more local in focus and function, though not exclusively so. Except when their advice is requested, the deputies are not involved in cases of suspension and deposition of elders, deacons, or commissioned pastors.
- b. The synodical deputies are responsible to see to it that all synodical regulations have been followed and a just judgment rendered. They fulfill this responsibility by concurring or not concurring in the decision of classis.

³³ *Acts of Synod 1972*, p. 26; *Acts of Synod 1975*, p. 19; *Manual*, pp. 275-76.

³⁴ *Acts of Synod 1984*, p. 592; *Acts of Synod 1985*, pp. 744-45.

³⁵ *Acts of Synod 1926*, pp. 141-42; *Acts of Synod 1936*, pp. 146-47; *Acts of Synod 1970*, p. 92; *Acts of Synod 1980*, pp. 28-29.

³⁶ *Acts of Synod 1982*, p. 55; *Manual*, p. 271.

- c. A complete report with the name of the classis, date of meeting, names of deputies and persons involved in the decision, advice given, and grounds must be prepared for transmission to synod at the time of the session of the classis which made the decision.
- d. Status of cases under appeal

All persons have the right of appeal “if they believe that injustice has been done or that a decision conflicts with the Word of God or the Church Order.”³⁷ The Christian Reformed Church has no rule “requiring that matters remain in status quo upon appeal. Each case must be decided on its own merits. The well-being of the church may demand that action proceed in spite of the appeal.”³⁸

M. *Article 83: Grounds for special discipline*

1. Church Order Article 83 (text)

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

2. Supplement, Article 83 (text)

One of the key dynamics in considering abuse of office is the imbalance and misuse of power. The power inherent in the role of officebearer represents a sacred trust and must not be misused.

(Acts of Synod, 2016, p. 865)

3. Guide for synodical deputies

Church Order Article 83 is quoted here to guide synodical deputies in reviewing the disciplinary action of classes. See the *Acts of Synod 1973*, page 77; and *Acts of Synod 1974*, page 31, for synodical decisions relating to the discipline of officebearers holding neo-Pentecostal views.

Synod 2016 adopted a new Supplement to Article 83 with the following ground: “Power is a foundational dynamic in ministry and in other professional relationships. Adding this statement to the Supplement will help ensure that the power dynamic is understood and not ignored in considering these issues” (*Acts of Synod 2016*, p. 865).

N. *Article 84: Reinstatement to office*

1. Church Order Article 84 (text)

Persons who have been suspended or deposed from office may be reinstated if they give sufficient evidence of repentance and if the church judges that they are able to serve effectively. Request for reinstatement to office on the part of those deposed for acts of sexual abuse or sexual misconduct shall be dealt with according to guidelines adopted by synod.

³⁷ *Church Order Article 30; Manual*, pp. 111-26.

³⁸ *Acts of Synod 1930*, p. 91; *Manual*, p. 126.

2. Supplement, Articles 82-84, i

- i. The council of the church 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.

3. Supplement, Article 84

When reinstatement is requested by a former officebearer who confessed to or was determined to be guilty of sexual misconduct leading up to suspension and deposition from office:

1. Reinstatement to office shall be denied to individuals who:
 - a. Confessed to or are determined to be guilty of sexual misconduct against a minor.
 - b. Confessed to or are determined to be guilty of sexual misconduct against more than one victim in a single church or community.
 - c. Confessed to or are determined to be guilty of sexual misconduct in more than one community or church.
 - d. Confessed to or are determined to be guilty of sexual misconduct *and* other related ungodly conduct.

Examples of related ungodly conduct include, but are not limited to, participation in pornography, engaging in sexual contact in return for payment or any other favor, or voyeuristic behavior, displays of sexually offensive material, suggestive gestures and remarks, and other sexually intimidating behavior.

2. Councils and classes shall not reinstate a former officebearer suspended or deposed for sexual misconduct or ungodly conduct not covered in items 1, a-d without receiving the advice of legal counsel concerning the church's liability and the advice of a Christian licensed psychologist concerning the likelihood of an officebearer's re-offending.

Note 1: The "Guidelines for Handling Abuse Allegations Against a Church Leader" adopted by Synod 2010 (cf. *Agenda for Synod 2010*, pp. 503-504) define sexual misconduct as

- exploiting or grooming (preparing) a minor or an adult—regardless of consent or circumstances—for the purpose of sexual touch, sexual activity, or emotional intimacy, with the result of either sexual gratification or power and control over the minor or adult;
- unwelcome touch, sexual activity, or emotional intimacy between co-workers, co-volunteers; or
- sexual touch, sexual activity, or emotional intimacy between a supervisor and a subordinate who serve together in a church program or church ministry.

Note 2: These rules that prevent the reinstatement of deposed officebearers in particular situations also apply to those ministers who have been released by way of Article 14 and have been declared "dismissed" or "in the status of one deposed" due to those situations.

(*Acts of Synod 2004*, pp. 611-12)

(*Acts of Synod 2016*, pp. 865-66)

4. Synodical deputies involved in reinstatement to office of ministers only, not elders, deacons, and commissioned pastors

Deputies are involved only in the judgment as to whether a deposed minister shall be declared eligible for call, not in the reinstatement of elders, deacons, or commissioned pastors.

5. Conditions

The conditions are the same for the reinstatement of all deposed officebearers. It may be helpful for a classis and synodical deputies in considering reinstatement to review the pre-1991 Church Order Article 94-a:

A deposed officebearer shall not be restored unless sufficient evidence of genuine repentance [is given]. It must further be evident that, should [the officebearer] be restored to office, [they] could then serve without being hindered in [their] work by the handicap of [their] past sin and that restoration [of the officebearer] would be to the glory of God and for the true welfare of the church.

(See *Manual*, p. 279.)

6. Classical approval

The judgment as to whether a deposed minister shall subsequently be declared eligible for call shall be made by the classis in which the minister was deposed together with the concurring advice of the synodical deputies (see *Acts of Synod 1918*, pp. 48-49). If the judgment is favorable and a call is received and accepted, re-ordination must follow (see *Acts of Synod 1978*, p. 48).

