

NEWS

Michigan Classis Accepts Study Report on Same-Sex Marriage, Offers It to Synod 2016

Classis Grand Rapids East (GRE) is sending a communication to Synod 2016 that summarizes a 142-page report on same-sex marriage created by a committee appointed by the classis. Twice in recent years, that classis asked synod to reexamine the Christian Reformed Church's 1973 position statement on homosexuality, which states that same-sex orientation is not sinful but homosexual activity is. (A classis is a regional group of churches, and synod is the annual general assembly of the Christian Reformed Church. Classis GRE has approximately 8,500 church members.)

After its requests were rejected, the classis appointed its own committee to examine the biblical/theological support offered by Christian proponents of gay marriage and to examine how that differs from the biblical/theological perspective that serves as the basis of the CRC's position.

Classis GRE received and accepted that committee's report. It is offering the report to Synod 2016 as "an additional resource for ongoing study and discussion regarding pastoral guidance for dealing with same-sex marriage and related matters."

In the summary of the report, the authors stated that "there has been significant theological consideration of these issues since 1973, both in the Reformed tradition and in the wider Christian church."

At various times in history, they said, the Holy Spirit prompted and



guided the church to reinterpret some parts of Scripture, including on such issues as slavery and racism. "Through these various means, the church was led to better interpretations of parts of Scripture. Comparing the issue of same-sex marriage to these other historical cases suggests that this might be another occasion in church history when the Holy Spirit is prompting a reexamination of Scripture."

The extensive report includes sections on

- advances in scientific understandings of sex and gender, intersex and transgender;
- guidelines for interpreting Scripture according to a Reformed hermeneutic;
- interpretation of biblical passages referring to gender differentiation and same-sex intercourse;
- historical, biblical, and theological foundations for marriage;
- psychological issues involved in considering full inclusion versus non-inclusion;
- personal stories of LGBT Christians.

Classis clerk Rev. Al Mulder characterized the discussion of the report at classis as cautious and respectful of those who agree

with the content of the report and of those in basic disagreement with Christian proponents of same-sex marriage. Mulder said most of the discussion centered on the most effective way to encourage meaningful denominational dialogue on the subject.

Rev. William DeVries, who chaired the committee, expressed his hope that "a gracious dialogue ... move forward in the churches of Classis Grand Rapids East, and in all the churches of the CRC on this vital issue; and that [people] listen to others without attacks on their faith or their commitment to Christ or Scripture."

The communication from Grand Rapids East, which will include a link to its full report, will be published in the *Agenda for Synod 2016*.

Synod 2016 delegates will gather in June in Grand Rapids, Mich.

—Gayla R. Postma

IN MEMORIAM



Rev. Gerald Nyenhuis
1928-2015

Gerald Nyenhuis had many vocations and completed degrees in the U.S., Spain, and Mexico. A missionary and professor in Mexico for 53 years, he wrote 11 books and numerous articles in Spanish-language journals. Nyenhuis died on November 1 in Mexico City. He was 87.

After training as a flight engineer in the U.S. Navy, Nyenhuis graduated from seminary and moved to Mexico to work for Christian Reformed World Missions.

Nyenhuis's family said he desired to live by the five principles that emerged from the Protestant Reformation. He defended the authority of Scripture. By faith alone he followed God's call to Mexico. His comfort was that he rested in the grace of God alone. His teaching and preaching centered on Christ alone, and he dedicated himself to living for the glory of God.

Nyenhuis retired in 1994 but continued teaching at Iberoamericana University and leading Berith Presbyterian Church until his death.

Nyenhuis was predeceased in 1971 by his first wife, Arlene. He is survived by his wife, Francisca, by eight children and their spouses, and by 14 grandchildren and 15 great-grandchildren.

—Janet A. Greidanus