

ARTICLE 29

(The report of Advisory Committee 4 is continued from Article 24.)

Advisory Committee 4, Congregational Ministries, Rev. Daniel Meinema reporting, presents the following:

I. Ecclesiastical Marriage Task Force

A. Materials

Report of the Ecclesiastical Marriage Task Force, pp. 251-284

B. *Privilege of the floor*: Gerry Koning, chair; Gayle Doornbos, reporter; and Loren Veldhuizen

C. Recommendations

1. That synod instruct the Office of General Secretary to disseminate the report on ecclesiastical marriage to the churches of the CRC to serve as guidance regarding the issue of ecclesiastical marriage.

—*Adopted*

2. That synod strongly advise pastors of the CRC not to solemnize ecclesiastical marriages (as defined in this report) as sanctioned and solemnized solely by the church to the exclusion of the state (civil government) whereby a couple is considered “married in the eyes of the church but not in the eyes of the state.”

Grounds:

- a. The biblical record clearly teaches us to submit to the governing authorities in all matters that do not conflict with the Word of God.
- b. Historically, Reformed churches have acknowledged the role and right of civil authorities to regulate marriage in their jurisdictions.
- c. In both the United States and Canada there could be negative legal consequences for the participants and/or for pastors who solemnize a noncivil or ecclesiastical marriage.

—*Adopted*

3. That synod encourage the churches to respect and honor the marriages of immigrants who did not obtain a civil marriage prior to arriving in Canada or the United States and counsel them in the understanding of Christian marriage and its relationship to civil authority in our countries.

Grounds:

- a. It is not the case that in every country where immigrants have come from that the civil authorities regulate marriage, so it might not have been possible for a civil marriage to occur.
- b. In the interest of grace and acceptance, we want to acknowledge the beautiful marriage traditions that have developed in various cultures.

- 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.

ARTICLE 31

(The report of Advisory Committee 4 is continued from Article 29.)

I. Ecclesiastical Marriage Task Force

The committee presents an amended motion that was tabled earlier in the day:

3. That synod encourage the churches to respect and honor the marriages of Indigenous peoples, as well as those of immigrants who did not obtain a civil marriage under the oversight of their sovereign nations or prior to arriving in Canada or the United States, and counsel them in the understanding of Christian marriage and its relationship to civil authority in our countries.

Grounds:

- a. Indigenous cultural practices existed prior to the governmental authorities of the United States and Canada and are adjudicated under the oversight of sovereign nations.
- b. It is not the case that in every country where immigrants have come from that the civil authorities regulate marriage, so it might not have been possible for a civil marriage to occur.
- c. In the interest of grace and acceptance, we want to acknowledge the beautiful Christian marriage traditions that have developed in various cultures.
- d. The law is permissive but not prescriptive in this regard.

—*Adopted*

6. That synod accept this report as fulfilling the mandate of the Ecclesiastical Marriage Task Force and dismiss the task force with wholehearted thanks.

—*Adopted*

Appreciation is expressed to the members of the Ecclesiastical Marriage Task Force. Rev. Edward Yoon (Ko-Am) offers a prayer of thanksgiving.

(The report of Advisory Committee 4 is continued in Article 70.)

ARTICLE 32

(The report of Advisory Committee 3 is continued from Article 30.)

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

I. Calvin Theological Seminary

A. Materials

1. Calvin Theological Seminary Report, pp. 181-91