7. Status of a person eligible to receive a call

The status of a minister who was deposed and is now eligible to receive a call is similar to that of a candidate. Until a call is accepted and a person is re-ordained, the prerogatives reserved for ordained ministers, such as administration of the sacraments may not be exercised. Eligibility for call does not in itself restore a person to office.

8. Parallel circumstances

For parallel circumstances relating to reinstatement following release or resignation, see Church Order Article 8 or 14.

X. Conclusions

The following unpublished comments of the late Dr. Richard R. De Ridder, professor of church polity, emeritus, are appropriate here:

The role of synodical deputies is very important for maintaining the good order and unity of the church's practice. Although much of what our Church Order specifies was defined as the result of the experience of the church, the Church Order nevertheless reflects both directly and indirectly the spirit and thrust of the Scriptures. It is a scriptural order, even though it is not the only one that can be described in this way. Our Church Order reflects the mind, tradition, and practices of the church from its New Testament origin. Faithful adherence, required of every congregation and member, is a part of what we mean when we say we are "Christian Reformed."

Synodical deputies have a unique opportunity to contribute to the maintenance and development of the community of the saints and the unity of the body of Christ. Exceptions to accepted norms may very well be necessary at times, but they must remain exceptions, based on sound reasoning and serving the welfare of the entire church. This trust committed by the church to its deputies through synod is a sacred trust. The decisions of synodical deputies are not always popular, especially with parties who become deeply involved emotionally in a case or cause.

No one has the right to think of [one's self] other than as a servant of the servants of Jesus Christ. This position, which the world cannot understand, is at one and the same time both humbling and noble. The church is not ours. It is Christ's alone.

The End

Appendix A: Standards for Ministry Positions and Personnel

Synod 2000 adopted the following principles and standards for ministry positions and personnel in the Christian Reformed Church:

2. That synod express its gratitude to God for the diverse ways in which the Holy Spirit has called and equipped people for ministry through alternative as well as traditional routes (see Part II, Supplement B).
3. That, in response to the committee's mandate to clarify "standards for effective ministry in the CRC," synod adopt and refer to the churches the following guiding principles:
 - a. The Reformed confessional heritage is the basic foundation for all ministry-staff job descriptions. A principle of proportionality should be thoughtfully applied to all persons who fill staff positions in any Christian Reformed church. 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.
 - b. The CRC is committed to a theologically well-trained clergy and to maintaining the expectation that "the completion of a satisfactory theological training shall be required for admission to the ministry of the Word" (Church Order Article 6-a).
4. That synod remind the churches that are seeking guidance in setting standards for effective ministry of the general scriptural teaching concerning personal qualifications for ministry as found in passages such as Matthew 18; 20:20-28; 28:18-20; Acts 6; II Corinthians 4; 5; Ephesians 4; I and II Timothy.
5. That synod affirm and refer to the churches the following basic **character** standards for all ministry positions and personnel, recognizing that they must be adapted to specific circumstances and situations:

Any person called to serve Christ in a Christian Reformed church ministry position should be

- a. Publicly committed to Christ and his church, submitting to its discipline.
- b. Exemplary in piety and holy conduct of life, a humble person of prayer who trusts in God's providence.
- c. Of good reputation, emotionally mature, honest, trustworthy, reliable.
- d. Caring and compassionate for the lost and the weak.
- e. Eager to learn and grow in faith, knowledge, and love.
- f. Joyful in affirming the goodness of God's creation and communicating to others a delight in its beauty.
- g. Sensitive to others in all their personal and cultural variety.

(See also *The Journey Toward Ordination in the CRC* document produced by the Candidacy Committee.)

6. That synod affirm and refer to the churches the following as the basic standards of biblical-theological **knowledge** expected of all persons hired in ministry positions in a Christian Reformed church:

a. Biblical foundations

Any person called to serve Christ in a CRC ministry position should

- 1) Know the content of the Old and New Testaments.
- 2) Know and be able to explain the basic structure and flow of biblical-redemptive covenantal history centered in Christ (promise and fulfillment).
- 3) Be able to identify main themes (covenant, kingdom of God, holiness) of Scripture as well as the large divisions (law, prophets, writings) and specific types of biblical literature.
- 4) Be able to articulate the significance of the various sections, books, or types of biblical literature to contemporary issues and questions.

b. Theological foundations

Any person called to serve Christ in a CRC ministry position should

- 1) Know and be able to explain the basic teachings of the universal Christian tradition concerning God, humanity, the person and work of Christ, salvation, the church, the last things.
- 2) Know, be able to explain, be ready and willing to defend the three forms of unity and a Reformed confessional stance on key doctrines such as predestination, unity of the covenant, infant baptism, millennialism, the cosmic scope of the Reformed worldview.
- 3) Have a rudimentary knowledge of and ability to respond to the key challenges posed to the Christian and Reformed faith in North America by the major world religions, the major cults, and the various forms of New Age spirituality.
- 4) Know the key concepts of CRC church polity.

7. That synod affirm and refer to the churches the following as the basic standards of the **skills** expected of all persons hired in ministry positions in a Christian Reformed church:

Any person called to serve Christ in a CRC ministry position should

- a. Be prepared "to give an answer to everyone who asks [you] to give the reason for the hope that [you] have" (I Pet. 3:15).
- b. Be able and willing to make a clear presentation of the gospel to an unbeliever.
- c. Be able to teach and disciple persons to deeper faith in and obedience to Jesus Christ.
- d. Be able to prepare and deliver short biblically based messages for public occasions (nursing homes, prisons, civic occasions).
- e. Be capable of effectively leading a group in various tasks, including Bible studies, task completion, resolving conflict.

8. That synod urge the churches hiring full-time non-ordained ministry personnel to seek persons who are educated in their respective fields. A four-year college degree and additional theological training are recommended. Churches should consider assisting personnel to receive concurrent education when there is a need for additional training.

