

of Reformed Churches (WCRC) (see Appendix A, *Agenda for Synod 2009*, p. 252).

—Adopted

4. That synod express its gratitude to the IRC for and receive for information its work in Appendix B, CRCNA Response to the Accra Confession: Covenanting for Justice (see *Agenda for Synod 2009*, p. 263).

—Adopted

5. That synod receive as information the decision of the IRC to change the name of the Interchurch Relations Committee (IRC) to the Ecumenical Relations Committee (ERC), effective July 1, 2009.

—Adopted

6. That synod grant time on its agenda for the IRC to make a formal informational presentation on the Belhar Confession in addition and prior to what the advisory committee may bring to the floor of synod for discussion.

—Adopted

(The report of Advisory Committee 7 is continued in Article 57.)

ARTICLE 27

Advisory Committee 6, Financial Matters, Rev. Bruce A. Persenaire reporting, presents the following:

I. Board of Trustees

A. Materials

1. Board of Trustees Report (section I, C; II, A, 9; B, 6; and C; including Appendices B, L-M), pp. 22-23, 28, 38-39, 52-69, 103-42
2. Board of Trustees Supplement (section II, B), including Appendix B

B. Observations

Our work as churches and the work of churches coming together as the CRCNA flows out of our response to God's call in the Great Commission. Christ-centered spirituality results in stewardship of all our gifts and in providing resources to enable the continued building of the kingdom of God.

With gratitude to God, we believe that the CRC in God's strength has contributed substantially to building the kingdom. With the gifts and resources we know are present, the work of the CRC is able to continue to be very strong both at the congregational level and at the denominational level.

Since a significant indicator of spirituality is generosity, the following focus on funding is for ministry to humanity and for the glory of God. Currently, ministry shares are a good way to make ministry work.

C. *Recommendations*: That synod address the following recommendations with regard to the Communal Covenantal Commitment Task Force report (II, A, 9 and Appendix B):

1. That synod affirm the ministry-share system as an effective means of carrying out ministry together as members of the CRCNA.

2. That synod request the BOT to instruct the executive director to convene an ethnically inclusive group to develop a statement of vision and strategy for increasing multiethnic representation within the leadership of the denomination and report to Synod 2010.

Ground: We believe the current structure of denominational leadership does not adequately address the fundamental concerns regarding advancement of people of color at all levels of congregational and denominational life.

—*Adopted*

(The report of Advisory Committee 1 is continued in Article 42.)

ARTICLE 36

The vice president introduces Dr. Gary J. Bekker, director of World Missions, who introduces a video presentation on Nigeria. The president of World Missions-Canada, Mrs. Jacoba (Ko) Spyksma, shares with delegates her experiences as a world missionary. After a second short video presentation, “On Sierra Leone,” the president of World Missions-U.S., Mr. Colin Watson, addresses three principles of ministry: partnerships, longevity, and leadership development. Dr. Bekker concludes the presentation following a third video on Guatemala.

ARTICLE 37

The president of synod, also the chair of the Interchurch Relations Committee, introduces panel members for discussion of the Belhar Confession: Dr. Harold Delhagan (Reformed Church in America), Dr. Peter Borgdorff (staff to the Interchurch Relations Committee), and Rev. Mothalentina Godfrey Betha (fraternal delegate from the Uniting Reformed Church in South Africa). The panel members spend time discussing the Belhar Confession.

The afternoon session is adjourned at 5:18 p.m. Rev. John Tenyenhuis leads closing prayer.

TUESDAY EVENING, June 16, 2009

Sixth Session

ARTICLE 38

The president resumes the chair.

Elder delegate Rika Vander Laan leads in opening prayer.

ARTICLE 39

Advisory Committee 9, Third Wave Pentecostalism, Rev. Leonard T. Riemersma, reporting, presents the following:

ARTICLE 53

The president of synod welcomes Mr. Andrew Ryskamp, director of CRWRC-U.S.A., who reads from James 2:14-17 and addresses synod regarding the HIV and AIDS programming and progress being made—33 million people live with HIV and AIDS. He presents a DVD on HIV and AIDS. Ms. Ida Kastra-Mutoigo, director of CRWRC-Canada, further addresses delegates regarding CRWRC's ministry, including the Canadian Foodgrains Bank and goatcanucksgoat initiative by Canadian citizens.

ARTICLE 54

The executive director addresses synod on the "state of the church" in creating and sustaining healthy congregations for the purpose of transforming lives and communities worldwide. He informs delegates regarding The Network: Connecting Churches for Ministry, the Leadership Exchange, Sustaining Congregational Excellence and Sustaining Pastoral Excellence, results of the recent Denominational Survey, and the present collaboration among the ministries in the CRC. He assures synod that the denomination is continuing to address financial concerns and that, in the end, this challenging situation will make the church stronger. He concludes that he is proud to be part of a church that is transforming lives and communities worldwide.

