

Dear Reader:

This report from the Synod Review Task Force is available to the CRC congregations and classes for discussion and careful review. All responses to this report must be in the form of an Overture or Communication to Synod 2019. Such documents must be processed through a church council and then classis and received by the Synodical Services Office by March 15 in order to be on synod's agenda.

If you have any questions regarding proper procedures, please contact the Synodical Services Office, the executive director of the CRCNA, or refer to the "Rules for Synodical Procedure" (pp. 7-9) available at crcna.org/SynodResources.

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I. Background and mandate

The establishment of the Synod Review Task Force (SRTF) was approved by Synod 2016 (*Acts of Synod 2016*, pp. 826-27). The committee formed according to the parameters for composition and membership delineated by synod, with the following members: Rev. Ronald Chu, Ms. Nelly Eyk, Rev. Sheila Holmes, Ms. Karen Knip, Dr. William Koopmans (reporter), Rev. Thea Leunk (chair), Ms. Dee Recker, Ms. Jeanette Romkema, Rev. Kathy Smith (recording secretary), Mr. Jose Tagle, Dr. Steven Timmermans (staff), and Mr. Kraig Van Houten.

The mandate of the SRTF, as approved by Synod 2016, has been

to research, examine, and review the principles, practices, and functions of synod; recommend changes and improvements that do not require amendments to the Church Order for implementation; and propose any Church Order changes for study and adoption by a subsequent synod.

(Agenda for Synod 2016, p. 49)

The background for this mandate evolved from the work of the Task Force Reviewing Structure and Culture (TFRSC) established by Synod 2011. Included in the final TFRSC report in 2015 was a recommendation to form a subsequent task force to conduct a meaningful review of synod. The TFRSC wanted to include an analysis of the structure and process of synod in their work but realized that expanding their mandate to include those considerations would not be feasible within the time allocated for their study. The timing of the work of the Synod Review Task Force served well to correlate with the transition from the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA to the Council of Delegates in 2017.

II. Methodology

The SRTF embraced the calling to work in ways that are participatory and broadly consultative, collaborative, and informed by the experiences and practices of other churches in and beyond the Reformed tradition through ecumenical and interchurch dialogue. For the purpose of comparative analysis, the SRTF studied the procedures of the major assemblies of the following denominations: Reformed Church in America, Evangelical Covenant Church, Presbyterian Church in America, Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Assemblies of God, Christian and Missionary Alliance, Presbyterian Church in Canada, Mennonite Church Canada, and Dutch Reformed Church. In addition, the task force took note of certain procedures and protocols adhered to in the ecumenical meeting structures of the World Communion of Reformed Churches and the Canadian Council of Churches.

Consideration was given to conducting a full-scale survey of the opinions of previous synodical delegates, with the assistance of the Calvin College Center for Social Research. However, the estimated cost of such a study was prohibitive, and the SRTF concluded that the required data could be obtained through other means. The task force made a detailed analysis of the evaluations submitted by delegates and advisers to Synods 2012, 2014, and 2016. In addition, comprehensive audits were conducted with regard to time allocations for Synods 2016 and 2017 (see Appendices A and B). To obtain additional information, surveys went out to the clerks of all classes of

the CRCNA. In addition, the task force interviewed several denominational leaders who have had extensive experience with the various levels of synod, with the previous Board of Trustees of the CRCNA (now Council of Delegates), and with the TFRSC.

To conduct its work, the task force met together in person on October 31, 2016; February 24 and October 6, 2017; and June 26, 2018. In the interest of cost savings, the group met by video-conference call on December 9, 2016; April 28 and November 17, 2017; and February 1 and May 15, 2018.

III. Overview of essential considerations

A. *Theological principles pertaining to Church Order and synodical structure and authority*

The adoption of synodical structures and procedures must be governed by a well-defined set of principles reflecting the essential characteristics of Reformed church order and synodical structure and authority. To that end we offer the following observations of principle.

Reformed church polity has historically emphasized that ecclesiastical structures and protocols ought to reflect a biblically defensible theological foundation. Within the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA) that truth is reflected in the Introduction to the Church Order¹:

More than a contractual set of regulations or simply guidelines, the Church Order is really a record of our covenanting together within this denominational fellowship. As leaders and members and congregations in the CRCNA, we promise to use these regulations to order our life together as a particular part of the body of Christ. And that covenant commitment is based on our belief that Christ is the head of the church and we, as Christ's body, must reflect Christ in how we function, choose leaders, assemble, deliberate over issues, carry out the ministries and mission of the church, and hold one another accountable for all these things.

Key to this perspective is the covenantal nature of ecclesiastical authority, through which lines of servanthood and authority in the church reflect the ultimate authority of Jesus Christ as the sovereign ruler.

In a subsequent paragraph, the Church Order Introduction also cites the biblical foundation that motivates the church's goal for the orderly conduct of its business:

All this is in keeping with the Scripture verse quoted in Article 1 of the Church Order, "Everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way." This statement in 1 Corinthians 14:40 rises out of a concern about disorder in worship, but it also highlights a New Testament principle that Christians are to behave in ways that are fitting for followers of Christ. The Church Order applies that principle to the organization of the church and the checks and balances that seek to ensure that fittingness.