(Acts of Synod 2000, pp. 702-704)

Appendix B: Process for Affiliation of Congregations and their Pastors with the Christian Reformed Church in North America

(Endorsed by Synod 2016; *Acts of Synod 2016*, p. 845)

Please access the [Affiliation Process](#) website and specifically the [process steps](#) (crcna.org/affiliation/process-affiliation) for the most up to date affiliation information, available in English, Spanish, and Korean. Or you may enter the following link into your web browser:

www.crcna.org/affiliation

Appendix C: Guidelines for the Separation of Pastor and Congregation

The following Guidelines were adopted by Synod 1998 (cf. *Acts of Synod 1998*, pp. 392-96):

A. *Responsibility of the separating pastor*

1. Promptly inform the regional pastor and church visitors when signs of conflict arise, and maintain regular communication.
2. Conduct him- or herself so as not to disrupt further the peace and unity of the congregation.
3. Identify a personal advocate who can assist him/her in the process.
4. Be amenable to career counseling and/or personal counseling.
5. Update the Pastoral Profile and contact Ministerial Information Service (Pastor-Church Relations) if relocation becomes necessary.
6. Help formulate and sign a termination agreement with the council if there is a separation.

B. *Responsibility of the council/congregation*

1. Seek assistance from the classical church visitors and regional pastor when signs of conflict begin.
2. Be willing to work with a designated person(s) (e.g., Pastor-Church Relations staff, classical regional pastor, mediation specialists) toward reconciliation. This would involve both the time and cost of such intervention.
3. Along with the pastor, determine the reasons for the conflict and/or separation.
 - a. This step requires accountability from both council and pastor.
 - b. It is also important to determine whether suspension is a more appropriate response to the problems which have arisen than separation/severance is.
4. Inform the congregation of decisions which are being made about the relationship to the pastor. This should be done in a timely manner, and members should be apprised of the process (cf. Church Order Art. 37).
5. If a decision is made to release the pastor from active ministerial service in his or her congregation, the council should attempt to enter into a termination agreement with the pastor. This agreement should address at least the following issues:
 - a. Clear specification of the effective date on which the relationship between church and pastor is to be dissolved and the pastor's employment is to be terminated. This date should be defined as the date on which the pastor is relieved of the duties and benefits of his or her position, except as expressly provided under the termination agreement.
 - b. Specifics regarding the length of time for salary and benefits continuation and the nature of any transition assistance. Some salary and benefits continuation may be necessary to make the termination agreement legally enforceable.
 - c. A clear specification of the date on which the pastor will conduct his or her last service and the date on which the pastor and family shall vacate the parsonage, if applicable.

- d. In consideration for continuing compensation and benefits, the pastor should agree to release the CRC, the applicable classis, the church, and each of their respective trustees, delegates, directors, employees, and agents from any and all claims, damages, liabilities, losses, and expenses which the pastor (or anyone claiming on behalf of the pastor) may attempt to claim in connection with the pastor's release and termination of employment, whether those claims are known or unknown, liquidated or un-liquidated, contingent or not contingent.
 - e. The pastor should agree that he or she will not, directly or indirectly, engage in any activities designed to recruit members who have held membership in the church from which the pastor has been released.
 - f. The pastor should commit to maintaining the confidentiality of the agreement and any proceedings of the council, classis, or synod in connection with the release. Moreover, the pastor should commit to a non-disparagement provision which requires the pastor not to make disparaging comments regarding the CRC, the classis, the congregation, or the council.
 - g. Provision for liquidated damages in the full amount of the salary continuation and the cost of benefits in the event that the minister breaches the provisions of the agreement, including the provision for member non-solicitation, confidentiality, and non-disparagement or in the event of any of the following:
 - 1) The minister acts in violation of his or her ordination vows.
 - 2) The minister renounces any continuing ecclesiastical governance of the CRCNA over the minister.
 - 3) The minister is convicted of any significant criminal conduct.
 - h. Provision that any dispute under the agreement, or otherwise in connection with the minister's release and termination of employment, must be reconciled by the classis, or synod on appeal, as ecclesiastical issues. Provision that recognizes that civil court shall have no jurisdiction over any dispute, except to the limited extent necessary to enforce the judgment of the classis or synod by entry of a monetary judgment and/or injunctive relief. Civil courts shall have no jurisdiction over the merits of the judgment of the classis or synod, which would create a governmental entanglement in violation of constitutional protections for freedom of religion.
6. Present to the classis the specific reasons for the separation. This involves the dynamics and behaviors of both the pastor and the council/congregation. Since the termination commences with the official decision by classis, this may necessitate a special meeting of classis to process the separation.
 7. Engage the services of an interim pastor who has been trained to guide the congregation in processing the reasons for the conflict, interpersonal healing, and planning future vision and mission for the congregation. This is particularly appropriate when there has been extended conflict which led to separation of the pastor and congregation, a series of forced separations from the same congregation, or the last pastorate was a lengthy one. It may also be advisable that the church delay calling another pastor until there has been an interim process.
 8. Provide a compensation package (cf. Church Order Arts. 16-b and 17-b) which includes the following:
 - a. Cash salary—a minimum of thirteen (13) weeks from the official decision of classis is required. Following the three months, further remuneration may be decided upon by a committee made up of some members of the local council and some members of classis. Any recommendation must be approved by the full classis.

- b. Parsonage occupancy or housing allowance.
- c. Provision for continuation of medical- and dental-insurance benefits.
- d. Provision for continuation of Ministers' Pension benefits.

The church served at the time of separation is responsible for the severance compensation.

Note: Synod 2010 adopted an amendment to the above regulation. "This package may not apply in every circumstance of separation such as when a pastor leaves for purely personal reasons" (*Acts of Synod 2010*, p. 916).

