

## CONGREGATIONAL SERVICES II

Chair: Rev. Joshua S. Van Drunen  
Reporter: Rev. Laryn G. Zoerhof

### I. Council of Delegates

#### A. Materials

1. Council of Delegates Report (sections II, A, 16; II, B, 5, b-c; and II, B, 6-7, 11, 13-14, including Appendices G-H), pp. 36, 43-44, 46-50, 83-101
2. Council of Delegates Supplement (sections I, C; and II, A, 1)

*B. Privilege of the floor:* Rev. Paul R. De Vries, chair of the Council of Delegates; Mr. Andy de Ruyter, vice chair of the Council of Delegates; Dr. Steven R. Timmermans, executive director; and members of the executive staff as needed

#### C. Recommendations

1. That synod establish a standing committee of the Council of Delegates (COD) for the purpose of reviewing Bible translations for potential use in the CRCNA, with a mandate and composition as outlined in section II, A, 16.
2. That synod, subject to establishing a Bible Translations Committee, take the following actions:
  - a. Approve that the denominational representative to serve as convener be appointed through the office of the director of ministries and administration.
  - b. Appoint the following persons to serve on the committee: Dr. Amanda W. Benckhuysen, Dr. William T. Koopmans, Rev. Sarah Schreiber (COD Supplement section I, C), and Dr. Michael Williams.
  - c. Give the COD power to act in the appointment of additional committee members to fulfill the requirements of the mandate and composition in COD Report section II, A, 16 after consultation with Calvin Theological Seminary.
3. That synod approve the evaluation reports by Faith Formation Ministries and Worship Ministries (II, B, 5; Appendices G-H).
4. That synod address the following with regard to Faith Formation Ministries (II, B, 6; see also FFM report, pp. 153-55):
  - a. That synod warmly welcome Dr. Christopher Schoon, the newly appointed Faith Formation Ministries (FFM) team leader, and pray a blessing over him. Dr. Syd Hielema, team leader, will transition from his current role, effective July 1, 2019. Dr. Schoon and his team are eager to walk alongside churches and ministry leaders as they learn how to more effectively disciple congregations.

- b. That synod, as follow-up to the decision of Synod 2018 to affirm the importance of Reformed children's curriculum, encourage congregations to consult with FFM concerning their curricular needs.
- c. That synod encourage all classes to partner with FFM in appointing a volunteer youth ministry champion to serve the congregations within their classis.
- d. That synod encourage all congregations to (1) recognize how critical the church-home relationship is for discipleship, and (2) take steps to strengthen the faith formation partnership between the church and the home.
- e. That synod encourage CRC congregations to consider supporting Faith Formation Ministries with their gifts. FFM is very grateful for the many congregations that now include FFM for an annual offering.

## **II. Congregational Services of the Christian Reformed Church**

### *A. Chaplaincy and Care Ministry*

- 1. Materials: Chaplaincy and Care Ministry Report, pp. 157-61
- 2. Recommendation

That synod acclaim with gratitude the varied and vital spiritual work of our chaplains through Chaplaincy and Care Ministry.

### *B. Faith Formation Ministries*

- 1. Materials: Faith Formation Ministries Report, pp. 153-55
- 2. Recommendation

That synod thank Dr. Syd Hielema for his pioneer work in launching Faith Formation Ministries, providing resources and coaching to support Christian Reformed congregations and ministry leaders in encouraging lifelong faith formation. We are grateful that Dr. Christopher Schoon has accepted the appointment of the Council of Delegates to serve as the new director of Faith Formation Ministries. He is excited to begin working and building on the superb platform created under the leadership of Dr. Syd Hielema over the past five years.

### *C. Pastor Church Resources*

- 1. Materials: Pastor Church Resources Report, pp. 165-70
- 2. Recommendation

That synod express deep appreciation to Pastor Church Resources for its diligent attention to promoting healthy pastors, healthy churches, and healthy pastor-church relations, including work with regional pastors, vocational assessment and training, and classis renewal. Congregations and pastors are strongly encouraged to utilize the resources available.

#### D. *Worship Ministries*

1. Materials: Worship Ministries Report, pp. 244-47
2. Recommendation

That synod commend Worship Ministries for assisting our congregations in faith formation through our appreciation of the riches of Reformed worship in its varied expressions. We encourage congregations to make use of endorsed coaches, the worship webinar library, and *Reformed Worship*, as well as a variety of other worship resources available through this office.

#### E. *Ministry Support Services*

1. Materials: COD Report, pp. 48-50
2. Recommendation:

That synod commend the staff of Ministry Support Services (MSS) for their work with *The Banner*; Faith Alive Christian Resources; Libros Desafio (Spanish-language resources); The Network; Click, Call, Chat; and Special Sundays. MSS supports ministries with professional services in marketing, brand management, order and subscription processing, call center, editorial services, translation, rights and permission management, design and web services, purchasing, and distribution. The Sunday School *Dwell* curriculum is being updated and now is also available in digital form.

#### F. *The Banner*

1. Materials: COD Report, p. 48
2. Recommendation

That synod commend Mr. Shiao Chong (Banner editor-in-chief) and staff for their faithful service producing *The Banner*, the monthly, award-winning, official magazine of the CRC that is free for the asking. Among other awards, *The Banner* received Awards of Merit for publication in both print and digital by the Evangelical Press Association in 2018. More than 6,000 donors contributed over \$450,000 for the annual appeal fundraiser in 2018.

### III. **Dynamic Youth Ministries**

#### A. *Calvinist Cadet Corps*

1. Materials: Calvinist Cadet Corps Report, p. 395
2. Recommendation

That synod commend the Calvinist Cadet Corps for the spiritually valuable contributions that they make toward the evangelism and faith formation of boys.

