

- c. The law is permissive but not prescriptive in this regard.

—*Tabled*

*Note:* The above recommendation was discussed and tabled until later in the day.

4. That synod caution pastors against acting as legal experts or offering legal advice, especially with regard to the issue of ecclesiastical marriage, and that synod encourage pastors to advise couples to seek independent legal counsel as necessary.

—*Adopted*

5. That synod instruct the Office of General Secretary to disseminate a letter of warning to the pastors and councils regarding the potential legal ramifications of solemnizing an ecclesiastical marriage.

—*Adopted*

(The report of Advisory Committee 4 is continued in Article 31.)

## ARTICLE 30

Advisory Committee 3, Education and Candidacy, Rev. Kyle Haack reporting, presents the following:

### **I. Study of Bivocationality Task Force**

#### *A. Materials*

Report of the Study of Bivocationality Task Force, pp. 285-314

*B. Privilege of the floor:* Bernard Bakker, chair, and Michael Vander Laan, reporter

#### *C. Recommendations*

1. That synod propose to Synod 2024 the following changes to Church Order Articles 14, 15, and 23 and their Supplements for adoption (with additions indicated by underline and deletions by ~~striketrough~~):

a. Proposed Article 14-d

A minister of the Word who has entered upon a vocation which classis judges to be nonministerial and forsakes the calling of a minister of the Word 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.

*Grounds:*

- a. Without this addition, Article 14 implies that a nonministerial vocation is in conflict with the work and ordination of a minister of the Word.

- b. The addition clarifies that forsaking the office is cause for a minister to be released.

—Adopted

b. Proposed Article 15

Each church through its council shall ~~provide for~~ attend to the proper support of its minister(s). ~~By way of exception and with the approval of classis, a church and minister may agree that a minister obtain primary or supplemental income by means of other employment. Ordinarily the foregoing exception shall be limited to churches that cannot obtain assistance adequate to support their minister.~~

*Grounds:*

- a. The change in phrasing maintains the covenantal relationship between pastor and congregation while giving flexibility with regard to where “proper support” is coming from.
- b. The removed section discriminates against bivocational ministry as an “exception” rather than recognizing it as a desired, missional choice.

—Adopted

c. Proposed Supplement, Article 15

*“Proper Support” Defined*

Proper support of a church’s minister is to include an adequate salary, medical insurance, disability insurance, a housing provision, ~~payment to the denomination’s ministers’ pension plan~~ payment to an appropriate pension or retirement plan, a continuing education stipend, and other employment-related items.

To “attend to” proper support does not imply that the calling church is responsible to provide all of these items of support. Rather, the calling church is responsible to ensure that the minister has a plan that addresses these items. In many ministries the local church itself accepts these responsibilities in order to facilitate full-time or part-time ministerial service. In other settings—such as church planting, various forms of chaplaincy, bivocational arrangements, multipoint ministries, and so on—the financial plan will include income and benefits provided by a variety of potential sources. The financial plan should be carefully reviewed and signed by the classical counselor when a call to ministry is made or when a pastor and church decide to change their financial arrangement.

*Guidelines for Churches Whose Ministers Receive Salary Support from Other Employment in Conversations with Pastors about “Proper Support”*

- 1. ~~The church is responsible for a total compensation package proportionate to the time spent in ministry to the church (forty eight hours equals full time). The compensation package shall ordinarily be~~

~~based on synodically stated minimum salary, fringe benefits, and housing costs.~~

- ~~2. Since the compensation package includes a percentage allowance for health insurance, the minister is expected to secure adequate health insurance for the minister and the minister's family.~~
- ~~31. The value of the parsonage provided by the congregation may be used for part or all of the compensation package.~~
- ~~42. The minister shall receive pension credits in the Ministers' Pension Fund proportionate to the percentage of time devoted to the duties of the church. Eligibility for full pension credit may be secured if full contribution to the Ministers' Pension Plan is made.~~
- ~~53. The nature and amount of time of the task(s) other than ministry shall be specified shall be mutually discerned by minister(s) and the supervising council. The support plan in the letter of call, including the financial plan, shall be specified in writing, approved by the classical counselor, and normally reviewed annually by the supervising council. The average amount of time expended upon the total of the ministerial and nonministerial tasks shall not normally exceed sixty hours per week.~~
4. The supervising council shall annually attend to nonfinancial support of ministers, including but not limited to physical, emotional, and spiritual support.