C. Responsibilities of classis

1. Church visitors should be available to assist or may take initiative if necessary when there is an indication of conflict or other relationship difficulty. They may be involved in reconciliation or mediation, or they may recommend that there be others who can assist the pastor and congregation in this process, e.g., a committee from the classis or outside resources such as representatives of Pastor-Church Relations or mediation specialists.
2. Concurrent with the work of the church visitors, the regional pastor should be called to provide emotional support and guidance for the pastor. The regional pastor, often one of the first persons aware of tensions, can serve as a gatekeeper and adviser for the pastor in the process of mediation.
3. Church visitors should continue to provide support and guidance for the council and congregation. They may assist the council in communication with the congregation.
4. If a separation of the pastor from the congregation is recommended, the classis should do the following:
 - a. Assist the council in determining whether a separation is appropriate. If it is appropriate, give guidance as to whether there should be a release or a suspension.
 - b. If necessary, call a special meeting of classis to process the separation.
 - c. Assign an individual(s) (not the regional pastor) to provide liaison between the pastor, the congregation, and the classis in the process of the separation. Such a person(s) should be acceptable to all parties involved.
 - d. Approve a termination agreement between pastor and council and record in the records of classis specific reasons for the termination.

Note: Copies of this agreement should be given to the pastor, the council, the classis, and the Pastor-Church Relations office.
 - e. Encourage the pastor and/or the congregation to seek continued help in learning from this situation and facing their responsibilities. (This will often require specific recommendations and continued involvement.)
 - f. Recommend specific follow-up for the congregation, such as a specialized interim pastor to help with healing and future planning.
 - g. Inform the regional pastor, congregation, and classis of his/her presence in the new region if the pastor moves to another region.

D. A pastoral note

It is important that ecclesiastical due process be followed in the separation process. When Synod 1996 asked that the above guidelines be prepared, it did so against a background of concern for the possibility of healing for both pastors and congregations. When signs of conflict or disagreements arise, it is crucial that the pastor, council, and classis take prompt action to deal with these differences. When there is early intervention and open communication, reconciliation is a greater possibility.

If pastor and council or congregation are not able to mediate differences, it may be advisable to bring in outside resource persons. If a separation does occur, it is important to recognize that there are continuing needs. The members of the congregation require continued support, opportunity to grieve, and guidance for future planning. The separated pastor and his/her family should not be forgotten as they leave the congregation and seek another call. The congregation and classis should covenant to provide continuing ministry and care for them, assisting in any way possible to encourage personal healing and further opportunities for ministry.

Appendix D: Guidelines for Understanding the Nature of and Relationships among the Concepts and Practices of Ordination, the “Official Acts of Ministry,” and Church Office

The following Guidelines were adopted by Synod 2001:

a. Re mission

- 1) As the church of Jesus Christ, we have been called together to serve the mission of the Lord. We believe with the apostle Paul that this mission is above all

. . . from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us.

(2 Cor. 5:18-20)
- 2) The role of the church in this mission is to be the body of Jesus Christ, manifesting his presence as we together and separately offer “our bodies [our whole lives] as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God” (Rom. 12:1). This is our public work, our *liturgy*, our great calling.
- 3) We are called to be a sacrificial presence in the world, giving of ourselves as Christ gave himself for the sake of others. We are “a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that [we] may declare the praises of him who called [us] out of darkness into his wonderful light” (1 Pet. 2:9).
- 4) For our role in the mission of Jesus Christ, every Christian has been anointed (2 Cor. 1:21; Heidelberg Catechism Q. & A. 32) and called to serve the Lord. This is the office of believer.

b. Re leadership

- 1) For the purposes of this redemptive mission, the Lord also calls some to serve as leaders. Leadership is centrally a relationship of trust and responsibility. Leaders are entrusted by Christ, the great shepherd of the sheep, to take pastoral responsibility for a part of his flock. With this responsibility comes the authority of Christ for the purposes to which the leader has been called.
- 2) Leaders must at the same time be recognized and trusted by the people of God as those who come with authority and blessings from the Lord. This 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.

c. Re the “official acts of ministry”

- 1) Certain acts of ministry—among them the preaching of the Word, the administration of the sacraments, the pronouncement of blessings for the people, the laying of hands on new leaders, and the reception and formal dismissal of members—are part of the ministry of Christ to his followers and are entrusted to the church and, within the church, to its ordained leaders, not to a specific office.
- 2) Therefore, no long-standing, organized congregation of Christians should be deprived of these liturgical acts simply because it cannot provide for the presence of an ordained minister or [commissioned pastor].
- 3) These acts of ministry symbolize and strengthen the relationships among the Lord, leaders, and the people of God. Their use is a sacred trust given to leaders by the Lord for the purpose of strengthening the flock. Therefore the administration of these acts should continue to be regulated by the church.

d. Re ordination

- 1) Ordination is the church's way to recognize and enact the relationships of leadership. In ordination, the church recognizes that a person has
 - The appropriate excellencies for ministry
 - The callings of Christ and the people of God
 - A call to a role of pastoral responsibility
- 2) The laying on of hands is the ceremony by which the church symbolizes and enacts the relationships of ordination. By this ceremony, the leader on whose head hands are laid is symbolically offered to Christ, included in the succession of leaders of the church stretching back to the apostles and given the power of the Spirit. Since by the laying on of hands the church recognizes pastoral leadership as such and not a specific office or role, this ceremony is appropriate for all church offices.
- 3) Ordination is appropriate when, and only when, a person is called to pastoral leadership within the church. "Pastoral" is here understood to embrace the functions of all the offices, including deacons, elders, [commissioned pastor], and ministers of the Word. Ordination is not a way of recognizing a person's academic credentials, elevating the prestige of religious professionals, or granting of tenure in the church. It is a recognition and enactment of a pastoral relationship between Christ and the church, mediated in a certain leader. As such it should not be entered into lightly. Therefore ordination ought to be regulated by the church according to the nature of the office.

e. Re office

- 1) The 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.
- 2) For the present purposes of the Christian Reformed Church, the four offices already recognized by the denomination are sufficient for good order.
- 3) The office of [commissioned pastor] may be understood to have the character of pastoral extension. [Commissioned pastors] 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 (cf. Church Order Article 24). By the broader application of the office of [commissioned pastor], 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 ministry positions may be identified by titles that indicate their ministry distinctiveness such as chaplain, pastor of education, pastor of youth, minister of congregational life, and so forth.
- 4) In congregations that cannot provide an ordained minister or [commissioned pastor], the right to exercise the "official acts of ministry" may be granted by the classis to the elders, who should be specifically trained for this purpose.

