

*Ground:* A classis has the right to table a motion.

—Adopted

(The report of Advisory Committee 9 is continued in Article 70.)

#### ARTICLE 67

The Saturday-morning session is adjourned; Elder Donald Zwier leads in closing prayer.

### MONDAY MORNING, June 19, 1995

#### Eleventh Session

#### ARTICLE 68

Elder George N. Monsma, Jr., reads from Philippians 2:1-11. He announces *Psalter Hymnal* 424, "Spirit of the Living God," and leads in opening prayer.

The roll call indicates that Rev. Donald Wisse (Classis Hudson) is present for the first time and that Elder Ted S. Rozeboom (Classis Lake Erie) is replacing Elder Paul R. Bossenbroek. They rise to express agreement with the forms of unity. Rev. Robert J. Price (Classis Chicago South), Rev. German Moreno (Classis Florida), Rev. John Joldersma (Classis Minnesota North), Rev. Bert De Jong, Rev. Lambert J. Sikkema, Elder Ray H. Bouma (Classis Northern Illinois), and Elder Neal Afman (Classis Rocky Mountain) have returned to synod.

The general secretary introduces and welcomes Rev. Sam Buti and Rev. James Buys, fraternal delegates from the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa.

#### ARTICLE 69

(The report of Advisory Committee 4 is continued from Article 30.)

Advisory Committee 4, Publications, Rev. William T. Koopmans reporting, presents the following:

#### Clarification of public profession of faith for covenant children

##### A. *Materials*

1. Clarification of Public Profession of Faith for Covenant Children Report A, pp. 265-74
2. Clarification of Public Profession of Faith for Covenant Children Report B, pp. 275-303
3. Overture 17, pp. 371-73
4. Overture 18, pp. 373-75
5. Overture 19, pp. 375-76
6. Overture 84, pp. 605-06
7. Communication 12, p. 613

## B. Background

The issue of children participating in the Lord's Supper has been under study in the Christian Reformed Church for over a decade. In 1984 Classis Rocky Mountain asked synod to appoint a study committee on this subject. The committee reported in 1986. The majority report encouraged the participation of covenant children in the Lord's Supper after they have made public profession of their faith. The minority report held that the covenant status is the only requirement for admission to the Lord's table and that children of believing parents should be present at the table. Synod did not accept either report but asked for additional study.

The discussion focused on the prerequisites for admission to the Lord's table: personal faith or covenant status.

In 1988 the study committee came to synod with a majority report arguing that covenant children should be welcome at the table on the basis of their covenant status and their "desire to remember and proclaim the Lord's death until he comes." The committee did not envision a public profession of faith as part of the requirement. A minority report retained the requirement of a more formal public profession of faith.

3. [Synod 1988 declared that]:
  - a. The church is warranted in admitting to the Lord's Supper covenant children who give evidence of faith and are able to discern the body and remember and proclaim the death of Jesus in celebrating the Lord's Supper.  
.....
  - b. The church is to assure itself of such faith through public profession of faith on the part of covenant children.  
.....
  - c. Covenant children should be encouraged to make profession of faith as soon as they exhibit faith and are able to discern the body and remember and proclaim the death of Jesus in celebrating the Lord's Supper.  
.....
  - d. The profession of faith of covenant children required for admission to the Lord's Supper is not necessarily an acceptance of adult responsibilities within a congregation; therefore:
    - 1) the church shall continue to instruct these children in the Word and in the Reformed confessions;
    - 2) adult responsibilities of membership are to be granted by the church council and assumed by professing individuals at age eighteen or as granted by the Articles of Incorporation of the congregation.
4. That synod request the CRC Worship Committee to review the forms for public profession of faith in the light of these declarations concerning the public profession of covenant children.

(Acts of Synod 1988, pp. 558-60)

Synod 1991 appointed a committee "to clarify the requirement of public profession of faith for admission to the Lord's Supper on the part of younger covenant children" (Acts of Synod 1991, p. 785). The two grounds were that (1) "the implementation of the 1988 decision . . . has confronted the churches with numerous practical difficulties" and (2) "the clarification of the requirement for public profession of faith by younger members raises significant theological issues concerning the basis of participation in the Lord's Supper (the covenant or personal profession, for instance), which neither this committee nor synod is able to address properly at this time" (Acts of Synod 1991, p. 785).