1. The headship of Jesus Christ

The quotations included in the preceding paragraphs demonstrate that ecclesiastical authority is understood in the CRCNA as being inherent in Jesus Christ as the head of the church. Delegated authority in church leadership is derived from Christ's original headship. Accordingly, the system of church governance, of which synod is a part, is, strictly

¹ To download the latest available version of Church Order, visit crcna.org/SynodResources.

speaking, neither democratic nor monarchic. It is, rather, a reflection of Christocracy, which may be defined as a governance structure based on the principle that the teachings of Christ as the head and ultimate authority of the church form the basis for the derived authority of the various levels of church government (i.e., council, classis, and synod).

2. Delegation of authority to assemblies

The form of church governance described here should not be viewed as a form of hierarchy “from the top down.” When correctly adhered to, biblical and Reformed principles provide a safeguard against improper forms of ecclesiological hierarchy. For clarity, it is helpful to summarize a number of these principles, including Christian servanthood, recognition of a diversity of leadership gifts, the parity of ecclesiastical offices, the priesthood of all believers, and the application of these principles in various circumstances and cultural contexts.

3. Authority through servanthood

Servanthood is exemplified in the earthly ministry and teachings of Jesus Christ and ought to be reflected in the offices of the church. Jesus differentiated between (1) the practice of rulers who lorded it over the people and (2) the servant-type ministry to which he called his followers. Highlighting his own commitment to humble servitude, Jesus stated that he “did not come to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (see Matt. 20:25-28). Upon that principle, he also instructed his followers that whoever “wants to be first must be slave of all” (Mark 10:44). Leadership in the church, therefore, is a matter of servanthood modeled on the sacrificial love of Christ as the head of the church (Col. 1:18; 2:19; Eph. 4:15; 5:23). The principle of servant leadership is illustrated through many powerful biblical images, not the least of which include the examples Jesus gives when he, the divine King, rides humbly on a donkey (Matt. 21:4-5) and when he performs the lowly task of footwashing (John 13:1-17).

4. Recognition of different gifts

The affirmation of a diversity of leadership gifts in the body of Christ constitutes a biblical teaching that is essential for a correct understanding of church governance (see 1 Cor. 12; Rom. 12:3-8; 1 Thess. 5:12-13). Taken together, these passages describe the church as an institution in which the leadership offices create opportunity for the meaningful employment of the spiritual gifts of all members.

5. Parity of offices

The Church Order of the CRCNA follows a biblical and confessional principle that affirms the parity of ecclesiastical offices. “The church recognizes the offices of minister of the Word, elder, deacon, and commissioned pastor. These offices differ from each other only in mandate and task, not in dignity and honor” (Church Order Art. 2; see also Belgic Confession, Art. 31).

It is now generally emphasized that there is not only parity between officebearers within a given office of the church but also between the respective offices, with a diversity of mandates specific to the offices.

Recognition of the special offices of the church does not contradict the Reformed doctrine that emphasizes the priesthood of all believers. All who are true followers of Christ share in his anointing (Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 12). Nevertheless, for the orderly structure and ministry of the church, some are called and ordained to special offices (Belgic Confession, Art. 30-31).

6. Varying circumstances may warrant changes to the Church Order

The Introduction to the Church Order also recognizes that within Reformed church polity there is a long-standing tradition to permit change to occur when it is warranted by new circumstances and the envisioned modifications fall within the bounds of biblical guidelines.

Our commitment to change and adjust our practices comes from one of the theological fathers of our church, John Calvin, who wrote,

But because [our Lord] did not will in outward discipline and ceremonies to prescribe in detail what we ought to do (because he foresaw that this depended upon the state of the times, and he did not deem one form suitable for all ages), here we must take refuge in those general rules which he has given, that whatever the necessity of the church will require for order and decorum should be tested against these. Lastly, because he has taught nothing specifically, and because these things are not necessary to salvation, and for the upbuilding of the church ought to be variously accommodated to the customs of each nation and age, it will be fitting (as the advantage of the church will require) to change and abrogate traditional practices and to establish new ones. Indeed, I admit that we ought not to charge into innovation rashly, suddenly, for insufficient cause. But love will best judge what may hurt or edify; and if we let love be our guide, all will be safe (*Institutes*, IV.X.30).

7. Cultural contexts and the application of the Church Order

As the CRCNA conducts a formal review of the structure and function of synod, it is important to take into consideration that these theological principles are contextualized differently in various cultural components within the denomination, especially in Asian, Hispanic, Indigenous nation, and African American contexts. Our commitment to respect and unity within the denomination demands awareness of and sensitivity to these dynamics of authority and leadership as we seek to develop and embrace protocols based on biblical principles. Our goal is to strive for synodical procedures that will unify the denomination through common practices.

B. *Synod: What it is and what it does*

1. 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 σύνοδος (*synodos*), meaning "assembly" or "meeting."

2. What does synod do?

The CRCNA *synod* fills an essential denomination-wide governance and leadership role alongside 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.

C. Observations regarding the efficiency of synod

A thorough analysis of the evaluation forms completed by previous synodical delegates and advisers provided the SRTF an objective data pool to

assess the levels of satisfaction or dissatisfaction regarding the function and efficiency of synod. In general, over the years past delegates have expressed a high degree of satisfaction with the way that synod operates. Delegates have generally concluded that being part of synod was inspirational and provided them with an experience that increased their appreciation for the complex dynamics of denominational administration, life, and ministry.

Despite the high level of satisfaction with the performance of synod, there are some discernible areas for possible improvement. Proposed enhancements gleaned from the evaluation forms of past delegates tend to cluster around a few repeated themes. Some, especially first-time delegates and advisers, find that the extensive agenda and fast pace of synod present a challenge for them to be suitably and confidently prepared to contribute meaningfully to discussions in advisory committee and plenary settings. Additional concerns that arise perennially in the synod evaluations include the matter of delegate speeches that seem unnecessarily long in debates on issues, and the fact that certain delegates speak repeatedly.