(*Acts of Synod 2001*, pp. 503-4, 506)

Appendix E: Guidelines for the Suspension and/or Deposition of Pastors

The following Guidelines were adopted by Synod 1998 (cf. *Acts of Synod 1998*, pp. 396-99):

A. Responsibilities of the council/congregation

1. Take immediate action after determining that special discipline is indicated because of violation of the Form of Subscription, neglect or abuse of office, or deviation from sound doctrine and godly conduct:
 - a. Obtain concurrence from the nearest consistory for the actions being taken, giving adequate information. Consultation with the church visitors prior to seeking concurrence is advisable.
 - b. Seek support of the regional pastor on behalf of the pastor.
 - c. Release the pastor from all ministry tasks until the issues have been dealt with.
 - d. Notify the classical abuse-response team if allegations of abuse are made.
2. Contact the church visitors or the classical interim committee to help articulate the reasons for suspension/deposition.
 - a. Identify the behavior/grounds.
 - b. Determine the appropriate response (suspension/deposition: Church Order Arts. 82-84; separation: Church Order Arts. 16 and 17). This decision will determine whether or not the pastor is to resume ministry tasks and the nature of the request for action by classis.
 - c. If a pastor is to be suspended, be clear about the specific cause for the suspension and what steps are necessary to lift the suspension.
3. Keep the congregation informed (cf. Church Order Supplement, Arts. 78-84 re Guidelines for Confidentiality).
4. Support the pastor during a time of suspension and prior to a final decision by the classis.
 - a. Encourage professional counseling and pastoral support.
 - b. Continue financial support (see *Acts of Synod 1984*, p. 592).
 - c. Assign a committee from the consistory to provide liaison between the pastor and the consistory. This committee should be in regular contact with the pastor, assisting in the transition and encouraging response to the needs of the pastor and family.
 - d. Since a suspension is temporary, the council should list reasons for the suspension and the basis and time line for why and when it will be lifted.
5. If a decision is made to depose the pastor consistent with the requirements of Church Order, the council should attempt to enter into a termination agreement with the pastor. This agreement should address at least the following issues:
 - a. The termination agreement should address both the minister's professional status relating to his or her ministerial credentials and the minister's status as an employee of the congregation.

- b. Clear specification of the impact on the pastor's ministerial credentials (with concurrence of classis) and the effective date for his/her termination.
 - c. Clear specification of the effective date on which the pastor's employment is terminated. This date should be defined as the date on which the pastor is relieved of the duties and benefits of his or her position, except as expressly provided under the termination agreement.
 - d. Specifics regarding the length of time for salary and benefits continuation and the nature of any transition assistance. Some salary and benefits continuation may be necessary to make the termination agreement legally enforceable.
 - e. A clear specification of the date on which the pastor will conduct his or her last service and the date on which the pastor and family should vacate the parsonage, if applicable.
 - f. In consideration for continuing compensation and benefits, the pastor should agree to release the CRCNA, the applicable classis, the church, and each of their respective trustees, delegates, directors, employees, and agents from any and all claims, damages, liabilities, losses, and expenses which the pastor (or anyone claiming on behalf of the pastor) may attempt to claim in connection with the pastor's suspension/deposition and termination of employment, whether those claims are known or unknown, liquidated or unliquidated, contingent or not contingent.
 - g. The pastor should agree that he or she will not, directly or indirectly, engage in any activities designed to recruit members who have held membership in the church from which the pastor has been suspended or deposed.
 - h. The pastor should commit to maintaining the confidentiality of the agreement and the proceedings of the council, classis, or synod in connection with the suspension or deposition. Moreover, the pastor should commit to a non-disparagement provision which requires the pastor not to make disparaging comments regarding the CRCNA, the classis, the congregation, or the council.
 - i. Provision for liquidated damages in the full amount of the salary continuation and the cost of benefits in the event that the minister breaches the provisions of confidentiality and non-disparagement or in the event of any of the following:
 - 1) The minister acts in violation of his or her ordination vows.
 - 2) The minister renounces any continuing ecclesiastical governance of the CRCNA over the minister, if applicable.
 - 3) The minister is convicted of any significant criminal conduct.
 - j. Provisions that any dispute under the agreement, or otherwise in connection with the minister's deposition, suspension, and termination of employment, must be reconciled by the classis, or synod on appeal, as strictly ecclesiastical issues. Provision that recognizes that civil courts shall have no jurisdiction over any dispute, except to the limited extent necessary to enforce the judgment of the classis or synod by entry of a monetary judgment and/or injunctive relief. Civil courts shall have no jurisdiction over the merits of the judgment of the classis or synod, which would create a governmental entanglement in violation of constitutional protections for freedom of religion.
6. Present the request for action relating to the pastor to the full classis at the earliest convenience in the case of a deposition.

7. Engage the services of an interim pastor who has been trained to guide the congregation in processing the separation, interpersonal healing, and planning future vision and mission.

B. Responsibilities of the classis

1. Church visitors should be available to assist as soon as possible to
 - a. Clarify the issues with both the council and the pastor.
 - b. Explain the Church Order procedures and options (this should include the possibilities and grounds for reinstatement).
 - c. Encourage honesty and fairness.
 - d. Provide liaison with the classical interim committee. Again, it is important that necessary action be taken in a timely fashion in order to decrease anxiety and facilitate a proper response.
 - e. Arrange with the council the continuing financial support for the pastor during the exploration/decision-making phase.
2. Set up a transitional support network for the pastor, his/her family, and the congregation. This will include spiritual, emotional, and career counseling, some of which may be supplied by the regional pastor and other designated classical representatives. It is also important to involve the denominational office of Pastor-Church Relations. Such support should continue for at least one year.
3. In the case of deposition, assist the council in setting up a termination agreement. Since the deposition commences with the official decision of classis, this may necessitate a special meeting of classis to process the deposition. Encourage the pastor and/or the congregation to seek continuing help in learning from this situation and facing their responsibilities.
4. Inform classical stated clerks of any action to depose, as required by the Church Order.
5. If the pastor moves to another region, inform the regional pastor, congregation, and classis of his/her presence in the new region, encouraging follow-up and support.

