

3. The supervising council shall annually attend to nonfinancial support of commissioned pastors, including but not limited to physical, emotional, and spiritual support.

—Adopted

2. That synod adopt all of the proposed recommendations in the Church Order Review Task Force report, including the proposed changes to the Church Order and the report's Addenda A-F (*Agenda for Synod 2024*, pp. 130-66).

—Adopted

Note: The recommended changes to the Church Order as found in the Church Order Review Task Force report are as follows (with proposed additions indicated by underline and deletions indicated by ~~striketrough~~):

Article 12

a. *[unchanged]*

b. A minister of the Word who (1) accepts a position endorsed by the CRC related to ~~enters into the work of~~ missions, chaplaincy, or specialized transitional ministry; or (2) is appointed directly by synod; or (3) accepts an appointment that is ratified by synod shall be called in the regular manner by a local church, which acts in cooperation with the appropriate committees of classis or synod to ensure that provisions for accountability to the calling church are in place.

—Cf. Supplement, Article 12

c. A minister of the Word may also serve the church in other positions that relate work which relates directly to the calling of a minister. Such ministers shall be called in the regular manner by a local church, but only after the calling church has demonstrated to the satisfaction of classis, with the concurring advice of the synodical deputies, that the said work is consistent with the calling of a minister of the Word, that provisions for accountability to the calling church are in place, and that the duties of the position do not conflict with the minister's commitment to the faith and practice of the Christian Reformed Church.

—Cf. Supplement, Article 12-e

[The following proposed Article 12-d has been moved and adapted from the previous Article 13-c.]

de. A minister of the Word may be loaned temporarily by the calling church to serve as pastor of a congregation outside the Christian Reformed Church, provided that the duties of the position do not conflict with the minister's commitment to the faith and practice of the Christian Reformed Church. Such ministers shall also be called in the regular manner by a local church, but only with the approval of classis, the concurring advice of the synodical deputies, and in accordance with synodical regulations, including the concurring advice of the

~~synodical deputies when necessary. Although the specific duties may be regulated in cooperation with the other congregation, the supervision of doctrine and life rests with the calling church.~~

~~—Cf. Supplement, Article 12~~

Article 13

a. *[unchanged]*

b. A minister of the Word whose ~~position work~~ is with a congregation, institution, or agency other than the calling church shall be supervised by the calling church in cooperation with any other congregations, institutions, or agencies involved. The council of the calling church shall have primary responsibility for supervision of doctrine and life. The congregations, institutions, or agencies, where applicable, shall have primary responsibility for supervision of duties.

—Cf. Supplement, Article 13-b

[Article 13-c has been moved and adapted to become the proposed Article 12-d.]

~~e. 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.~~

~~—Cf. Supplement, Article 13-e~~

Supplement, Article 12-e

Regulations for the application of Article 12-e of the Church Order to specific tasks and situations:

A. To be “called in the regular manner” means that a minister of the Word, whether called to serve a congregation or to serve in a noncongregational ministry, requires the following (see Church Order Articles 4, 9-10) in addition to the fulfillment of any other synodical regulations or classical approvals:

1. Nomination by the council and election by the congregation
2. An extension of a call by the council
3. Approval of the counselor who acts on behalf of classis
4. Ordination or installation in a public worship service

The requirement for a separate installation service during a CRC worship service is optional in the case of a minister serving on loan to a congregation in another denomination.

Noncongregational positions “consistent with the calling of a minister of the Word” are those in which a minister serves beyond a local CRC congregation to proclaim, explain, and apply Holy Scripture under the authority of and as a public representative of the church, in a way that the members of the church may be gathered in and built up in Christ.

B. Positions that do not require concurrence of the synodical deputies

1. Types of ministry positions

a. Positions regulated by Articles 9-10 of the Church Order. This includes congregational positions, whether solo-pastor positions or additional staff ministry positions; or also those of pastors serving multiple CRC congregations or in multiple vocational settings.

b. Positions regulated by Article 12-b of the Church Order. These include positions that have the endorsement of a synodically authorized body, such as those of chaplains, missionaries, and specialized transition ministers endorsed or accredited by the CRC denomination; or positions whose appointees are approved by or ratified by synod itself (such as professors of theology or other CRC executive staff positions requiring ratification by synod). Classis minutes should note that the position is deemed consistent with the ministry of the Word.

c. Calls regulated by Article 8-b of the Church Order and its supplemental rules. These include ministers who participate in the Orderly Exchange of Ordained Ministers between the CRC and the Reformed Church in America. Classis minutes should indicate the concurrence of the sending body (cf. Supplement, Art. 8, D, 7).

2. Prior to calling a minister of the Word to any noncongregational position ~~chaplaincy ministry~~, the calling church is required to ensure that the minister has secured any necessary endorsements from accrediting institutions within or outside the Christian Reformed Church, and that all synodical regulations have been followed. A Covenant of Joint Supervision shall be mutually agreed to and signed by the minister, the calling church, and the appointing organization (cf. Supplement, Art. 8, Section D; Supplement, Art. 13-b). ~~obtain the endorsement of the Office of Chaplaincy Ministries of the Christian Reformed Church (Acts of Synod 1973, p. 56; amended Acts of Synod 1998, p. 391).~~

C. Positions that require specific approval of the classis and concurrence of synodical deputies

1. In all other cases of noncongregational positions, ~~t~~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 demonstration that the position will be consistent with the calling of a minister of the Word.
 - c. A Covenant of Joint Supervision that shall be mutually agreed to and signed by the minister, the calling church, and the appointing organization (cf. Supplement, Art. 13-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.~~
 - d. When any position having been declared by a classis to be “spiritual in character and directly related to the ministerial calling” . . . becomes vacant, this position shall be reviewed by the classis and synodical deputies in light of Articles 11-14 of the Church Order before another call is issued.
 - e. 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 interim committee, subject to subsequent approval by classis with the concurring advice of the synodical deputies. The letter of call must indicate the provisional nature of this call if such approval has not yet been granted. 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 from office and may be readmitted according to the regulations of the Church Order. (Cf. Article 14-e.)
2. Ministers ~~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 recognizes the value of a Reformed witness and allows the minister to serve in a way consistent with the faith and practice of the Christian Reformed Church, ordinarily articulated through statements of faith in harmony with those of the Christian Reformed denomination. ~~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 a nondenominational 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.~~

b. The loaning of such ministerial services may be for a period of time not to exceed two years. Extension of not more than two years each may be granted if circumstances warrant, with the approval of classis and the synodical deputies.

c. These regulations also apply when pastors whose credentials are held in the CRC receive a request to serve simultaneously in an additional congregation outside the CRC.

d. If the requested service is in the Reformed Church in America, calls shall be processed in keeping with the regulations for the Orderly Exchange of Ministers (cf. Supplement, Art. 8, D).

D. In all cases, the minister shall be called in the regular manner, and the council and the counselor shall render to classis an account of all matters processed. Classis minutes should reflect the work of the counselor in accordance with Church Order Article 42-c.

E. Where it is possible and feasible, ministers of the Word should ordinarily be called by a local church in close geographic proximity to the congregation, institution, or agency being served, and the pastor's membership should normally reside with the calling church. If the ministry position congregation to be served is in close proximity to a Christian Reformed congregation of another is located in a classis other than that of the calling church, 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.

F. Continuation under the Christian Reformed Church Pension Plan shall require that the minister, or the congregation, institution, or agency ~~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 Funds committees for ministers serving in noncongregational extraordinary positions outside of our denomination.

G. Supervision of a minister in noncongregational ~~specialized~~ ministry may be transferred, at the request of the minister or of the calling church, to another church. Such a tTransfer of ministerial credentials requires the regular calling process of the local church and must be approved by both councils and classes.

H. If a noncongregational ministry position is eliminated, the minister should be formally released according to the regulations of the Church Order appropriate to the situation.

Supplement, Article 13-b

A. ~~Provisions for cooperative supervision of ministers of the Word working for agencies and institutions not directly under the authority of the synod of the CRCNA are to be formulated and processed according to the regulations contained in Church Order Supplement, Article 12-c and the provisions regarding chaplains adopted by Synod 1998 (see Acts of Synod 1998, pp. 391-92, 457-60). When the position of a minister of the Word is with other than the calling church, the position shall be regulated by a Covenant of Joint Supervision as approved by the minister, the calling church, and the appointing organization, with concurrence of the classis. Any changes to the status of the Covenant of Joint Supervision, as soon as they are known, shall be submitted to all parties for review and concurrence.~~

B. Situations requiring a change in status of a CRC minister in a noncongregational setting

1. If any council, agency, or institution of the CRC involved in the cooperative supervision of a minister of the Word learns about significant deviation in doctrine, life, or duties, it shall officially inform in writing its partner(s) in that supervision about such deviation before any action is taken that affects that minister's status and future. A similar communication officially informing its partner(s) in supervision is expected from an agency or institution when a minister's status is altered at a time of downsizing or position elimination.
2. ~~Should a the minister serving a non-CRC congregation or noncongregational ministry become subject to discipline, the supervising institution non-Christian Reformed congregation which is being served shall have the right to suspend the minister from service-serving that church, but suspension from office and deposition may be applied only by the calling church council that is part of the Christian Reformed Church. A similar communication is requested when a minister's status is altered, whether due to a change in the job description or at a time of downsizing or position elimination.~~
3. In all cases of discipline or other changes in status regarding a ministry position, the minister should be formally released from the call or issued a new call according to the appropriate provisions of the Church Order.