Numerous past delegates have raised concerns pertaining to possible improvements that could be made in the election of synodical officers, clarity on some rules of synodical procedure, and the desirability of enhanced training for synodical participants. Leadership training is a key concept in effective administration and efficient time management. Synod would be served well through the refinement of rules pertaining to the election of officers, their specific duties, and certain provisions that could be made with regard to advanced training and preparation for the leadership of synod. To this end, the SRTF is proposing a number of recommendations that pertain to the selection of synod's officers, refinement of their roles, and provisions for training.

At times there has been confusion as to whether the denomination's Rules for Synodical Procedure (RSP) are intended to harmonize with Robert's Rules of Order. While the RSP have much in common with Robert's Rules, they do not strictly adhere to them. There are aspects in the RSP that reflect the nature of an ecclesiastical assembly and discussion, and it is not necessary to make our synodical rules conform to other protocols. Nevertheless, based on experience from previous synods, there are some areas in which the current RSP may be considered ambiguous or lacking in specificity. Accordingly, to assist in the orderly conduct of synod, amendments and clarifications to the RSP are being recommended.

In addition to the concerns mentioned above, the SRTF is aware of a growing desire that synod include increased opportunity for vision casting—if not annually, then at least occasionally. While it is not consistent with the governance purpose and goals of synod to structure it as a visioning rally, and while there have been other formats for visioning (e.g., national and binational gatherings such as *Inspire* for CRCNA members²), synod nevertheless should be a place to celebrate, refine, and reflect on the vision of the CRCNA. For example, Synod 2015 approved the implementation of five ministry priorities³ as a strategy for focusing and organizing the work of the

² *Inspire* 2017 was held August 3-5, 2017, in Detroit, Michigan. A similar *Inspire* 2019 is scheduled for August 1-3, 2019, in Windsor, Ontario.

³ Faith Formation, Servant Leadership, Global Mission, Mercy and Justice, and Gospel Proclamation and Worship (see crdna.org/ministries).

CRCNA, and it called for annual updates on how these priorities are being developed (*Acts of Synod 2015*, p. 680).

Periodically scheduling a “themed synod” could provide a way to focus on a specific aspect of the vision or calling of the church. At such synods, the business items that are necessarily handled annually could be incorporated, and yet a significant percentage of the agenda could be allocated to and structured around a specific theme. In order to make themed synods feasible, consideration would likely have to be given to scheduling so that a themed synod wouldn’t overlap with the presentation of major study committee reports in a given year. Consequently, a themed synod could focus on the topic and results of a particular study committee.

D. Additional considerations

1. The SRTF explored but did not choose to promote having synod follow a three-year cycle in which it might meet annually for two years and then skip a year till its next meeting, thus allowing room for binational gatherings on the “off” years. While recognizing the potential advantage of cost savings that such a system might provide (taking into account decreasing ministry-share income), the task force also recognized potential disadvantages that could develop—for example, not having annual decisions on matters such as candidacy, creating more distance with congregations by having fewer meetings of synod, increasing the challenge of planning for themed synods, and relegating more decisions to the Council of Delegates in years when synod would not gather.
2. Finding an ideal formula for the location of synod has been an ongoing challenge that calls for the balancing of various pros and cons, including cost containment. The expense of holding synod varies annually, based on a number of factors that include travel costs, the size of synod’s agenda, and the duration of synod (see cost comparisons in Appendix C). Increased travel costs can be anticipated when synod meets outside of Grand Rapids, Michigan. Hosting synod regularly in central locations such as Grand Rapids or near Chicago tends to optimize cost efficiency. Fiscal stewardship is a major consideration as the denomination continues to struggle with implications of cost containment. There is also merit, however, in periodically hosting synod in other locations across the continent, particularly because we are a binational denomination. Synod is refreshed by connecting with various regions of the CRCNA, and various regions of the CRC feel more engaged and a part of the denomination when synod meets in their area.
3. Given the financial constraints that the denomination is experiencing, reflecting an ongoing pattern that is not likely to be reversed in the foreseeable future, synod may soon need to address more aggressive cost-cutting measures. At this time it is relevant already to entertain questions about the advisability of requesting that classes participate in some cost-sharing with respect to delegates’ participation at synod. The relevance of this issue is underscored by the reality that in a number of classes, not due to financial hardship but based on decisions of principle and choice, some congregations are currently paying ministry shares at a level well below the denominational average (or mean). In the opinion of the SRTF,

synod costs should continue to be covered mainly by the denomination's administrative office, but it may also be time to introduce the contribution of a modest offset from classes in the form of a delegate registration fee. A registration fee could help to enhance a sense of ownership of denominational matters by classes and their local congregations. Such a measure could be calibrated by (1) reducing or waiving fees for classes experiencing financial hardship and/or (2) increasing fees for classes whose ministry-share contributions are significantly below the norm.