C. Responsibilities of the pastor

1. Inform the regional pastor and church visitors when signs of conflict or accusations arise, and maintain regular communication.
2. Enter into consultation with the council and classical representatives in determination of the validity of accusations and appropriate responses.
3. Conduct him- or herself so as not to disrupt further the peace and unity of the congregation.
4. Sign a termination agreement set up by the council (see 111, A, 5 above).
5. Maintain communication with a council or classis, keeping it informed of progress and needs and accepting its support.
6. Identify an advocate who can assist him/her in the process.

D. A pastoral note

It is important that ecclesiastical due process be followed in the process of suspension or deposition. When Synod 1996 asked that the above guidelines be prepared, it acted against a

background of concern for the possibility of healing for pastors and congregations. When there are indications that special discipline may be necessary, it is crucial that the pastor, council, and classis take prompt action. There should be open communication about problems which have surfaced and an opportunity given to prove or disprove charges which are made. All of this should be done in an atmosphere of Christian concern and support. If the pastor and council are not able to bring matters to a satisfactory conclusion, it may be necessary to bring in outside resource persons.

If a suspension or deposition does occur, it is important to recognize that there are continuing needs. The members of the congregation require continued support, opportunity to grieve, and guidance for future planning. The suspended pastor and his/her family should be included in the process of decision making. The deposed pastor and his/her family should not be forgotten as they leave the congregation and ministry. The congregation and classis should covenant to provide continuing ministry and care for them, assisting in any way possible to encourage personal healing and guidance for possible reentry into ministry at a future date.

SYNODICAL DEPUTY

REPORT FORMS

Updated 2022

Office of Synodical Services
1700 28th St. SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49508

Email: drecker@crcna.org
Fax: 616-224-5895

Church Order Article 7: Examination of Required Qualifications for Eligibility to Exhort as the First Step in the Process of Ordination by Way of Church Order Article 7 (Supplement, Article 7 A, 1)

Synodical deputies _____ (Classis _____),

_____ (Classis _____), and

_____ (Classis _____),
having examined the written credentials submitted by the council of _____
_____ Christian Reformed Church, with the favorable recommendation
of the Candidacy Committee, and having heard the examination for licensure to exhort
in accordance with the provisions of Church Order Article 7 and its Supplement, concur/
do not concur [select one] in the decision of Classis _____,
in session on _____, to grant _____ the
right to exhort in Christian Reformed churches until _____.

Comments (not printed in the *Acts of Synod*):

Synodical Deputies:

Classis _____

Classis _____

Classis _____

Date: _____

Copy submitted to: _____ Stated Clerk _____ Synodical Deputies _____ Synodical Services Office

Church Order Article 7: Examination for Eligibility for Call as the Second Step in the Process of Ordination by Way of Church Order Article 7 (Supplement, Article 7 A, 2 and 3)

Synodical deputies _____ (Classis _____),

_____ (Classis _____), and

_____ (Classis _____),

having considered the gifts of the applicant, having heard the examination in accordance with the provisions of Church Order Article 7, and having received the favorable recommendation of the Candidacy Committee, concur/do not concur [select one] in the decision of Classis _____, in session on _____, to declare _____ eligible for call to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

Comments (not printed in the *Acts of Synod*):

Synodical Deputies:

Classis _____

Classis _____

Classis _____

Date: _____

Copy submitted to: _____ Stated Clerk _____ Synodical Deputies _____ Synodical Services Office

Church Order Article 7: Examination for Ordination as the Final Step in the Process of Ordination by Way of Church Order Article 7 (Supplement, Article 7 A, 4)

Synodical deputies _____ (Classis _____),

_____ (Classis _____), and

_____ (Classis _____),

having heard the examination for ordination in accordance with the provisions of Church Order Article 7, concur/do not concur [select one] in the decision of Classis

_____, in session on _____, to
admit _____, to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

Comments (not printed in the *Acts of Synod*):

Date of Ordination service: _____
(Note: This information is important for Ministers' Pension Office purposes.)

Synodical Deputies:

Classis

Classis

Classis

Date: _____

Copy submitted to: _____ Stated Clerk _____ Synodical Deputies _____ Synodical Services Office

Synodical deputies _____ (Classis _____),
_____, (Classis _____), and
_____, (Classis _____),
having heard the colloquium doctum (doctrinal conversation) of Rev. _____
_____, in accordance with Church Order Article 8, and having
received the favorable recommendation of the Candidacy Committee, concur/do not
concur [select one] in the decision of Classis _____, in session on
_____, to declare him/her eligible for call to the ministry of the Word in
the Christian Reformed Church in North America. The calling church is _____
_____. Date of installation service: _____
(Note: This is important for Ministers' Pension Office purposes.)

We have ensured that classis has assigned a mentor for the new pastor. Yes/No

Synodical Deputies:

Classis _____

Classis _____

Classis _____

Date: _____

Copy submitted to: _____ Stated Clerk _____ Synodical Deputies _____ Synodical Services Office

Synodical deputies _____ (Classis _____),
 _____ (Classis _____), and
 _____ (Classis _____),

_____ is released from the office of minister of the Word in the
Christian Reformed Church in North America.

Comments (not printed in the *Acts of Synod*):

Classis

Classis

Classis

Copy submitted to: _____ Stated Clerk _____ Synodical Deputies _____ Synodical Services Office

Church Order Article 8: Extension of Eligibility for Call Following Specified Term of Service (Supplement, Article 8, C, 3)

Synodical deputies _____ (Classis _____),

_____ (Classis _____), and

_____ (Classis _____),
having heard the discussion of Classis _____, in session on
_____, concur/do not concur [select one] in the decision of
classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Supplement Article 8, C, 3, that
_____’s eligibility for call is extended for one year.