In its 1993 report the clarification committee could not reach a consensus with regard to Ground 2 (above) and so concerned itself only with the practical

difficulties. Synod 1993 sent the report back to the committee. The study committee now presents two reports to Synod 1995. Report A argues for an expression of personal faith as a prerequisite for participation in the Lord's Supper, and Report B argues for covenant status as the prerequisite for participation.

### C. *The advisory committee's deliberations*

The advisory committee believes it will best serve synod and the denomination by presenting a unified recommendation. Though some committee members agreed with Report A and some with Report B and others wished to reject both A and B, in time a consensus position was built that brings together elements which were polarized by the two reports. Though "the Bible makes clear that participation in the Lord's Supper is a result of status in the covenant (Matt. 26:28; Luke 22:20; cf. Exodus 12; 13; 24:4-11; I Cor. 10:1-4; Eph. 2:11-13)," the majority was also convinced that "an act of faith on the part of those participating" is also required (I Cor. 11:23-29; John 6:35; Luke 22:19) (*Acts of Synod 1988*, p. 558). The consensus is built on the following key factors:

1. Most of the committee members did not find Report B's interpretation of I Corinthians 11 compelling enough to eliminate the need for an individual response of faith as a prerequisite to communion.
2. The committee judged that the recommendations of Report B diverged from the decisions of Synod 1988 instead of clarifying them.
3. Those within the advisory committee who are most appreciative of the B position can live with the A position. Some churches already have received professions of faith of rather young children, in effect making the practical differences between the two positions smaller than the underlying theological differences.
4. Some of the opposition to A stemmed from a desire to include a commitment to the creeds and confessions as part of the basis for profession of faith. The advisory committee strengthened Step 3 of the four-step process outlined in Report A by adding instruction in the basic meaning of the Ten Commandments and the Lord's Prayer along with the Apostles' Creed. Thus, the core of the Heidelberg Catechism would be used for preparation in profession of faith as has been the custom in most of our churches. If young children are allowed to profess a simple faith in Jesus as their Savior, assent to the creeds and confessions needs to be expressed later.
5. Some of the opposition to Report A stemmed from the proposed three categories of membership. The advisory committee is recommending only two categories of membership.

### D. *Recommendations*

1. That Rev. Dean Deppe and Dr. Robert C. De Vries (Report A) and Dr. Wayne A. Brouwer (Report B) be given the privilege of the floor when this report is being discussed.
- Granted*
2. That churches be encouraged to implement the decision of Synod 1988 (Art. 72, C, 3, a, b, c and Art. 76, B, 3, d) by use of the four-step procedure outlined in Report A and reproduced here with a modification in Step 3:

Step 1: The child expresses interest in participating in the Lord's Supper to his/her parent(s) or perhaps to a church-school teacher or another faith mentor within the church.

Step 2: The parent(s) discusses with the child the meaning of the sacrament and assesses the motivation of the child for participating. Convinced that this inquiry arises from a genuine stirring of the Spirit in the heart of the child, the parent(s) contacts an elder and/or pastor.

Step 3: The elder and/or pastor meets with the child and parent(s) to hear the testimony of the child with respect to his/her faith and desire to participate in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. It is recommended that the child then participate in a short process of preparation for profession of faith taught by a pastor, elder, church-school teacher, or potential faith mentor. This training will focus on the nature and meaning of the sacrament and on a basic explication of the Apostles' Creed, Ten Commandments, and the Lord's Prayer. It will be carried out at the cognitive level appropriate to the child. When satisfied with the faith commitment of the child, the elder and/or pastor will recommend to the council that this child be admitted to the table of the Lord. If the elder or pastor is unable to make such a recommendation, he will provide clear counsel and advice to the child and parent(s) on how to address the area(s) of concern. It may also be helpful to assign an adult faith mentor to nurture a child toward full adult responsibilities in the church after he/she is recommended for profession.

Step 4: The child makes a public profession of faith in a simple and appropriate manner during a regular worship service. Since baptism is commemorated during a worship service, the appropriation of the baptismal promises should also be celebrated during a public worship service. Furthermore, a regular worship setting offers an opportunity for the people of God to celebrate a child's first communion and to make public promises of support.