4. The SRTF notes that a number of classes have adopted measures to provide a degree of remuneration for loss of income incurred by lay members who serve as synodical delegates or advisers. It is not the prerogative of synod to prescribe such provisions by all classes. Nevertheless, synod could encourage all classes to consider making such arrangements reflecting local situations. Classes that do so not only provide valuable assistance to their delegates but also demonstrate the value that they place on the time taken and efforts made by their representatives at synod. Many classes indicate that they have difficulty in finding enough elder and deacon delegates to attend synod, partly due to the prospect of income loss and to a lack of time these officebearers have available for being away from their jobs.
5. The SRTF agrees with feedback from synodical delegates that it is desirable to replace the term *fraternal delegate* with *ecumenical delegate* or *ecumenical representative*. *Ecumenical*, as a neutral term, is a fitting replacement for the male-oriented language of *fraternal*. These thoughts were communicated to the Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee (EIRC), which at its meeting of January 29, 2018, concurred and has decided to replace the term *fraternal delegate* with *ecumenical delegate*. Synod 2018 was made aware of this development via the EIRC report, and it was duly noted (*Acts of Synod 2018*, p. 480).
6. Over the years many groups, including young adult representatives and ethnic minority persons, have made valuable contributions to the spirit and discussions of synod, despite barriers such as inexperience or language challenges that inhibit full engagement in synodical deliberations. It may be desirable to facilitate deeper involvement by such representatives in the future. We note that in the Reformed Church in America seminarians often serve as young adult representatives. Perhaps the Candidacy Committee could give consideration to development of an educational component for seminarians at synod, to assist them in learning what synod is and what it does, and in thinking of themselves as future synodical delegates. Candidates are already presented at synod, and that involvement could be expanded to include educational sessions while present at synod. Spending more time at synod in a learning context would help new ministers to become effective synodical delegates in the future.

Adequate training of delegates includes more than providing a basic orientation to the way synod functions. It is also important that all delegates feel empowered to participate in the deliberations of synod, whether in advisory committees or in plenary sessions. All delegates should be encouraged to be aware of power dynamics that at times come to bear on

synodical discussions. For that reason, sensitivity training prior to synod could contribute to fostering inclusive and gracious conversations.⁴ For a congenial, constructive, and broadly participatory engagement, various formats for dialogue could be considered, especially in discussing topics that are expected to be controversial. More intentional investment in training may also assist ethnic and women advisers and young adult representatives in gaining greater confidence to participate in synodical procedures and discussions. Assignment of on-site guides or mentors could be considered as a positive step in this direction.

7. Developments in social media have presented a challenge in maintaining the integrity of the deliberative nature of synod. Live streaming provides the opportunity for social media contact, influence, and strategizing to be communicated by nondelegate observers to delegates at synod during the course of deliberations. This can cause interference with the deliberative nature of the delegated assembly. One way to address this issue is through a time delay in live streaming. The SRTF accordingly considered recommending a time delay of thirty minutes. However, a cost analysis demonstrates that this would entail significant expense, such as technological equipment rental (since purchase price is estimated at \$20,000) and the requisite personnel from a production company (for an annual cost of \$6,000), necessitating an increase in the synod budget (borne by ministry-share funding). Given the significant costs that a time-delay system would incur, we are instead proposing that the orientation for all delegates and advisers should address the matter of appropriate boundaries regarding social media interaction between delegates and nondelegates during advisory committee discussions and plenary sessions of synod. The goal is to protect the integrity of the deliberative process while synod meets. Though such guidelines may be impossible to enforce, they should at least be emphasized annually as a matter of conscience for all delegates and advisers.
8. Synod 2016 assigned the SRTF to provide advice regarding an overture from Classis Hamilton to move the distribution date of synodical study committee reports to churches from November 1 to September 15 (*Agenda for Synod 2016*, p. 547; *Acts of Synod 2016*, p. 831). The SRTF took into consideration the fall and winter meeting dates of all the classes of the CRCNA and noted that a majority of the classes meet in September. For these classes, a September 15 distribution would not help the congregations deal with study committee reports prior to fall classis meetings. Further, adjusting the date for distribution to the churches from November 1 to September 15 would require that the reports from study committees be received in the denominational office by midsummer to facilitate preparation for distribution by September 15. In short, any benefit that might be attained for the churches by moving the distribution date to mid-September to create a longer study time in the fall would be offset by a disadvantage of restricted working time for the study committees and the denominational office.

⁴ One option could be a training exercise similar to “The Power Flower”—a tool to increase understanding of personal power and privilege.

IV. Recommendations⁵

Based on its learnings from evaluations and discussions, the Synod Review Task Force presents the following recommendations for consideration by Synod 2019:

1. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Rev. Thea N. Leunk, chair; Dr. William T. Koopmans, reporter; and Rev. Kathleen S. Smith, recording secretary, when matters pertaining to the Synod Review Task Force are discussed.
2. That synod recognize that in general the current format for conducting synod, along with the typical agenda template, has served the denomination well.

Grounds:

- a. 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.
 - b. Proposed changes to the format or function of synod ought to be in the order of fine-tuning rather than radical revamping.
 - c. Most of the components currently included on the agenda for synod properly belong there.
3. 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, with contributions to the additional costs of the fourth-year meeting to be drawn from classes without financial hardship.

Grounds:

- a. 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.
 - b. 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. Additional resources (for delegate travel) from classes would allow for good stewardship when synod meets outside Grand Rapids (or a midwestern location nearby).
4. That synod meetings continue to be supported by ministry shares (as managed by the denomination's administrative office) with the introduction of a modest contribution from classes in the form of a "delegate registration fee" and partial payment of travel costs.

Note: Such contributions would be waived for classes experiencing financial hardship and would be increased for classes without financial hardship who

⁵ Unless otherwise noted, all recommendations are, upon approval, assumed to go into effect immediately for implementation at subsequent synods.

provide less than 50 percent of the overall denominational average (mean) percentage of denominational ministry-share .

