

C. *Recommendations:*

1. That synod express appreciation for the work of the committee.

—*Adopted*

2. That synod request the Historical Committee to submit its financial report for inclusion in the Agenda.

Ground: An annual budget of \$10,000 ought to be reviewed occasionally.

—*Adopted*

II. SYNODICAL COMMITTEE ON RACE RELATIONS (SCORR)

A. *Material:* Report 18.

B. *Recommendation:* That synod thank the committee and its executive secretary, Mr. Karl J. Westerhof, for the important work they are doing in carrying out their mandate.

—*Adopted*

III. CHRISTIAN LAYMEN'S LEAGUE

A. *Material:* Report 23.

B. *Information:* The Christian Laymen's League currently uses two primary means to accomplish its purpose. BLAST OFF is a Christian television program for children. Several hundred ORBITOR BIBLE CLUBS for children were conducted during 1972 throughout the United States and Canada.

C. *Recommendations:*

1. That synod express appreciation for the work of the League.

—*Adopted*

2. That synod continue to name a representative to the Christian Laymen's League.

—*Adopted*

(The report of Advisory Committee 11 is continued in Article 60.)

The session is closed with devotions.

MONDAY AFTERNOON, JUNE 18, 1973

Eleventh Session

ARTICLE 53

The session is opened with devotions.

Advisory Committee 7, *Foreign Missions*, the Rev. B. Huizenga reporting, presents the following: (The report of Advisory Committee 7 is continued from Article 26.)

COMMITTEE TO STUDY HOMOSEXUALITY

A. *Materials:*

Report 42

Communication 17

B. *Observations:*

The mandate of the committee as given by the Synod of 1970 was "to study the problem of homosexuality and to delineate the church's position on this matter" (Acts, 1970, p. 121). In the "grounds" supplied for the mandate, synod declared that homosexuality "is a growing problem in

today's society" and it therefore deemed it advisable to appoint a study committee to advise synod what the church's position ought to be.

For a proper reading and understanding of the report it is imperative to observe the careful definitions of and distinctions made in relation to the terms "homosexual," "homosexuality" and "homosexualism":

A "homosexual" is a person who has erotic attractions for members of the same sex. Such a person may or may not actually engage in homosexuality. "It must be pointed out that there are people who have strong erotic attractions for members of the same sex who nevertheless never engage in homosexual acts for various reasons, such as, for example, their religious convictions. They are homosexuals, that is, they are constitutionally (by either biological or psychological conditions or both) predisposed to homosexuality, but do not engage in homosexuality."

"Homosexuality" is a condition of personal identity in which the person is sexually oriented toward persons of the same sex.

"Homosexualism" is explicit (overt) homosexual practice.

C. Recommendations:

1. That the Rev. Clarence Boomsma, secretary of the Committee to Study Homosexuality be given the privilege of the floor when matters pertaining to this committee are considered. —*Adopted*

2. That synod submit the "Study Report Re Homosexuality" (Part 1) to our churches as providing a background study for our understanding of the problem of homosexuality and the formulation of a Christian position. —*Adopted*

3. Introductory Note:

For a proper reading and understanding of the pastoral advice it is imperative to observe the following definitions:

"A homosexual" is a person who has erotic attractions for members of the same sex. Such a person may or may not actually engage in homosexuality. "It must be pointed out that there are people who have strong erotic attractions for members of the same sex who nevertheless never engage in homosexual acts for various reasons, such as, for example, their religious convictions. They are homosexuals, that is, they are constitutionally (by either biological or psychological conditions or both) predisposed to homosexuality, but do not engage in homosexuality."

"Homosexuality" is a condition of personal identity in which the person is sexually oriented toward persons of the same sex.

"Homosexualism" is explicit (overt) homosexual practice.