*Grounds:*

- a. These revisions address issues described in section VIII of the task force report ("Financial Considerations").
- b. These revisions provide further clarity to the proposed Article 15.
- c. These revisions promote flexibility while also promoting the covenantal arrangement between the minister and the calling church.

*— Adopted*

Elder delegate David Hoekema (Yellowstone) offers prayer.

d. Proposed Article 23-d

Each church through its council shall attend to the proper support of its commissioned pastor.

*Grounds:*

- a. The proposed addition calls for the proper support of commissioned pastors.
- b. The proposed addition parallels the proposal for Article 15.

*— Adopted*

e. Proposed Supplement, Article 23-d

“Proper Support” Defined

Proper support of a commissioned pastor is to include an adequate salary, medical insurance, disability insurance, a housing provision, payment to an appropriate pension or retirement plan, a continuing education stipend, and other employment-related items.

To “attend to” proper support does not imply that the calling church is responsible to provide all of these items of support. Rather, the calling church is responsible to ensure that the commissioned pastor has a plan that addresses these items. In many ministries the local church itself accepts these responsibilities in order to facilitate full-time or part-time ministry service. In other settings—such as church planting, various forms of chaplaincy, bivocational arrangements, multipoint ministries, and so on—the financial plan will include income and benefits provided by a variety of potential sources. The calling church’s support of the financial plan should be carefully reviewed at the time classis approves the commissioned pastor’s position. This includes a call to bivocational ministry or when a pastor and church decide to change their financial arrangement.

*Guidelines for Churches in Conversations with Pastors about “Proper Support”*

1. The value of the parsonage provided by the congregation may be used for part or all of the compensation package.
2. The nature and amount of time of the task(s) shall be mutually discerned by the commissioned pastor(s) and the supervising council. The support plan, including the financial plan, shall be specified in writing, approved by classis along with the position description, and normally reviewed annually by the supervising council. The average amount of time expended upon the total of the ministerial and nonministerial tasks shall not normally exceed sixty hours per week.
3. The supervising council shall annually attend to nonfinancial support of commissioned pastors, including but not limited to physical, emotional, and spiritual support.

*Grounds:*

- a. This addition provides further clarity to the proposed Article 23-d.
- b. This addition promotes flexibility while also promoting the covenantal arrangement between the commissioned pastor and the calling church.

- c. The proposed supplement reflects similar proposed changes to Supplement, Article 15.

*—Adopted*

2. That synod encourage classical student funding committees (providing financial aid for students seeking to become ministers of the Word—cf. Church Order Article 21) to treat those who are in or anticipating bivocational or other nontraditional ministry arrangements in the same manner as those who are in or anticipating full-time arrangements.

*Grounds:*

- a. Bivocational pastors and pastors in nontraditional arrangements retain the honor of the office they have been ordained to and remain accountable to the work to which they have been called.
- b. Burdening bivocational pastors and pastors in nontraditional arrangements with financial debts does not serve the church as a whole, nor does it serve the cause of the gospel.
- c. Article 21 states that “the churches . . . in coordination with classis, shall grant financial aid to those who are in need of it” and thus make their decisions based on their knowledge of specific situations.

*—Adopted*

3. That synod instruct the Office of General Secretary to create an exit interview/ministry postmortem learning process for classes, churches, leaders, and their families to use when burnout occurs in bivocational ministry.