Grounds:

- a. Such contributions could help to enhance a sense of ownership of denominational matters by classes and their local congregations.
 - b. It is important that consideration be made for classes experiencing financial hardship.
5. 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.

Grounds:

- a. The Rules for Synodical Procedure include such a policy for advisers to synod.
 - b. Some classes already have such policies in place and can provide samples.
 - c. More persons are likely to be able to serve as delegates to synod if remuneration is available.
6. 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.

Grounds:

- a. Such a low-cost program would increase the benefit of these representatives' and advisers' involvement at synod.
 - b. 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.
 - c. 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.
7. That synod create a process, to begin in 2020, of selecting at the end of synod each year a president, a vice-all, and a clerk to serve the following synod, with the following provisions:
- a. Three new officers would be selected each year for the following synod. A president pro tem would no longer be required at synod.
 - b. In order to encourage diversity of gender, ethnicity, and nationality at each synod and over time, a ranked-choice voting process would not be used.
 - c. The process of surveying synodical delegates regarding availability and willingness to serve as officers would continue to be used.

- d. Officers chosen for the next synod would come to that synod as part of their classis delegation. If an elected officer of synod moved from one classis to another in the intervening year, that person would be part of the delegation of his or her new classis.
- e. If the term of an elder or deacon chosen to be an officer of synod is due to expire before the next synod, that officebearer's term would be extended to ensure service at the next synod. Local duties and responsibilities as an officebearer would be determined by the local council.
- f. In the year leading up to the synod at which the officers would serve, they would
 - function as the program committee of synod, which makes plans and assignments and provides advice for staff for the upcoming synod,
 - attend Council of Delegates meetings for informational purposes and with an advisory voice, but not as voting delegates (see Appendix D for a cost estimate).
 - participate in training related to synodical governance and procedures, provided by the CRC's executive director and parliamentarian.
- g. In the event that the president-elect or clerk-elect is unable to serve at the next synod, the vice-all would take his or her place, and a new vice-all would be elected at the start of the next synod, based on a survey of delegates to that synod. If the vice-all-elect selected by the previous synod is unable to serve at the next synod, a new vice-all would be elected at the start of the next synod.

Grounds:

- a. This plan would result in more experienced officers at synod, enabling them to be prepared to lead well the following year.
 - b. Election of a vice-all allows for an alternate to either the president or the clerk, should the need arise for either to step aside.
 - c. The current problem of advisory committee chairpersons and reporters being removed from committees because of synod-officer elections would be eliminated.
 - d. This plan would allow time for mentoring and training of officers on procedural skills and/or content knowledge.
8. 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.

Grounds:

- a. Two clerks are no longer necessary with current staff support and use of technology.
 - b. Accessibility to the officers by the staff member taking minutes would be extremely helpful.
9. 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.

Grounds:

- a. This provision would allow synod to schedule proactive visionary leadership for the denomination.
 - b. 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.
10. That synod follow a set meeting schedule that includes the following:
- a. Begins with orientation exclusively for the chairs and reporters of advisory committees the evening before synod convenes in preparation for advisory committee meetings.
 - b. Provides orientation for all (not just first-time) delegates and advisers prior to the convening session of synod.
 - c. 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.
11. That synod include time for worship and prayer in its schedule in the following ways:
- a. 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.
 - b. 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.
 - c. 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 Recommendation 7 above), 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.

12. That synod organize its work each year to reflect the five ministry priorities adopted by Synod 2015.

Ground: Synod 2015 endorsed five “ministry priorities to strategically focus and adaptively organize the work of the Christian Reformed Church in North America . . .” (*Acts of Synod 2015*, p. 680).

13. 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.

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.”

14. That synod adopt and implement the following changes to the Rules for Synodical Procedure (changes indicated by ~~strikeout~~ and underline):

a. 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.

b. 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.

c. 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.

d. 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.

e. 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.

f. 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.

g. 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.

h. 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.

i. 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.

j. 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 14, a through 14, j: These changes reinforce the consistent use of the Rules for Synodical Procedure, provide clarifications of current practices that have not been fully described in the RSP, and will serve to ensure smooth procedures at synod.

15. 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.
16. 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:

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 σύνοδος (*sýnodos*), 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.

17. That synod be intentional about providing opportunity for purposeful dialogue during synod, including the following considerations:
 - a. Schedule time in plenary sessions and/or advisory committee meetings, and/or elsewhere in the schedule of synod to encourage space for dialogue.
 - b. Provide time for dialogue in connection with significant and challenging topics and/or recommendations to be voted on, to encourage learning and listening.
 - c. Develop processes for learning from and listening to each other and the Holy Spirit.
 - d. Offer discussion guidelines for being genuinely curious and for learning from each other.
 - e. Use the process of a Native American 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.
 - f. In group discussions, account for diversity and different learning and discussion styles.
 - g. 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.
18. That synod improve the connection between synod and classes and churches, using the following methods (see Appendix D for a cost estimate):
 - a. 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.
 - b. Offer an easy-to-read guide to the issues on synod's agenda.
 - c. Make executive summaries of study committee reports available in other languages (Korean, Spanish, others?).
 - d. Strongly encourage classes to invite their synodical delegates to speak to the classis about their experience at synod.
 - e. 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.

19. 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.

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.

20. That synod encourage diversity in classical delegations to synod, as previously approved by synod, and require each classis to 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.

