

ARTICLE 66

Advisory Committee 9, Christian Day School Education, Rev. Hendrik P. Bruinsma reporting, presents the following:

Committee to Study Christian Day School Education

A. *Materials*: Committee to Study Christian Day School Education Report including Appendices, pp. 352-481

B. *Background and observations*

We praise God for the gift of Christian day school education and the fruit it has borne over the last 150 years in our congregations and in the world. We give thanks to God for all the leaders who have been trained in the classrooms of these schools and how these people have lived out and articulated the lordship of Christ in their various disciplines.

We also appreciate how the report helps us to look to the future. There are many challenges facing Christian schools, and this report provides assistance and suggestions for addressing these challenges.

Specifically, the advisory committee appreciates and our discussions addressed the following:

- We appreciate that the report reflects openness and encouragement to evangelism in the Christian schools.
- We appreciate that the report acknowledges the brokenness and hurt in these schools as well as our successes and that it also suggests strategies for addressing these concerns in a pastoral way.
- We appreciate the report's suggestions for small churches who struggle with a lack of resources to support Christian schools.
- We appreciate the call to diversity in Christian schools.
- We appreciate the report's addressing the issue of parental liberty without the report losing commitment and vision for Christian schools.
- Most of all, we appreciate that together we can affirm and sharpen our vision for biblical Reformed Christian day school education and look to a future where our sharpened vision can help assure that our schools will remain strong and grow in the years ahead.

The Committee to Study Christian Day School Education was appointed by Synod 2001 and reported to Synod 2003 with sixteen recommendations (*Agenda for Synod 2003*, pp. 360-64). Delegates to synod were challenged by this passionate reaffirmation of our historic commitment to Christian day schools, and they thought about its implications in the context of personal and corporate experience. Synod 2003 ended up adopting most of the committee's recommendations. These can be summarized as follows:

1. While honoring Christian liberty through respect for the various educational choices made in good faith by families, synod reaffirmed the CRC's historic commitment to Reformed Christian education from the elementary level through college and university (*Acts of Synod 2003*, p. 619).
2. Synod reaffirmed the Reformed emphases on covenant and kingdom of God as foundational for Reformed Christian schools and affirmed mission/evangelism as an additional block (*Acts of Synod 2003*, p. 620).

3. Synod affirmed that Christian day school education is a communal as well as parental responsibility and encouraged churches and groups of churches to develop and promote plans for congregational support so that all the church's children have an opportunity to receive an education where the lordship of Jesus Christ is acknowledged (*Acts of Synod 2003*, pp. 626, 627).
4. Synod adopted the following change for Church Order Article 71:

The council shall diligently encourage the members of the congregation to establish and maintain good Christian schools in which the biblical, Reformed vision of Christ's lordship over all creation is clearly taught. The council shall also urge parents to have their children educated in harmony with this vision according to the demands of the covenant.

Synod 2003 was not ready to recommend the report to the churches for study, guidance, and reflection on Christian education. Therefore, Synod 2003 mandated the committee to augment its study with special attention to three matters. These were:

1. The relationship between the church's commitment to Christian education and its commitment to evangelism;
2. Ways in which small churches can fulfill their baptismal obligations with respect to Christian education; and
3. How to deal with the brokenness and division in churches where not all have the same financial resources, commitments, and sensitivities concerning Christian education (*Acts of Synod 2003*, pp. 630-31).

The committee's response to the new mandate has resulted in a report and recommendations that go a long way toward addressing the concerns raised in 2003. They lead us to celebrate the gift our denomination has in its Reformed worldview that nurtures thinking about all of life in terms consistent with the lordship of Christ. The Christian education borne of this worldview has not only blessed generations within the Christian Reformed Church, it has also been our gift to others. We also note that this new report not only claims that Christian day school education need not be a barrier to evangelism but also challenges believers to see the classroom of the Christian school as an aid to and context for evangelism.

The 2005 report differs from the 2003 report in several respects. Section III is new. It deals with some of the matters that pertain to the relationship between the church's commitment to Christian education and its commitment to evangelism. After making the case that Christian schools have done much to nurture the continuity of the Reformed worldview within the church and to strengthen the church's witness to the world with a framework for interpreting the world from a viewpoint that is Reformed, it goes on to say that Christian schools help the church with the task of discipleship. After all, following Jesus involves more than knowing basic doctrine and giving attention to private matters of the soul. While frankly acknowledging the fact that the implementation of a strong commitment to Christian day schools has too often had unintended consequences, which at times have caused pain, it maintains that the vision of such a comprehensive approach to discipleship is a gift that

we must not lose. Whether we are training new believers in the faith or instructing the children of believers, we must be guided by the same robust understanding of what it is to follow our Lord.