That synod serve the churches with the following statements of pastoral advice:

a. Homosexuality (male and female) is a condition of disordered sexuality which reflects the brokenness of our sinful world and for which the homosexual may himself bear only a minimal responsibility. —*Adopted*

b. The homosexual may not, on the sole ground of his sexual disorder be denied community acceptance, and if he is a Christian he is to be wholeheartedly received by the church as a person for whom Christ died. —*Adopted*

c. Homosexuality—as explicit homosexual practice—must be condemned as incompatible with obedience to the will of God as revealed in Holy Scripture. —*Adopted*

d. The church must exercise the same patient understanding of and compassion for the homosexual in his sins as for all other sinners. The gospel of God's grace in Christ is to be proclaimed to him as the basis of his forgiveness, the power of his renewal, and the source of his strength to lead a sanctified life. As all Christians in their weaknesses, the homosexual must be admonished and encouraged not to allow himself to be defeated by lapses in chastity, but rather, to repent and thereafter to depend in fervent prayer upon the means of grace for power to withstand temptation. —*Adopted*

e. In order to live a life of chastity in obedience to God's will the homosexual needs the loving support and encouragement of the church. The church should therefore so include him in its fellowship that he is not tempted by rejection and loneliness to seek companionship in a "gay world" whose godless lifestyle is alien to a Christian. —*Adopted*

f. Homosexuals, especially in their earlier years, should be encouraged to seek such help as may effect their sexual reorientation and the church should do everything in its power to help the homosexual overcome his disorder. Members of the churches should understand that many homosexuals, who might otherwise seek therapeutic aid, are deterred from doing so by the fear of detection and consequent ostracism. Christian acceptance and support can in all such cases be a means toward healing and wholeness. On the other hand, to those who are not healed and who must accept the limitations of their homosexuality, the church must minister in the same spirit as when it ministers to all who are not married. —*Adopted*

g. Christians who are homosexual in their orientation are like all Christians called to discipleship and to the employment of their gifts in the cause of the kingdom. They should recognize that their sexuality is subordinate to their obligation to live in wholehearted surrender to Christ.

By the same token, churches should recognize that their homosexual members are fellow-servants of Christ who are to be given opportunity to render within the offices and structures of the congregation the same service that is expected from heterosexuals. The homosexual member must not be supposed to have less the gift of self-control in the face of sexual temptation than does the heterosexual. The relationship of love and trust within the congregation should be such that in instances where a member's sexual propensity does create a problem, the problem can be dealt with in the same way as are problems caused by the limitations and disorders of any other member. —*Adopted*

h. It is the duty of pastors to be informed about the condition of homosexuality and the particular problems of the homosexual in order that the pastor may minister to his need and to the need of others, such as parents, who may be intimately involved in the problems of homosexuality. The pastor is also in a position to instruct his congregation in

appropriate ways about homosexuality and to alert members and office holders to the responsibility they bear toward homosexuals in the fellowship. He can encourage an understanding of and compassion for persons who live with this sexual disorder, and dispel the prejudices under which they suffer. —*Adopted*

i. The church should promote good marriages, and healthy family life in which the relations between husband and wife and between parents and children are such that the psychological causes that may contribute to sexual inversion are reduced to a minimum. Parents should be encouraged to seek Christian counsel and help when they see signs of disordered sexual maturation in their children. —*Adopted*

j. Institutions and agencies associated with the church that are in a position to contribute to the alleviation of the problem of homosexuality are encouraged to do so by assisting ministers to become better informed, by offering counseling services to the homosexual and his family, and by generally creating a Christian attitude in the churches as well as in society as a whole. —*Adopted*

k. The church should speak the Word of God prophetically to a society and culture which glorifies sexuality and sexual gratification. It should foster a wholesome appreciation of sex and expose and condemn the idolatrous sexualism and the current celebration of homosexuality promoted in literature, the theater, films, television, advertisements and the like. —*Adopted*

4. That synod thank the study committee for its work. —*Adopted*

5. That synod consider this to be its answer to that part of Communion 17 dealing with this matter. —*Adopted*

ARTICLE 54

The session is closed with prayer and on Monday evening synod honors its special guests at a testimonial dinner.

TUESDAY MORNING, JUNE 19, 1973

Twelfth Session

ARTICLE 55

The morning session is opened with devotions. The roll is called. All delegates are present. The Monday minutes are read and approved.

ARTICLE 56

1. The Rev. L. Bazuin, speaking for the *Reception Committee*, introduces Dr. Herman Ridder, former President of Western and New Brunswick Seminaries and present pastor of the Central Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan, as the fraternal delegate from the Reformed Church in America. Dr. Ridder addresses synod and in the course of his address presents in behalf of the RCA Synod of 1973 two invitations to synod: a. To join a study committee composed of five representatives of each denomination whose mandate will be to study the theology of evangelism. b. To join in pilot projects in various shared ministries, such as: church planning, youth work, overseas ministries.