

shall consist of a group of neighboring churches.” A virtual-only/digital church, as we understand it, does not have a physical location, therefore making the aspects of belonging to a region or neighborhood untenable.

- d. While digital and virtual ministry tools have been effective for outreach, evangelism, and supporting the early development of ministry connections—and while they may serve as helpful supplements or temporary alternatives in extraordinary circumstances—they are not sufficient for administering the ordinary means of grace or for maturing into an established congregation governed by the Church Order.

2. That synod acknowledge there should be room for intentional and ongoing experimentation within the CRCNA for digital ministry by local churches for the purpose of evangelism and mission, preaching and teaching, prayer, community building, pastoral care, church planting, and other such means of service to Christ and his kingdom.

3. That synod encourage those engaged in an exclusively digital ministry to seek to move those they are serving toward a hybrid ministry and/or toward in-person gathering as a true church.

Note: The minority report is in agreement with Recommendations 3-7 of the majority report but not with the grounds summarizing the majority report’s recommendations.

Following the rules of procedure, synod returns to the consideration of the recommendations of the advisory committee’s majority report.

Virtual Church Task Force (majority report)

A. Materials

Virtual Church Task Force report, pp. 311-21

B. Recommendations

1. That synod acknowledge that while churches preferably gather in person for worship, fellowship, and mission, there should be room for intentional and ongoing experimentation within the CRCNA for digital ministry.

—*Adopted*

2. That synod encourage those engaged in an exclusively digital ministry to seek, when applicable, to move those they are serving toward gathering as a hybrid or in-person church.

—*Adopted*

3. That synod encourage classes and emerging church plants within the CRCNA that are experimenting with digital ministry and virtual churches to network with each other for shared learning and discernment, including continued study about the legitimacy of virtual churches and especially how they might fulfill the marks of the true church in their context.

—*Adopted*

4. That synod further encourage classes and calling churches to pray for, partner with, and offer intentional support for church planters who are navigating the unique challenges of digital ministry.

—*Adopted*

5. That synod direct the Office of General Secretary to work with denominational agencies to be a resource to classes and churches that are considering how best to support virtual church experiments. This would include, but not be limited to, helping these classes and/or churches network with others in our denomination who are also experimenting.

—*Adopted*

6. That synod instruct those who are experimenting with virtual-church plants, along with their parent church(es), to provide a clear ministry plan to their classis, including especially how they plan to fulfill the marks of the true church in their context and how they plan to address the importance of embodiment and in-person gatherings.

—*Adopted*

7. That synod declare the mandate of the Virtual Church Task Force fulfilled and dismiss the members with thanks.

Grounds:

- a. It is premature for synod to declare strictly digital or virtual online ministries to be churches, yet also premature to categorically declare virtual churches to be theologically impermissible. Further study is needed, including biblical and confessional study on the nature of a true church.
- b. In the meantime, the reality of digital engagement provides opportunities for sharing the gospel that shouldn't be discouraged simply because we aren't ready to make theological decisions about the validity of virtual churches.

—*Adopted*

The following negative votes are recorded: Joshua Christoffels (Illiana), Brittany Clark (Grand Rapids North), Nathan Dykstra (Illiana), Mark D. Elffers (Georgetown), Aaron Greydanus (Heartland), Joshua Grimes (Grand Rapids North), Scott Klooster (Alberta North), Israel Ledee (Chicago South), Zackery McCain (Greater Los Angeles), Caley Meza (Chicago South), Scott Muilenburg (Minnkota), Cedric Parsels (Illiana), Michael Saville (Atlantic Northeast), Jeffrey Scripps (Georgetown), Brandon Seaver (Georgetown), Aaron Solomon-Mills (Greater Los Angeles), Joe Steenholdt (Minnkota), Dan Tracy (Heartland), Adrian VandenBout (Atlantic Northeast), Richard VanderWoude (Illiana), Tyler Wagenmaker (Zeeland).

(The report of Advisory Committee 5 continues in Article 71.)

ARTICLE 69

Joseph Bae (Lake Erie) closes the session in prayer.

WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON, June 18, 2025

Twelfth Session

ARTICLE 70

Delegate Christian Sebastia (Rocky Mountain) and Melody Van Arragon (staff) lead in singing a medley of worship songs in Spanish and English.

The roll call indicates that Randy Raak (Northcentral Iowa), Tim Raakman (Niagara), and John Tamming (Huron) are absent.

ARTICLE 71

The vice president assumes the chair.

(The report of Advisory Committee 5 continues from Article 68.)

Advisory Committee 5, Congregational Care and Justice, Rev. Richard Grift reporting, presents the following:

I. Response to Overture 26: Identify, Train, and Maintain Individuals with a License to Exhort

A. Materials

Overture 26, p. 393

B. Recommendation

That synod urge each classis to encourage churches to identify, train, and nurture individuals with a license to exhort in their classis by Synod 2027. Such individuals shall meet all the requirements of Church Order Article 43-b.

Grounds:

1. This recommendation may increase the number of exhorters needed to respond to our current shortage of ministers of the Word.
2. This recommendation may lead to more potential candidates for the ministry of the Word.
3. This recommendation broadens the number of churches who may benefit beyond an individual's own local church.

—*Adopted*

II. Council of Delegates Report

A. Materials

Council of Delegates report (section III, F; including Appendix C), pp. 27, 56-80

B. Privilege of the floor

Michael L. Ten Haken, chair of the Council of Delegates; Greta Luimes, vice chair of the Council of Delegates; Zachary J. King, general secretary; and members of the executive staff as needed