In response to the additional mandate, material in section V (Biblical and theological foundations) has been rewritten and elaborated in order to clarify what the report means by evangelism/mission and how the mission mandate of Matthew 28:18-20 is to be understood in relationship to the cultural mandate of Genesis 1:27-30.

Section VII, A, which is also new, explores foundational elements for dealing with the brokenness and pain that can (and sometimes does) occur where not all have the same financial resources, commitments, and sensitivities concerning Christian education. Section VII, B, especially, gives the answer of the committee to the question of how small churches can with imagination explore what it means to fulfill their baptismal obligations with respect to Christian education.

The 2005 report is much more explicit and direct in challenging the Christian school movement and its supporters to live up to the ideals of good Christian scholarship, high expectations of exemplary Christian discipleship, and genuine inclusiveness, including warnings against isolation and ghettoization. The 2005 report will require more of our churches in terms of self-examination and reflection and openness to correction and renewal.

Some of the new elements in the report address the variety of ways in which the church's evangelistic task and its commitment to education mutually support each other—a conclusion already reached by Synod 2003. What the new report does is to spell out ways in which church and school, while retaining their own distinctive identity and task, nonetheless can mutually support each other and cooperate in carrying out their calling to be faithful witnesses to the gospel of Jesus Christ and the claims of his lordship. The report and its recommendations call the CRC and its members to serious reflection on the degree to which they are actively living out the Reformed vision in their congregations and the schooling of their children. The report also proposes specific ways in which Christian educators and Christian schools can help the church's mission efforts to reach the lost and ways in which the church and its agencies can support and also make use of the schools' assistance in the overall witness of God's people in the world.

While we do recommend this report to the churches for study and discussion, we concede that for many its length may thwart its usefulness. Therefore, we also recommend that a more concise document be made available to the churches.

We also call synod to give attention to its own rules as they apply to the adoption of a change of Church Order Article 71 by Synod 2004. Normally a synod will recommend a church order change and a following synod may be asked to adopt it.

This process was not followed in 2004. Therefore, we recommend the adoption of the change to Article 71 of the Church Order.

C. *Recommendations*

1. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Dr. Dan Vander Ark, chair, and Dr. John Bolt, reporter.

—*Granted*

2. That synod adopt the change to Church Order Article 71 recommended by Synod 2003 (changes in bold).

The council shall diligently encourage the members of the congregation to establish and maintain good Christian schools **in which the biblical, Reformed vision of Christ's lordship over all creation is clearly taught. The council shall also** urge parents to have their children educated in harmony with this vision according to the demands of the covenant.

—Adopted

3. That synod declare that the purpose of all Christian education, in the home, in the church, and in the school, is to tell the story of God, his people, and his world, with the goal that children become active participants in that story and accept as their own the mission of God's people in his world (section III).

—Adopted

4. That synod advise the members and churches of the CRC to consider the responsibilities they bear both for Christian education and for doing evangelism as vitally important and complementary and declare that support for Christian education should never be used to undermine the work of evangelism and that evangelistic outreach should never be given as a ground for failing to support Christian day school education (sections III and IV).

Grounds:

- a. Both tasks flow from a Reformed understanding of Christian discipleship rooted in the covenant and kingdom of God as well as the mission of God's people in the world.
- b. Both tasks are callings placed before the CRC, its congregations, and through its officebearers to its members by Church Order Articles 71, and 73-77.
- c. Consideration of this dual calling and recognition of the diversity of gifts and interests of Christian believers are the essential first steps in diffusing potential tension and conflict in congregations regarding Christian education.

—Adopted

5. That synod give thanks to God for bringing the CRC *anno domini* 2005 to new circumstances of greater diversity thanks to new churches and members and declare this to be a wonderful opportunity to bear witness to the Reformed vision of an integral Christian education wherever it takes place—in the home, school, or church. That synod also urge all the members and churches of the CRC to give leadership to the many other Christians who are increasingly opting for some kind of Christian education (section IV, A, 4).
6. That synod encourage all the member churches of the CRCNA to commit themselves in the church calendar year 2005-2006 to study, reflection, and self-examination as to the Reformed identity of their faith and practice as individual believers and as congregations. Use of denominational

statements and study guides available from CRC Publications is recommended (section VII, C).

