

ARTICLE 47

(The report of Advisory Committee 5 is continued from Article 40.)

Advisory Committee 5, Pastoral Ministries, Rev. Peter Slofstra reporting, presents the following:

I. Committee to Give Direction about and for Pastoral Care for Homosexual Members

A. *Material*: Report of the Committee to Give Direction about and for Pastoral Care for Homosexual Members, pp. 237-79

B. *Observations*

Advisory Committee 5 is convinced that this report is clearly based on and affirms the 1973 report. Twenty-five years later we still see the pastoral value of asking hard questions, promoting discussion, and listening to one another. We believe that the new report helps us to do that.

We agree with the committee that the survey it sent to the churches was not “highly scientific” (p. 239). Nevertheless, it yielded the kind of information that Ground 3 of the committee’s mandate sought about the intervening twenty-five years. We are thankful for all those who responded to the survey and those who met with the committee. They helped “us understand to what degree the pastoral recommendations of Report 42 of Synod 1973 have been effectively carried out and to uncover reasons why this may or not be so” (Ground 3 of the mandate).

We came to understand that the prayer composed by the committee and presented at the conclusion of Part 1 represents a corporate confession which we make to God on behalf of those persons and those situations in our midst to which the prayer applies. It is a sample prayer that our congregations are invited to use.

We want to observe that the title of the report and the sample prayer engage in labeling people. We encourage Christians who struggle with same-sex attraction not to consider themselves “homosexuals” or to be labeled as such. According to I Corinthians 6:11, they are our brothers and sisters in Christ. Throughout the report, phrases like “homosexual members” and “gay and lesbian sisters and brothers” should be replaced with a phrase like “those who experience same-sex attractions.” This change would be in harmony with the report’s own intent in its section on identity (p. 250).

We also have some problems with other language used in the report. For example, the phrase “Scripture seems to forbid” on page 252 is ambiguous, and Scenario A, which deals with same-sex partners who wish to participate in the Lord’s Supper, ends with a question which is too open-ended (“How should we respond?” p. 269). Therefore, we would like to recommend altering various phrases in the report which have the potential to take this discussion beyond the position presently adopted by our denomination and affirmed by the committee.

Finally, we want to express our appreciation for the committee’s intent to raise awareness and create compassion in our denomination. It is well on its way to fulfilling its mandate to “give direction about and for pastoral care of homosexual members in a manner consistent with the decisions of Synod 1973.”

C. *Recommendations*

1. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Dr. Melvin Hugen (chairman), Rev. Mary-Lee Bouma, and Rev. Gerald Zandstra as representatives of the study committee.

—*Granted*

2. That synod declare that the intent of this report is to affirm Synod 1973's understanding of the teachings of Scripture about homosexuality and to help the churches pastorally apply its recommendations.

—*Adopted*

3. That synod replace the phrases "who love you and are homosexual" and "gay and lesbian sisters and brothers" with the phrases "who love you and experience same-sex attractions" and "sisters and brothers who experience same-sex attractions" in the sample prayer (*Agenda for Synod 1999*, p. 245).

Grounds:

- a. This revision avoids labeling.
- b. The report itself says, "This tendency to reduce a person to some aspect of her/his person is dehumanizing and unchristian" (*Agenda for Synod 1999*, p. 250).

—*Defeated*

4. That synod receive the committee's report (Part 1) and send it to the churches for their responses as the churches judge appropriate.

—*Adopted*

5. That synod revise Part 2 of the committee's report by

- a. Replacing the phrase "Scripture seems to forbid such sexual intimacy with persons of the same sex" (*Agenda for Synod 1999*, p. 252) with the phrase "Scripture forbids such sexual intimacy with persons of the same sex."

Grounds:

- 1) The phrase "seems to forbid" is not consistent with the position taken in the 1973 report.
- 2) This phrase is also internally in conflict with the rest of the committee's report and therefore would send a mixed message to the church.
- 3) In our conversations committee members affirmed that Scripture forbids sexual intimacy with persons of the same sex.