Grounds:

- a. This requirement would increase the number of ethnic minority and women delegates.
- b. This practice would eventually eliminate the need for nonvoting advisers.

21. That synod replace the term *fraternal delegate* with *ecumenical delegate*.

Grounds:

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

22. 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.

Grounds:

- a. 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.
- b. Synod provides a valuable context in which to further the denomination's ecumenical relations.

23. 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.

Grounds:

- a. When procedural questions arise, help would be available from the parliamentarian to assist synod in doing its work efficiently.
 - b. The need for a parliamentarian position is well supported in synod evaluations.
 - c. Appointment, instead of election, provides a greater opportunity for impartiality and preparedness.
 - d. Other denominations such as the RCA have found it helpful to adopt this type of practice.
24. 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).

Grounds:

- a. More training is needed for effective participation of all delegates and especially those serving for the first time.
 - b. On-site discussion groups will facilitate learning and the opportunity to process questions.
 - c. Experienced educators will help with content and process learning.
 - d. Classes could use training materials and encourage former delegates to mentor those selected to be delegates to synod.
25. That synod incorporate power and privilege training into its scheduled training and orientation for delegates to help synod participants 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).

Grounds:

- a. Understanding power dynamics is important in order for synod to function in healthy ways and accomplish its tasks well.
 - b. Ethnic, gender, and age-related minorities will be more affirmed and encouraged in their participation at synod.
26. 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).

Grounds:

- a. Chairs and reporters are often unprepared for group facilitation and the unique rules for synodical procedure.
- b. Training would help to ensure that all voices are invited, respected, and heard.
- c. 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.
- d. Some delegates are reluctant to serve as chairs and reporters due to lack of training.
- e. Other denominations, such as the RCA, have found it helpful to provide such training for chairs and reporters.

27. That synod implement guidelines restricting the length of speeches during plenary sessions to a maximum of *three minutes* per person. For delegates and advisers to synod 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).

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.

28. That synod adopt the following provision pertaining to use of social media:

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.

29. 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.

Grounds:

- a. 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.
- b. 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.

30. That Synod 2019 propose to Synod 2020 the adoption of the following changes to the Church Order (changes indicated by strikethrough and underline):

Current Article 46

- a. Synod shall meet annually, at a time and place determined by the previous synod. Each synod shall designate a church to convene the following synod.
- b. The convening church, with the approval of the Council of Delegates of the CRCNA, may call a special session of synod, but only in very extraordinary circumstances and with the observance of synodical regulations.

Proposed Article 46

- a. Synod shall meet annually, at a time and place determined by the a previous synod. ~~Each synod shall designate a church to convene the following synod.~~
- b. ~~The convening church, with the approval of the Council of Delegates of the CRCNA;~~ may call a special session of synod, but only in very extraordinary circumstances and with the observance of synodical regulations.

Grounds:

- a. If the proposed process for electing officers of synod is adopted and the officers would be in place by the convening session of synod, a convening church and a president pro tem (the minister of the convening church) will not be needed.
- b. If the recommendations regarding synodical worship services are adopted, a convening church will not be needed, but local churches would be included in the planning and leading of the Sunday synodical worship service.

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*.

31. 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.
32. That synod dismiss the Synod Review Task Force.

Synod Review Task Force

Ronald Chu

Nelly Eyk

Sheila Holmes

Karen Knip

William Koopmans, reporter

Thea Leunk, chair

Dee Recker

Jeanette Romkema

Kathy Smith, recording secretary

José Tagle

Steven Timmermans, staff

Kraig Van Houten

Appendix A Synod 2016 Summary of Timed Proceedings

| | TOTAL MINUTES | TOTAL BREAKS | COFFEE | LUNCH | SUPPER | OPENING | ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETINGS | PRESENTATIONS REPORTS GUESTS | COMMITTEE REPORTS TO PLENARY | MISC. |
|------------------|------------------|-----------------|------------|------------|------------|-------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------|
| Friday | 780 | 260 | 80 | 90 | 90 | 40 | 375 | 0 | 0 | 77 |
| Saturday | 765 | 259 | 64 | 90 | 105 | 38 | 330 | 105 | 0 | 16 |
| Monday | 795 | 250 | 40 | 90 | 120 | 46 | 0 | 54 | 409 | 36 |
| Tuesday | 770 | 265 | 45 | 90 | 130 | 45 | 0 | 91 | 340 | 29 |
| Wednesday | 810 | 240 | 40 | 80 | 105 | 44 | 0 | 64 | 455 | 22 |
| Thursday | 790 | 190 | 36 | 80 | 75 | 46 | 0 | 0 | 513 | 40 |
| Friday | 210 | 12 | 11 | 0 | 0 | 10 | 0 | 21 | 107 | 61 |
| TOTAL | 4920 | 1476 | 316 | 520 | 625 | 269 | 705 | 335 | 1824 | 281 |
| PERCENT % | 100% | 30% | | | | 5.5% | 14% | 7% | 37% | 5.5% |

COMMITTEE REPORTS TO PLENARY

| | MINUTES |
|--|-------------|
| 1. Synodical Services | 145 |
| 2. Church Order and Synodical Matters | 226 |
| 3. Education and Candidacy | 243 |
| 4. Congregational Services I | 196 |
| 5. Congregational Services II | 198 |
| 6. Global Mission and Ministry | 49 |
| 7. Financial Matters | 197 |
| 8. Interdenominational Matters | 257 |
| 9. Pastoral Guidance re Same-Sex Marr. | 313 |
| TOTAL | 1824 |

OPENING is the time before roll call (worship, meditation, prayer).