Grounds:

- a. The occasion of significant discussion about Christian education is a great opportunity to consider the meaning of our Reformed identity and the nature of a Reformed understanding of Christian discipleship in our world.
- b. Our Reformed confessional heritage is a gift from God, and we are called to be good stewards of the Reformed biblical worldview of Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Consummation, which is a needed message in our religiously confused times.
- c. There are concerns in the CRCNA about the strength of our Reformed identity, our understanding of it, and our commitment to it.

—*Adopted*

7. That synod urge all parents, as they face an increasing number of options for educating their children, to examine carefully and prayerfully whether the schools they are considering are in harmony with the Reformed Christian vision of life where the lordship of Jesus Christ over all creation is clearly taught (section VI, A, 2).

Ground: This consistent vision of Christian education is set forth in Church Order Article 71.

—*Adopted*

8. That synod urge parents whose children attend Reformed Christian day schools, and CRC members who support these schools, to stay informed and be vigilant in helping such schools retain their Reformed identity and character (section VI, A, 1).

Ground: This consistent vision of Christian education is set forth in Church Order Article 71.

—*Adopted*

9. That synod urge parents whose children attend Christian day schools, and CRC members who support these schools, to stay informed and be vigilant in helping their schools be truly inclusive communities where diversity does not create unnecessary barriers to any student's full involvement in the life of the school (section VI, B, 1, 2, and 6).

Ground: This is a mandate of the gospel (James 2) and an implication of the CRC's commitment to becoming a more diverse community.

—*Adopted*

10. That synod instruct the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA to encourage and assist all CRC agencies in the implementation of the denominational strategy of including "Christian day school education in a full-orbed CRCNA mission program" (BOT Minute 2592, 3) (section VI, A, 5).

Grounds:

- a. Reformed Christian day school education is important for equipping a leadership for the CRC that is committed to the Reformed faith.
- b. In view of the growing secularization of public schools, the Reformed tradition's long practice of good Christian education is an integral part of our Reformed kingdom witness and mission to our fellow citizens. This is one of our distinctive contributions to the growth of God's kingdom in North America.
- c. There is a growing awareness among evangelicals in mission work globally that evangelism and missions in our world are incomplete without distinctly Christian education at all levels (section VII, C, 3, p. 437).

—Adopted

11. That synod provide the following advice to small churches with respect to Church Order Article 71 and Christian day school education (section VII, B):
 - a. That councils of small churches continue to encourage preaching that is consistent with the Reformed world-and-life view and that recognizes and promotes Christ's lordship over all areas of life as articulated in *Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony*.
 - b. That councils of small churches urge parents to have their children educated in harmony with the Reformed vision of Christ's lordship over all creation. Where possible, councils shall diligently encourage the members of the congregation to establish and maintain good Christian schools.
 - c. That councils encourage parents who need to supplement the day school education with faith-based materials, or parents who home-school, to consider publications from organizations that produce excellent curricular materials that support the Reformed vision of Christian education such as Christian Schools International (CSI), Society of Christian Schools in British Columbia (SCSBC), Prairie Association of Christian Schools (PACS), or Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools (OACS).
 - d. That churches be encouraged to intentionally use Faith Alive Publications' curriculum and materials based on a Reformed vision for as many of its youth and adult educational programs as possible.
 - e. That churches encourage their youth to attend Reformed Christian colleges and universities via scholarships, campus visits, and other ways. (See Recommendation 14, *Acts of Synod 2003*, p. 629.)
 - f. That those responsible for adult education in the churches promote the Reformed vision of Christian education by (1) encouraging the discussion of books and articles supporting this vision, (2) inviting speakers who are insightful advocates of Christian education to lead workshops, and (3) including materials on Christian education in their libraries.

—Adopted

12. That synod instruct the Board of Trustees to ask CRC Publications (if possible, in cooperation with CRC Home Missions and Christian school organizations) to investigate the prospect of producing a curriculum to be used by churches, Christian parents, or youth leaders to help integrate faith and learning.

Ground: This would help to ensure that the “Reformed vision of Christ’s lordship over all creation” (Church Order Art. 71) could be more clearly taught to the youth and more clearly understood by all involved in giving leadership to the youth of the church.