3. That the modified trial form of 1989 printed below be accepted as a form for public profession of faith by children.

Brothers and sisters in the Lord:

Today we are happy to celebrate God's grace in the lives of (names). When they were baptized, they were welcomed into the covenant family of God. Now they want to join that family at the Lord's table. So today they will respond in faith to God's promises in baptism, tell us of their faith in the Lord Jesus, and commit themselves to grow in that faith.

*The Questions*

- Q Whom do you trust as the Savior from your sin and the Lord of your life?  
A. I believe in Jesus Christ as my Savior and Lord.  
Q Do you know that you belong to the family of God through your baptism?  
A. I do.

*(Alternate Questions)*

- Q Do you believe in Jesus as your Savior and Lord?  
A. Yes, I believe that God sent him to die for all my sin and that he lives as the Lord of my life.  
Q What does your baptism mean to you?  
A. That I am a member of God's family.

Q Will you continue to learn more about God and his Word, and will you continue to serve him with us in your life and worship?

A. I will.

Q Will you allow us, your church family, to encourage you in your faith and hold you responsible to your commitment to Jesus and his church?

A. I will.

Q Congregation of Jesus Christ, will you welcome (names) the table of the Lord and continue to support him/her/them with your prayers and help him/her/them grow by the example of your discipleship?

A. I/we will, God helping me/us.

Q Do you desire to grow in your faith in God and service to him?

A. Yes, by learning more about God's Word, worshiping God with his people, and serving God with my life.

Q If you begin to weaken in faith and commitment, will you allow us as your church family to call you back to a strong relationship with Jesus and his church?

A. Yes, I will always need your help and prayers.

The questions may also be stated in such a way that the child gives a memorized answer or gives the answer in his/her own words.

Examples:

I love Jesus, who has paid for my sins on the cross.

I want Jesus to lead me and guide me.

I know that I belong to God's family through baptism.

I want to learn more about God and his Word and serve God with my life and worship.

*Welcome*

(names), because you have responded to your baptism by telling us of your personal faith in Jesus Christ, we now welcome you to join the family of God at the table of the Lord. Strengthened by this heavenly food and drink, we will travel together on the journey of faith that brings us to the promised land of God's kingdom.

*Prayer*

Our covenant God, we thank you for leading (names), your children, to the faith they expressed today. May the fellowship of the Lord's table strengthen them in faith and service to you. Help them to continue to learn more about you through your Word and to grow in faith and love with all your people. Bring us all, one day, to that great wedding feast, where, clothed in the white robes of Christ's righteousness, we will eat and drink with him in the heavenly kingdom forever. Amen.

*Hymn*

4. That each congregation devise an appropriate means for securing a commitment to the creeds of the Christian Reformed Church and to the responsibilities of adult membership in the local congregation from confessing members who, having attained the age of 18, have not yet made such a commitment.
5. That membership in the Christian Reformed Church be counted in two categories:
  - a. Baptized members—persons who have been baptized but not admitted to the Lord's Supper.

- b. Confessing members—persons who have been admitted to the Lord's Supper on the basis of a personal expression of their faith ("profession of faith"). Confessing members who have reached the age of 18 and who have made a commitment to the creeds of the Christian Reformed Church and the responsibilities of adult membership in the church shall be accorded the full rights and privileges of such membership.
6. That Church Order Article 59-a be divided into two parts to reflect these membership categories:

Article 59-a

Members by baptism shall be admitted to the Lord's Supper upon a public profession of their faith in Christ with the use of the prescribed form(s). Their membership shall be designated as "confessing member." The names of those who are to be admitted to the Lord's Supper shall be announced to the congregation for approval at least one Sunday before the public profession of faith.

Article 59-b

Confessing members who have reached the age of 18 and who have made a commitment to the creeds of the Christian Reformed Church and the responsibilities of adult membership in the church shall be accorded the full rights and privileges of such membership.

(Note: The current 59-b and 59-c would become 59-c and 59-d.)

7. That when a church council transfers memberships, it would note for the receiving church whether the confessing members have assented to the creeds and confessions and accepted the responsibilities of adult membership. (This should become Church Order Supplement, Art. 66-a.) The forms for transfer of membership may have to be modified to facilitate this.