*B. GEMS Girls' Club*

1. Materials: GEMS Girls' Club Report, pp. 396-97
2. Recommendation

That synod commend GEMS Girls' Clubs for the spiritually valuable contributions they make toward the faith formation of covenant girls, as well as their outreach to unchurched girls—locally and internationally.

*C. Youth Unlimited*

1. Materials: Youth Unlimited Report, pp. 397-98
2. Recommendation

That synod commend Youth Unlimited for their important ministry of education and service, and encourage them in their growing collaboration with the CRCNA's Faith Formation Ministries.

**IV. Response to Overture 9: Revise Church Order Articles 51 and 54; Encourage Churches to Review their Worship Practices**

*A. Materials: Overture 9, pp. 509-12*

*B. Observations*

This overture from Classis Atlantic Northeast addresses the second worship service—a long-standing and well-respected practice that has undergone significant change in the past number of years for a variety of reasons. As the overture points out, a survey of CRC congregations provided by the Yearbook Office reveals that only about one-third of our churches hold two worship services per Sunday (a fact which also has implications for the requirement of catechism preaching found in Church Order Art. 54-b). When a second preaching service currently does not exist in the majority of our congregations, the authority of the Church Order is weakened by continuing to require something that most of our churches are not currently practicing.

At the same time, we should not simply dismiss the CRC's tradition of morning and evening worship as a quaint historic artifact. We need to acknowledge that we live in a world that does not prioritize the worship of the triune God, and that we tend to rest in a selfish way that does not renew us in the finished work of Christ.

The second service has long proven to be a helpful discipline in fostering appropriate observance of the Lord's Day, raising the level of biblical and doctrinal literacy in the church, and creating opportunity for deeper and richer fellowship. Many churches that have continued the practice of a second worship service can testify to these benefits. For congregations that are exploring an alternative to the evening worship service, or for congregations that have already discontinued worshiping on Sunday evening, perhaps there are ways to re-imagine what public gatherings for worship might look like. Moving the substance of the Church Order Supplement,

Article 51-a into the Church Order as Article 51-b will provide an avenue for the churches in each classis to share helpful ideas on these issues.

Out of pastoral consideration for churches that already have only one service, the time has come to remove the “ordinarily twice” from the Church Order. And at the same time, out of pastoral consideration for churches that still maintain a meaningful evening service, it is important to include affirmation of this rich tradition in the Church Order. Overture 9 is designed to accomplish both of these pastoral concerns.

### C. *Recommendations*

In order to bring the Church Order into closer alignment with our current practice as a denomination, and to foster conversation among the churches about the expectations that should shape our worship practices, the advisory committee recommends the following:

1. That synod propose that a future synod adopt the following changes to Church Order Articles 51-a and 51-b so that they will read as follows (additions in **bold**; deletions in ~~strike through~~):

- a. The congregation shall assemble for worship, ~~ordinarily twice~~ on the Lord's Day, to hear God's Word, to receive the sacraments, to engage in praise and prayer, and to present gifts of gratitude.

- b. Each classis shall affirm the rich tradition of assembling a second time on the Lord's Day for worship, learning, prayer, and fellowship by encouraging churches to include these items as part of a strategic ministry plan for the building up of the body of Christ.

Note: The current Articles 51-b and -c would become 51-c and -d respectively; Supplement, Article 51-a would be deleted.

#### *Grounds:*

- a. These changes would bring the Church Order into harmony with the current practice of the vast majority of congregations, so that its provisions for public worship are “faithfully observed” (Church Order Art. 86).
  - b. Though Scripture does not indicate the frequency of worship on the Lord's Day, the proposed Article 51-b highlights the value of a time beyond Sunday morning worship when the whole congregation may be invited to assemble as Christ's people and invites the broader assemblies to foster conversations about how this might best be done.
2. That synod propose that a future synod delete Church Order Article 54-b.

#### *Grounds:*

- a. Though it is important for our preaching to reflect the instruction of the Reformed confessions, the current Church Order Article 54-a already requires that preaching be guided by the creeds and confessions, and a specific obligation for catechetical preaching is an unrealistic expectation when the majority of our congregations do not have a second service.
- b. This brings Church Order into harmony with denominational practice (Church Order Article 86).

3. That synod affirm the rich tradition of assembling for worship twice on the Lord's Day and instruct the Council of Delegates to ensure that Worship Ministries and/or Faith Formation Ministries continue to make excellent resources available to the churches that would encourage existing congregations to continue, and new congregations to embrace, some kind of assembly that builds up the body of Christ.

*Ground:* This provides congregations with resources for carrying on the tradition of, or beginning, a second Sunday service, in keeping with the decisions of earlier synods (see *Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 766-67).

4. That synod not accede to Recommendation D in Overture 9 from Classis Atlantic Northeast.

*Ground:* Ministry Support Services has supported the CRCNA communications office in launching a unified process for churches to request materials for special Sundays (e.g., Easter, World Hunger Sunday, Abuse Awareness Sunday). Instead of each ministry separately promoting "their" week, Ministry Support Services now sends to churches a link to a single page where they can view all the materials for the next six months, order the materials they want, and access other supporting materials (e.g., litanies, videos, projection images). The form remembers each church's preferences so that each time they go into the form, they need only to review and make minor adjustments. The new process has been welcomed by churches (because of the convenience) and with ministries (because churches are requesting more materials). In addition, we are saving ministry-share expense by consolidating ordering, printing, and shipping.

5. That synod declare this to be its response to Overture 9.