—*Adopted*

13. That synod instruct Denominational Services to develop a best-practices resource file for small churches, enabling the sharing of insights and programs that creatively implement the intentions of Article 71 (section VII, B).
14. That synod declare the following statements to be the Christian Reformed Church’s understanding of the relationship between our commitment to Reformed Christian day schools and the church’s work of doing evangelism in North America (section VII, C, 1):

—*Adopted*

- a. The very presence of Reformed Christian day schools in our increasingly secular public square is itself a Christian witness, a testimony to the lordship of Jesus Christ; their existence is to be celebrated and their mission to be encouraged.
- b. Institutionally, Christian day school education is not the responsibility of the official church. In mission situations, especially in cases of great need, it may be necessary for the church to engage in such activities as education as part of its larger ministry. Such activity should be ad hoc and temporary in nature and should strive toward indigenous ownership and governance.
- c. CRC mission activity in North America is to be guided by an *integral* vision of Christian discipleship with a view toward establishing solid families and communities and Christian day schools as well as worshipping congregations.

Ground: This is in keeping with the BOT’s denominational strategy statement.

By the year 2002, the CRC will have developed a deeper understanding of and response to God’s claim to obedience in all areas of our lives (business, labor, government, media, health, education, justice, peace, affluence, pursuit of pleasure, earthkeeping, racial relationships, etc.).

(*Agenda for Synod 1997*, p. 61)

- d. CRC members who are actively involved in Christian education are encouraged to consider their calling to be evangelists in a threefold sense:
 - 1) In their personal lives and conduct as teachers to demonstrate their own personal commitment to Jesus Christ and use all appropriate

means to nurture the faith and spiritual development of their students.

- 2) To pursue their vocations as a means of testifying to the lordship of Jesus Christ and in that way bear witness to the world.
- 3) To pursue creative ways of using their gifts as educators to be *directly* evangelistic, either in specific mission situations (e.g., teaching English as a second language) or by encouraging the schools in which they work to be creative in reaching out to the lost with the good news of the gospel.

—*Adopted*

(The report of Advisory Committee 9 is continued in Article 69.)

ARTICLE 67

Delegate Rev. William J. Renkema reads from 2 Corinthians 5:20 and leads in closing prayer. The afternoon session is adjourned at 5:09 p.m.

THURSDAY EVENING, June 16, 2005 Thirteenth Session

ARTICLE 68

Dr. Peter Borgdorff, executive director of ministries, announces *Psalter Hymnal* 475, “Praise, My Soul, the King of Heaven” and leads in opening prayer. He reads from Isaiah 61 and Ephesians 4 and reflects on his years of service to the church. Dr. Borgdorff addresses synod on what makes a healthy church. In conclusion, he reads from Ephesians 3.

ARTICLE 69

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

Advisory Committee 9, Christian Day School Education, Rev. Hendrik P. Bruinsman reporting presents the following:

Committee to Study Christian Day School Education

A. *Materials*: Committee to Study Christian Day School Education Report including Appendices, pp. 352-481

C. *Recommendations* (continued)

15. That synod declare the following statements to be the Christian Reformed Church’s understanding of the relationship between our commitment to Reformed colleges and universities and the church’s work of doing evangelism in North America (section VII, C, 2):
 - a. The very presence of Reformed colleges and universities in our increasingly secular public square is itself a Christian witness, a testimony to the lordship of Jesus Christ; their existence is to be celebrated and their mission and work encouraged.

- b. Reformed colleges and universities are encouraged to see themselves as being in a global mission context and are urged to guide their work by an *integral* vision of Christian discipleship in which academic concerns do not overshadow the spiritual and evangelistic components of the educator's task.
- c. CRC members who are actively involved in teaching at the college and university level are encouraged to consider their calling to be evangelists in a threefold sense:
 - 1) In their personal lives and conduct as teachers to demonstrate their own personal commitment to Jesus Christ and use all appropriate means to nurture the faith and spiritual development of their students.
 - 2) To pursue their vocations as a means of testifying to the lordship of Jesus Christ and in that way bear witness to the world.
 - 3) To pursue creative ways of using their gifts as educators to be *directly* evangelistic, either in specific mission situations (e.g., teaching English as a second language), or, in the case of those teaching at our Reformed colleges and universities, by encouraging the schools in which they work to be creative in reaching out to the lost with the good news of the gospel.

