

STUDY COMMITTEES/TASK FORCES

Chair: Rev. David A. Struyk
Reporter: Rev. Greg Janke

Response to Overture 14: Appoint a Committee to Study the Morality and Advisability of Ecclesiastical (Non-Civil) Marriages

A. *Materials:* Overture 14, pp. 518-19

B. *Recommendations*

1. That synod appoint a Task Force to study the advisability, legality, and morality of ecclesiastical (non-civil) marriage to report to Synod 2021 or 2022.

Grounds:

- a. Churches are being confronted with questions and situations related to specifically ecclesiastical (non-civil) marriages.
- b. Pastors and elders need guidance on how to respond to these questions.
- c. The current CRCNA position on marriage does not specifically address the relationship between civil and ecclesiastical marriage.

Mandate:

The Task Force's mandate shall include, but not be limited to, the following:

1. Is it legal in the various states, provinces, and territories of Canada and the United States to perform an ecclesiastical (non-civil) wedding ceremony?
2. What implications do the current CRCNA position on marriage and the Church Order have on ecclesiastical (non-civil) weddings and marriages?
3. Is it morally legitimate to perform an ecclesiastical (non-civil) wedding in order to avoid the financial costs and obligations of a civil marriage?
4. If people are declared married in a non-civil ceremony in a home country outside of the United States or Canada, should that marriage be recognized by the CRCNA?
5. What are the implications for the church of a specifically ecclesiastical marriage?
6. What are the implications of ecclesiastical (non-civil) marriages for senior citizens; including pensions, and end-of-life care issues?
7. What, if anything, have other faith communities done in regard to this issue?

8. Consult with the Study Committee to Articulate a Foundation-laying Biblical Theology of Human Sexuality for insights that might be beneficial to this task force.

Composition:

Include at least one person with legal expertise in the United States, and one with such expertise in Canada.

Person or persons with pastoral experience in this area.

Person or persons with cross-cultural experience.

Person or persons with experience in pensions and end-of-life care issues in Canada and in the United States.

2. That synod declare this to be the response to Overture 14.