*Grounds:*

- a. Exit interviews/postmortems can provide healing to those involved.
- b. Exit interviews/postmortems may help to teach us how to avoid future burnout or breakdown situations between churches and pastors.

*—Adopted*

4. That synod instruct the Office of General Secretary to provide a ministry wellness assessment for pastors in bivocational ministry and their supervisory councils to use as part of their regular conversations.

*Grounds:*

- a. Such an assessment could provide helpful feedback regarding a bivocational pastor’s well-being.
- b. Such an assessment could provide a helpful tool in the regular conversations between a bivocational pastor and the supervisory council.

*—Adopted*

5. That synod instruct the Office of General Secretary to work with the pension boards, in consultation with clergy couples, to find a just and equitable solution that recognizes the ordination of both spouses who are ministers of the Word.

*Ground:* The current rules of the pension plan do not equally recognize and honor the ordinations of clergy couples who are both ministers of the Word.

— *Adopted*

6. That synod encourage all pastors together with their supervisory councils to annually review the “proper support” required for pastors, including the financial plan.

*Grounds:*

- a. An annual review of “proper support” will help to encourage the ongoing health of pastors and their families.
- b. Annual reviews that include a review of “proper support” will fulfill the requirements regarding the same in proposed Church Order Articles 15 and 23-d and their Supplements.

— *Adopted*

7. That synod encourage church visitors to inquire about the health and welfare of pastors, including whether they have “proper support.”

*Grounds:*

- a. Inquiry about the health and welfare of pastors will encourage the same.
- b. Inquiry about whether pastors have “proper support” is included in the church visitors’ mandate to ascertain whether a church’s officebearers “observe the provisions of the Church Order” (see Art. 42-b).

— *Adopted*

8. That synod encourage the classes and congregations of the CRCNA to affirm the challenges of bivocational ministry, support the leaders of adaptive changes that are happening in our current ministry settings, and celebrate the dedicated and creative pastoral work many are doing and will do for the sake of the gospel as led by the Holy Spirit.

*Ground:* Bivocational pastors, those in nontraditional ministry arrangements, and their work require affirmation, support, and celebration by the broader body of believers.

— *Adopted*

President De Vries leads in prayer for bivocational pastors.

LaClear; piano/vocals: Katie Roelofs; bass: Eric Tisch) leads the assembly in singing “Ten Thousand Reasons/Bless the Lord.”

Rev. Jon Hoekema shares that evening worship times will draw from Psalm 46 to refocus on prayer, Scripture, reflection, and song. Rev. Ernesto Hernandez (Arizona) reads Psalm 46:1-9, and the assembly spends time in guided prayer. The assembly responds by singing “Ancient of Days.”

#### ARTICLE 36

(The report of Advisory Committee 3 is continued from Article 32.)

Advisory Committee 3, Education and Candidacy, Rev. Kyle Haack reporting, presents the following:

##### **I. Study of Bivocationality Task Force**

###### *A. Materials*

Report of the Study of Bivocationality Task Force, pp. 285-314

*B. Privilege of the floor:* Bernard Bakker, chair, and Michael Vander Laan, reporter

###### *C. Recommendations (continued)*

9. That synod accept this report as fulfilling the mandate of the Study of Bivocationality Task Force and dismiss the task force with wholehearted thanks.

—*Adopted*

(The report of Advisory Committee 3 is continued in Article 55.)

#### ARTICLE 37

(The report of Advisory Committee 5 is continued from Article 33.)

Advisory Committee 5, Global Mission, Rev. Adrian de Lange reporting, presents the following:

##### **I. Response to Overture 12: Develop a Strategy to Reverse the Trend of Membership Decline and Require Annual Reporting of Progress**

###### *A. Materials*

Overture 12, pp. 389-96

###### *B. Recommendations (continued)*

5. That synod consider this to be its response to Overture 12.

*Ground:* In addition to the preceding rationale regarding Overture 12, we sense a high value for contextual ministry within the CRCNA rather than a top-down approach.

—*Defeated*