—Adopted

16. That synod declare the following statements to be the Christian Reformed Church's understanding of the relationship between our commitment to Reformed Christian day schools and the church's work of world missions (section VII, C, 3):

- a. Although establishing Christian day schools is not, in the first place, the task of the official church, in mission situations, especially in cases of great need, it may be necessary for the church to engage in such activities as education as part of its larger ministry. Such activity should be ad hoc and temporary in nature and should strive toward indigenous ownership and governance.
- b. CRC mission activity around the world is to be guided by an *integral* vision of Christian discipleship with a view toward establishing solid families and communities and Christian day school as well as worshiping congregations.

Ground: This is in keeping with the BOT's denominational strategy statement.

By the year 2002, the CRC will have developed a deeper understanding of and response to God's claim to obedience in all areas of our lives (business, labor, government, media, health, education, justice, peace, affluence, pursuit of pleasure, earthkeeping, racial relationships, etc.).

(Agenda for Synod 1997, p. 61)

- c. That CRWM be encouraged to seek out allies and avenues in encouraging Christian higher education opportunities in its mission fields outside North America.

Grounds:

- 1) This is consistent with, and a complement to Recommendation 15, b above.
 - 2) From the strength of our theology and practice, the CRC has a golden opportunity today to provide needed assistance to and leadership for the global church and its mission work around the world.
- d. CRC members who are actively involved in Christian education are encouraged to consider their calling to be evangelists on the world scene by pursuing creative ways of using their gifts as educators to be *directly* evangelistic in global contexts (e.g., teaching English as a second language).

—*Adopted*

17. That synod give thanks to God for the visionary leadership of CRWM in developing a strong educational mission ministry around the world; for the many missionaries who have served our Lord and his church so well in diverse educational settings in Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America, and the Pacific; and dedicate a time of prayer asking the Lord for increased opportunities for educational mission service, for missionaries to supply new posts, and for the financial resources to send them (section VII, C, 3).

—*Adopted*

18. That synod encourage all its member churches to develop goals, strategies, and processes toward the healthy resolution of differences and conflicts (section VII, A).

Grounds:

- a. The changes and cultural pressures underscored in this report make it clear that building authentic community needs to be a high priority for the church at this point in its history.
- b. Christ's high priestly prayer makes it clear that disunity in the church undermines the gospel message (John 17:20-23).

—*Adopted*

19. That synod instruct the Synodical Ministerial Candidacy Committee to include as a ministry standard for Church Order Article 6, 7, and 8 candidates a knowledge of the CRC's position on and commitment to Christian day school education. This report could serve as part of the required reading for ministry candidates (section VII, C, 2).

—*Adopted*

20. That synod instruct the Board of Trustees to develop a summary document using the 2005 synodical report and synodical recommendations, as well as other applicable denominational materials on Christian day school education to clearly articulate the CRC position on Christian day school education. This document should be designed to be useful for our local congregations and for the purpose of education, training, and encouragement in the denomination as a whole.

—*Adopted*

21. That synod commend the summary of the CRC's position on Christian day school education to the churches for study and discussion.

—Adopted

22. That synod declare the work of the committee completed and dismiss the committee with thanks.

—Adopted

Delegate Rev. Carl J. Afman leads in a prayer of thanks for educational mission ministry around the world.

ARTICLE 70

Elder delegate Mr. Mike Van Dyke reads from 2 Timothy 1 and leads in closing prayer remembering especially Mr. Ken Draayer, brother of delegate Rev. Thomas D. Draayer, who was recently diagnosed with a brain tumor. The evening session is adjourned at 9:06 p.m.

FRIDAY MORNING, June 17, 2005

Fourteenth Session

ARTICLE 71

Rev. Sam Hamstra, Jr., announces "Zion/We're Marching to Zion" and *Sing! A New Creation* 106, "Soon and Very Soon."

Delegate Rev. Robert J. Price, pastor of Roseland CRC, Chicago, Illinois, reads from Revelation 21:1-5, 22, 23 and addresses synod regarding "The New City." He announces "Have You Heard of the City?"

ARTICLE 72

The roll indicates that all delegates are present.

Note: Rev. Douglas R. Fauble (Holland) and Rev. Bernard J. Haan (Iakota) are absent with notice.

ARTICLE 73

(The report of Advisory Committee 2 is continued from Article 52.)

Advisory Committee 2, Synodical Services II, Rev. John A. Ooms reporting, presents the following:

I. Board of Trustees

A. *Materials:* Board of Trustees Report (II, B, 2, a; Appendices D, D-1, D-2, pp. 35, 54-60)

B. Recommendations

1. That Ms. Beth Swagman, Director of the Office of Abuse Prevention, be given the privilege of the floor.

—Granted