C. 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.

Note: The change at the end of the following subsection D has already been proposed to Synod 2024 (*Acts of Synod 2023*, p. 993). (See *Acts of Synod 2024*, p. 904.)

D. All pastors serving in noncongregational positions remain bound to the faith and practice of the Christian Reformed Church as required by one's signature to the Covenant for Officebearers and as articulated in the Code of Conduct.

Proposed Article 14

- a. A minister of the Word shall not leave the call ~~the congregation~~ with which the minister is connected for another position ~~church~~ without the consent of the council which issued the call.
- b. *[unchanged]*
- 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 valid ~~weighty~~ reasons as shall receive the approval of the classis with the concurring advice of the synodical deputies.

—Cf. Supplement, Article 14-c

Note: The change in Article 14-d has already been proposed to Synod 2024 (*Acts of Synod 2023*, pp. 962-63). (See *Acts of Synod 2024*, p. 850.)

- d. A minister of the Word who has entered upon a vocation which classis judges to be non-ministerial 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.
- 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, and shall ensure that all synodical regulations have been met. Upon acceptance of a call, the person shall be reordained.

—Cf. Supplement, Article 14-e

Proposed Article 16

A minister who for valid reasons desires a temporary leave of absence from service to the congregation must have the approval of the council, which shall continue to have supervision over the minister. A council may also, in consultation with the minister, initiate the process of granting a temporary leave of absence when it believes that the situation warrants such an arrangement. In all cases of a temporary leave of absence

the intention shall be that the minister shall return to service in that congregation.

—Cf. Supplement, Article 16

Proposed Article 17

a. Ministers who are neither eligible for retirement nor worthy of discipline may for valid weighty reasons be released from active ministerial service in a position to which they have been called by 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.

—Cf. Supplement, Article 17-a

b. *[unchanged]*

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

d. *[unchanged]*

Proposed Article 42-b

b. The church visitors shall consist of one or more teams of officebearers chosen for their experience and counsel. Team composition shall include a minister of the Word and at least one other officebearer. Their task shall be to ascertain whether the officebearers of the church faithfully perform their duties, adhere to sound doctrine, observe the provisions of the Church Order, and promote the building up of the body of Christ and the extension of God's kingdom. Churches are ~~free~~ to call on the church visitors whenever serious challenges arise that would benefit from their advice. The church visitors shall provide classis a written report of their work.

—Cf. Supplement, Article 42-b

Proposed Supplement, Article 8, D, 7

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 and in accordance with synodically established procedures.

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

Proposed Supplement, Article 14-b, a-b

Changes are proposed to sections a and b; sections c and d of Supplement, Article 14-b would remain unchanged.

- 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~~ This resolution statement allows for a broad degree of flexibility in responding to such situations (cf. *Acts of Synod 1978*, p. 73).
- b. ~~In making such a resolution, Synod directed the churches and classes~~ should 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.)

Proposed Supplement, Article 14-e

Process for reentry into CRC ministry after a release from office via Article 14 or 17:

1. A former minister who was released through the provisions of Article 14-b, 14-c, or 14-d or Article 17-c or 17-d and desires readmission to CRCNA ministry should be interviewed by the classis in which the original action was taken. The interview should examine the following:
 - a. the circumstances surrounding the release
 - b. the applicant’s theological and ministerial journey since the release
 - c. the sense of call and renewed commitment to service in the CRC

The classis, with the concurrence of the synodical deputies, shall then make a decision regarding whether to endorse the request to begin the process for readmission.
2. If approval is given to proceed, the classis shall notify the Candidacy Committee to guide the applicant through the completion of any requirements for ministry imposed by synod subsequent to

the original ordination. If the applicant has served in ministry outside the CRC, the Candidacy Committee should also receive and review recommendations from the church and regional body last served by the minister.

