

III. Friendship Ministries

A. *Materials*: Friendship Ministries Report, p. 399

B. *Recommendation*

That synod accept the report of Friendship Ministries with thanks for their work in collaboration with the CRC, noting the new inclusive small group curriculum *Together*.

—*Adopted*

The president expresses appreciation to Friendship Ministries.

(The report of Advisory Committee 4 is continued in Article 72.)

ARTICLE 65

The first clerk of synod, Rev. José Rayas, takes the chair, and second clerk Melissa Van Dyk acts as vice-all so that the president and vice president can represent the Synod Review Task Force during the presentation of its report.

(The report of Advisory Committee 9 is continued from Article 58.)

Advisory Committee 9, Study Committees/Task Forces, Rev. Greg Janke reporting, presents the following:

Synod Review Task Force

A. *Materials*

1. Synod Review Task Force Report (including Appendices A-D), pp. 445-73
2. Overtures 15-23, pp. 519-36

B. *Privilege of the floor*: Rev. Thea N. Leunk, chair; Dr. William T. Koopmans, reporter; Rev. Kathleen S. Smith, recording secretary

C. *Recommendations*

1. That synod adopt the following recommendations as presented by the Synod Review Task Force (SRTF) in their report:
 - a. That synod recognize that in general the current format for conducting synod, along with the typical agenda template, has served the denomination well (SRTF Recommendation 2, p. 454).

Grounds:

- 1) Careful scrutiny and tabulation of results from synodical delegate evaluation forms over a period of years indicates a high degree of general satisfaction with respect to the format and function of synod.
- 2) Proposed changes to the format or function of synod ought to be in the order of fine-tuning rather than radical revamping.
- 3) Most of the components currently included on the agenda for synod properly belong there.

—*Adopted*

- b. That synod encourage classes to develop and/or maintain policies through which the classis would provide remuneration to delegates who are financially disadvantaged through service to synod.

Each classis can determine a fitting amount of remuneration on the basis of its location (SRTF Recommendation 5, p. 455).

Grounds:

- 1) The Rules for Synodical Procedure include such a policy for advisers to synod.
- 2) Some classes already have such policies in place and can provide samples.
- 3) More persons are likely to be able to serve as delegates to synod if remuneration is available.

— *Adopted*

- c. That synod arrange for a volunteer on-site mentor/guide and offer that person's service to young adult representatives and ethnic minority persons (advisers or delegates) to familiarize them with synodical procedures, to assist them in preparing to actively participate in synodical sessions, and to help them process their learning at synod. The mentor/guide would not have a voice or vote at synod (SRTF Recommendation 6, p. 455).

Grounds:

- 1) Such a low-cost program would increase the benefit of these representatives' and advisers' involvement at synod.
- 2) Such a program would increase the denomination's investment in young people and new leaders who may be encountering language, experience, and/or cultural barriers.
- 3) Intentional investment in having people learn how the church works and in diminishing language and cultural differences would be of benefit to the denomination. Ethnic minority and young adult leaders who benefit will become better able to contribute to the church as leaders in the future.

— *Adopted*

- d. That synod no longer elect a second clerk as an officer of synod but have a staff member take minutes in close proximity to the clerk (SRFT Recommendation 8, p. 456):

Grounds:

- 1) Two clerks are no longer necessary with current staff support and use of technology.
- 2) Accessibility to the officers by the staff member taking minutes would be extremely helpful.

— *Defeated*

- e. That synod follow a set meeting schedule that includes the following (SRTF Recommendation 10, p. 457):

- 1) Begins with orientation exclusively for the chairs and reporters of advisory committees the evening before synod convenes in preparation for advisory committee meetings.
- 2) Provides orientation for all (not just first-time) delegates and advisers prior to the convening session of synod.

- 3) Provides adjournment no later than mid-afternoon on the fourth day of plenary sessions, and possible deferment of unfinished items on the agenda to the following synod or to the Council of Delegates—the interim committee of synod—if necessary.

Grounds:

- a) Synod evaluations call for better orientation and a more definitive schedule determined for adjournment.
- b) These changes would provide for a more effective operation of synod.

—*Adopted*

- f. That synod include time for worship and prayer in its schedule in the following ways (SRTF Recommendation 11, p. 457):

- 1) Synod would begin each morning with a time of worship planned by a committee appointed by the program committee of synod and convened by the denominational Worship Ministries Office, with the exception of the final day when synod concludes with worship. The Synod Worship Planning Committee will be composed of a diverse group of delegates and advisers to synod and make use of the gifts of synod's attendees as much as possible to carry out worship.
- 2) The Synod Worship Planning Committee would also be responsible for planning the Sunday synodical worship service, using local congregations as much as possible in planning and implementing the service.
- 3) Prayer would be central to worship and become a more intentional feature of synod's work sessions.

Grounds:

- a) This recommendation seeks to achieve an appropriate balance of planning for worship before synod convenes and making use of the gifts of delegates and advisers to synod.
- b) Given recommendations that would result in discontinuing the appointment of a convening church/president pro tem of synod (see SRTF Recommendation 7, pp. 455-56), this plan would provide an alternative consistent with the overall approach to worship.
- c) Synod evaluations, appropriately citing Scripture, call for more emphasis on prayer.

—*Adopted*

- g. That synod limit its agenda in any given year to include no more than two major study reports so that fuller and more thoughtful discussion can take place (SRTF Recommendation 13, p. 458).

Ground: This recommendation serves as a response to concerns raised in the overture from Classis Hamilton to Synod 2016 (and assigned to this task force), requesting that synod "move the distribution date of synodical study committee reports to churches from November 1 to September 15."

—*Adopted*

h. That synod adopt and implement the following changes to the Rules for Synodical Procedure (changes indicated by strikethrough and underline; SRTF Recommendation 14, pp. 458-61):

1) Amend the following introductory paragraph in section VIII as follows:

Our ecclesiastical assemblies "shall transact ecclesiastical matters only, and shall deal with them in an ecclesiastical manner," as Article 28 of our Church Order stipulates. Our synods should therefore ~~not be bound to observe detailed parliamentary rules. These may be proper in other gatherings, but they do not fit into the pattern of ecclesiastical assemblies which demand a large~~ be allowed some measure of freedom in discussion and action. However, a few agreed-upon general rules of order may serve a good purpose and are to be observed, as contained in this document, particularly in the following section regarding Rules of Order.

2) Add the following new point 3 to section VIII, A:

3. Any report and decision addressed in executive or strict executive session should include a recommendation regarding what is to be included in the public record, subject to approval by the body.

3) Add the following new points 4 and 5 to section VIII, C:

4. A motion to amend must be recognized as acceptable by the chair and seconded by a member of synod. Such a motion is open to debate.

5. If a minor amendment is judged properly before the assembly by the chair, is acceptable to the maker of the main motion, and finds no objections from any delegates, the chair may declare the amendment adopted (sometimes referred to as a "friendly amendment"). If the amendment is not acceptable to all, it shall be subject to debate and vote.

4) Add the following changes to points 1 and 3 and insert a new point 4 in section VIII, D:

1. When synod deems it advisable, it may decide to table a motion temporarily. Tabling a motion implies that the assembly will resume consideration on the motion at a later hour or date. A motion to table is not debatable.

[Point 2 is unchanged.]

3. If synod prefers not to take action regarding a matter, it may adopt a motion to withhold action. A motion to withhold action is debatable.

4. A motion to refer a matter to an advisory committee for further discussion and possible revision may be debated and amended.

- 5) Add the following to section VIII, E:

If any member is not satisfied with the ruling of the chair, the matter is referred to synod for decision. An objection to a ruling of the chair must be seconded in order to be considered and debated. The person presiding at the time of the challenge shall relinquish the chair until the body votes whether to sustain the ruling in question.

- 6) Add the following to section VIII, G:

At the request of one or more members of synod, a motion consisting of more than one part must be divided and voted upon separately, unless synod decides that this is not necessary. A call for division of a question must be seconded to be considered, and is not open to debate.

Note: The rules state that upon "the request of one or more members," the motion must be divided unless synod decides that is not necessary. Since there is no debate and the request does not need to be voted on, presumably synod would only decide that division is not necessary if the chair states that it is not necessary. A challenge to the chair on that matter would be put to a vote by the delegates.

- 7) Add the following to section VIII, I, 1:

A motion may be offered to *reconsider* the matter. The purpose of this motion is to propose a new discussion and a new vote. (The motion must be made by one who voted with the prevailing side when the decision was made.) A motion to reconsider must be seconded to be considered, can be debated, cannot be amended, and requires a simple majority to pass.

Note: The intent of a motion to reconsider is to modify, not negate, a previous decision of the same synod.

- 8) Add the following to section VIII, I, 2:

A motion may be made to rescind a previous decision. The purpose of this motion is to annul or reverse a previous decision. (Rescinding applies to decisions taken by the synod in session; it does not apply to decisions taken by previous synods. A succeeding synod may alter the stand of a previous synod; it may reach a conclusion which is at variance with a conclusion reached by an earlier synod. In such cases the most recent decision invalidates all previous decisions in conflict with it.) A motion to rescind a previous decision made by the same assembly must be made and seconded by delegates who voted previously with the prevailing side. It can be debated and amended, and it requires a two-thirds majority to pass.

Note: In the case of rescinding, it is wise to require more than a simple majority to pass. Otherwise, if a decision passes by one or two votes, a person not in favor could convince two people who voted in favor of the motion to change their mind and the whole matter could be reversed.

9) Amend the following within section VIII, J:

[Points 1-4 are unchanged.]

5. When it is believed that a motion under consideration has been debated sufficiently, the president may propose cessation of debate. If a majority of synod sustains this proposal, discussion shall cease and the vote shall be taken. No further speakers will be allowed.

6. When any member of synod deems a matter to have been debated sufficiently, that delegate, without speaking for or against the main motion, may move to cease debate (also known as "calling the question"). ~~Close the discussion.~~ Those who call the question move to cease debate shall be recognized in the same manner as others who gain the floor of synod, i.e.,—that is, by taking their turn on the list of those who have requested the privilege of the floor. The vote on the motion to cease debate is not debatable and shall be taken at once. Should a majority be in favor of ceasing debate, the vote on the matter before synod shall be taken only after those who had previously requested the floor have had the opportunity to address the main motion that is being discussed. However, once the motion to cease debate has been adopted by synod, no motion to amend the main motion will be permitted.

10) Add a new section VIII, K regarding reports:

K. Precedence and Procedures for Addressing Reports

1. When there is a substantial difference between the recommendations in a report from a synodical study committee or task force and those of the advisory committee, the recommendations of the original committee report receive precedence for consideration by the assembly (cf. section VI, E, 2).

2. When there is a majority report and a minority report from the same advisory committee, the recommendations from the majority report are presented first, followed by a for-information reading of the recommendations from the minority report. Precedence for consideration is given to the majority report. A motion to table the majority report, or a defeat of the majority report's recommendations, would be required in order to move to a consideration of the minority report (cf. section VI, B, 2, e).

Note: With the adoption of the proposed new section VIII, K, the current sections VIII, K: Voting and VIII, L regarding changes to the rules, will be renumbered VIII, L and VIII, M respectively.

Ground for recommendations h, 1 through h, 10: These changes reinforce the consistent use of the Rules for Synodical Procedure (RSP), provide clarifications of current practices that have not been fully described in the RSP, and will serve to ensure smooth procedures at synod.

—*Adopted*

- i. That synod declare that the training of officers and the orientation of delegates and advisers include a basic review of the Rules for Synodical Procedure (SRTF Recommendation 15, p. 461).

—*Adopted*

- j. That synod add the following definition and descriptions of synod to the Rules for Synodical Procedure to explain why synod exists—what synod is and what it does—and include this statement in training materials as well (SRTF Recommendation 16, pp. 461-62):

Synod: What it is and what it does

What is synod?

The CRCNA *synod* is an ecclesiastical assembly of delegates that provides governance and leadership for the members, congregations, classes, agencies, and ministries of the Christian Reformed Church in North America. The term *synod* is derived from the Greek *σύννοδος* (*synodos*), meaning “assembly” or “meeting.”

What does synod do?

The CRCNA *synod* fills an essential denomination-wide governance and leadership role alongside of the regionally delegated authority of the church *classes* and the locally elected church *councils*.

- A. The functions of synod include, but are not necessarily restricted to, the following primary responsibilities:
 1. Elect officers to lead the synod meeting.
 2. Provide a context for deliberative assembly, both in the form of advisory groups and in plenary meetings.
 3. Receive reports from the various denominational agencies, ministries, and institutions and oversee their mandates, bylaws, and articles of incorporation, relying on the Council of Delegates, as specified in the COD Governance Handbook.
 4. Receive and act upon the reports of study committees and task forces appointed by synod.
 5. Appoint representatives to denominational boards, committees, and other working groups.
 6. Appoint or ratify the appointment of certain staff and leadership positions, including seminary faculty, college and seminary presidents, and the executive director of the denomination.
 7. Provide direction and instruction for denominational administration through the office of the executive director.

8. Decide on issues of Church Order, liturgical forms, and confessional matters (cf. Church Order Art. 47).
9. Review denominational budgets, provide financial oversight to the agencies and ministries of the denomination through adoption of ministry-share formulas, and approve annual ministry share amounts.
10. Receive, discuss, and process overtures, communications, and appeals from classes, congregations, and individuals.
11. Adjudicate judicial code matters and address appeals and recommendations brought before synod by way of the Judicial Code Committee.
12. Supervise and advance ecumenical relations by way of the Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee.
13. Oversee the archival work of the denomination by way of the Historical Committee.
14. Approve candidates for ministry in the CRCNA and oversee other work of the Candidacy Committee.
15. Ratify the appointment of synodical deputies and review and approve their work.

B. Secondary functions of synod include the following:

1. Conduct orientation for all delegates and advisers.
2. Provide a denomination-wide context for worship, celebration, and fellowship.
3. Create opportunities for ministry-related learning via seminars, workshops, and discussion groups.
4. Occasionally make known, via letters or other forms of communication, the denomination's position on current issues or affairs.

Grounds:

- a) This information will help new delegates understand the purpose of synod and how it functions.
- b) This rationale will guide other proposals and recommendations about synod.
- c) This explanation will give clarity to planning decisions.

— Adopted

k. That synod be intentional about providing opportunity for purposeful dialogue during synod, including the following considerations (SRTF Recommendation 17, p. 463):

- 1) Schedule time in plenary sessions and/or advisory committee meetings, and/or elsewhere in the schedule of synod to encourage space for dialogue.
- 2) Provide time for dialogue in connection with significant and challenging topics and/or recommendations to be voted on, to encourage learning and listening.
- 3) Develop processes for learning from and listening to each other and the Holy Spirit.

- 4) Offer discussion guidelines for being genuinely curious and for learning from each other.
- 5) Use the process of an Indigenous talking circle (found to be effective by this task force) or other methods so that everyone has an opportunity to be heard in a group discussion.
- 6) In group discussions, account for diversity and different learning and discussion styles.
- 7) Provide tools for committee and group leaders to use.

Grounds:

- a) Difficult issues need deep, well-facilitated discussions that promote a deliberative process to help ensure listening and learning.
- b) The current model offers space for only a few speakers to voice opinions for or against motions.
- c) Shepherding committees have had significant success using listening and learning dialogue methods, as have other bodies such as the Reformed Church in America (RCA) and the World Communion of Reformed Churches.
- d) Workshop/learning times scheduled in recent synods have provided some helpful examples of dialoguing.
- e) Agenda items related to study committee reports have helped determine when dialogue is needed.

— *Adopted*

- l. That synod improve the connection between synod and classes and churches, using the following methods (see Appendix D for a cost estimate; SRTF Recommendation 18, pp. 463-64):
 - 1) In addition to sending a summary of the *Acts of Synod* to classes and churches after synod, also send a summary of the *Agenda for Synod* prior to synod. These documents would be sent to the delegates to synod and to church council clerks with an encouragement to pass them on to church members.
 - 2) Offer an easy-to-read guide to the issues on synod's agenda.
 - 3) Make executive summaries of study committee reports available in other languages (Korean, Spanish, others?).
 - 4) Strongly encourage classes to invite their synodical delegates to speak to the classis about their experience at synod.
 - 5) Offer classes and churches tips on how they can encourage and support delegates to synod.

Grounds:

- a) The disconnect between synod and churches must be bridged.
- b) Increased communication about and understanding of synod will benefit all churches and hopefully make it easier to recruit delegates.
- c) Ethnic minorities will especially benefit from this plan.

— *Adopted*

- m. That synod encourage classes to send one or more delegates to synod for two consecutive years, if possible, to build continuity from synod to synod (SRTF Recommendation 19, p. 464).

Ground: Though difficult to require, multiyear commitments could be encouraged to enhance continuity and local interest in denominational matters, while also respecting classical rules and procedures.

— *Adopted*

- n. That synod replace the term *fraternal delegate* with *ecumenical delegate* (SRTF Recommendation 21, p. 464).

Grounds:

- 1) *Ecumenical* as a neutral term is a fitting replacement for the male-oriented language of *fraternal*.
- 2) The EIRC has already begun using *ecumenical delegate* in place of *fraternal delegate*.

— *Adopted*

- o. That synod instruct the EIRC to continue to include presentations and participation by ecumenical delegates and guests in a way that would maximize the benefit of their presence at synod (SRTF Recommendation 22, p. 464).

Grounds:

- 1) Previous synodical delegates have indicated that improvement is possible in the manner in which ecumenical guests address synod and are incorporated into the program of synod.
- 2) Synod provides a valuable context in which to further the denomination's ecumenical relations.

— *Adopted*

- p. That synod be served by a parliamentarian appointed each year by the program committee of synod in advance of synod, with no limit on the number of one-year appointments he/she may serve. The duties of the parliamentarian would include advising the president with regard to appropriate procedure related to Church Order and the Rules for Synodical Procedure, responding to procedural challenges from the floor, and serving with the officers of synod when complicated procedural processes arise. The person appointed as parliamentarian should have demonstrated expertise in Church Order and meeting management, should be stationed in close proximity to the officers and other staff on the floor of synod, would have the right to challenge the chair related to the Rules for Synodical Procedure, and would provide training to the officers prior to synod as well as in-the-moment advice. This position could be filled by the faculty adviser for church polity (SRTF Recommendation 23, pp. 464-65).

Grounds:

- 1) When procedural questions arise, help would be available from the parliamentarian to assist synod in doing its work efficiently.
- 2) The need for a parliamentarian position is well supported in synod evaluations.
- 3) Appointment, instead of election, provides a greater opportunity for impartiality and preparedness.
- 4) Other denominations such as the RCA have found it helpful to adopt this type of practice.

— *Adopted*

- q. That synod offer more extensive training for all delegates prior to synod with online and printed materials that cover rules and best practices, and ensure on-site engagement with training materials led by trained educators before synod begins. Doing so will help all delegates to engage with the material on synod's agenda and to facilitate comments and questions, possibly in discussion groups. This position could be filled by the faculty adviser for Church Order and synodical matters (see Appendix D for a cost estimate; SRTF Recommendation 24, p. 465).

Grounds:

- 1) More training is needed for effective participation of all delegates and especially those serving for the first time.
- 2) On-site discussion groups will facilitate learning and the opportunity to process questions.
- 3) Experienced educators will help with content and process learning.
- 4) Classes could use training materials and encourage former delegates to mentor those selected to be delegates to synod.

— *Adopted*

- r. That synod require training of advisory committee chairs and reporters regarding synodical rules, best practices for leading committees, facilitating discussion and participatory decision making, following rules for advisory committees, handling differences, developing reports, and functioning in plenary sessions. Training could include the use of online modules, webinars, on-site instruction and discussions, and a video introduction to advisory committee meetings (see Appendix D for a cost estimate; SRTF Recommendation 26, pp. 465-66).

Grounds:

- 1) Chairs and reporters are often unprepared for group facilitation and the unique rules for synodical procedure.
- 2) Training would help to ensure that all voices are invited, respected, and heard.
- 3) A short video introduction with some dialogue would ensure that all advisory committee members are on the same page with regard to the functioning of the committee.
- 4) Some delegates are reluctant to serve as chairs and reporters due to lack of training.
- 5) Other denominations, such as the RCA, have found it helpful to provide such training for chairs and reporters.

— *Adopted*

- s. That synod adopt the following provision pertaining to use of social media (SRTF Recommendation 28, p. 466):

That the training and orientation session for all delegates and advisers include guidelines to avoid inappropriate use of social media contact with nondelegates during advisory committee meetings and plenary sessions of synod, because such use might compromise the transparency and integrity of the deliberative process.

Ground: Since synod is a deliberative body, it is important for delegates to be engaged in the deliberative process of the assembly unencumbered by social media influences by nondelegates.

— Adopted

- t. That synod not accede to the overture by Classis Hamilton (*Agenda for Synod 2016*, p. 547) seeking to move the distribution date of synodical study committee reports to churches from November 1 to September 15 (SRTF Recommendation 29, p. 466).

Grounds:

- 1) Adjusting these dates would require that the reports from study committees be received in the denominational office by midsummer to facilitate preparation for distribution by September 15.
- 2) Since a majority of the classes meet in September, a September 15 distribution would not help most congregations deal with study committee reports prior to fall classis meetings.

— Adopted

- u. That Synod 2019 propose to Synod 2020 the adoption of the following change to the Church Order (indicated by strikethrough and underline; SRTF Recommendation 30, p. 467-68):

Current Article 47

The task of synod includes the adoption of the creeds, of the Church Order, and of the principles and elements of worship. Synod shall approve the liturgical forms, the *Psalter Hymnal*, and the Bible versions suitable for use in worship. No substantial alterations shall be effected by synod in these matters unless the churches have had prior opportunity to consider the advisability of the proposed changes.

Proposed Article 47

The task of synod includes the adoption of the creeds, of the Church Order, and of the principles and elements of worship. Synod shall approve the liturgical forms, the hymnals ~~*Psalter Hymnal*~~, and the Bible versions suitable for use in worship. No substantial alterations shall be effected by synod in these matters unless the churches have had prior opportunity to consider the advisability of the proposed changes.

Ground: The reference to the *Psalter Hymnal*, a title that was not used for the most recent hymnal approved by synod, *Lift Up Your Hearts*, should be changed to a generic reference to *hymnals*.

— Adopted

- v. That synod instruct the executive director, in consultation with the Church Order adviser, to implement changes to the Rules for Synodical Procedure as necessitated by the adoption of preceding recommendations in this report (SRTF Recommendation 31, p. 468).

— Adopted

2. That synod adopt the following recommendations from the Synod Review Task Force as revised by the advisory committee:

- a. That synod follow a cycle of annual meetings taking place in Grand Rapids for three years in succession (one of which could be at another midwestern location nearby, such as Chicago) followed by a fourth-year meeting in a region elsewhere in North America where CRC congregations are clustered (SRTF Recommendation 3, p. 454).

Grounds:

- 1) Good stewardship is attained when synod meets in Grand Rapids (or a nearby midwestern city, such as Chicago) due to hosting/travel costs and the role/location of staff who serve synod.
- 2) Synod is refreshed by connecting with various areas of the CRC in both Canada and the United States, and various regions of the CRC feel more engaged and a part of the CRC when synod meets in their area.

—*Adopted*

(The report of Advisory Committee 9 is continued in Article 68.)

ARTICLE 66

Synod recesses at 5:15 p.m. Ms. Marcia L. Hosmar (Hamilton) leads in closing prayer.

WEDNESDAY EVENING, June 19, 2019 Twelfth Session

ARTICLE 67

The evening session convenes at 7:00 p.m. Ms. Lori A. Fieber (B.C. North-West) leads in opening prayer.

It is announced that Ms. Sharon Jim's (Red Mesa) nephew was in an accident, resulting in the amputation of his leg. Rev. Stanley Jim will be going to pastor the family. The president assures Ms. Jim of the prayers of synod delegates.

The first clerk resumes the chair, and the second clerk acts as vice-all.

ARTICLE 68

(The report of Advisory Committee 9 is continued from Article 65.)

Advisory Committee 9, Study Committees/Task Forces, Rev. Greg Janke reporting, presents the following:

Synod Review Task Force

A. *Materials*

1. Synod Review Task Force Report, including Appendices A-D, pp. 445-73
2. Overtures 15-23, pp. 519-36

B. *Privilege of the floor:* Rev. Thea N. Leunk, chair; Dr. William T. Koopmans, reporter; Rev. Kathleen S. Smith, recording secretary

C. *Recommendations* (cont.)

2. That synod adopt the following recommendation from the Synod Review Task Force as revised by the advisory committee:

Note: The actions that follow in section C, 2, resulted after synod first reviewed the recommendation as presented within the Synod Review Task Force (SRTF) report—taking precedence over the revised recommendations of the advisory committee. Each action includes a notation regarding whether it is the SRTF recommendation or the revised recommendation of Advisory Committee 9.

- b. SRTF: That synod instruct the COD to periodically recommend a plan for a “themed agenda” or “themed synod” in which, alongside indispensable components of a typical synod agenda, the primary focus would be on a visioning or leadership theme germane to the health and growth of the entire denomination (SRTF Recommendation 9, pp. 456-57).

Grounds:

- 1) The provision would allow synod to schedule proactive visionary leadership for the denomination.
- 2) Setting regularly scheduled themed synods would provide a framework, in consideration of major study committee reports, to focus intentionally on areas of ministry leadership that are essential to the denomination’s overall ministry plan.

— *Adopted*

- c. Advisory Committee: That synod organize its work each year to reflect the ministry priorities adopted by synod (cf. SRTF Recommendation 12, p. 458).

Ground: Synod 2015 endorsed five “ministry priorities to strategically focus and adaptively organize the work of the Christian Reformed Church in North America . . .”—Faith Formation, Servant Leadership, Global Mission, Mercy and Justice, Gospel Proclamation and Worship (*Acts of Synod 2015*, p. 680).

— *Adopted*

Note: A **minority report** was submitted by Violetta Diamond, Marlyce Snyder, and Peter Zigterman for the following Recommendation 2, d, in favor of the original SRTF Recommendation 20.

- d. Advisory Committee: That synod encourage diversity in classical delegations to synod, as previously approved by synod, and recommend that each classis include at least one woman *or* one ethnic minority person in its delegation of one minister, one elder, one deacon, and one other officebearer to synod (cf. SRTF Recommendation 20, p. 464).

Grounds:

- 1) This recommendation would increase the number of ethnic minority and women delegates.
- 2) This recommendation reflects historic CRCNA polity, which places authority for selecting delegates at the classis level.
- 3) *Recommending* rather than *requiring* honors the classical-local option approved in 1995 and does not penalize classes that have limited ability to delegate persons from ethnic minorities.

Rev. Jacob D. Porter (Holland) offers prayer before the vote is taken.
— *Adopted*

The following negative vote is registered: Rev. Mark P. Van Andel (Lake Erie).

- e. Advisory Committee: That synod incorporate biblically and theologically grounded training and orientation for delegates to better understand the power with which they are privileged, especially with regard to gender, ethnicity, position, and age (see Appendix D for a cost estimate; cf. SRTF Recommendation 25, p. 465).

Grounds:

- 1) Understanding power dynamics as articulated in *God's Diverse and Unified Family* is important in order for synod to function in healthy ways and accomplish its tasks well.
- 2) Ethnic, gender, and age-related minorities will be more affirmed and encouraged in their participation at synod.

— *Adopted*

- f. Advisory Committee: That synod implement guidelines restricting the length of speeches during plenary deliberation and debate to a maximum of *three minutes* per person. For delegates and advisers who need accommodation (e.g., for whom English is a second language or who may require interpretation services), the chair may extend the three-minute time limit (see Appendix D for a cost estimate; cf. SRTF Recommendation 27, p. 466).

Ground: One area of recurring frustration for delegates, as expressed repeatedly in post-synod evaluation forms, is that some delegates tend to speak at excessive length to the detriment of a fair discussion involving the voices of as many delegates as possible.

— *Adopted*

3. That synod consider the following with regard to recommendations from the Synod Review Task Force:
- a. That synod not adopt Recommendation 4 of the SRTF report (p. 454).

Grounds:

- 1) The churches already have a sense of financial ownership in denominational matters through the ministry-share system, and it is doubtful that requiring more financial obligations will foster a greater sense of ownership.
- 2) The recommendation does not clearly specify how "financial hardship" is determined or what a "modest contribution" would be.

— *Adopted*

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

ARTICLE 69

Synod recesses at 9:10 p.m. Rev. Erick D. Westra (Greater Los Angeles) leads in closing prayer.

THURSDAY MORNING, June 20, 2019

Thirteenth Session

ARTICLE 70

The morning session convenes at 8:15 a.m., and Rev. Nathan De Jong McCarron (Grand Rapids East) leads in opening prayer.

The roll call indicates that the following delegates are absent: Mr. Piet De Dreu (Hackensack), Rev. Jason T. Semans (Northcentral Iowa), Rev. Mark P. Van Andel (Lake Erie), Rev. Chad M. Vandervalk (B.C. South-East), and Rev. Philip VanderWindt (Rocky Mountain)

The first clerk of synod resumes the chair, and the second clerk acts as vice-all.

ARTICLE 71

(The report of Advisory Committee 9 is continued from Article 68.)

Advisory Committee 9, Study Committees/Task Forces, Rev. Greg Janke reporting, presents the following:

Synod Review Task Force

A. Materials

1. Synod Review Task Force Report, including Appendices A-D, pp. 445-73
2. Overtures 15-23, pp. 519-36

B. Privilege of the floor: Rev. Thea N. Leunk, chair; Dr. William T. Koopmans, reporter; Rev. Kathleen S. Smith, recording secretary

C. Recommendations (cont.)

3. That synod consider the following with regard to recommendations from the Synod Review Task Force:

- b. That synod not adopt Recommendation 7 of the SRTF report (pp. 455-56)

Ground: While preappointing officers of synod would come with efficiencies and opportunities for greater preparation, this recommendation presents a number of concerns, including the following:

- 1) Synod's determining for classes whom it would delegate to synod the following year would overstep the bounds of its delegated authority (Church Order Art. 34).
- 2) Selection of officers by one synod for another would alter our traditional polity of setting aside officers from the delegates gathered in a given year—thus changing the shape of synod (Church Order Art. 37).
- 3) There would be the potential for undue influence to be exerted on the officers of the upcoming synod in the form of lobbying.

— *Adopted*

- c. That synod withdraw consideration of the SRTF recommendation to change Church Order Article 46 (see SRTF Recommendation 30, p. 467).

Ground: The proposed changes to Article 46 are not necessary because the selection process for officers of synod is not changed.

— *Withdrawn*

4. That synod declare its decisions regarding the SRTF report to be its response to Overtures 15-23.

— *Adopted*

5. That synod dismiss the Synod Review Task Force with gratitude for their work.

— *Adopted*

The president of synod resumes the chair.

(The report of Advisory Committee 9 is continued in Article 78.)

ARTICLE 72

(The report of Advisory Committee 4 is continued from Article 64.)

Advisory Committee 4, Congregational Services I, Rev. Carl J. Leep reporting, presents the following:

Response to Overture 6: Follow Christ in the Way of Peace, Doing Justice, and Bringing Reconciliation to the Peoples of Israel and Palestine

A. Materials: Overture 6, pp. 482-88

Rev. Sidney Couperus (Niagara) offers prayer before the discussion regarding Overture 6.

B. Recommendations

1. That synod grant Dr. Darren Roorda, Canadian ministries director, the privilege of the floor while Overture 6 is discussed.

— *Granted*

2. That synod encourage the work of addressing peace in the Middle East already being done, acknowledging the awareness of injustice, and commend with thanks the work being done.

— *Adopted*

3. That synod (with the COD) recognize and encourage our staff and churches to continue to strive for increased partnership that seeks a third way between mainline and evangelical approaches and fosters increased reconciliation on all sides.

— *Adopted*

4. That synod not accede to Overture 6.

Grounds:

- a. The overture positively acknowledges the existing types of work of the CRCNA in connection with peace in the Middle East.
- b. In light of the larger concern about distinguishing and addressing matters of politics and justice, there is a need to clarify the role of the church in ecclesiastical matters from the local church to classis and to synod.

— *Adopted*