Delegates join in singing the doxology. The president of synod expresses thanks on behalf of synod. Synod watches a video presentation on the ministries of the CRCNA.

ARTICLE 55

The afternoon session is adjourned at 5:16 p.m. Rev. Dale Melenberg leads in closing prayer.

WEDNESDAY EVENING, June 17, 2009

Ninth Session

ARTICLE 56

Rev. Matthew M. Le leads in opening prayer.

ARTICLE 57

(The report of Advisory Committee 7 is continued from Article 26.)

Advisory Committee 7, Interdenominational Matters, Rev. Richard J. deLange, reporting, presents the following:

Interchurch Relations Committee

A. Materials

1. Interchurch Relations Committee Report, including Appendices A-D, pp. 242-314
2. Interchurch Relations Committee Supplement
3. Overtures 5 and 7, Communication 3

B. *Recommendation*: Concerning the Belhar Confession our advisory committee recommends the following:

That synod propose to Synod 2012 the adoption of the Belhar Confession as part of the standards of unity of the CRC (as a fourth confession) and the revision of Church Order Supplement, Articles 5, 23-a, and 32-d and the Public Declaration of Agreement to reflect that adoption.

Grounds:

1. It is important at this time for the CRC to formally state its commitment to, and live out, the biblical principles of unity, reconciliation, and justice.
2. Adopting the Belhar Confession is an important testimony to the membership of the CRC that together we stand firm on matters that are rooted in scriptural teaching and flow from the heart of God.
3. It is an important testimony to Reformed churches worldwide that the CRC will stand with them in matters of confessional integrity.
4. Adopting the Belhar Confession is consistent with the decision of Synod 1996 when it adopted the recommendations concerning *God's Diverse and Unified Family*.
5. This action would mean that the CRC is taking this step in concert with the RCA, a desire that previous synods have affirmed.
6. Since previous synods have expressed no difficulty with the Belhar Confession on biblical grounds, and given Dutch Reformed shortcomings over the past four hundred years (e.g., slave trade on the Gold Coast, numerous denominational schisms), this action would testify to our ecumenical partners and the world (as well as CRC members committed to unity, reconciliation, and social justice) that the CRC is taking a public stand to promote the principles of unity, reconciliation, and justice.
7. While there is no direct reference by name to the historic Reformed confessions in the Church Order itself, the Supplement to the Church Order Article 5 (the Form of Subscription), lists the confessions by name.
8. Allowing for a three-year period of reflection (2009-2012) is consistent with the intent of Church Order Article 47 and its Supplement for a confessional matter of this magnitude. The additional time is given to the churches to adequately study and reflect on the proposal and be better prepared for response.

First clerk Donald Dykstra leads in prayer before the vote.

—Adopted

The following negative votes are registered:

Jose Rayas (Arizona)—The Belhar Confession does not have the information which prohibits its misuse, and it does not rise to the levels of the three forms of unity.

John van der Woude (B.C. North-West)—The Uniting Reformed Church of South Africa, where the Belhar Confession originated, failed to achieve unity with the other Reformed Churches of South Africa. Since this confession

strives for unity and relief, we as the CRCNA should not have passed this motion.

Jack M. Gray (Central Plains)—As biblically beautiful as it is, the Belhar Confession does not reach the level of our historic three forms of unity.

Rev. Joel D. Vande Werken (Hudson)

Rodney De Boer (Minnkota)—I believe the Belhar Confession does not merit the level of confession in the CRC.

Jeffrey G. Heinen (Wisconsin)—While I appreciate that the Belhar Confession can be a valuable resource to the Christian Reformed Church, it should not be granted confessional status.

John C. Klompfen (Zeeland)—I do not believe the Belhar rises to the level of our historic confessions in spite of my appreciation for much of its content.

Ronald J. Meyer (Zeeland)—I wish to register my negative vote (on the Belhar Confession): though professedly biblical and largely ecumenical, it fails in my judgment to be distinctly Reformed and certainly not a candidate to be raised to the level of a Reformed standard of unity on a par with our three forms of unity.

(The report of Advisory Committee 7 is continued in Article 60.)

ARTICLE 58

The evening session is adjourned at 9:54 p.m. Elder delegate Marsha A. Strickland leads in closing prayer.

THURSDAY MORNING, June 18, 2009

Tenth Session

ARTICLE 59

Rev. Timothy L. Holwerda welcomes synod delegates and leads in opening prayer. Rev. Holwerda then leads in a responsive litany and announces “We Have Come to Join in Worship.” He reflects on unity and reads from Ephesians 4. Rev. Erick D. Westra reads from Galatians 3:26-28 and 1 Peter 2. Rev. Holwerda shares that “God has brought our beautiful diversity together into one cohesive family” and announces “People of God.” Elder delegate Kathy Vandergrift reads from Romans 15:1-7. Synod joins in singing “Bind Us Together.” Rev. Daniel R. Ackerman leads in a meditation on Ephesians 4:1-6. Rev. Raymond Slim leads in prayer. The time of worship concludes with the singing of *Psalter Hymnal* 540, vv. 1-4, “In Christ There Is No East or West.”

