

2. That synod accede to the request in Overture 18 to declare that Declaration F of Synod 1991 no longer be part of the CRCNA's official position statement on creation and science.

*Grounds:*

- a. Declaration F, with its accompanying notes, appears contradictory and confusing.
- b. The church should not bind the consciences of its members beyond what is the clear and indubitable teaching of Scripture and the creeds.
- c. The remaining Declarations of Synod 1991 (namely A-E, and particularly Declaration E), as well as Section VI, J, of Report 28, sufficiently safeguard the church's confession with respect to the uniqueness of humanity as imagebearers of God.

*—Adopted*

(The report of Advisory Committee 9 is continued in Article 56.)

#### ARTICLE 54

The afternoon session is adjourned at 5:00 p.m. Ethnic adviser John J. Gonzales leads in closing prayer.

### **WEDNESDAY EVENING, June 16, 2010**

#### **Ninth Session**

#### ARTICLE 55

Rev. Mary-Lee Bouma leads in opening prayer.

The president resumes the chair.

Rev. Henry Jonker, alternate (Classis B.C. South-East), is absent with notice from the evening session.

#### ARTICLE 56

(The report of Advisory Committee 9 is continued from Article 53.)

Advisory Committee 9, Migration of Workers, Rev. Michael F. Abma reporting, presents the following:

#### **Committee to Study the Migration of Workers**

##### *A. Materials*

1. Board of Trustees Report (section II, A, 12, including Appendix B), pp. 30, 43-46
2. Committee to Study the Migration of Workers Report, including Appendices A-E, pp. 535-85

B. *Privilege of the floor*: Mrs. Teresa Renkema, chair, and Mr. Chris Pullenayegem, reporter.

C. *Background*

Synod 2007 received an overture intended to assist the denomination in its ministry to undocumented workers. However, because the overture began by framing the issue as one of church discipline, it caused considerable pain. Synod's advisory committee wrote, "We sorrowfully note that a number of members of our denominational family were deeply hurt by it" (*Acts of Synod 2007*, p. 595). Synod appointed a committee to study this matter and gave it this mandate:

To study the issue of the migration of workers as it relates to the church's ministries of inclusion, compassion, and hospitality, and to propose ways for the church to advocate on behalf of those who are marginalized.

(*Acts of Synod 2007*, p. 596)

D. *Recommendations*

1. That synod affirm the sorrow first expressed by Synod 2007 over the alienation and misunderstanding caused by the processes that brought the original overture to Synod 2007 (*Acts of Synod 2007*, pp. 595-96) and, to avoid such hurt in the future, that synod instruct the Board of Trustees to encourage CRC agencies, classes, boards, and committees to make every effort to ensure proper representation of the affected groups when issues are studied and discussed.

*Ground*: When the church discusses an issue without the benefit of hearing the voices of those most directly affected by that issue, confusion and hurt can, and usually does, result.

—Adopted

*Biblical Affirmations*

2. That synod declare that the biblical teachings and principles from both the Old and New Testaments as summarized in this report properly inform and guide the church's ministry to both status or non-status immigrant people, and that they affirm the following:
  - a. All people are created in the image of God and are to be treated as such regardless of circumstances under which the church encounters individuals or of a given person's ethnicity, background, or legal status.
  - b. God's Word consistently directs the people of God to be welcoming toward the strangers in their midst and to extend special care to those most vulnerable to social or economic conditions that threaten their ability to survive.
  - c. The church of Jesus Christ welcomes all who profess faith in him as their Lord and Savior and who desire to live for him. God has no favorites—true faith in Jesus Christ is the only condition of membership in the church.

- d. God's Word calls upon believers to respect the governing authorities and the laws of the state. However, citizenship in the kingdom of God obligates believers to the highest law of love for God and neighbor above all, and the exercise of this love should lead believers to advocate for laws that will mandate the just and humane treatment of immigrant peoples.

—Adopted

#### *Education and Awareness*

3. That synod instruct the Board of Trustees to encourage the Office of Race Relations to engage in, as a priority, a campaign to educate and raise cross-cultural sensitivity across our denomination and provide tools and resources to denominational agencies, classes, and local churches to deal with cross-cultural conflict that may arise from time to time.

—Adopted

4. That synod instruct the Board of Trustees to encourage the CRC's relevant agencies to propose ways and to develop resources that will help in educating the churches and Christian schools by engaging in thoughtful study and discussion of the economic, political, social, and spiritual issues involved in the church's view of, and ministry with, immigrant people.

—Adopted

5. That synod encourage local churches to educate their membership about the socioeconomic, political, and security issues facing immigrants and newcomers, and equip them to respond in love and concern to the people groups that God is bringing into our nations.

*Ground:* The economic realities surrounding immigration and the presence of millions of documented and undocumented immigrants in the United States and Canada have created ongoing circumstances that already exist in many communities in which the church seeks to do ministry. This fact compels church members to educate themselves on the relevant issues already being faced by their various communities.

—Adopted

#### *Ministry of Mercy and Compassion*

6. That synod urge the Christian Reformed Church, through its assemblies and agencies, to affirm the need to reach out in hospitality and compassion to immigrant people, and that synod further encourage churches to display this ministry concern through actions that include but are not limited to the following:
- a. Prayerful study and discussion of issues related to the causes that motivate people to immigrate to other lands so as to deepen understanding of the circumstances under which many people live.
  - b. Mindful attention to the plight of both documented workers and people without status and to reach out in love to those who seek

assistance for themselves and for their children in terms of financial assistance, food, clothing, and shelter.

*Ground:* Scripture calls us to be mindful of the plight of aliens and strangers, offering compassion and love in Christ's name to those who find themselves marginalized and in need.

—Adopted

### *Advocacy and Justice*

7. That synod instruct the Board of Trustees to encourage the Office of Social Justice and Hunger Action, and the Canadian Committee for Contact with the Government, in collaboration with their denominational and non-denominational partners, to engage in, as a priority, policy development and advocacy strategies that will lead to immigration reform and the enactment of fair, just, and equitable laws regarding those without status in Canada and the United States.

—Adopted

8. That synod encourage congregations and their individual members to speak out against, and seek to reform, laws and practices concerning the treatment of immigrants that appear to be unduly harsh or unjust.

—Adopted

9. That synod be mindful of the need for governments to create and enforce laws that protect the security and integrity of a given nation's borders, while encouraging congregations and church members to advocate for comprehensive immigration reform in ways that will reduce the number of people without status and/or non-status workers, and provide increased opportunities for immigrants to gain legal status within the nation.

—Adopted

10. That synod encourage congregations to advocate for a more just and dignified process on behalf of those suffering arrest and incarceration on account of their lack of status, and also to advocate for more humane treatment of those who are unfortunate enough to face a long imprisonment.

*Ground:* The governments of both the United States and Canada have been struggling with comprehensive immigration reform for years, recognizing that current policies are insufficient to deal with contemporary aspects of immigration. The CRC can be of service to these governments by speaking up for the just treatment of all people as part of the larger process to reform current laws and policies.

—Adopted

### *Process*

11. That synod recommend this report of the Committee to Study the Migration of Workers to the churches for study and discussion regarding issues surrounding the immigration of workers.

—Adopted

12. That synod encourage churches to engage as mission partners the evangelical congregations and ministries that are serving in immigrant communities.

*Ground:* Many newer and diverse congregations are ministering effectively in this field of service, and Christian Reformed people would gain much by being in fellowship with them as partners in ministry.

—Adopted

13. That synod declare that this report fulfills the study committee's mandate given by Synod 2007 and dismiss the committee with great thanks for their pastorally sensitive, warm-hearted, and very helpful report.

—Adopted

Rev. Philip F. Reinders offers a prayer of thanksgiving for the work of the Committee to Study the Migration of Workers.

(The report of Advisory Committee 9 is continued in Article 60.)

#### ARTICLE 57

A delegate presents the following motion:

That synod instruct the BOT to request that the Office of Social Justice and Hunger Action (OSJ) and the Canadian Committee for Contact with the Government (CCG) present synod with a more concrete direction for the second half of the CCG mandate regarding "ways for the church to advocate on behalf of those who are marginalized" (*Acts of Synod 2007*, p. 596).

*Grounds:*

- a. The report does not make sufficiently clear what direction such "policy development and advocacy strategies" the BOT is to direct the OSJ and the CCG to take.
- b. From the CRC website it appears that the BOT and OSJ have already begun advocacy on this issue within the denomination and with non-denominational partners, while the CCG has not. The mandate of this committee was in part to present *a direction* in policy and legal reform for the BOT to instruct these denominational offices to pursue. That is lacking in the report.

—Adopted

#### ARTICLE 58

The evening session is adjourned at 8:52 p.m. Young adult adviser Ms. Elizabeth Jennings leads in closing prayer.

### THURSDAY MORNING, June 17, 2010 Tenth Session

#### ARTICLE 59

Following the theme of worship "Thy Kingdom Come," Rev. Stephen F. Terpstra announces the opening song, "Holy, Holy, You Are Holy," and