Comments (not printed in the *Acts of Synod*):

Synodical Deputies:

Classis _____

Classis _____

Classis _____

Date: _____

Church Order Article 8: Establishing a Joint Ministry of a Minister from a Church in Communion (see Church Order Supplement, Article 8, G)

Synodical deputies _____ (Classis _____),

_____ (Classis _____), and

_____ (Classis _____),
having reviewed the documents specified in accordance with Church Order Supplement,
Article 8, F, and having heard the discussion of Classis _____,
in session on _____, concur/do not concur [select one] with the
decision of classis to establish the joint ministry of _____ and

(name of church) to call Rev. _____.
(name of church)

State the need(s):

Comments (not printed in the *Acts of Synod*):

Synodical Deputies:

Classis _____

Classis _____

Classis _____

Date: _____

Copy submitted to: _____ Stated Clerk _____ Synodical Deputies _____ Synodical Services Office

Church Order Article 10: Admission of Candidate Who Has Completed the Requirements for the Ministry of the Word

Synodical deputies _____ (Classis _____),

_____ (Classis _____), and
_____ (Classis _____),

having heard the examination for ordination in accordance with Church Order Article 10,
concur/do not concur [select one] in the decision of Classis _____,
in session _____, to admit candidate _____
to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

We have ensured that classis has assigned a mentor for the new pastor. Yes/No

Comments (not printed in the *Acts of Synod*):

Calling church: _____

Date of Ordination service: _____
(Note: This information is important for Ministers' Pension Office purposes.)

Synodical Deputies:

Classis _____

Classis _____

Classis _____

Date: _____

Copy submitted to: _____ Stated Clerk _____ Synodical Deputies _____ Synodical Services Office

Synodical deputies _____ (Classis _____),
 _____ (Classis _____), and
 _____ (Classis _____),

Comments (not printed in the *Acts of Synod*):

Classis

Classis

Classis

Copy submitted to: _____ Stated Clerk _____ Synodical Deputies _____ Synodical Services Office

Church Order Article 13-c: Loaning a Minister to Another Denomination

Synodical deputies _____ (Classis _____),

_____ (Classis _____), and

_____ (Classis _____),

satisfied that synodical regulations have been followed in accordance with Church Order

Article 13-c, concur/do not concur [select one] in the decision of Classis

_____, in session on _____,

to approve loaning Rev. _____ to serve

_____ Church of _____ for not

more than two years (cf. Supplement, Art. 13-c, Regulation e).

Comments (not printed in the *Acts of Synod*):

Synodical Deputies:

Classis _____

Classis _____

Classis _____

Date: _____

Copy submitted to: _____ Stated Clerk _____ Synodical Deputies _____ Synodical Services Office

Church Order Supplement, Article 13-c, Regulation e: Extension of Loan of a Minister to Another Denomination

Synodical deputies _____ (Classis _____),

_____ (Classis _____), and

_____ (Classis _____),

having heard the discussion of Classis _____, in session on

_____, concur/do not concur [select one] in the decision of

classis to approve the extension of loan, in accordance with Church Order Supplement,

Article 13-c, Regulation e, of Rev. _____ to serve the

_____ Church of _____

until _____ [date—not more than 2 yrs.].

Comments (not printed in the *Acts of Synod*):

Synodical Deputies:

Classis _____

Classis _____

Classis _____

Date: _____

Copy submitted to: _____ Stated Clerk _____ Synodical Deputies _____ Synodical Services Office

Church Order Article 14-b: Release from Office to Enter a Ministry Outside the Christian Reformed Church

Synodical deputies _____ (Classis _____),

_____ (Classis _____), and

_____ (Classis _____),

having heard the discussions relating to the resignation of _____,

in accordance with Church Order Article 14-b, concur/do not concur [select one] in the

decision of Classis _____, in session on _____,

to declare that _____ is _____

[enter one: *honorably released*, *released*, *dismissed*, or *in the status of one deposed*]

from the office of minister of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

Effective date: _____ (for Ministers' Pension purposes)

Comments (not printed in the *Acts of Synod*):

Synodical Deputies:

Classis _____

Classis _____

Classis _____

Date: _____

Copy submitted to: _____ Stated Clerk _____ Synodical Deputies _____ Synodical Services Office

Church Order Article 14-c: Release from Office to Enter a Non-ministerial Vocation

Synodical deputies _____ (Classis _____),

_____ (Classis _____), and

_____ (Classis _____),
having heard the discussion of Classis _____, in session on
_____, concur/do not concur [select one] in the decision of classis to declare,
in accordance with Church Order Article 14-c, that _____ is
_____ [enter one: *honorably released*, *released*, *dismissed*, or
in the status of one deposed] from the office of minister of the Word in the Christian
Reformed Church in North America to enter a non-ministerial vocation.

Effective date: _____ (for Ministers' Pension purposes)

Comments (not printed in the *Acts of Synod*):

Synodical Deputies:

Classis _____

Classis _____

Classis _____

Date: _____

Copy submitted to: _____ Stated Clerk _____ Synodical Deputies _____ Synodical Services Office

Church Order Article 14-d: Release from Office of One Whose Vocation Is Judged to Be Nonministerial

Synodical deputies _____ (Classis _____),

_____ (Classis _____), and

_____ (Classis _____),
having heard the discussion of Classis _____,
in session on _____, concur/do not concur [select one] in the
decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 14-d, that
_____, having entered a vocation that is judged to be non-
ministerial, is released from the office of minister of the Word in the Christian Reformed
Church in North America.

Effective date: _____ (for Ministers' Pension purposes)

Comments (not printed in the *Acts of Synod*):

Synodical Deputies:

Classis

Classis

Classis

Date: _____

Copy submitted to: _____ Stated Clerk _____ Synodical Deputies _____ Synodical Services Office

Church Order Article 14-e: Return to Office of a Person Who Was Released to Enter a Non-ministerial Vocation

Synodical deputies _____ (Classis _____),

_____ (Classis _____), and

_____ (Classis _____),
having heard the interview of the applicant and the discussion of Classis
_____, in session on _____, concur/do
not concur [select one] in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church
Order Article 14-e, that [Mr./Ms.] _____ is eligible for
call to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

Comments (not printed in the *Acts of Synod*):

Synodical Deputies:

Classis _____

Classis _____

Classis _____

Date: _____

Copy submitted to: _____ Stated Clerk _____ Synodical Deputies _____ Synodical Services Office