3. The Candidacy Committee shall notify the releasing classis once all requirements are complete and favorable recommendations have been received.
4. Upon completion of all requirements, the releasing classis shall declare the former minister eligible for call. A former minister shall not be nominated for a call until the releasing classis and the Candidacy Committee have approved the applicant's eligibility for call. Eligibility for call shall be for a period of two years. An individual who has not received and accepted a call within that time and who desires to continue eligibility for call, must request an extension through the classis that approved the request for eligibility for call.
5. The ordination and installation of a former minister who has been declared eligible for call shall require the approval of the calling church's classis counselor or the calling church's classis interim committee, which shall see that all synodical requirements have been met.
6. 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)

Proposed Supplement, Article 16

A council may initiate the process of granting a leave of absence only after seeking the advice of the church visitors, who should inform the classis of the situation when a written report is provided to the assembly (Church Order Art. 42-b). An initial leave of absence should be granted for no more than six weeks, with any extension of this time requiring additional advice of the church visitors. In no case may a leave of absence initiated by the council extend for a period of longer than twelve weeks.

Proposed Supplement, Article 17-a

A new section a is proposed; the current sections a and b would become sections b and c, respectively, and their content would remain unchanged, except as where indicated in subsection c, 2. The current *Note* at the end of Supplement, Article 17-a would be moved to section a, 4, as shown.

Provisions regulating release from ministerial service in a congregation

a. General Provisions

- 1) All Article 17 separations, even those requested by a pastor or those jointly initiated by a pastor and council, are formally a request of the calling council and shall be handled as such by the classis.
- 2) Pastors, churches, and classes are encouraged to take note of denominational resources available that provide assistance in the process of Article 17 separations, and to call upon outside resources or mediators when necessary (in addition to the involvement of classis representatives).
- 3) In all situations, councils and pastors shall utilize a formal separation agreement that identifies the publicly stated reason(s) for the separation, the effective date of the separation, the financial arrangements agreed upon by all parties, and other relevant information. This document shall be submitted to classis for its approval when the council formally requests the Article 17 separation. If the pastor and council disagree on specific matters, the areas of disagreement shall be clearly identified, and classis shall adjudicate those matters separately.
- 4) Classis minutes will concisely record the grounds for the separation—for example, family situation, conflict, continuing education, church closure, etc. Article 17 separations will be processed according to the guidelines set forth by synod and the appropriate denominational agencies. Councils and classes should take note of the regulations regarding “release from ministerial service” adopted by Synod 2024 (see *Acts of Synod 2024*, pp. 859-64) and Synod 1998 (see *Acts of Synod 1998*, pp. 392-96) and as amended by Synod 2010 (see *Acts of Synod 2010*, pp. 915-16).
- 5) Releases from calls issued jointly between a CRC council and a congregation in another denomination should be processed in accordance with the principles established by Synod 2024 (see *Acts of Synod 2024*, pp. 859-64).
- 6) 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.

ba. [unchanged]

~~cb.~~ [unchanged] . . .

- 2) In conjunction with the church council, the committee shall secure interim pastoral leadership, preferably a specialized interim pastor, and set goals. (~~ThrivePastor Church Relations~~ is able to assist with securing pastoral leadership.)

- 3) [unchanged] . . .

~~Note: Councils and classes should take note of the regulations regarding “release from ministerial service” adopted by Synod 1998 (see *Acts of Synod 1998*, pp. 392-96) and as amended by Synod 2010 (see *Acts of Synod 2010*, pp. 915-16).~~

Joel Vande Werken, chair of the Church Order Review Task Force, offers prayer.

II. Response to Overture 13: Do Not Adopt Proposed Addition of Church Order Article 23-d and Its Supplement

A. Materials

Overture 13, pp. 437-39

B. Preamble

Overture 13 raises a matter related to the report of the Study of Bivocationality Task Force that is recommended by Synod 2023 to Synod 2024 for adoption. The overture specifically asks that Synod 2024 not adopt the task force’s proposed addition of Church Order Article 23-d and its Supplement. The primary concern raised in Overture 13 is that the wording related to “proper support” is the exact same for commissioned pastors (Article 23-d) as it is for ministers of the Word (Article 15). The overture writers believe that this may result in diminishing the distinction between the offices and may place undue burdens on churches in nontraditional settings within the CRCNA.

While Advisory Committee 3 believes that it would be unwise not to adopt the proposed addition of Church Order Article 23-d and its Supplement, we recognize the potential for confusion in Article 23-d. For this reason, we recommend that synod adopt the changes to the Church Order recommended by Synod 2023, with one amendment to Article 23-d. (*Note: The amendment referred to here has already been proposed to and adopted by Synod 2024; see *Acts of Synod 2024*, pp. 852-53.*)

C. Recommendation

That synod not accede to Overture 13.

Grounds:

1. The amendment to include “as appropriate” in the proposed Supplement, Article 23-d largely addresses the concern(s) raised by Overture 13.