The roll indicates that the following delegates are absent: Derek Van Dalen (Arizona), Harvey J. Roosma (B.C. North-West), Jack J. Jansons (Columbia), Jacob (Jack) M. Van de Hoef (Huron), Leonard T. Riemersma (Lake Erie), and David A. Zylstra (Minnkota). Dirk D. Jasperse (California South) had to leave to return home for a funeral. Nancy J. Kwastenet (Chicago South) went home due to illness.

Elder delegate Marion J. Dykstra (Chicago South) replaces Hilda M. Ragon, who left to attend a wedding. She rises to express agreement with the forms of unity.

ARTICLE 60

(The report of Advisory Committee 7 is continued from Article 57.)

Advisory Committee 7, Interdenominational Matters, Rev. Richard J. deLange reporting, presents the following:

Interchurch Relations Committee

A. Materials

1. Interchurch Relations Committee Report, including Appendices A-D, pp. 242-314
2. Interchurch Relations Committee Supplement
3. Overtures 5 and 7, Communication 3

B. Recommendations

1. Concerning the Belhar Confession our advisory committee recommends the following:
 - a. That synod adopt the following statement in introducing the Belhar Confession to the CRCNA:

As Synod 2009 brings the Belhar Confession before the church for consideration, synod shares with the whole church the profound nature of this moment in the life of the church and therefore one that must not be entered into lightly but rather with godly fear and trembling, humbly trusting that we will be faithful to the gospel. With these understandings synod proposes to Synod 2012 the adoption of the Belhar Confession as a fourth confession of the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

Since Scripture is the only rule of faith and practice, our confessions are and must be historic and faithful witnesses to Scripture. Synod observes that the Belhar Confession truly expresses the biblical goals of unity, reconciliation, and justice; the church's commitment to these goals; and the fact that "true faith in Jesus Christ is the only condition for membership of this church" (The Belhar Confession, Article 2).

Synod further observes that, as a faithful witness to Scripture, the Belhar Confession does not negate the biblically derived statements of synod on homosexuality, including those of 1973 and 1996. Finally, synod recognizes that injustice and enmity between peoples are two dimensions of all-pervasive human sinfulness, for which every human being needs Jesus Christ as Savior.

—Adopted

b. That synod distribute Appendices C-1 and C-2 (*Agenda for Synod 2009*, pp. 282-84) and the above introductory statement along with the Belhar Confession to the churches between 2009 and 2012.

—Adopted

c. That Synod 2009 authorize the IRC to promote the study of the Belhar Confession in the churches during this consideration period, and designate the IRC to represent Synod 2009's proposal to adopt the Belhar Confession at the meeting of Synod 2012.

—Adopted

d. That synod express its gratitude to the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa for enriching the heritage of Reformed churches worldwide by developing and writing the Belhar Confession.

Grounds:

- 1) The themes of unity, reconciliation, and justice as expressed in the Belhar Confession are important dimensions of our common faith in obedience to the demands of biblical teaching.
- 2) The testimony of the Reformed family of churches from the Southern Hemisphere is an important contribution to the awareness and faith of churches in other parts of the world.
- 3) The Christian Reformed Church in North America wishes to stand in solidarity with brothers and sisters who together bear witness to all matters that reflect the heart of the gospel.
- 4) Synod 2009 affirms the decision of Synod 1990, which stated that "the Belhar Confession is in harmony with 'the Reformed faith as a body of truth' articulated in the historic Reformed confessions. . . ."

—Adopted

e. That synod declare this to be its response to Overtures 5 and 7 and Communication 3.

—Adopted

2. In light of the IRC report highlighting interfaith dialogue (*Agenda for Synod 2009*, p. 249), we note that in recent years there is increasing opportunity for interfaith dialogue. The Interchurch Relations Committee distinguishes such dialogue from what is normally called ecumenical relations in that interfaith dialogue involves persons from faiths other than the Christian faith. The purpose of interfaith dialogue is to foster better understanding between people of differing faiths living in a pluralistic society. In response to the observation of the IRC concerning interfaith dialogue, it is recommended

a. That synod authorize the expansion of the IRC's mandate to include interfaith dialogue to assist the CRC in its interreligious encounters.

Grounds:

- 1) The CRC on several occasions has been asked by ecumenical partners to participate in such dialogue.
- 2) While interfaith dialogue is to be distinguished from ecumenicity, there is sufficient overlap to warrant the expansion of the IRC mandate.