Church Order Article 17-a: Release from Ministry in a Congregation

Synodical deputies _____ (Classis _____),

_____ (Classis _____), and

_____ (Classis _____),

having heard the weighty reasons provided and the discussion of Classis

_____, in session on _____, concur/do not

concur [select one] in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church

Order Article 17-a, that _____ is released

from ministerial service in _____ Christian Reformed Church of

_____.

In keeping with provisions of Church Order Supplement, Article 17-a, the following stipulations must be met before Rev. _____ may accept a call or have his/her credentials transferred to another church:

Comments (not printed in the *Acts of Synod*):

Synodical Deputies:

Classis _____

Classis _____

Classis _____

Date: _____

Copy submitted to: _____ Stated Clerk _____ Synodical Deputies _____ Synodical Services Office

Church Order Article 17-c: Extension of Eligibility for Call

Synodical deputies _____ (Classis _____),

_____ (Classis _____), and

_____ (Classis _____),

having heard the discussion of Classis _____, in session on
_____, concur/do not concur [select one] in the decision of
classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-c, that
_____’s eligibility for call is extended for one year.

Comments (not printed in the *Acts of Synod*):

Synodical Deputies:

Classis _____

Classis _____

Classis

Date: _____

Copy submitted to: _____ Stated Clerk _____ Synodical Deputies _____ Synodical Services Office

Church Order Article 17-c: Release from the Office of Minister of the Word

Synodical deputies _____ (Classis _____),

_____ (Classis _____), and

_____ (Classis _____),

having heard the discussion of Classis _____, in session on

_____, concur/do not concur [select one] in the decision of classis to

declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-c, that _____

_____ is released from the office of minister of the Word in the Christian

Reformed Church in North America.

Effective date: _____ (for Ministers' Pension purposes)

Comments (not printed in the *Acts of Synod*):

Synodical Deputies:

Classis _____

Classis _____

Classis _____

Date: _____

Copy submitted to: _____ Stated Clerk _____ Synodical Deputies _____ Synodical Services Office

Synodical deputies _____ (Classis _____),
 _____ (Classis _____), and
 _____ (Classis _____),

Comments (not printed in the *Acts of Synod*):

Classis _____

Copy submitted to: _____ Stated Clerk _____ Synodical Deputies _____ Synodical Services Office

Church Order Supplement, Article 23-a: Declaration that a Commissioned Pastor's Position Fits Synodical Guidelines

Synodical deputies _____ (Classis _____),

_____ (Classis _____), and

_____ (Classis _____),
having examined the written materials submitted by the council of _____
Christian Reformed Church of _____, and having compared
them with the synodical guidelines re office and ordination, concur/do not concur [select
one] with the decision of Classis _____, in session on _____,
that the position of _____ (position title) is in keeping with
synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors.

This position is to be filled by [Mr./Ms.] _____ (if known).

Has this person completed a learning plan, adopted by classis? **YES/NO**

Comments (not printed in the *Acts of Synod*):

Synodical Deputies:

Classis _____

Classis _____

Classis _____

Date: _____

Copy submitted to: _____ Stated Clerk _____ Synodical Deputies _____ Synodical Services Office

Church Order Article 24-a: Service of a Commissioned Pastor in an Organized Church as Solo Pastor or Senior Leadership Position (cf. Supplement, Article 24-a)

Synodical deputies _____ (Classis _____),

_____ (Classis _____), and

_____ (Classis _____),

having examined the request submitted by the council of _____

Christian Reformed Church of _____, concur/do not concur

[select one] with the decision of Classis _____, in session on

_____, that the position of _____ (position title) is

in keeping with synodical guidelines for commissioned pastors.

This position is to be filled by [Mr./Ms.] _____ (if known).

Synod requires the synodical deputies to affirm through their written report to synod that a learning plan has been approved by the classis and the Candidacy Committee for the person being considered for a *solo pastor* or *senior leadership* position in either an emerging or organized church *prior to* any examination.

Has this person completed a learning plan, adopted by classis and approved by the Candidacy Committee? **YES/NO**

Comments (not printed in the *Acts of Synod*):

Synodical Deputies:

Classis _____

Classis _____

Classis _____

Date: _____

Copy submitted to: _____ Stated Clerk _____ Synodical Deputies _____ Synodical Services Office

Church Order Article 38-h: Designation that Multiaffiliation of a Congregation Fits Synodical Guidelines

Synodical deputies _____ (Classis _____),

_____ (Classis _____), and

_____ (Classis _____),
having examined the written materials submitted by the council of _____
Christian Reformed Church of _____, regarding affiliating with
another denomination in ecclesiastical fellowship, concur/do not concur [select one] that
the decision of Classis _____, in session on _____,
is in keeping with synodical guidelines regarding multiaffiliation as outlined in Church
Order 38-h and its Supplement.

Comments (not printed in the *Acts of Synod*):

Synodical Deputies:

Classis

Classis

Classis

Date: _____

Copy submitted to: _____ Stated Clerk _____ Synodical Deputies _____ Synodical Services Office

Synodical deputies _____ (Classis _____),

(Classis _____), and

(Classis _____),
having heard the grounds submitted by the council of _____ Christian
Reformed Church of _____, and the discussion of Classis
_____, in session on _____, concur/do not concur
[select one] in the decision of classis to approve, in accordance with Church Order
Articles 82 and 83, the deposition of _____ from the
ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

Synodical Deputies:

Classis

Copy submitted to: _____ Stated Clerk _____ Synodical Deputies _____ Synodical Services Office

Church Order Article 84: Consideration for Reinstatement of a Deposed Minister of the Word

Synodical deputies _____ (Classis _____),

_____ (Classis _____), and

_____ (Classis _____),
having heard the discussion of Classis _____, in session on
_____, concur/do not concur [select one] in the judgment of classis to
declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 84 and its Supplement, that
_____ is eligible for call to the ministry of the Word in the
Christian Reformed Church in North America.

Comments (not printed in the *Acts of Synod*):

Synodical Deputies:

Classis _____

Classis _____

Classis _____

Date: _____

Copy submitted to: _____ Stated Clerk _____ Synodical Deputies _____ Synodical Services Office