*Grounds for Recommendations 2-7:*

- a. These actions will "clarify the requirement of public profession of faith for admission to the Lord's Supper on the part of younger covenant children" in a manner consistent with the decisions of Synod 1988.
- b. These actions serve the churches by giving some flexibility within a common structure.
8. That CRC Publications be encouraged to produce for the churches study materials containing the history, decisions, sample forms produced by the Worship Committee, and any other materials for children and adults which may provide congregations with guidance for implementing these decisions.
9. That the work of the study committee be declared completed and the committee be discharged with thanks for its services.
10. That synod declare this to be its answer to Overtures 17, 18, 19, and 84 and Communication 12.

The advisory committee recommendations are in agreement with Report A of the study committee.

According to the Rules for Synodical Procedure, the recommendations of Report B are read as information by Dr. Wayne Brouwer.

2. That synod recognize that there are two clearly distinct perspectives on the grounds for participating in the Lord's Supper—individual faith and communal faith—and that both perspectives have support in the tradition, theology, and practice of the church of Jesus Christ.
3. That synod allow room within our denomination for the differing practices which each perspective requires.

*Grounds:*

- a. There is probably no argument that is persuasive enough to cause advocates on either side to change their perspective.
  - b. This avoids the necessity of having to say that one perspective is right and the other wrong.
  - c. If a decision is made for one of the perspectives, a certain segment of the church will be alienated.
4. That the children of covenant families would follow the policy regarding participation in the Lord's Supper that is in effect in the local congregation.
  5. That our categories of membership be two: "baptized" members to describe our total church membership count and "corporate" members to describe those who are baptized, have reached the age of majority, have publicly professed their faith in Christ, and have committed themselves to the confessions, practices, and ministries of the church. Each local congregation would be free to decide how it wants to track the children who do or do not participate in the Lord's Supper.
  6. That when a church council transfers memberships, it would note for the receiving church whether the children involved have been participating in communion or not so that any pastoral problems arising from that issue can be addressed. Some modifications may need to be made in the forms for transfer of membership.
  7. That the following changes be made in the Church Order if the above recommendations are adopted by synod (the proposed changes are underlined; the brackets indicate present wording):
    - a. Article 3-a  
[Confessing] Corporate male members of the church who meet the biblical requirements are eligible for the offices of minister, elder, and evangelist.
    - b. Article 3-b  
All [confessing] corporate members of the church who meet the biblical requirements are eligible for the office of deacon.
    - c. Article 59-a  
Members by baptism shall be [admitted to the Lord's Supper] received into corporate membership in the Christian Reformed Church upon a public profession of Christ according to the Reformed creeds, with the use of the prescribed form. Before the profession of faith the consistory shall examine them concerning their motives, doctrine, and conduct. The

names of those [who are to be admitted to the Lord's Supper] involved shall be announced to the congregation for approval at least one Sunday before the public profession of faith.

d. Article 59-b

[Confessing] Corporate members coming from other Christian Reformed congregations shall be [admitted to communicant] received into corporate membership upon the presentation of certificates of membership attesting their soundness in doctrine and life.

e. Article 59-c

[Confessing] Corporate members coming from churches in ecclesiastical fellowship shall be [admitted to communicant] received into corporate membership upon presentation of certificates or statements of membership after the consistory has satisfied itself concerning the doctrine and conduct of the members. Persons coming from other denominations shall be admitted to [communicant] corporate membership only after the consistory has examined them concerning doctrine and conduct. The consistory shall determine in each case whether to admit them directly or by public reaffirmation or profession of faith. Their names shall be announced to the congregation for approval.

f. Article 66-a

[Confessing] Corporate members who remove to another Christian Reformed church are entitled to a certificate, issued by the council, concerning their doctrine and life. When such certificates of membership are requested, they shall ordinarily be mailed to the church of their new residence.

g. Article 81-c

[Confessing] Corporate members who have been excluded from membership in the church shall be received again into its fellowship upon repentance of their sin.

8. That the work of this committee be declared completed and the committee be discharged.

Synod returns to its consideration of the recommendations of the advisory committee.

