

ARTICLE 55

Dr. Emily Brink leads in opening devotions, and the assembly sings *Psalter Hymnal* 232, "You Are Worthy," and the chorus "Hallelujah, Amen." She leads in opening prayer.

ARTICLE 56

Advisory Committee 13, Worship, Rev. Jack Roeda reporting, presents the following:

"Authentic Worship in a Changing Culture"

A. *Material*: Appendix to CRC Publications Report, "Authentic Worship in a Changing Culture," pp. 93-144

B. *Introduction*

Because of the enormous changes taking place in the worship services of Christian Reformed congregations, Synod 1994 requested the CRC Worship Committee to study the following questions regarding worship:

- What are the essentials of public Christian worship? What is nonnegotiable in a Reformed setting? How do the Reformed confessions and our expression of our faith determine our approach to worship?
- How do the various cultural realities come to expression with the diversity now current in the church?
- How are the four motifs identified in the 1968 report (biblical, catholic, confessional, pastoral) expressed in our worship? Can an emphasis on the pastoral motif become so dominant that the other three motifs are ignored?
- How does the church maintain its biblical and Reformed character in the current climate?
- For whom is worship intended—the believer? the seeker? both? Can sound principles of worship guide the church in providing worship that glorifies God, that expresses the heartfelt covenantal commitment of God's people, and that draws others into the circle of faith?

(*Acts of Synod 1994*, pp. 526-27)

The committee has prepared a lucid and substantial report for synod that answers these questions according to the principles of Reformed worship, Scripture, the Reformed confessions, and the 1968 report of the Liturgical Committee.

The report itself is neither an exhaustive biblical-theological study of Christian worship nor a "how to" manual for preparing worship. Rather, it is a theological reflection upon the cultural situation in which we worship today. The report identifies and explains some of the dynamics in our culture and then reflects theologically upon those forces and the changes they have caused in worship. "Our goal," says the report, "is to equip church leaders with perspectives and insights that will help them make decisions regarding worship that are biblically and theologically informed and culturally discerning" (*Agenda for Synod 1997*, p. 94). The study committee offers a summary of the 1968 report on worship, acknowledging that this report is the beginning point of their own reflection and that it forms the biblical-theological framework for all their observations. This summary is then followed by an analysis

of the cultural winds blowing through our congregations and the enduring motifs of biblical worship to keep us on course.

C. Recommendations

1. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Rev. Duane Kelderman, Rev. Wayne Brouwer, and any other member of the committee present when this report is discussed.

—Granted

2. That synod endorse the following principles and commend them to the churches as guidelines for evaluating worship.

- a. A biblical-theological approach to worship must embrace strengths and critique weaknesses in worship at every point on the contemporary worship continuum; it will resist simplistic either/or choices and will reject the use of labels that polarize the church and caricatures that misrepresent the sincere attempts of fellow believers to worship.

—Adopted

- b. A biblical-theological approach to worship demands discerning analysis of the powerful cultural forces that presently affect the church's life and worship:

- 1) Cultural assimilation brings greater exposure to other Christian traditions and a declining interest in preserving specific beliefs and customs that have distinguished one tradition from another.
- 2) A pervasive consumer culture increases the church's awareness of the various needs and expectations of those it desires to reach with the gospel, but a consumer culture may also tempt the church to accept consumer preferences rather than biblical or historical principles as primary determinants of its ministry and worship.
- 3) Rapid change in all areas of life makes it increasingly difficult for the church to develop the positive, healthy traditions essential to shaping Christian community identity.
- 4) The shift from a culture of discourse to a culture of entertainment, especially as promoted by television, calls into question many of the ways in which the church has historically understood and communicated the Word.
- 5) A widespread emphasis on felt needs and on self-fulfillment as the highest human good carries with it a temptation to reduce the message of the gospel to therapeutic categories.
- 6) The prevalence of economic anxieties, family breakdown, addiction, stress, and violence in contemporary society means that many people now come to church primarily in search of healing for pain and meaningful answers to pressing personal concerns.

—Adopted

- c. A biblical-theological approach to worship underscores the following general norms:

- 1) Certain enduring biblical components serve as a common basis in all Christian worship, including
 - a) That worship is an ascription of worth, adoration, and praise to God.

- b) That this worship naturally includes confession of sin and surrender to the true God.
- c) That worship is a God-initiated engagement of God and the worshiper, as well as a corporate/communal engagement among the worshipers, both locally and universally.
- d) That worship strengthens and is strengthened by the Christian community and must build upon the shared memory, shared meaning, and shared traditions of a particular community.
- e) That worship reflects the mighty redemptive acts of God.

—Adopted

- 2) There is a basic biblical dynamic of worship: when God's people worship with pure hearts and in authentic community and when that community is ever renewing and being renewed in its worship, then effective evangelism, i.e., the proclamation of the good news of Jesus Christ to those outside the community of faith, is the natural outgrowth.

—Adopted

The following negative votes with statements re 1) and 2) are registered:

I record my negative vote for the following reasons:

- 1. The study report, in its list of Reformed distinctives in worship, fails to mention the primacy of preaching in the worship service, the historic practice of joining confession of sin/assurance of forgiveness/reading of the Law as a guide for gratitude, ordinarily preaching through the Heidelberg Catechism, etc.
- 2. The study report makes not even a passing reference to the overall guideline for Reformed worship emphasized by John Calvin and summarized as follows in the Heidelberg Catechism: "that we [not] worship [the Lord] in any other way than he has commanded in his Word" (Q. and A. 96).

Randal S. Lankheet (California South)

I record my negative vote for the following reasons: The study committee mandate was, in part, to discuss "what is *nonnegotiable* in a Reformed setting" (my emphasis). The study committee report merely refers to "historic strengths" of the worship of the Reformed community. The mandate seems to ask for absolutes of Reformed worship, but the report only describes current practices in our churches. Thus the report fails to fulfill a crucial part of the mandate.

Peter M. Nanninga (California South)

- 3) There is a recurring, community-constituting basic pattern to Christian worship: gathering as a covenant community, proclamation of the Word, celebration of the Lord's Supper, going out for service in the world. (The elements that give shape and form to this basic pattern are elaborated in the 1968 Liturgical Committee report, *Acts of Synod 1968*, pp. 142-55.)
- 4) Authentic worship has an intrinsically sacramental character: in worship, certain elements from the stuff of creation—water, bread and wine, the human words of the sermon—become Spirit-charged, identity-shaping vehicles of God's grace.
- 5) Christians do not need to fear diversity in authentic worship: Christians of diverse backgrounds enrich one another when they come together in Christ, and when growth and change take place

among people whose hearts are right and who are in Christian community, God is praised in ever-expanding and ever-deeper ways.

- 6) Worship cannot be separated from evangelism. Although the church does not gather in worship primarily for evangelism, the church must worship in ways that call people to faith and life in Christ.
- 7) The historic strengths in the worship of the Reformed community deserve continuing cultivation.

These include

- a) A redemptive-historical perspective that takes seriously the rich communion of relationships involved in worship.
- b) A healthy trinitarian balance within worship.
- c) The Calvinist theology of preaching and the sacraments.
- d) A strong appreciation for the psalms and the Old Testament in general.
- e) An emphasis on the importance of congregational singing.

—Adopted

The following negative votes with statement are registered:

I would like to record my negative vote to Recommendation 2, c, 3) for the following reason: I feel that these guidelines fail to take into account the regulative principle of Heidelberg Catechism Q. and A. 96, that we not . . . "worship God in any other way than He has commanded in His Word."

Rev. Roger Sparks (Iakota)

I wish to record my negative vote on the worship guidelines on the grounds that the report does not make clear references to the 1968 CRCNA report on worship, the creeds, or Scripture.

Keith A. Vander Pol (California South)

3. That synod commend to the churches the practical suggestions found in Section V: Questions and answers (cf. *Agenda for Synod 1997*, pp. 127-42), as guidelines for evaluating worship.

—Adopted

4. That synod disseminate this report as widely as possible among the churches for study and discussion by
 - a. Directing CRC Publications to publish the report separately from the *Acts of Synod* for distribution to church councils and worship committees.
 - b. Directing CRC Publications to develop supplementary educational materials based on the report and promote discussion of its conclusions by means of workshops throughout North America.
 - c. Acknowledging with thanks CRC Publications for funding the publishing of the report with discussion guidelines.
 - d. Encouraging the churches to familiarize their worship leaders and planners with the principles and recommendations of this report.

—Adopted

5. That synod direct the CRC Worship Committee to consult with the Calvin Worship Institute, Calvin Theological Seminary, CR Home Missions,

CR World Missions, Pastoral Ministries, Youth Ministries, and CRC Publications with a view to assessing how the worship principles of this report are reflected in the programs of these agencies and to report on their work to Synod 2000.

—*Adopted*

6. That the work of this committee be declared completed and the committee be discharged with much thanks.

—*Adopted*

ARTICLE 57

(The report of Advisory Committee 10 is continued from Article 53.)

Advisory Committee 10, Church Order II, Rev. Gerrit J. Bomhof reporting, presents the following:

I. Response to Overture 8: Permit Transfer of Trinity CRC from Classis Northern Michigan to Classis Muskegon

A. *Material*: Overture 8, p. 438

B. Recommendation

That synod accede to the overture and approve the transfer of Trinity CRC of Mt. Pleasant, Michigan, from Classis Northern Michigan to Classis Muskegon.

—*Adopted*

II. Response to Overture 9: Transfer Pine Creek CRC to Classis Zeeland

A. *Material*: Overture 9, pp. 438-39

B. Recommendation

That synod accede to the overture and approve the transfer of the Pine Creek CRC from Classis Holland to Classis Zeeland.

—*Adopted*

III. Response to Overture 37: Transfer Garden Grove Korean CRC to Classis Pacific Hanmi

A. *Material*: Overture 37, p. 552

B. Recommendation

That synod accede to the overture and approve the transfer of Garden Grove Korean CRC from Classis California South to Classis Pacific Hanmi.

—*Adopted*

(The report of Advisory Committee 10 is continued in Article 61.)