MISCELLANEOUS is roll call, synod orientation, announcements, technical delays, assigned prayers (before meals, beginning/end of sessions), closing worship of synod.

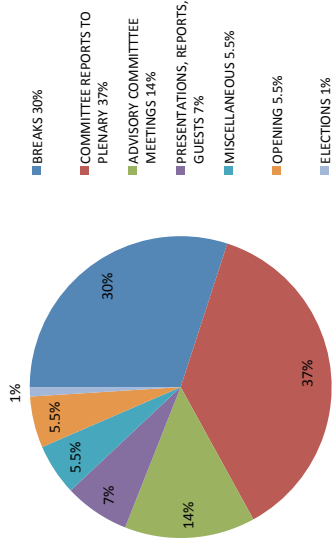
COMMITTEE REPORTS TO PLENARY include deliberation time.

Days were timed from beginning of worship to adjournment.

Timed only the days with roll call (Sunday excluded).

PRESENTATIONS/REPORTS/GUESTS

| | MINUTES |
|----------------------------------|------------|
| 1. Blanket Exercise | 105 |
| 2. President BOT Address | 10 |
| 3. State of the Church Address | 22 |
| 4. CRCNA and RCA | 22 |
| 5. EIRC | 31 |
| 6. EIRC | 39 |
| 7. Calvin College | 21 |
| 8. Presentation of Candidates | 27 |
| 9. Faith Formation "Our Calling" | 32 |
| 10. Our Journey: Identity | 5 |
| 11. Our Journey: Discipleship | 8 |
| 12. Inspire 2017 | 13 |
| TOTAL | 335 |



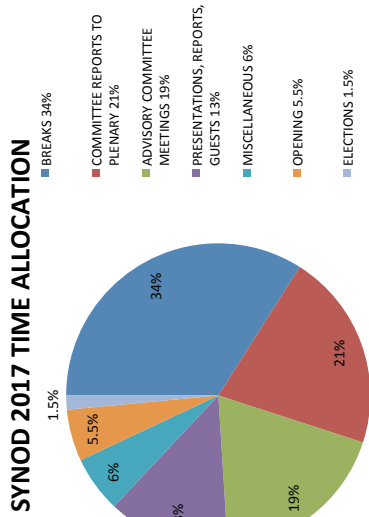
Appendix B Synod 2017 Summary of Timed Proceedings

| | TOTAL MINUTES | TOTAL BREAKS | COFFEE | LUNCH | SUPPER | OPENING | ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETINGS | PRESENTATIONS REPORTS GUESTS | COMMITTEE REPORTS TO PLENARY | MISC. |
|------------------|------------------|-----------------|------------|------------|------------|-------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------|
| Friday | 760 | 225 | 60 | 75 | 90 | 36 | 405 | 0 | 0 | 60 |
| Saturday | 725 | 250 | 55 | 90 | 105 | 43 | 315 | 76 | 0 | 20 |
| Monday | 720 | 254 | 44 | 90 | 120 | 40 | 0 | 146 | 244 | 36 |
| Tuesday | 775 | 253 | 68 | 70 | 115 | 37 | 0 | 203 | 257 | 25 |
| Wednesday | 680 | 310 | 50 | 150 | 110 | 40 | 0 | 45 | 265 | 20 |
| Thursday | 75 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 10 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 65 |
| TOTAL | 3735 | 1292 | 277 | 475 | 540 | 206 | 720 | 470 | 766 | 226 |
| PERCENT % | 100% | 34% | | | | 5.5% | 19% | 13% | 21% | 6% |

| COMMITTEE REPORTS TO PLENARY | MINUTES |
|---------------------------------------|------------|
| 1. Synodical Services | 41 |
| 2. Church Order and Synodical Matters | 60 |
| 3. Education and Candidacy | 97 |
| 4. Congregational Services I | 200 |
| 5. Congregational Services II | 15 |
| 6. Global Mission and Ministry | 124 |
| 7. Financial Matters | 23 |
| 8. Interdenominational Matters | 206 |
| TOTAL | 766 |

| PRESENTATIONS/REPORTS/GUESTS | MINUTES |
|------------------------------------|------------|
| 1. Chaoilainy | 12 |
| 2. State of the Church Address | 24 |
| 3. President BOT Address | 13 |
| 4. BTGMI | 27 |
| 5. Ministry Priority | 56 |
| 6. Chaoilainy | 23 |
| 7. RCA/CRC Future and RCA Delegate | 67 |
| 8. EIRC | 57 |
| 9. EIRC | 66 |
| 10. Presentation of Candidates | 27 |
| 11. EIRC | 23 |
| 12. Day of Justice | 30 |
| 13. New Mission Agency | 38 |
| 14. Inspire 2017 | 7 |
| TOTAL | 470 |

OPENING is the time before roll call (worship, meditation, prayer).
MISCELLANEOUS is roll call, synod orientation, announcements, technical delays, assigned prayers (before meals, beginning/end of sessions), closing worship of synod.
COMMITTEE REPORTS TO PLENARY include deliberation time.
 Days were timed from beginning of worship to adjournment.
 Timed only the days with roll call (Sunday excluded).



