

V. Overture 3: Commission a Study of Church as *Institution* and *Organism*

A. *Materials*: Overture 3, pp. 466-69

B. *Background*

The material in Overture 3 reflects the reality that we live in a society and belong to a church that is to some extent characterized by polarization and lack of trust. In this context, church members on occasion feel that denominational leaders, denominational agencies, and ecclesiastical assemblies speak on behalf of the church in areas beyond their mandate or competence. Overture 3 addresses this polarization and lack of trust.

The overture touches on deep pastoral concerns and raises large theological issues, such as the nature and calling of the church and how it engages the world. These issues should be addressed, but the normative way to begin addressing such weighty and consequential matters would be by studying Scripture and the confessions that the church has adopted. A study of the distinction between church as institution and church as organism offers too narrow an approach to these matters—one that does not draw on biblical images or other available theological models.

C. *Recommendation*

That synod not accede to Overture 3.

Ground: This overture engages a broad range of issues, pastoral as well as theological, but offers a framework that is too narrow for addressing those issues comprehensively.

—*Defeated*

(The report of Advisory Committee 1 is continued in Article 78.)

ARTICLE 69

The afternoon session adjourns at 5:15 p.m. Elder delegate Mr. Michael Schuller leads in closing prayer.

WEDNESDAY EVENING, June 13, 2012 Twelfth Session

ARTICLE 70

Elder delegate Ms. Carolyn P. Dieleman leads in opening prayer.

ARTICLE 71

Advisory Committee 9, Creation Stewardship, Mr. Lawrence Hoogerhyde, Sr., reporting, presents the following:

Creation Stewardship Task Force

A. *Materials*

1. Creation Stewardship Task Force, including Appendices A-G, pp. 287-411
2. Overtures 55-60

B. *Introductory observations*

From the beginning, especially in light of the submitted overtures, the advisory committee noted the following:

- The time constraints for both the task force and the churches to respond were significant.
- Issues regarding some aspects of pertinent biblical Reformed theology needed to be addressed.
- Some of the overtures presented thoughtful doubts and hesitations about the emerging global scientific consensus on the issues of global warming and climate change (see *Agenda for Synod 2012*, p. 374).

The committee prayerfully considered these issues throughout our discussion. As a result of our deliberations, we believe that they should not prevent synod from adopting the following recommendations.

C. *Recommendations*

Reaffirmations

1. That synod re-affirm biblical principles of responsible dominion, care, and stewardship of creation as articulated in *Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony* and referenced in section IV, A of the Creation Stewardship Task Force report (*Agenda for Synod 2012*, pp. 295-301; *Contemporary Testimony*, par. 7-10, 13, 15, 18, 23-25, 43, 44, 50, 51, 55-58; see also par. 16).
—Adopted
2. That synod reaffirm that continually emerging science is a valid and necessary means for knowledge about God’s world and should therefore guide us in our love of God and neighbors, including care for the creation (see par. 50 of the *Contemporary Testimony*).
—Adopted

Statements

3. That synod recognize that
 - a. It is the current near-consensus of the international scientific community that climate change is occurring and is very likely due to human activity.
—Adopted

The following negative vote is registered: Rev. Tom Van Engen (Heartland).

- b. Human-induced climate change is an ethical, social justice, and religious issue.

Grounds:

- 1) Such climate change poses a significant threat to future generations, the poor, and the vulnerable.
- 2) Such climate change poses a significant challenge to us all.
- 3) We are called to “commit ourselves to honor all God’s creatures and to protect them from abuse and extinction, for our world belongs to God” (*Contemporary Testimony*, par. 51).

—Adopted

The following negative votes are registered: Rev. Tom Van Engen (Heartland) and Mr. Roger Sparks (Minnkota).

- c. Therefore, even when scientific uncertainties are taken into account, the precautionary principle (e.g., Overture 60, *Agenda for Synod 2012*, p. 594) compels us to take private and public actions to address climate change.

—Adopted

The following negative vote is registered: Rev. Tom Van Engen (Heartland).
(The report of Advisory Committee 9 is continued in Article 74.)

ARTICLE 72

The evening session adjourns at 9:30 p.m. Ms. Kyla Smits (young adult representative) leads in closing prayer, and delegates sing *Psalter Hymnal* 461, “Beautiful Savior.”

THURSDAY MORNING, June 14, 2012 Thirteenth Session

ARTICLE 73

Rev. Gordon Pols leads in the call to worship, and delegates sing “Sing Praise to the Lord, You People of Grace.” Delegates respond with a responsive reading from Psalm 8 and say the Lord’s Prayer. Following the charge, delegates sing “We Celebrate the Unity of the Spirit.”

The roll indicates that all delegates are present.

ARTICLE 74

(The report of Advisory Committee 9 is continued from Article 71.)

Advisory Committee 9, Creation Stewardship, Mr. Lawrence Hoogerhyde, Sr., reporting, presents the following:

Creation Stewardship Task Force

A. *Materials*

1. Creation Stewardship Task Force, including Appendices A-G, pp. 287-411
2. Overtures 55-60

B. *Recommendations* (continued)

Call to Action

1. That synod call upon the churches, members, and denominational bodies to be voices for justice and public examples in the effort to live sustainably within our God-given resources, to promote stewardship in our own communities and our nations, and to seek justice for the poor and vulnerable among us and for future generations.

—Adopted

2. That synod call upon the churches and their members to reduce individual and collective carbon emissions to the atmosphere. We should examine energy choices in our homes, lives, businesses, farms, and institutions from a perspective of stewardship, challenging ourselves to use less energy and to use it more wisely.
—Adopted
3. That synod call upon the churches and their members to consider and advocate for public strategies that reduce carbon emissions and move us toward very low or zero net emissions.
—Adopted
4. That synod call upon the churches, their members, and appropriate denominational agencies and institutions to respond with generosity and compassion to people and places negatively affected by climate change, as well as to make efforts to mitigate it. This includes advocating with our governments to take the necessary actions in an effective global framework to assist populations that are bearing the brunt of the negative effects of climate change while being the least able to cope.
—Adopted
5. That synod direct the BOT to ensure that educational resources and programs are identified and made widely available to congregations, schools, and other groups in order to promote participation in the urgent global conversation concerning care for the creation.
—Adopted
6. That synod request the BOT to review the operational practices of major CRC agencies and institutions in the light of this report's conclusion concerning the need to exercise robust leadership in caring for the creation and addressing a changing climate, including the need to reduce our denominational carbon emissions.
—Adopted
7. That synod request the BOT to encourage several appropriate creation care organizations to apply for placement on the list of accredited non-denominational agencies recommended for financial support submitted for approval to Synod 2013.
—Adopted
8. That synod accept this report as fulfilling the mandate of the Creation Stewardship Task Force and thank them for their work.
—Adopted
9. That synod request that members of the task force make themselves available for approximately twelve months for forums, discussions, and educational sessions around the denomination.
—Adopted
10. That synod commend the Creation Stewardship Task Force report to the churches as a guide for prayer and discussion, and for direct action and advocacy when and where appropriate.
—Adopted

11. That synod consider these recommendations to be its response to Overtures 55-60.

—*Adopted*

Dr. Linda Naranjo-Hueble prays for Dr. Joe Pel, whose grandmother passed away; the Belleville Community that is dealing with a misconduct situation; and the Benjamin Ribbens family as they grieve.

(The report of Advisory Committee 9 is continued in Article 76.)

ARTICLE 75

A delegate presents the following motion:

That synod call upon the churches to be gracious and accepting of each other in the context of the Creation Stewardship Task Force report. We hold to our unity in Christ. We receive each other in love. We encourage each other to be more stewardly to the glory of God. We encourage the churches to not live in fear but in the knowledge that God's Spirit renews the face of the earth (Ps. 104:30) and that his Spirit is with us (Hag. 2:5).

—*Adopted*

ARTICLE 76

(The report of Advisory Committee 9 is continued from Article 74.)

Advisory Committee 9, Creation Stewardship, Mr. Lawrence Hoogerhyde, Sr., reporting, presents the following:

Creation Stewardship Task Force

B. Recommendations (continued)

Call to Action

In response to section XI, 1 of the task force's report regarding the "Doctrine of Discovery" (p. 348), the Advisory Committee recommends:

That synod affirm the necessity for the CRC to examine, better understand, and respond to the "Doctrine of Discovery" and related legal instruments—particularly in their origins, their historical effects, and their continuing effects on indigenous peoples in Canada and the United States. To that end synod instructs the Board of Trustees to form a small task force with a clear mandate, process, and time frame composed of knowledgeable CRC staff, board members, and appropriate resource persons. The task force will be expected to keep the church informed throughout its work and to conclude its work with a summary report of its findings and, if appropriate, recommendations to the Board of Trustees and synod for further action.

Ground: This responds appropriately to the Creation Stewardship Task Force report's conclusions that, although a deeper understanding of the "Doctrine of Discovery" and related legal instruments could be very helpful in clarifying our cultural attitudes toward caring for creation, the issues raised by the "Doctrine of Discovery" and related instruments cut deeply across the entire spectrum of the church's life and

ministry in Canadian and U.S. society and, therefore, merit a separate effort.

—Adopted

The president thanks the Creation Stewardship Taskforce for the work that they have done.

Delegates sing *Psalter Hymnal* 436, “This is My Father’s World.”

ARTICLE 77

(The report of Advisory Committee 2 is continued from Article 50.)

Advisory Committee 2, Synodical Services II, Rev. William G. Vis reporting, presents the following:

I. The Network

A. *Materials*: Board of Trustees Report (section II, B, 2, Appendix B), pp. 33; 40-44

B. *Recommendation*

That synod receive the following as information:

For some time there was a growing awareness that the Network, operating as a separate entity, was creating excellent programs that sometimes overlapped or were in conflict with the programs of other agencies.

Following the appointment of Rev. Joel Boot as executive director, a task force was formed to review the restructuring of the work of the Network. Following the recommendations of that task force, the management of the work of the Network is being distributed to other existing ministries. All aspects of the Network continue to be maintained.

—Granted

II. Office of Deacon Task Force

A. *Materials*: Office of Deacon Task Force report draft

B. *Recommendation*

That synod receive the following as information:

Synod 2010 formed a task force to study and enhance the ministry of the diaconate. The Office of Deacon Task Force has done a significant amount of preliminary work, including formulation of the following six guiding principles:

- The church does not just have deacons, it *is* diakonia.
- Diakonia is not just charity; it permeates all aspects of church ministry.
- Diakonia is not just an internal church matter but addresses the search for justice and shalom in society.
- The “principle of parity” between the offices, as stated in Church Order Article 2.
- Delegation to broader assemblies is not a search for equal representation but a desire that the *full* church be present.
- Regarding the Church Order, striving for minimal regulation for maximal engagement.