—*Adopted*

- b. Changing Question A on page 269 (*Agenda for Synod 1999*) to read, "How should we pastorally apply the recommendations of the 1973 report?"

Ground: Phrasing the question in this way keeps the discussion in our churches within the guidelines adopted by Synod 1973.

—*Adopted*

6. That synod receive the committee's report (Part 2) with these revisions and send it to the churches for their responses as the churches judge appropriate.

—Adopted
7. That synod call the churches to repentance for their failures to minister to those who experience same-sex attractions. The prayer printed in the *Agenda for Synod 1999*, page 245, can serve as an expression of such repentance.

—Adopted
8. That when the report is mailed to the churches, synod send an accompanying letter inviting churches to hold adult-education classes to discuss the reports of 1973 and 1999 and church councils to review and discuss the reports, and that churches taking such action submit their responses by April 1, 2000, summarizing their discussions and reactions. The general secretary's office will be responsible for the mailings and for a follow-up note in April 2000.

—Adopted
9. That *The Banner* be asked to include a series of articles regarding the 1973 and 1999 reports and their ministry suggestions.

—Adopted
10. That CRC Publications be asked to publish a brief booklet summarizing the 1973 and 1999 reports.

Note: This may need a \$2,000 (U.S.) subsidy from the Board of Trustees.

—Adopted
11. That the presently constituted synodical study committee reconvene after the responses have been received to consider the responses and modify accordingly its 1999 report about pastoral care to those who experience same-sex attractions.

—Adopted
12. That the committee submit its final report to Synod 2002 after distributing it to the churches in the fall of 2001, according to synodical regulations.

Grounds:

 - a. This process will allow churches to participate in the process rather than being passive recipients of a synodical decision.
 - b. The churches will take more ownership of that to which they have contributed.
 - c. One of the failures of the 1973 report was that it remained only a report in the *Acts of Synod 1973* without being widely known by the members of the Christian Reformed Church. The report of the committee of 1973 remained primarily the report of the committee. Synod served as the approving body, and the churches generally made use of the report only when a situation arose which required reference to it.

—Adopted

The chairman of the committee, Dr. Melvin D. Hugen, pays tribute to the late Dr. John Kreeft, who was an original member of the study committee.

The chairman of the advisory committee, Rev. Peter Slofstra, leads synod in the prayer of repentance.

ARTICLE 48

(The report of Advisory Committee 1 is continued from Article 39.)

Advisory Committee 1, Synodical Services, Rev. Jack M. Gray reporting, presents the following:

I. Synodical deputies' reports

A. *Material*: Synodical deputies' reports

Ministers from other denominations, Article 8-b (continued)

11. Synodical deputies J. Kuipers (Chatham), J. Zantingh (Hamilton), and R. Koops (Huron), having reviewed the documents specified in accordance with Church Order Supplement, Article 8, concur in the declaration of Classis Niagara, in session on November 17, 1998, that a **need** has been demonstrated to call a minister from another denomination (Dutch Reformed Church/South Africa) to serve as minister of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

Statement of need: Three-year vacancy; several ministers called; several ministers consulted wanted no call.

Deputies' comments: We met with the classical interim committee, which was authorized to act on behalf of Classis Niagara. Recognizing that Dr. Andre Basson is not an ordained pastor, we concur with Niagara CIC to proceed via Article 8 for the following reasons:

- a. Dr. Basson was declared a candidate (proponent) by the DRC/South Africa some years ago.
 - b. He served as assistant pastor for two years in a congregation and as a chaplain in the S.A. Navy and continues to preach regularly.
12. Synodical deputies Rev. J. Zantingh (Hamilton), Rev. J. Kuntz (Toronto), and Rev. J. Kuipers (Chatham), having heard the colloquium doctum of **Dr. Andre Basson**, in accordance with Church Order Article 8, concur in the decision of Classis Niagara, in session on April 7, 1999, to declare him eligible for call to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

Deputies' comments: The synodical deputies note the irregularity that Dr. A. Basson was called before the colloquium doctum took place.

Recommendations:

1. That synod not approve the work of the synodical deputies.

Grounds:

- a. Admission to ministry through Article 8-b was not appropriate in that the candidate was not an ordained minister of the Word.
- b. The grounds given for using Article 8 were inadequate.

—Adopted

F. Ministers' Pension Funds committees

Canadian Pension Trustees

Rev. J. Kuntz (2000), Mr. J. Knibbe (2001), Mr. J. Woudstra (2001), Mr. B. Dykstra (2002), Mr. J. Luimes (2002).

U.S. Board of Pensions and Insurance

Mr. L. Bierma (2000), Mr. W. Venema (2000), Mr. T. Waalkes (2001), Rev. E.J. Tamminga (2002), Mr. G. Vande Werken (2002).

G. Sermons for Reading Services Committee

Rev. H.A. Vander Windt (2000); Mr. R. Vander Ploeg (2000), secretary/treasurer; Rev. P.D. Stadt (2002); Rev. G.J. Bomhof (2002); Rev. H. Bruinsma (2001), alternate.

H. Youth-Ministry Committee

Rev. D.D. Poolman (2000), Mr. P. Pereboom (2000), Mrs. J. Koops (2001), Mr. A. Azwan (2001), Mr. S. Elgersma (2001), Mr. R. Abma (2002), Mr. G. Bysma (Cadets) (2002), Ms. M. De Groot (2002), Ms. D. Ryswyk (2002), Ms. G. Tamming (2002), Ms. N. Knol (2002); members-at-large: Mr. S. Hielema (2000), Mr. J. Vanden Heuvel (2000); advisers: Dr. R.C. De Vries (Calvin Theological Seminary), Mr. R. Grussing (CRASM), Rev. A.E. Mulder (director of New-Church Development, Home Missions), Mr. R. Rozema (CRC Publications).

V. Study committees

A. Committee to Study Ordination and "Official Acts of Ministry" *(Church Order Art. 53-b)*

Dr. R.C. De Vries (chair), Rev. H. De Ruyter, Rev. R. Hofman, Dr. D.E. Holwerda, Rev. S.A. Jim, Rev. J.B. Vos; Dr. D.H. Engelhard, adviser.

B. Committee to Examine Routes Being Used to Enter the Ordained Ministry in the CRC

Rev. B.T. Ballast, Mr. E. Benally, Dr. J. Bolt, Mr. R. den Dulk (chair), Dr. E. Greenway, Rev. E.A. Harrison, Rev. R.E. Orellana, Mrs. E.J. Suh, Dr. W. Van Groningen; ex officio members: Dr. J.A. De Jong, Dr. D.H. Engelhard.

C. Committee to Give Direction about and for Pastoral Care for Homosexual Members

Mrs. R. Alons, Ms. M.L. Bouma, Rev. C.J. De Boer, Dr. M.D. Hugen, Rev. Y.J. Oh, Rev. H. Van Niejenhuis, Dr. R. Van Noord, Rev. G.L. Zandstra, Dr. D.H. Engelhard (ex officio).

D. Multiethnic-Strategies Committee

Rev. P. Aviles, Mr. D. Chimoni, Mr. B. Goei (chair), Rev. D.K. Kelderman, Mr. H.O.J. Kim, Mr. H. Roscher, Mrs. K. Smith, Rev. R. Smith, Rev. D.A. Venegas, Rev. F.J. Witteveen, and ex officio members Dr. D.H. Engelhard, Dr. P. Borgdorff.

E. Committee to Review the Decision re Women in Office for Synod 2000

Dr. A.J. Bandstra, Dr. S. de Haan, Dr. R.S. Greenway, Rev. W.T. Koopmans, Mrs. G. Postma, Rev. J.S. Shim, Rev. J.G. Van Ryn (chair), Rev. J.B. Vos, Dr. D.H. Engelhard (ex officio).