Appendix C Cost Assessment of Synods 2015, 2016, 2017

| | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | Notes |
|--|---|---|--|--|
| | Held in Sioux Center Adjourned Thurs. a.m. | Held in Grand Rapids Adjourned Fri. a.m. | Held in Palos Heights Adjourned Thurs. a.m. | |
| Direct Costs | | | | |
| Temporary help | \$ 5,227.55 | \$ 9,463.41 | \$ 9,348.63 | |
| Contracted services | \$ 2,399.00 | \$ 17,801.10 | \$ 22,976.50 | Editing and interpretation services included in 2016 & 2017 |
| Meeting facilities, meals, lodging | \$ 114,184.48 | \$ 99,746.88 | \$ 106,720.55 | |
| Travel (incl. synodical deputies) | \$ 129,191.50 | \$ 84,735.21 | \$ 103,429.85 | |
| Postage/shipping | \$ 18,520.86 | \$ 26,333.26 | \$ 13,888.59 | Larger Agenda mailed in 2016 |
| | | | | The Agenda 2016 was 200 pages longer than Agenda 2017; Cost to publish <i>Manual of CRC Government</i> in 2016 included here as well |
| Publications/printed/AV materials | \$ 42,104.66 | \$ 83,039.88 | \$ 65,180.63 | |
| Supplies | \$ 4,651.75 | \$ 4,808.00 | \$ 4,431.49 | |
| Synodical study committees | \$ 42,306.53 | \$ 2,103.93 | \$ 15,734.12 | Five active study committees and task forces in 2015; three active in 2016; two active in 2017 |
| Miscellaneous | \$ 2,101.30 | \$ 1,763.93 | \$ 2,682.31 | |
| TOTAL | \$ 360,687.63 | \$ 329,795.60 | \$ 344,392.67 | |
| <p>Significant variables that affect synod costs are the location where synod is held (affects travel costs and the number requiring lodging on campus), the duration of synod (affects number of meals and lodging nights), the size/length of the <i>Agenda for Synod</i> (affecting publication and shipping costs), and the number of active synodical study committees that require meeting in person. In addition to the direct costs of holding a synod meeting, not included in the above are indirect costs of staff salaries and office costs of centralized services. The average for such indirect costs to support synod is \$230,000 per year.</p> | | | | |

Appendix D

Cost Estimate Associated with Report Recommendations

Synod 2016 adopted the following instruction: “That synod require that all new ministry proposals include a ministry-share cost implication and / or alternative funding plan for sustaining the ministry” (*Acts of Synod 2016*, pp. 857-58). In light of this requirement, the Synod Review Task Force presents cost implications for its recommendations if applicable.

Recommendation 3 – Location of Synod Meetings

Appendix C provides information about past costs for holding synod in three different midwestern (U.S.) locations; the costs for holding synod at other locations would be extrapolated from these data. The suggested source of additional funding that may be required to hold synod at other locations, beyond amounts that classes might contribute, would be an increase in the budget for synod (depending on the specific location) and be borne by ministry-share funding.

Recommendation 6 – Mentoring for Young Adult Representatives

The additional cost for food and housing (and potentially travel) would be minimal and would minimally affect the budget for synod and be borne by ministry-share funding.

Recommendation 7, f – Synod Officers Attending COD Meetings

The additional cost of travel, lodging, and food (\$600) for three (3) officers to attend three (3) COD meetings a year is estimated to be \$5,400. The suggested source would be an increase in the COD budget to be borne by ministry-share funding.

Recommendation 18 – Creating Agenda Summaries/Easy-to-Read Guides

The additional cost of staff time is estimated to be \$1,400 (40 hours at \$35 per hour). The suggested source would be an increase in the synod budget to be borne by ministry-share funding.

Recommendation 23 – Parliamentarian

If a person needs to be hired (i.e., if this person is someone other than the seminary faculty polity adviser), the additional cost is estimated to be \$2,000 (five 10-hour days for plenary sessions and training). In addition, travel, lodging, and food are required and are estimated to cost approximately \$1,000. The suggested source would be an increase in the synod budget to be borne by ministry-share funding.

Recommendation 24 – Trained Educator

Initial costs are estimated to be staff time (4 weeks at \$40 per hour = \$6,400) and training materials and video production (\$3,000) for a total of \$9,400 for the first year; for subsequent years the costs would decrease for staff time (\$1,600) and materials / production (\$1,500), anticipating that only an update of materials would be needed. Each year the presence of the trained educator

would be minimal (e.g., food = \$200). The suggested source would be an increase in the synod budget to be borne by ministry-share funding.

Recommendation 25 – Power and Privilege Training

Initial costs are estimated to be staff time (4 weeks at \$40 an hour = \$6,400) and training materials and video production (\$3,000) for a total of \$9,400 for the first year; for subsequent years the costs would decrease for staff time (\$1,600) and materials/production (\$1,500) for any necessary updates to materials. Each year the presence of the facilitator would require approximately \$800 for travel, food, and lodging for the first two days of synod. The suggested source would be an increase in the synod budget to be borne by ministry-share funding.

Recommendation 26 – Advisory Committee Training

Initial costs are estimated to be staff time (honorarium of \$1,000), training materials, and video production (\$2,000) for a total of \$3,000 for the first year; for subsequent years the costs would decrease for staff time (\$500) and materials/production (\$1,000) for any necessary updates to materials. The presence of the trainer would be minimal each year (e.g., food = \$200). The suggested source would be an increase in the synod budget to be borne by ministry-share funding.

Recommendation 27 – Length of Speeches

Some form of technology/app would be required at a cost of not more than \$200 annually, borne by the synod budget by way of ministry-share funding.