2. That churches be encouraged to implement the decision of Synod 1988 (Art. 72, C, 3, a, b, c and Art. 76, B, 3, d) by use of the four-step procedure outlined in Report A, with a modification in Step 3.

Step 1: The child expresses interest in participating in the Lord's Supper to his/her parent(s) or perhaps to a church-school teacher or another faith mentor within the church.

Step 2: The parent(s) discusses with the child the meaning of the sacrament and assesses the motivation of the child for participating. Convinced that this inquiry arises from a genuine stirring of the Spirit in the heart of the child, the parent(s) contacts an elder and/or pastor.

Step 3: The elder and/or pastor meets with the child and parent(s) to hear the testimony of the child with respect to his/her faith and desire to



participate in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. It is recommended that the child then participate in a short process of preparation for profession of faith taught by a pastor, elder, church-school teacher, or potential faith mentor. This training will focus on the nature and meaning of the sacrament and on a basic explication of the Apostles' Creed, Ten Commandments, and the Lord's Prayer. It will be carried out at the cognitive level appropriate to the child. When satisfied with the faith commitment of the child, the elder and/or pastor will recommend to the council that this child be admitted to the table of the Lord. If the elder or pastor is unable to make such a recommendation, he will provide clear counsel and advice to the child and parent(s) on how to address the area(s) of concern. It may also be helpful to assign an adult faith mentor to nurture a child toward full adult responsibilities in the church after he/she is recommended for profession.

Step 4: The child makes a public profession of faith in a simple and appropriate manner during a regular worship service. Since baptism is commemorated during a worship service, the appropriation of the baptismal promises should also be celebrated during a public worship service. Furthermore, a regular worship setting offers an opportunity for the people of God to celebrate a child's first communion and to make public promises of support.

—Adopted

3. That the modified trial form of 1989 (printed above) be accepted as a suggested form for public profession of faith by children.

—Adopted

4. That each congregation devise an appropriate means for securing a commitment to the creeds of the Christian Reformed Church and to the responsibilities of adult membership in the local congregation from confessing members who, having attained the age of 18, have not yet made such a commitment.

—Adopted

5. That membership in the Christian Reformed Church be counted in two categories:

- a. Baptized members—persons who have been baptized but not admitted to the Lord's Supper.
- b. Confessing members—persons who have been admitted to the Lord's Supper on the basis of a personal expression of their faith ("profession of faith"). Confessing members who have reached the age of 18 and who have made a commitment to the creeds of the Christian Reformed Church and the responsibilities of adult membership in the church shall be accorded the full rights and privileges of such membership.

—Adopted

6. That Church Order Article 59-a be divided into two parts to reflect these membership categories:

Article 59-a

Members by baptism shall be admitted to the Lord's Supper upon a public profession of their faith in Christ with the use of the prescribed form(s). Their membership shall be designated as "confessing member." The names of those who are to be admitted to the Lord's Supper shall be announced to the congregation for approval at least one Sunday before the public profession of faith.

Article 59-b

Confessing members who have reached the age of 18 and who have made a commitment to the creeds of the Christian Reformed Church and the responsibilities of adult membership in the church shall be accorded the full rights and privileges of such membership.

(Note: The current 59-b and 59-c would become 59-c and 59-d.)

—*Recommitted*

7. That when a church council transfers memberships, it would note for the receiving church whether the confessing members have assented to the creeds of the Christian Reformed Church and accepted the responsibilities of adult membership. (This should become Church Order Supplement, Art. 66-a.) The forms for transfer of membership may have to be modified to facilitate this change.

—*Adopted*

8. That CRC Publications be encouraged to produce for the churches study materials containing the history, decisions, sample forms produced by the Worship Committee, and any other materials for children and adults which may provide congregations with guidance for implementing these decisions.

—*Adopted*

9. That the work of the study committee be declared completed and the committee be discharged with thanks for its services.

—*Adopted*

10. That synod declare this to be its answer to Overtures 17, 18, 19, and 84 and Communication 12.

—*Adopted*

(The report of Advisory Committee 4 is continued in Article 109.)

ARTICLE 70

(The report of Advisory Committee 9 is continued from Article 66.)

Advisory Committee 9, Rev. Lambert Sikkema reporting for the majority, presents the following: