

CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA

AGENDA FOR SYNOD



1995

Christian Reformed Church in North America

AGENDA FOR SYNOD

June 13-23, 1995
Fine Arts Center Auditorium
Calvin College
Grand Rapids, Michigan

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PREFACE

The prayer service for Synod 1995 will be held Monday evening, June 12, 1995, at 8:00 p.m. in Twelfth Avenue Christian Reformed Church, 7581 Twelfth Avenue, Jenison, Michigan. Rev. Calvin Bolt, pastor of Twelfth Avenue CRC, will be in charge of the service.

Synod begins its sessions Tuesday morning, June 13, at 9:00 a.m. in the Fine Arts Center of Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Rev. Calvin Bolt will serve as president pro tem until Synod 1995 is duly constituted and its four officers have been elected.

The congregations of the Christian Reformed Church in North America are requested to remember the synodical assembly in intercessory prayers on Sunday, June 11. Let us pray that the Holy Spirit will equip the synodical delegates to serve in faith and obedience and will lead the Christian Reformed Church into new and challenging areas of ministry. May we together experience the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace as we strive to know and to do the will of the Lord.

David H. Engelhard
General Secretary
2850 Kalamazoo Ave. SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49560

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

I. Note to delegates

- A. Delegates who travel by automobile are urged to carpool if possible, to save on travel costs.
- B. Plane travel is the most economical for delegates traveling long distances to synod because it eliminates lodging and meal expenses en route.
- C. Synod provides travel accident insurance for those traveling to and from synod. Synod does not provide health insurance. Canadian delegates may wish to purchase additional health insurance for the time they are at synod (for which reimbursement will be made) if their present policies do not provide adequate insurance outside of Canada.
- D. Delegates should bring with them to synod their copies of the *Agenda for Synod 1995* and all supplementary materials.

II. Taping of synodical sessions

Synod 1979 authorized the making of an official audio recording of the entire proceedings of the general sessions of synod. It was also decided that synod designate the office of the general secretary to be responsible for the use and storage of these materials according to the job description of the office of the general secretary.

The general secretary and the Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church in North America take this opportunity to inform synod that, although the general sessions of synod have been recorded since 1979, the rule has been followed that executive sessions are not taped.

The Board of Trustees, at the request of the general secretary, has also adopted the rule that all delegates to synod be advised at the opening session of synod that all the general sessions are being taped.

III. Confidentiality of the executive sessions of synod

The Board of Trustees calls the matter of confidentiality to the attention of Synod 1995 and urges that all necessary precautions be taken to prevent violations of confidentiality.

Synod 1954 stated that "the very principle of executive sessions, or sessions that are not open to the public, involves the practical implication that reporters may not 'report'" (*Acts of Synod 1954*, p. 15). If reporters are not permitted to report on executive sessions of synod, it is certainly a breach of confidentiality also for delegates to the synodical assembly to report—publicly, orally, or in print—on the discussions held in an executive session of synod (cf. *Acts of Synod 1982*, p. 16).

IV. Audio and video recordings of synod

The following regulations have been adopted by synod (*Acts of Synod 1989*, p. 445) concerning audio and video recordings of synodical sessions:

A. The original and stated purpose of making an audio recording of synodical proceedings is to be honored, namely, that the recording serve to verify the written record of the synodical proceedings. The general secretary is responsible for the use and storage of those audio recordings.

B. Representatives of the media are permitted to make video recordings of synodical proceedings provided they observe the restrictions placed upon them by the synodical news office under the direction of the general secretary of synod.

C. *Visitor privileges*

1. Visitors are at liberty to make audio recordings of the public proceedings of synod provided they do so unobtrusively (i.e., in no way inhibiting or disturbing either the proceedings of synod, the synodical delegates, or other persons).
2. Video recordings are permitted provided the following restrictions are observed:
 - a. Video cameras are permitted only at the entrances, not backstage or in the wings.
 - b. Auxiliary lighting is not permitted.
 - c. Videotaping is to be done unobtrusively (i.e., in such a way that it in no way inhibits or disturbs either the proceedings of synod, the synodical delegates, or other persons).

DELEGATES TO SYNOD 1995

Classis	Delegates	Alternates
Alberta North		
Ministers.....	Cecil Van Niejenhuis John A. Ooms	Ministers.....Philip Stel Dick J. Heinen
Elders.....	Henk W.H. Van Andel Dirk W. Simmelink	Elders.....Frank Van Veen Eelke Eilander
Alberta South		
Ministers.....	Peter Nicolai John Kerssies	Ministers.....Jake Corvers Richard T. Vander Vaart
Elders.....	Hans Visser Herman Kielstra	Elders.....Peter De Boer Cor Pasveer
Arizona		
Ministers.....	Jonathan D. Westra Bradd L. Nymeyer	Ministers.....Ray Yeo Timothy R. Hull
Elders.....	Steven Van Hofwegen Lloyd Kredit	Elders.....Robert Van Hofwegen, Sr. Kenneth W. Vanderlei
Atlantic Northeast		
Ministers.....	Wesley Timmer Karl H. Bratt	Ministers.....Robert D. Steen William G. Vis
Elders.....	Gerald Gabrielse Bruce H. Klanderman	Elders.....Peter Admiraal
B.C. North-West		
Ministers.....	Norman Prenger William Veenstra	Ministers.....Leonard H. Batterink Thomas J. Van Milligen
Elders.....	Andy Beerda John A. Vander Hoek	Elders.....Jan Lok Ben Moedt
B.C. South-East		
Ministers.....	Harry Salomons Loren J. Swier	Ministers.....Robert De Moor Alvin Beukema
Elders.....	John Snel Dick Bouwsema	Elders.....Peter Vriend Roger Addink
California South		
Ministers.....	W. Robert Godfrey Randal S. Lankheet	Ministers.....Randal K. Young Peter Y. Shin
Elders.....	Henry Docter James I. Park	Elders.....Keith A. Vander Pol Phil Du Bois
Central California		
Ministers.....	Bruce A. Persenaire James R. Van Tholen	Ministers.....Carl J. Klompier George G. Vink
Elders.....	Robert G. den Dulk Bernard A. te Velde	Elders.....William Dotinga Henry F. De Jong

Classis	Delegates	Alternates
Chatham		
Ministers.....	Kenneth F. Benjamins John H. Noordhof	Ministers.....Jack M. Van de Hoef Peter C. Hogeterp
Elders.....	Jan H.G. Vandergeest Simon L. Vreman	Elders.....Peter Loerts Ben Vanderlugt
Chicago South		
Ministers.....	Gerald R. Erffmeyer Robert J. Price	Ministers.....Gary P. Hutt Henry B. Vanden Heuvel
Elders.....	Marvin H. De Vries Roger W. Van Dellen	Elders.....Henry W. Washington Donald H. Leo
Columbia		
Ministers.....	Carl J. Leep John Hofman, Jr.	Ministers.....Jerald D. Lion Perry J. Tinklenberg
Elders.....	Neil W. Gillenwater Herbert Roos	Elders.....Harry Visser Harley E. Dykema
Eastern Canada		
Ministers.....	Allan C. Groen Henry P. Kranenburg	Ministers.....Henry G. Gunnink Michael Veenema
Elders.....	Dale H. Poel Peter Mostert	Elders.....Kees Van Dieen
Florida		
Ministers.....	Douglas L. Aldrink Jonathan L. Huizenga	Ministers.....German Moreno Stanley J. Workman
Elders.....	James H. Boldenow Charles H. Korringa	Elders.....Phillip Wierenga Wayne De Young
Georgetown		
Ministers.....	Calvin H. Bolt Howard D. Vanderwell	Ministers.....Eugene W. Los Marvin J. Vander Vliet
Elders.....	Donald Zwier Will G. Byker	Elders.....Sidney Klyn Calvin R. Huizinga
Grand Rapids East		
Ministers.....	Roger E. Van Harn Morris N. Greidanus	Ministers.....Alfred S. Luke Jack Roeda
Elders.....	George N. Monsma, Jr. Peter Buma	Elders.....Roger Faber John Roels
Grand Rapids North		
Ministers.....	Charles S. Steenstra C. James den Dulk	Ministers.....Gerald W. Vander Hoek Gerald A. Koning
Elders.....	Lawrence J. Vander Ploeg Ben J. Van Houten	Elders.....Harry J. Vriend Roger L. Roskamp
Grand Rapids South		
Ministers.....	Ecko De Vries David A. Struyk	Ministers.....Calvin D. Vander Meyden Walter Swets
Elders.....	W. David Luikaart Sidney Smit	Elders.....William C. Hendricks Thomas J. Van Dyke
Grandville		
Ministers.....	Carl W. Bergman Kenneth L. Havert	Ministers.....Curtis A. Walters Dale L. Slings
Elders.....	Terry J. Kimber Donald H. Langerak	Elders.....John E. Morren

Classis	Delegates	Alternates
Greater Los Angeles		
Ministers.....	John Van Schepen David W. Yang	Ministers..... Andrew Vanden Akker Thomas P. Doorn
Elders.....	Andy P. Voss Ray Mc Cormick	Elders..... John Wybinga Max Slegers
Hackensack		
Ministers.....	Paul R. De Vries Stanley J. Vander Klay	Ministers..... Stephen R. Steenstra Timothy C. Limburg
Elders.....	Edwin R. Arevalo Hubert Borduin	Elders..... David K. Watson
Hamilton		
Ministers.....	A. Carel Geleynse John Zantingh	Ministers..... Bernard H. De Jonge Marvin Van Donselaar
Elders.....	Bert Schilthuis Mark Vandervliet	Elders..... Richard Bouwma Henry J. Smees
Heartland		
Ministers.....	Roger A. Bouwman Aldon L. Kuiper	Ministers..... Jack M. Gray William G. Van Hal
Elders.....	Henry P. Haarsma Rick W. Vander Berg	Elders..... Everett L. Hoekstra Stanley B. Van Vliet
Holland		
Ministers.....	Ronald D. De Young Keith M. Doornbos	Ministers..... Michael De Vries Frank T. Wevers
Elders.....	Kenneth R. Kuipers Neal Berghoef	Elders..... Kenneth G. Laninga Marvin Gritter
Hudson		
Ministers.....	Donald P. Wisse Casey D. Freswick	Ministers..... Scott Greenway John G. Keizer
Elders.....	Edwin Gorter Gordon Kuipers	Elders..... Jacob (Jake) D. Klaassen John Van Lenten
Huron		
Ministers.....	Ralph Koops William T. Koopmans	Ministers..... Henry Lunshof Jerry J. Hoytema
Elders.....	Hilbert Rumph R. Rob Datema	Elders..... Hank Ligterink Thomas Vanderstelt
Iakota		
Ministers.....	Warren H. Lammers Roger W. Sparks	Ministers..... Bernard Dykstra Clifford D. Hoekstra
Elders.....	Harold Meyerink Arthur Vanden Bosch	Elders..... Garry G. Zonnefeld Russell W. Maatman
Illiana		
Ministers.....	Calvin L. Bremer Richard J. Blauw	Ministers..... Lester W. Van Essen Laryn G. Zoerhof
Elders.....	Sid Post Jacob Van Eck	Elders..... Simon J. Koopmans Henry G. Belgrave
Kalamazoo		
Ministers.....	Robert A. Arbogast Mark R. Van't Hof	Ministers..... Leonard J. Vander Zee Mark A. Van Haitmsma
Elders.....	Art Hoekstra George Marsden	Elders..... John Vanderploeg William Veldkamp

Classis	Delegates	Alternates
Lake Erie		
Ministers.....	George F. Vander Weit William C. De Vries	Ministers.....Emmett A. Harrison John G. Zevalking
Elders.....	Andre Nauta Robert W. Ettema	Elders.....Ted S. Rozeboom Paul R. Bossenbroek
Minnesota North		
Ministers.....	John Joldersma Paul O. Sausser	Ministers.....Kenneth D. Van De Griend Dean R. Deppe
Elders.....	John H. Taatjes H. John Laninga	Elders.....Herman Ahrenholz G. Hank Wesselink
Minnesota South		
Ministers.....	Harold J. Westra Terry L. Genzink	Ministers.....Willard H. De Vries Alan L. Camarigg
Elders.....	Willard E. Sankey Ernest J. Dykema	Elders.....Gerald Haak Tom N. Vanden Bosch
Muskegon		
Ministers.....	John Terpstra Jack C. Vander Plate	Ministers.....Ken W. Vis Louis Roossien, Jr.
Elders.....	David Wagner Lawrence R. Anderson	Elders.....Leroy J. Wybenga John Witt
Niagara		
Ministers.....	Fred J. Koning Harry A. Vander Windt	Ministers.....John Pasma John De Jong
Elders.....	Bert Van Soelen Andy Van Driel	Elders.....Mike Bylsma Ben Van Hoffen
Northcentral Iowa		
Ministers.....	Daryl E. Kats Joel E. Kok	Ministers.....David A. Zylstra Brent A. Wassink
Elders.....	Nick L. Verbrugge Lauris R. Frerichs	Elders.....Andrew M. Cannegieter Floyd J. Luiken
Northern Illinois		
Ministers.....	Bert De Jong Lambert J. Sikkema	Ministers.....Lee A. Koning Peter De Jong
Elders.....	Arnold Hoving Ray Bouma	Elders.....Gerald W. Frens
Northern Michigan		
Ministers.....	Joel W. Zuidema Ronald A. Klimp	Ministers.....Thomas A. De Does Jon O. De Bruyn
Elders.....	Chet Van Haitisma Bernard L. Mulder	Elders.....Edward Stehouwer
Pacific Northwest		
Ministers.....	Harvey A. Brink Kenneth D. Koeman	Ministers.....Gerard Van Groningen, Jr. James T. Petersen
Elders.....	Anthony Van Rooyen Douglas G. De Vries	Elders.....Elmer Kaemingk Raynard J. Dykstra
Pella		
Ministers.....	Thomas R. Dykstra Kenneth L. Schepel	Ministers.....J. Mark Beach Ronald L. Bouwkamp
Elders.....	James C. Stroo Owen Sieperda	Elders.....Leo D. Nikkel William B. Lapp

Classis	Delegates	Alternates
Quinte		
Ministers.....	Karl J. House Michael F. Abma	Ministers.....Henry Wildeboer Carl D. Tuyl
Elders.....	Hank A. Nieuwstraten Stuart Vander Meer	Elders.....Lawrence J. Lutgendorff Eelke (Al) Hiddema
Red Mesa		
Ministers.....	Raymond Slim Robert L. Jipping	Ministers.....Michael J. Meekhof Paul H. Redhouse
Elders.....	James T. Nahkai Philip L. Kamps	Elders.....Joe Smart Herbert R. Thomas, Jr.
Rocky Mountain		
Ministers.....	Merle H. Bierma Paul R. Jorden	Ministers.....Ronald J. Nydam Dale L. Piers
Elders.....	Richard W. De Vries Neal Afman	Elders.....Harry A. Vander Vliet Robert J. Van Wyk
Thornapple Valley		
Ministers.....	Douglas R. Fauble Roger G. Timmerman	Ministers.....William J. Renkema Bernard W. Mulder
Elders.....	John C. Vander Wall Ned Nielsen	Elders.....David J. Harper Randall L. Bytwerk
Toronto		
Ministers.....	Gordon H. Pols Jack B. Vos	Ministers.....Homer G. Samplonius John Tenyenhuis
Elders.....	Jan de Koning Wietse G. Posthumus	Elders.....Henry Dykstra Kenneth Van Wyk
Wisconsin		
Ministers.....	Leslie J. Kuiper Adrian Dieleman	Ministers.....Wendell M. Gebben Clifford E. Bajema
Elders.....	Seymour W. Kok Bruce Huizenga	Elders.....Roland J. Dirkse Gerhard Ebbers
Yellowstone		
Ministers.....	A. William Heersink John M. Wanders	Ministers.....Gary G. Hofland John T. Ebbers
Elders.....	Henry D. Vander Stelt David J. Howerzyl	Elders.....
Zeeland		
Ministers.....	Bernard F. Tol James J. Stastry	Ministers.....Harlan G. Vanden Einde Douglas R. Zimmerman
Elders.....	Allen D. Walters Steven J. Vander Ploeg	Elders.....Paul W. Wagenmaker

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BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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BOARD OF TRUSTEES REPORT

Joint-Ministries Management Committee

Christian Reformed Church in North America—Michigan Corporation
Christian Reformed Church in North America—Ontario Corporation
Christian Reformed Church Synod Trustees

The Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church in North America—hereinafter known as the Board—presents this report as a summary of the activities carried on in behalf of synod during the interim between Synod 1994 and Synod 1995.

I. Introduction

A. General

The governing board of the Christian Reformed Church is organized as two legal entities, one in Michigan and one in Ontario. Together these legal entities form the Joint-Ministries Management Committee (JMMC) and are known as the Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

The mandate given by synod to the Board is found in its constitution and bylaws as approved provisionally by Synod 1993. The constitution and bylaws are scheduled to be reviewed, and possibly revised, during the coming year for presentation to Synod 1996 for final approval.

The Board has met three times since Synod 1994 (September, December, March) and is scheduled to meet again in May. At its meetings the board divides into two standing committees (Polity Committee and Program and Finance Committee) for consideration of agenda material. The Polity Committee considers matters which formerly were assigned to the Synodical Interim Committee (SIC) as well as the work associated with the office of the general secretary. The Program and Finance Committee deals with matters which arise out of the ministries of the agencies and the work associated with the office of the executive director of ministries.

The Executive Committee of the Board meets as needed. Canadian trustees meet separately to consider Canadian issues. This arrangement complies with Canadian regulations governing binational organizations and provides a helpful way to consider and recommend solutions to issues unique to the Canadian churches.

While the Board deals with many ecclesiastical matters as well as required corporate issues, a central focus of its work is to enhance the ministries of the whole church, especially those which are carried on through the agencies of the CRC. It is a privilege to see how many wonderful ministries the Lord is pleased to accomplish through the membership and organizations of the CRC. The work of education, relief and development, radio and TV, and missions at home and abroad has been blessed by God.

The church's calling to be a blessing to the nations has also been fulfilled through chaplaincy, race-relations efforts, and advocacy for the abused and disabled.

The Board, as synod's agent, is grateful for the opportunity to serve the whole church in these challenging times.

1. Membership

The members of the Michigan Corporation are Dr. John Van Schepen (Far West U.S., Subgroup I); Dr. Eugene Vander Wall (Far West U.S., Subgroup II); Rev. John Joldersma, Mr. Harry G. Vermeer (Great Plains); Dr. Kenneth B. Bootsma, Dr. Calvin L. Bremer (Central U.S., Subgroup I); Mr. Nelson Gritter (Central U.S., Subgroup II); Rev. Arthur J. Schoonveld, Mr. Howard Johnson (Central U.S., Subgroup III); Dr. Herman C. Eldersveld, Rev. Wilmer R. Witte (Central U.S., Subgroup IV); Rev. Vernon Geurkink (Eastern U.S.); Dr. Carol Rottman, Mrs. Jane Vander Ploeg (members at large).

The members of the Ontario Corporation are Rev. Peter Brouwer (Western Canada); Rev. Jake Kuipers (Eastern Canada, Subgroup I); Mr. Klaas Terpstra, Mr. Don S. Wiersma (Eastern Canada, Subgroup II); Mr. William Wildeboer (member at large).

The general secretary, Dr. David H. Engelhard, and the executive director of ministries, Dr. Peter Borgdorff, serve ex officio as corporate trustees and members of the Board of Trustees.

2. Board officers: president, Dr. K.B. Bootsma; vice president, Mr. D.S. Wiersma; secretary, Dr. D.H. Engelhard; treasurer, Mr. N. Gritter.
3. Corporation officers: president, Dr. K.B. Bootsma; vice president, Mr. D.S. Wiersma; general secretary, Dr. D.H. Engelhard; executive director of ministries, Dr. P. Borgdorff; treasurer, Mr. N. Gritter; director of finance and administration, Mr. Robert Van Stright.
4. Polity Committee: Dr. K.B. Bootsma, Rev. P. Brouwer, Dr. H.C. Eldersveld, Rev. V. Geurkink, Rev. J. Joldersma, Dr. C. Rottman, Rev. A.J. Schoonveld, Rev. J. Van Schepen, Mr. W. Wildeboer, and Dr. D.H. Engelhard (adviser).
5. Program and Finance Committee: Dr. C.L. Bremer, Mr. N. Gritter, Mr. H. Johnson, Rev. J. Kuipers, Mr. K. Terpstra, Mrs. J. Vander Ploeg, Dr. E. Vander Wall, Mr. H. Vermeer, Mr. D.S. Wiersma, Rev. W.R. Witte, and Dr. P. Borgdorff (adviser).
6. Executive Committee: Dr. K.B. Bootsma, Mr. D.S. Wiersma, Mr. N. Gritter, Rev. J. Joldersma, Dr. C.L. Bremer. Dr. D.H. Engelhard and Dr. P. Borgdorff serve ex officio.

C. *Salary administration and disclosure*

Each agency has provided salary disclosure information within the body of its own report. For personnel employed directly by the Board of Trustees, the information is as follows:

Job level	Number of positions	Compensation quartile (including housing allowance)
10	1	3rd quartile
9	1	2nd quartile
7	1	3rd quartile
5	2	2nd quartile
3	1	2nd quartile

Salary ranges within which the agencies will be reporting actual compensation for 1995 are as follows:

1995 Salary Ranges—United States						1995 Salary Ranges—Canada				
Salary Level	Min.		Median		Max.	Min.		Median		Max.
12	58,100	65,300	72,600	79,900	87,100					
11	55,000	61,900	68,800	75,700	82,600					
10	52,200	58,800	65,300	71,800	78,400					
9	49,600	55,800	62,000	68,200	74,400					
8	47,600	53,600	59,500	65,500	71,400					
7	44,000	49,500	55,000	60,500	66,000	55,800	62,700	69,700	76,700	83,600
6	42,100	47,300	52,600	57,900	63,100	51,600	58,000	64,500	71,000	77,400
5	40,200	45,300	50,300	55,300	60,400	48,800	54,900	61,000	67,100	73,200
4	38,600	43,400	48,200	53,000	57,800	41,500	46,700	51,900	57,100	62,300
3	33,900	38,200	42,400	46,600	50,900	40,500	45,500	50,600	55,700	60,700

D. Interim appointments

1. Board appointments

Board	Classis	Member	Alternate	Term
Synodical Deputies	B.C. South-East		Rev. A. Beukema	
	Georgetown		Rev. C. Bolt	
	Grandville	Rev. J. Gorter		1998
	Greater Los Angeles		Rev. D.R. Koll	
	Iakota	Rev. D.W. De Groot	Rev. C.E. Fennema	1997
	Lake Erie		Rev. C. Libolt	
	Pella		Rev. R.L. Bouwkamp	
	Wisconsin		Rev. L.J. Kuiper	
CRC Publications	B.C. South-East		Rev. A. Westerhuis	
	Heartland		Mr. D. De Jong	
	Muskegon		Rev. L.D. Van Dyke	
Home Missions	Alberta South		Rev. J.R. Huizinga	
	Greater Los Angeles	Rev. A. Vanden Akker		1997
	Kalamazoo		Mr. J. Schaap	
	Minnesota North		Rev. E.S.H. Busink	
	Pacific Northwest		Rev. J.A. Byker	
	Eastern Canada		Rev. G.J. Hogeterp	
	Georgetown		Mr. H. De Witt	
	Kalamazoo		Mr. D. Selles	
World Missions	Niagara		Rev. F. Koning	
	Thornapple Valley	Rev. W.J. Renkema		1998
CRWRC	Alberta South		Ms. D. Van Galen	
	Grand Rapids North		Mr. R. Ruiter	
	Grandville	Mr. J. Holsem	Mr. P. Wassink	1998
	Toronto		Ms. M. Spoelstra	

2. Youth-Ministry Committee

The Board approved the interim appointment of Rev. David D. Poolman as the Eastern U.S. member to the Youth-Ministry Committee.

II. Activities of the Board

A. Polity matters

1. Convening church for Synod 1995

Inasmuch as Synod 1994 had not designated a congregation to be the convening church for Synod 1995, the Board requested Twelfth Avenue Christian Reformed Church, Jenison, Michigan, to serve in that capacity. The council and its pastor, Rev. Calvin Bolt, graciously accepted the invitation and look forward to serving synod.

2. Convening church for Synod 1996

Seymour Christian Reformed Church, Grand Rapids, Michigan, has offered to serve as the convening church for Synod 1996. The Board of Trustees recommends that synod accept the invitation of Seymour CRC and designate it as the convening church for Synod 1996.

3. Publications and services

a. *Yearbook*

The *Yearbook*, published annually by the office of the general secretary of the Christian Reformed Church in North America, serves as a denominational directory and as a resource for statistical information. In addition to information about classes, congregations, ministers, and agencies, it contains a historical sketch of the life of the church during the previous year and provides obituary information about pastors who died during that year.

Each year the *Yearbook* is published with greater facility than the year before because of technological refinements. The earlier deadline for *Yearbook* information was observed again this year so that the book could be published in January rather than in the spring, as in prior years. Thus the book reflects denominational and local-church information at a given point (August 31) in the calendar year. The change in date of publication continues to meet with favorable response.

The statistics printed beneath the congregational information in the 1995 *Yearbook* in each instance show the total number of souls (baptized and professing members) in a local congregation. By instruction of synod the following membership totals are listed on the Classical Information pages: number of families, number of professing members over eighteen years of age, total number of professing members, total number of baptized members, and total number of members.

FAX numbers reported by ministers, churches, and agencies are listed in the 1995 *Yearbook*. E-mail addresses may be coming soon.

The Directory of Churches and Ministries in the *Yearbook* includes organized churches, emerging churches, newly planted churches (not yet having statistics), and other ministries, for a total of 985 active ministries. The return rate for questionnaires was outstanding this year so that the *Yearbook* includes current statistics for 908 ministries.

Each year a few changes are made in the book, and this year is no exception. Campus ministries are more clearly identified, and the language(s) used in worship are noted. Five of the ministry agencies (Abuse Prevention, Chaplains, Disability Concerns, Synodical Committee on Race Relations, and Pastor-Church Relations) have been incorporated into one agency and are now found under the name Pastoral Ministries. Two new symbols indicate the accommodations churches have made for persons with special needs. The necrology of Christian Reformed clergy, which is published every five years, is included in the 1995 *Yearbook*.

Dr. Richard R. De Ridder, assisted by Mrs. Adrianna De Ridder, prepared the 1994 historical sketch of the life of the Christian Reformed Church and the obituaries of the pastors who died in that year. We thank them both for their valuable contributions.

We also acknowledge with gratitude the excellent services of Mrs. Charlene Ezinga, *Yearbook* manager, and Mrs. Marlene Oosterhouse and Mrs. Patricia Vander Bie, who assisted in gathering information, entering it into the database, copy reading, editing, and carefully attending to the myriad of details involved in publishing the *Yearbook*.

b. *Church Order and Rules for Synodical Procedure*

An updated *Church Order and Rules for Synodical Procedure* was printed, incorporating the changes adopted and ratified by synod. These booklets are updated by the general secretary and reprinted annually, when necessary, and a copy is sent to each church.

c. *Agenda for Synod and Acts of Synod*

The publication of the *Agenda for Synod and Acts of Synod* is the responsibility of the general secretary. This would not be accomplished by established deadlines without the invaluable assistance of his secretary, Mrs. Marlene Oosterhouse, Mrs. Jan Walhout (copy editor), Mrs. Charlene Ezinga, and personnel from CRC Publications.

In spite of all the checks and balances built into our system, an omission was made in the transcription of one of the acts of Synod 1994. Article 74, I, C, 2, page 504, omitted the term "instruct" before the phrase "its agencies."

As in previous years, some decisions needed to be made about which material properly belonged in the *Agenda for Synod*. Erring on the side of grace seemed more appropriate than erring on the side of rigid regulation. Synod itself will finally decide in all cases whether the material is properly on its agenda.

d. *Manual of Christian Reformed Church Government*

The *Manual of Christian Reformed Church Government* has been updated by Dr. Richard R. De Ridder and Rev. Leonard J. Hofman. The content has been updated through Synod 1994. It has been printed by CRC Publications and is now available for purchase.

Previous editions of this manual have served the churches well. We commend the writers for producing a guide which leads to a "deeper appreciation for and understanding of the principles, policies, and procedures that regulate the Christian Reformed Church's organization and activities."

e. *Handbook of the Christian Reformed Church*

During the past year the Board of Trustees has again sent to all of our councils updated materials for the *Handbook of the Christian Reformed Church: Your Church in Action*. Several councils ordered new notebooks because the old ones had been lost or misplaced. This large blue notebook should be kept available in every council room.

The *Handbook of the Christian Reformed Church* contains the following sections:

- 1) "Ministry Shares and Offerings"—This section of the booklet contains financial data and a description of the programs carried on by all CRC boards and agencies as well as by accredited agencies. It gives assistance for scheduling special offerings and suggests announcements to be made prior to receiving such offerings.
- 2) "Denominational Insights"—After a brief statement on the nature of the church and on some of the principles of Reformed church government, this section provides information about the nature of our assemblies, the function of major assemblies, the agenda for synod, and the denominational program structure.
- 3) "Congregational Helps"—This section contains helps which are available for councils and congregations; suggested rules of procedure and model agendas for council, consistory, and deacons meetings; suggestions for congregational committees; helpful information on the use of members' gifts; and other useful information.
- 4) "Ministers' Compensation Survey"—By mandate of synod, a survey of ministers' compensation has been prepared each year for use by our pastors and by finance committees of the church councils. The 1995 survey will be presented to Synod 1995 for approval and mailed for inclusion in the *Handbook*. It is intended to be a helpful guide in the setting of salaries and other position-related reimbursements. Because the survey is also used by our pension committees, Synod 1988 passed the following recommendation:

That synod remind the churches that Synod 1982 adopted a recommendation to "require that all ministers complete the salary questionnaire annually to enable the pension committees to accurately calculate the average cash salary as a base for computing ministers' pensions."

(*Acts of Synod 1982*, p. 51; *Acts of Synod 1988*, p. 574)

- 5) "Sight-Sound Programs"—Every congregation should avail itself, when looking for interesting program materials or information, of the wealth of artistic and effective presentations of the work of our Lord being carried on by our denomination through its agencies. The *Handbook* contains a complete directory of sight-sound programs available from our denominational agencies for showing in our congregations.
- 6) "Doctrinal and Ethical Decisions"—This section is indispensable for all who wish to know the position of the CRC on various matters of doctrine and ethics.

Section 6 of the *Handbook* has not been revised or updated since 1982. The Board of Trustees has initiated the process by which the updating will take place and hopes to have the project completed by fall 1995.

f. Index of synodical decisions

Synod 1994 approved the following recommendation:

That every five years the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA produce an index of synodical decisions. The Board is to study the best possible way to carry out this mandate in a cost-effective way and to report to Synod 1995.

(*Acts of Synod 1994*, p. 435)

The previous indices have been a valuable aid for those who need to research the decisions of synodical assemblies. The most recent edition of the index was published in 1980. Thus fifteen years of synodical activity is difficult to obtain apart from engaging in the time-consuming examination of each *Agenda* and *Acts*.

Initial steps have been taken to prepare a new cumulative index of synodical decisions. Much valuable work was done on a similar project in the late 1980s by Mrs. Wilma Klooster, but, for a variety of reasons, this material was never published. Some of the earlier research can be used even though the format of the new project will be somewhat different from the one envisioned in the late 1980s.

Preliminary decisions have been made to retain the format, categories, and inclusionary principles that were operative in previous editions of the index. The new edition will look essentially like its predecessors and contain data inclusive of Synod 1995.

When will it be published? No one knows the answer to that question, but attempts will be made to have it ready before Synod 1996.

g. Handbook for synodical deputies

Synod 1993 instructed the general secretary "to prepare a handbook for synodical deputies" (*Acts of Synod 1993*, p. 582). Rev. Leonard J. Hofman had begun the project before his retirement on September 30, 1994. The press of other duties and commitments prevented him from completing the handbook immediately, but he has now undertaken the work with intentions of completing it this spring. If the project is finished by the time synod meets in June, copies will be made available for the delegates.

4. Nominations from the floor of synod for Board membership

While reflecting on the somewhat cumbersome process followed to obtain nominees for some of the boards and committees of our ministries, the Board of Trustees recognized that sometimes this work can be overturned or set aside by the procedures of synod. Rule for synodical procedure VI, D, 5 specifies that "ballots of nominations for synod shall be prepared on which space is reserved for nominations from the floor."

Undoubtedly the regulation was put in place to keep synod from becoming a rubber stamp for board and committee recommendations and to allow synod to provide names not previously considered. In recent years, however, synods have mandated a careful and painstaking process for obtaining nominees that requires boards, committees, and classes to take into consideration such matters as balance in membership, expertise, availability, eligibility, and both gender and ethnic inclusiveness. Random nominations from the floor of synod could negate any careful planning previously done.

Therefore, the Board of Trustees presents the following recommendation and its ground:

That synod discontinue the practice of allowing nominations from the floor (VI, D, 5) and remove this provision from the Rules for Synodical Procedure.

Ground: Random nominations from the floor of synod can defeat the process adopted by synod to prepare a slate of nominees that takes into consideration a variety of matters such as balance in membership (minister/nonminister), expertise, availability, eligibility, and gender and ethnic inclusiveness.

5. Time and length of synod

There has been a steady stream of comments over the years about the efficiency and length of synodical proceedings. It has been suggested that one reason so few elders are willing to be nominated for synod is that the time commitment is excessive.

Presently synod meets from the evening of the second Monday of June (the prayer service) until the Wednesday or Thursday of the following week, i.e., about ten or eleven days. The daily schedule is usually 8:30-11:45 a.m., 1:30-5:45 p.m., and 7:30-9:30 p.m. Some advisory committees in the first week work even longer hours, and a few are able to do their work in less time. This rigorous schedule of 95 hours per day for seven days and a four-hour session on Saturday totals about seventy hours of work in advisory committee and/or plenary sessions.

The above format has served the church well for several decades. Complaints are heard from elders, however, that two weeks away from work makes service to synod impossible. Therefore, only retirees, teachers, or well-positioned professionals can accept the nomination for elder delegate to synod. Some pastors voice similar concerns and argue that the essential business could be handled in one week.

The Board of Trustees recommends that synod consider altering its meeting dates by beginning its sessions on the morning of the second Saturday of June and concluding by noon on Saturday of the following week; such scheduling could begin as early as June 1997.

Grounds:

- An assembly of seven working days should provide adequate time for conducting the business of the church. (*N.B.*: If the present daily synodical schedule is maintained, synod would have fifty-eight to sixty hours for committee and plenary session time, compared to seventy hours under the present two-week schedule.)
- An assembly of only one week's duration would make it possible for a greater number of elders to be available as nominees to attend synod.
- Most North American denominations are able to conduct their business in one week.
- Plans for concurrent Reformed Ecumenical Council meetings and the Christian Reformed Church synod meetings have already been made for 1996.

6. Multiethnic Conference

In 1986 synod adopted a recommendation which established a "biennial orientation conference/ethnic planning workshop for the various ethnic minority groups in the CRC" (*Acts of Synod 1986*, p. 717). The general secretary

was instructed to participate in planning these conference/workshops and to arrange "appropriate interaction between the conference/workshop and synod" (*Acts of Synod 1986*, p. 718).

The next conference/workshop is scheduled for 1996, and initial discussion and planning have begun. Mrs. Victoria Gibbs has agreed to chair the planning committee again, and Mrs. Charlene Ezinga from the general secretary's office will assist in coordinating and facilitating conference plans.

In order to assist the general secretary's efforts to "arrange for appropriate interaction between the conference/workshop and synod" and to avoid some of the scheduling difficulties which arose at Synod 1994, the Board of Trustees recommends the following to Synod 1995:

- a. That the Friday-evening session of synod (June 14, 1996) be set aside as a time when the conferees of the Multiethnic Conference, the delegates of the Reformed Ecumenical Council, and the delegates of the CRC synod meet together. The plans for the evening will be made by the Multiethnic Conference planning committee in consultation with the REC planning committee.
- b. That the Saturday-morning session of synod (June 15, 1996) be designated as the session at which the report of the Committee to Study the Development of a Racially and Ethnically Diverse Family of God will be discussed and acted upon.

Grounds:

- 1) Both of these recommendations are in keeping with requests from the Multiethnic Conference (*Acts of Synod 1994*, pp. 522-23) and are consistent with the advance planning of the REC.
- 2) This will help to ensure some "appropriate interaction between the conference/workshop and synod."

7. Ratification of proposed changes in Church Order articles as adopted by Synod 1994

- a. Church Order Article 14-b (*Acts of Synod 1994*, pp. 491-92)

Synod 1994 adopted a recommendation that Church Order Article 14 be revised by the addition of the following provision:

A minister of the Word who resigns from the ministry in the Christian Reformed Church to enter a ministry outside the denomination shall be released from office by the classis with an appropriate declaration reflecting the resigned minister's status and with the concurring advice of the synodical deputies.

Synod 1994 noted that this change must be ratified by a following synod. If this change is ratified, the provision will become Article 14-b, and the current 14-b, 14-c, and 14-d will be changed to 14-c, 14-d, and 14-e. The revised 14-b also has a supplement; its content was approved by Synod 1993 (*Acts of Synod 1993*, pp. 581-82) and was attached to this new article by Synod 1994 (*Acts of Synod 1994*, p. 492).

- b. Church Order Articles 23, 24, and 25 (*Acts of Synod 1994*, pp. 488-90)

Synod 1994 adopted a recommendation that Church Order Articles 23, 24, and 25 be revised by additions to the articles and rearrangement of the material found in the current articles. The new wording and new arrangement are made evident by underlined italicized material.

C. The Evangelists

Article 23

a. The evangelist shall be acknowledged as an elder of his calling church with corresponding privileges and responsibilities. His work as elder shall normally be limited to that which pertains to his function as evangelist.

b. Ordinarily, the office of an evangelist working in an emerging congregation will terminate when a group of believers is formed into an organized church. However, upon organization and with the approval of the newly formed council and the classis, the ordained evangelist may continue to serve the newly organized church until an ordained minister is installed or until he has served the newly organized church for a reasonable period of transition.

c. An evangelist may also serve an organized congregation along with a minister of the Word.

d. Any service or assignment beyond his specific field of labor requires the authorization of his consistory and the approval of classis.

Article 24

a. The task of an evangelist is to witness for Christ and to call for comprehensive discipleship through the preaching of the Word, the administration of the sacraments, evangelism, church education for youth and adults, and pastoral care, in order that the church may be built and unbelievers won for Christ. He shall also equip fellow believers to participate in the work of evangelism.

b. The evangelist shall function under the direct supervision of the council, giving regular reports to it and being present at its meetings whenever possible, particularly when his work is under consideration.

D. The Elders and Deacons

Article 25

a. The elders and deacons shall serve for a limited time as designated by the council. As a rule a specified number of them shall retire from office each year. The retiring officebearers shall be succeeded by others unless the circumstances and the profit of the church make immediate eligibility for reelection advisable. Elders and deacons who are thus reelected shall be reinstalled.

b. The elders, with the minister(s), shall oversee the doctrine and life of the members of the congregation and fellow officebearers, shall exercise admonition and discipline along with pastoral care in the congregation, shall participate in and promote evangelism, and shall defend the faith.

c. The deacons shall represent and administer the mercy of Christ to all people, especially to those who belong to the community of believers, and shall stimulate the members of Christ's church to faithful, obedient stewardship of their resources on behalf of the

needy—all with words of biblical encouragement and testimony which assure the unity of word and deed.

Synod 1994 noted that these changes must be ratified by a following synod.

c. Church Order Article 52-c (*Acts of Synod 1994*, p. 494)

Synod 1994 adopted a recommendation that Church Order Article 52-c be revised to read (italics indicate proposed changes):

The consistory shall see to it that *if liturgical forms are adapted, these adaptations conform to synodical guidelines and that* if choirs or others sing in the worship service, they observe the synodical regulations governing the content of the hymns and anthems sung. These regulations shall also apply when supplementary hymns are sung by the congregation.

Synod 1994 noted that this change must be ratified by a following synod.

d. Church Order Article 55 (*Acts of Synod 1994*, p. 494)

Synod 1994 adopted a recommendation that Church Order Article 55 be revised to read (italics indicate proposed changes):

The sacraments shall be administered upon the authority of the consistory in the public worship service, by the minister of the Word, with the use of the prescribed forms *or adaptations of them which conform to synodical guidelines.*

Synod 1994 noted that this change must be ratified by a following synod.

8. Nominations for Board members

Great Plains

Rev. Dennis Kamper is pastor of Fellowship CRC, Greeley Colorado. He is a graduate of Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary. He serves on the classical interim committee and as regional pastor for Classis Rocky Mountain. He has served on the classical home-missions committee and as alternate member to the Board of Home Missions for Classis Wisconsin. He has been a delegate to synod.

Rev. Aldon Kuiper is pastor of Hope CRC, Hull, Iowa. He is a graduate of Dordt College and of Calvin Theological Seminary. He presently serves on the classical interim committee and as secretary of the Dordt College Board of Trustees. He has served as a synodical deputy, as stated clerk of Classis Northcentral Iowa, and as delegate to synod several times. He has also served on the Hope Haven board and on various classical committees.

Central U.S., Subgroup I

Mr. Daniel Hoebeke is vice president of Centier Bank, working with estate planning. He is a member of First CRC, Highland, Indiana. He is a graduate of Calvin College and Valparaiso University School of Law. He has served on the Barnabas Foundation. He currently serves as clerk of council and has served as deacon.

Mr. Milton Kuylers (alternate incumbent) is chairman of GMK Companies, Brookfield, Wisconsin. He is a member of Brookfield CRC, Brookfield, Wisconsin. He received his M.B.A. from the University of Michigan. He

presently serves on the Board of Trustees as alternate and has served on the Program and Finance Committee. He also has served on the Calvin College Presidential Search Committee, the Barnabas Board, the St. Charles Youth and Family Services, and the Trinity Christian College Board. A seven-time elder, he has also been a delegate to synod.

Central U.S., Subgroup III

Rev. Arthur J. Schoonveld (incumbent) is senior pastor of Ivanrest CRC, Grandville, Michigan. He graduated from Calvin Theological Seminary and received his D.Min. from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois. He is completing his first three-year term on the Board of Trustees. He has served on the boards of Home Missions, Trinity Christian College, and Holland Christian Schools.

Rev. Jacob W. Uitvlugt (alternate incumbent) retired as pastor of Beaverdam CRC, Beaverdam, Michigan, as of October 1, 1994. A graduate of Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary, he presently serves as alternate on the Board of Trustees and as chaplain of the Family Fare food-store chain of Michigan and Indiana. He has been a delegate to synod five times and has served on the CR Board of World Missions and as synodical deputy, church visitor, and member of the classical home-missions and student-fund committees.

Central U.S., Subgroup IV

Nominations for this region will be presented to synod by way of the supplementary report.

Eastern Canada, Subgroup II (clergy)

Rev. Gordon Pols is pastor of Clarkson CRC, Mississauga, Ontario. He is a graduate of Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary. He has served on various denominational and classical study committees and as a delegate to synod five times.

Rev. Gerard Ringnald is a hospital chaplain in Classis Toronto. He is a member of Willowdale CRC, Toronto, Ontario, and a graduate of Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary. He presently serves as synodical deputy for Classis Toronto and in several other capacities.

Eastern Canada, Subgroup II (nonclergy)

Mr. Andrew Schaafsma is owner of Andrew Schaafsma Advertizing. He is a member of Bethel CRC, Waterdown, Ontario, where he serves as chairman of council. He attended Ontario Art College. He presently serves on the pastor-review committee and on the Christian Education Assistance Foundation Board. Mr. Schaafsma has previously served on the Hamilton District Christian High School Board for five years and on the Dundas Christian School Board for eight years.

Mr. J. Hans Vander Stoep (alternate incumbent) is executive director of the Canadian Christian Business Federation. He is a member of Waterdown, Ontario, CRC, where he serves as vice chairman of council. He presently serves as alternate on the Board of Trustees and has served on its Program and Finance Committee. He was a member of the search committee for the director of finance and administration (CRCNA) and is immediate past chairman of the Canadian Christian Education Foundation.

At-large member

Mrs. Sandra Gronsman (alternate incumbent) is a fifth-grade teacher at Kalamazoo Christian School and a member of Third CRC, Kalamazoo, Michigan. She graduated from Calvin College with an A.B. degree in education and has done graduate work at Western Michigan University. She presently serves as chair of the Education Committee at Third CRC. She has been active in Calvinettes, taught Sunday School, served as director of children's church, and was a member of the Kalamazoo chapter of the Calvin Alumni Board. She is a member of various teacher/education organizations.

Mrs. Jane Vander Ploeg (incumbent) is corporate development officer of Sonetics Corporation, a business she and her husband began ten years ago. She is a member of Christ Community CRC, Wilsonville, Oregon, where she currently serves as a prayer coordinator, steering-committee member, and diaconal liaison. A graduate of Calvin College, Mrs. Vander Ploeg received her MSOD from Pepperdine University, Los Angeles. In Portland she cofounded Peoplebank, a talent bank (like Love, Inc.) for twenty churches. She has served on the board of the Portland Metro Chapter of the American Society for Training and Development and in the Billy Graham crusade.

B. Legal matters

1. Designation of legal counsel

The law firm of Miller, Johnson, Snell, and Cummiskey (Grand Rapids) was designated by the Board as legal counsel for the Christian Reformed Church in North America—Michigan Corporation. The law firm of Mr. Wietse Posthumus (Toronto) was designated by the Board (upon recommendation of the Canadian trustees) as legal counsel for the Christian Reformed Church in North America—Ontario Corporation.

2. Approval of the Restated Articles of Association of the Christian Reformed Church in North America and the Amended Bylaws of the Christian Reformed Church in North America (Appendix A-1 and A-2)

The Board recommends for the approval of synod the Restated Articles of Association of the Christian Reformed Church in North America and the Amended Bylaws of the Christian Reformed Church in North America. The restating is essentially a matter of updating the official documents so that the changes (Board of Trustees, executive director of ministries, etc.) that have been made in recent years are appropriately incorporated as required by law.

3. Approval of the Restated Articles of Incorporation of Christian Reformed Church Synod Trustees and the Bylaws of the Trustee Corporation of the Christian Reformed Church in North America (Appendix B-1 and B-2)

The Board recommends for approval the Restated Articles of Incorporation of what has been essentially a dormant corporate entity. The purpose of the restatement is to make this dormant corporation the legal structure for holding endowment gifts, bequests, and other properties given or presently owned by the Christian Reformed Church—Michigan Corporation and/or one of its agencies. Presently such gifts and or properties are held in various forms and accounts. This proposed legal structure will allow the Board to consolidate these gifts and properties and to have a corporate depository for a more efficient and cost-effective management of

these assets. This entity will be known as the Trustee Corporation. Its bylaws also require synod's approval.

4. Trademarking the church's names in the United States

The Board has considered a number of times the issue of legitimate and illegitimate uses of the denomination's name(s) by our own ministries and churches and by those who have gone out from us. Requests made to cease and desist from using our names in what have been judged to be illegitimate ways have gone unheeded. It appears that moral suasion and reasoned appeals will not attain the desired end, namely, that only our congregations and ministries have legitimate claim to the use of our name(s).

In an effort to obtain legal recognition of our name(s), the Board was advised to seek a trademark for it/them. The Board approved such an action, and in February 1995 the legal documents were filed to trademark the following names and their abbreviations:

- a. Christian Reformed Church
- b. Christian Reformed Church in North America
- c. CRC
- d. CRCNA

Legal counsel informs us that it may require a whole year to complete the process.

5. Lawsuits

The Christian Reformed Church is occasionally named in a suit even though its culpability is negligible. Again this year the Board needed to weigh the cost of engaging in such suits to clear our name against paying a sum of money to settle the case out of court.

An amount of money not to exceed \$7,500 (Canadian) was approved to settle a case out of court and to cover modest legal fees in another case. Confidentiality, legal vulnerability, and prudence suggest that we not disclose additional details in the printed agenda.

C. *Program and finance matters*

1. Restructuring of agencies and support services

The restructuring of some agencies and some interagency services continues as mandated by Synod 1992 and following. As previously announced, the printing plant, which was formerly part of CRC Publications, is now operated by Product Services, a department of the denominational office. Mr. Robert Van Stright, director of finance and administration, provides general oversight over this and other centralized support functions.

The Pastoral Ministries reorganization has also continued as planned and is scheduled for full implementation on July 1, 1995. This change has been substantial for the agencies involved, and the Board is deeply grateful to all personnel who have helped to facilitate the change. To be sure, there is more to be learned about how to integrate the ministries of five agencies into one and how to combine five committees into one board. The spirit is willing, but the body is in the process of being trained. This will be the last year that the Abuse-Prevention Committee, Chaplain Committee, Committee on Disability Concerns, Pastor-Church Relations Committee, and SCORR will report as independent ministries. The Board asks that Synod 1995 thank all

those who have helped govern these ministries. It is hoped that, once the pain of change has subsided, all of these ministry efforts will be enhanced by the organizational changes that have been implemented.

The one matter remaining that needs synodical action is the appointment of the Pastoral Ministries' board. The proposed slate of single nominees was selected by a nominating committee composed of the present ministry committees. Nearly all the nominees have unexpired terms on one of the previous committees. The Board recommends that synod appoint the persons nominated for the terms indicated along with their designated alternates, as proposed.

For a one-year term

Regular member

Daniel J. De Witt, Western Michigan
Edward Tamminga, Western Michigan
Charles Terpstra, Western Michigan
Mamie Thomas, Chicago
Bert Zwiers, Ontario, Canada

Alternate member

Everett Gritter
Nicholas Vander Kwaak
Rolf Bouma
Gerald Thaxton
Ralph Bus

For a two-year term

Regular member

Gerry Bosma, Manitoba, Canada
Mary Bouwma, Western Michigan
Barbara Heerspink, Western Michigan
Robert Heerspink, Western Michigan
Peter Nicolai, Alberta, Canada

Alternate member

Eugene Westra
Sharon Hulst
Ruth Oosterhof
Harold Postma
Henry Bosch

For a three-year term

Regular Member

Nell de Boer, Ontario, Canada
Peter Szto, Western Michigan
Carol Topp, Western Michigan
Richard Williams, Chicago
Joe Wilson, Iowa

Alternate member

Diane Algera
Juan Flores
Mary Vander Vennen
William Van Dyke
Marsha Van't Land

Several other staff committees are exploring and proposing ways for agencies to work more cooperatively in areas such as interagency communications, fund-raising, and publications. It is becoming increasingly apparent that changes in the way agencies do things will be required. The change is driven partly by synodical mandate, partly by a genuine desire to work cooperatively, and partly by economic reality. Denominational ministries will have to do, perhaps even do more, with less. That itself is a painful process because there is already so much to do, and opportunities to do more abound. The Board desires synod to know that these issues are frequently discussed, and efforts are being made to respond appropriately to changing circumstances in the church.

2. Ministries of the agencies: an overview

a. Abuse Prevention

The Board informs synod that it approved the appointment of Ms. Beth Swagman as the director of Abuse Prevention. Ms. Swagman was

recommended by the Abuse-Prevention Committee for this appointment. She began her service in November 1994.

The Board received the revised abuse-prevention policies and guidelines from the Abuse-Prevention Committee and its director as directed by Synod 1994. The revised policy statement and guidelines are contained in the Appendix following Communications. The Board informs synod that it recommends the policy and guidelines as printed.

b. The Back to God Hour

At the request of the board of The Back to God Hour, the Board of Trustees approved a change in the Global Media Mission Order, which, though technical in nature, needs to be reported to synod. The wording of the change is reported in The Back to God Hour report.

c. Educational Assistance to Churches Abroad (CEACA)

The Board recommends that synod approve CEACA's recommendations concerning the transfer of its ministry to Calvin Theological Seminary and Christian Reformed World Missions. The Board also recommends that synod approve the continuation of the present ministry share for this ministry, to be distributed as recommended by CEACA, on an 80/20 basis.

d. CRC Publications

The Board ratified the appointment of Rev. Robert De Moor as the associate theological editor for the Education, Worship, and Evangelism Department. The Board also endorses the reappointment of Rev. John Suk as editor in chief of *The Banner*.

e. Calvin College

The Board informs synod that it endorses the appointment of Dr. Gaylen Byker to become the president of Calvin College and recommends that synod ratify that appointment.

f. Pastoral Ministries

1) The Board informs synod that it ratified the appointment of Rev. Duane Visser to be the director of Pastor-Church Relations, a division of Pastoral Ministries.

2) The Board informs synod that it has approved the request of the Chaplain Committee to upgrade the part-time director position in Canada to full-time.

g. Pensions and Insurance

The Board informs synod that it supports the governance transfer of Consolidated Group Insurance (CGI) to the existing committees governing pensions in the U.S. and Canada. To accomplish this transfer of responsibility, the Board recommends the following for synod's approval:

1) That the governance of the employee group-insurance programs currently managed under the CGI Committee be reassigned to the U.S. Ministers' Pension Committee and the Canadian Pension Trustees. These boards, acting for the U.S. and Canadian programs respectively, would take action on general policy issues and significant changes in the insurance and benefit provisions of the programs. Further, in the U.S., the oversight would include fiduciary responsibility for the trust fund supporting the self-funded insurance program.

As is currently the case, these boards would act under the authority of the Board of Trustees and synod, as appropriate.

Ground: This organization will provide a more representative and objective governing structure. Further, the structure takes advantage of a committee structure that is already functioning in the governance of a closely related employee-benefit program.

- 2) That a separate committee be set up to deal with appeals from participants relative to coverage decisions on claims. This appeals committee would be made up of persons with the following expertise or perspectives:
 - Medical credentials to assist in evaluation issues of diagnosis and treatment.
 - Legal experience to help evaluate implications of committee decisions.
 - Health-benefit and insurance administration for understanding of our specific coverages and our program objectives.
 - Financial oversight to maintain a perspective on the program's financial position.
 - Denominational representation to keep perspective on overall objectives and constraints.

This appeals committee would act as a subcommittee reporting to the U.S. Pension Committee. It is not anticipated that the appeals committee will need to be duplicated in Canada because the program there is not self-funded. The committee should be considered the designated appeals mechanism for the plan. Decisions of the appeals committee are to be considered final and binding.

Ground: The appeals committee, staffed as described above, will provide an effective and fair mechanism to judge the appeals of participants in regard to claims. As primarily nonemployees, the committee will be able to maintain a highly objective perspective.

- 3) That an advisory committee of agency/employee representatives be appointed to provide a source of evaluation and advice regarding health insurance and other personnel-related matters. The purpose of this advisory committee is to provide employee input on matters directly related to personnel issues, including, but not limited to, issues involving health insurance.

Ground: A mechanism of communication and advice is important to provide employee and agency input into employee-benefit policy issues, program performance, and strategic planning in the area of personnel and employee benefits.

The Board also informs synod that it approved of the administrative arrangement which allowed the functions formerly performed by Dr. Ray Vander Weele (Pensions/Insurance administrator) to be assumed by the office of the director of finance and administration.

h. Listening conferences and the denominational mission statement

Synod 1994 decided to "submit the 'Catch the Vision' materials to the churches for their discussion and comments in anticipation of possible action at Synod 1995" (*Acts of Synod 1994*, p. 432, Art. 21).

Forty listening and discussion conferences have been held to solicit responses to the proposed mission statement for the CRC. The participation of the church's membership and the level of discussion have been excellent. As a result, the proposed mission statement is undergoing significant revision at this time. The Board will consider the revised statement at its regularly scheduled meeting in May 1995 and, if possible, will submit it to synod in the supplementary report, requesting synod's endorsement.

i. Revised employment policy

Synod 1993 approved several provisions which made it possible for agencies to better manage personnel needs in view of changing circumstances and, in some cases, declining income levels. These provisions follow below:

1. That synod declare that boards and committees, in consultation with the Board of Trustees, are authorized to manage their own programs, personnel, and finances within the boundaries of their bylaws and the bylaws of the Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
2. Any termination of synodical appointments for employment by the respective mission boards and service committees must be approved in advance by the applicable board or committee with ratification by the Board of Trustees, whose work is approved by synod. Such synodical appointments are terminable at the will of the Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
3. That synod declare the normal grievance and appeal procedures to be applicable, as defined in the bylaws of the board or agency and the Bylaws of the Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church in North America, in the event an involuntary termination of employment takes place. Except as provided for in such grievance and appeal procedures, synodical action or approval is not required to terminate the employment or the appointment of any denominational appointee. The results of the grievance and appeal procedures shall be final and binding on the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA and the employee.

(*Acts of Synod 1993*, pp. 633-34)

These provisions were adopted in the context of a discussion about the meaning of "synodical appointments" and their relationship to employment obligations assumed by synod or the agency boards. The Board has continued to study this matter, has sought legal advice, and is now proposing a policy for synod's approval. The main point at issue is the clarification of employment terms for those called or appointed to positions of leadership within the synodical agencies. Synod 1993 instructed the Board to clarify such issues and propose a policy to synod. In a time when employment law requires clear policies, in order to avoid employment disputes from being litigated in the courts, an employer needs a policy such as that proposed below. Every effort has been made to protect the rights of individuals employed by the denomination. Unfortunately, in these litigious times the conditions that exist between

the legal employer and anyone legally considered an employee must be very explicit. The proposed policy clearly establishes a distinction between a legal contract of employment, which the Board or an agency enters into on behalf of synod, and a "synodical ratification" of a person, which is an affirmation that the person in question has the requisite gifts to perform the task to which he or she has been called or appointed.

The Board's bylaws will still require a synodical ratification procedure for first-time appointments, but the ratification procedure should be understood as a vote of confidence in the person to be appointed. Synod could, in addition, require that such a vote of confidence be a required procedure at specified times (e.g., every four or five years), but such reaffirmations are not essential to the policy as proposed. The Board and/or the agency involved will assume responsibility for monitoring the performance of all employees on a regular evaluation schedule.

What follows below is presented in detail only because the Board believes that synod needs to understand the total context in which these employment issues are being discussed. The Board recommends that synod adopt the policy as proposed.

708 EMPLOYMENT TERMINATION APPEALS PROCEDURE

708.1 Introduction

The procedure for termination appeals is the sole and exclusive means for an eligible employee to appeal his or her employment termination by an agency or committee or other agent of the CRCNA. This procedure is intended to provide the means of enforcing the organization's philosophy of employment. This policy will apply to all employees of the CRCNA mission and service agencies except those specifically excluded by a decision of the Board of Trustees and/or the synod of the CRCNA.

708.2 Procedure Relating to Appeal

This procedure is intended to supplement, not add to, detract from, delete from, or otherwise change the jurisdiction of the Judicial Code Committee and/or synod. With respect to employment terminations that are covered by this procedure, this procedure must be exhausted before an appeal may be taken to the Judicial Code Committee and/or synod. Whether any particular matter is within the jurisdiction of the Judicial Code Committee and/or synod shall be determined by the bylaws of the Board of Trustees and/or its decisions.

708.3 Grounds for Appeal of Employment Termination

This procedure applies to all forms of involuntary termination of employment, with the exception that the procedure does not apply to the conclusion of a period of employment that was agreed upon at the outset to be final or was specified by contract to have a concluding date.

Involuntary terminations fall into two categories:

- terminations for job performance and/or misconduct-related reasons
- terminations due to reduction, reorganization, or elimination of a position

The grounds for appeals of these two categories of employment terminations are as follows (in sections 708.31 through 708.33).

708.3.1 Employment Terminations for Job Performance and/or Misconduct-Related Reasons

An employee of an agency, committee, or other entity of the CRCNA may appeal his or her termination for job performance and/or misconduct-related reasons. In such a case the grounds for appeal are limited to the following:

- that the employee is not guilty of any, or a significant part, of the reasons given for termination;
- that although the employee is guilty of the reasons given for termination, the penalty is out of proportion with the misconduct or poor job performance;
- that the termination has violated one of the following:

- an established policy of the agency, committee, or other entity that has terminated the employee
- an established policy of the CRCNA
- a specific provision of the Church Order

708.3.2 Employment Termination Due to Reduction, Reorganization, or Elimination of a Position

An employee may experience termination of employment when an agency, committee, or entity of the CRCNA is reduced in size, is eliminated, is merged, or is reorganized. This may occur for a variety of reasons, such as redefining a mission, economic or budgetary considerations, or other factors. The grounds for appeal for such a termination are limited to the following:

- that the reason given for the termination (for example, reorganization, merger, etc.) is a pretext for removing the employee
- that the selection of the employee or the employee's position for termination has violated one of the following:
 - an established policy of the agency, committee, or other entity that has terminated the employee or the employee's position
 - an established policy of the CRCNA
 - a specific provision of the Church Order

(Note: The employee in such an appeal may not challenge the underlying decision to reorganize, cut back, merge, or effect some other action. The grounds for appeal are limited to the issue of whether some other employee, rather than the appealing employee, should have been terminated, based on a requirement of established agency, committee, or denominational policy or Church Order.)

708.3.3 Appeal Procedure

A. Filing

Appeals must be filed in writing on a form provided by and obtained from the Office of Personnel of the CRCNA.

The appeal must be filed within 30 calendar days or less after the employee is terminated or is notified in writing that he/she will be terminated, whichever date is earlier.

The written appeal must state the grounds for the appeal.

B. Steps of Appeal

- Step 1** The appeal shall first be filed with the senior administrative person of the agency, committee, or other entity in which the employee worked (for example, executive director, director, chair, or other). That administrator—or his or her designee—shall meet with the employee and other appropriate persons within 10 calendar days after receiving the written appeal and shall answer the appeal in writing within 10 calendar days after the meeting.
- Step 2** If the employee is not satisfied with the response at Step 1, the employee may appeal to the EDM in writing within ten calendar days after receiving the Step 1 reply. The EDM or his designee shall meet with the employee and other appropriate persons within 10 calendar days after receiving the written appeal and shall respond to it in writing within 10 calendar days after meeting with the employee.
- Step 3** If the employee is not satisfied with the response of Step 2, the employee may appeal to the board of the agency or committee in writing within 10 calendar days after receiving the Step 2 response. The board or its designee (for example, a subcommittee of the board) shall conduct a hearing promptly. The hearing shall be conducted according to procedure set forth below (in E. Conduct of Hearing).
- Step 4** If the employee is not satisfied with the response at Step 3, the employee may appeal to the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA within 10 calendar days of receiving the Step 3 response. The Board of Trustees or its designee (for example, a subcommittee of the board) shall conduct a hearing promptly. The hearing shall be conducted according to the procedures set forth below (in E. Conduct of Hearing).

Appeal beyond the Board

An appeal, if any, beyond Step 4 is subject to the jurisdiction and procedures of the Judicial Code Committee and/or synod.

C. Access to Information

An employee shall be given access, at reasonable times and places, to such non-confidential information as he or she may reasonably request to adequately pursue an appeal and prepare for meetings and hearings.

D. Representation

At the meetings provided for in Steps 1 and 2, the employee may be accompanied by another person to provide support and assistance. However, the employee shall speak for himself or herself and the accompanying person shall not function as an attorney or advocate.

At the Step 3 and 4 hearings, the employee may be represented by an attorney or other advocate, provided that the appellant gives written notice of such outside representation at least 15 calendar days before the hearing.

E. Conduct of Hearing

The Step 3 and 4 hearings shall be conducted in the following manner:

- The hearing body (board, committee, or subcommittee) shall appoint a hearing officer who may be a member of the hearing body or may be an outside party (for example, attorney).
- The employer shall proceed first with its proofs (documents, testimony, and other evidence). The employee may cross-examine witnesses and respond to any evidence presented.
- At the conclusion of the employer's presentation, the employee may present proofs (documents, testimony, and other evidence), and the employer may cross-examine and respond.
- Further rebuttal by the employer and/or the employee shall be at the discretion of the hearing body.
- At the conclusion of the proofs, the hearing body shall give each party an opportunity to make closing arguments, orally and/or in writing. If the hearing body requires additional evidence to render its decision, it shall so advise the parties before the conclusion of the hearing and before closing arguments are made. If written closing arguments are allowed, a reasonably prompt deadline shall be specified.
- The hearing body shall issue its decision in writing within 30 calendar days after arguments have been received or the deadline for the receipt of written arguments has passed.

F. Other Procedural Matters

- At Steps 1 and 2 the employer may independently investigate the matters involved in the appeal. However, at Steps 3 and 4 the hearing body shall limit its consideration to the evidence and arguments presented at the hearing.
- Time limits in this procedure may be waived only by written agreement. Absent compelling circumstances or an employee's failure to file or process an appeal in a timely fashion shall constitute a waiver to the right of appeal.

G. Effect of Decision

This appeal procedure is an employee's sole and exclusive remedy in all cases of employment termination. The decision produced by this procedure in any particular case is final and binding on the employer and the employee and, to the extent that a civil court has jurisdiction of the matter, such decision is fully enforceable in such a court.

j. Board's response to the recommendations of the Committee to Study Structure for Ministry in Canada

The Board has discussed the recommendations being advanced by the synodical Committee to Study Structure for Ministry in Canada. The Canadian trustees have met with the Interim Committee of the Council of the Christian Reformed Churches in Canada (CCRCC). The recom-

mentations of the study committee address the important question of how the CRC must face its binational character (an essential reality of the CRC's being). The Board endorses the need for synod's official recognition of that reality by declaring that the CRC is a binational denomination and that synod, as well as the agencies, accepts the consequences of that declaration. The implementation of that reality can take many forms, some implications of which can be far reaching for both the agencies of the denomination and the CRC as a whole. The Canadian trustees decided to request the agencies to respond to the study-committee report. Information gained from the responses may be submitted to synod for consideration by way of a supplementary report.

k. Agency representatives addressing synod

In recent years synodical officers have expressed a desire for some guidelines about which agency or agencies should be permitted to address synod. Some agencies have a long-standing tradition of enjoying that privilege; others are only now beginning to request the same privilege. The Board has no desire to control synod's prerogatives, but, at the same time, it wishes to respond to expectations that this issue be addressed.

Officially, agencies report to synod by way of their written reports and through meetings with synod's advisory committees. In addition, agency representatives are present and available to synod at the time their reports are discussed by synod in plenary session. Additional presentations are approved by each synod upon recommendation of an advisory committee or by the permission of synodical officers. The Board believes it preferable for synod to declare its own wish on this matter so that either an appropriate rotation schedule can be arranged or other means of agency information-sharing can be developed. Some Board members suggested that agencies should staff their display booths so that synodical delegates could stop by to visit and discuss additional areas of mutual interest. It was also suggested that other creative means be explored for interaction between the agencies and the delegates. Synod's advice on this matter is requested.

l. Financial information

The agency financial reports and a unified budget (including requests for ministry shares and above-ministry-share offerings) will be available at the time synod convenes by means of the *Agenda for Synod 1995—Financial and Business Supplement*.

m. World-hunger report

The world-hunger decisions of Synod 1993 included a provision that the Board monitor the world-hunger ministry efforts of the denominational agencies and require annual reporting concerning these efforts. Synod also decided that a world-hunger coordinator be appointed to provide leadership to this ministry. As was announced at Synod 1994, Mr. Peter Vander Meulen has accepted the appointment and has begun his activities in the world-hunger effort. Mr. Vander Meulen has been part of CRWRC's staff for twelve years. He has previously served in Asia and Latin America and presently is completing his service as West Africa regional director. Mr. Vander Meulen has begun planning for his new

work in cooperation with staff persons from other denominational agencies. The coordination of various efforts will now be enhanced, and reporting on these efforts will also improve in future years.

n. Subcommittee on Ministry to Smaller Churches report

Synod 1994 referred the proposed new Fund for Smaller Churches guidelines to the churches for study and response. The Board Subcommittee on Ministry to Smaller Churches reviewed the responses and prepared a revised report. The revised report, with recommendations, was adopted by the Board of Trustees for recommendation to Synod 1995. The report, including recommendations, is Appendix C of this report.

3. Conclusion

The CRC is privileged and blessed to be used by the Lord in many and diverse ways. Even in times of turmoil and strife in the church, the kingdom of God is advanced through what the Spirit is doing. The Board requests the prayers of synod as each part of the whole church does its ministry to the end that "every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord."

III. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Dr. Kenneth B. Bootsma, president; Dr. David H. Engelhard, general secretary; Dr. Peter Borgdorff, executive director of ministries; and Mr. Robert Van Stright, director of finance and administration, when matters affecting the Board of Trustees are discussed.

B. That synod approve the interim appointments made by the Board to the agency boards and committees (I, D, 1).

C. That synod designate Seymour CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan, to be the convening church for Synod 1996 (II, A, 2).

D. That synod adopt the recommendation concerning nominations for board positions from the floor of synod (II, A, 4).

E. That synod adopt the recommendation concerning the length of synod and its convening and adjournment dates (II, A, 5).

F. That synod ratify the revision of Articles 14-b, 23, 24, 25, 52-c, and 55 of the Church Order as decided by Synod 1994 (II, A, 7).

G. That synod approve the Restated Articles of Association and the Amended Bylaws of the Christian Reformed Church in North America (Appendix A-1 and A-2).

H. That synod approve the Restated Articles of Incorporation of the Christian Reformed Church Synod and the Bylaws of the Trustee Corporation of the Christian Reformed Church in North America (Appendix B-2 and B-2).

I. That synod appoint the nominees and their alternates for the Pastoral Ministries board as proposed (II, C, 1).

J. That synod endorse the suggested abuse-prevention policy and guidelines as guidance for the churches (see Appendix following Communications).

K. That synod approve amending the mandate of the U.S. Ministers' Pension Committee and the Canadian Pension Trustees to include governance responsibility for the denominational group-insurance plans and that synod rename these entities the U.S. Pension and Insurance Board and the Canadian Pension and Insurance Trustees (II, C, 2, g).

L. That synod approve the employment-policy statement for the Board of Trustees and the mission and service agencies of the Christian Reformed Church (II, C, 2, i).

M. That synod express its preference and expectations concerning the practice of agency representatives addressing synod (II, C, 2, k).

N. That synod approve the recommendations of the Subcommittee on Ministry to Smaller Churches in Appendix C.

Board of Trustees of the
Christian Reformed Church in North America
David H. Engelhard, general secretary
Peter Borgdorff, executive director
of ministries

APPENDIX A-1

STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
CORPORATION DIVISION
LANSING, MICHIGAN

Do Not Write In Spaces Below - For Department Use

Date Received	

**RESTATED ARTICLES OF ASSOCIATION
OF
THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA**

Pursuant to the provisions of Act 327, Public Acts of 1931, Act 162, Public Acts of 1982, the undersigned persons execute the following Restated Articles:

1. The present name of the corporation is:

THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA

2. The corporation identification number (CID) assigned by the Bureau is:

7	9	2	—	0	1	5
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3. The corporation has no former names.

4. The date of filing the original Articles of Association was: July 29, 1974.

The following Restated Articles of Association supersede the original Articles of Association as amended and shall be the Articles of Association for the corporation:

ARTICLE I

NAME OF CORPORATION

The name of this corporation is:

THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA

ARTICLE II

REGISTERED OFFICE AND RESIDENT AGENT

The street address and mailing address of the Registered Office is 2850 Kalamazoo Avenue, S.E., Grand Rapids, Michigan 49560. The name of the Resident Agent is Robert V. Van Stright.

ARTICLE III

TERM OF CORPORATION

The term of this corporation is perpetual.

ARTICLE IV

GOVERNANCE

The corporation shall be the legal structure in the United States for the Christian Reformed Church, a denomination of member churches which worship and labor together according to the discipline, rules and usage of the Christian Reformed Church as authorized and declared by its synod ("Synod") from time to time.

ARTICLE V

CORPORATE PURPOSES

The corporation is a nonprofit, ecclesiastical corporation organized and operated exclusively for religious and charitable purposes within the meaning of Section 501(c)(3) of the United States Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended (or the corresponding provision of any future United States internal revenue law). The purposes of the corporation are the following:

(a) To proclaim the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ through the churches of the denomination, its agencies and boards.

(b) To promote the principles and teachings of the Holy Bible, as interpreted by the Reformed Creeds, namely, the Belgic Confession, The Heidelberg Catechism, and The Canons of Dort, in the churches of the denomination.

(c) To fulfill the scriptural mandate enunciated by Jesus Christ in Mark 16:15 to "go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature," by actively

supporting and promoting Christian missions through the churches of the denomination, classical home mission programs, and synodical agencies and boards for home missions and world missions.

(d) To extend mercy and help to those in distress by reason of natural catastrophe and disaster, illness, old age, poverty, unemployment, and war, through synodical and classical agencies and the churches of the denomination.

(e) To train members of the denomination to be ministers of the gospel, missionaries, and lay workers in the service of the church and society; to provide for the financial support and security of ordained and unordained personnel of the churches of the denomination, and synodical and classical agencies and boards.

(f) To receive funds directly and/or through offerings in the churches for the support of the activities, agencies, functions, and programs of the denomination and/or for the purpose of supporting and contributing to religious, charitable, and educational organizations exempt from taxation under Section 501(c)(3) of the United States Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended (or the corresponding provision of any future United States internal revenue law).

(g) To conduct a literature ministry for the production and distribution of Christian periodicals and writings, Sunday school materials, and other publications needed to carry out the religious and charitable objectives and purposes of the corporation.

(h) To do all other lawful acts and things necessary to fulfill the mandate and mission of the Christian Reformed Church as determined by Synod.

This corporation shall not carry on any other activities not permitted to be carried on (a) by a corporation exempt from federal income tax under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended (or the corresponding provision of any future United States internal revenue law) or (b) by a corporation, contributions to which are deductible under Section 170(c)(2) of the United States Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended (or the corresponding provision of any future United States internal revenue law).

The corporation has not been formed for pecuniary profit or gain. No part of the assets, income or profit of the corporation will inure to the benefit of its members, directors or officers. However, the corporation shall be authorized and empowered to pay reasonable compensation for services rendered and to make payments and distributions in furtherance of the purposes set forth in this Article V.

No substantial part of the activities of the corporation shall be the carrying on of propaganda or otherwise attempting to influence legislation. The corporation shall not participate in, or intervene in (including the publishing or distribution of statements) any political campaign on behalf of any candidate for public office.

ARTICLE VI

DISSOLUTION

In the event of dissolution of the corporation, all assets of the corporation, real and personal, shall be distributed to organizations which are tax exempt under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended (or

the corresponding provision of any future United States internal revenue law) as may be determined by Synod.

ARTICLE VII

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The Board of Trustees of The Christian Reformed Church in North America (the "Board of Trustees") shall be the Board of Directors of the corporation. A member of the Board of Trustees shall be a director of the corporation.

ARTICLE VIII

LIMITED LIABILITY FOR MEMBERS OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

A volunteer member of the Board of Trustees (a "Volunteer Director") shall not be personally liable to the corporation or its members for monetary damages for a breach of the Volunteer Director's fiduciary duty, except for liability for any of the following:

- (a) A breach of the Volunteer Director's duty of loyalty to the corporation or its members;
- (b) Acts or omissions not in good faith or that involve intentional misconduct or a knowing violation of law;
- (c) A violation of Section 551(1) of the Michigan Nonprofit Corporation Act, as amended;
- (d) A transaction from which the Volunteer Director derived an improper personal benefit;
- (e) An act or omission occurring before this Article is effective; or
- (f) An act or omission that is grossly negligent.

For purposes of this Article VIII, "Volunteer Director" means a director who does not receive anything of value from the corporation for serving as a director other than reasonable per diem compensation and reimbursement for actual, reasonable, and necessary expenses incurred by a director in his or her capacity as a director.

The corporation shall assume all liability to any person other than the corporation or its members for claims for monetary damages for a breach of a Volunteer Director's duty in his or her capacity as a Volunteer Director, and the Volunteer Director shall not be personally liable to such persons for monetary damages, except for liability for any of the following:

- (a) A breach of the Volunteer Director's duty of loyalty to the corporation or its members;
- (b) Acts of omissions not in good faith or that involve intentional misconduct or a knowing violation of law;
- (c) A violation of Section 551(1) of the Michigan Nonprofit Corporation Act;
- (d) A transaction from which the Volunteer Director derived an improper personal benefit;
- (e) An act or omission occurring before this Article is effective; or
- (f) An act or omission that is grossly negligent.

If the Michigan Nonprofit Corporation Act is amended after this Article has been adopted by the members to authorize corporate action to further eliminate

or limit the personal liability of Volunteer Directors, then the liability of a Volunteer Director for the corporation shall be eliminated or limited to the fullest extent permitted by the Michigan Nonprofit Corporation Act as amended.

Any repeal, modification or adoption of any provision in these Articles of Association inconsistent with this Article VIII shall not adversely affect any right or protection of a Volunteer Director of the corporation existing at the time of such repeal, modification, or adoption.

ARTICLE IX

LIMITED LIABILITY FOR NONDIRECTOR VOLUNTEERS

The corporation shall assume the liability for all acts or omissions of a nondirector volunteer of the corporation (a "Non-director Volunteer") occurring on or after the effective date of this Article if all of the following are met:

(a) The Nondirector Volunteer was acting or reasonably believed he or she was acting within the scope of his or her authority.

(b) The Nondirector Volunteer was acting in good faith.

(c) The Nondirector Volunteer's conduct did not amount to gross negligence or willful and wanton misconduct.

(d) The Nondirector Volunteer's conduct was not an intentional tort.

(e) The Nondirector Volunteer's conduct was not a tort arising out of the ownership, maintenance, or use of a motor vehicle for which tort liability may be imposed as provided in MCLA § 500.3135.

For purposes of this Article IX, a "Nondirector Volunteer" means an individual, other than a volunteer director, performing services for a nonprofit corporation who does not receive compensation or any other type of consideration for the services other than reimbursement for expenses actually incurred.

If the Michigan Nonprofit Corporation Act is amended after this Article has been adopted by the members to authorize corporate action to further eliminate or limit the personal liability of Nondirector Volunteers, then the liability of a Non-director Volunteer for the corporation shall be eliminated or limited to the fullest extent permitted by the Nonprofit Corporation Act, as amended.

Any repeal, modification or adoption of any provision in these Articles of Association inconsistent with this Article IX shall not adversely affect any right or protection of a Nondirector Volunteer existing at the time of such repeal, modification, or adoption.

5. These Restated Articles of Association were duly adopted on the ____ day of _____, 19____, in accordance with the provisions of Section 642 of Act 162, Public Acts of 1982, and Section 182 of Act 327, Public Acts of 1931, as amended, by the necessary number of members and do further amend the provisions of the Articles of Association.

- (i) Attached is a copy of the call for the meeting of the members.
- (ii) The number of members present at the meeting: _____
- (iii) The number of members voting in favor of the Restated Articles of Association: _____

Signed this _____ day of _____, 19____.

Chairman of Synod

Secretary of Synod

STATE OF MICHIGAN)

) ss.

COUNTY OF _____)

Subscribed and sworn to before me this _____ day of _____, 19____, by

_____.

(Signature of Notary)

(Type or Print Name of Notary)

Notary Public for _____

County, State of _____

My Commission expires: _____

AMENDED BYLAWS
OF
THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA

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AMENDED BYLAWS
OF
THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA

ARTICLE I

NAME AND PURPOSES

Section 1. Name. This corporation shall be known as the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

Section 2. Purposes. The corporation is a nonprofit, ecclesiastical corporation organized and operated exclusively for religious and charitable purposes within the meaning of Section 501(c)(3) of the United States Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended (or the corresponding provision of any future United States internal revenue law). The purposes of the corporation are the following:

(a) To proclaim the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ through the churches of the denomination, its agencies and boards.

(b) To promote the principles and teachings of the Holy Bible, as interpreted by the Reformed Creeds, namely, the Belgic Confession, The Heidelberg Catechism, and The Canons of Dort, in the churches of the denomination.

(c) To fulfill the scriptural mandate enunciated by Jesus Christ in Mark 16:15 to "go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature," by actively supporting and promoting Christian missions through the churches of the denomination, classical home mission programs, and synodical agencies and boards for home missions and world missions.

(d) To extend mercy and help to those in distress by reason of natural catastrophe and disaster, illness, old age, poverty, unemployment, and war, through synodical and classical agencies and the churches of the denomination.

(e) To train members of the denomination to be ministers of the gospel, missionaries, and lay workers in the service of the church and society; to provide for the financial support and security of ordained and unordained personnel of the churches of the denomination, and synodical and classical agencies and boards.

(f) To receive funds directly and/or through offerings in the churches for the support of the activities, agencies, functions, and programs of the denomination and/or for the purpose of supporting and contributing to religious, charitable, and educational organizations exempt from taxation under Section 501(c)(3) of the United States Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended (or the corresponding provision of any future United States internal revenue law).

(g) To conduct a literature ministry for the production and distribution of Christian periodicals and writings, Sunday school materials, and other publications needed to carry out the religious and charitable objectives and purposes of the corporation.

(h) To do all other lawful acts and things necessary to fulfill the mandate and mission of the Christian Reformed Church as determined by its members sitting in synodical assembly ("Synod").

This corporation shall not carry on any other activities not permitted to be carried on (a) by a corporation exempt from federal income tax under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended (or the corresponding provision of any future United States internal revenue law) or (b) by a corporation, contributions to which are deductible under Section 170(c)(2) of the United States Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended (or the corresponding provision of any future United States internal revenue law).

The corporation has not been formed for pecuniary profit or gain. No part of the assets, income or profit of the corporation will inure to the benefit of its members, directors or officers. However, the corporation shall be authorized and empowered to pay reasonable compensation for services rendered and to make payments and distributions in furtherance of the purposes set forth in this Article I, Section 2 of these Bylaws.

No substantial part of the activities of the corporation shall be the carrying on of propaganda or otherwise attempting to influence legislation. The corporation shall not participate in, or intervene in (including the publishing or distribution of statements) any political campaign on behalf of any candidate for public office.

ARTICLE II

BASIS/FORMS OF UNITY

Section 1. Basis. The basis of this corporation is the Holy Bible which is the inspired and infallible Word of God and the only rule for faith and practice.

Section 2. Forms of Unity. The Christian Reformed Church in North America, as an ecclesiastical organization and legal corporation, together with its members and supporting assemblies, accepts, believes and is bound by the Forms of Subscription in the following Reformed Creeds as a true interpretation of the Holy Bible:

The Belgic Confession
The Heidelberg Catechism
The Canons of Dort

ARTICLE III

CHURCH GOVERNMENT

The church order of the Christian Reformed Church in North America, as adopted by Synod and amended from time to time (the "Church Order"), and all regulations and mandates of Synod shall regulate the ecclesiastical organization and operation of the denomination and its corporate expression and form.

ARTICLE IV

MEMBERS

Section 1. Definition of Members. The members of this corporation are the delegates elected from time to time to Synod consistent with the Church Order or synodical regulations and mandates. Each delegate shall continue to hold the office as a member of this corporation until a successor has been chosen and the next synodical assembly has been duly convened and constituted.

Section 2. Meetings of Members. The members of the corporation shall meet annually as the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church at a time and place designated by Synod from the previous year.

Section 3. Notice of Meetings. Notice of any annual or special meeting of the members of this corporation shall be provided to the members in the official publications of the denomination at least 15 days prior to the date of the meeting.

ARTICLE V

SUPPORTING ASSEMBLIES

The supporting assemblies of the denomination are the consistory and the classis. The jurisdiction of the consistory shall be exercised in the local church in which it is the governing body. The jurisdiction of the classis shall be exercised in the geographic district in which its constituent churches and congregations are located and over which it has been appointed consistent with the regulations and mandates of Synod. The consistory and the classis shall meet from time to time as prescribed by the Church Order.

ARTICLE VI

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church in North America (the "Board of Trustees") shall be the Board of Directors of this corporation. A member of the Board of Trustees shall be a Director of this corporation. The Board of Trustees shall have the authority, duties and responsibilities prescribed under the Church Order or under the regulations and mandates of Synod.

ARTICLE VII

OFFICERS OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES AND THE CORPORATION

Section 1. Officers of the Board of Trustees. The officers of the Board of Trustees shall consist of a Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and Secretary. The Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson of the Board of Trustees shall be elected by the Board of Trustees from its membership to serve terms as determined by the Board of Trustees. The Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson shall hold office until their successors are elected and qualify or until their resignation or removal. The General Secretary of the corporation shall also be the Secretary of the Board of Trustees.

Section 2. Officers of the Corporation. The officers of the corporation shall consist of the General Secretary, the Executive Director of Ministries, and the Director of Finance and Administration. Synod shall appoint the General Secretary and the Executive Director of Ministries to serve the terms of office as determined by Synod. The Executive Director of Ministries shall appoint the Director of Finance and Administration subject to ratification by the Board of Trustees. The officers of the corporation shall hold office until their successors are elected and qualify or until their resignation or removal.

Section 3. Duties of the Chairperson of the Board of Trustees. The duties of the Chairperson of the Board of Trustees shall include the following:

- (a) Preside at meetings of the Board of Trustees.
- (b) Call special meetings of the Board of Trustees consistent with the Church Order, synodical regulations and mandates and requirements of law.
- (c) Perform other duties as may be specified from time to time by Synod.

Section 4. Duties of the Vice-Chairperson. The duties of the Vice-Chairperson of the Board of Trustees shall include the following:

- (a) Preside at meetings of the Board of Trustees in the absence of the Chairperson.
- (b) In the absence of the Chairperson, to serve in place of the Chairperson at all committee and Board of Trustees meetings as well as perform those responsibilities of the Chairperson outlined under Section 3 of this Article VII.

Section 5. Duties of the General Secretary. The General Secretary shall be the secretary of the Board of Trustees and the Secretary of the corporation. The General Secretary shall have the authority, duties and responsibilities as are prescribed from time to time by Synod. The General Secretary shall be an authorized signatory on behalf of the corporation for those matters which arise within the scope of the General Secretary's duties.

Section 6. Duties of the Executive Director of Ministries. The Executive Director of Ministries shall have the authority, duties, and responsibilities as are prescribed from time to time by Synod. The Executive Director of Ministries shall be an authorized signatory on behalf of the corporation for those matters which arise within the scope of the Executive Director's duties.

Section 7. Duties of Director of Finance and Administration. The Director of Finance and Administration shall have the authority, duties and responsibilities as are prescribed from time to time by Synod. The Director of Finance and Administration shall be an authorized signatory on behalf of the corporation for those matters which arise within the scope of the Director of Finance and Administration's duties.

ARTICLE VIII

AGENCIES

The purposes of the corporation outlined under Article I, Section 2, of these Bylaws may be fulfilled through the functioning of independent agencies as prescribed by Synod from time to time (the "Agencies"). The Agencies shall have the authority, duties and responsibilities as prescribed by Synod from time to time. The Agencies shall be designated in, and subject to, the Bylaws of the

Board of Trustees which Synod originally approved in June of 1993 (the "Board of Trustee Bylaws") and as may be amended by Synod.

ARTICLE IX COMMITTEES

Synod or the Board of Trustees may form standing and ad hoc committees as are necessary for the corporation to carry out the purposes outlined under Article I, Section 2 of these Bylaws. The committees shall perform those duties which are delegated by Synod or the Board of Trustees. The Committees shall be designated in, and subject to, the Board of Trustee Bylaws, as may be amended by Synod.

ARTICLE X INDEMNIFICATION OF OFFICERS, TRUSTEES, EMPLOYEES, AND AGENTS

Section 1. Indemnification: Third Party Actions. This corporation has the power to indemnify a person who was or is a party, or is threatened to be made a party to a threatened, pending or completed action, suit or proceeding, whether civil, criminal, administrative or investigative and whether formal or informal (other than an action by or in the right of this corporation) by reason of fact that the person is or was a Trustee, Officer, employee or agent of this corporation, or is or was serving at the request of this corporation as a Director, Officer, Partner, Trustee, employee or agent of another foreign or domestic corporation, business corporation, partnership, joint venture, trust, or other enterprise, whether for profit or not for profit, against expenses (including attorneys' fees), judgments, penalties, fines and amounts paid in settlement actually reasonably incurred by that person in connection with the action, suit or proceedings if that person acted in good faith and in a manner reasonably believed by that person to be in or not opposed to the best interests of this corporation, and with respect to a criminal action or proceeding, that person had no reasonable cause to believe that the conduct was unlawful. The termination of an action, suit or proceeding by judgment, order, settlement, conviction, or upon a plea of nolo contendere or its equivalent, shall not, of itself, create a presumption that the person did not act in good faith and in a manner reasonably believed by that person to be in or not opposed to the best interests of this corporation and, with respect to a criminal action or proceeding, had reasonable cause to believe that the person's conduct was unlawful.

Section 2. Indemnification: Actions in the Right of this Corporation. This corporation has the power to indemnify a person who was or is a party to, or is threatened to be made a party to a threatened, pending or completed action or suit by or in the right of this corporation to procure a judgment in its favor by reason of the fact that the person is or was a Trustee, Officer, employee or agent of this corporation, or is or was serving at the request of this corporation as a Director, Officer, Partner, Trustee, employee or agent of another foreign or domestic corporation, business corporation, partnership, joint venture, trust or other enterprise, whether for profit or not, against expenses (including actual and reasonable attorneys' fees) and amounts paid in settlement incurred by that

person in connection with the action or suit if that person acted in good faith and in a manner reasonably believed by that person to be in or not opposed to the best interests of this corporation. However, no indemnification shall be made for a claim, issue or matter in which such person shall have been found to be liable to the corporation unless and only to the extent that the court in which such action or suit was brought has determined upon application that, despite the adjudication of liability but in view of all circumstances of the case, that person is fairly and reasonably entitled to indemnification for the expenses which the court considers proper.

Section 3. Indemnification: Mandatory and Permissive Payments.

(a) To the extent that a Trustee, Officer, employee or agent of this corporation has been successful on the merits or otherwise in defense of an action, suit or proceeding referred to in Section 1 or Section 2 of this Article X, or in defense of a claim, issue or matter in the action, suit, or proceeding, that person shall be indemnified against expenses (including actual and reasonable attorneys' fees) incurred by that person in connection with the action, suit or proceeding brought to enforce the mandatory indemnification provided in this Subsection.

(b) An indemnification under Section 1 or Section 2 of this Article X, unless ordered by a court, shall be made by this corporation only as authorized in a specific case upon a determination that indemnification of the Trustee, Officer, employee or agent is proper in the circumstances because that person has met the applicable standard of conduct as set forth in either Section 1 or Section 2. That determination shall be made in any of the following ways:

(1) A majority vote of a quorum of the Board consisting of Trustees who were not parties to the action, suit or proceeding.

(2) If that quorum is not obtainable, then by a majority vote of a Committee of Trustees who were not parties to the action, suit, or proceeding. The Committee shall consist of not less than two (2) disinterested Trustees.

(3) By independent legal counsel in a written opinion.

(4) By the members.

(c) If a person is entitled to indemnification under Section 1 or Section 2 of this Article X for a portion of expenses including attorneys' fees, judgments, penalties, fines, and amounts paid in settlement, but not for the total amount thereof, the corporation may indemnify the person for the portion of the expenses, judgments, penalties, fines, or amounts paid in settlement for which the person is entitled to be indemnified.

Section 4. Indemnification: Expense Advances. Expenses incurred in defending a civil or criminal action, suit or proceeding described in Section 1 or Section 2 of this Article X may be paid by this corporation in advance of the final disposition of the action, suit, or proceeding upon receipt of an undertaking by or on behalf of the Trustee, Officer, employee or agent to repay the expenses if it is ultimately determined that the person is not entitled to be indemnified by this corporation. The undertaking shall be by unlimited general obligation of the person on whose behalf advance are made but need not be secured. The indemnification provisions of Sections 1 through 4 of this Article X shall continue as to a person who ceases to be a Trustee, Officer, employee, or agent

and shall inure to the benefit of the heirs, executors, and administrators of that person.

ARTICLE XI

AMENDMENTS

These Bylaws may be amended by the majority vote of the members of the Board of Trustees then holding office at any regular or special meeting of the Board of Trustees, provided that the substance of the amendment has been stated in the notice of the meeting or in a waiver of notice of the meeting.

CERTIFICATE

I, Dr. David H. Engelhard, the General Secretary of the Christian Reformed Church in North America, certify that these Amended Bylaws were adopted as the Bylaws of this corporation by the vote of Synod on _____, 1995 and shall be the Bylaws of this corporation.

Dated: _____, 1995.

Dr. David H. Engelhard
General Secretary

APPENDIX B-1

STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
CORPORATION DIVISION
LANSING, MICHIGAN

Do Not Write In Spaces Below - For Department Use

Date Received

**RESTATED ARTICLES OF INCORPORATION
OF
CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH SYNOD TRUSTEES**

Pursuant to the provisions of Act 327, Public Acts of 1931, the undersigned persons execute the following Restated Articles:

1. The present name of the corporation is:

CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH SYNOD TRUSTEES

2. The corporation identification number (CID) assigned by the Bureau is:

8	1	6	—	0	1	5
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

3. The corporation has no former names.

4. The date of filing the original Articles of Incorporation was: September 24, 1969.

The following Restated Articles of Incorporation supersede the original Articles of Incorporation as amended and shall be the Articles of Incorporation for the corporation:

ARTICLE I

NAME OF CORPORATION

The name of this corporation is:

THE TRUSTEE CORPORATION OF THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA

ARTICLE II

REGISTERED OFFICE AND RESIDENT AGENT

The street address and mailing address of the Registered Office is 2850 Kalamazoo Avenue, S.E., Grand Rapids, Michigan 49560. The name of the Resident Agent is Robert V. Van Stright.

ARTICLE III

TERM OF CORPORATION

The term of this corporation is perpetual.

ARTICLE IV

CORPORATE PURPOSES

The corporation is a nonprofit, church trustee corporation organized and operated exclusively for religious and charitable purposes within the meaning of Section 501(c)(3) of the United States Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended (or the corresponding provision of any future United States internal revenue law). The purposes of the corporation are the following:

(a) To take and hold in its corporate name all real and personal property which is devised, bequeathed, transferred or conveyed to the corporation for the use and benefit of the Christian Reformed Church.

(b) To execute the terms of any will, deed or other instrument by which real or personal property shall have been devised, bequeathed, transferred or conveyed to the corporation subject to the direction of the Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church in North America (the "CRCNA Board of Trustees").

(c) To be the depository of all real and personal property which any congregation or classis of the Christian Reformed Church transfers or conveys to the corporation. The corporation shall also be the depository for all real and personal property transferred or conveyed to the corporation by any board, agency, committee or other body, whether incorporated or unincorporated, over which the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church ("Synod") has jurisdiction, whether due to dissolution or termination or otherwise.

(d) To fund and administer an endowment fund, assets of which shall be used for the benefit of the ministries of the Christian Reformed Church or any board, agency, committee or other body, whether incorporated or unincorporated, over which Synod has jurisdiction.

This corporation shall not carry on any other activities not permitted to be carried on (a) by a corporation exempt from federal income tax under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended (or the corresponding provision of any future United States internal revenue law) or (b) by a corporation, contributions to which are deductible under Section 170(c)(2) of the United States Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended (or the corresponding provision of any future United States Internal Revenue law).

The corporation has not been formed for pecuniary profit or gain. No part of the assets, income or profit of the corporation will inure to the benefit of its trustees or officers. However, the corporation shall be authorized and empowered to pay reasonable compensation for services rendered and to make payments and distributions in furtherance of the purposes set forth in this Article IV.

No substantial part of the activities of the corporation shall be the carrying on of propaganda or otherwise attempting to influence legislation. The corporation shall not participate in, or intervene in (including the publishing or distribution of statements) any political campaign on behalf of any candidate for public office.

ARTICLE V

ORGANIZATION AND FINANCING

Subject to the provisions of Sections 159 through 162 of the provisions of Act 327, Public Acts of 1931, the corporation shall be organized on a nonstock, directorship basis.

The corporation does not own any real or personal property at the present time.

The corporation shall be funded by gifts, contributions, donations, grants, devises and bequests from individuals and organizations, public and private.

ARTICLE VI

DISSOLUTION

In the event of dissolution of the corporation, all assets of the corporation, real and personal, shall be distributed to organizations which are tax exempt under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended (or the corresponding provision of any future United States internal revenue law), as may be determined by the CRCNA Board of Trustees.

ARTICLE VII

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

The Board of Trustees of this corporation shall consist of not more than nine (9) members nor fewer than six (6) members as the CRCNA Board of Trustees

may determine from time to time. The Board of Trustees of this corporation shall be subject to the jurisdiction, authority and direction of the CRCNA Board of Trustees.

ARTICLE VIII

LIMITED LIABILITY FOR MEMBERS OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

A volunteer member of the Board of Trustees (a "Volunteer Director") shall not be personally liable to the corporation or its members for monetary damages for a breach of the Volunteer Director's fiduciary duty, except for liability for any of the following:

- (a) A breach of the Volunteer Director's duty of loyalty to the corporation or its members;
- (b) Acts or omissions not in good faith or that involve intentional misconduct or a knowing violation of law;
- (c) A violation of Section 551(1) of the Michigan Nonprofit Corporation Act, as amended;
- (d) A transaction from which the Volunteer Director derived an improper personal benefit;
- (e) An act or omission occurring before this Article is effective; or
- (f) An act or omission that is grossly negligent.

For purposes of this Article VIII, "Volunteer Director" means a director who does not receive anything of value from the corporation for serving as a director other than reasonable per diem compensation and reimbursement for actual, reasonable, and necessary expenses incurred by a director in his or her capacity as a director.

The corporation shall assume all liability to any person other than the corporation or its members for claims for monetary damages for a breach of a Volunteer Director's duty in his or her capacity as a Volunteer Director, and the Volunteer Director shall not be personally liable to such persons for monetary damages, except for liability for any of the following:

- (a) A breach of the Volunteer Director's duty of loyalty to the corporation or its members;
- (b) Acts of omissions not in good faith or that involve intentional misconduct or a knowing violation of law;
- (c) A violation of Section 551(1) of the Michigan Nonprofit Corporation Act;
- (d) A transaction from which the Volunteer Director derived an improper personal benefit;
- (e) An act or omission occurring before this Article is effective; or
- (f) An act or omission that is grossly negligent.

If the Michigan Nonprofit Corporation Act is amended after this Article has been adopted to authorize corporate action to further eliminate or limit the personal liability of Volunteer Directors, then the liability of a Volunteer Director for the corporation shall be eliminated or limited to the fullest extent permitted by the Michigan Nonprofit Corporation Act as amended.

Any repeal, modification or adoption of any provision in these Articles of Incorporation inconsistent with this Article VIII shall not adversely affect any

right or protection of a Volunteer Director of the corporation existing at the time of such repeal, modification, or adoption.

ARTICLE IX

LIMITED LIABILITY FOR NONDIRECTOR VOLUNTEERS

The corporation shall assume the liability for all acts or omissions of a nondirector volunteer of the corporation (a "Non-director Volunteer") occurring on or after the effective date of this Article if all of the following are met:

- (a) The Nondirector Volunteer was acting or reasonably believed he or she was acting within the scope of his or her authority.
- (b) The Nondirector Volunteer was acting in good faith.
- (c) The Nondirector Volunteer's conduct did not amount to gross negligence or willful and wanton misconduct.
- (d) The Nondirector Volunteer's conduct was not an intentional tort.
- (e) The Nondirector Volunteer's conduct was not a tort arising out of the ownership, maintenance, or use of a motor vehicle for which tort liability may be imposed as provided in MCLA § 500.3135.

For purposes of this Article IX, a "Nondirector Volunteer" means an individual, other than a volunteer director, performing services for a nonprofit corporation who does not receive compensation or any other type of consideration for the services other than reimbursement for expenses actually incurred.

If the Michigan Nonprofit Corporation Act is amended after this Article has been adopted to authorize corporate action to further eliminate or limit the personal liability of Nondirector Volunteers, then the liability of a Non-director Volunteer for the corporation shall be eliminated or limited to the fullest extent permitted by the Nonprofit Corporation Act, as amended.

Any repeal, modification or adoption of any provision in these Articles of Association inconsistent with this Article IX shall not adversely affect any right or protection of a Nondirector Volunteer existing at the time of such repeal, modification, or adoption.

5. These Restated Articles of Incorporation were duly adopted on the _____ day of _____, 19____, in accordance with the provisions of Sections 159 through 162 of Act 327, Public Acts of 1931, as amended, by the necessary vote and procedures and do further amend the provisions of the Articles of Incorporation.

Signed this _____ day of _____, 19____.

Chairman of Board of Trustees of the
Christian Reformed Church in North
America

Secretary of Board of Trustees of the
Christian Reformed Church in North
America

STATE OF MICHIGAN)
) ss.
COUNTY OF _____)

Subscribed and sworn to before me this _____ day of _____, 19____, by

(Signature of Notary)

(Type or Print Name of Notary)

Notary Public for _____

County, State of _____

My Commission expires: _____

BYLAWS
OF
THE TRUSTEE CORPORATION OF THE
CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN
NORTH AMERICA

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**BYLAWS
OF
THE TRUSTEE CORPORATION OF THE
CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN
NORTH AMERICA**

**ARTICLE I
NAME AND PURPOSES**

Section 1. **Name.** This corporation shall be known as **THE TRUSTEE CORPORATION OF THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA.**

Section 2. **Purposes.** The purposes for which this corporation is formed are as follows:

The corporation is a nonprofit, church trustee corporation organized and operated exclusively for religious and charitable purposes within the meaning of Section 501(c)(3) of the United States Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended (or the corresponding provision of any future United States internal revenue law). The purposes of the corporation are the following:

(a) To take and hold in its corporate name all real and personal property which is devised, bequeathed, transferred or conveyed to the corporation for the use and benefit of the Christian Reformed Church.

(b) To execute the terms of any will, deed or other instrument by which real or personal property shall have been devised, bequeathed, transferred or conveyed to the corporation subject to the direction of the Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church in North America (the "CRCNA Board of Trustees").

(c) To be the depository of all real and personal property which any congregation or classis of the Christian Reformed Church transfers or conveys to the corporation. The corporation shall also be the depository for all real and personal property transferred or conveyed to the corporation by any board, agency, committee or other body, whether incorporated or unincorporated, over which the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church ("Synod") has jurisdiction, whether due to dissolution or termination or otherwise.

(d) To fund and administer an endowment fund, assets of which shall be used for the benefit of the ministries of the Christian Reformed Church or

any board, agency, committee or other body, whether incorporated or unincorporated, over which Synod has jurisdiction.

This corporation shall not carry on any other activities not permitted to be carried on (a) by a corporation exempt from federal income tax under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended (or the corresponding provision of any future United States internal revenue law) or (b) by a corporation, contributions to which are deductible under Section 170(c)(2) of the United States Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended (or the corresponding provision of any future United States Internal Revenue law).

The corporation has not been formed for pecuniary profit or gain. No part of the assets, income or profit of the corporation will inure to the benefit of its trustees or officers. However, the corporation shall be authorized and empowered to pay reasonable compensation for services rendered and to make payments and distributions in furtherance of the purposes set forth in this Article I, Section 2 of these Bylaws.

No substantial part of the activities of the corporation shall be the carrying on of propaganda or otherwise attempting to influence legislation. The corporation shall not participate in, or intervene in (including the publishing or distribution of statements) any political campaign on behalf of any candidate for public office.

ARTICLE II

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Section 1. **Powers and Duties.** The property, business and affairs of the corporation shall be under the direction and control of a Board of Trustees. The Board of Trustees shall have the power to take all action consistent with the purposes outlined under Article I, Section 2 of these Bylaws subject to limitations under Michigan law and these Bylaws. In all matters, the Board of Trustees shall be subject to the jurisdiction, authority and direction of the CRCNA Board of Trustees, including without limitation, the following limitations on the authority of the Board of Trustees:

(a) The Board of Trustees shall obtain the approval of the CRCNA Board of Trustees prior to authorizing any expenditure or other disposition of corporate assets having a total value in excess of \$5,000.00; and

(b) The Board of Trustees shall not sell, transfer, mortgage nor lease for a period longer than three years, any real estate held in the name of the Corporation unless authorized by the CRCNA Board of Trustees.

Section 2. **Number and Term of Trustees.** The members of the Board of Trustees of this Corporation shall be appointed by the CRCNA Board of Trustees. The Board of Trustees shall consist of not more than nine (9) members nor fewer than six (6) members as the CRCNA Board of Trustees may determine from time to time. The Trustees shall serve until their successors are elected and qualify or until their resignation or removal.

Notwithstanding any provisions seemingly to the contrary, those individuals who hold the offices of General Secretary, Executive Director of Ministries and Director of Finance and Administration for the Christian Reformed Church in North America shall be members of the Board of Trustees of this corporation serving no fixed term of office (the "Continuing Trustees"). Successors to those

individuals who hold the offices of General Secretary, Executive Director of Ministries and Director of Finance and Administration for the Christian Reformed Church in North America shall automatically replace their predecessors as members of the Board of Trustees of this corporation.

In addition to the Continuing Trustees, at least three (3) other members of the Board of Trustees of this corporation shall be members of the CRCNA Board of Trustees serving a term of office concurrent with their term of office for the CRCNA Board of Trustees (the "BOT Trustees"). All other members of the Board of Trustees other than the Continuing Trustees or the BOT Trustees, if any (the "Other Trustees"), shall serve a term of office as determined by the CRCNA Board of Trustees but, in any event, not to exceed three (3) years. The CRCNA Board of Trustees may appoint the Other Trustees to serve consecutive terms of office.

Section 3. **Removal.** Any Trustee may be removed from office by the CRCNA Board of Trustees.

Section 4. **Resignation.** Any Trustee may resign at any time by giving written notice of the resignation to the Secretary of the corporation. The resignation shall become effective upon the date specified in the notice, or, if no date is specified, upon receipt of the notice by the Secretary.

Section 5. **Vacancies and Additional Directors.** The CRCNA Board of Trustees shall fill any vacancy in the Board of Trustees of this corporation at any regular or special meeting called for that purpose.

Section 6. **Advisory Representatives.** The Board of Trustees may, in its discretion, request that advisory representatives be appointed to sit with, and advise the Board of Trustees on matters within their expertise or experience. These representatives shall sit in an advisory capacity only, and shall not be eligible to hold office in the corporation.

ARTICLE III

MEETINGS

Section 1. **Time and Place of Meetings.** Meetings of the Trustees shall be held at the place and time as the Trustees shall from time to time determine, and within or outside of the state of Michigan.

Section 2. **Regular and Special Meetings.** Regular meetings of the Trustees may be held from time to time as the Trustees may determine, provided that meetings shall be held no less frequently than annually. No notice of regular meetings shall be required. Special meetings of Trustees may be convened upon the written request of any five (5) of its members, or by the Chairperson.

Section 3. **Quorum.** At any meeting of the Trustees, a majority of the entire number of such Trustees shall comprise a quorum for the transaction of business.

Section 4. **Place and Notice of Meetings.** All Trustees shall be notified of a special meeting and its purpose at least forty-eight (48) hours prior to a special meeting.

Section 5. **Waiver of Notice.** Attendance without objection at any meeting shall constitute waiver of notice of that meeting. Waiver of notice executed in writing before or after the date of the meeting shall be equivalent to receipt of notice by the individual executing the waiver.

Section 6. **Voting.** At all meetings of the Trustees when a quorum is present, the affirmative vote of a majority of those present and voting on the question shall, except where a larger vote may be required by law, decide any question brought before that meeting.

Section 7. **Action Without Meeting.** Any action required to be taken at a meeting of the Trustees may be taken without a meeting if a written consent shall be signed by all Trustees who are entitled to vote with respect to the action.

Section 8. **Parliamentary Procedure.** Parliamentary Procedure shall be used at all meetings of the Board of Trustees.

ARTICLE IV

OFFICERS

Section 1. **Principal Officers.** The principal officers of the corporation shall consist of a Chairperson of the Board, Secretary and Treasurer, who shall be elected by the Board of Trustees from among its members at the annual meeting. From time to time the Board of Trustees may elect other officers as it shall determine in its discretion. Except as otherwise provided in these Bylaws, the officers shall be elected by the Trustees at their annual meeting and shall serve for a one (1) year term.

Section 2. **Chairperson of Board.** The Chairperson of the Board shall be selected from the membership of the Board of Trustees and shall preside over all meetings of the Trustees. The Chairperson of the Board shall perform other duties as may be specified from time to time by the Trustees.

Section 3. **Vice Chairperson.** If a Vice Chairperson is selected, the Vice Chairperson shall be selected from the membership of the Board of Trustees, shall perform the duties of the Chairperson during any absence or disability of the Chairperson, and shall succeed the Chairperson in the event that the office of Chairperson becomes vacant for any reason.

Section 4. **Secretary.** The Secretary shall give notice of each meeting of the Trustees or committees of the corporation as to which notice is required; shall record minutes of the meeting in books kept for that purpose; shall have custody of the records of the corporation; and shall perform such other duties as may be specified from time to time by the Trustees.

Section 5. **Treasurer.** The Treasurer shall have custody of the funds and other property of the corporation; shall keep accurate records of all property, receipts and disbursements of the corporation in financial books to be maintained for that purpose; shall deposit all assets in the name and to the credit of the corporation with such depository or depositories as shall be designated by the Trustees; shall disburse the funds of the corporation; and render to the Trustees such reports as they shall prescribe.

All books, records and vouchers of the corporation shall be open to the inspection of any Director. The Treasurer shall, at least once a year, and whenever requested by the Trustees, render a full and detailed account of all receipts and expenditures and submit a schedule showing the financial status of the corporation and the changes, if any, since the last report of the Treasurer. The Treasurer shall perform other duties as may be specified from time to time by the Trustees.

Section 6. **Removal.** Any officer of the corporation may be removed at any time, with or Without cause, by vote of two-third (2/3) of the Trustees then holding office.

Section 7. **Vacancies.** Any vacancy in any office of the corporation may be filled for the unexpired portion of the term by majority vote of the Trustees present at a meeting of the Trustees called for that purpose, except that the Vice Chairperson shall become the Chairperson in the event that office becomes vacant for any reason. If any officer is absent or unable to perform the duties assigned to that office, the Trustees may delegate the powers and duties of that office, during the period of the absence or disability, to another person.

Section 8. **Resignation.** Any officer may resign from office at any time by giving written notice of the resignation to the Secretary of the corporation. The resignation shall become effective upon the date specified in the notice or, if no date is specified, upon receipt of the notice by the Secretary. Acceptance by the Board shall not be necessary to render the resignation effective.

ARTICLE V **COMMITTEES**

Section 1. **Other Committees.** The corporation may also have committees as the Trustees may from time to time determine and appoint.

Section 2. **Executive Director.** At such time as may be deemed necessary or desirable, the Board of Trustees may appoint an Executive Director, responsible to the Board of Trustees, who shall be in active charge of the day-to-day affairs of the corporation. The Executive Director, or his designated representative, may sit with the Board of Trustees in the capacity of advisor with right of discussion, but without vote.

ARTICLE VI **INDEMNIFICATION OF OFFICERS, TRUSTEES, EMPLOYEES, AND AGENTS**

Section 1. **Indemnification: Third Party Actions.** This corporation has the power to indemnify a person who was or is a party, or is threatened to be made a party to a threatened, pending or completed action, suit or proceeding, whether civil, criminal, administrative or investigative and whether formal or informal (other than an action by or in the right of this corporation) by reason of fact that the person is or was a Trustee, Officer, employee or agent of this corporation, or is or was serving at the request of this corporation as a Trustee, Officer, Partner, Trustee, employee or agent of another foreign or domestic corporation, business corporation, partnership, joint venture, trust, or other enterprise, whether for profit or not for profit, against expenses (including attorneys' fees), judgments, penalties, fines and amounts paid in settlement actually reasonably incurred by that person in connection with the action, suit or proceedings if that person acted in good faith and in a manner reasonably believed by that person to be in or not opposed to the best interests of this corporation, and with respect to a criminal action or proceeding, that person had no reasonable cause to believe that the conduct was unlawful. The termination of an action, suit or proceeding by judgment, order, settlement, conviction,

or upon a plea of nolo contendere or its equivalent, shall not, of itself, create a presumption that the person did not act in good faith and in a manner reasonably believed by that person to be in or not opposed to the best interests of this corporation and, with respect to a criminal action or proceeding, had reasonable cause to believe that the person's conduct was unlawful.

Section 2. Indemnification: Actions in the Right of This Corporation. This corporation has the power to indemnify a person who was or is a party to, or is threatened to be made a party to a threatened, pending or completed action or suit by or in the right of this corporation to procure a judgment in its favor by reason of the fact that the person is or was a Trustee, Officer, employee or agent of this corporation, or is or was serving at the request of this corporation as a Trustee, Officer, Partner, Trustee, employee or agent of another foreign or domestic corporation, business corporation, partnership, joint venture, trust or other enterprise, whether for profit or not, against expenses (including actual and reasonable attorneys' fees) and amounts paid in settlement incurred by that person in connection with the action or suit if that person acted in good faith and in a manner reasonably believed by that person to be in or not opposed to the best interests of this corporation. However, no indemnification shall be made for a claim, issue or matter in which such person shall have been found to be liable to the corporation unless and only to the extent that the court in which such action or suit was brought has determined upon application that, despite the adjudication of liability but in view of all circumstances of the case, that person is fairly and reasonably entitled to indemnification for the expenses which the court considers proper.

Section 3. Indemnification: Mandatory and Permissive Payments.

(a) To the extent that a Trustee, Officer, employee or agent of this corporation has been successful on the merits or otherwise in defense of an action, suit or proceeding referred to in Section 1 or Section 2 of this Article VI, or in defense of a claim, issue or matter in the action, suit, or proceeding, that person shall be indemnified against expenses (including actual and reasonable attorneys' fees) incurred by that person in connection with the action, suit or proceeding brought to enforce the mandatory indemnification provided in this Subsection.

(b) An indemnification under Section 1 or Section 2 of this Article VI, unless ordered by a court, shall be made by this corporation only as authorized in a specific case upon a determination that indemnification of the Trustee, Officer, employee or agent is proper in the circumstances because that person has met the applicable standard of conduct as set forth in either Section 1 or Section 2. That determination shall be made in any of the following ways:

(1) A majority vote of a quorum of the Board consisting of Trustees who were not parties to the action, suit or proceeding.

(2) If that quorum is not obtainable, then by a majority vote of a Committee of Trustees who were not parties to the action, suit, or proceeding. The Committee shall consist of not less than two (2) disinterested Trustees.

(3) By independent legal counsel in a written opinion.

(c) If a person is entitled to indemnification under Section 1 or Section 2 of this Article VI for a portion of expenses including attorneys' fees, judgments, penalties, fines, and amounts paid in settlement, but not for the total

amount thereof, the corporation may indemnify the person for the portion of the expenses, judgments, penalties, fines, or amounts paid in settlement for which the person is entitled to be indemnified.

Section 4. **Indemnification: Expense Advances.** Expenses incurred in defending a civil or criminal action, suit or proceeding described in Section 1 or Section 2 of this Article VI may be paid by this corporation in advance of the final disposition of the action, suit, or proceeding upon receipt of an undertaking by or on behalf of the Trustee, Officer, employee or agent to repay the expenses if it is ultimately determined that the person is not entitled to be indemnified by this corporation. The undertaking shall be by unlimited general obligation of the person on whose behalf advance are made but need not be secured. The indemnification provisions of Sections 1 through 4 of this Article VI shall continue as to a person who ceases to be a Trustee, Officer, employee, or agent and shall inure to the benefit of the heirs, executors, and administrators of that person.

ARTICLE VII

AMENDMENTS

These Bylaws may be amended by a vote of two-thirds (2/3) of the Trustees then holding office at any duly constituted meeting of the Board of Trustees, provided that fifteen (15) days' written notice is given of the intention to amend the Bylaws and the amendment has been stated in the notice of the meeting or in a duly completed waiver of notice of the meeting.

CERTIFICATE

I, Dr. David H. Engelhard, certify that these Bylaws were adopted as the Bylaws of the Trustee Corporation of the Christian Reformed Church in North America on _____, 1995.

Dr. David H. Engelhard

APPENDIX C

Report to Board of Trustees from Subcommittee for Ministry to Smaller Churches

I. History and process of study

A. *Mandate*

A task force was appointed in the fall of 1992 with the following mandate:

to propose programmatic and organizational changes needed to increase the effectiveness of the support systems, as provided by the Fund for Smaller Churches (FSC), for the smaller congregations of the Christian Reformed Church.

B. *Method*

The task force chose to follow a collaborative method in conducting its study and developing its report. The process included making some initial observations, offering some tentative conclusions, soliciting responses, and then revising conclusions in light of the responses offered.

During the fall of 1992 and early months of 1993, the task force met together a number of times and considered various matters such as written documents, reports on books, and seminars attended. In addition, the committee commissioned a questionnaire, which in January 1993 was sent to nearly one hundred congregations being served by FSC. In March 1993 the committee considered the responses of the congregations:

- Fifteen completed questionnaires were returned from the twenty-eight distributed to Canadian congregations.
- Thirty-nine completed questionnaires were returned from the eighty distributed to U.S. congregations.

The task force reported its initial findings to the executive director of ministries by April 15, 1993. The Board of Trustees incorporated the task force as a subcommittee of the Board. The executive director of ministries included mention of this work in his supplemental report to Synod 1993.

In the fall of 1993 the subcommittee met to consider the comments and reactions of delegates to Synod 1993, to refine its report, and to propose an extended collaborative process to the Board of Trustees.

The report was approved by the Board of Trustees and sent to each FSC church prior to December 15, 1993.

In January and February 1994 meetings were held in six locations in the United States and Canada, and one area was consulted by means of a conference telephone call. All FSC congregations and the committees responsible for oversight of FSC matters in each classis were invited to send representatives to the meetings or to correspond with the subcommittee.

The subcommittee again met in February 1994 and revised its report, which was later presented to the Board of Trustees for approval. The Board subsequently presented the report and its recommendations to synod in the printed *Agenda for Synod 1994*.

Synod 1994 received the report from the Board of Trustees concerning ministry to smaller churches and referred the report to the churches for study. January 15, 1995, was established as the deadline to receive responses.

The subcommittee members read the forty-eight (48) responses from congregations and one classical response received by that date. In addition, the committee had received letters from some individuals—all from the same congregation—concerned that funding for their congregation would be terminated. Of the forty-eight congregational responses received

- Twenty-three gave nearly unqualified endorsement to the report.
- Ten gave overall endorsement but expressed concerns about certain aspects.
- Fifteen expressed concerns or objections.

The classical response contained a number of suggestions for revision. The subcommittee also did some extensive research on past patterns of FSC support.

A number of revisions were made by the Board of Trustees, and the Board now recommends the adoption of the recommendations contained in this report by Synod 1995.

II. Analysis of situation

A. Preamble

As one person has said, "God must love small churches because He made so many of them." In the Christian Reformed Church we have many smaller churches dear to the heart of God. Nearly one-third of our congregations have fewer than fifty families. Many of these congregations have contributed much to the growth of God's kingdom. Frequently youth are trained in these small congregations, and the benefits are reaped years later by a congregation at some distance. Persons brought in through evangelism in the smaller churches may transfer to other locations; offerings received in small churches benefit ministries which many in these congregations will never have opportunity to visit.

The size of a congregation has no relationship to the effectiveness of that congregation. Congregations of every size struggle to be faithful to the responsibilities which God has given in light of the resources he has allocated. As a committee, we salute the ministry of smaller churches, give thanks for what they accomplish, and wish to enhance the ministry of smaller congregations.

The focus for the committee's work was the enhancement of the ministries of smaller congregations. We attempted to address the concerns and expressed needs of all smaller congregations within our denomination.

However, within the set of smaller Christian Reformed congregations is a subset of congregations that receive assistance from the Fund for Smaller Churches. The Board spent a significant portion of its time and energy addressing the impact of the FSC upon the effectiveness of smaller congregations.

B. Introduction

"If it's not broke, don't fix it." So goes the proverbial advice. But what if it is breaking under the strain and will soon be broken? This is the case with the present system of denominational assistance carried out under the ministry of the Fund for Smaller Churches. Allow us to briefly introduce the present system.

C. *Present system*

1. History

The Christian Reformed Church has a history of subsidizing the ministries of smaller congregations. This practice has been with us for over sixty years and has taken a number of forms during this period. It has been assigned to different agencies within the denomination. The mandate and rules have been changed a number of times. Most other North American denominations have, over the years, had to rethink their practice of subsidy for smaller churches. The present CRC practice of long-term subsidies to relatively small congregations is unique among North American denominations.

The present Fund for Smaller Churches program has an annual budget of nearly \$1 million. These funds are distributed to about one hundred congregations.

2. Minimum-size criteria

According to the rules for operation established by synod, congregations need a minimum of thirty (30) families to be eligible for FSC assistance. According to the formula for aid, most congregations no longer qualify for assistance after they have reached the fifty-family level. Congregations who have been assisted but whose membership declines to fewer than twenty (20) families (fifty professing members) are no longer eligible.

3. Manner of affiliation

Congregations currently supported by FSC have affiliated with the FSC in a number of different ways:

- a. Many have come through denominational Home Missions or classical /congregational mission programs. These congregations have grown beyond the thirty-family (seventy-five-member) mark and have graduated from Home Missions. However, they continue to want denominational assistance for ministry and therefore apply for FSC support.
- b. Some of the congregations are in rural regions where changing demographics have led to the shrinking of a congregation's size. At some point the shrinking congregation chooses to seek FSC assistance.
- c. Within the last few years FSC has seen a number of applications from congregations which have split due to theological or ministry-style tensions.

Note: A number of congregations eligible for FSC assistance choose not to affiliate with FSC because they do not wish to pay the pastor at the FSC minimum rate.

4. Longevity

Of the 108 congregations presently served by FSC

- Five were organized before 1900.
- Fourteen were organized from 1900-1949.
- Twenty-four were organized in the 1950s.
- Twenty-one were organized in the 1960s.
- Twenty-two were organized in the 1970s.
- Twenty-one were organized in the 1980s.
- One was organized in the 1990s.

5. Patterns of assistance

In response to comments received from congregations and individuals following Synod 1994's referral of the report to the churches, the subcommittee researched the patterns of ministry assistance over a thirty-one-year period from 1964 through 1994. During that period the Fund for Smaller Churches (formerly Fund for Needy Churches) assisted approximately 301 congregations. The patterns for assistance during that period were as follows:

Years of FCS support:	25+	20-24	15-19	10-14	5-9	1-4
Number of congregations:	41	33	39	64	61	62

There was no apparent pattern as to which congregations were most likely to receive aid for long periods of time. For example, of the seventy-four congregations receiving aid for longer than twenty years, twenty-three of them were in locations with a sizeable population base, twenty-four were in rural areas, four were in urban areas of high need, and the remaining were in small towns.

It should be noted that some of the churches on the above list were receiving income from denominational Home Missions for a number of years prior to receiving ministry assistance from FSC.

D. *Present stresses upon the system*

There are some significant stresses upon the system which led us to conclude that it is breaking and will soon be broken. Please consider the following:

1. It is a system with an insufficient level of accountability.

We believe that any system in which monies are provided automatically, according to a formula, will lack accountability. When those reviewing the use of funds do not themselves provide some of the funds, it is difficult to maintain responsible accountability.

Within the present system there is minimal accountability for the use of the funds. Part of the reason for this is in the design of the system. Major loci of accountability are the classically designated committees. There is significant variation in how well these committees work. Committee personnel turnover, concern about collegial relations, and priority being given to other ministry matters often result in little accountability for Fund for Smaller Churches expenditures. This minimal accountability is evidenced in

- a. Errors in computation and arithmetic in applications processed through the classes. These occur in 20 to 25 percent of the applications each year.
- b. Submission of Ministry Reviews done by telephone and based on only one or two congregational members' impressions.

2. The present system establishes one salary level. In many rural areas this results in pastors serving FSC churches being paid salaries much greater than those who serve congregations which are not supported by FSC funds. However, this single salary also results in some pastors in urban areas on both coasts being paid salaries which are significantly below the congregational average salary for their area. The disparities in the examples cited above are increasing.

3. The historical pattern has been for churches to grow to the thirty-family minimum with congregational, classical, or denominational assistance and to then to come to the Fund for Smaller Churches for ministry assistance. These congregations leave the built-in resources and accountability structures for ministry plans and execution that existed in the agencies which brought them to that point in maturation. For many congregations this new period is characterized by stagnation of growth and enthusiasm. Even congregations which declared they wished to minister effectively have failed to reach their stated objectives because of insufficient program resources and minimal financial accountability.
4. An additional concern is that FSC has been experiencing a marked increase in the number of new ministries, begun in the last seven years, which have been applying to FSC. We cannot continue to assimilate increasing numbers of congregations into FSC in the future without a significant increase in the financial investment the denomination makes in this program.
5. The best of current missiological thinking emphasizes the importance of short-term subsidies for ministries. Christian Reformed Home Missions is now implementing this thinking in its current policies. Those ministries begun after 1993 will be designed in such a way that there is no expectation of additional assistance from other denominational sources after the time for assistance from Home Missions has been completed.
6. Long-term subsidies often result in recipients beginning to assume that the monies are owed to them or in an attitude which assumes that, as long as there is a source for monies, the subsidy should be requested, whether or not it is imperative for ministry. Long-term subsidy often results in dependence on the giver.
 Personnel from both Home Missions and the FSC Committee report exchanges with representatives of congregations which seem to validate the above observation.
7. Unless changes are made in the policy and practice of FSC, it is going to be very difficult to responsibly continue operating this ministry as a committee without some salaried staff.
8. There is also a significant shift within the denomination as to the pattern of congregational size. This shift influences the denomination's ability to generate ministry shares and influences the potential number eligible for such shares. The result in fiscal 1995 is that FSC has received insufficient funds to meet its obligations on a timely basis. A look at the shift in patterns during the period between 1964 and 1994 shows the following patterns:

Number of congregations	1964	1994
Emerging	37	97
Organized	597	845
15-49 families	164	251
140-169 families	49	73
170-200 families	34	33
201+ families	58	41

It is in the light of some of these stresses upon the system that the committee did its work.

III. Observations

A. *Scope of change*

The committee was faced with a choice early in its work. Would the task force present recommendations which it felt the churches would adopt easily (tinker with the system), or would it make recommendations which, it is convinced, would best serve the denomination as a whole and the individual congregations?

The task force chose to make the recommendations which would best serve the denomination and the congregations. We recognize that the adoption of the changes recommended will significantly alter relationships which have developed through our history. We note that any change will cause pain and discomfort. In our opinion, to make no change will cause greater pain and discomfort.

B. *Pastoral concerns*

We also recognize that implementation of these recommendations will cause pain and discomfort for a specific number of churches. We wish to be sensitive to the discomfort and pain. We have attempted to be as sensitive as possible to pastoral concerns. Every congregation is different and unique; however, policy decisions must cover a wide spectrum of congregations. We cannot design a policy for synod which recognizes each unique circumstance. We believe that many of the pastoral concerns generated by adoption of the recommendations can be addressed by the agencies involved in implementation and by the classes.

C. *Factors that influenced the recommendations*

1. The current system of indefinite assistance to congregations without respect to ministry effectiveness is injurious to the smaller congregation and to the denomination as a whole. The present system has created long-term financial dependency within many congregations, a dependency which often breeds frustration.
2. Incentives for change and creativity within congregations are lessened by the presence of long-term financial assistance from the denomination. For example, the presence of an ordained pastor may not be necessary for a church to minister effectively. Such presence may be helpful, comforting, desirable, but it is not necessary. Long-term subsidies often stymie the consideration of creative alternatives.
3. The financial shortfall with relation to ministry shares within the CRC was a catalyst for reexamining the relationship of FSC to the smaller church. However, this was not the only factor which made such a study helpful and necessary for the Christian Reformed Church.
4. Smaller congregations have been hampered by the lack of knowledge concerning available resources and by the lack of accountability in use of FSC ministry monies.
5. Neither the denomination nor the congregations are served well by perpetuating the present system.

D. Anticipated outcomes if recommendations are adopted

1. Smaller congregations will enjoy more program assistance from the ministry-support conferences and resources provided.
2. Congregations losing subsidy will be challenged to become more creative in their ministry and will become more selective in continuing only those ministries which are effective.
3. Congregations will examine options for ministry which they likely would never examine as long as funding came from the outside (e.g., shared ministries, bivocational ministries, circuit-riding pastors, nonordained leadership).
4. The denomination will profit from a variety of models for ministry in that small congregations will see that there are more than two options: either a full-time ordained person assigned to one location or the demise of the ministry in that location.
5. Clergy salaries will become more reflective of local conditions.
6. The classis will become more directly involved in assisting and evaluating the ministries of smaller congregations.
7. The FSC committee can effectively function with no full-time paid staff if the classes are more directly involved in accountability processes for expenditure of FSC funds.
8. The removal of a structural disincentive will stimulate creativity, stewardship, and vision for growth.
9. The ministry-share contribution from the hundred or more FSC congregations may drop if more monies are invested in local ministries.

IV. Recommendations

A. That, when the report is being discussed, synod grant the privilege of the floor to Dr. Peter Borgdorff, executive director of ministries; Dr. Kenneth Bootsma, president of the Board of Trustees; Rev. Louis Tamminga, member of the subcommittee; and other members of the subcommittee who worked on this report.

B. That synod direct the Fund for Smaller Churches Committee, in conjunction with Home Missions, to hold biennial regional conferences for churches of 60 to 120 adult members in order to provide fellowship, peer encouragement, education, and skill development.

Grounds:

1. Congregations of this size are often hampered by insufficient local resources. A joint effort can offer resources which individual congregations cannot easily access by themselves.
2. Previous conferences sponsored by these agencies have proved helpful to the smaller congregations involved, according to the majority of participants.

C. That synod direct Christian Reformed Home Missions to provide information on resource materials geared toward effective growth ministry in smaller congregations, including the titles of video training materials, books, and articles concerning the smaller church and information concerning personnel needs and consultant resources.

Grounds:

1. Home Missions is the synodically mandated agency responsible for leading all churches in effective evangelistic ministry.
2. Home Missions presently provides similar services.

D. That synod direct the Fund for Smaller Churches, in consultation with the Pastor-Church Relations Committee, to contract with Home Missions to implement an assessment process which will help pastors identify skills, motivational factors, and commitments most suitable to the revitalization of smaller-church ministries.

Grounds:

1. Not all pastors possess the same skills. Particular skills are helpful for those leading in the revitalization of a congregation. Identification of pastors with those skills will be helpful to vacant congregations.
2. Pastors who identify the skills and gifts which work best in established congregations will be able to make well-informed career choices.
3. Home Missions currently uses a similar assessment process to identify new-church developers.
4. The Fund for Smaller Churches will benefit from identifying persons skilled in smaller-church revitalization.

E. That synod declare that all ministry-assistance grants from FSC are for a five-year maximum.

Grounds:

1. Grants which have no termination date lead to dependence upon the grantor.
2. Long-term subsidy is counterproductive to effective ministry.
3. The period of up to five years of FSC monies allows sufficient time for a congregation to make plans for the future shape of its ministry.

F. That synod implement the decision above (E) in the following manner:

1. That the five years begin for all churches currently funded by FSC on January 1 of the year following the adoption of this motion by synod.
2. That all ministries which apply to FSC after this date will negotiate with the FSC Committee at the time of initial application for length of the funding period, which will in no case exceed five years.
3. That normally assistance be granted at the following percentage rates of the FSC formula: 100, 80, 60, 40, 20.

G. That synod declare that no congregation will be considered for any additional funds after the five years of funding unless *both* of the following conditions (1 and 2) are met:

1. The classis in which the congregation is located judges the ministry to be of such a crucial nature or of such historical significance that classis contributes at a rate of one dollar for every two dollars contributed by FSC.

Ground: Financial involvement at the regional level ensures the significance of this ministry to the people of the classis. In the absence of this provision it becomes easy for an individual classis to endorse a ministry for denominational subsidy.

2. The ministry is evangelistic in character, community oriented in scope, recommended by the classical committee for oversight of FSC ministries, and approved by the denominational FSC Committee.

Ground: Denominational resources are merited only if the ministry seeks to fulfill the Great Commission.

Note: Criteria for judging the character and scope of the ministry may include such things as distance from other Reformed churches, character and need of the community, extent of the congregation's ministry and witness within the community, level of congregational stewardship.

3. A congregation applying for continuing assistance, upon receiving the approvals spoken of in G, 1 and 2 (above), may negotiate terms other than those spoken of in F, 3 (above). These terms shall have the approval of classis and the FSC denominational committee.

H. That synod declare the above decisions to be the framework within which previous decisions regarding eligibility and viability (e.g., church size and financial contribution) shall remain in force except where directly superseded by Synod 1995's decision.

I. That synod empower the FSC Committee to negotiate specific terms with individual classes during the transitional time of the next five years.

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UNIFIED REPORT OF AGENCIES AND COMMITTEES

Overview

On the pages that follow, the denominational agencies and committees of the Christian Reformed Church tell their story—a story about ministry in Christ's name to the members of the CRC, to all the people of Canada and the United States, and to thousands of people in thirty countries around the world. It is a story of difficulty and triumph, of struggle and great joy, of agony and ecstasy. This version of the story is being told to the synod of the Christian Reformed Church—for inspiration but also for accountability. The denominational agencies and committees are accountable to synod, and therefore it is appropriate that their story is told in this *Agenda for Synod 1995*.

The story is, of course, much more than an accounting in the purely formal sense. The story includes references to the many ministry partners of the CRC around the world who participate in ministry with the CRC. Such partners may be individuals, churches, parachurch organizations, and even governmental agencies. At the heart and core of what the Christian Reformed Church does is the conviction that its members are agents of God, advancing his mission in the world. Please read the story as that kind of story—and thank God for it.

Each agency tells its part of the story in its own words. The reports appear, for the most part, in alphabetical order. For the first time, the Abuse Prevention, Chaplain Committee, Disability Concerns, Pastor-Church Relations, and SCORR reports are being combined into a report from the new Pastoral Ministries agency.

It is the prayer of all who are represented by these reports that the Lord will lead Synod 1995. May the story told here inspire, encourage, and help the whole church to tell the story of what God is doing in the world.

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I. Introduction

Last September high-level representatives of 160 nations met in Cairo for the United Nations' International Conference on Population and Development. The conference produced a twenty-year action program designed to stabilize world population and avoid mass starvation. It was dominated by the view that every individual added to the world is a threat—another mouth to feed.

The Christian Reformed Church has ministries that are charged with the responsibility of looking at world population in a different way. The Back to God Hour, one of those ministries, has been dedicated to using electronic media to reach the world's expanding population with the gospel. Each person added to the world's population is an imagebearer of God, and all must be told of Christ's love. Through God's Spirit, many who hear will believe and be saved.

The Back to God Hour, located at the International Communication Center in Palos Heights, Illinois, now reaches out in nine major world languages. The paragraphs that follow provide an overview of recent developments in this ministry so that the church can exercise wise supervision, so that it can be inspired anew with the glory and magnitude of this task and motivated to pray for it, so that it will continue to provide this ministry with the necessary financial resources.

The mission of The Back to God Hour is to communicate "the historic Christian faith." Its commitment to this task will never waver, and the men and women who work at this exalted mission feel highly privileged. Their enthusiasm is rooted in a sense of working closely with God as he uses the word of the cross to call his elect to himself. The Word of God never returns void; it invariably accomplishes God's purposes.

II. The Back to God Hour Board of Trustees

A. *Board and staff*

The Back to God Hour is governed by a fourteen-member board, which sets policy and evaluates the work of the staff. Meeting three times a year, this board encourages the staff to maintain high quality in production and remain responsive to the rapidly changing broadcasting scene.

Day-by-day operations proceed under the direction of the executive director, who supervises the business/financial dimension of the work, and the director of ministries, who is responsible for the ministry dimension of The Back to God Hour. Both report to The Back to God Hour board.

B. *Officers of the board*

The officers of the board are Rev. John Bylsma, president; Rev. Peter Nicolai, vice president; Mr. George J. Vande Werken, secretary; and Mr. Meindert Bosch, treasurer.

C. *Nominations for board members*

1. New nominations

The Back to God Hour requests that synod elect one of the following nominees for a three-year term beginning July 1, 1995.

Mr. Martin Duimering, from Moorefield, Ontario, is self-employed. He is a member of the Drayton Christian Reformed Church and has served as an elder and a deacon. He has served on the Calvin Christian School board, the Woodland Christian High School board, and the board of the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario.

Mr. C. Keith Oosthoek, from Kitchener, Ontario, is an area manager for the Royal Bank of Canada. He has been with the Royal Bank of Canada since 1967. He is a member of First Christian Reformed Church of Kitchener and has served as an elder and a deacon. He has also been active in the Montreal Seaway Ministry and has served as the vice chair of the local Christian high school board.

2. Reelection

The Back to God Hour board requests that synod reelect the following individuals, who are completing their first three-year term and are eligible for an additional three-year term beginning July 1, 1995

Mr. George Vande Werken, currently serving as secretary of the board, is a member of Second CRC, Highland, Indiana.

Rev. Peter Nicolai, currently serving as vice president of the board, is pastor of Emmanuel CRC, Calgary, Alberta.

Grounds:

- a. The Back to God Hour board judges continuity of service by board members to be essential.
- b. Both of these board members presently hold a leadership office on the board.
- c. The board judges both of these members to be highly competent to serve the needs of this ministry.

D. *Global Media Mission Order revision*

The board addressed organizational structure during 1994 and approved changes which should enhance the management of this ministry. These changes, administrative in nature, have been incorporated into a revision of the Global Media Mission Order, which governs this organization. They have been approved by the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA and are reported here as information.

Article 5 (Personnel) before revision:

1. The director of ministries shall be an ordained person responsible to the board for the programs of all The Back to God Hour ministries.
2. The ministers shall be ordained persons who are responsible to the director of ministries and the board for the execution of their gospel ministries.
3. The executive director shall be responsible for the execution of the business policies and decisions of the board. He shall supervise and coordinate the administrative, production, and business staffs so that they support and facilitate the ministry of the Word. He shall perform other assigned duties as directed by the board.

Article 5 (Personnel) after revision and approval by the Board of Trustees of the CRC:

1. The executive director shall be the chief executive officer of The Back to God Hour, responsible to the board for the leadership, strategic planning, and general supervision of the organization and for the execution of the policies and decisions of the board. He shall be responsible for seeing that the entire organization supports and facilitates the mission of The Back to God Hour.

2. The director of ministries shall be an ordained minister in the Christian Reformed Church responsible to the executive director for the effectiveness of all The Back to God Hour ministries.
3. The ministers employed by The Back to God Hour shall be ordained persons who are responsible to the director of ministries for the execution of their gospel ministries.

Note: These changes will take effect upon the scheduled retirement of Dr. Joel Nederhood on January 1, 1996.

E. Cooperative organizations

The Back to God Hour works closely with the following organizations: AdMark, an advertising agency; RACOM, the public-relations arm; and Christian Bridge, a facilitating agency for the Russian-language ministry. The Back to God Hour also has an agreement with CRC Publications for jointly publishing appropriate publications.

F. Salary disclosure

According to the requirements of synod, salary information is provided below:

Job level	Number of positions	Compensation quartile (includes housing allowance)
7	2	4th
5	1	4th
5	1	3rd
5	1	1st

III. Back to God Hour ministries

A. English-language ministry

Current English programs are "The Back to God Hour," heard weekly; "Insight," heard on weekdays; and "Faith 20," heard daily. Literature offerings include *Today* (bimonthly press run of 410,000), *The Radio Pulpit*, *The Compendium*, "Faith 20" and "Insight" transcripts, and other support literature for "Faith 20." Dr. Joel Nederhood is the speaker on "Faith 20" and "Insight"; Rev. David Feddes is the primary speaker on "The Back to God Hour."

"The Back to God Hour" program, which seeks to relate the great biblical themes in strong and clear language, continues to be the flagship program. The four-and-a-half-minute "Insight," heard on one hundred stations on weekdays, comments on current events from a Christian perspective. The Voice of Life radio station, which is part of our English-language ministry, is on the air sixteen hours daily from Dominica. This station covers the eastern Caribbean islands all the way down to Trinidad and carries all our English programs, including a radio version of "Faith 20."

Most of the time and effort of The Back to God Hour organization is spent in program production. The English-language production must be sensitive to changes occurring in the broadcasting industry and in the culture. It is encouraging that the industry accepts these programs well, both in this country and overseas. The policy of making virtually the entire broadcast investment in secular stations continues; this ensures that the programs will reach people who otherwise would not be exposed to the gospel. Program content reflects awareness that The Back to God Hour reaches a secular audience.

Aside from occasional conflicts with stations such as those of the FOX network because of program content, the television program "Faith 20" is well accepted in the industry. During 1994, it became possible to incorporate into the program special spots which were produced in Canada and which reflected the Canadian scene.

The board and staff continually watch developments in broadcasting in order to prepare for a future that will be quite different from the present. It is expected that over the next decades program delivery technologies will change considerably. It is important to anticipate these and be ready to use them effectively. The rapid changes in technology, coupled with uncertainties regarding financial resources, make it difficult to create a viable long-range plan in the usual sense. As an organization, The Back to God Hour must be prepared at any time to make adjustments, changes, and innovations. The board and staff are concerned about the matter of preparing for the future as effectively as possible.

In addition to handling the daily mail, Back to God Hour staff also respond to telephone calls received in the phone centers in Burlington, Ontario; Chino and Artesia, California; Palos Heights, Illinois; Wyckoff, New Jersey; and Seattle, Washington. The calls which were formerly handled by the Grand Rapids center are now being handled in New Jersey. The Leighton, Iowa, phone center responds to calls generated by Back to God Hour radio programs. The volunteers who answer these phones answer questions, provide the literature requested, help people find churches, deal with some of their specific problems, and often pray with them. It is especially gratifying when local churches and missionaries report that they are working with our listeners. Rev. James Vander Slik of Sunlight Community Christian Reformed Church in Port St. Lucie, Florida, recently wrote in the Board of Home Missions' *Reach*, "As a direct result [of a free tag added to "The Back to God Hour"], we have received five telephone inquiries and three people have started attending our church. Both the inquirers and attenders are more serious seekers than the general population."

Prayer requests are distributed to a network of prayer partners who covenant to remember these people regularly. The work of the prayer partners is an important element of the broadcast outreach.

B. Arabic-language ministry

The Arabic ministry of The Back to God Hour is its oldest foreign-language ministry. During the thirty-eight years that Rev. Bassam Madany was the speaker, he produced thousands of programs. Since he retired in June 1994, his programs continue to be used. Though Rev. Madany has retired "in person," he has not been retired "electronically."

The Back to God Hour board, meeting February 8 and 9, 1995, accepted the resignation of Rev. Nasser Yassa, who had been working in the Arabic Department since January 1, 1994. Rev. Yassa's service to the Arabic ministry during his time with The Back to God Hour is greatly appreciated.

The Back to God Hour board will now initiate a search to find a radio minister for Arabic programming. Because the candidates for this position are few and because a thorough search will take considerable time, this process may not be completed for a year or two. The prayers of the churches are solicited that the Lord will point out the person of his choosing.

The Back to God Hour staff is grateful to the Lord for bringing Miss Suesanne Abraham, a native speaker of Arabic, to the Arabic Department. She knows

Egypt and the Middle East well and will consult with Rev. Madany to ensure that program content will continue to be appropriate for the target audience.

Meanwhile, The Back to God Hour will continue the Arabic ministry as it has been over the years. North Africa and the Middle East have never been more in need of the gospel—the fierce fanaticism of some Muslim sects is well-known. Millions of people in that part of the world are in bondage to a false prophet. Stations such as Trans World Radio in Monte Carlo, which airs “The Back to God Hour,” are reaching these people where they live. A recent letter from Yemen states,

I have wanted to write you long before now, but due to difficult family circumstances I couldn't. My father used to forbid me from listening to your broadcast. But now since I went to college, and after ten years of listening to your program, I am able to write you hoping to receive your books soon.

C. *Spanish-language ministry*

The mainstay of our Spanish ministry, “La Hora de la Reforma,” has continued since this ministry began in 1966. “Reflexion,” a short program (similar to the English “Insight” program), has also been on the air for many years and continues to be popular. Rev. Guillermo Serrano is the speaker for these programs. During 1994 Rev. Serrano began production of a new television program called “La Vida Ahora,” a preaching program that uses many visuals that connect it to the contemporary scene. Distribution for this program is now underway. The Back to God Hour also distributes audio- and videocassettes of Spanish-language sermons, along with vast quantities of literature.

A contract was recently signed with Radio Amanecer in Madrid, Spain, to broadcast “La Hora de la Reforma” each Monday at 7:30 a.m. to a potential eight million listeners in the greater Madrid area. Several years ago Spain was not interested in programs featuring Latin Americans, but with satellites bringing Latin American fare to the Continent regularly, The Back to God Hour programs are now welcome.

D. *French-language ministry*

The French-language programs, “Perspectives Reformees,” with Rev. Aaron Kayayan as speaker, are heard in Quebec and Ontario, in French-speaking Europe, and in Africa. In Africa the ministry has led to the establishment of the Reformed Confessing Church in Zaire as well as churches in Benin, Burundi, and Togo. The tragic situation in Rwanda has caused great heartbreak because of the impact it has had on listeners to the French broadcast in that country and on the churches that have started there. Rev. Kayayan was thankful to hear from some of his Rwandan listeners after the worst of the upheaval.

The Gereformeerde Kerken (Vrijgemaakt) established a mission field in Zaire in 1991. The Back to God Hour has worked out an agreement with that denomination to govern Back to God Hour ministries in that country. Each year the director of the French-language ministry (Rev. Kayayan) and two other members of a Zaire committee meet with three representatives of agencies of the Gereformeerde Kerken (Vrijgemaakt) to ensure that ministry “in the air” and ministry “on the ground” are properly coordinated.

Rev. Kayayan and his wife, Carmen, also stay in close touch with France, where they lived for many years. The European releases of Rev. Kayayan's programs provide France and other francophone areas with an alternative to the nihilism and neopaganism that are prevalent in these areas.

The extensive literature offerings in the French language are designed to help listeners understand the issues that confront Christians today. These book-size publications not only find enthusiastic readers in Quebec and France but in Africa as well. The French Department has video programs that deal with subjects from the Reformed tradition. They are released under the name *Croire Pour Comprendre*. Copies of *Croire Pour Comprendre* are being used in Europe and Africa.

In view of Rev. Kayayan's retirement in June 1995, the board will be evaluating this ministry.

E. Chinese-language ministry

On his recent trip to China, Rev. Jimmy Lin, the Chinese-language pastor, was deeply moved when listeners to his broadcasts introduced him to house-church congregations which were being instructed by spiritual leaders who had spent decades in prison for their faith. In response to the needs of such churches, the Chinese-language ministry broadcasts more than eighteen hours of programming each week, in both Mandarin and Cantonese. The programs include a fifteen-minute sermon, a Bible study (dealing with the Gospel of Mark and Old Testament figures), theology (consisting of elements of Calvin's *Institutes*, *The Compendium*, and *Questions/Answers*), the devotional program "Walking with God," the bilingual program "Word for Today," and the musical program "Melody of Life."

An important advance in this ministry has been the beginning of a network of stations to reach Chinese speakers in North America. Chinese-language stations now carry Chinese-language programs in Toronto, New York, San Diego, Chicago, and Panama; expanding the use of local stations is expected. This outreach has become part of the vast international network of stations that carry these broadcasts, stations such as Far East Broadcasting and Trans World Radio transmitters in Manila; on Saipan, Guam, and Cheju Island; and in Inchon, Korea. Letter response and on-site reports indicate that this network covers all of China's twenty-six provinces, more than 11 billion people.

By monitoring the relationship between Christians in China and the Chinese government, The Back to God Hour staff stays in touch with what is happening in China. The government keeps close check on letters sent to Christian broadcasters. Efforts are being made to assess what our course should be when Hong Kong reverts to China in 1997. Presently the Alliance Radio staff on Hong Kong works with The Back to God Hour in follow-up. Alliance staff members not only follow instructions carefully as they respond to listeners but also express helpful initiatives that aid in understanding the changing situation in China. The Alliance organization provides listeners with literature furnished by The Back to God Hour, such as the *Heidelberg Catechism*, the bilingual *Today*, and other specialized pieces. The hope and prayer are that this effective follow-up will continue after 1997.

F. Japanese-language ministry

Rev. Shojiro Ishii of the Reformed Church of Japan directs the Japanese broadcast ministry, using various men and women to produce sermons, Bible studies, and specialized programs for homemakers. He reports a significant increase in response during 1994; several of the listeners were baptized and received into local churches.

Programs are heard early in the morning on a local station which blankets the Kanto Plain, perhaps the most densely populated region on earth—Tokyo and Yokohama are found here. A station in Nagoya covers the region around that city and Chikoku Island. The station on Cheju Island, Korea, covers the entire country from southern Kyusho to Hokkaido. A telephone ministry is also an important component of this outreach.

A full-time staff member and three part-time workers, along with volunteers, assist Rev. Ishii in the Japanese ministry. Rev. Ishii carries on not only radio programming but also a program of listener contact that includes a Bible camp each summer. In recent years, this ministry was buffeted by financial problems caused by the relation of the dollar to the yen. The Back to God Hour office is working closely with the Japanese staff to ensure that the current level of programming will be maintained.

G. Portuguese-language ministry

With the election of its new president, Ferdinand Enrique Cardoso, Brazil anticipates a new day and an end to the rampaging inflation that has plagued it for years. The Portuguese-language minister, Rev. Celsino Gama, interviewed Cardoso and his primary opponent on the television program "Cada Dia." This is just one example of the way Rev. Gama strives to make his programs interesting and up-to-date as he focuses the nation's attention on the gospel.

"Cada Dia" is just part of a multifaceted outreach to Brazil, the most populous nation in Latin America. In addition to a thriving radio outreach, a telephone ministry, made possible by an advantageous arrangement with the telephone company, attracts more than 400,000 callers each month. The combination of aggressive radio and television programming, good station selection, and the unique telephone ministry provides hundreds of thousands of responses each year for this ministry. The high interest of the Presbyterian church in Brazil in this ministry ensures that many who respond benefit from the attention of local churches.

H. Indonesian-language ministry

Dr. Junus Atmarumeksa, The Back to God Hour's Indonesian-language pastor, has given his home church, the Gereja Kristen Indonesia, a vision for reaching the nation of Indonesia by means of mass communication. He serves as the director of the Joint Communication Institute of two of the synods of that denomination. His main work is program production and the supervision of outreach in Indonesia, which has the largest Muslim population in the world. Indonesian programs are heard over thirty-four Indonesian stations, covering most of the major population areas of this vast island country. Seventeen of these stations are on Java, five in the Jakarta region. Coverage of the entire nation is achieved through four international stations, three of which are shortwave.

This ministry also features a bookstore outreach and the growing influence of *Wasiat*, the Indonesian version of *Today*. This work takes place in studios that have been recently upgraded. The ministry must be conducted with great sensitivity to the country's Muslim majority, which is becoming more aggressively anti-Christian. Those who convert from Islam to Christianity are persecuted. Persons leading this ministry must spend time counseling and helping converts who experience discrimination and unemployment.

I. Russian-language ministry

The demoralized Russian army, muddling its way through an ill-fated military venture in Chechnya, provides an accurate picture of the current state of affairs in Russia. It is only the unusual resourcefulness of the individual Russian people that keeps life in the great cities from collapsing entirely. The Christian Reformed Church is ministering to this nation each week over powerful and effective radio and television stations. The Back to God Hour programs, both carrying the name "Vozvrashcheniye k Bogu" ("Back to God"), are presented by Mr. Mikhail Morgulis, who is affiliated with an organization called Christian Bridge. Morgulis grew up and was educated in Kiev, where he was a journalist and editor before coming to the United States. The Russian scripts are translations of English-language scripts that have been especially prepared for Russian listeners. So far as is known, this program is the only North American program in Russia that features a Russian speaker. These programs also cover Ukraine, with a special network in the Donetsk region, Belorussia, and much of the rest of the Commonwealth of Independent States.

Working with The Back to God Hour, the World Literature Committee of CRC Publications has produced Russian-language literature oriented to thinking people. H.H. Meeter's *The Basic Ideas of Calvinism* is virtually completed. It will still be several years before the completion of Calvin's *Institutes*, the translation of which is underway. When it becomes available, it is expected to confront the Russian people with new and important ideas.

At this writing, there are new laws being considered by the Russian Parliament that would restrict Western missions in Russia. There is concern about this development, and The Back to God Hour staff is attempting to ensure that the radio and television ministry will continue there. It was possible for Dr. Joel Nederhood to meet with Orthodox Patriarch Alexie II in an effort to come to greater understanding with the Orthodox regarding the nature of The Back to God Hour mission. Sensitivity to the feelings and convictions of the Orthodox is essential for continuing Back to God Hour work in Russia. It is good that the interagency structure of the Christian Reformed Church has an ad hoc committee that deals specifically with Russian outreach and can coordinate the efforts of all agencies with regard to new developments in Russia and other former Soviet states.

IV. Recommendations

A. The board requests that Rev. John Bylsma, president; Mr. John Kuyers, executive director; and Dr. Joel Nederhood, director of ministries, be given the privilege of the floor when Back to God Hour matters are discussed.

B. The board requests that Rev. Aaron R. Kayayan be permitted to address synod on behalf of The Back to God Hour (cf. Board of Trustees' recommendation concerning agency representatives addressing synod).

C. The board requests that synod elect one of the two new nominees as proposed and reelect Rev. Peter Nicolai and Mr. George Vande Werken to serve an additional three-year term for reasons stated in this report (see II, C, 1 and 2).

The Back to God Hour

John Kuyers, executive director

Joel Nederhood, director of ministries

I. Introduction

This report reflects information from and actions taken at the October 1994 and the February 1995 meetings of the Calvin College Board of Trustees.

A. Board officers

The officers elected for 1994-1995 are Rev. John L. Witvliet, pastor of First CRC, Sioux Center, Iowa, chairman; Ms. Sheri Haan, executive director of Christian Schools International, vice chair; Rev. James Cooper, pastor of Third CRC, Zeeland, Michigan, secretary; Ms. Carol Smith, assistant to the Calvin College Board of Trustees, assistant secretary; and Mr. Dale Guikema, vice president for administration and finance, treasurer.

B. Selection of a nominee for president

The Calvin College Board of Trustees concluded a historic three days of meetings on Saturday, February 18, 1995. The highlight of the February meeting was the appointment of Dr. Gaylen Byker, a native of Hudsonville, Michigan, and a 1973 Calvin graduate, as the school's eighth president.

In February 1994 Dr. Anthony Diekema announced his plans to leave the office of president on August 31, 1995, to take a six-month sabbatical and then to end his twenty-year tenure in February 1996.

The board appointed a search committee of sixteen members, representing the faculty, trustees, administration, alumni, students, denomination, and at-large constituency. Trustee Grace Achterhof chaired the committee.

The committee's mandate included the revision of the position description of the Calvin College president. With the help of President Diekema, the committee drafted such a document for board of trustees' approval (Appendix A).

Approximately 2,200 letters were sent out requesting names of nominees. Among those receiving letters were all the churches in the denomination, friends of the college, the President's Council, leaders in higher education, the Multicultural Council, members of the Coalition of Christian Colleges and Universities, local community leaders, etc. Advertisements were placed in thirteen publications. More than one hundred names were suggested, and the committee interviewed a number of applicants. In mid-January the committee invited Dr. Gaylen Byker to the Calvin campus to meet the various college constituencies. Dr. Byker's resumé is attached in Appendix B. The questions responded to by Dr. Byker are attached in Appendix C. On February 17, 1995, the search committee presented Dr. Byker to the college board of trustees as its nominee for the next president of Calvin College.

The board of trustees interviewed Dr. Byker on Friday morning, February 17, and unanimously appointed him to the position of president of Calvin College. The Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church in North America unanimously endorsed the decision of the Calvin board. Dr. Byker's appointment now requires ratification by synod. The formal board summary and recommendation are attached in Appendix D. If the appointment is ratified, Dr. Byker will become the eighth president in Calvin's history, the third in the last forty-four years.

II. General college matters

A. *Hekman Library dedication*

In October 1994 the board participated in a variety of events related to the Hekman Library dedication. These events celebrated God's goodness to the college through the generosity of alumni Edsko and Claire Hekman, whose gifts to the Campaign for Calvin College provided for the completion of the fifth-floor addition to the library.

B. *Strategic Plan*

At its February 1995 meeting, the board discussed the document entitled "Reformed Christian Higher Education for a Changing World: A Strategic Plan for Calvin College - 1995-2000" and reaffirmed the following established commitments of Calvin College:

1. To affirm the Reformed Christian tradition and its relevance for the challenges of the changing world of learning and life.
2. To serve undergraduate students with rigorous and excellent Christian education that prepares them to meet the challenge to serve and lead in the twenty-first century.
3. To provide cultural and intellectual leadership through Christian scholarship and service.
4. To remain affordable for students from a broad range of socioeconomic circumstances.

The board and administration, working with the new president, will maintain a dynamic annual engagement with the Strategic Plan.

C. *Staff*

The board appointed four new faculty and reappointed twenty-seven faculty/administrators. Twenty were granted sabbatical leaves, and five faculty members received Calvin Research Fellowships. Dr. Paul Zwier, professor of mathematics, was awarded the Presidential Award for Exemplary Teaching.

Tenure interviews were a highlight of the board in February, when it interviewed seven faculty for reappointment. Their names and recommendations are listed under Recommendations.

In September 1994 the faculty approved and in October 1994 the board ratified a change in faculty organization from a full-faculty governance system to a faculty-senate governance system. The new Faculty Senate consists of forty-five members elected by the faculty and closely approximating the demographic composition of the entire faculty. The first senate meeting was held on December 5, 1994.

D. *Advancement and development*

The college received a \$988,000 gift from the Pew Foundation for a faculty summer seminar program in Christian scholarship. Over seventy new, endowed family scholarships have been started during the recent Calvin campaign. The goal of the campaign is \$50 million; at present, it is at the \$45 million mark.

E. Enrollment

The enrollment projection for fall 1995 is 3,829 and an additional one hundred CAP (Calvin Accelerated Program) students. This figure represents a modest increase over the 3,793 and 49 CAP students enrolled for fall 1994.

The Admissions Office continues to communicate the following message about Calvin: Calvin is a Christ-centered college. Calvin is strikingly academic. Calvin is a welcoming community. Calvin educates in the context of Christian service.

F. Finances

In October the board approved the 1994-1995 educational and general budget of approximately \$43,086,000. In February the board approved tuition and room-and-board increases totaling 6.8 percent. Tuition for 1995-1996 will be \$10,995; room and board will be \$3,895. The increase in tuition and room and board will fund two primary areas: increases in faculty and staff salaries and an increased level of financial aid.

Therefore, the board also approved raising scholarship and financial aid for 1995-1996 by 10.6 percent. When the increases in room, board, and tuition and the increases in scholarship and financial aid are factored in, the average Calvin student will pay about 4.8 percent more to attend Calvin in 1995-1996 than in 1994-1995. The board is committed to keeping Calvin affordable and continues to discuss ways in which it can keep increases in costs to a minimum.

The denominational endowment to the college, reflected in denominational ministry shares, goes directly into a grant awarded to Christian Reformed students who study at Calvin College.

III. Recommendations

A. Academic matters

1. That synod ratify the appointment of Dr. Gaylen J. Byker as president of Calvin College.
2. That synod ratify the following:
 - a. Faculty reappointments with tenure
 - 1) W. Dale Brown, Ph.D., Professor of English
 - 2) Mary Molewyk Doornbos, Ph.D., Professor of Nursing
 - 3) Glenn W. Fetzer, Ph.D., Professor of French
 - 4) Kurt C. Schaefer, Ph.D., Professor of Economics
 - 5) Mary C. Schutten, P.E.D., Professor of Physical Education
 - 6) Peter Vande Guchte, Ph.D., Professor of Business
 - 7) Dean A. Ward, Ph.D., Professor of English
 - b. Faculty appointments
 - 1) Clarence W. Joldersma, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Education
 - 2) Marilyn R. Bierling, Ph.D., Professor of Spanish
 - c. Administrative reappointments
 - 1) Jeanette Bult De Jong, M.Ed., Vice President for Student Life, continuing appointment (with faculty status)
 - 2) Dale J. Guikema, M.B.A., C.P.A., Vice President for Administration and Finance, for two years (with faculty status)

Calvin College Board of Trustees
James Cooper, secretary

APPENDIX A

Position Description

President of Calvin College

The president is the chief executive officer of Calvin College and provides leadership for all operations of the college. The president works to promote the mission and purpose of the college and to assure the welfare of the college both in the present and into the future.

I. Authority and accountability

Calvin College is the college of the Christian Reformed Church in North America, which delegates control, through its synod, to Calvin's board of trustees.

The president

- reports to the board of trustees, serves at the pleasure of the board, and is subject to the authority of the board.
- leads the board to develop goals and strategies that will guide presidential activities and provide the context for regular evaluation of the president.
- advises the board on the needs of the college and serves as the medium of communication to and from the college.
- organizes, directs, motivates, and evaluates an administration to accomplish the mission and goals of the college.

II. Specific areas of responsibility

A. *Educational program*

The president

- promotes the educational and spiritual welfare of the student body.
- preserves and promotes the Reformed Christian commitment of Calvin College in faculty recruitment and development and in educational policy.
- chairs the faculty and Faculty Senate, soliciting faculty support and participation in the manner prescribed in the Faculty Bylaws.
- guides the development of faculty teaching and research and curricular and cocurricular programs.
- serves as a model of Christian discipleship and seeks to develop a Christian academic community characterized by integrity and mutual respect.

B. *Organizational effectiveness*

The president

- cultivates both a senior leadership team and a college staff marked by competence, creativity, and collaboration.
- initiates and oversees planning and coordination of the diverse areas of the college.
- assures fiscal integrity and stewardship in all areas of college operations.

C. Development

The president

- leads in raising financial support for the college.
- inspires others to become partners with the college in the mission of Reformed Christian higher education.
- consults with and uses the resources of others in serving the college.

D. Public relations

The president

- serves as the principal representative of the college in all relations with external constituencies.
- represents the college to the Christian Reformed Church and the larger church.
- serves as spokesperson for the role of Reformed Christian scholarship and education in church and public life.
- participates in local and national organizations to influence contemporary culture, governmental policy, and trends in higher education.

APPENDIX B

Resumé of Gaylen J. Byker

Present Position:

Principal of Offshore Energy Development Corporation, Houston, Texas, a natural-gas exploration, production, and pipeline company operating primarily in the Gulf of Mexico. Title: Vice President for Development and Hedging.

Personal Data:

Birthdate:	April 10, 1948
Marital and Family Status:	Married to Susan (Lemmen) Byker (Calvin '71, teacher at United Nations International School) Two daughters, ages 22 and 16
Addresses and Phones:	3631 Mirror Court Spring, Texas 77388 Home: (713) 288-5172 Office: (713) 364-0033 Fax: (713) 364-1122 255 Island Road Kintnersville, Pennsylvania 18930 Home: (610) 847-2138
Church Membership:	New Life Christian Reformed Church, Spring, Texas

Education:

- B.A. Interdisciplinary, Calvin College. Concentrations in philosophy, English, political science, and speech. Minor in Russian language (courses taken at Grand Valley State College). Dean's list every semester. Team taught in Speech Department, served (with spouse) as resident director and was captain of the wrestling team.
- J.D. *Cum laude*, the Law School, University of Michigan. Received awards for distinguished work in foreign and comparative law and legal writing and advocacy.
- M.A. *Magna cum laude*, world politics, University of Michigan.
- Ph.D. International relations, University of Pennsylvania. Concentration in international business at the Wharton School. Supplemental fields of public international law and organizations, international-relations theory, and international commercial law. Awarded the Dean's Fellowship and the Penfield Fellowship for study abroad. Dissertation: "The Role of Political Events and Political Expectations in Exchange Rate Movements: The Case of Lebanon."

Military Service:

United States Army - artillery (active duty 1967-1970, Reserve duty 1971-1973). Commissioned as an artillery officer at age 19. Served at Fort Lewis, Washington, as nuclear weapons officer and in Vietnam as a forward observer and battery executive officer. Supervised 90 enlisted men in combat situations and commanded up to 150 officers and enlisted men in the Army Reserve. Repeatedly decorated. Rank of Captain at discharge.

Business and Legal Experience:

Phibro Energy, Inc., a subsidiary of Solomon, Inc., Greenwich, Connecticut. Co-Head of Commodity Derivatives, with responsibilities for structured finance transactions, Latin America, and new businesses in base metals and agricultural commodities.

Banque Paribas, New York, New York. Head of the Commodity Indexed Transactions Group, with worldwide responsibility for hedging and financing transactions that utilized long-term commodity-price risk management. Major transactions included the first "new money" loan to Mexico in seven years in the form of a copper-indexed loan, one of the first long-term natural-gas price swaps, and the first reserve acquisition loan arranged using a prepaid natural-gas price swap.

Chase (Manhattan) Investment Bank, New York, New York. Manager of Commodity-Indexed Swaps and Financings. Developed this group of new products from the idea stage; performed statistical, business, and legal analysis, obtained approvals, drafted documents, marketed corporate and sovereign customers, negotiated and consummated transactions. Also structured and marketed interest-rate and currency swaps and worked on private placements.

Morgan, Lewis and Bockius, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Lawyer handling cases for firms and government agencies—foreign and domestic—involving

public stock offerings, bids for mass-transit equipment construction, military aircraft parts procurement, bankruptcy, maritime accidents, election laws, and constitutional questions.

United States District Court, Detroit, Michigan. Law Clerk to Chief District Court Judge John Feikens. Assisted in the supervision of trials, performed legal research, and drafted judicial opinions.

Overseas Private Investment Corporation (an agency of the U.S. Department of State), Washington, D.C. Intern in the Legal Department, analyzing international legal, insurance, and business matters. Monitored and reported on litigation in the Supreme Court of Jamaica involving aluminum-industry investments.

Worked extensively with statistics and computers and became familiar with a broad spectrum of scientific and technical subjects.

Member of the Bars of Michigan, Pennsylvania, District of Columbia, and the Supreme Court of the United States.

Teaching Experience:

University of Pennsylvania: International Relations Theory (one semester).

American University of Beirut, Beirut, Lebanon: Corporate Finance and Legal Aspects of International Business at the Graduate School of Business (three semesters); concurrently pursued dissertation research. (Forced to leave when kidnapping of U.S. nationals began.) 1983-1985.

Calvin College: Ethics and International Affairs (with Dr. Richard Mouw), Interim 1984.

Spoke and/or presented papers on various international financial and/or political topics for supranational organizations (World Bank, IFC, etc.), government agencies (Federal Reserve Bank, Bank of England, ministries of the economy, national oil companies, etc.), academic institutions, professional associations, and businesses throughout the United States and in Canada, Mexico, England, France, Switzerland, Germany, Columbia, Lebanon, and Bahrain.

Wrote Harvard Business School case: "The Chase Manhattan Bank: Commodity Swaps" (1988). Presented and discussed the case at the Harvard University Senior International Management Agribusiness Seminar in London, Winter 1988.

Other Activities:

Calvin College: Member of the steering committee of the Campaign for Calvin College (currently) and provided statements and photos for campaign booklet (see pages 12 and 13) and campaign video presentation. Served as Philadelphia area recruiting coordinator and hosted Calvin Interim business classes in New York.

Fuller Theological Seminary: Trustee (currently).

Fuller Foundation: Trustee (currently).

New Life Christian Reformed Church: Adult Bible-study teacher, vice president of council, and finance-committee member (currently).

Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church, New York, New York: Adult Bible-study teacher, elder, and chair of Stewardship Committee/Campaign.

Philadelphia-Montgomery Christian Academy, Dresher, Pennsylvania: Trustee, treasurer, and chair of finance committee.

American Community School, Beirut, Lebanon: Trustee.

United Nations International School, New York, New York: Chair of annual fund drive.

Republican State Committee of Pennsylvania: Assistant general counsel.

George Bush for President Committee of Pennsylvania (1979-80): General counsel.

International Practitioner's Notebook (quarterly publication of the American Branch of the International Law Association): Contributing editor.

Bethany Christian Services (Philadelphia): Volunteer legal counsel.

World Affairs Council of Philadelphia: Director.

Visited more than thirty countries for business, speaking engagements, and personal travel.

Personal interests include theater, geography, bicycling, cross-country skiing, upland hunting, and dog obedience training.

References:

Dr. Richard J. Mouw, President
Fuller Theological Seminary

Mr. Max De Pree, Chairman
Herman Miller, Inc.

Dr. Nicholas Wolterstorff
The Divinity School, Yale University

Dr. Laurent Jaque
The Fletcher School of International Law and Diplomacy

Paul Zwier, Esq.
The University of Richmond Law School

Chronological Resumé Summary

Gaylen J. Byker

1963-66 Student - Unity Christian High School, Hudsonville, Michigan

1967-70 Artillery officer - United States Army, Fort Lewis, Washington, and Vietnam (active duty)

1970-73 Student - Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan
(also U.S. Army Reserve)

1973-77 Student - University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan
Law School (J.D.) and Rackham Graduate School (M.A.);
Summer 1975, Michigan Court of Appeals, Lansing,
Michigan;
Summer 1976, Overseas Private Investment Corporation,
Washington, D.C., and Kingston, Jamaica

- 1977-78 Law clerk - United States District Court, Detroit, Michigan
(Judge John Feikens)
- 1978-81 Lawyer - Morgan, Lewis and Bockius, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
- 1981-83 Student - University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
(Ph.D., 1993)
- 1983-85 Assistant professor - American University of Beirut, Beirut, Lebanon
(concurrently conducted dissertation research)
- 1985-88 Investment banker - Chase Investment Bank, New York, New York
- 1989-91 Investment banker - Banque Paribas, New York, New York
- 1992 Investment banker - Phibro Energy, Inc., Greenwich, Connecticut
- 1992- present Principal - Offshore Energy Development Corporation, Houston, Texas

APPENDIX C

The search committee asked four questions of all the candidates it interviewed. Following are the questions and Dr. Byker's responses.

1. Who are you and how have you been formed?

A sense of "who" I perceive myself to be can be gathered from the following series of phrases that I offer as descriptions of my person and character and the way I try to live: a committed Christian, in the Reformed tradition by heritage and by choice; have a variety of intellectual and practical interests and several areas of business, legal, and academic expertise; have been described at different times as a "Renaissance man" and a "financial engineer"; search for God's will and for ways to be of service, and work to integrate my faith with all my activities; conscientious husband and father; concerned about and involved in education at all levels; active church member; gravitate toward leadership roles by actively defining and addressing opportunities and/or problems and working to achieve positive results; pragmatic optimist with a sense of "Calvinistic realism" about the nature of man, society, and bureaucracies; need ongoing intellectual challenge to hold my interest; taker of calculated risks; have high energy level and strong work ethic; creative problem solver; and political moderate.

I was formed by an amalgamation of the conservative Dutch Calvinist immigrant farmer tradition and the vibrant Christian intellectual culture that existed at Calvin College during the early 1970s. I was strongly influenced by both of these formative elements, and since both existed at some distance from the center of mainstream American perspectives and values, it is not surprising that I have developed interests and pursued activities that are somewhat atypical. My personality, values, and habits were formed initially in a self-consciously conservative Dutch Calvinist family in a small town fifteen miles southwest of Grand Rapids. I am the second of six children. My parents—both born in the U.S. to immigrant parents—spoke Dutch to each other but did not teach it to me or my siblings.

A great deal of emphasis was placed on education—Christian education—and work habits. My parents had been teenagers living in rural Iowa during the Depression years of the early 1930s, and neither had been able to attend high school. My father later attended Calvin while I was a young child, using his World War II veteran's benefits. Each of the children attended Christian school for thirteen years and Calvin for at least two years. Three of us graduated from Calvin; the other three completed specialized degrees elsewhere. In all, my parents paid 106 years of tuition for us—an accomplishment about which they are very happy and proud. They also served constantly on school boards and committees and gave generously of their time and money. Though we were relatively well-off financially, I was typical in my family in starting my first newspaper route at age 10 and my first full-time summer job at age 11.

Christian faith was of utmost importance in our family, and in addition to receiving instruction in Bible and church history in school, we participated very regularly in the programs of our church. This included ten years of studying the catechism and confessions of the Christian Reformed Church. Despite the extensive knowledge and understanding of Christianity that I gained, my faith remained on an intellectual level, and I declined to make a public profession of faith with my high school classmates. It was not until age 22, after I had returned from Vietnam, gotten married, and was attending Calvin, that I personally committed my life to Christ and claimed the promises of the covenant. Once my faith became alive and I accepted the implications of being a sinner saved by grace, I was glad that I had learned and internalized so much about the Bible and Reformed theology.

I had enrolled at Calvin during the fall of 1966 but withdrew after six weeks, fully understanding that I would most likely be drafted into the Army. In the spring of 1967 I entered the Army, where my education and personal habits stood me in good stead. I earned a commission at the age of 19 and served as an artillery officer in Washington state and Vietnam. My military service left a deep impression on me of how different a Christian would be from a typical American if he or she consistently acted on his or her beliefs. Upon my return I had intended to work for several months and then attend the University of Michigan because I thought I had had enough of Dutch Reformed culture.

The job I had expected to take did not materialize, however, and since Susan, to whom I had just gotten married, was a junior at Calvin, I decided to re-enroll at Calvin and try it for a semester. In retrospect, that was the single most important decision of my life for my intellectual and spiritual development and for the development of the world and life view that has guided me since I left Calvin.

In preparation for writing this essay I got out my Calvin transcript, and while reviewing it late one night, I recalled in a way that I had not for many years the sheer intellectual pleasure of the challenges I experienced at Calvin and the stimulating discussions with faculty members and students both in and outside of class. I recalled philosophy, ethics, and metaethics with Rich Mouw; aesthetics and discussions about the relationship between philosophy and "real life" with Nick Wolterstorff; symbolic logic with Al Plantinga;

Shakespeare with Dick Tiemersma; the intellectual history of the United States and discussions about what it meant to be a Christian scholar with George Marsden; ancient and modern political thought and discussions about Christian involvement in politics with Paul Henry; communications theory and Christian approaches to group interaction and the media with Del Nykamp; literature and discussions about career choices with George Harper; Dante with Howard Rienstra; history of the English language and discussions about the "American Dutch Calvinist approach to life" with Stanley Wiersma; Calvin's *Institutes*; linguistics; semantics; Russian language and literature (taken at GVSC) Those were the best years of my life. Having convinced Dean Vanden Berg that I was going to law school and did not need a "major," I was able to take the classes and professors that were the most interesting and challenging. Even though I was at Calvin for only three and one-half years, I took several more courses than were required, and I would have liked to take even more.

I experienced and learned many things at Calvin. Three of the most important were these: (1) I learned from the example of numerous faculty members that it is possible to integrate a strong Christian faith with first-rate scholarship and intellectual pursuits; (2) I became convinced that the Christian world and life view fostered at Calvin changes lives, alters career choices, and motivates people "to make a difference"; and (3) I became aware that I would need to find significant, ongoing intellectual challenges in whatever occupation I pursued if that occupation was to be satisfying.

My formation continued after I left Calvin, the most important influences being my wife, Susan, our two daughters, Tanya and Gayle, and the privilege we have had in bringing up and educating the girls. But all of the things I have done since leaving Calvin have been attempts to live out the vision that I developed there. I have perceived each change as an advance to a higher level of effectiveness and service and an opportunity to engage in new and challenging endeavors: law school and master's program; law practice; church, school, and community activities; doctoral program; teaching, research, and travel in the Middle East; international banking and financial innovation; and most recently putting finance and business theory into practice. Each academic undertaking, job, or activity has required me to draw on a combination of the training, work, and activity experiences that have preceded it and has in turn allowed me to learn new things and develop new abilities. One result of this process is my unusual ability to function comfortably both in academic settings and in the business/professional world.

2. Give a practical example of how you have exercised special leadership skills and describe how these would be valuable to you as Calvin's president.

While working at Chase Investment Bank in New York in 1986 and 1987, I adapted certain long-term hedging (i.e., volatility management) techniques and structures that had recently been developed in the interest-rate and foreign-exchange markets for use in commodity markets, beginning with the crude-oil market. The techniques and structures we provided offered oil consumers, producers, and their governments an effective way to manage their price-volatility risks. I built a team consisting of five young professionals from several countries and a support staff, and we developed a significant

amount of business. In early 1988 it became apparent that, as a result of internal political wrangling, Chase Investment Bank was going to be eliminated and its major lines of business returned to its commercial banking parent, the Chase Manhattan Bank. Broader application of our hedging techniques and their use to facilitate the financing of oil-reserve acquisitions and development did not appear likely in the planned new organizational structure. Consequently, I began negotiations with three major international banks to arrange for a transfer of the team to a new institution that was willing to commit to putting our techniques and structures into practice in a wide variety of domestic and foreign situations.

After several months of negotiating, I reached an agreement with Banque Paribas, a large French financial institution, for the transfer of the team to its New York office to start this new line of business for Paribas from scratch. Both during the negotiating process and afterwards I had to convince the various parts of the Paribas organization that this new way of approaching commodity-market participants and various governments was advantageous in the long run and justified the risk of alienating certain clients who might perceive that the bank was now competing with them. At the same time I had to convince the team members that this new opportunity justified giving up their existing jobs to follow me to Paribas, which was offering us a six-month trial period in which to establish the new business.

During our first month at Paribas, the bank received a request from the largest copper producer in Mexico for a pre-export financing loan to allow it to pay down the large amount of debt it had assumed when the company was denationalized as part of the economic reforms that were just beginning in Mexico. Even though the oil markets were the primary focus of the business we came to Paribas to build, I was able to convince both the bank and the Mexican mining company that a \$210 million copper-indexed loan could be structured and that it would be better than the conventional alternatives. Over the next five months, in addition to establishing the new oil market operations at Paribas, our team structured and negotiated all the elements of the first "new-money" foreign bank loan to Mexico. We had to get the agreement of the copper producer, the government of Mexico, a Belgian copper refinery, German metal brokers, and an eleven-member syndicate of international banks. We worked nearly around the clock to put this unprecedented transaction together in an extremely short period of time, without resorting to the graft that is all too common in transactions involving developing-country companies and governments. My drive, determination, and enthusiasm inspired the team throughout this period and sustained its efforts, even when obstacles arose.

Throughout the process of switching from Chase to Paribas and putting together the Mexicana de Cobre loan facility, I was able to convince the team members to believe in the concepts I had developed, to maintain their trust in me as their leader, and to inspire them to work hard and creatively to accomplish something that most observers thought was impossible. In the process the team members risked their job security and stretched themselves almost to the limit. They also learned a great deal and matured personally and professionally.

The leadership skills that I exercised included the ability (1) to demonstrate that I was a person who could be trusted, (2) to show that I was consistent in my dealings with people, (3) to express effectively my beliefs and values and those of the institution, and (4) to learn constantly from both my successes and failures. I believe that these skills would enable me to be effective as Calvin's president by making it possible for me to work well with the board of trustees, to manage the day-to-day activities of the college, and to guide the administration, faculty, and student body through the processes of renewal and change.

3. What are the most pressing issues for higher education in the decade ahead?

Marginalization of faith in academic circles and growing skepticism in society at large about the possibility of doing creditable "Christian scholarship." Christian higher education, especially from a Reformed perspective, is a part of a countercultural force and has to deal with the constant tension created by the need to uphold its clear allegiance to historic Christianity and the need to maintain constructive engagement with a world in which faith is being marginalized.

The use of new technologies. The use of multimedia presentations and interactions, massive storage and retrieval capabilities, and ever-increasing computing power has major implications for the learning and scholarship processes, the sense of being a community of scholars, the transmission of traditions and values, and even for a sense of place.

The two sides of the budget struggle—fund-raising and cost containment. The quality of education and research will be directly affected by the institution's willingness and ability (1) to expand existing sources of nontuition funds and develop new ones and (2) to manage carefully its resources and use new techniques and technologies creatively to limit or reduce the costs of providing an education and conducting research.

Maintenance of academic excellence. In addition to the need to raise funds and contain costs, colleges and universities will face pressure in the areas of teaching versus scholarship, abuse of tenure, grade inflation, student recruitment, and admissions policies.

Diversity of students and faculty. Adaptation to a body of students and faculty that are more self-consciously diverse without damaging the essential features of the institution will be a slow and sometimes difficult task. At Calvin this issue will become more important if the college gets, as it should, more students and faculty from non-CRC backgrounds and from other countries.

Better utilization of the gifts of women and minorities. Colleges and universities that accomplish this through community-wide effort and consensus and without the divisive and debilitating effects of political correctness, quotas, and "special treatment" will clearly rise above their peers that do not.

Student values and conduct. Given the trends in society at large, students' spiritual lives, motivations, career choices, sexual conduct, and use of drugs

and alcohol will vary more and more from one type of college or university to the next. Calvin has the opportunity to maintain and improve community life in ways that will distinguish it from secular institutions and support its mission of providing a distinctively Christian liberal arts education.

4. What is your vision for Calvin College?

My vision for Calvin College in the next decade is based upon my understanding of its impressive history and its present strengths and weaknesses. It assumes that Calvin remains true to the Reformed tradition of historic Christianity and is successful to a considerable extent in addressing the issues listed in my answer to the previous question. If it does these things, it will become a community of God's people that is an even more effective witness to the work of Jesus Christ in this rapidly changing world, and it will send out graduates and scholarly works that are in the forefront of renewal in the church and society throughout the United States and Canada and throughout the world.

I believe that most of the members of the Calvin community already approve of this vision in concept. But I also believe that it will take an awareness and commitment on the part of each member of the community that he or she is personally a vital part of the implementation of this vision for it to be more fully realized.

Calvin can continue to provide the stimulating integration of faith, scholarship, and career preparation for students from Reformed backgrounds and, at the same time, teach them about and expose them to the vastness and diversity of the human race and its ethnic and cultural groupings. It can diversify its student body and faculty and better utilize the gifts of women and minorities without losing the essential elements and strengths of its tradition. It can increase its effectiveness and the scope of its impact by forming more cooperative ventures and exchanges with churches and institutions in other countries that share its perspective on Christian higher education.

By challenging its increasingly diverse students and faculty to work and think creatively in the best liberal arts tradition, Calvin can serve as an incubator and testing ground for approaches and technologies that not only change people's lives but also affect the societies and institutions in which they live and operate. By mobilizing the entire college community around the common purpose of answering Christ's call to servanthood, Calvin can promptly and sincerely provide the most appropriate response for the many gifts it has received from God.

APPENDIX D

Board of Trustees Recommendation

Gaylen Byker is a man of Christian faith, personal integrity, family fidelity, keen intelligence, boundless energy, business acumen, intuitive sensitivity, and great enthusiasm for Calvin College.

Gaylen Byker will serve the Calvin community as a disciple of Christ. His faith is firm and Reformed, tested in the international world of law and business and evident in all his undertakings. His wife, Susan, a teacher at United Nations International School and active in Bible Study Fellowship, joins him in this decision to pursue full-time work in the world of Christian higher education. Their children have been concerned participants in the decision making. Reared in the Christian Reformed Church, he returned to it on his move to Houston and has the enthusiastic endorsement of his pastor. Active for many years in the Presbyterian church, he shared with his fellow session members his understanding of the covenant and the Reformed vision of a whole-life view of Christian faith. At Calvin, he has said, the role of the chapel and of Christian nurture must be vital.

Gaylen Byker will serve the Calvin community as an academic leader. He has credited his education at Calvin with animating his whole life. One friend and recommender declared of him that he has the Kuyperian outlook in his very bones. He has earned three advanced degrees at distinguished universities: a law degree *cum laude* and a master's degree in world politics *magna cum laude* at Michigan and a doctoral degree in international relations at Pennsylvania. Though he teaches individual courses on occasion, he chose to practice what he had learned in the world of international business. He has remained, all the while, a voracious reader, a writer within his world of responsibility, and a keen student of international relations—in short, as one person put it, more an intellectual than a businessman. He sees the need for excellence in undergraduate education as a part of our Christian calling and has a supportive vision of Christian scholarship as a significant countercultural force in an information-driven world.

Gaylen Byker will serve the Calvin community as an effective administrator. He comes with a proven record as someone who is task driven and able to accomplish the goals he has set. He is known to get results, though never, from what associates have said, at the expense of human well-being or institutional integrity. He understands that people and not organizational charts make communities whole and effective. As a lawyer and businessman who has worked within large and small organizations, he understands the importance of delegation and accountability. The stress and sheer momentum of a presidential position, daunting for most people, is for him energizing and challenging.

Gaylen Byker will serve Calvin as a community liaison. As a son of western Michigan, residence director at Calvin College, and life-long Reformed Christian, he knows Calvin's traditional constituency from the inside. As an international lawyer and businessman, he knows Calvin's potential constituency of Christians worldwide through firsthand experience. He has been an enthusiastic member of the Fuller Theological Seminary board and understands, from his experience there, the place of community relations in that constituency. He is, for all his high-powered credentials and extensive international experience, approachable and unpretentious. He will relate easily to students and parents as well as to benefactors and to academics. He will listen, but he will also represent the mission of Calvin College with heartfelt enthusiasm.

Gaylen Byker will serve the Calvin community as a creative steward. He has worked actively on the Calvin campaign and already has declared a personal interest in the quality of the development and financial wings of the college. He understands and relishes the role of finding adequate support for the college's operations. He has handled far larger sums than the college commands and has done so with the strictest integrity. He will bring to the presidency the expertise of a businessman and lawyer and the heart of a teacher and intellectual. He understands his role as that of a steward, serving God with the talents and resources at his command.

The college presidency has become a formidable task. In Gaylen Byker the Calvin College Board of Trustees has found a Reformed Christian whom God has endowed with an unusually rich measure of the required gifts and expertise. The board is deeply grateful to God that, in answer to many prayers, a person of such faith, talent, and energy has come forth from the Calvin community to answer this call. **The board of trustees unanimously recommends him to the synod of the Christian Reformed Church in the fullest confidence and with great enthusiasm.**

I. Introduction

The seminary began its fall session with a student enrollment of 242 in all programs. This was slightly higher than the year before, even though several international students planning to enroll were unable to do so because the State Department did not issue them visas. Second-quarter enrollment is identical to that of first quarter. Encouragingly, numbers in the Master of Divinity (M.Div., pre-ordination) program are higher than last year, although synod will want to note that nine of the students in the first year of this program are women.

The spirit of support and encouragement among the students is outstanding. Despite the financial strains many students feel, the family obligations which demand the attention especially of many second-career students, and the complexities of ministerial service today, students pursue their training with vision and faith. The student body rallied to the support of Dongo Pewee in December, when his mother and brother were killed by rebels in Liberia. Several weeks later they sustained Peter and Susan Vande Brake when their one-week-old daughter, Rachel Anne, passed away. Through a clothing center, a food pantry, and support and prayer groups, students demonstrate to one another the Christ-like compassion that is already a beautiful ministry. The seminary is blessed by its students.

II. Board of Trustees**A. Governance**

The board consists of nineteen members—ten ordained and nine unordained. Sixteen members are regional trustees; three are members at large. The nine-member executive committee met in regular session in September, November, and January. The full board met on February 9 and 10. Five new trustees were oriented to the work of the board in a preliminary session and were commissioned as trustees during a special seminary chapel service. The executive committee is scheduled to meet in April, and the full board again on May 25 and 26. The executive-committee officers were elected as officers of the full board.

Chairman	Dr. Lyle Bierma
Vice chairman	Rev. Gerry Heyboer
Secretary	Mr. Elmer Walcott
Assistant secretary	Rev. Calvin Hoogendoorn
Treasurer	Mr. James Quist (appointee)

The board prepared nominations from names submitted by classes. These nominations have been forwarded to the general secretary for distribution to the classes in the regions where elections are required. These elections will occur at the spring classes meetings (March or May) and will be reported to synod by supplemental report.

There are two at-large elections to be conducted by synod. Both incumbents have served ably for three years and are eligible for another term. Mr. Jay Van Andel, who served as Mr. Vermeer's alternate for three years, did not feel free to allow his name to stand again. In his place the board is presenting the name of Mr. Bastian Knoppers. Mr. Sidney Jansma, Jr., alternate to Mr. Loren Dykstra, is

also eligible for reelection. The person not selected in both cases will serve as alternate.

1. At-large nomination

Mr. Bastian Knoppers is the owner and president of Cardpro Services, Inc. He lives in Oakbrook, Illinois, is a graduate of Calvin College with a business major, and is a member of Lombard CRC. Mr. Knoppers has served as member and president of the board of Timothy Christian Schools in Elmhurst. He has been active on both the long-range planning committee and the expansion planning committee of this board. He has been a deacon and an elder in his home church and has been active on a number of other committees.

Mr. Robert Vermeer (incumbent) is the chairman and CEO of Vermeer Manufacturing Company in Pella, Iowa. He is a graduate of Central College with an economics and business-administration degree. Mr. Vermeer has served on several boards, including those of the Barnabas Foundation, Pine Rest Christian Hospital, and Central College. He has served two terms as both deacon and elder.

2. At-large nomination

Mr. Loren Dykstra (incumbent) is a retired manager for Allstate Insurance. He lives in Kalamazoo, Michigan, and is a graduate of Calvin College and the University of Michigan Law School (Juris Doctor). Mr. Dykstra has served on the board of directors of Timothy Christian Schools and on the board of trustees of Trinity Christian College. Mr. Dykstra has served as both deacon and elder. He currently serves on the board and executive committee of Calvin Seminary.

Mr. Sidney J. Jansma, Jr. (current alternate), owns and is president and chief executive officer of Wolverine Gas and Oil Company, Inc., in Grand Rapids, Michigan. He has served as chairman of Michigan Oil and Gas Association and as chairman of Grand Rapids Christian School Association fund drive and is president of the board of Bethany Christian Services. Mr. Jansma is a member of Plymouth Heights CRC, where he has served as deacon and elder.

B. February meeting

On February 10 the fourth annual board-faculty dinner was held. Discussed during the program was the relationship of church and seminary, a major theme in theological education these days. The focus was on how church and seminary can form more effective partnerships in training people for ministry. Participants did some background reading, discussed issues and ideas in small groups, reported their conclusions to the full group, and referred them to a committee for consideration and possible proposals.

The board authorized its chairman and the seminary president to select area retired ministers, as needed, to assist with processing candidates. The service of these pastors, all of them alumni trustees, has been effective and deeply appreciated over the past several years.

The board's secretary prepared and mailed a report of the February meeting to the clerks of all classes and congregations as a direct way of informing the churches of the board's actions on their behalf. Included was a report on each congregation's ministry-share and additional-gift giving to the seminary for calendar 1994.

C. *Representation at synod*

The board asks that its chairman, Dr. Lyle Bierma, and its secretary, Mr. Elmer Walcott, represent it at synod and be given privilege of the floor when seminary matters are presented.

III. Faculty and staff

Six faculty leaves were granted for a variety of projects. A number of part-time appointments were approved, as were the following seven reappointments of faculty members, which are recommended for synod's approval (*italics indicate a change in rank*):

Professor Carl J. Bosma, Associate Professor of Old Testament for two years (1995-1997)

Professor Ronald J. Feenstra, *Professor* of Systematic and Philosophical Theology for two years (1995-1997)

Professor Richard C. Gamble, Director of the H. Henry Meeter Center and Professor of Historical Theology for two years (1995-1997)

Professor Arie C. Leder, Associate Professor of Old Testament for two years (1995-1997)

Professor Richard A. Muller, Professor of Historical Theology with permanent tenure

Professor Craig Van Gelder, *Professor* of Domestic Missiology for two years (1995-1997)

Professor Jeffrey A.D. Weima, *Associate Professor* of New Testament for two years (1995-1997)

Two new appointments were made which need ratification by synod, one of which requires a synodical interview. Curriculum vitae materials of both appointees are appended to this report.

Dr. Gary J. Bekker, Academic Dean and Associate Professor of Church Education and Missiology for two years (1995-1997), academic appointment contingent on administrative appointment. A synodical interview is required.

Mr. Michael J. Williams, Lecturer in Old Testament for two years (1995-1997)

One staff appointment needs synodical ratification.

Dr. Richard J. Eppinga, Assistant to the President for Advancement with indefinite (continuing) tenure

IV. Academic policies and programs

A. *New courses and requirements*

Eight new courses for seminary programs were approved. A major entrance requirement, a modern foreign language, was dropped after considerable discussion, particularly on the faculty level. However, the faculty still strongly encourages two years of a modern foreign language for entering students. This requirement for the Master's of Divinity (M.Div.) and the Master's of Theological Studies (M.T.S.) programs was increasingly burdensome, particularly for second-career students. It also was out of step with the standards at virtually all other seminaries. When this issue reached the board, the board adopted a resolution asking the faculty to consider whether a Bachelor of Arts degree should not be considered sufficient for entrance into the seminary. The faculty was given a year to reflect on this matter and to respond to the board.

B. CEACA

The standing Committee for Educational Assistance to Churches Abroad (CEACA) is presenting a series of recommendations to synod. The seminary, along with Christian Reformed World Missions, has had a hand in formulating these proposals, has reviewed them, and concurs with them. The seminary board has reviewed them and recommends their approval.

C. *Extension program for Korean pastors*

The seminary appointed Rev. John Taek Kim as an adjunct professor in missiology for one year (half time) for the purpose of initiating an extension and continuing-education program for Korean pastors. If the program is successful and is financially supported by Korean churches, it will be continued.

D. *Training program for evangelists and church planters*

In November the seminary sent a representative to a meeting in southern California called for the purpose of planning a training program for evangelists and church planters. The meeting was initiated by local pastors with the cooperation of Home Missions. Since the intent is to provide a form of pastoral leadership for emerging churches, the seminary is vitally interested in this initiative but also has a number of questions about its role in the endeavor. The seminary faculty and board both approved sending an invitation to Home Missions, World Missions, and the group in southern California to meet with the seminary's educational-policy committee for the purpose of defining "a possible certificate program" for this endeavor. This initiative is in line with mandates given the seminary in the 1980s concerning ethnic-minority education.

V. General institutional matters

A. *The 1994-1995 operating budget*

The trustees are deeply concerned about the annual operating budget. While many congregations faithfully contribute their ministry-share gifts, there are a number of others that give little or nothing. The board spent considerable time discussing this problem. Each trustee will again receive a report on the churches in his or her district and is expected to contact those whose giving does not conform to the denominational commitment. Each church also received a report on its giving to the seminary mailed with a report of our February meeting. We note that erratic giving is a significant problem that makes it impossible to build reliable budgets. The board has conveyed this concern to the Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church in North America and asked that it take steps to improve the situation. It asks the same of synod. Meanwhile, it conveys its deep gratitude to those churches and classes that are exemplary in their faithful giving to the seminary.

B. *The 1996 ministry-share request*

Synod approved a ministry-share budget of \$1,980,800 for 1995. The ministry-share budget for 1996 recommended by the Ministries Coordinating Council and the synodical Board of Trustees is \$2,040,200, or a 3 percent increase. The seminary board recommends approval of this request.

C. *Special offerings*

Each year of late synod has approved the seminary as a cause for special offerings to help defray general operating expenses and to fund the seminary Revolving Loan Fund for student assistance. These projects are again recommended for approval; full descriptions will appear in the financial supplement prepared for synod.

D. *Calling policy*

After careful consideration of problems that have developed in recent years with respect to churches calling prospective candidates, the board formulated the following policy, which it recommends to synod for adoption:

1. Churches shall not decide to call candidates until after synod has approved them for candidacy. This policy does not prevent churches or CRC agencies from interviewing prospective candidates or candidates from indicating a preference for a designated area of ministry (world or home missions, chaplaincy, congregational ministry, staff ministry, etc.).
2. Churches and CRC agencies shall not issue a letter of call to a candidate before the synodically approved date.

VI. **Recommendations**

A. That Dr. Lyle Bierma, chairman, and Mr. Elmer Walcott, secretary, be given privilege of the floor when seminary matters are presented.

B. That synod elect one person from each of the pairs of nominations to a three-year term as trustee, with the understanding that the other person will serve as the alternate trustee (see II, A).

C. That the following faculty reappointments be approved:

Professor Carl J. Bosma, Associate Professor of Old Testament for two years (1995-1997)

Professor Ronald J. Feenstra, *Professor of Systematic and Philosophical Theology* for two years (1995-1997)

Professor Richard C. Gamble, Director of the H. Henry Meeter Center and Professor of Historical Theology for two years (1995-1997)

Professor Arie C. Leder, Associate Professor of Old Testament for two years (1995-1997)

Professor Richard A. Muller, Professor of Historical Theology with permanent tenure

Professor Craig Van Gelder, *Professor of Domestic Missiology* for two years (1995-1997)

Professor Jeffrey A.D. Weima, *Associate Professor of New Testament* for two years (1995-1997)

D. That the following new faculty appointments be approved:

Dr. Gary J. Bekker, Academic Dean and Associate Professor of Church Education and Missiology for two years (1995-1997). Academic appointment contingent on administrative appointment. Interview required.

Mr. Michael J. Williams, Lecturer in Old Testament for two years (1995-1997)

- E. That the following staff reappointment be approved:
 Dr. Richard J. Eppinga, Assistant to the President for Advancement with indefinite (continuing) tenure
- F. That the recommendations of CEACA contained in its report be approved.
- G. That synod adopt the policy for calling candidates (see V, D, 1 and 2).

Calvin Theological Seminary
 Elmer Walcott, secretary

APPENDIX A

Gary J. Bekker
 6 Scenna Road
 Beverly, Massachusetts 01915
 (508) 922-6795

Professional Experience

- 11/77 - 8/84 Seminary teacher and administrator, Christian Reformed Seminary and Bible College of the Philippines, Bacolod City, Philippines
- 2/85 - 8/85 Research assistant at Michigan State University for Dr. David Cohen. Wrote research memos for a project in adult education about the history, finance, and demographics of adult education in the U.S. and a final memo reflecting on research in adult education
- 7/85 - 8/86 Quarter-time service with Covenant CRC, Lansing, MI, extending church's ministry to Southeast Asian Refugees
- 9/86- Associate Professor of Missions, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary; since August 1993 Associate Professor of Missiology and Christian Education and
- 9/88 - Director of the Overseas Missions Practicum
- 9/89 - 12/93 Director of Research in the Ockenga Institute
- 9/89 - 12/93 Coordinator of the Pilot Immersion Project for the Globalization of Theological Education
- 1-8/91 Interim Director of the Ockenga Institute
- 1-6/92 Interim Director of the Ockenga Institute
- 1/94- Pastor, Hope Church, Framingham, MA (Christian Reformed Church in North America)

Education

Trinity Christian College, A.B., 1973 (major: history; minors: philosophy and Greek)

Calvin Theological Seminary, B.D., 1977 (upgraded to M.Div., 1981)

Michigan State University, Ph.D., 1991

Department: Adult and Continuing Education

Major: Curriculum Research

Cognate: Educational Anthropology

Dissertation: "American Hosts' Perspectives on Their Relationships with Southeast Asian Refugees in Urban Settings - A Fieldwork Study"

Church Information

Ordained minister of the Christian Reformed Church: Hope Christian Reformed Church, Framingham, MA, calling church
Member and pastor of Hope Christian Reformed Church, Framingham, MA (served a three-year term as elder)
Member of Classis Atlantic Northeast Home Missions Committee (1989 -).

Awards and Recognitions

1977 American Bible Society Award, Calvin Theological Seminary
1984 Centennial Missions Scholarship, Christian Reformed Church
1985 William and Sarah E. Hinman Graduate Fellowship, Michigan State University
1986 Elected to membership in the honor society of Phi Kappa Phi
1994 *Two Thousand Notable American Men* (2nd ed.)

Professional Associations

American Society of Church History
American Anthropological Association General Anthropology Division and Council on Anthropology and Education
American Society of Missiology
Association of Professors of Mission
Catholic Missions Association
Evangelical Missiological Society
Society for Intercultural Training, Education, and Research

APPENDIX B

Michael James Williams
1902 Rickert Road
Perkasie, PA 18944
(215) 453-1288

Education

University of Pennsylvania, September 1988 - present: Ph.D. program in Biblical Studies. Dissertation in progress: "Deception in Genesis." Adviser: J. Tigay.
Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia, September 1987 - June 1988: Ph.D. program in Hermeneutics and Biblical Interpretation. Adviser: T. Longman III.
Westminster Theological Seminary, September 1985 - June 1987: M.A. in Religion, G.P.A. 3.98.
Columbia Bible College, August 1982 - June 1985: B.A., summa cum laude.

Teaching Experience

Lecturer: Westminster Theological Seminary, Fall 1994, Jeremiah.
Lecturer: Westminster Theological Seminary, Spring 1994, Jeremiah.
Lecturer: University of Pennsylvania, Fall 1992 - Summer 1993, Elementary Biblical Hebrew.

Teaching Assistant: Westminster Theological Seminary, Fall 1986 - Summer 1987,
Introduction to the Old Testament.

Languages

Ancient Near Eastern: Biblical Hebrew (and related Northwest Semitic dialects),
Aramaic, Akkadian, Ugaritic, Sumerian, and Greek.
Modern European Languages: German (reading) and French (reading).
Modern Semitic: Hebrew (reading) and Arabic.

Awards and Fellowships

Educational Fellowship, University of Pennsylvania, Fall 1994 - Summer 1995.
Dean's Scholar, School of Arts and Sciences, Department of Asian and Middle
Eastern Studies, University of Pennsylvania, 1994.
University Dissertation Fellowship, Fall 1993 - Summer 1994.
Pepper Fellowship, Fall 1991 - Summer 1992.
Foreign Language Area Studies Fellowship, Fall 1990 - Summer 1991.
Foreign Language Area Studies Fellowship, Fall 1989 - Summer 1990.
Foreign Language Area Studies Fellowship, Fall 1988 - Summer 1989.

Memberships

American Schools of Oriental Research
Evangelical Theological Society
Society of Biblical Literature

I. Introduction

During the past year CRC Publications has again devoted its energies to accomplishing its mission as adopted by the board in 1990:

To provide, efficiently and effectively, publications and other resources to assist the Christian church in helping people (a) commit their lives to Jesus Christ, and (b) to show the lordship of Christ in their daily living and in their witness and ministry to the world.

A number of significant developments took place within our agency during this past year. Among them are the following:

- Release of the new LiFE curriculum, followed by brisk sales and positive reactions.
- Publication of the revamped *Banner*; many new subscribers initially; more recently, a decline in subscribers.
- Merging with Home Missions' publishing efforts.
- Realignment of Publications' Services Department with central denominational services.
- Significant funding challenges in World Literature Ministries.

In addition to these key developments, this report will cover a number of other items, many of them related to new publishing initiatives, such as providing increased resources for small groups (including small groups focused on evangelism), for spiritual formation, and for conveying the Reformed faith to the former Soviet Union.

All these changes and new developments continue to tax the flexibility and talents of the staff. Fortunately, CRC Publications is blessed with staff members who respond well to these types of challenges. Both staff and board continue to be stimulated and encouraged by the potential impact a publishing ministry such as CRC Publications can have in helping people come to know Jesus Christ and grow in the faith, both in North America and around the world.

II. Board organization, membership, and governance matters**A. Organization**

CRC Publications is currently governed by a board of forty-nine delegates, one delegate nominated by each of the forty-six classes and three (at-large) delegates elected by synod. The board ordinarily meets annually in February.

Between board meetings a fifteen-member executive committee (elected annually by the board) normally meets three times to supervise the ongoing work of the agency. Each member of the executive committee serves on one of three subcommittees: administrative, education, and periodicals.

B. Officers

The officers of the CRC Publications Board through August 1995 are as follows:

Ms. Winnie Klop, president
Rev. Robert De Moor, vicar
Dr. Lorna Van Gilst, secretary
Mr. James Meyer, treasurer

C. At-large board members

The first term of at-large board member Mr. Cecil Jenkins will be completed in August 1995. According to synodical guidelines, two nominees are being submitted for this position, which should be filled by someone with a background in finance.

Cecil Jenkins (incumbent) is currently employed at ALCOA Wheel Product International as the senior financial analyst to the controller. He attended Franklin University in Columbus, Ohio, and received a bachelor of science/business administration degree in accounting. Currently, he is a CPA candidate. Mr. Jenkins attends East Side CRC, Cleveland, Ohio, with his wife, Dr. LeVelle Bristow Jenkins, and son Cecil II. His activities at East Side CRC include being church treasurer and serving as an administrative deacon and on the finance committee of the church. He also has worked with the church youth group. His professional and community activities include being a member of the National Association of Black Accountants, working with Grandville Academy in an inner-city Junior Achievement program, and serving on an executive committee of the Ohio Society of CPAs.

Paul Soper is currently employed as the accounting manager at St. Mary's Health Services, Grand Rapids, Michigan. He attended Calvin College, where he completed a bachelor of science degree in accounting. He is also a certified public accountant. Mr. Soper and his wife, Susan, attend Eastern Avenue CRC. His activities at Eastern Avenue include leading the Nehemiah Club (a youth club for high-school-age community boys) and teaching catechism. He presently serves as deacon. He is a past board member of the Institute of Management Accountants and is a member of the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants.

D. Long-range planning

The CRC Publications Board discussed in depth the annual edition of CRC Publications' long-range plan, developed by staff. The board offered suggestions to the staff in the various areas of CRC Publications' ministry. The board then approved the plan in concept.

E. The new denominational-agency structure

During the past year a number of previously developed recommendations with regard to centralization of support services for several agencies were implemented. These changes especially affected CRC Publications, since a number of the services that became centralized were previously managed by Publications. Those services that have the most direct bearing on CRC Publications' ministry were the printing plant and the art and design services. As of July 1, 1994, these services were centralized as CRC Product Services, which reports to the director of finance and administration for the denomination.

Thus far, except for a negative impact on finances, this change has not significantly affected CRC Publications' work. The new arrangement promises ongoing responsive service from this centralized group.

A decision was also made that the technical editing functions and the customer-service functions for all the denominational agencies will normally be performed by CRC Publications.

F. Relationships with other denominational agencies

In addition to participating in various activities associated with the new agency structure, CRC Publications continued in other ways to work on improving relationships with other agencies. The most significant development in this regard during the past year was the friendly merger with Home Missions' publishing efforts. Effective January 1, 1995, CRC Publications assumed responsibility for publishing all Church Development Resources (CDR) products as a service to Home Missions. This decision involved, among other adjustments, some staff reassignments and the purchase of CDR inventory. The decision was based on the perception that the denomination would be better served in terms of expertise and efficiency if it combined its publishing efforts in one agency.

CRC Publications has also been working with other agencies to develop a strategy for ministry to the former Soviet Union. Additionally, CRC Publications' World Literature Ministries Committee (WLMC) is involved in inter-agency coordination for ministries of literature translation and distribution. WLMC is also now publishing the materials that were formerly published by CITE (Committee for International Theological Education).

Finally, several members of the CRC Publications staff are participating in a series of consultations with other agencies on the topic "A Reformed View of the Church's Mission in the Contemporary Context."

G. Recycling

At its 1990 meeting, the CRC Publications Board adopted a report of the Task Force on CRC Publications and the Environment. That report contained several goals regarding CRC Publications' use of recycled paper. Because of recent reductions in the price difference between recycled and nonrecycled paper, Publications is now essentially achieving the goals of that report. Both *The Banner* and the new LiFE curriculum are printed on recycled paper.

H. Ethnic-minority and disability concerns

Several years ago the board adopted personnel policies and goals related to ethnic-minority persons and persons with disabilities. Substantial progress has been made since that time. However, since most of that progress had been in the Services Department, ground was lost during this past year when the Services Department was taken out of CRC Publications. Currently 5 percent of CRC Publications' employees and 6 percent of its board members are ethnic-minority persons.

I. Total Quality Management

During the past several years, CRC Publications has begun implementing the management concepts commonly referred to as Total Quality Management (TQM). Attention has focused on a number of projects, one of which was an organization-wide targeting of the *Reformed Worship* periodical. In that project over \$6,000 in annual cost savings was effected.

Some of the key concepts embodied in TQM include the following: total focus on serving the customer (both internal and external), focus on improving work processes, empowerment of employees, and the use of measurement to identify and solve problems.

Some of the current foci of TQM are customer service, product planning, *Banner* processes, and inventory control.

J. Salary disclosure

CRC Publications, in accordance with action taken by synod, submits the annual compensation data:

Job level	Number of positions	Compensation quartile (includes housing allowance)
8	1	3 (100-109%)
6	1	2 (82-91%)
5	1	4 (109-118%)
5	1	2 (82-91%)
4	1	2 (91-100%)

III. CRC Publications' ministry

A. The Banner

As of this writing, the revamped *Banner* has been published for just over a year. Many changes were made in *The Banner* in an attempt to attract more subscribers in their thirties and forties without sacrificing appeal to all segments of the denomination. Among these changes were new graphic design, more direct focus on family and practical-living issues, a long feature article in each issue, and repositioning "Voices" to the back of the magazine. Anecdotal reactions to these changes were almost uniformly positive. In addition, over 2,500 subscribers were added to the subscriber base. However, later in the year these gains were lost, and circulation, as of this writing, is just over 35,000 (compared to 36,000 last year at this time).

Staff is doing several things to address this decline:

- Forming a Task Force on the Future of *The Banner*. This task force will address a variety of strategic issues related to *The Banner*, such as enhancement of the product, spin-off publications, sending *The Banner* to every home, etc.
- Developing a sustaining-membership program to generate additional revenue from the subscriber list.
- Continuing to promote *The Banner* through direct mailings, leadership promotions, new child promotions, etc.
- Conducting a survey of subscribers, of those who recently tried *The Banner* and did not subscribe, and of those long-time subscribers who recently failed to renew, in the hope that data from this research will suggest changes that will again increase *The Banner* subscriber base.

It is questionable, however, whether the number of *Banner* readers can be expected to increase significantly. The primary reasons for this decline in subscribers are most likely a decreased interest in denominational matters, a continuing decline in interest in reading, and denominational division and schism.

Some of *The Banner's* content that readers particularly reacted to during the past year included the following:

- The synod issue, particularly the women-in-office decision.
- The Young Calvinist Federation issue.
- The editorial on inerrancy.
- The news article about the AWARE organization.

Editorially, the *Banner* staff plans to include more articles about biblical and theological issues, partly in response to some expressed concerns that *The Banner* should not ignore the more academically oriented readers who tend to be leaders in the CRC. To get them on board, staff probably needs to beef up the biblical/theological content. Staff does walk a tightrope here, however, given the general disinclination on the part of most CRC members to read anything but escapist or high-personal-interest materials.

The *Banner* news network continues to serve *The Banner* well. These stringers play a critical function in meeting *The Banner's* goal of keeping the denomination informed about what's happening in the churches. Also, editor Rev. John Suk has made a number of trips throughout the denomination this past year to make sure that he is exposed to the various elements in the denomination.

The *Banner* staff would appreciate any input from synodical delegates regarding additional changes that might help *The Banner* achieve more effectively its mandate to

- Inform readers about what is happening in the CRC, as well as the church at large.
- Provide articles which edify and encourage Christian living.
- Stimulate critical thinking about issues related to the Christian faith and the culture of which Christians and the Christian Reformed Church are a part.

B. Voice of the Reformed

For the past several years synod has helped fund *Voice of the Reformed*, a periodical published by the Korean CRC community through a ministry-share allocation to CRC Publications. Several significant developments occurred this past year in connection with this periodical.

During the summer of 1994, the editor of the periodical, Rev. John Taek Kim, resigned because he was planning to move to Grand Rapids to work with Calvin Seminary and the CRC. At the Korean Council's suggestion, the CRC Publications executive committee (CRC Publications was serving as publisher for an interim year) appointed Rev. James Hyun as interim editor until a more permanent editor could be named in January 1995. By early January a new editor had not yet been named; however, Hyun resigned his position. The two other members of the current three-member editorial team will be trying to publish this magazine until a permanent editor can be named. It is hoped that the Korean Council will name a permanent editor in April of this year.

Owing to all these changes in leadership, publication of this periodical has been a bit sporadic during the past year. Several combined monthly issues were published. It is possible and certainly desirable that before synod meets a firm direction for the future leadership of this periodical will be established.

In line with the original proposal to synod when the ministry-share request was first approved for *Voice of the Reformed*, CRC Publications is reducing the amount of financial support for this periodical so that it will be completely phased out of Publications' budget after seven years.

C. Education, Worship, and Evangelism Department (EWE)

As a result of the merger with Home Missions' publishing efforts, the former Education Department has been renamed to more clearly reflect its activities. The new Education, Worship and Evangelism (EWE) Department includes the

usual designations for three of the major committees found in most congregations, letting the churches know that this department is charged with providing materials to help those ministries. The work of this department is carried on through five offices:

1. Curriculum Office

This office deals with the task assigned by synod when the Education Department was first formed (around 1970): to provide church-school materials that would combine the strengths of the CRC catechetical tradition with those of the Sunday-school tradition. This mandate still guides the efforts of this office. Staff in the Curriculum Office will be working on some fifty-five projects between now and the summer of 1996.

a. Materials for younger students

The LIFE curriculum was released in the summer of 1994. The response has been heartwarming to the board and to the editors who worked long and hard on this immense project. The sales have almost met budgeted goals. Furthermore, the reactions of the churches to this curriculum have been very positive. Teachers seem to be highly appreciative of the faith-nurture-modeling approach at the heart of this curriculum.

Some of the concerns expressed about the new curriculum were anticipated (e.g., lack of take-home papers for third and fourth graders, difficulty of the fifth- and sixth-grade materials, the advisability of "wondering questions"). These issues will be studied in detail when staff analyzes comprehensive evaluations; however, for the most part, only a small number of churches seem concerned by these issues.

The BIBLE WAY curriculum is still being offered. In fact, enthusiastic letters occasionally still arrive from churches that have just discovered BIBLE WAY.

During the past year a curriculum for two- and three-year-olds was developed. Though the board approved these plans, staff decided it would be wise to conduct some additional research before moving ahead—to make sure the materials planned would be welcomed and used in the churches.

b. Materials for junior high students

Nothing new was produced this year for junior high students.

However, an author has been assigned to work on a new *Crossroads* course on relationships. Some new materials to help children of this age prepare for making profession of faith will be developed after synod deals with the new reports on children at the Lord's Supper.

c. Materials for senior high students

- 1) *Bible Landmarks*: The articles in the student papers of this course are presently being updated. Additionally, a course called *Living the Lord's Prayer*, which provides the basis for a practical, living-out experience of this section of the Heidelberg Catechism, is under development.
- 2) *Prime Time* series: Four six-session courses were produced in this Bible-study series during the past year. Four more are anticipated during the next year.

- 3) *Life Wise* series: This is the new series of short, four-session courses dealing with practical issues (e.g., stewardship, sex, violence, TV). Two courses have been completed; three more are currently being written.

Still on the horizon are plans to redo *Reasons*, our apologetics series for this age level, and plans for a new course on world religions. *Voices* will most likely not be reprinted; the *Prime Time* series will replace it.

d. For adults

- 1) *Issues in Christian Living* series: Following synodical mandates, the Education Department produced two six-session courses this past year that fit into this series: *Too Close for Comfort—Understanding and Responding to the Reality of Abuse* and *Earth-Wise—A Biblical Response to Environmental Issues*. Fulfillment of the synodical mandate to develop materials about gambling has been stalled by delays on the part of the author.
- 2) Three other series courses are in process: one on passing on family values, another on divorce, and another on the sandwich generation.
- 3) The adult Bible curriculum has several components to it:
 - a) *How to Read the Bible* series: Rev. Andrew Kuyvenhoven's video overview of the Bible, called *Windows on the Word*, will appear next fall as the first publication in this series.
 - b) *Fresh Look* series: This series consists of products that provide in-depth Bible studies for adults—usually from a unique perspective. Two courses (on I Timothy and Mark) are currently in process.
 - c) *Revelation* series: This series consists of basic but substantial Bible studies. A number of new products have been completed, and several more are in development.
- 4) Spiritual-formation materials: These materials are an exciting new type of adult resource. They will include personal-devotion materials, small-group study materials, and training materials for church leaders. An introductory booklet to promote this entire category, entitled *Reformed Spirituality—It's Not New Age*, will be out by the time synod meets.

Three of the personal-devotion materials will also be out by the time synod meets. These are basically "write your own devotionals" materials.

For small-group use, several six-session courses are in process, including a study of the psalms of ascent, a study of public worship, and a study of prayer.

By the spring of 1996, a guide for training elders and other spiritual leaders should be available.

- 5) *Acts 2* series: This product is also intended for small groups. It will coincide with small-group training offered by church-education consultants this year. The series is made up of seven sessions; it consists of a text for students with notes in the margin for the leader.
 - 6) A significant course on crisis intervention—*When Hurts Go Deep*—written by Rev. Thomas L. Haan, will also be available this summer.
- e. Materials for people with mental impairments

Year 4 of the *Friendship Series*, called *Living God's Way*, has been published. EWE is dedicated to producing three five-session courses each

year for this series. Funding for these new courses is provided by the Friendship Foundation.

f. Materials for people with visual impairments

Braille versions of our curriculum materials are being developed in conjunction with Pathways International. Initial segments of the LiFE curriculum are also being prepared in braille.

g. Materials for minority groups

The training materials *When Leaders Serve* were published this past year. A simplified version of the Church Order is in process.

2. Training and Consultancies Office

a. Church-education consultants (CECs)

The twenty-four CECs conducted a record number (180) of training workshops this past fall because of the release of the LiFE curriculum. These were very well received by the churches.

b. Children and Worship Program

This program remains popular for many CR churches. Trainers are much in demand.

c. Small-group support

On the urging of a number of church people, CRC Publications decided to investigate the viability and advisability of offering training on small-group ministry. After checking out many of the programs and materials available, staff was convinced that, while it might not add anything new, it could package some training that would be readily accepted in CR churches. Accordingly, the staff is preparing, in cooperation with Home Missions, a workshop for CECs this summer.

3. General Publishing Office (GPO)

The need for this office came about in the 1970s because of several mandates from synod to publish certain reports written by synodical committees. The work of this office has expanded greatly since that time. Forty-five books are scheduled to come through the General Publications Office between now and the summer of 1996.

a. Responses to synodical mandates

Most of the synodical mandates received over the past few years have focused on materials that are appropriate for short adult-education courses and have therefore been handled by the Curriculum Office. One mandate that did not fit this category was a request for materials to aid churches in developing ministries for and with singles. This past year we published *Single Focus—Ministry with Adult Singles* in response to that request.

b. Work for other agencies

Projects that are initiated, and often funded, by other agencies also come to this office. In 1994 the General Publishing Office produced a second edition of *FirstFruits* for the Barnabas organization. It has also been working on the 1995 edition of the *Manual of Christian Reformed Church Government*.

c. Devotionals

The GPO is continuing to produce devotionals for a variety of age groups. Recently several products for younger children have been produced as well as a number of books for youth and adults. The most popular adult publication was *Twilight*, by former *Banner* editor Andrew Kuyvenhoven.

d. Open Door Ministries

Open Door Books is the line of books designed for those who are learning to read. There are three categories of products in this line: Life Stories, Bible Studies, and Faith Questions. The board recently approved a new cassette-based program called *How to Read the Bible*. During the past year the GPO also made available to the churches a packet of information on how to start a literacy program. CRC Publications is cooperating with CRWRC in promoting this program.

e. *Seeker* series

This new series of booklets is designed for use with non-Christian neighbors and friends. *The Jesus Alternative*, the first of this series, is now available.

4. Music and Liturgy Office

This office originated from a request by the *Psalter Hymnal* Revision Committee that CRC Publications be given the responsibility of publishing the new hymnal. Later the work of the CRC Worship Committee (formerly the Liturgical Committee) was transferred to CRC Publications and thus to this office.

a. *Reformed Worship*

This past year the Music and Liturgy Office completed the eighth year of publishing this quarterly magazine. This product was the focus of an agency-wide Total Quality Management project (see Section II, I) during the past year. With issue thirty-five, staff is revamping the journal's content and design. Subscriptions remain at about 3,500; a major promotional effort took place this spring to try to increase that number.

b. *Songs for LiFE*

This songbook, designed to accompany the LiFE curriculum as well as to serve as a "stand alone" item, became available late last year. A leader's guide and cassette tapes will soon also be available.

c. *Psalter Hymnal*-related products

Disks containing the worship documents found in the back of the *Psalter Hymnal* are now available. Completion of the long-awaited *Psalter Hymnal Handbook* is scheduled for around the end of this year. The CRC Worship Committee has urged staff to think about developing a new *Psalter Hymnal Supplement*, which would focus on tunes for the psalms in a variety of musical styles.

d. Other projects

Another Conference on Liturgy and Music (COLAM) is scheduled for the week of July 17, 1995. The worship-planning manual *Lift Up Your Hearts* was released this past spring.

e. The CRC Worship Committee

The current (1995/1996) members of this committee are as follows: Dr. Wayne Brouwer, Rev. LeRoy Christoffels, Dr. Thomas Dykstra, Ms. Fern E. Pruiksma, Rev. Jack Reiffer, Ms. Geri Schelhaas, Ms. Ruth Ann Schuringa, Rev. Peter Slofstra, and Mr. John Witvliet.

Synod 1994 requested the CRC Worship Committee to

study, in consultation with others, the questions raised [in last year's Worship Committee report] regarding issues of worship and to prepare a report for synodical consideration that answers those questions according to the principles of Reformed worship, Scripture, and Reformed confessions, and the 1968 "Liturgical Report."

(Acts of Synod 1994, p. 527)

The committee has mapped out a three-year study for responding to this mandate. Topics to be studied include the uses of technology, participation in worship, relationship of worship to evangelism, cultural diversity, modes of preaching, and the roles of drama, dance, and the visual arts. The following persons have been appointed as members of the study committee: Dr. Wayne Brouwer, Mr. John Witvliet, Dr. David Diephouse, Rev. Leonard Vander Zee, and Rev. Duane Kelderman. Two additional persons will be appointed to this committee in the near future. It is anticipated that this report will be presented to Synod 1997.

Synod 1994 also asked the CRC Worship Committee to "provide gender-sensitive language in the Belgic Confession and Canons of Dordt." Drafts of this work have been completed. However, the committee decided to hold this matter in abeyance for another year in order to review more carefully the proposed changes and some accompanying notes.

5. Church Development Resources (CDR) Office

This newest office grew out of a request from Home Missions this past summer that CRC Publications take over the publishing function for CDR products. These resources are intended to support the evangelism programs developed by Home Missions. Since the knowledge of these programs and of the evangelism strategies they are intended to implement is the ministry focus of Home Missions, that agency will retain final control of the content of these resources. CRC Publications will handle all other aspects of publishing them.

a. *Discover Your Bible* series

This series is the primary support for the Coffee Break program. The series currently includes some thirty-four study and leader guides. Five more titles will be published by June 1996. A new series of *Core Values* booklets, intended to aid program leaders in their work, is also being developed.

b. *Discover Life* series

This series supports the Men's Life program. These materials, though designed for men, also work well with mixed, single, or women's groups. Sixteen products are currently available; four more are planned for the next eighteen months.

c. Other products

About twenty-five CDR products are scheduled for completion during the next two years. CDR already lists the following series:

- 1) *Inspirit* series: resources to support a new evangelistic strategy featuring entry-level Bible study for those who are totally unchurched and non-Christian. The resources are intended for small-group use in the workplace.
- 2) *Healthy Church* series: booklets designed to provide guidance regarding principles for church life. A new booklet planned for next year is entitled *Structured for Ministry*.
- 3) *Effective Ministry* series: new program designed to be especially practical. For 1995, the booklet *Coordinating Your Church's Prayer Ministry* is planned.
- 4) A substantial revision of *Discover Your Gifts*.
- 5) *Developing Dynamic Worship*: a guide to new forms of worship.
- 6) *Disciple Making: 10-Step Guide for Churches*.

6. TRAVARCA

This is the designation for our joint effort with the RCA to provide a video/film library. It now serves 166 CRC congregations.

D. World Literature Ministries

1. Purpose and membership

The World Literature Committee (WLC) coordinates the efforts of the various CRC agencies in publishing and distributing biblical Christian literature in seven major languages. This literature introduces its readers to and nurtures them in a Reformed vision of faith and life. The committee also supervises the work of a number of language committees assigned various tasks that assist the WLC in this ministry. Serving on the WLC are Rev. Merle Den Bleyker (secretary), Ms. Winnie Klop, Dr. Arie C. Leder (treasurer), Rev. Guillermo Serrano, Dr. Harvey Smit (chair), Ms. Susan Van Lopik, Rev. Herman Van Niejenhuis, and Dr. Alvin Vander Griend (vice chair).

2. Work of the committee and staff

Much of the work of this ministry is done by volunteers who serve on the five language committees. In addition, the WLC as a whole serves as a language committee for projects in the Russian and Korean languages. The committee is served by the World Literature Ministries staff (now a department of CRC Publications), who spend much of their time in project management and in establishing and maintaining contacts with overseas publishers.

3. Language-committee overview

- a. Arabic literature: All four volumes of Herman Bavinck's *Our Reasonable Faith* have now been published by Middle East Publications of Cairo, Egypt. This represents the end of a twelve-year effort. The Arabic Literature Committee plans to release a popular version of John Calvin's *Golden Booklet of True Christian Life* later this year.
- b. Chinese literature: The Chinese Literature Committee (CLC) copublishes its projects with Tien Dao and Alliance Press of Hong Kong. Six titles in CRC Publications' *Revelation* series Bible studies are now available in the Chinese language. Four additional titles will be released by summer.

The CLC believes it important to plan for the eventual, perhaps imminent, opening of the People's Republic of China to the proclamation of the gospel. Many thousands (millions?) of pieces of Christian literature will be needed to convey a biblical, Reformed view of faith and life to meet the need for transforming that nation. A contingency plan has been developed for such an eventuality.

- c. French literature: Through a partnership with James Moore, director of Editions la Chairiere of Quebec, Canada, the committee has set a goal of publishing six titles each year.
- d. Hausa literature: Poor economic conditions, low literacy, an unstable government, and a weak infrastructure for distribution of Christian literature have been major obstacles to successful Christian-literature ministry in Nigeria. Accordingly, this committee's work has been discontinued, effective September 1994.
- e. Korean literature: Seven full courses in the *Discover Your Bible* (Coffee Break) series have now been published. Word of Life Press in Seoul, Korea, publishes Asian editions of these products; CRC Publications is the publisher for the North American edition.
- f. Russian literature: Through Christian Reformed World Missions, the CRC is moving ahead with plans to establish a ministry center in Russia. World Literature Ministries plans to use the services of this center to monitor the work of its projects in Russia. Current projects include the following: *Basic Ideas of Calvinism*, *The Golden Booklet of True Christian Life*, *Our Reasonable Faith*, and *Institutes of the Christian Religion*.
- g. Spanish literature: The committee has established the following publishing goals for fiscal 1996:
 - One commentary.
 - Two titles from a general category (pastoral, missions, apologetics, pedagogy, history).
 - Four Christian-education projects (including the *Friendship* materials).
 - Two Bible studies.

4. Finances

Depressed economic conditions in most of the nations where World Literature Ministries publishes and distributes literature continue to limit sales and hinder its ability to recover costs. In many of these countries books are considered an unaffordable luxury.

Because of this problem and the vastly increased needs and potential for ministry in countries such as Russia and China, a half-time staff person was added to this department during the past year so that director Mr. John De Jager can concentrate on fund-raising efforts for this ministry. In addition, the ministry-share request is being raised.

E. Marketing Department

The functions performed by the Marketing Department include customer service, promotion, public relations and communications, sale of *Banner* ads and subscriptions, market research and analysis, and sales forecasting. The executive director has been serving as marketing director for the past one and one-half years.

A significant number of the activities of this department during the past year or so have been devoted to promoting the revamped *Banner* and the new LiFE curriculum. As mentioned earlier, the LiFE curriculum is being well received by the churches. About two-thirds of the CRC churches have purchased it. Sales of our core curriculum are virtually reaching the Marketing Department's goal of a 14 percent increase over last year. Intensive efforts are being undertaken this spring to promote the new curriculum to other denominations.

As can be seen from the chart below, over one-half of CRC Publications' accounts and sales are to non-CRC churches. This fact speaks highly of the quality of the products produced by the Christian Reformed Church.

Education, Worship, and Evangelism Department Sales by Denomination: 1993-1994

Denomination	Active Customers	%	Sales	%
CRC	887	27%	\$1,137,704	40%
Other	2,053	62%	\$1,334,900	47%
Bookstores/schools/distributors	355	11%	\$1,665,011	23%
TOTAL:	3,295	100%	\$4,137,615	

While the LiFE curriculum sales have been positive, total sales of most of our other products (especially youth and adult products) have declined in recent years. The decline is likely caused by a variety of factors:

- The slowdown in publishing other new materials due to the focus on the LiFE curriculum.
- The increasing tendency of the churches to "shop around" for resources.

As can be seen in the report of the EWE Department earlier, a great number of new products are planned for completion during the next few years. Also, more attention will be given in coming years to market research regarding the types of products that churches need.

For most CRC Publications' products, the primary promotional approaches are these three:

- The CRC Publications catalog (now combined with the former CDR catalog).
- Direct mail to churches announcing new products or promoting specific categories of products by way of mini catalogs.
- Advertising in *The Banner* and other periodicals.

Plans have been developed to promote the excellent products of CDR to other denominations during the coming year. A good response to these efforts is expected—especially to efforts to promote the Men's Life products to those associated with the Promise Keepers movement.

More attention will also be given to promoting World Literature Ministries' products, especially Spanish-literature products. This area has been neglected in recent years.

E. Personnel matters

The CRC Publications staff is made up of forty-two employees organized into five departments and an administrative office.

The Staff Council is a management group made up of executive director Mr. Gary Mulder and the department heads, Rev. John Suk, Periodicals Department

(*The Banner*); Dr. Harvey Smit, EWE Department; Mr. John De Jager, World Literature Ministries Department; Ms. Lana Hasper, Marketing Department; and Mr. Michael Dykema, Finance Department.

At its February meeting, the board approved the appointment of Rev. Robert De Moor to the vacant position of associate theological editor in the Education, Worship, and Evangelism Department. This appointment was approved by the Board of Trustees in March 1995. Rev. De Moor will begin serving in this new position in the summer of 1995.

The board of CRC Publications recommends to synod the reappointment of Rev. John Suk as editor in chief of *The Banner*, beginning September 1, 1995, for a four-year term or until the regulations for appointments are changed.

Ground: During his initial two-year appointment the issues of *The Banner* published under John Suk's leadership have been well received by readers. Rev. Suk has demonstrated creativity, a very good grasp of the denomination, and a strong desire to build up the faith of CRC members.

This reappointment was endorsed by the Board of Trustees at its March 1995 meeting.

G. Finance Department

1. The year in review

The CRC Publications Board remains firmly committed to the goal that CRC Publications' ministry should be, as nearly as possible, financially self-supporting. However, it recognizes the fact that there will always be projects undertaken, either because the board believes they are necessary or because synod requests them, that cannot be financially self-sufficient. This is particularly true, as mentioned previously, for World Literature Ministries. However, CRC Publications' ministry-share request for 1996 constitutes only 4 percent of its annual budget. In fact, if the decrease in purchasing power is considered as part of the calculation and even if the increase in our ministry-share request is granted, Publications' requests have *declined* over the past ten years.

During the development of the LiFE curriculum, CRC Publications' financial condition has been very tight because of the expenses associated with this development and because of staff concentration on this immense project, which limited work on other projects. Accordingly, Publications has been budgeting for—and experiencing—budget deficits for the past few years. The budgeted deficit for the current fiscal year is \$184,000. Next year's budget, however, shows \$154,000 in net revenue.

CRC Publications submits for synod's information audited financial statements for the fiscal year that ended June 30, 1994, and budgets for fiscal years 1995 and 1996. These reports have been submitted to the denominational financial coordinator for placement in the *Agenda for Synod 1995—Financial and Business Supplement*.

CRC Publications Board requests synod to allocate a denominational ministry share of \$2.55 per member (\$5.88 per family) for calendar 1996 for support of CRC Publications' ongoing ministries (\$.70—*The Banner*; \$.11—Korean periodical; \$.22—EWE Department; \$1.52—World Literature Ministries).

CRC Publications Board also requests synod to recommend CRC Publications' World Literature Ministries to the churches for one or more offerings for above-ministry-share needs in calendar year 1996.

Finally, CRC Publications Board requests synod to recommend the Friendship Ministries (United States) and Friendship Series Charities (Canada) to the churches for financial support in 1996.

IV. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to the following people when matters of CRC Publications are discussed:

For the board

Ms. Winnie Klop, president

Mr. Gary Mulder, executive director

For *The Banner*

Rev. John Suk, editor in chief

For Education, Worship, and Evangelism

Dr. Harvey Smit, editor in chief

For the Worship Committee

Dr. Emily Brink

B. That synod elect either Mr. Cecil Jenkins (incumbent) or Mr. Paul Soper as an at-large member of the CRC Publications Board for a three-year term.

C. That synod ratify the reappointment of Rev. John Suk as *Banner* editor.

CRC Publications

Gary Mulder, executive director

I. Introduction

A. Gathering God's Growing Family, *energizing vision for evangelizing*

The Christian Reformed Church is committed to reaching and gathering lost and searching people throughout North America. For good reason: "God reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation" (II Cor. 5:8). As a church we confess, "I believe that the Son of God . . . gathers, protects, and preserves for himself a community chosen for eternal life" (Heidelberg Catechism, A. 24). The CRC evangelizing movement—*Gathering God's Growing Family: Seeking the lost, discipling the found . . . all for God's glory*—flows out of what we confess and out of a real sense of urgency for our friends, neighbors, and family members who are among millions of lost, wandering, and seeking people in North America.

B. *The goals of Gathering*

Gathering God's Growing Family focuses on these four goals:

1. Prayer: To mobilize the Christian Reformed Church in concerted prayer for lost and searching people in North America.
2. Established-church development: To encourage and equip established churches to seek the lost and disciple the found.
3. New-church development: To encourage and equip churches and classes to plan and develop new churches which seek the lost and disciple the found.
4. Financial resources: To promote the *Gathering* vision and develop partnerships which provide financial resources to achieve the goals of *Gathering*.

C. *The core values of Gathering*

The *Gathering* vision and its goals are rooted in these core *Gathering* values, affirmed by Christian Reformed Home Missions in 1993:

1. We care passionately for the salvation and discipling of lost people, as God calls us to do.
 - a. Caring passionately for the lost expresses the heart of God for his world.
 - b. Seeking the lost and discipling the found are essential to being biblical and Reformed.
2. Prayer is essential to fulfilling God's mission regarding lost people.
 - a. Prayer for lost people reflects the mind of Christ.
 - b. Prayer for the transformation of churches and members into effective instruments for God's harvest reflects the desire of God for the church and the world.
 - c. Prayer for persistence in this mission reflects our dependence on the work of the Holy Spirit.
3. The local church is the primary agent for carrying out this mission from God.
 - a. God has provided a great field for harvest today in North America.

- b. God wills that new and established churches reproduce themselves.
 - c. The development of new churches is an effective way to reach people who are not reached by established churches.
 - d. The primary role of Home Missions is to serve established churches, new churches, and their ministries with vision, guidance, and support.
 - e. Classes, classical home-missions committees, and regional groupings of churches are valuable resources for vision, networking, support, and mutual accountability on the level of local ministry.
4. The increasing growth and diversity of the Christian Reformed Church are essential to the effectiveness of the mission.
 - a. A multiethnic and multiclass denomination reflects the North American harvest field in which God has called us to minister.
 - b. The Christian Reformed Church, a denomination embodying the Reformation heritage, provides biblical and confessional standards for accountability in fulfilling God's mission to grow and diversify.
 5. Wherever and whenever we, God's people, exercise vision and faith, God provides resources for his work.
 - a. Christian stewardship requires wise application of resources to enhance and increase the capacity of local congregations and their members.
 - b. Responsible Christian stewardship avoids fostering or supporting dependency, which has long-term debilitating effects.

D. Gathering (*evangelizing*) progress in 1994

By God's grace, since 1988, growth through evangelism in the CRC totaled 19,484 persons. This compares to 14,587 persons brought in through evangelism in the same period before *Gathering*. In the 1994 reporting period, 2,489 persons were added through evangelism, compared to 2,766 persons in 1993. In 1994 alone 890 people were added through evangelism in new churches.

As of September 1, 1994, total CRC membership stands at 294,179. Even though membership data for 1994 shows that the CRC added 9,165 new members, evangelism accounting for 2,489 persons, the sobering news is that, for the same period, those leaving for other denominations, deaths, reversions, and congregations withdrawing from the denomination have caused an overall decline of 6,141 persons, or 2 percent overall loss of membership.

II. Board and executive committee

A. *Composition of the board*

The Board of Home Missions is organized into two legal entities, one for Canada and one for the United States, which together are the agency of synod charged with guiding and carrying out the denominational home-missions program. The combined board has fifty members; forty-six members are chosen by their respective classes. There are four board members at large, who have expertise in real estate, architecture, finance, and resource development. Eleven board members are from Canada, and thirty-nine from the United States.

In 1994, the Board of Home Missions began meeting in May rather than in February in order to respond more quickly to proposals for new ministries and requests for assistance from congregations and classes and to better serve the church. The report of the May 1995 meeting of the board will be included in the supplementary agenda for synod.

B. Board officers

The officers of the Board of Home Missions of the United States are Rev. Bruce Ballast, president; Rev. Peter Slofstra, vice president; Rev. John Rozeboom, secretary (executive director); Rev. Dale Slings, recording secretary; Mr. Jack Heinen, treasurer (director of finance); and Mr. Leon De Lange, assistant treasurer.

The officers of the Christian Reformed Board of Home Missions of Canada are Rev. Peter Slofstra, president; Rev. Peter Boodt, vice president; Ms. Mary Buteyn, secretary; Mr. John Kamerman, treasurer; Mrs. Debbie Glasbergen, recording secretary; and Rev. Peter Hoytema, assistant treasurer.

The complete listing of Home Missions' staff can be found in the 1995 *Yearbook*, pages 515-23.

C. Executive committee of the Board of Home Missions (U.S. and Canada)

The executive committee of the Board of Home Missions is made up of elected delegates from the twelve regions listed below. The executive committee meets in September, December, and February.

Region	Classes
Western Canada	British Columbia NW, British Columbia SE, Alberta North, Alberta South
Central Canada	Chatham, Huron, Niagara
Eastern Canada	Hamilton, Toronto, Quinte, Eastern Canada
Northwest U.S.	Pacific Northwest, Columbia, Central California, Yellowstone
Southwest U.S.	California South, Greater Los Angeles, Arizona, Red Mesa
Midwest U.S.	Rocky Mountain, Dakota, Minnesota South, Heartland
Central U.S.	Minnesota North, Northcentral Iowa, Pella
Chicago	Northern Illinois, Chicago South, Illinois, Wisconsin
Eastern U.S.	Atlantic Northeast, Hudson, Hackensack, Florida
Out-state Michigan	Cadillac, Muskegon, Kalamazoo, Lake Erie
Ottawa County	Holland, Zeeland, Georgetown, Grandville
Grand Rapids	Grand Rapids East, Grand Rapids North, Grand Rapids South, Thornapple Valley

D. Salary disclosure

Executive and administrative persons are being paid within the salary ranges approved by synod (*Acts of Synod 1994*, p. 361) as follows:

Job level	Number of positions	Compensation quartile
8	1	2nd
6	2	3rd
5	2	2nd, 4th
4	3	3rd (2), 4th (1)

E. One-hundred-year anniversary

The Board of Home Missions, with thanks to God, calls to the attention of synod and the denomination that 1996 marks one hundred years of continual gospel outreach in North America by the Christian Reformed Church and that a

special publication—*The 100-Year Journey to the Future*—and observances for the centennial are being planned by Christian Reformed Home Missions.

III. Home Missions' ministries

A. Established-Church Development

The Established-Church Development (ECD) Department of Home Missions partners with established churches to provide creative leadership and assistance in collaboration with classes and other agencies so that established churches effectively seek the lost and disciple the found, all for God's glory.

1. The means and desired outcome: This work is accomplished by means of
 - a. Consultation by Home Missions regional directors and others. Home Missions encourages and equips churches to become (better) outreaching churches.
 - b. Church-development materials. Home Missions offers assistance for various church outreach concerns, strategies, and programs in cooperation with CRC Publications.
 - c. Small-group Bible-study outreach ministries. Home Missions enables and assists churches with the effective programs of Story Hour, Little Lambs, Coffee Break, and Men's Life by means of Coffee Break representatives and Men's Life trainers.
 - d. Financial grants. Home Missions enables churches to increase their effectiveness in outreach by strategic seed-money grants.
 - e. *Gathering* conferences, training, and educational courses. Home Missions in cooperation with Calvin Theological Seminary encourages and equips church leaders to be Gatherers.

The outcome which Home Missions seeks to achieve is an increasingly large number of churches that are interested in, mobilized for, and effective in *Gathering*. This is evidenced by more churches receiving more people as participants and members through evangelism, as reported in the *Yearbook*.

2. Some objectives and key results

- a. Provide guidance for established congregations and classes in their planing and working for *Gathering*.
 - 1) Developed and implemented a comprehensive plan to encourage churches, classes, and denominational agencies to pray.
 - 2) Developing a three-phase pilot for a *Gathering* Church Network strategy and reproducing its first two phases in other areas.
 - 3) Assisted classes through the classical home-missions committees in doing strategic planning for ministry (through the CRWRC/CRHM Task Force on the Role of Classis in the 21st Century).
- b. Enable established churches to plan for and experience healthy and effective growth through outreach to nonchurched, non-Christian people in their communities.
 - 1) Piloted and reproduced a network in fourteen places for established churches on Focusing Leaders: Understanding God's Call in Your Life (A Personal Development Process).

- 2) Currently processing eighteen Congregational MasterPlanning contracts with twenty consultants currently under contract.
 - 3) Helped churches understand and effectively manage change as it occurs in the churches by sponsoring a course called Managing Change in the '90s in various areas in the denomination.
 - 4) Provided partnership-assistance grants, including fifteen to campus ministries and thirty-two to church ministries, for a total of \$544,700.
 - 5) Cooperated with Youth Unlimited to provide 173 SWIMers for forty-three new and established churches in the summer of 1994.
 - 6) Conducted twenty Men's Life workshops across the U.S. and Canada.
 - 7) Sent materials to 250 church prayer coordinators.
 - 8) Published and distributed a new Church Development Resources catalog with new materials to assist established churches to reach out; merged this publishing effort with CRC Publications.
- c. Help established-church leaders create the conditions in the churches they serve that make it possible to confidently claim God's promise of a *Gathering harvest*.
- 1) Held a fourth *Gathering* conference in connection with Willow Creek Community Church's Church Leadership Conference in October 1994 with 203 CRC persons (including denominational leaders) attending, representing forty-two Christian Reformed churches and several denominational agencies.
 - 2) Held a Coffee Break Convention for Coffee Break leaders in July 1994 in Wheaton, Illinois, attended by 1,200 women.
 - 3) Published the following through Church Development Resources: *Someone Needs You* video, two *Inspirit* Bible-study manuals, three Coffee Break Bible-study books, three Men's Life Bible-study books, two *Core Values* booklets, and a video for children's leaders called *The Great Create*; developed a three-hour *Inspirit* training workshop.
 - 4) Led six prayer seminars for pastors and church leaders.
 - 5) Identified and marketed eighty helpful books/videos from other publishers, including a video seminar on leadership, a video seminar on discipleship, four books on the small church, four books on reaching inactives, four books in Stephen Ministries' Caring Evangelism series, and five resources for singles ministry.
 - 6) Taught three courses in connection with Calvin Theological Seminary: New Church Development, Vision Leadership and Public Worship in the Mission-Shaped Church.
 - 7) Held a Men's Life Conference in September 1994 in Grand Rapids with 125 men attending.
 - 8) Led five leadership-training workshops for small-group leaders.

In addition, Established-Church Development works with the Christian Reformed Campus Ministry Association (CR/CMA) to help each campus ministry become an integral part of local outreaching churches. Grants are being made to fifteen campus ministries, totaling more than \$290,700 in fiscal 1995.

In all of these efforts, Home Missions works to build momentum in the CRC so that the church will move forward in "seeking the lost and discipling the found . . . all for God's glory."

B. New-Church Development

Ever since the days of the twelve apostles, the starting of new churches has been God's primary method for spreading the gospel and "gathering people into fellowship with Christ and his church" (Home Mission Order). New-church development is a vital element in maintaining spiritual health and vigor as a denomination. To grow numerically as a denomination, the CRCNA needs a minimum of twenty to thirty new churches annually (approximately 2 to 3 percent) to replace churches that are closing or leaving the denomination.

The goal for the New-Church Development (NCD) Department, therefore, is to encourage and equip churches and classes to prayerfully plan and develop new churches as disciple-making communities which continually seek the lost and disciple the found . . . all for the glory of God and the upbuilding of his kingdom. Our prayer is that, with God's blessing and in partnership with Home Missions and local sponsors, new churches will grow by at least 30,000 members between 1988 and 2000, by at least 3,000 members during 1996 alone, and that up to thirty new churches will be started during 1996.

As of February 1, 1995, Home Missions was partnering in various ways with 163 new-church ministries and staff positions. An additional seventeen new churches are approved for funding pending the recruiting of missionary-pastor leadership.

By way of the NCD and Finance Departments, Home Missions also provides assistance for three Christian schools in Classis Red Mesa. Rehoboth Christian School started the 1994-1995 school year with 337 students, Crownpoint Christian School with 20 students, and Zuni Christian School with 100 students. In response to work of an Educational Missions Task Force during the prior school year, efforts continue "to clarify the relationship of the Home Missions mandate to Christian education in Classis Red Mesa" and to explore new ways and means for the schools to carry out their ministries with decreasing dependence on denominational resources.

1. Guiding principles for New-Church Development

Home Missions seeks to provide leadership and support for new-church ministry in keeping with its core *Gathering* values and the following guiding principles:

- a. Reproducibility. Missionary pastors are challenged to gather and multiply disciple-making leaders indigenous to their communities; churches are challenged to sponsor and parent new churches that reproduce themselves; Home Missions is challenged to develop key support systems in strategic locations throughout Canada and the U.S.A.
- b. Partnership. Home Missions, in collaboration with other denominational agencies and resources, serves new churches and their local partners with vision, guidance, and support; new churches relate interdependently—across cultural, economic, and geographical lines—with other churches, and emerging churches become full partners in denominational life.
- c. Christian, biblical, and Reformed. Home Missions calls new churches to plan and develop their life and ministry in obedience to the Word of God as the only rule for faith and practice and to maintain integrity with the CRCNA in their identity, proclamation, and witness by honoring the confessions and polity of the CRCNA.

- d. Cultural relevance. Just as the apostle Paul made himself “a slave to everyone to win as many as possible” (I Cor. 9:19), new churches are to carry out incarnational ministry in comprehensive ways that are appropriate to the cultural context of the congregation and community and that meet the needs of the whole person.
 - e. Reconciliation. Home Missions is eager to partner with new churches—including ethnic-minority and multiethnic churches—that are committed to growth through evangelizing and discipling, and to challenge all new churches to enfold whomever the Lord brings to their fellowship and spiritual care without regard to age, gender, race, or status in life.
 - f. Stewardship. New churches are to assume responsibility for their own ministry development as soon and as fully as possible, including vision, staffing, and funding; Home Missions, classes, and supporting congregations are to provide guidance and assistance in ways that increase local capacity for ministry and avoid the fostering of dependency.
 - g. Effectiveness. Home Missions desires to invest resources where the need is most evident and effectiveness can be expected; it recommends that effectiveness be evaluated in relation to numerical and spiritual growth, financial stewardship, organizational development, and outreach to people in physical and spiritual need at home and abroad.
2. Objectives and activities of New-Church Development
- The entire NCD team—Home Missions’ regional directors, ethnic-ministry directors, and central-office personnel—provides overall vision, guidance, and support for new-church ministry in the CRCNA. This is done through strategic planning, resourcing, and reporting and especially through developing reproducible support systems for new-church ministry in strategic locations throughout the classes and regions. These support systems and related activities are
- a. Prayer mobilization: encouraging and equipping individuals and churches to pray fervently that God will empower *Gathering* by providing strategies, materials, consultation, and training to increase the awareness of need and opportunity for new-church ministry. Mobilization includes volunteer prayer coordinators, prayer circles, and other strategies for new churches.
 - b. Recruiting and training leaders: identifying and encouraging missionary pastors as disciple-making leaders by spreading the vision of *Gathering* through new churches and by providing a variety of training opportunities and pathways to leadership in new-church development. Strategies include NCD apprenticeships, internships, and residencies and a leadership-training system with a growing number of local training programs.
 - c. Assessing leaders: guiding and assisting new churches and their sponsors in the selection of missionary pastors as disciple-making leaders by providing appropriate evaluative tools, opportunities, and other helps. Assessment-center teams and behavioral interviewers are being developed in several locations, and consultation is offered for specific situations.

- d. Partnering with new-church sponsors: encouraging and assisting churches to support, sponsor, and/or parent new churches by spreading the *Gathering* vision and by providing motivation, opportunities, training, resources, and other helps to new churches and their local partners. This system involves guidance and support in keeping with Home Missions guidelines and life-cycle stages and emphasizes the concept of parenting—that is, churches growing churches.
- e. Coaching and empowering leaders: encouraging and increasing the effectiveness of new churches for *Gathering* by providing training, materials, and qualified coaching for the character and skill development of missionary pastors as disciple-making leaders. Specialized orientation and in-service training events are supplemented with support networks, resource manuals, and on-site guidance and consultation.

3. New churches from 1993 to 1995

- a. New churches started between August/September 1993 and August 1994

Location/Name	Personnel	Began
Artesia, CA/Hispanic	Francisco Golon Godoy	9/93
Bartlett, IL/WestWind	Mark D. Timmer	1/94
Bellflower, CA/Hispanic	Isay Alvarez	9/93
Hacienda Hts, CA/East. United	Young Dae Kim	9/93
Kayenta, AZ/Navajo	Jerome Sandoval	8/93
Los Angeles, CA/Galilee	David W. Yang	9/93
Monterey Park, CA/Indonesian	Hendry Lie	9/93
N. Jersey City, NJ/NCD	Trevor and Linda Rubingh	2/94
Northridge, CA/Valley Shinil	Jong Whan Lee	9/93
Oceanside, CA/First Union	Hyung Ju Park	9/93
Orlando/Kissimmee, FL/Crosswind	Keith A. Mannes	6/94
Paterson, NJ/Joy, Peace, Love	Ezequiel N. Romero	9/93
Phoenix, AZ/Chung-Ang	Raymond Tae Hoo Yeo	10/93
Phoenix, AZ/Celebration Comm.	Jonathan D. Westra	8/93
Sepulveda, CA/Valley Dongsan	Chong Dae Yoon	9/93
St. John, IN/Crossroads Comm.	Kris J. Vos	9/93
St. Vital, MN/The Youth Network	Timothy J. Berends	9/93
Tustin, CA/Fellowship	Matthew Minh Le	9/93
Vancouver, BC/Surrey (residency)	Michael R. Dadson	9/93
Victorville, CA/Church of the Way	Robert Lewis	9/93
Wyoming, MI/Hispanic	Carlos G. Tapanes	11/93

- b. New churches started between September 1994 and February 1995

Location/Name	Personnel	Began
Ajax, ON/NCD	Adrian G. Van Giessen	9/94
Allen, TX/All Nations Grace Fellowship	NeeOdoi Edward Thompson	9/94
Bellflower, CA/Grace Filipino	Elmer Tandyu	9/94
Beverly Hills, CA/Chowon Korean	Dae Sun Shin	9/94
Los Angeles, CA/Morning Star	Sung Hwan Park	9/94
Cerritos, CA/Heaven Bound	Andrew Choh	9/94
Chicago, IL/Grace & Peace Fellowship	Pedro Aviles	9/94
Cloverdale, BC/NCD	Mike Dadson	9/94
El Paso, TX/Hispanic NCD	John Matias	11/94
Eugene/Springfield, OR/NCD	Henry Reyenga	9/94
Garden Grove, CA/Korean Presbyterian	Young Ook Kim	9/94

Grand Rapids, MI/Forest Hills	Gene De Jong	9/94
Honolulu, HI/Pyung Kang	William Yang	9/94
Hudsonville, MI/Evergreen	Larry Doornbos	9/94
Indianapolis, IN/NCD	Robert A. Sizemore	8/94
Los Angeles, CA/Chosen People	In-Chul Kim	9/94
Northridge, CA/Valley Evan. Mission	Soo Do Hong	9/94
Orlando, FL/Hispanic	Guillermo Ortiz	2/95
Philadelphia, PA/Spirit and Truth Fellowship	Randy Baker/Manuel Ortiz	9/94
Philadelphia, PA/Ayuda Community	Debbie Vasquez	9/94
Salt Lake City, UT/NCD	Joel De Boer	9/94
San Diego, CA/ El Arca Comunidad Cristiana	Felipe Acuna	9/94
Sardis/Chilliwack, BC/NCD	Kenneth Byl	8/94
Tempe, AZ/Principe de Paz	Esteban Lugo	9/94
Torrance, CA/Glory	Sung Ho Nam	9/94
Winfield, IL/Vietnamese New Hope	Huu Phu Nguyen	9/94
Worthington, MN/Vietnamese	Viet Tran	9/94

4. Conclusion of funding for NCD ministries

The standard funding pattern for new churches is for Home Missions to approve funding for three years, with decreasing amounts annually, subject to renewal for a second three-year period. For churches located in communities of extraordinary need and limited resources, funding may be longer. Home Missions' funding may be discontinued or interrupted if a new-church ministry is not developing satisfactorily and continued subsidy is not likely to result in increased effectiveness.

a. Funding conclusions from September 1993 to August 1994

Location/Name	Personnel	Began
Brampton, ON/Living Hope	Dan A. Gritter	8/85
Brampton, ON/Living Hope 2S	Toni Dryhout	9/91
*Chicago/Matteson, IL/Grace	Roger Nelson	9/92
Fairfield, CA/CRC	David Zandstra	9/79
*Kent, WA/Good News	Alvin J. Machiela	1/90
*Los Angeles, CA/Rehoboth	Yong Tae Kim	9/91
*Poway, CA/Christ Community	Larry M. Fryling	8/86
Salt Lake City, UT/Indian Center	Jerry Haswood	9/64
*Santa Monica, CA/Good Land	Nasser Yassa	8/91
Silverdale, WA/Anchor of Hope	David Snapper	5/84
*Southlake, TX/Daybreak	Daniel Devadatta	9/92
Springfield, IL/Christ's Fellowship	Timothy L. Koster	9/84
Surrey, BC/Hope Community	Steven C. Elzinga	10/87
Surrey, BC/Hope Comm 2S	Kenneth Byl	9/93
*Tampa, FL/Evergreen Korean	Sung Jin Bak	3/91
*Tustin, CA/Fellowship	Matthew Le	9/93
Traverse City, MI/Fellowship	Eric Evenhouse	5/91
Virginia Beach, VA/Christ Community	Alvin A. Mulder	9/81

b. Funding conclusions from September 1994 to February 1995

Location/Name	Personnel	Began
*Monrovia, CA/Eternal Covenant	Roy Brooks	2/91

*CRHM funding was discontinued or interrupted because goals were not being met.

5. Harvest chart for new and emerging churches as of August 31, 1994

	1991	1992	1993	1994
a. Total NCDs reporting	117	115	123	130
b. Main worship attendance	9,822	9,732	10,230	10,237
c. Total members	9,993	10,008	9,934	8,945
d. Professions of faith	422	283	468	337
e. Growth by evangelism	474	768	1,102	890
f. Growth from other denominations	437	378	425	393
g. Child baptisms	269	280	259	227
h. Total member growth (add e, f, g)	1,180	1,426	1,786	1,510
i. Total member losses	583	556	692	846
j. Net growth (h minus i)	597	870	1,094	664

C. *Resource Development and Finance*

One of Home Missions' core *Gathering* values states: "Wherever and whenever we, God's people, exercise vision and faith, God provides resources and spiritual gifts for his work." Home Missions is grateful to God for providing abundantly in fiscal 1994. Although total income declined by 1 percent compared to fiscal 1993, the ministry was still able to fund all programs as planned. Ministry-share, missionary-support, and above-ministry-share income all declined, but income from the sales of evangelism resources, conferences, and consulting increased.

In light of denominational finance issues, the 1994 request for ministry share was not increased for fiscal 1995. At the same time, Home Missions is developing other sources of income. The annual Easter offering from churches has been a real encouragement. In 1994, 362 churches participated by ordering Easter bulletins and other materials and by receiving offerings for Home Missions. A new Partners program for support of ministries of various ethnic-minority backgrounds was developed and shared with mission committees in the hope that missionary support will stabilize.

Launched in October 1993, the *Gathering* magazine was developed to spread the vision for domestic missions. Topics have included reaching men for Christ, church-growth strategies, and the growing need for Hispanic churches and leaders. Stories of individual churches and church members are highlighted in these magazines.

Also, Home Missions gratefully notes that volunteer involvement with both the office and the field ministries continues to grow. Home Missions and affiliated ministries appreciate the time given by faithful Christians in many different ways.

Home Missions provides advice and financial assistance regarding site selection and purchase and building design and construction for new churches that start with Home Missions' partnership. During 1994, Home Missions assisted Hope Community Church (Surrey, BC) in the purchase of a 73-acre church site. Home Missions' investment notes provide a way for CRC members to invest in new-church building programs. The proceeds from the note sales provide the loan funds for new-church building programs that would have difficulty obtaining funds from commercial lenders. At the end of fiscal 1994 Home Missions had over \$6.1 million in outstanding loans to sixty-eight churches.

A detailed audited financial report for the year ended August 31, 1994, the 1995 budget, and the proposed 1996 budget will be presented to synod in *Agenda for Synod 1995—Financial and Business Supplement*. A summary report for the year ended August 31, 1994, is shown below:

Source of income	Income (\$000s)	% of total
Ministry share	\$5,732.5	62.9
Missionary support	973.5	10.7
Above-ministry-share gifts	795.8	8.7
Catalog, conferences, consulting	1,065.0	11.7
Interest and other	550.1	6.0
Total income	\$9,505.8	100.0

Use of funds	Disbursements (\$000s)	% of total
New-church development	\$4,918.5	56.2
Established-church development	2,327.2	26.6
Land, capital, currency	436.1	5.0
Administration	629.1	7.2
Resource development	433.7	5.0
Total disbursements	\$8,744.6	100.0

IV. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to the president of the Board of Home Missions, the executive director, and the director of finance when matters pertaining to Home Missions are discussed.

B. That synod grant permission for Home Missions to give a progress report about *Gathering God's Growing Family* at one of the sessions of synod (cf. Board of Trustees' recommendation on agency representatives addressing synod).

C. That synod, with thanks to God, call to the denomination's attention that 1996 marks one hundred years of continued gospel outreach in North America by the CRC.

Christian Reformed Board of
Home Missions

John A. Rozeboom, executive director

Note: Additional recommendations will be submitted by way of the supplementary report to synod after the May 1995 meeting of the Board of Home Missions. Financial requests for Home Missions are included in the Board of Trustees' combined budget recommendations.

I. Introduction

In the spirit of Pentecost, Christian Reformed World Missions (CRWM) continues to proclaim the gospel and develop churches around the world. With gratitude to the Lord of the harvest, CRWM reports to synod on opportunities, efforts, and results during 1994.

During 1994, World Missions had or supported missions in thirty countries with 108 long-term missionaries and 88 missionary spouses. There were also 87 associate missionaries, most of whom were teachers in various places, and other short-term missionary volunteers, who accomplished a variety of tasks. There were 2 seminary interns and 26 summer mission volunteers of college age. Thus, we had a total of 319 active missionaries during 1994, who were accompanied by 180 missionary children. They gave support to twenty-five Reformed and Presbyterian churches (which are attended by over two million people) and to about twenty other agencies. In ten countries they are developing churches which have not yet been organized. Although CRWM does not have complete statistics, it estimates that these churches added at least fifty thousand adherents in 1994. Political problems forced missionaries to withdraw from parts or all of Haiti, Mali, and Sierra Leone during the year.

II. Board of World Missions

- Christian Reformed World Missions-International
- Christian Reformed World Missions-Canada
- Christian Reformed World Missions-U.S.A.

Christian Reformed World Missions is organized in such a way that the Canadian agency and the United States agency together comprise the synodical board which governs the world-missions program on behalf of the Christian Reformed Church. The Canadian and United States parts cooperate by means of a joint-venture and an agency agreement. Meetings are held in each country as appropriate, but most meetings are held jointly. The following board matters are reported here for synod's information.

A. *Annual meetings*

CRWM held its annual meetings in Grand Rapids, Michigan, from February 20-22, 1995, at which time the committees of CRWM-Canada and CRWM-U.S.A. met separately to attend to mission matters peculiar to Canada and the U.S.A. and jointly to attend to the common task of governing overseas mission fields and projects through CRWM-International. The executive committees of the three boards meet jointly and separately in May, August, and November.

B. *CRWM-International executive director*

A search committee has been selected to seek one or more nominees for appointment to the position of executive director of CRWM-International by the Board of Trustees and Synod 1996. Rev. William Van Tol has agreed to continue in this position until July 1996, at which time he hopes to transfer back to mission work overseas.

C. *Changes in administrative rules*

Additional changes to the administrative rules that govern CRWM-International are recommended to the Board of Trustees to clarify the roles of the CRWM-Canada and CRWM-U.S.A. committees when they act jointly to govern CRWM-International.

D. *CEACA*

CRWM informs synod that it is aware of the recommendations of the Committee for Educational Assistance to Churches Abroad (CEACA) to transfer its ministry to Calvin Seminary and CRWM. CRWM is prepared to accept the part of CEACA's mandate assigned to it by these recommendations.

E. *Salary disclosure*

In accordance with the requirements of synod, administrative salary information is provided below:

Job level	Number of positions	Compensation quartile (includes housing allowance)
7	2	3rd
6	2	1st and 2nd
5	2	2nd and 4th
4	1	2nd

III. **World Missions' fields and projects**

Mission fields and projects are listed alphabetically with a brief report on each.

A. *Argentina*. The Reformed Church of Argentina is growing slowly. CRWM will continue to provide matching financial grants through 1996. No Christian Reformed missionaries are present.

B. *Central America*. CRWM supports small but growing CRC churches in Costa Rica, El Salvador, Honduras, and Nicaragua with twenty-nine long-term missionaries (including spouses) and eight associate and volunteer missionaries residing in Costa Rica and Honduras. Most missionaries are involved in evangelism and leadership training. The rapidly growing Honduran CRC formed a national synod in 1992 and now has thirty-three churches with about two thousand communicant members. The churches in the other countries are small and without synodical organization.

C. *China (including Taiwan)*. On the mainland CRWM supported twenty-nine teachers in 1994. Some of them have completed multiple years of teaching and are involved in long-term ministry in China. The CRC has placed over two hundred teachers in China during the past eight years, at least twenty-five at any given time. The Chinese government recently admitted, by its own count, that there are at least 63 million Christians in China. Some estimates run as high as 100 million. CRWM is exploring ways to assist the Chinese church with leadership development. Christian literature is being distributed in China. On Taiwan six missionaries continue to support the slowly growing Reformed Presbyterian Church, training leaders and producing literature for use among all Chinese.

D. *C.I.T.E.* One missionary formerly administered a project called Committee for International Theological Education (C.I.T.E.), which provides leadership seminars in Spanish-speaking countries. CRC Publications and CRWM concluded an agreement in 1993 through which CRC Publications assumed responsibility for the publication and distribution part of this ministry.

E. *Cuba.* The thirteen Christian Reformed churches in Cuba have begun another eight churches and are growing rapidly, but the political and economic climate makes things difficult. CRWM gives this church financial grants and provides short-term missionaries for leadership workshops. CRWM hopes soon to obtain long-term visas for missionaries so that it can expand support. The leaders of the churches in Cuba are overwhelmed by the demands of growth and need.

F. *Dominican Republic.* Nineteen long-term missionaries and ten associate and volunteer missionaries facilitate the development of a Christian Reformed Church and Christian-school system. Most of the growth occurs among the Haitian and Dominican peoples. The CRC of the Dominican Republic has grown to over eleven thousand attenders in the last twelve years with 100 organized churches and 152 preaching centers. Twenty-eight Christian day schools with 3,800 students are operating under the auspices of CRWM in the Dominican Republic.

G. *Ecuador.* CRWM has an agreement with the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students through which World Missions provides two associate missionaries for work at its Latin America headquarters in Ecuador.

H. *France.* Two long-term missionaries work in France on loan to the Reformed seminary at Aix-en-Provence. They also provide support and teaching ministries to congregations of the Reformed Church of France and the Evangelical Reformed Church.

I. *Guam.* Two long-term missionaries, four associate missionaries, and two volunteers give support to Faith Presbyterian Reformed Church, Faith Bookstore, and the Pacific Islands Bible College. Faith Church is independent of CRWM, and CRWM is in the process of transferring Faith Bookstore to local ownership.

J. *Guinea.* Our mission in this West African country began among the Fulbe people in 1984. Twelve long-term and two volunteer missionaries use a variety of ministries to plant a church among the 2.5 million Muslim Fulbe. Recent conversions have increased the number of Fulbe Christians, but the church is still very small. CRWM prays that a church of 200,000 members will be established within the next thirty years.

K. *Haiti.* In 1985 CRWM began placing missionaries across the border from the Dominican Republic in Haiti to provide leadership training and develop a Christian-school system among Haitian independent churches. CRWM missionaries left the island during the transition in government brought about by U.S. occupation, but they have returned. Six long-term missionaries and three associate missionaries provide training to nearly two thousand church leaders through training centers and correspondence programs. Reformed churches are developing because of the flow of Haitian people between the two countries.

L. Hungarian ministries. In Hungary, Romania, Slovakia, and Ukraine, CRWM gives support to Hungarian Reformed churches. CRWM placed two long-term and eight short-term teachers at the Reformed Academy and Seminary in Sarospatak, at the Reformed University in Budapest, and among Reformed churches in Romania. A summer music/evangelism team of eight young people witnessed in youth camps and churches for eight weeks.

M. Japan. This mission has developed over 40 of the 135 organized congregations of the Reformed Church of Japan, which now has over nine thousand members. In 1994, eleven unorganized mission churches grew at a rate of 12 percent. Sixteen long-term missionaries and eight associate missionaries worked in Japan. Most of the associate missionaries teach in Christian schools.

N. Kenya. One volunteer missionary provides evangelism and leadership training for medical personnel in East Africa through Hospital Christian Fellowship International. She provides Bible-study materials and seminars which equip them for Christian witness.

O. Korean ministries. During 1994 CRWM began two mission ventures with the Korean Christian Reformed churches. One led to the formation of a partnership with the Asian Center for Theological Studies and Mission (ACTS) in Seoul, where CRWM is assisting in the cross-cultural training of Korean missionaries. In Manchuria, China, CRWM is assisting with church-leadership development among 1 million Koreans who are citizens of China.

P. Liberia. War has closed much of CRWM's mission work in Liberia. Two long-term missionaries continue to support the translation of the Bassa Bible from bases outside Liberia. Financial support for the Christian Education Foundation of Liberia, a consortium of churches among the Bassa, continued so that Christian leaders are being trained.

Q. Mali. Our mission in this West African country began among the Fulbe people in 1984. Eight long-term and two volunteer missionaries use a variety of ministries to plant a church among the 1 million Muslim Fulbe. Missionaries were forced to leave some areas due to rebel incursions, but the number of Bible studies and conversions grows among this small group of believers. CRWM requests persistent prayer that a church of 200,000 members will be established within the next thirty years.

R. Mexico. Fifteen long-term missionaries provide evangelism and leadership-training to the Reformed Presbyterian Church and the National Presbyterian Church. These missionaries are located in Tijuana, Yucatan, and Mexico City. Most of our ministry is concentrated on the Reformed Presbyterian Church, which has thirty-six organized churches, about one hundred unorganized churches, and average Sunday attendance of over twenty thousand.

S. Nigeria. The NKST (Tiv) Church in Nigeria, which was formally organized in 1954, has 500,000 attenders among the 2.5 million Tiv people in central Nigeria. CRWM no longer has long-term missionaries supporting this church, but it does provide financial grants for some of its ministries as well as short-term teaching and medical missionaries. The Christian Reformed Church of Nigeria, a multiracial church located primarily among the Jukun, Icen, Ndoro, Tigum, Fulani, Chamba, Jibu, and Daka peoples (4 million population) in northeastern

Nigeria, formally organized in 1957, now has 165,000 attenders. A church has begun among the 150,000 Kambari people in northwestern Nigeria with more than one hundred baptisms. Four groups are faithfully gathering for worship. World Missions is praying for a church of 10,000 members among the Kuranko by 2005. In Plateau State three long-term missionaries conduct evangelism, leadership training, and literature ministries. An additional ten missionaries work in a variety of support ministries in Nigeria, such as Hillcrest School, Mountain View Hostel, and the SUM-CRC office. Forty-three long-term missionaries and nine volunteers supported these mission efforts in Nigeria. CRWM also provides financial grants to some of the ministries of the churches.

T. Puerto Rico. Two long-term missionaries concluded their service as we phased out CRWM's effort to provide leadership training and evangelistic encouragement to the five CRC congregations in Puerto Rico. Two volunteer missionaries continue to support the evangelism efforts of these churches.

U. Pakistan. CRWM developed a partnership with World Witness, the mission of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church, through which CRWM loans one CRC missionary family for service in Pakistan.

V. Philippines. The Philippine CRC with the support of CRWM intends to increase the number of its organized churches to one hundred and the number of emerging churches to forty by the year 2000. This should raise the membership of the church from 8,500 to 12,000. Nearly four hundred baptisms and professions of faith were celebrated in 1994. Twenty-eight long-term missionaries and four volunteers supported church development and leadership training on five major islands.

W. Russia and Ukraine. The agencies of the CRC have a joint strategy for mission in Russia. Short-term projects have occurred, and CRWM has appointed a leader to coordinate the missions of the agencies from a Moscow office. CRWM has also loaned two long-term missionaries to Mission to the World, the mission agency of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) for work in Odessa, Ukraine. CRWM also plans to place long-term missionaries in cities to the north of Moscow and St. Petersburg and is exploring the possibility of a partnership with the Union of Evangelical Reformed Churches of Russia, based in the city of Tver.

X. Sierra Leone. Four long-term missionaries work among the Kuranko people in northern Sierra Leone. Over eleven hundred people who formerly identified with Islam are now forming a Kuranko church after eleven years of mission. During the last half of 1994 the mission was forced to evacuate the area due to the incursion of rebels intent on overthrowing the current government of Sierra Leone. Two missionary homes were burned, and efforts to return and reestablish the work have been thwarted by continuing instability.

Y. Zambia. Two long-term missionaries live and work at the Justo Mwale Theological College of the Reformed Church of Zambia. Through classroom instruction and mission trips they are giving their students a vision for evangelizing the unreached in Zambia.

IV. Personnel and program matters

There was a time when a career missionary was thought to be a life-long missionary. This is no longer true. Many missionaries now plan in advance to discontinue or interrupt their missionary careers. Indeed, many now apply with the intention of serving as missionaries for five to ten years. Often such decisions are driven by concerns for the education of missionary children. Many missionary parents no longer consider boarding schools, tutors, or home schooling to be acceptable alternatives to the educational systems available in North America. The early conclusion of missionary careers in order to return children to an educational system in North America is not in the best interest of a vigorous church-development program overseas. This change also has a dramatic impact on the church-relations task of CRWM because it is often not in the best interest of local churches to be making changes every five to ten years in the career missionaries they support.

The number of long-term missionaries CRWM sends out is declining—for many reasons. Among them are declining interest in the church's mission to the world; economic and social problems in North America which are forcing many businesses, institutions, and churches to downsize; renewed interest in local evangelism; the growth in church support for parachurch missionaries; and negative feelings toward the CRCNA generated by issues such as women in office, over which this agency has no control. In 1993-1994 CRWM budgeted for 121 career missionaries. In 1994-1995 it budgeted for 114. With the 1995-1996 budget CRWM now presents a plan for 1075 long-term missionaries and 80 long-term missionary spouses. During the same period of time the number of short-term missionaries has continued to grow. In 1995-1996 CRWM expects to appoint 116 short-term missionaries, including thirty-six summer mission participants.

Short-term missionaries fall into the categories of volunteers, associate missionaries, seminary interns, and summer mission participants; they serve for periods of time ranging from one to twenty-four months and do not receive salaries from CRWM. They support themselves or raise their support (travel costs and living allowance) from churches and friends, or, in the case of associate missionaries (tent makers), they are supported by a job in the country to which they go. CRWM provides them with logistical assistance, medical coverage if needed, and other supplemental support on the fields. Most of our long-term missionaries are involved in evangelism and church development, leadership training, and other educational roles.

The number of missionary children this year is about 180. Providing for their education in a variety of situations where adequate schools are not available continues to be a challenge. CRWM does send volunteer teachers or tutors to some countries to teach them. CRWM is in conversation with some other mission agencies about solutions to this problem.

CRWM provides the following information about missionary salaries. In fiscal 1994-1995:

- The base salary for single missionaries is \$18,900.
- The base for married couples is \$24,200.
- In addition, each missionary receives 1.1 percent of single base salary for each year of applicable prior service and 1.4 percent of base salary for each year of CRWM service.

- Education allowances in the amount of 2.3 percent of single base salary for an M.A., 34 percent of single base salary for an M.Div., and 4.5 percent of single base salary for a Ph.D.
- Children's allowance is being phased out. CRWM does provide assistance for educational costs of children.
- CRWM also provides: U.S.A. Social Security payment or allowance and a Canada pension payment; payments to denominational pension plans, with disability insurance; workers compensation insurance; medical and hospitalization costs; housing; an automobile or mileage reimbursement for overseas ministry; and a cost-of-living differential.

The names and addresses of missionaries and administrative personnel may be found in two places: in the Directory of Agencies and Committees in the CRC *Yearbook* and on the back of the World Missions calendar.

Each year CRWM honors missionaries who are celebrating significant anniversaries of service. During 1994-1995 the following deserve tribute for twenty or more years of service with the mission:

- Dr. Paul and Mrs. Barbara Bergsma, 25 years in Mexico and Central America
- Mr. Sidney Norman, 20 years in Japan, Guam, and the CRWM-U.S.A. office
- Miss Christine Roos, 25 years in Nigeria
- Rev. Peter and Mrs. Freda Tong, 30 years in Taiwan
- Rev. Jan and Mrs. Darlene Van Ee, 20 years in Mexico

V. Cooperation with other agencies

Each year CRWM and CRWRC provide their committees and the Board of Trustees with a Joint Fields Assessment Report, which assesses cooperation on joint fields. Good cooperation continues, although some fields express concern that the change from field executive councils to field coordinating councils could signal some slippage. This change was made to match field councils to the role of the interagency Ministries Coordinating Council. Copies of the Joint Fields Assessment Report are available from the CRWM offices.

CRWM cooperates with The Back to God Hour, CRC Publications, CRWRC, and Calvin Theological Seminary in a number of countries. Calvin Theological Seminary's Missions Institute provides CRWM with seminars and workshops for newly appointed missionaries, and many of our overseas seminaries benefit from short-term teaching by seminary professors, who have also provided on-field seminars for some missionaries.

VI. CRWM-U.S.A. and CRWM-Canada reports

Because of government regulations CRWM has separate offices in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and Burlington, Ontario, which focus on church and donor relations in the U.S.A. and Canada respectively and jointly support all the mission fields and projects administered under CRWM-International. A very positive working relationship continues to exist between the Burlington and Grand Rapids offices. Through a joint-venture agreement the two give administrative support to one world-mission outreach. In addition, an agency agreement between the two enables CRWM-U.S.A. to provide CRWM-Canada with various media, promotional, and church-relations services so that special ministries are not duplicated.

The 1993-1994 fiscal year, which ended June 30, was a ten-month year because the beginning of CRWM's fiscal year was moved up to July 1 from September 1. CRWM continued to experience significant slippage in its ministry-share payments during fiscal 1994-1995. It has become apparent that a significant number of congregations, for reasons of their own, are choosing not to give 100 percent of the ministry share approved by synod for CRWM and other agencies of the church. In fiscal year 1991-1992 CRWM reduced its budget by 10 percent, or \$1.2 million, because of declining income. The CRWM Committee had hoped that this downsizing would be adequate to carry World Missions through the hard times experienced by CRCNA congregations. It is now apparent that this 10 percent reduction was inadequate, and continuing reductions in the size of the church's missionary force are necessary as churches choose to divert dollars that were formerly given for the support of CRWM or its missionaries to local causes or to missionaries of other agencies. It has become increasingly difficult to project the future for CRWM finances as churches continue to consider the implications of synodical decisions and members react to denominational trends and weigh local ministry opportunities and financial conditions.

For fiscal 1995-1996 CRWM is presenting a reduced budget of \$12,843,900, compared to the 1994-1995 budget of \$13,692,000. This will reduce the career-missionary force by another seven or eight missionaries. Even though CRWM is requesting a 3 percent ministry-share increase, it is anticipated that this will bring us about \$150,000 less in ministry-share income than we budgeted in fiscal 1994-1995.

CRWM reported last year that difficult times and ministry-share slippage brought about three years of debate within CRWM about the manner by which support should be raised for missionaries. Last year the CRWM Committee approved a plan entitled Principles and Guidelines for the Raising of Support. The core of this document is the recognition that neither the missionaries nor the mission administration has sole responsibility for challenging the churches to support world missions with their prayers, care, and financial resources. These two form a team to raise mission awareness and seek support from local churches to the best of their abilities. Since mission is the calling of the church and the agency is the servant of the church and under its authority, CRWM, both missionaries and administrative personnel, have responsibilities to assist local churches to accomplish their call to mission. Concerning CRWM-U.S.A. specifically, since 1983 there has been a 30 percent increase in the number of churches supporting CRWM missionaries. About 80 percent of the Christian Reformed churches in the U.S.A. support one or more CRWM missionaries with above-ministry-share offerings or faith-promise gifts. Stronger links between the sending churches and their missionaries are also being developed as a result of the growing and faithful network of over five hundred congregational or local and regional representatives. However, CRWM is also finding that when a missionary retires or resigns, it is becoming increasingly difficult to persuade churches to support another CRWM missionary in his or her place. Nearly 50 percent of the churches now elect to do something different with this support money.

Almost 50 percent of the churches actively participated in this year's Pentecost celebration. Our goal is for 80 percent of the churches to take a special offering for CRWM on Pentecost Sunday each year.

A few years ago, when one of our two donor-development staff persons left for another organization, he was not replaced. Because of declining ministry-share income, we now need to replace this person and concentrate more on generating income from other sources.

Concerning CRWM-Canada specifically, there has been an emphasis on strengthening the relationship between the church and its missionaries through a network of local-church and regional representatives. CRWM-Canada has continued to stress the following themes: (1) ownership: proclaiming the gospel and developing churches is the work of the church; (2) vision: communicating a clear mission vision; (3) results: sharing with the church what the Spirit of God is doing as a result of CRWM activities; (4) support: communicating the need for ongoing prayer, care, and financial support and in all our efforts emphasizing the importance of teamwork.

A stronger working relationship between agencies of the denomination in Canada is developing. Basic to this relationship is the belief that through coordinating its ministry efforts, CRWM-Canada will be able to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of all the ministries. CRWM shares an increasing number of administrative staff with CRWRC in the Burlington, Ontario, office.

Support for missionaries through faith-promise initiatives is growing, and the number of churches who support missionaries with above-ministry-share gifts grows. However, ministry-share giving is no longer growing. The proportion of churches in Canada that support one or more CRWM missionaries with above-share support has increased to over 75 percent. The challenge is to have all the churches do so in the future.

VII. Long-range plan and fiscal 1995-1996 plan

Copies of World Missions' long-range plan are available on request. It describes CRWM's mission purpose, principles, and values, its mission task and design of fields and projects, strategic issues for effective mission, its deployment plan for mission, and the force for mission provided by the CRCNA. This plan is updated regularly and is used to give shape to CRWM's three-year plan as well as to its annual plan and budget. This year the CRWM joint committee incorporated into the plan a statement on contextualization for the guidance of our missionaries.

CRWM's fiscal 1995-1996 plan and budget call for 1075 long-term salaried missionaries, accompanied by about 80 spouses (who contribute much volunteer time to missions), and 118 short-term missionaries. They will be supported by a North American administration of twenty-two positions, based in Grand Rapids and Burlington. The budget, from July 1, 1995, to June 30, 1996, will be \$12,843,914. North American administrative and promotional expenses will be 11.6 percent of budget. Budget details will be provided in the *Agenda for Synod 1995—Financial and Business Supplement*. CRWM notes that this plan and budget continue to reduce the size of the long-term missionary force. This plan and budget reduce the number from 114.5 to 1075 long-term missionaries.

The amount of income received from ministry shares, as a percentage of the total budget, will be 39.3 percent of the total income received from churches and church members for fiscal year 1995-1996. CRWM seeks a 3 percent increase in ministry share, equivalent to a \$116.59 per family and \$50.71 per member.

IV. Recommendations

A. That the president of CRWM Canada, Rev. John De Jong; the president of CRWM-U.S.A., Dr. Russell Palsrok; and the CRWM-International executive director, Rev. William Van Tol, or the person acting in his stead be given the privilege of meeting with appropriate advisory committees of synod and of representing CRWM to synod when synod deals with matters related to this agency.

B. That synod encourage all Christian Reformed churches to recognize Pentecost Sunday as a significant opportunity to take an offering for Christian Reformed World Missions.

C. That synod permit the CRWM-International executive director, on behalf of CRWM, to address synod briefly and to present missionary personnel who are on home service to synod on Friday, June 16, 1995 (cf. Board of Trustees' recommendation on agency representatives addressing synod).

Christian Reformed World Missions

William Van Tol, CRWM-International director

Al Karsten, CRWM-Canada director

David Radius, CRWM-U.S.A. director

I. Introduction

CRWRC is a binational agency in Canada and the United States. Its diaconal and church-relations programs within these two countries are carried out by offices in Burlington, Ontario, and Grand Rapids, Michigan. Thirty staff persons are located in the U.S. and eight in Canada. Through its collaborative diaconal partnerships, CRWRC responds annually to the needs of 18,000 families and individuals in the U.S. and Canada. Of these, 3,500 achieve self-sufficiency. The Canadian and U.S. offices jointly carry out the overseas and the disaster-response programs. CRWRC has fifty-eight staff overseas, of whom thirty-eight are on assignments longer than two years. These North American staff persons work with more than five hundred staff members of partner organizations. Through work with these partner organizations, CRWRC in 1994-1995 plans to assist more than 100,000 overseas families. CRWRC carries out its disaster work through disaster teams of 1,800 volunteers. CRWRC operates on an annual budget of \$10 million (U.S.), countless hours of volunteer time, and generous material donations.

II. CRWRC board matters

Continuing board development, ongoing assessment of constituency needs and ministry opportunities, and constant review of agency capacity keep CRWRC dynamic as a learning organization.

Collaborative efforts with other denominational agencies and joint activity with other Christian denominations and agencies combine to maximize the efforts of our church and its members to serve our Lord wholistically.

A. Officers of CRWRC-U.S.A.

Mr. Calvin Hulst, president
Mr. Duane Bajema, vice president
Mr. Barry Haven, treasurer
Ms. Thea Leunk, secretary

B. Officers of CRWRC-Canada

Mr. Marvin DeVries, president
(To be elected in September), vice president
Mr. Gerrit Apperloo, treasurer
Mr. Nick Van Dyke, secretary

C. Nominations for board members

CRWRC-U.S.A. recommends the following names for the position of pastoral adviser (at-large position) for a three-year term beginning in July 1995: Rev. Roy Berkenbosch as the pastoral adviser nominee, Dr. Douglas Fauble as the first alternate, and Rev. Arthur Van Wyhe as the second alternate.

Rev. Roy Berkenbosch is pastor of Eastern Avenue CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan. He previously served as Bangladesh field director, overseeing CRWRC's community-development programs and staff in agriculture, health, literacy, income earning, and leadership. An engineering technologist, he studied at several colleges in Canada. He earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from Calvin College and a Master of Divinity degree from Calvin Theological

Seminary. Rev. Berkenbosch has served as pastoral adviser on the CRWRC-U.S.A. committee for the past three years.

Dr. Douglas Fauble is pastor of Ada CRC, Ada, Michigan. He previously served Western Springs CRC, Western Springs, Illinois, where he was actively involved in the Chicagoland Diaconal Task Force. He has developed devotional materials for deacons and has served as alternate member at large on the CRWRC-U.S.A. committee during the past eight years.

Rev. Arthur Van Wyhe has served as pastor of Dorr CRC, Dorr, Michigan, since 1990. He has initiated diaconal programs with Project Hope and with Love, Inc. in that area and has done much to encourage local diaconal conferences. Rev. Van Wyhe has served churches in Kansas City, Missouri; Washington, Pennsylvania; Allendale, Michigan; and Spokane, Washington.

D. Reappointment of CRWRC-U.S.A. director

Mr. John De Haan has been the director of CRWRC-U.S.A. since 1978 and has also served as the codirector (with Mr. Ray Elgersma of CRWRC-Canada) of CRWRC-International. The CRWRC-U.S.A. board officers conducted a performance review of Mr. De Haan, and the board decided to recommend Mr. De Haan for reappointment for a three-year term (July 1, 1995-June 30, 1998). The Board of Trustees approved that reappointment, and it is now submitted to synod for ratification.

E. Salary disclosure

In accordance with synod's requirement, salary information is reported below:

Job level	Number of positions	Compensation quartile (includes housing allowance)
7	2	2nd through 4th
6	2	3rd through 4th
5	3	3rd through 4th

III. CRWRC ministry programs

A. Diaconal ministries

1. Communications

CRWRC continues to focus on development education and stewardship education within the CRC. As Christian citizens of the richest, most powerful continent in the world, Canadians and Americans are in a position of significant accountability to the Lord as they use the gifts and resources of a world in which 95 percent of the population is poorer than they are. CRWRC thanks God for a church and a theology that recognize the responsibilities Christians have to all of God's imagebearers and continues to work with the whole church to better equip all members for meaningful service to the poor.

2. General report for Canada and the U.S.

The primary role of CRWRC diaconal ministries in Canada and the U.S. is to develop ministries to and with the most needy. The development of such ministries is carried out through deacons, diaconal conferences, and/or church networks. The goal is to have as many needy people as possible meet Christ through the helping programs of the deacons and the church.

CRWRC's board is hoping that the number of needy people reached will be forty-four thousand by the year 2003.

A three-pronged strategy is being used to achieve this goal:

- a. Ongoing development and partnership with the deacons and diaconal conferences.
 - b. Collaborative work, either directly or through diaconal conferences, with other agencies (i.e., Home Missions) and with home-missions committees at the classical level.
 - c. Work with the deacons and/or diaconal conferences wherever possible in high-need areas in order to identify, develop, and link care networks.
3. Highlights in Canada
- a. Most ministry activity in Canada is done by local diaconates and classical/regional diaconal conferences. CRWRC tends to collaborate with local conferences and may offer consultation for ministry where CRWRC has the expertise or there is need for its insight and support.
 - b. One of the highlights of this year's activities is the opportunity to develop, with other ministries of the Christian Reformed Church, the ServiceLink Project, a pilot project to coordinate the church's efforts to use the denominational Volunteer Resources, a list of persons available for ministry opportunity.
 - c. The government's policies and our community's attitudes about refugee sponsorship and support continue to change. Sponsorship is severely curtailed, but there has been greater advocacy activity. Much of this activity is done with the broader Christian community in Canada.
 - d. In the Christian community, CRWRC-Canada plays a leading role among Christian agencies in speaking to international poverty issues. This past year submissions were made by our agency to the Federal Foreign Policy Review Committee. Our agency director chairs the Canadian Council of Christian Charities Relief and Development group, which also speaks out on issues of public policy that are pertinent to the mission of Christian agencies.
 - e. Mr. Peter Zwart, a long-time employee involved in diaconal ministry, retired last fall and has been replaced by Mr. Rick De Graaf, a former employee in Bangladesh.
4. Highlights in the U.S.
- a. Several community-development ministries to high-need areas were initiated during the past year.

Eastern U.S.	Ayuda - Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
West Michigan	Urban Task Force - Paterson, New Jersey Vinedressers - Grand Rapids, Michigan Project Hope - Dorr, Michigan New Directions - Muskegon, Michigan
Midwest	Vision Chicago - Chicago, Illinois LEAP - Milwaukee, Wisconsin
Farm Belt	Transitional housing - Minneapolis, Minnesota
Southern California	Jobs programs and training in high-need locales of Home Missions churches
Western U.S.	FIRM - Fresno, California

- b. In Classis Red Mesa, staff have helped to form local organizations that develop small businesses. In addition, management consultation is being provided to existing organizations that minister to the many needs in the Red Mesa area. It has been an exciting beginning for this new staff position for CRWRC.
- c. More and more partner groups, many of them diaconal conferences, are becoming skilled at taking referrals from social-service agencies and helping these clients not only to self-sufficiency but also to integration into the body of Christ.
- d. Along with Home Missions, two conferences are being planned for 1995 that will enhance the process of ministry planning at the classis level. Already many classes are going beyond the "business as usual" model. Consultation is available through CRWRC and Home Missions.
- e. The values that guide our programs are being affirmed:
 - 1) Prayerful, Spirit-led visioning.
 - 2) High relationship focus in programs.
 - 3) Support systems for care giver and care recipient.
 - 4) Self-sufficiency goals for care recipient.
 - 5) High accountability for results.
 - 6) Building programs through church networks.

5. Disaster response

Disaster-response work in North America was again heavy in 1993 and through the fall of 1994. Following are the major responses, the costs or budget for those responses, and the number of volunteer hours put into the work:

Response	Cost/Budget 1993/1994
Hurricane Andrew: Homestead, FL; Houma, Loreauville, LA	\$174,220
Kauai, HI - hurricane	\$ 63,073
Midwest floods	\$258,616
Los Angeles, CA - earthquake	\$108,872

In summary, 1,212 volunteers contributed 114,438 hours, affecting 1,739 lives.

6. Volunteer Services

This program links the varied gifts and abilities of volunteers with needs of people and agencies throughout the United States and Canada. Volunteers are linked with CRWRC-sponsored projects or with partner-agency ministry opportunities. Thirty-three groups were linked to projects, 156 individual volunteers were placed, and four special service projects were completed.

CRWRC is grateful to God for the many volunteers who came from throughout Canada and the U.S. to give their time and talents as an expression of God's love.

7. Resource development

CRWRC hopes to make involvement in CRWRC's mission as meaningful and fulfilling as possible for those who support CRWRC financially. Its strategy for generating necessary financial resources is simply to present the needs and opportunities for ministry.

The Peter Fish Bank Program, which was launched this year to provide our churches and families with a personal response to world hunger, generated many encouraging comments. The concept is based on the Peter fish, an actual fish in the Sea of Galilee that has been named after a story recorded in the gospel. We have used it as an example of Jesus' compassion for the poor. Banks shaped like fish were distributed to Sunday-school children, who brought them home to their families to generate giving for the poor. This is an exciting, visual way for families and children to learn about and respond to the needs of the hungry around the world. It adds a new visual element to world-hunger week and initiates a personal response. This program will be developed further, and more churches will be encouraged to participate next year.

Recently CRWRC has been using the gifts of award-winning contemporary Christian music artists Dick and Melodie Tunney to help present the Free a Family Program to a wider audience. The Tunneys' song "We Can Touch the World" was written following their experience on a CRWRC ministry field. They will perform it with a video in fifty-some concerts this year and will speak about their participation with the Free a Family Program, hoping to encourage their audiences to consider involvement.

More personal contact with key churches and individual supporters became a priority for CRWRC last year. This emphasis is being more fully carried out by two full-time field representatives. However, the death of Robert Comer, who served in one of those positions, was a great loss to the new program and to CRWRC. By midyear, Ms. Patti Saunders began as field representative for the Western U.S. region.

CRWRC is working to strengthen the link between churches and individuals and CRWRC international workers through the Staff Partner Program, which encourages regular correspondence between workers and supporters as well as personal appearances by workers returning to the U.S. and Canada.

CRWRC continues to work with the diaconates by providing encouragement and resource material to generate contributions for CRWRC's ministry of mercy. Increasingly, we are providing individualized projects for interested churches, which make their involvement with CRWRC as meaningful and fulfilling to them as possible.

CRWRC continues to develop a program of direct mail, offering important news and information about CRWRC's work and opportunities for direct response.

Our income goal for the year was challengingly high, and we are working hard with churches and individual supporters to reach it.

8. Long-range plan

The basis for the outreach of CRWRC is found in the "Corporate Purposes" of the Christian Reformed Church in North America. The particular purpose that has become CRWRC's reason for existence reads, "to extend mercy and help to those in distress by reason of natural catastrophe and disaster, illness, old age, poverty, unemployment, and war, through synodical and classical agencies and the churches of the denomination." CRWRC tries to achieve this corporate purpose by providing needy persons around the world with increased access to the basic necessities of life. To do this, CRWRC attempts to promote the interdependent functioning of

communities and other groups by helping them identify and respond to their major problems and opportunities and to do so in the most cost-effective way. CRWRC believes that its actions can help the poor, the community, and the body of believers to flourish.

CRWRC's governing body has defined four guiding principles for the conduct of its ministry as it seeks to restore God's kingdom through Jesus Christ: (a) the use of, and challenge to, the talents and abilities of the poor so that they will be enabled and empowered; (b) mutual support by the poor and the rich, allowing them jointly to address and resolve the problems of poverty; (c) recognition of injustice, efforts to correct it, and affirmation of the dignity and worth of all people; and (d) mutual appreciation, which allows people to flourish through beneficial exchanges with each other.

The overarching goal of CRWRC is to assist partner groups and diaconates in reaching out to 144,000 families by the year 2000, empowering them to experience greater completeness in Christ.

B. *International programs*

1. Introduction

There is much progress to be thankful for in CRWRC's international programs. Since World War II life expectancy in the developing world has increased by about one-third, infant and child death rates have been halved, the proportion of children starting school has risen from 50 percent to 75 percent, and the number of rural families with access to safe drinking water has risen from just 10 percent to almost 60 percent.

But the technological, economic, and consumption gaps between the poor and the wealthy grow at an alarming pace. Contrary to the trickle-down theory, the education and patterns of consumption of the rich have not benefited the poor. Furthermore, rich nations are not learning more stewardly use of the earth's resources, and the consumption patterns of the rich are depleting the resources of the earth. While the rich use huge quantities of resources, the poor possess very few and out of desperation often do damage to the land and water that are available.

2. The CRWRC response

In overseas programs, CRWRC focuses on the poor in such a way that *cultural transformation* and *sustainable development* (the two cannot be separated) occur as the result of the following kinds of CRWRC efforts:

- Encouragement of locally owned effective solutions resulting in improved health, increases in agricultural yields and incomes, advances in basic education, and diaconal service to each other. In diaconal work CRWRC seeks to help those in need by means of building the ministry of the institutional church.
- The formation of networks between and the increase in capacity of Christian organizations, both local and national.
- The formation of intermediary organizations which lead to participation, unity, and awareness among the poor.

Such programs benefit individuals, families, and communities directly as well as indirectly by influencing policy, structural justice, and availability of opportunities. CRWRC programs protect God's creation. Often CRWRC involvement in a region begins with a disaster response.

As Reformed Christians, CRWRC workers recognize that CRWRC's work must compel them, to the extent possible,

- a. To profess a relationship to Jesus Christ.
- b. To work toward reconciliation of people to God and the creation.
- c. To reflect God's special care for the poor.
- d. To contextualize the message.
- e. To intentionally link CRWRC, wherever possible, to the institutional church.

3. Past results, future plans

The total number of families assisted in **Asia** has fluctuated between 18,000 and 22,000, going down some when CRWRC is phasing out of its work with a particular partner organization. The plan in 1993-1994 was to help 22,751 families toward self-sufficiency. The actual count was 17,976, the decrease due to CRWRC's pulling back from a stretched network of urban health activities in the Philippines. The work in Asia cost \$816,982, against a planned amount of \$861,631 (cost per family: \$45). The number of families proposed in 1995-1996 is being increased to 35,436, and the cost per family is being decreased to \$33.

Two new projects are proposed in **Bangladesh** and one in **Indonesia**. New partnerships are being forged with the Bangladesh Northern Evangelical Lutheran Church, which serves the Santal indigenous people in northwest Bangladesh; the Australian Baptist Mission Society (the project is called Pratassha) with the majority community in north central Bangladesh; and the Christian Church of Java, Indonesia. The Indonesia project is scheduled to be completed by the year 2000, the year CRWRC plans to phase out of Indonesia.

In **India**, work with the small CRC of India expands, and new possibilities for urban work will be explored. The Indochina research will most likely result in the development of one or two pilot projects.

In **East Africa** (7150 families in 1987-1988; 15,437 in 1992-1993) the programs have experienced a steady increase in families participating. The plan in 1993-1994 was to make a big leap forward in hopes of assisting 25,900 families toward self-sufficiency. The actual count is 29,300. Much of the increase is in Kenya, where a U.S. AID grant fueled a large expansion. In 1993-1994, \$979,351 was spent on East Africa, compared to a planned amount of \$934,977 (cost per family: \$33). The number of families planned in East Africa in 1995-1996 is being increased to 51,450 from the 1994-1995 plan of 33,250.

In Kenya, the U.S. Agency for International Development (AID)-funded project has been completed. CRWRC will apply for another grant. It anticipates beginning work with the Reformed Church of East Africa and also will continue work with the Reformed Church in America to enhance the RCA's relationship and project involvement in southern Africa. CRWRC's work in Ethiopia is beginning; it is developing responses in Sudan and will continue in Rwanda as necessary.

In **Latin America**, CRWRC has enjoyed significant increases in the number of families assisted, going up from 11,256 in 1987-1988 to 30,839 in 1992-1993. The plan in 1993-1994 was to assist 35,978 families with development. The actual number was 28,216. The cost of CRWRC's Latin America work was \$1,716,107, compared to a planned amount of \$1,732,046 (cost per

family: \$61). In Latin America, the number of families planned in 1995-1996 is being decreased to 32,715 from the 1994-1995 plan of 38,368.

In the Dominican Republic, a new partner group is being proposed, Pro Mujer, an urban income-generation plan consistent with the decision last year to consider expansion of the work there. In Haiti, because of all the disruption as this material is being prepared, no definite plan is in place. Proposed work in Central America, while at a maintenance level in regard to costs, includes several new partner groups:

- A new project in El Salvador with either the Lutherans or Episcopalians.
- A new project in Honduras with Ven A Servir.
- A new project in Nicaragua with ACJ (Asociacion De Cristiano Jovenes).

During the past six years, **West Africa** programs have assisted between 3,665 and 6,266 families. The plan in 1993-1994 was to assist 3,897 toward self-sufficiency. The actual number was 3,485. Many families which last year were reported in partner consultation programs in Nigeria were not reported in 1993-1994. The West African budget was \$909,696 actual against a plan of \$963,130 (cost per family: \$261).

The number of families planned in West Africa during 1995-1996 is being increased to 10,542 from the 1994-1995 goal of 7,417.

With increases in CRWRC funding and grants, the Arid Lands program is being expanded. Arid Lands will test three pilot programs:

- a. In Mali with the Pan African Christian Women's Association.
- b. In Niger with ACEN (Christian Church Association of Niger), an outreach related to a church.
- c. In Senegal, an irrigation scheme titled Farandol.

In Guinea, one last attempt is being made toward an effective project. An evaluation in April 1996 will help determine whether CRWRC should go on with this work.

Overall, CRWRC's international program can be summarized in the following figures:

- 1991-1992 total of families served: 68,353.
- 1992-1993 total of 75,022.
- 1993-1994 total of 78,977 (planned: 88,526).
- 1994-1995 plan is for 101,438.
- 1995-1996 proposal is for 118,536.

The expenditure for all international programs in 1993-1994 was \$4,455,826 (against \$4,536,376 planned) (cost per family: \$56).

4. Summary

CRWRC overseas *development* programs in 1995-1996 are planned to involve 118,536 families who do not have clean water, enough food, basic education, more than a rudimentary shelter to live in, or steady incomes (more than 500,000 individuals, about 1 of every 2,000 of the 1 billion people in these conditions). Without CRWRC's assistance, these people will not be able to feed themselves, find employment and income, become skilled. For

these families, education is out of reach, and jobs and resources are scarce. There are many barriers to their progress: illness and disease, discrimination from oppressive and corrupt petty tyrants, an overpopulated and deteriorating environment, violent conflicts. This fifth of the world's population, struggling for survival at the edge of subsistence, lacking the most minimal requirements for life, eagerly searches for and responds to opportunities. A disproportionate percentage of the world's population, which increases by 80 million per year, is in these so-called "developing countries."

CRWRC remains committed to activities which celebrate and affirm a relationship to Jesus Christ, reconcile people to God and the creation, reflect God's special care for the poor (in a contextualized manner), and intentionally make connections with the institutional church wherever possible.

At this time CRWRC is considering several countries in Indochina, Ghana in West Africa, and Rwanda and Sudan in East Africa as locations for additional programs. Meanwhile, phaseouts are being planned in Indonesia and the Philippines in Asia; Kenya and Tanzania in East Africa; the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, and Mexico in Latin America; and Guinea and Nigeria in West Africa. A country like the Philippines and a denomination like the Philippines CRC are ready for phaseout planning because they have sources of funding from within.

C. *Finance*

1. CRWRC's financial picture since 1990 (see chart on next page)

2. Fluctuations of the Canadian dollar

The declining Canadian dollar continues to limit purchasing power. Every penny lost on exchange lessens the funding capacity by \$24,000 on the \$2.4 million allotted for international programs. Nevertheless, the faithfulness of contributors to CRWRC and their increased support have thus far offset the need to trim international expenditures.

3. Canadian government funding

While CRWRC continues to receive substantial dollars (over \$1,200,000 Can. for 1994-1995) from the Canadian government through the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), the Canadian Council for International Cooperation (CCIC), Partnership Africa Canada (PAC), and more recently from the Saskatchewan Council for International Cooperation (SCIC), cuts in government spending will undoubtedly influence CRWRC's ability to expand international programs. The challenge is to maintain what it has and to be more creative in accessing decentralized funds, in monetizing foodstuffs for program activity, and in maximizing matching grants.

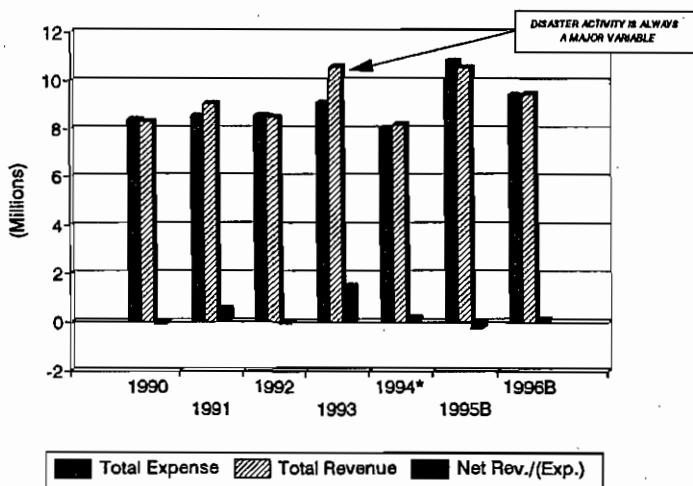
4. The Canadian Foodgrains Bank

CRWRC, one of twelve church-based partner members, annually commits \$250,000 (Can.) to its account at the Canadian Foodgrains Bank (CFGB). Matched four to one by the Canadian government, this amount gives back to CRWRC \$1.25 million in food resources each year. Christian Reformed Church members in Canada support this program in the form of cash and/or grain donations. During 1993-1994, CRWRC had opportunity to use this resource in response to the refugee crisis in Rwanda and surrounding countries, the drought in southern Ethiopia, and the continuation of refor-

CRWRC-Consolidated Revenue and Expense History/Budgets, Including Disasters
 (B = Budget, * 1993/94 was a ten-month fiscal period,
 ** Disaster budgets often include a carryover from the previous year)

For the fiscal years ended in:

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994*	1995B	1996B
International	5,424,536	5,427,297	5,271,011	5,429,847	4,311,519	5,913,639	5,390,731
Domestic	761,015	707,665	594,113	621,746	917,063	1,220,079	924,138
Disaster **	865,749	1,055,190	953,524	1,456,777	1,288,095	1,580,160	773,342
Administration	875,727	789,550	902,472	839,670	750,560	1,003,729	1,024,755
PR/Education	449,623	551,014	812,992	762,387	742,604	1,087,985	1,276,758
Tot. Exp.	8,376,650	8,530,716	8,534,112	9,110,427	8,009,841	10,805,592	9,389,722
Tot. Rev.	8,276,813	9,055,614	8,462,980	10,585,799	8,161,681	10,536,242	9,467,889
Net R/(E)	(99,837)	524,898	(71,132)	1,475,372	151,840	(269,350)	78,117



estation projects in East Africa, using food as wages. Approximately 300,000 people benefited overall. CRWRC also engaged in two monetization projects, one in Kenya and one in Bangladesh, enhancing local development through the marketing and sale of Canadian grain products. CRWRC's partnership in the CFGB provides unique opportunities to collaborate with other CFGB partners, to increase resources and expertise, and to augment the relief and development activities of CRWRC.

5. United States government funding

During 1994-1995, CRWRC administered five grants from the United States Agency for International Development, totaling \$1,040,000. These grants underwrite a variety of activities, from the distribution of tools and seeds to Rwandan farmers to an in-depth study of partner institution-building. Recently, CRWRC received grants for 1995-1996 totaling \$350,000. Additional grant proposals will be submitted for the 1995-1996 fiscal year.

6. Detailed financial information

Detailed financial information and budgets will be submitted to synod by way of the *Agenda for Synod 1995—Financial and Business Supplement*.

IV. Recommendations

A. That synod authorize the agency directors and board presidents of CRWRC-U.S.A. and CRWRC-Canada to represent CRWRC at synod.

B. That CRWRC missionaries who are presently in North America be presented to and acknowledged by synod.

C. That synod commend the work of mercy carried on by CRWRC and urge the churches to take one offering per quarter to provide the funds necessary for this ministry.

D. That synod elect to the board of CRWRC from nominations listed in Section II, C.

E. That synod ratify the reappointment of Mr. John De Haan as the director of CRWRC-U.S.A. for the term specified in the report (see II, D) or until such time as regulations for synodical appointments are changed.

Christian Reformed World Relief
Committee

John De Haan, director, CRWRC-U.S.A.

Ray Elgersma, director, CRWRC-Canada

I. Introduction

The Christian Reformed Church Loan Fund, Inc., U.S. was organized by Synod 1983 with a directive to assist organized Christian Reformed churches in the financing of capital improvements. The Loan Fund concentrates its efforts in the United States; Canada has its own similar fund. The board of directors, responsible to synod, oversees the loan approval process and determines interest rates. The board also establishes interest rates for securities sold primarily to Christian Reformed constituents.

II. Board matters

A. New director

The Christian Reformed Church Loan Fund board is pleased that Mr. Harry Vander Meer joined the agency upon his retirement as denominational financial coordinator on September 1, 1994. Mr. Vander Meer assumed the responsibilities formerly performed by Mr. Garrett C. Van de Riet, who, for the third time, has retired from denominational service. Mr. Vander Meer is salaried at less than full time but can hardly be classified as a part-time employee. For such service the board is profoundly grateful.

The members of the Loan Fund board of directors are Mr. Donald Molewyk (1995), Mr. Merle Prins (1995), Mr. Gerard Borst (1996), Mr. Henry Washington (1996), Mr. John Feikens (1997), and Mr. Gerald Van Wyke (1997).

The terms of Mr. Molewyk and Mr. Prins will expire on September 1, 1995. Their faithful service is most appreciated. The board requests synod to appoint two members from the following nominees to the Loan Fund board for terms as stated.

B. Nominations

Position #1 - select one for a three-year term through August 31, 1998

Rev. Gerard (Jerry) Dykstra is pastor of Cascade Fellowship CRC, Grand Rapids. He was an elder delegate to Synod 1986 and minister delegate to Synod 1993, serving as reporter for the finance advisory committee. He was formerly president and CEO of Brinderson DeLaval Sales and Service Incorporated.

Rev. Herman Hoekstra is a pastor emeritus of the CRC, having served four churches during active ministry and a number of interim pastorates since retirement. He has been a delegate to synod six times. He has served on various denominational boards, including the Loan Fund board, and on several classical committees.

Position #2 - select one for a three-year term through August 31, 1998

Ms. Jany Admiraal is a member of South Kendall CRC (Miami, FL) but currently attends Seymour CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan. A graduate of Calvin College, she is preparing for CPA certification and is employed by Helmholdt and Co. CPAs.

Ms. Kelli Schutte is a member of Discovery CRC, Jenison Michigan, where she serves as youth-group leader. A graduate of Calvin College, she now serves as adjunct professor of finance there. She was formerly a loan officer with Michigan National Bank.

III. Sources of funding

Funds for the Loan Fund operation are derived from the following sources:

- The sale of notes in those states where legal approval to offer has been obtained.
- The gradual liquidation of non-interest-bearing notes of the former Christian Reformed Church Help Committee, which was dissolved December 31, 1983. Balances of these notes as of December 31, 1994, were \$120,923 U.S. and \$27,837 Canadian.
- Gifts and bequests made to the corporation.
- Bank loans and interagency borrowing consistent with the corporation's articles of incorporation and bylaws.

IV. Growth of operations

A. The Loan Fund is now qualified to sell notes to investors in the District of Columbia and twenty-three states: Alaska, Arizona, Colorado, Connecticut, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Iowa, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, Ohio, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Texas, and Washington. Efforts continue toward the addition of other states with CRC population where cost of registration is reasonable.

B. As of December 31, 1994, a total of \$5,447,063 of interest-bearing notes held by investors was outstanding. Maturities range from one year to ten years, and interest rates vary from 4.00 percent to 9.25 percent, reflecting market conditions at the time the notes were issued.

C. To date, over 260 requests for loan information have been received from various Christian Reformed churches in the United States; nearly seventy loan applications have been approved. As of December 31, 1994, a total of \$8,294,016 U.S. and \$353,658 Canadian was outstanding. Loan delinquencies do occur from time to time, but they are minimal.

D. Growth of operations is also reflected in the following data (U.S. and Canada consolidated):

	1992	1993	1994
Loans Receivable	\$5,735,418	\$7,842,291	\$8,502,209
Loans and Notes Payable	\$3,927,057	\$5,215,655	\$5,994,238
Fund Balance	\$2,745,133	\$2,781,496	\$2,865,402

E. The audited financial report as of December 31, 1994, appears in the *Agenda for Synod 1995—Financial and Business Supplement*.

V. Staff changes

During this past year, Mr. Garrett Van de Riet retired as executive director. Mr. Harry J. Vander Meer now serves as executive director.

VI. Recommendations

- A. That Mr. Harry J. Vander Meer, executive director, or any member of the board of directors of the Christian Reformed Church Loan Fund, Inc., U.S. be given the privilege of the floor when matters pertaining to the Loan Fund are discussed.
- B. That synod approve the four nominees and vote for two of the four to serve on the board of directors of the Christian Reformed Loan Fund, Inc., U.S.
- C. That synod thank Mr. Donald Molewyk and Mr. Merle Prins for their many years of excellent service on the Loan Fund board of directors.
- D. That synod acknowledge and thank Mr. Garrett C. Van de Riet for the years of service he has devoted to the CRC Loan Fund, Inc., U.S.

Christian Reformed Church Loan Fund,
Inc., U.S.

Harry J. Vander Meer, executive director

I. Introduction

In accordance with its mandate, CEACA has continued to administer the sponsorship of international students in educational programs designed to upgrade their qualifications for service in their home churches and countries. This strategic ministry clearly concretizes our denomination's commitment to help Reformed churches throughout the world, especially in developing countries, as they seek to advance the kingdom of God in their areas. CEACA has always given priority to denominations whose resources are limited and whose needs are most urgent.

Most students sponsored by CEACA follow programs at Calvin Theological Seminary, but in recent years a number of programs have been approved at other institutions "closer to home" or more suitable to a student in terms of language. During the past academic year, for example, CEACA sponsored two students for study programs at Justo Mwale Theological College in Lusaka, Zambia, and one for study at the University of Stellenbosch in South Africa.

In addition, the committee has once again provided library assistance to developing seminaries of churches abroad.

II. The committee

The current members of the committee are Mrs. Thelma Boonstra, Mr. Chris Cok, Dr. Henry De Moor, Mrs. Evelyn De Vries, Ms. Karen Helder, Rev. Harvey Kiekover, and Ms. Geraldine Vanden Berg. Mr. John De Jager, who was scheduled to retire from the committee on September 1, 1994, served an additional four months as chairman of the committee, with permission from the Board of Trustees, for which service beyond the call of duty we owe him thanks.

The committee is grateful to Mrs. Nancy Spiering of CRWRC for her continued and invaluable administrative assistance during 1994-1995.

III. The ministry of CEACA

A. Student sponsorship

The following students have been or are being sponsored by CEACA during the 1994-1995 academic year:

- Virgilio Bernardino (Philippines)
- Winston Kawale (Malawi)
- Myung Hee Lee (Korea)
- Dipaniel Magodoro (Zimbabwe)
- Abraham Mbachirin (Nigeria)
- Paul Mpindi (Zaire)
- Isaac Pandasvika (Zimbabwe)
- Chan Thleng (Myanmar)

Funds were also reserved for two other students, both from Nigeria, but at the time of this writing these persons have not been successful in securing visas to enter the United States.

We must also note here that Calvin Theological Seminary currently sponsors an additional seven international students through its International Student Assistance Fund, formerly known as the CEACA-CTS program.

B. *Library assistance*

The committee approved five applications for library assistance for the 1994-1995 academic year:

- Institute for Christian Studies (Mkar, Nigeria)
- Zomba Theological College (Malawi)
- Smith Memorial Bible College (Baissa, Nigeria)
- Christian Reformed Seminary and Bible College (Philippines)
- Instituto Superior Evangelico de Estudios Teologicos (Argentina)

Grants are channeled through the library program of the Reformed Ecumenical Council. These funds enable grantees to order new theological books at a considerable discount. Mr. Peter De Klerk has once again served CEACA ably and tirelessly in the area of library assistance.

III. CEACA's future

A. *Difficulties faced by the committee*

The vision which currently guides CEACA in its work can be stated as follows:

The CRC assists churches abroad by providing educational opportunities to their present and future leaders at its own or closely related institutions of learning in North America or similar institutions abroad and by providing library support to their seminaries, Bible institutes, and theological schools.

Initially CEACA assisted students at CRC and CRC-related schools. Subsequently, its purpose was widened. In 1994-1995, the CRC has every reason to review this vision in a world of need and either to reaffirm or modify it in the light of changing realities.

Over the years CEACA has encountered difficulties in implementing and administering this vision, difficulties that have increased to the point where they cannot be ignored:

1. Volunteer part-time staff find it difficult to contend with the administrative work load involved in the program.
2. Volunteer part-time staff find it difficult to contend with necessary promotional activities that increasingly require professional expertise.
3. The ministries of the CRC need streamlining to avoid duplication of efforts.
4. There should be avenues of more meaningful and permanent day-to-day accountability.
5. The name *CEACA* does not communicate and is a hindrance to promotional activity.

In an effort to overcome these difficulties, CEACA engaged in a process of self-study that culminated in the decision of Synod 1992 "that this educational ministry to churches abroad can effectively be carried out by a volunteer committee serving as an independent agency of synod" (*Acts of Synod 1992*, p. 638, Art. 38).

B. *Ad hoc committee's proposals*

Upon the prodding of the executive director of ministries (EDM) in a memo dated November 8, 1993, CEACA began yet another round of self-study, this

time by way of an ad hoc committee mandated by the EDM to review the committee's structure. This committee, made up of representatives of CEACA, Calvin Seminary, and World Missions, considered various options:

- That CEACA continue to function as an independent committee of synod.
- That CEACA's work be assumed by World Missions.
- That CEACA's work be assumed by Calvin Seminary.
- That CEACA's work be assumed by both World Missions and Calvin Seminary by way of division of mandate.
- That CEACA's work be assumed by a joint committee of World Missions and Calvin Seminary.
- That CEACA's work in the area of library support be assumed by the World Literature Committee and/or the Reformed Ecumenical Council.

After much reflection and discussion, the ad hoc committee proposed and CEACA recommends to synod the following course of action:

1. That synod assign CEACA's international-student scholarship program to Calvin Seminary and World Missions in the following manner:
 - a. That synod assign to Calvin Seminary that part of CEACA's international-student scholarship program relating to those who study at Calvin Seminary.
 - b. That synod encourage Calvin Seminary to continue the practice of using the services of volunteer counselors for international students.
 - c. That synod encourage World Missions to maintain its current scholarship program for churches born of or assisted by its mission work.
 - d. That synod assign to World Missions CEACA's program of scholarship assistance for leaders from Reformed/Presbyterian churches that are not and have not been assisted by its mission work who desire to study at schools other than Calvin Seminary.
2. That synod assign to Calvin Seminary CEACA's library-support program.
3. That synod instruct the Board of Trustees to monitor these and related programs by way of the executive director of ministries and to recommend any appropriate adjustments in order to ensure that the historic vision associated with CEACA continues to be implemented by agencies of the CRC.
4. That synod release CEACA from its mandate and thank all those who have generously supported this work and all those who have faithfully served on the committee in the past twenty-six years.
5. That synod instruct the Board of Trustees to distribute CEACA's assets according to a formula whereby 20 percent of current ministry-share income is designated for World Missions and 80 percent of current ministry-share income is designated for Calvin Seminary. The endowment fund and its proceeds are to be designated for Calvin Seminary in accordance with the implied trust.

Grounds:

- a. Volunteer part-time staff find it difficult to contend with the administrative work load involved in the program.
- b. Volunteer part-time staff find it difficult to contend with necessary promotional activities that increasingly require professional expertise.
- c. The ministries of the CRC need streamlining to avoid duplication of efforts.
- d. There should be avenues of more meaningful and permanent day-to-day accountability.
- e. The name *CEACA* does not communicate and is a hindrance to promotional activity.
- f. Transferring the mandate to Calvin Theological Seminary and Christian Reformed World Missions provides for the continued implementation of our denomination's vision of educational assistance to churches abroad.
- g. The proposed formula for division of assets is consistent with the genesis of *CEACA*, with the support that Calvin Theological Seminary has provided the committee over the years, and with the distribution of mandate as indicated above.

IV. Recommendations

- A. That the secretary of *CEACA*, Dr. Henry De Moor, be given the privilege of the floor when *CEACA* matters are discussed.
- B. That synod adopt Recommendations B, 1 through 5 (above) and the seven accompanying grounds.
- C. That synod express its gratitude to all current board members and assistants of *CEACA* as well as to all those who have served *CEACA*'s ministry in whatever capacity during its twenty-six years of "independent existence, and approve the work of ministry performed by the committee."
- D. That synod especially recognize the services of Mr. Peter De Klerk. Mr. De Klerk has been involved in *CEACA*'s ministry since 1971 and during that time has spent countless hours managing and administering its library-assistance program.

Committee for Educational Assistance
to Churches Abroad
Henry De Moor, secretary

I. Organization

The Fund for Smaller Churches Committee is composed of three lay people and two ministers, in keeping with previous synodical decisions. The present membership is as follows: Mr. James Hofman (1995), president; Rev. Gary P. Hutt (1996), secretary; Mr. James Evenhouse (1997), treasurer; Rev. Lambert Sikkema (1995), vicar; and Mr. Art Ruiter (1996).

II. Work of the committee

Statistics for the calendar year 1994:

Applications processed	100 (103 in 1993)
Assistance granted	100 (some provisionally)
Average size of congregation	31.44 families (30.51 in 1993)
Educational allowances granted	26 (21 in 1993)

III. Matters requiring synodical action

A. Representation at synod

The committee requests that its secretary and treasurer be consulted on matters pertaining to FSC when considered either by synod or its advisory committee, and it requests that they be given the privilege of the floor. In the absence of either the secretary or treasurer, it requests the same privilege for other members of the committee.

B. Recommendations re financial matters

1. That the minimum salary for ministers serving churches receiving assistance from FSC be set at \$26,900 for 1996 (\$26,150 in 1995, \$25,400 in 1994, \$24,700 in 1993, \$24,100 in 1992) and that Canadian minimum salary to be set at \$29,590 ($\$26,900 \times 110 \text{ percent} = \$29,590$) (see 10 below).
2. That a service increment of \$100 per year, for up to thirty years of service, continue to be granted.
3. That child allowance of \$600 continue to be granted for every unmarried child up to age 19 (age 23 if enrolled full-time at an educational institution in an undergraduate program).
4. That automobile expenses be reimbursed at the rate of \$.30 a mile (\$.30 per kilometer in Canada) times the percentage of ministry-share reduction granted.
5. That an allowance of up to 20 percent of the salary subsidy be granted each congregation which provides its minister with health/dental/life insurance offered by the Consolidated Group Insurance of the CRC or insurance comparable to it. Insurance coverage of the pastor and family is mandatory for congregations receiving FSC assistance.

6. That salary allowance for stated supply be set at \$330 per week for 1996 (\$320 per week for 1995, \$310 per week for 1994, \$300 for 1993, \$280 for 1992).
7. That the contribution toward the minister's salary in congregations receiving assistance from FSC be not less, and if possible more, than \$455 per family for 1996 (\$440 per family for 1995, \$425 per family for 1994, \$415 for 1993, \$405 for 1992).
8. That congregations in the U.S. receiving assistance from FSC shall pay a Social Security/Medicare offset to their pastors in the amount of at least \$2,540 for 1996 (\$2,425 for 1995, \$2,425 for 1994, \$2,425 for 1993, \$2,340 for 1992).
9. That FSC churches in the U.S. be assisted in the Social Security/Medicare offset according to the following formula: churches shall receive assistance in the amount of 10 percent of the approved salary subsidy for 1995.
10. That a cost-of-living differential allowance of 10 percent be added to the minimum salary and allowances paid to pastors serving Canadian congregations assisted by FSC. The Canadian churches shall also contribute at a rate of 110 percent of the per family contribution rate established for the U.S. churches for 1996 ($\$455 \times 110 \text{ percent} = \500).

Grounds:

- a. The disparity in the cost of living between the U.S. and Canada makes such an adjustment necessary.
 - b. Other denominational agencies give a differential premium to those employed in Canada.
11. That synod declare the continuing-education allowance for pastors in smaller churches to continue at \$350 for 1996.

Note: All pastors of churches with fewer than fifty families are eligible to apply for these funds.

12. That synod approve a Christian-education allowance of \$600 per child for each child attending a Christian school, grades K-12, for 1996.
13. That the 1996 ministry share for the Fund for Smaller Churches be set at \$20.12 per family (40 percent) and \$8.66 (60 percent) per communicant member, based on 72,226 families and 176,190 communicant members (\$19.17 per family [60 percent] and \$8.25 per communicant member [40 percent] for 1995, based on 73,600 families and 169,800 communicant members, \$16.67 and \$6.95 for 1994, \$12.00 for 1993, \$2.00 for 1992, \$17.00 for 1991).

C. Recommendations re committee membership

That synod, waiving normal procedure for the sake of continuity, appoint Mr. James Hofman and Rev. Lambert Sikkema to second terms as members of the FSC Committee.

Mr. James Hofman has served one term on the FSC Committee and is eligible for a second term. He is a member of Community Life CRC in Lockport, Illinois, where he serves on the church council. He is vice president of operations and sales for Ozinga Bros., Inc., in Alsip, Illinois.

Rev. Lambert Sikkema has also served one term on the FSC Committee and is therefore also eligible for a second term. He is pastor of Western Springs CRC in Western Springs, Illinois.

Both of these men have served the FSC Committee and the Christian Reformed denomination well.

Fund for Smaller Churches Committee
Gary P. Hutt, secretary

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For two-year terms

Member	Alternate
Gerry Bosma, Manitoba	Eugene Westra
Mary Bouwma, Western Michigan	Sharon Huist
Barbara Heerspink, Western Michigan	Ruth Oosterhof
Robert Heerspink, Western Michigan	Harold Postma
Peter Nicolai, Alberta	Henry Bosch

For three-year terms

Member	Alternate
Neill de Boer, Ontario	Diane Algera
Peter Szto, Western Michigan	Juan Flores
Carol Topp, Western Michigan	Mary Vander Vennen
Richard Williams, Chicago	William Van Dyke
Joe Wilson, Iowa	Marsha Van't Land

The persons listed above were endorsed by the committees of the five Pastoral Ministries divisions; they represent the expertise and commitment necessary for governing the overall work of Pastoral Ministries.

On the following pages are the final reports of the individual committees.

I. Introduction

During Synod 1992 the denomination was first made aware of its need for a director and an agency to respond to the growing crisis of emotional, physical, and sexual abuse. The recommendation came from a synodical committee appointed to examine the prevalence of abuse within the denomination. The committee's work was enhanced by comprehensive research conducted by the Calvin College Social Research Center.

The research concluded that 12 percent of the denomination's members identified themselves as victims of physical abuse, 13 percent identified themselves as victims of sexual abuse, and 19 percent as victims of emotional abuse. In all, nearly sixty thousand people within the denomination are victims of abuse.

Synod 1992 did not respond with the appointment of a professional staff person, but it did acknowledge the need for continuing work in the area of abuse education and prevention. The synodical committee on abuse, first appointed in 1989, was then reappointed to serve two more years with the mandate to (a) develop guidelines for responding to abuse allegations and (b) establish a denomination-wide abuse-prevention program.

The committee reported to Synod 1994 with the results of its work: guidelines for handling abuse allegations against church leaders, guidelines for choosing a therapist, guidance on the matter of forgiveness, and a recommendation for a professional staff person to carry on the work of the committee.

Synod 1994 was moved by speeches from delegates who were struggling with (a) allegations against members of the church, (b) survivors who brought great emotional needs to the pastorate, and (c) the development of policies and procedures to protect young and vulnerable church members from violations against their person. Acknowledging that a volunteer committee was insufficient to handle the task, synod approved the position of director for abuse prevention and an abuse-prevention division in the new Pastoral Ministries agency.

The newly created abuse-prevention division began in November 1994, with one staff person, the division director, Ms. Beth Swagman, who was nominated for the position by the Synodical Committee on Abuse Prevention and appointed by the Board of Trustees. Office support for the director is being provided through the office of Pastoral Ministries.

The addition of an abuse-prevention division with a professional staff person is unique in the faith community. It represents the pioneering efforts of the Christian Reformed Church in (a) educating its constituency about the harmful impact of abuse, (b) developing long-term preventive measures, (c) enfolded survivors into the fellowship of believers, and (d) bringing perpetrators into the saving arms of the Lord, our Savior.

II. Abuse-Prevention Committee

A. *Committee membership*

Synod 1994 decided that the Synodical Committee on Abuse Prevention should temporarily continue to assist in the recruitment and nomination of a director and then be dissolved. Its work was completed with Ms. Swagman's

acceptance of the appointment. A three-member interim Abuse-Prevention Committee was appointed to function until July 1, 1995, when abuse prevention will be assumed by the Pastoral Ministries board. The persons who agreed to serve on the interim committee are Ms. Carol Topp, Rev. Nicholas Vander Kwaak, and Rev. Edward J. Tamminga. Ms. Swagman serves the committee as staff support. The committee has met as needed and has greatly assisted in the initiation of this ministry.

B. Mandate

In the absence of a clearly defined and approved mandate for either the director of abuse prevention or the committee supervising the work, both the director and the committee have been working under the description of the proposed "functions of an abuse-prevention coordinator" contained in the *Agenda for Synod 1994* (p. 195) and repeated below. When the Pastoral Ministries board begins its work in July 1995, the mandate(s) of the director and the agency will be refined and adopted for approval.

- A. Supervising the editing, publication, and distribution to all the churches of the two reports on abuse in the CRC.
- B. Forming a team with the director of the Pastor-Church Relations Committee to deal with congregations where abuse is discovered in the leadership. This arrangement would lessen reliance on regional pastors, who, in general, have no training and are busy with their own ministries. It would also ensure consistency of procedures.
- C. Training, response teams in classes in both the U.S. and Canada.
- D. Developing protocols and questionnaires for volunteers in church programs such as Sunday school, Cadets, Calvinettes, and nursery attendants.
- E. Developing with CRC Publications material suitable for various age groups on what it means to be imagebearers of God in our human relationships.
- F. Developing materials for premarital counseling courses.
- G. Working with Calvin Theological Seminary faculty and acting as an educator there for future pastors on how to examine their own attitudes toward women, men, and children; how to relate pastorally with victims and perpetrators; and how to institute prevention in their congregations.
- H. Functioning as a consultant to denominationally related agencies that work with young people.
- I. Working with SCORR and with the Committee on Disability Concerns, given the special needs of the populations they serve. The denominational survey revealed that abuse is more prevalent among physically disabled people than in the general population.
- J. Keeping abreast of legal procedures and theory relating to the issue of abuse.

C. Salary disclosure

Job level	Number of positions	Compensation quartile (includes housing allowance)
5	1	2nd

III. Abuse-prevention activities

A. Education and training

In the early phase of this ministry, the director's efforts have been primarily education and training. She has been part of numerous meetings with abuse

task forces from CRC churches to offer advice and resources and has filled several speaking engagements, with adult-education groups, a Calvin College Interim class, a retreat with Calvinette leaders, classis meetings, council meetings, and conferences in Vancouver and Grand Rapids.

B. Documents produced

Several documents have been drafted, some of which are included in this report for further review by synod. Policies and procedures have been written for the churches to implement so as to prevent abuse in the following church programs: nursery, Sunday school, Calvinettes and Cadets, youth groups, and children's worship programs. In addition, policies have been written for responding to domestic-violence crises and to allegations of abuse against a church leader, and guidelines have been formulated for conduct of ministerial personnel. The documents are being compiled into a comprehensive booklet designed to educate churches about prevention strategies and procedures for responding to abuse allegations.

C. Networking

The director continues efforts to network with member churches and professionals across the United States and Canada so that a resource list of therapists, attorneys, and treatment centers can be developed for distribution to all the churches.

D. Listening and responding

The director has received more than thirty calls from individuals describing a CRC church which is struggling to respond compassionately to a survivor or perpetrator of abuse. A significant amount of time is devoted to listening to these stories of brokenness and trying to solve these problems effectively.

E. Fund-raising

A growing concern to the director is the financial problem which plagues small agencies that are dependent on ministry-share funds alone. In the coming year there will be an exploration of appropriate and sound fund-raising strategies to augment ministry shares.

F. Disseminating report and guidelines and revising guidelines in light of responses from churches

Synod 1994 "recommend[ed] to the churches the [abuse-prevention] committee's report to Synod 1994 together with the Guidelines for Ethical Sexual Conduct of Ministerial Personnel for study, prayer, and response." In September 1994, every CRC church was sent a copy of the committee's proposed guidelines with the request that responses be sent to the director of abuse prevention by January 15, 1995. The director was then to reconstruct the guidelines to reflect the input of the churches, the advice of church-polity advisers, the advice of legal counsel, and the advice of the general secretary of the CRCNA.

The Guidelines for Ethical Sexual Conduct of Ministerial Personnel were transferred to the office of abuse prevention for revision and inclusion in this report. At the same time, the guidelines were expanded to encompass the work of chaplains providing pastoral care in specialized settings.

The Guidelines for Ethical Sexual Conduct of Ministerial Personnel and the suggested Guidelines for Handling Abuse Allegations Against Church Leaders appear in the *Agenda for Synod 1995* immediately following the Communications to synod.

Abuse-Prevention Committee
Beth Swagman, director

I. Introduction

The Chaplain Committee of the Christian Reformed Church was established fifty-three years ago by Synod 1942. It gratefully reports on its efforts during this past year as it worked to coordinate and strengthen the ministry of CRC chaplains throughout the world.

The CRC is fortunate as a denomination to have a corps of dedicated chaplains who are often called upon to satisfy the hunger for spiritual answers to life's puzzling problems. Chaplains minister beyond the borders and memberships of congregations to places where peace is being pursued with great urgency: hospitals, prisons, nursing homes, psychiatric wards, and army camps, to name only a few of the places where chaplains represent the Prince of Peace. Frequently these are places where despair and pain go hand in hand.

Prisons especially are places where despair dominates the days. One of the most awful sounds in this troubled world is the metallic iron-on-iron clang of a cell door being shut. Prison doors often not only isolate a human being from the community, but also from hope. Yet even in prison, where hope is likely to vanish into the black hole of gloom, chaplains represent the God of hope.

Chaplaincy is a ministry which is often performed without the support system that is the privilege of pastors in more conventional congregations. In addition to loneliness and isolation, chaplains must often cope with the high stress of their calling. The emergency department of a hospital, the tense locked-down prison wing, and the psychogeriatric ward are not places for the weak of heart. Yet those are the parishes of some chaplains, and in these depressing and demanding situations, they bring the gospel of God's grace and peace. Praying during a meeting of spiritual care givers, Rev. A. Dirk Evans confessed, "Our task is too grand; in humbleness we still pursue . . . yet we carry on with a vision. . . a vision of the promised land."

II. The Chaplain Committee

A. *Committee membership*

The following persons serve on the Chaplain Committee: Mrs. Nell de Boer, Dr. Daniel De Witt, Mrs. Shirley Los, Mr. Harold Postma, Rev. Peter C. Hogeterp, Rev. Robert Heerspink, Rev. Raymond Swierenga, and Mrs. Arlene Wassink. Mr. Harold Postma serves as chairperson. Each of these persons serves on one or more subcommittees.

Besides the denominational Chaplain Committee, there also is a Canadian Chaplain Committee, which coordinates its work with the committee appointed by synod. The legal structure which makes this arrangement possible is provided by the legal structure of the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA. Serving on the Canadian Chaplain Committee are Mrs. Dianne Algera, Mrs. Nell de Boer, Rev. Evert Gritter, Rev. Peter C. Hogeterp, and Rev. Siebert Van Houten. Rev. Peter Hogeterp serves as chairperson.

B. *Administrative matters*

Somewhat tentatively the Chaplain Committee is feeling its way in the new administrative order, where it will function as a part of the agency now called Pastoral Ministries. Board and staff are convinced, however, that the Lord will

continue to lead his church and his servants in the ministry to those whom he himself called "the least of these brothers of mine." Honoring the past, they anticipate the future in trust and faith.

The Chaplain Committee wishes to report to synod that work has begun toward fulfilling the mandate received from Synod 1993 "to recommend strategies for ensuring the appropriate supervision and accountability of those pastors serving in specialized ministries." Pastoral Ministries hopes to submit appropriate recommendations to Synod 1996.

In compliance with the requirements of synod the following salary information is here provided:

Job level	Number of positions	Compensation quartile (includes housing allowance)
5	1	2nd

The financial statement, the auditor's report, the proposed budget, and the quota request will be published in the *Agenda for Synod 1995—Financial and Business Supplement*, which will be available at the time of synod.

III. Chaplaincy ministries

The Chaplain Committee takes great joy in being able to report that the chaplains continue their work even though institutional budget cuts threaten in many settings. The Chaplain Committee has endeavored to encourage and to support its chaplains in these spiritually needy and financially uncertain times.

The Chaplain Conference in June 1994 brought many CRC chaplains together for a time of prayer, study, and collegial fellowship. The conference was also the occasion when the chaplains and the staff bade farewell to Rev. Harold Bode, who was the executive director of the Chaplain Committee for more than twenty years. The new director, Rev. Jacob P. Heerema, was also welcomed at the conference. In his first year of service, he has placed high priority on making personal contact with as many chaplains as possible. Field visits provide much-needed affirmation and encouragement for the chaplains and their families. Rev. Heerema has become known as an enthusiastic advocate for chaplains and a thoughtful administrator.

The chaplaincy organization in whatever form it takes under the new Pastoral Ministries will continue to challenge pastors and seminarians with the need for this specialized ministry and inasmuch as it is able will facilitate the training and education of those who accept the call to chaplaincy. Through its membership in endorsing agencies and its presence at regulatory bodies, the Chaplain Committee has been able to promote chaplaincy in the various institutions of the U.S. and Canada.

In the offices of hospital administrators, in the cells of prisoners, in the barracks and chapels of soldiers and sailors, at the bedsides of terminally ill patients, and on the wards of long-term care facilities for aging citizens, chaplains continue to point toward the fountain of life, in whose light even the anguished may find hope.

In Canada Rev. Carl Tuyl reports that war still rages in the Mewburn Veterans Centre in Edmonton. The sights and sounds of battle reappear in the memory of the veterans who are lovingly cared for in the center. They are maimed not only physically but also, and perhaps even more painfully, spiritually; they bear the

scars of combat in their souls. The Christian Reformed denomination, through one of its chaplains, ministers in that place where every resident bears a personal pain, where unvoiced screams are heard only by God. It is not an easy congregation, for on every walkabout the chaplain meets the ravages of age and the horror of war. Rev. Harry Kuperus, however, ministers in this center with good cheer, upheld by God's empowering grace.

Nor is that the only difficult ministry performed by CRC chaplains in Canada. They comfort parents of stillborn children, they minister to alcoholics and their families, they support the care givers of handicapped persons, they make the rounds in hospitals with the medicine of mercy, they visit prisoners in their cells, and they teach ministers aspiring to become chaplains.

The Canadian Chaplain Committee records with gratitude and pride the most excellent service of the denomination's chaplains. Although a certain amount of anxiety about possible cutbacks seems to be on the minds of staff persons in many pastoral-care departments, CRC chaplains maintain their acute sense of calling and persevere in rendering exemplary service. In their ministry the church continues to voice the prophetic veto against the powers of evil.

The committee supports the chaplains to the best of its abilities. At conferences where Christian Reformed chaplains are present, opportunity to meet together is usually arranged. Wherever possible, visits are arranged through the ministry of the director. The Chaplain Committee is grateful that the position of Canadian chaplaincy director will soon become full-time.

The Canadian Committee reports several significant developments. Especially in the area of our contact with the government we have experienced some extraordinary successes. When the Ministry of Health of the Ontario government announced multimillion-dollar cutbacks which threatened the pastoral care to patients in psychiatric institutions, the Canadian Committee intervened with the Minister of Health and as many members of parliament as it could contact. The result was that no chaplaincy positions in the ministry's facilities were lost. The amount of cutbacks was also drastically reduced.

Through our representation on the council that regulates chaplaincy in Ontario, we have deeply penetrated the various levels of that province's government. The CRC is represented in Ontario on all regional committees. These committees actively lobby government ministers and members of parliament on behalf of chaplaincy. Our current part-time director was privileged to have opportunity to meet with the premier of Ontario and to speak with him about the needs for spiritual and religious care in the institutions of the province. Some results of this high-level discussion are already noticeable throughout the province.

Although the Canadian Chaplain Committee regards these successes with thankfulness, it also recognizes the urgent need to "nationalize" its work. It needs to seek representation on all the provincial regulatory bodies. The Canadian director of chaplaincy will have to consider this as an important part of his task.

In the past year the Canadian Committee was somewhat disappointed that no CRC ministers entered the program which leads to accreditation for chaplaincy. It hopes and trusts that in the future some Christian Reformed clergy in Canada will be attracted to this ministry, especially since there is a noticeable "graying" among current chaplains.

No Canadian chaplains lost their positions in this last year, one new member was welcomed into the ranks, and one CRC chaplain was appointed to an important coordinating position in the Toronto Conference of the United Church of Canada.

The Canadian Committee has decided to sponsor the participation of Rev. Suhail Ramadan at the International Conference of Prison Chaplains in August of this year. Rev. Ramadan works as a prison chaplain in Galilee, where Jesus identified himself with prisoners when he said, "I was in prison and you came unto me." A number of individual members of the CRC as well as some diaconates have sent us financial contributions for this cause.

Rev. Carl Tuyl has been actively involved as a leader in chaplaincy since 1969. He has provided visionary and bold leadership as the Canadian director since 1990. Directly as a result of his efforts for chaplaincy and for the denomination, the scope and intensity of chaplaincy in Canada, especially in Ontario, have developed rapidly. The committee faces the task of finding a replacement for him when he steps down in early 1995. The committee wishes him well as he settles into his new work as executive director of the Ontario Multifaith Council on Spiritual and Religious Care. Someone else will carry on the work; no one can take Carl Tuyl's place.

The Chaplain Committee, as it prepares to terminate its existence, commits the interest of chaplaincy to the new Pastoral Ministries agency, admittedly with some trepidation. This area of the denomination's ministry is not only extremely challenging but also unique.

It calls upon synod to acknowledge with gratitude to God the ministry of the chaplains, trusting that he, the Creator of all the human family, will continue to bless this outreach of the CRC, and that the members of the denomination will continue their support, both prayerful and financial, as chaplains continue to shine the light of forgiveness, redemption, and reconciliation to creatures of God who live in darkness.

Five new chaplains have been added during this past year: Rev. Harvey Kiekoover, currently serving the Holland Home in Grand Rapids, Michigan; Rev. Harry Kuperus, currently serving Mewburn Veterans Centre in Edmonton, Alberta; Rev. Edward Hommes, currently serving Borgess Medical Center in Kalamazoo, Michigan; Rev. Ronald Peterson, currently serving the Cranford Center in Cranford, New Jersey; and Mrs. Lydia De Ruiter, currently serving Midwest Regional Health Center in Palmerston, Ontario. Also during this year two of our chaplains have retired from chaplaincy: Rev. Jan Friend and Rev. John Meppelink. During 1994 Rev. Randy Rozema was granted a stipend for training.

The Chaplain Committee expresses special gratitude to Rev. Karl Willoughby and Rev. George Cooper, who during 1994 were deployed to Haiti. They have now returned to the United States, Rev. Cooper to his post on the USS WASP in Norfolk, Virginia, and Rev. Willoughby to his post at Fort Drum, New York.

Note: All the chaplains presently serving are listed in the *Yearbook*, pages 532-34.

IV. Recommendations

A. That Rev. Jacob P. Heerema, Rev. Carl Tuyl, and Mr. Harold Postma be granted the privilege of the floor when Chaplain Committee matters are discussed.

B. That time be allotted on Friday, June 16, 1995, for the presentation of chaplains in attendance at the annual Chaplain Conference, scheduled for June 15-17, 1995 (cf. Board of Trustees' recommendation concerning agency presentations at synod).

C. That synod take special note of the distinguished service of the Canadian director of chaplaincy, Rev. Carl Tuyl, for his outstanding leadership in this ministry.

D. That synod now dismiss with gratitude the members of the Chaplain Committee, namely, Mrs. Nell de Boer, Dr. Daniel De Witt, Rev. Robert Heerspink, Rev. Peter Hogeterp, Mrs. Shirley Los, Mr. Harold Postma, Rev. Raymond Swierenga, and Mrs. Arlene Wassink.

Chaplain Committee

Rev. Jacob P. Heerema, director

I. Introduction

The Committee on Disability Concerns (CDC) receives energy and guidance from this resolution by Synod 1985:

Whereas the Bible calls us to be a caring community as the covenant people of God,

Whereas we recognize that our Lord Jesus Christ requires the involvement of all his people in the ministry of his church,

Whereas we have not always made it possible for people with disabilities to participate fully in the community and have often isolated them and their families,

We pledge ourselves to be the caring community according to I Corinthians 12, paying special attention to the needs and gifts of people with physical, sensory, mental, and emotional impairments.

We pledge ourselves to make public these needs and capabilities through our various communication and educational materials.

We pledge ourselves to overcome three barriers:

1. the attitudinal barriers which make persons with disabilities feel unwelcome;
2. the communication barriers in sight, sound, and understanding which may impede participation; and
3. the physical and architectural barriers which make it difficult for persons with some disabilities to enter

(Acts of Synod 1985, pp. 702-03)

In 1986, synod, in keeping with this resolution, appointed a standing committee with a full-time staff to address these issues. In 1987, synod expanded the mandate of this standing committee, the Committee on Disability Concerns. This expanded mandate reads as follows:

a. To gather and disseminate information on services available from and through the CRC and other denominations.

b. To increase awareness among our constituency of the special needs of persons with disabilities by means of articles in our denominational publications.

c. To assist the churches in identifying and eliminating those barriers which hinder the full participation of persons who have disabilities in the life of the church through such actions as:

- 1) educating congregations through educational materials;
- 2) encouraging in-service training of local officebearers;
- 3) participating in regional programs and activities in conjunction with other local Christian organizations and churches, e.g., diaconal conferences;
- 4) ministering to persons with disabilities and their families by providing counsel where possible and assisting in obtaining legal and financial aid;
- 5) assisting the families of persons with disabilities to obtain Christian professional advice on matters such as guardianship, estate planning, marriage and family planning, and the development of living facilities.

(Acts of Synod 1987, pp. 555-56)

II. Committee members and staff

A. Committee membership

The committee is presently comprised of nine members—three from Canada and six from the United States. These members were chosen in accordance with three criteria: persons (1) having disabilities, (2) having family members with disabilities, and (3) serving as professionals in a disability field.

The CDC has also tried to maintain geographical balance and clergy representation in its membership. Since disability ministry will be consolidated with four other ministries and governed by a fifteen-member board, it may be impossible to maintain this disability diversity in the board membership. The CDC strongly encourages the new board to have at least three members with major, visible disabilities.

B. Staff

The staff of the CDC consists of a director and a program developer. Disability Concerns formerly had its own secretary, but it now receives secretarial assistance from the combined support staff of the Pastoral Ministries office.

C. Salary disclosure

According to the requirements of synod, salary information is provided below:

Job level	Number of positions	Compensation quartile (includes housing allowance)
5	1	2nd

III. The ministry of CDC

A. The CDC disseminates information on services available to people with disabilities and their families by printing and distributing

1. *Directory of Service Providers*, describing agencies related to the CRCNA and the services they provide to people with developmental disabilities.
2. *Breaking Barriers*, a newsletter sent three times a year to 4,000 subscribers and also to every CRC minister, clerk, and secretary of deacons.
3. *Disability Resource Guide*, sent to every congregation as part of its *Your Church in Action* manual.
4. A list of the resources and services CDC offers, which is sent annually to deacons.

B. CDC increases constituency awareness of needs people with disabilities have by means of

1. Articles in *Breaking Barriers* describing experiences of people who live with disabilities.
2. Articles in other CRCNA periodicals and reminders to their editors to feature disabilities.
3. Preaching, teaching, and speaking by CDC personnel for churches, schools, and various gatherings.

C. CDC assists churches to identify and eliminate disability barriers through the following activities:

1. Distributing educational materials such as self-evaluation checklists, disability-committee kits, special ministry guidelines, and book and video lists.

2. Providing to councils and congregations the onsite service of our program developer.
3. Holding workshops at diaconal and church conferences and sponsoring support groups and conferences for service providers, for church personnel interested in disabilities, and for people and families with disabilities.
4. Assisting, advising, encouraging, and advocating for people with disabilities and for their families through letters, phone calls, and face-to-face visits.
5. Participating by means of newsletters, conventions, and personal acquaintances in networks with other individuals and organizations experienced in various aspects of disabilities and helping those needing specialized assistance to locate particular services needed.

D. Progress

Synod 1993 accepted a CDC proposal and heartily recommended that the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) be implemented in all portions of the CRCNA. In pursuit of the plan that synod recommended for this implementation, the CDC corresponded with all Christian Reformed churches, proposing general guidelines for them to use. It then organized a task force of representatives from all the major denominational agencies to prepare printed material as help to the churches in planning their implementation.

Now that these materials have been disseminated, the CDC, as mandated by synod, will monitor denominational progress in implementing ADA provisions. The CRC *Yearbook* questionnaire on disability access, sent annually to all councils, has been adapted so as to provide the data needed for this purpose. The results of the questionnaire responses this year are as follows:

Churches that are

Barrier free	517
Partially accessible	309
Signing for the deaf	31
Providing aids for hearing impaired	403
Providing aids for visually impaired	153
Providing special programs	229
Providing transportation	104

Because the questionnaire was modified this year, we do not have a good base from which to estimate progress. Next year, however, the questionnaire will be unchanged, and we will then be able to note the change in church access and acceptance for people with disabilities.

Disability Concerns also proposes that synod add to the questions in Church Order Article 41 a question about whether the council has made the church building and programs fully accessible to people with disabilities. This question, if put to each council two or three times a year, would help to remind churches that the gospel of God's grace and the fellowship of his gifts must be made accessible to all people.

CDC is planning a Bible-study booklet on disabilities and the kingdom of God. It will be produced by CDC in cooperation with CRC Publications. The funding needed to cover expenses beyond what will be recovered from the projected sale of the booklet has already been provided by an allocation of

\$5,000 from the Fellowship Fund. If this booklet is successful in gaining wide use in the churches, it will help to raise sensitivity among CRC members with regard to the place of people with disabilities in the life of the church.

IV. Recommendations

A. That the privilege of the floor be given to the chairman of CDC, Mr. Bert Zwiers, and to its director, Dr. James L. Vanderlaan, when disability concerns are discussed.

B. That synod now dismiss with gratitude the members of the Committee on Disability Concerns, namely, Dr. Gerben de Jong, Mrs. Barbara Heerspink, Mr. Bryan Jansen, Mr. Jake Kuiken, Mrs. Jane Manten, Ms. Mary Stamps, Rev. Roger G. Timmerman, Dr. Joe Wilson, and Mr. Bert Zwiers.

Committee on Disability Concerns
James L. Vanderlaan, director

I. Introduction

This is the last time that the Pastor-Church Relations Committee (PCRC) will report to Christian Reformed synods in this format. PCRC will cease to exist as a governing body when its task is taken over by the Pastoral Ministries Board (PMB), which will be appointed by Synod 1995. The PMB will also govern the work done by the Chaplain Committee, the Committee on Disability Concerns, the Abuse-Prevention Committee, and the Synodical Committee on Race Relations. These changes will coincide with the imminent retirement of Rev. Louis Tamminga from the ministry and from the position of director of Pastor-Church Relations. Therefore, as part of this introduction, Rev. Tamminga surveys the ministry of PCRC since its inception in 1982.

Synod 1982 made some basic provisions that have proved to be greatly beneficial to pastors and churches alike. First, synod decided that the primary pastoral care givers to pastors must be their fellow pastors. In every classical region one or two regional pastors were appointed. Through the years the regional pastors have come to mean a great deal to pastors and the churches they serve. I will always count it a distinct privilege to have worked with these gifted and committed pastors.

Synod 1982 also launched the equally visionary and helpful mentor program. Just under two-thirds of all CRC pastors are, or have been, part of this support program, under which seasoned pastors team up on a one-to-one basis with newly ordained pastors.

That same synod also provided the basic design for the pastoral-relations committee, a support group within the local congregation for the pastor and his wife. Since the formation of these groups is optional, fewer than half of the congregations have established pastoral-relations committees. Yet many CRC pastors have benefited greatly from them.

Through the years the ministry-enhancement consultation program has grown in importance. Under this program the director of Pastor-Church Relations and a regional pastor meet as a team with a local church and its pastor(s) to explore ways of making ministry more effective. A good share of these consultations are devoted to conflict resolution. Over the past few years, as demands on the director's time increased, regional pastors and classical church visitors often visited churches as teams.

In spite of these efforts, the number of pastors who parted from their churches under less than agreeable circumstances has increased through the years. From 1972 through 1981 their number was 75. From 1982 through 1991 the number rose to 135. During 1992 some 33 pastors left their churches. During 1993 the number was also 33, 22 of these having resigned in order to associate with independent churches. In 1994 22 pastors resigned, of whom two went to independent congregations.

Although still very much a factor in CRC church life, polarization eased off a bit in 1994. There seems to be a growing desire among the members to get on with the true calling of the church.

Through the years of serving as director I have regularly conducted retreats for pastor-couples and, to a lesser extent, for elders and congregations. They

have left me with many precious memories and have enabled me to get to know many pastors, leaders, and church members.

For me it has always been a great honor to work with the highly gifted and committed people who have served on PCRC. They consistently encouraged, guided, and assisted the ministry to pastors and churches. I also owe a great debt of gratitude to my coworkers, Mrs. Irene Wiersma and Mrs. Alice Apol. The competence and grace with which they have assisted me these last several years added immensely to the quality and effectiveness of the PCRC ministry. Mrs. Wiersma also will retire in the summer of 1995.

II. Pastor-Church Relations Committee

A. *Members*

The following people have served on the PCRC since its beginning:

Rev. Harold Bode	Mr. Fred Hollebeek
Dr. Peter Borgdorff	Rev. Carl L. Kammeraad
Rev. William P. Brink	Mrs. Nancy Knol
Mrs. Joanne De Jong	Rev. James Kok
Dr. Richard R. De Ridder	Rev. Eugene Los
Rev. Robert De Vries	Mr. Ira Slagter
Mrs. Gladys Hasper	Dr. David Vander Ploeg
Mrs. Cobi Hofman	Mrs. Mirth Vos
Rev. Leonard J. Hofman	Dr. Richard Westmaas

The following are presently serving on the committee:

Rev. Edward J. Blankespoor	Rev. Charles Terpstra
Rev. Rolf T. Bouma	Rev. John Vander Lugt
Mrs. Mary Bouwma	Mrs. Mary Vander Vennen
Rev. Wayne Brouwer	Dr. William Van Dyke
Ms. Mary Ratliff	Rev. Richard Williams
Mrs. Anita Schoonveld	

Now that PCRC is organizationally part of Pastoral Ministries, it is recommended that synod dismiss the present committee with appreciation.

B. *New director*

PCRC is happy to inform synod that the search process for a successor to Rev. Louis Tamminga resulted in the appointment of Rev. Duane Visser as the next director of Pastor-Church Relations Services.

Rev. Visser has served for the last three years as chaplain and director of clinical pastoral education at Loyola University Medical Center, Chicago, Illinois. Previously he served as pastor of the CRC in Fresno, California, and as chaplain and director of the Department of Pastoral Services at Pine Rest Christian Hospital. He has extensive experience as a pastoral counselor and therapist and is an expert in counseling those suffering from alcohol addiction. Rev. Visser is a graduate of Calvin College and Seminary and holds master's degrees from Western Michigan University and Arizona State University. The Pastor-Church Relations committee is grateful to the Lord for bringing Rev. Visser to this ministry at this time.

C. Salary disclosure

Consistent with synodical requirement, salary information is provided below:

Job level	Number of positions	Compensation quartile (includes housing allowance)
6	1	3rd

III. Pastor-Church Relations ministries

A. Pastor-Church Relations Services

As reported in the introduction, the Pastor-Church Relations Committee essentially goes about its ministry according to the guidelines adopted by Synod 1982. Its approach is highly decentralized, since most of the direct pastoral care for pastors is provided through the network of regional pastors and the congregationally based committees. The ministry-enhancement process often but not always involves the director personally. Nevertheless, frequent consultations and interventions do occur, and then advice and encouragement are given by the director.

Synod 1988 ruled that the reference to *minister* in Pastor-Church Relations Services' (PCRS) mandate was also to include unordained church professionals. Until the summer of 1994 most of these professionals had been organized under the Christian Reformed Association of Staff Ministries (CRASM). The Pastor-Church Relations Committee and the Christian Reformed Association of Staff Ministries merged in 1994, and the PCRC subsequently appointed an Unordained Church Professionals Committee, a standing task force mandated to facilitate the ministry to these worthy workers. Their number has climbed to well over 450, including both full-time and part-time staff.

B. Ministerial Information Service (MIS)

During 1994, MIS in one way or another assisted practically every "vacant" church in the denomination. All churches beginning the search process for a new pastor received a packet of information from MIS consisting of the document *A New Pastor for Greenville*, a church profile form, and a two-page cover letter. During the year 2,096 ministerial profiles were mailed to these churches.

At the beginning of 1995 the vacancy rate stood at 130 churches—including some 15 churches with second staff positions to fill. During 1994, 105 pastors accepted calls; 24 of these were candidates. From the following summary it is plain that many churches preferred to call younger pastors. It was pointed out to these churches that such preference rests mostly on faulty presuppositions.

Age range	25-30	31-35	36-40	41-45	46-50	51-55	56- 60	61 and over
Number of pastors who accepted calls	14	22	24	13	15	4	8	5

Because of the shortage of pastors, vacancy periods have gradually become longer. For the churches vacant in January 1995, the vacancy lengths were as follows:

Months of vacancy	Number of churches
Fewer than 3	29
4 to 6	29
7 to 9	18
10 to 12	10
More than 12	43

Is the present shortage of pastors an indication that there is less interest in the ministry among young people than a generation ago? Not really. Twenty years ago the CRC had 649 ordained pastors (including home missionaries involved in church planting), serving 64,427 families. Today there are 872 such pastors, serving 75,439 families. Proportionately this amounts to a significant increase in the number of pastors. The high number of vacancies is due to earlier retirements, to resignations, and to the increased number of pastors per congregation and in specialized ministries.

C. *Observations on trends in the denomination*

Since joining PCRS Rev. Tammenga has kept notes of his dealings with pastors and churches, of denominational events and developments, and of observations made by CRC members and leaders. The following items from his notes suggest trends and patterns in church and society since PCRC began in 1982:

1. CRC church life

- a. Congregations became more diverse in terms of needs, interests, gifts, and ethnic backgrounds.
- b. Concern about the nature and practice of worship increased.
- c. Members have come to expect more from their churches.
- d. Members are less clear about the function of church authority.
- e. There is a growing eagerness to experience the Christian faith in daily life.
- f. Polarization, although abating, has not yet run its course.
- g. Giving for local churches is up, for denominational ministries, down.
- h. People with disabilities are playing a more significant role in church life.
- i. The number of drafty church basements has decreased.
- j. Volunteers are more difficult to recruit.
- k. The competence and leadership skills of women members are increasingly being utilized.
- l. After a century of growth, the membership of the CRC has decreased.
- m. Increasing numbers of "reconstituted" and "blended" families as well as single adults require intentional pastoral care.
- n. Youth ministries need continuing attention.
- o. Transferring to other denominations no longer seems to be a traumatic process for many.
- p. Sterile family relationships frustrate a personal relationship with God.
- q. During the late eighties a beginning was made toward recognizing and honestly facing various forms of abuse.
- r. Elders' tasks have become more demanding and complex.
- s. Denominational cohesiveness comes less from ethnic ties, more from common vision.
- t. Salvation by grace means living without guilt feelings (also for members of the CRC).

2. CRC clergy

- a. Calvin Seminary graduates of the last decades have done well in the ministry.
- b. There is a growing concern among pastors, especially the younger half, about spiritual and emotional health and nurturing relationships.
- c. The study of theology has suffered because of increasing ministry demands, although 60 percent of pastors now avail themselves of continuing education.
- d. An increasing number of pastors' wives are pursuing careers.
- e. The moral conduct of ministers has increasingly fallen under scrutiny.
- f. Pastors generally have come to see that they are not trained to be managers and therapists.
- g. Pastors' families seek more earnestly to live normal lives.
- h. Pastoral care for pastors has improved but is still not up to par.
- i. Pastors are more concerned about each other's well-being.
- j. There is a growing shortage of ordained pastors.
- k. Retired pastors are increasingly coming to the aid of churches struggling with long vacancies.
- l. The number of unordained church professionals (full- and part-time) will soon reach five hundred.
- m. More councils have come to see that it is unrealistic to assume that a pastor can go on year after year writing two sermons a week.

3. Church and society

- a. Church-society interaction in the CRC still remains too confined to narrowly defined moral issues.
- b. Strides were made toward racial reconciliation, but more needs to be done.
- c. Secularism, consumerism, liberalism, conservatism, legalism, and fundamentalism continued to make inroads; perhaps this accounts for the diverse expectations members have of their churches.
- d. Church members became more aware of the scope and depth of world suffering.
- e. The disintegration of North American society became a source of fear for many CRC members.
- f. CRC missionaries abroad work in societies going through profound upheaval and dislocation.
- g. Church leaders must accept the difficult task of building, from a kingdom-covenant perspective, new communities of people responsive to the needs of a broken world, gathering God's growing family.

IV. Recommendations

- A. That PCRC chairman Rev. Edward Blankespoor, vice all Rev. Charles Terpstra, and director Rev. Louis Tamminga be permitted to speak at synod on matters affecting the PCRC.

B. That synod dismiss with profound gratitude the members of the PCRC as listed above in II, A.

C. That synod recognize Rev. Louis Tamminga for his thirty-eight years of service to the Christian Reformed Church and its agencies.

Pastor-Church Relations Committee
Louis M. Tamminga, director of PCRS

I. Introduction

The members of the Synodical Committee on Race Relations board express their appreciation to Synod 1995 and to the denomination for its faithful support of the ministry of SCORR in 1994, which was a year of God's richest blessings, of challenges, and of some unsettling changes. The board is pleased to share with the delegates by way of this report what SCORR is, how God is using SCORR's ministry, and what it believes will be the shape of SCORR's mission in the years to come. SCORR's mandate has been the same for nearly twenty-five years:

To design, organize, and implement programs through which the denomination, individual churches, and members can effectively use all available resources to eliminate racism, both causes and effects, within the body of believers and throughout the world in which we live.

(Acts of Synod 1971, p. 113)

II. Board matters

The members of SCORR's board reflect the growing racial diversity of the CRC. Their diversity enables SCORR to receive and be guided by the talents of sisters and brothers who are African Americans (3), Asian Americans (2), Dutch Americans (4), Hispanic Americans (1), and Native Americans (2).

We express special thanks to SCORR board members Mr. Gerry Bosma, Mrs. Charlotte Bradley, Mrs. Cindy Doorn, Mr. Donald Edwards, Rev. Juan Flores, Mr. Hyung Kim, Mr. Peter Szto, Mr. Gerald Thaxton, Ms. Mamie Thomas, Mrs. Jackie Venegas, Mr. Eugene Westra, and Rev. Simon Wolfert, whose services to the SCORR board will no longer be needed when the new Pastoral Ministries board becomes fully functional. SCORR is disappointed that the CRC will lose the input of seven gifted members of the CRC ethnic-minority community and prays that Synod 1995 will not forget previous decisions made to diversify agency boards and staff.

SCORR is grateful to God for staff persons who love the Lord and are committed to serving Christ and Christ's church. They include Mrs. Mary James, administrative assistant, Grand Rapids, Michigan; Mrs. Jeanette Walkotten, part-time secretary, Grand Rapids, Michigan; Mrs. Sue Kim, part-time secretary, Grand Rapids, Michigan; Mrs. Yvonne Rayburn, regional director, Chicago, Illinois; and Rev. Norberto Wolf, regional director, Los Angeles, California.

SCORR gives thanks for and extends hearty congratulations to Mr. Gary Teja, who has left SCORR to join Home Missions as director of Hispanic ministries.

SCORR wishes to express its gratitude to Trinity Christian College for allowing SCORR to have a Chicago office on its campus. With the help of Home Missions, SCORR now also has an office in Bellflower, California, where Home Missions' regional director, SCORR's regional director, Home Missions' Korean ministry coordinator, and CRWRC are all located under one roof.

In compliance with synodical requirements, salary information is provided below:

Job level	Number of positions	Compensation quartile (includes housing allowance)
1	1	2

SCORR's enthusiasm and support for the development of a single Pastoral Ministries agency has been under stress during the past year. Part of its concern was caused by the vacancy in the SCORR director position. SCORR is still unsure about the benefits of joining all the smaller agencies and urges the executive director of ministries to keep refining the process of restructuring so that SCORR is situated where it can best carry out synod's mandate. However, SCORR extends its appreciation to the Pastoral Ministries directors for their support and leadership as SCORR members grieved over the decision of Calvin College to have Charles Murray speak during the January Series.

III. SCORR's ministry

SCORR's ministry can best be described by the following areas of activity:

A. Leadership development

With gratitude to God, SCORR reports that through the generosity of God's people the following SCORR scholarships were awarded in the amount of \$27,500:

	African-American	Asian	Hispanic	Native-American	Other
Calvin College	1	3	2	0	0
Calvin Seminary	0	5	2	1	0
Dordt College	0	4	1	0	0
RBC	2	2	3	0	1
Trinity Christian College	3	0	1	0	0
Miscellaneous	3	1	1	0	0

SCORR has also been able to help in the ongoing development of multiethnic leaders and churches through SCORR's Leadership Development Grants. These grants are used to place ethnic-minority leaders in churches and other Christian institutions as well as to help such churches and institutions implement programs that meet the unique needs of communities with limited resources. The following ministries have been able to receive SCORR's support in the amount of \$43,810:

Bethlehem CRC - Gallup, NM
 Calvin Seminary SEAMS - Grand Rapids, MI
 Cambodian Ministry - Graafschap CRC, Holland, MI
 Classis Wisconsin - Hmong CRC, Racine, WI
 Friendship Community Church - Downsview, ON
 Grace and Peace Fellowship - Chicago, IL
 Lao Community Church - Holland, MI
 Northside Community Chapel CRC - Paterson, NJ
 Our Shepherd CRC - Arlington Heights, IL
 Providence CRC - Holland, MI
 Sunshine Community Church - El Paso, TX
 Sun Valley Community CRC - Denver, CO

B. Advocacy

Much of SCORR's work continues to deal with advancing the vision that the world and its people are very diverse and that diversity is part of God's creation. The church, like so many of us who are committed to the principles of the

Scriptures and biblical justice, is in the process of becoming. That means that it is not yet where it needs to be, and, therefore, SCORR's ministry continues.

SCORR was deeply disappointed and hurt by the decision of Calvin College to allow Charles Murray to speak on Calvin's campus. SCORR believes that Murray's message is a message of division which contradicts the reconciling work of Jesus Christ on the cross and makes a mockery of God's commandment to love one's neighbor. SCORR believes that inviting such speakers to the campus of the CRC's denominational college hurts the church's ministry and is in contradiction with what Synod 1959 declared:

... we should guard against any impression of discrimination which could imply the inferiority of the other race the members of which should be made to feel that they are being regarded as fellow-members in the body of Christ, bound to us by the closest of ties.

(Acts of Synod 1959, pp. 82-84)

SCORR continues to encourage the agencies of the CRC to diversify their staff membership. It appreciates the effort and commitment of Dr. Peter Borgdorff and Ms. Norma Coleman in this matter and will continue to support them and to challenge the denomination not to forget the importance of including all members of the church in leadership and service.

C. Education

1. Materials

The educational material developed under the direction of Gary Teja continues to be used in the CRC. The development of new material will continue to be a goal for SCORR, but it will now be working in cooperation with Home Missions and CRC Publications.

2. Synodical Study Committee on Diversity

SCORR's former executive director, Mr. Bing Goei, continues to serve on the Synodical Study Committee on Diversity as an adviser. SCORR is deeply grateful for the work of the committee members and looks forward to receiving their report in 1996.

3. World hunger

In support of the denomination's efforts toward eliminating world hunger, SCORR continues to address the sin of racism, which is a major cause of poverty in the world today. SCORR's focus has been to address the inequities of employment opportunities for ethnic minorities in both Christian and secular profit and nonprofit communities.

4. All Nations Heritage Week

SCORR is deeply grateful to the denomination for its strong support of SCORR's All Nations Heritage Week celebration. In 1994, the denomination was enriched by the celebration of the Canadian Aboriginal peoples and cultures in the CRC. Close to six hundred churches in our denomination participated in this celebration. The 1995 All Nations Heritage Week (September 25-October 1, 1995) celebration will focus on the African-American community in the CRC. SCORR encourages all churches to join in celebrating the beauty and richness of God's people across Canada and the United States and to struggle with the weighty issues of equity, inclusiveness, and justice.

5. Council of the Christian Reformed Churches in Canada (CCRCC)

SCORR is grateful for CCRCC's development of the Committee on Racial Reconciliation in Canada and its work in addressing the sin of racism in Canada. SCORR will continue to encourage the efforts of this committee and pray for God's blessings upon its leaders. Presently, the SCORR board is studying this model of reconciliation for application in U.S. CRC churches and colleges.

6. Multiethnic Conference 1994

SCORR expresses its deepest appreciation to synod for its support of the CRC biennial Multiethnic Conference. The 1994 conference was filled with the power and love of God's spirit. A greater and deeper appreciation for the CRC was gained by those attending the conference. SCORR believes that God is using the conference to bring healing in the lives of people who have been hurt by a world that does not value God's diverse creation. It looks forward to participating with synod in the 1996 Multiethnic Conference.

7. SCORR's challenge

SCORR continues to be faced with many challenges as it attempts to minister in a world where diversity is not yet fully embraced. This challenge has been increased by the fact that SCORR has been without a full-time executive director for much of the past year. Because of the major changes being made in organizational structure, the SCORR board has made an intentional decision to discontinue temporarily the search process for a new director while SCORR evaluates, by way of a SCORR Board Task Force, the needs of its ministry in light of the changes anticipated and the restructuring of the denominational ministries. This decision does not diminish SCORR's conviction that its work must continue in some form and that the mandate given in 1971 needs its continued efforts.

IV. Recommendations

A. That executive committee members Mrs. Cindy Doorn, Mrs. Jackie Venegas, or their appointed representative be granted the privilege of the floor when matters pertaining to SCORR's ministry are discussed.

B. That synod encourage the churches to celebrate All Nations Heritage Week from September 30-October 6, 1996.

C. That synod dismiss with gratitude the members of the Synodical Committee on Race Relations, namely, Mr. Gerry Bosma, Mrs. Charlotte Bradley, Mrs. Cindy Doorn, Mr. Donald Edwards, Rev. Juan Flores, Mr. Hyung Kim, Mr. Peter Szto, Mr. Gerald Thaxton, Ms. Mamie Thomas, Mrs. Jackie Venegas, Mr. Eugene Westra, and Rev. Simon Wolfert.

Synodical Committee on Race Relations
Cindy Doorn, chairperson

I. Introduction

As a benefit to the employees of the Christian Reformed Church and as a service to denominational agencies and Christian Reformed churches, the denomination manages pension programs and a group health-insurance program for both clergy and unordained employees. In the past these plans were administered by staff organized under a separate Office of Pensions and Insurance. During the summer of 1994, the management functions related to pensions and insurance were reorganized to take advantage of the functions already being carried out by the Denominational Finance Office and the Office of Personnel. The administrative functions pertaining to benefits have become the immediate responsibility of the director of personnel. The financial and fiduciary responsibilities have become the responsibility of the director of finance and administration.

II. Board matters

The ministers' pension plans and the employees' retirement plans are governed by the United States Ministers' Pension Committee and the Canadian Pension Trustees. These boards meet individually two to four times per year and annually in joint session. The U.S. Ministers' Pension Committee monitors the investment activities of the funds through a subcommittee made up of trustees and additional members recruited because of special expertise in investment. The Canadian Pension Trustees perform the investment functions within the context of the full board. Mr. Harry Schep is the current chairman of the Canadian Pension Trustees, and Mr. David Vander Ploeg chairs the U.S. Ministers' Pension Committee.

The Consolidated Group Insurance program is currently governed by the CGI Committee, a Board of Trustees subcommittee composed of finance and personnel staff from the various agencies. A recommendation is currently being advanced to incorporate the governance of employee group-insurance programs into the responsibilities of the U.S. and Canadian pension boards. This action, if implemented, has the endorsement of the pension trustees and would bring the governance of these major employee-benefit programs together in a common organization.

III. Pension and insurance activities

A. Ministers' Pension Plans

As of December 31, 1994, there were 1480 participants in the ministers' pension plans. These participants are categorized as follows:

	U.S.	Canada	Total
Total participants	1,184	296	1,480
Active ministers	759	226	985
Retired ministers	305	49	354
Widows and dependents	120	21	141

Every three years actuaries are employed to do a complete update of the liabilities and valuations in the plans. These calculations were most recently

made in January 1994 by Deloitte and Touche for the United States Ministers' Pension Plan and by MLH and A, Inc. for the Canadian Pension Plan.

1. Basic assumptions

The calculation of the fund liability is based on several major assumptions. These assumptions are reviewed and approved regularly by the U.S. and Canadian trustees and are based on historical data and expectations for future trends. Most significant of these assumptions is that regarding investment yield. The gross yield, before investment expenses, is assumed at 75 percent for the Canadian plan and 80 percent for the U.S. plan.

The formula for pension determination is 1.1 percent of the final average salary multiplied by pensionable years of service. Therefore, the expectations about increases in ministers' salary play a significant role. The 1994 average salary used for pension determination was U.S. \$27,857 and Canada \$30,685.

2. Asset balances

Market values of fund assets were as follows (in thousands of dollars):

	December 31, 1993	December 31, 1994
United States	\$54,424	\$52,150
Canada	13,788	13,090
Total	\$68,212	\$65,240

Both the U.S. Ministers' Pension Committee and the Canadian Pension Trustees are guided in their investment decisions by previously adopted policies governing social responsibilities and proportions of funds to be invested in various instruments. The primary goal is to provide an above-average return and at the same time to preserve the principal. Five professional money managers direct the day-to-day investments of the pension funds. In the United States this service is performed by Ambs Investment Counsel, Inc.; Brinson Partners, Inc.; Loomis, Sayles and Co., L.P.; and NBD Bank, Trust Division. Canadian pension funds are invested through Mu-Cana Investment Counseling, Ltd.

3. Investment results

Investment returns are continually monitored by the investment committees of both the U.S. Ministers' Pension Committee and the Canadian Pension Trustees. Because of general market conditions, the performance for 1994 did not measure up to that of 1993. However, the following three- and five-year averages continue to be good:

	1994	3 years	5 years
Total portfolio:			
Canada - Mu-Cana	-1.0%	7.7%	7.5%
United States	-1.2%	7.0%	10.3%

B. Employees' retirement plans—United States and Canada

The employees' retirement plans are defined-contribution plans covering unordained employees of denominational agencies, committees, and churches. Contributions are paid to the plans on a quarterly basis by participating groups in an amount equal to 9 percent of the compensation of the unordained

employees who are participants in the plans. At the end of each year, participants receive a statement indicating the dollar amount credited to their accounts, the total value of their accounts, and the vested percentage in their accounts.

Individual participants direct investment of their account balances among a number of investment alternatives, such as a money-market fund, a bond fund, a pooled equity fund, and a guaranteed investment contract fund. The investment alternatives are currently managed for U.S. participants by the NBD Bank, N.A. Trust Division, which also serves as custodian of the plans' assets, and for Canadian participants by Mu-Can Investment Counseling, Ltd.

C. Consolidated Group Insurance

This is a self-funded denominational plan which offers life, health, and dental coverage in the United States and Canada to denominational agencies, ministers, and employees of congregations. Currently, there are 1414 participants in the program, 399 employees of denominational agencies and 1015 pastors and employees of local churches.

Medical expenses paid in 1994 were \$4,184,373, a 41 percent increase from 1993. Dental expenses paid in 1994 were \$528,329, a 3 percent increase from 1993.

IV. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to members of the Canadian Pension Trustees and of the United States Ministers' Pension Committee or to Mr. Donald F. Oosterhouse and Mr. Robert Van Stright when insurance matters and matters pertaining to pension plans for ministers and employees are discussed.

B. That synod designate up to 100 percent of a minister's early and normal retirement pension or disability pension for 1995 as housing allowance for United States income-tax purposes (IRS Ruling 1.107-1) but only to the extent that the pension is used to rent or provide a home.

C. That synod note the willingness of the U.S. Ministers' Pension Committee and the Canadian Pension Trustees to assume responsibility for the governance of the Consolidated Group Insurance program and, if synod so decides, to

1. Enlarge the mandate of the U.S. Ministers' Pension Committee and the Canadian Pension Trustees to accommodate that additional responsibility.
2. Rename the entities the U.S. Pension and Insurance Board and the Canadian Pension and Insurance Trustees.

Ground: The new names more appropriately describe the broadened responsibilities of the two governing bodies: ministers' pensions, unordained employees' pensions, and health, dental, and life insurance for ministers and unordained employees.

D. That synod elect one member to the U.S. Ministers' Pension Committee from the following nominations for a three-year term beginning September 1, 1995.

1. *David Vander Ploeg*, incumbent, of Orland Park, Illinois, is current executive director of the Barnabas Foundation and previous executive director of The Back to God Hour. He has served on the Ministers' Pension Committee

(fourteen years), the Judicial Code Committee, the Pastor-Church Relations Committee, and the RACOM board. Before going to The Back to God Hour, Mr. Vander Ploeg practiced law in St. Joseph, Michigan. He is a member of Orland Park CRC.

2. *Lloyd Bierma*, of Sioux Center, Iowa, currently practices law as a member of Oostra, Bierma, and Schouten. He has served five years as elder, six years as secretary and later as president of the local Christian-school board, three years on the Calvin College Board of Trustees, five years on the Barnabas Foundation Board of Directors, seven years on the Christian School Foundation, and six years on the U.S. Ministers' Pension Committee. He graduated from Calvin College and Valparaiso University Law School. He is a member of First CRC, Sioux Center, Iowa.

E. That synod elect one member to the Canadian Pension Trustees for a three-year term beginning September 1, 1995.

1. *David van der Woerd* of Hamilton, Ontario, is an attorney. Besides doing various kinds of work in his local congregation, he has served on committees for Calvin Christian School and as vice president of the board of Beginnings. He is a member of Immanuel CRC, Hamilton, Ontario.
2. *John Woudstra* of Edmonton, Alberta, recently retired as supervisor of credit and collections for a large gas-distributing company. He has served four terms as elder, several terms on the local Christian-school board, as governor and treasurer of King's College, as a delegate to Synod 1981 and 1982 (ethics and pastoral-care committee; finance committee), and six years as a trustee of the Canadian Ministers' Pension Plan. He is currently serving as treasurer of District II of Christian Schools International. He is a graduate of a Christian liberal arts college in the Netherlands and a member of Maranatha CRC, Edmonton.

G. That synod express its appreciation to the following members for their services:

1. U.S. Ministers' Pension Committee member Mr. David Vander Ploeg, who has served for three years and is eligible for reelection.
2. Canadian Pension Trustee Mr. Simon Kouwenhoven, who has served for six years.
3. Mr. Garrett C. Van de Riet, who served as acting director of Pensions and Insurance from July 1 to December 31, 1994.

Pensions and Insurance
Robert Van Stright, director of
finance and administration

I. Introduction

Much of the work begun by the Youth-Ministry Committee (YMC) since its formation by Synod 1991 comes to the floor of synod this year. One highlight of the committee's work is a request that synod reconsider the matter of ordination. The committee favors opening ordination to youth pastors by way of some pathway to ordination besides the Master of Divinity degree. It is aware, however, that this matter is beyond the scope of the Youth-Ministry Committee. Similar issues are also being discussed with respect to ministers of Christian education and evangelists. Another highlight is a plan and a request for funds to train the denomination in the Relational Model for Youth Ministry, which Synod 1994 endorsed. A third highlight is the new early teen ministry through United Calvinist Youth, the denominationally approved youth-ministry agency. A fourth highlight is the distribution of guidelines for the functioning of classical youth-ministry committees. May God bless the CRC's ministry to youth within and beyond the church.

II. The Youth-Ministry Committee

The Youth-Ministry Committee is comprised of persons from around the denomination with an interest in youth ministry. The members of the committee are Mrs. Jolene De Heer, Dr. Robert C. De Vries, Dr. Milton R. Doornbos, Mr. Peter Duyst, Mr. Robert Grussing (vice chairman), Rev. Jacob Heerema (chairman), Mr. Robert Keeley, Mrs. Joanna Meyer (treasurer), Mr. Rick Nanninga, Rev. Nick A. Negrete, Rev. Ronald J. Noorman, Rev. David R. Poolman, Mr. Robert Rozema, Mrs. Karen Wilk, Mr. Elmer Yazzie, and Rev. Joel W. Zuidema (secretary). Besides having the responsibility for nurturing faith in the denomination's young people, the YMC serves as synod's official liaison with the various divisions of United Calvinist Youth, which until 1991 provided most of the denomination's youth services beyond the local churches.

YMC meets several times per year. Having no staff of its own, it is primarily served by the administrative assistant to the executive director of ministries.

The committee recommends that synod approve and/or elect the following persons to committee membership:

A. That synod approve *Mr. Peter Duyst* and *Mrs. Joanna Meyer* to three-year terms. Both Mr. Duyst and Mrs. Meyer have served one term on YMC. Mr. Duyst represents the western United States, and Mrs. Meyer represents Calvinettes.

B. That synod elect one of the following nominees to a three-year term as ethnic representative to the Youth-Ministry Committee:

Rev. Reginald Smith is the pastor of Roosevelt Park Community CRC in Grand Rapids. Rev. Smith previously served as copastor of Northside Chapel CRC in Paterson, New Jersey, and as a youth worker at Lawndale CRC in Chicago and Crenshaw CRC in Los Angeles.

Ms. Wendi Waller, a long-time resident of the south side of Chicago, was raised in Pullman CRC. Ms. Waller is an elementary teacher at Roseland Christian School and has been deeply involved in the spiritual shaping of youths from non-Anglo backgrounds.

III. Youth-Ministry Committee program issues

A. Ordination of youth pastors

1. Nontheological warrant for ordination of youth pastors

In 1991 the new Youth-Ministry Committee was given the mandate not only "to serve as a denominational conscience continually emphasizing the paramount importance of ministry among our youth" but also "to develop standards for youth pastors in the Christian Reformed Church and serve synod with recommendations concerning the same." In keeping with this mandate, the Youth-Ministry Committee has noted the growing number of persons who are serving our churches in multistaff ministry positions. This report requests and recommends that synod appoint a study committee to investigate the relationship between this phenomenon and our church's position on the nature of ecclesiastical office and ordination. The YMC committee was, and is, certainly willing and ready to fulfill its mandate "to develop standards for youth pastors." As it began to pursue this issue, the discussion rather quickly turned to the matter of ordination for youth pastors and then to the nature of ordination in relationship to this special function within the church. The committee was prepared to make a direct recommendation to synod for the ordination of persons to the position of youth pastor, but it also realized that the issue of ordination to particular ministries likely exceeded the scope of its mandate. Many other full-time and part-time professional ministry positions are emerging within our denomination. Some of these focus in whole or in part on youth ministry. The 1994 *Yearbook* indicates that at least 472 persons are in ministry positions other than that of minister of the Word. The *Yearbook* also lists forty-eight ordained evangelists.

The Youth-Ministry Committee is convinced that the denomination is experiencing a sharp increase in the number of persons who are specially trained, paid professionals serving the churches in particular forms of ministry. Calvin Theological Seminary has developed two special Master of Arts programs to equip persons in these specialized areas. The Reformed Bible College and several other schools within the Reformed tradition also provide special training in these areas. The General Synod of the Reformed Church of America amended *The Book of Church Order* in 1992 to accommodate "Associates in Ministry and Ministers of Education." The YMC judges that these three factors alone—the changing configuration of staff ministries, the growth of specialized training programs, and the official recognition of these special ministries in a sister denomination—are sufficient warrant for the Christian Reformed Church to enter a purposeful study of this matter.

2. Theological warrant for ordination of youth pastors

Synod 1973 adopted a watershed decision regarding "the nature of ecclesiastical office and ordination." Among the guidelines adopted by that synod are three guidelines especially pertinent to YMC's request for the appointment of a study committee to examine the ordination of persons serving the church in staff positions other than minister of the Word.

a. (Guideline 3)

It is not inconsistent with this universal office-sharing and is in keeping with apostolic practice that some individuals, in whom the church has discerned the required gifts, be appointed to special tasks. The Scriptures report a setting

apart to particular ministries or services. Both in the Old and New Testaments God calls certain people for particular tasks.

b. (Guideline 9)

"Ordination" should be understood as the appointment or setting apart of certain members of the church for particular ministries that are strategic for the accomplishment of the church's total ministry. In this sense of appointment or setting apart, ordination has biblical precedent, and is valuable for the good order and well-being of the church.

c. (Guideline 12)

Because the Scriptures do not present a definitive, exhaustive description of the particular ministries of the church, and because these particular ministries as described in Scripture are functional in character, the Bible leaves room for the church to adapt or modify its particular ministries in order to carry out effectively its service to Christ and for Christ in all circumstances.

(*Acts of Synod 1973*, pp. 63-64)

The theology and the guidelines concerning the nature of ecclesiastical office and ordination were articulated in a specific case in 1978, when synod recognized and established the office of ordained evangelist. Synod decided that the task of providing ministry and leadership in emerging congregations was unique and necessary and that persons carrying out that task could be ordained to the office of evangelist. Synod also provided the church with certain guidelines by which it could regulate entrance to and ministry from that office.

Synod 1994 further revised the definition of the office of ordained evangelist to accommodate an increasing need *within* the churches for this specialized ministry. No longer limiting the role of evangelist to emerging congregations, Synod 1994 recognized that a person engaged in the particular ministry of evangelism could also serve in an ordained capacity within an existing congregation (*Acts of Synod 1994*, pp. 488-91, Art. 67).

The Pastor-Church Relations Committee has also recognized the existence and needs of persons in staff ministry positions. As early as 1988, synod mandated PCRC to include care for unordained persons on ministry staffs. In its report to Synod 1992, PCRC informed synod of a cooperative agreement between PCRC and the Christian Reformed Association of Staff Ministries (CRASM). PCRC also requested synod to elect to the board of PCRC one representative from CRASM. By February 1994 CRASM was merged with PCRC, and PCRC had taken over full responsibility for the pastoral care and professional support services for these persons.

The church continues to recognize and adapt to the changing forms of ministry into which the Spirit of Christ leads it. YMC, recognizing the growing importance of youth ministry, recommends ordination for those serving as youth pastors (see Recommendations below).

B. *Relational Model for Youth Ministry*

Synod 1991 mandated the Youth-Ministry Committee to "develop a comprehensive strategy for youth ministry in the Christian Reformed Church." YMC presented such a strategy to Synod 1994 and received endorsement for the relational youth-ministry model. Several questions in advisory committee and from the floor of Synod 1994 raised concerns about training the denomination in the model. YMC returns to synod this year with a plan to publish, market, and distribute the Relational Model for Youth Ministry in booklet, poster, and

video form to the churches and to conduct a follow-up mailing to assess effectiveness.

Furthermore, YMC requests the funds to begin the work of publishing, marketing, and distributing the endorsed Relational Model for Youth Ministry (see Recommendations below).

C. Early teen ministry

Synod 1991's mandate for the Youth-Ministry Committee included an assignment "to serve as a denominational conscience continually emphasizing the paramount importance of ministry among our youth" and "to supervise the work of youth ministry within the Christian Reformed Church . . . making recommendations regarding future programming for youth ministry to ensure appropriate ministry to youth" (*Acts of Synod 1991*, pp. 741-42).

Presently there is a void in our denomination's ministry to youth at the early teen (middle school / junior high) level. United Calvinist Youth, which provides most CRC youth programs, has three divisions: Cadets for boys 7 through 16, Calvinettes for girls 7 through 16, and Youth Unlimited for high-school-age youth of both sexes. But Cadets and Calvinettes report a drop in program attendance in the middle-school years, and Youth Unlimited's target is several years older than the age of those leaving Cadet and Calvinette programs. The gap is not the fault of poor programs. YMC heartily endorses the ministry divisions of UCY. The gap is due instead to the unique developmental stage of the early teen. This stage is well documented in youth ministry as a separate phase from elementary- and high-school development. (For more information see *Junior High Ministry*, rev. ed., Zondervan, 1987)

Synod 1991 also mandated the Youth-Ministry Committee

- 2) To develop a comprehensive strategy for youth ministry in the Christian Reformed Church using the nurturing model as the basis for such a program.
 - a) The strategy shall incorporate the present work of UCY.
 - b) And new programs which the committee deems necessary shall be recommended to UCY for implementation. If UCY should choose not to implement, then the committee shall be free to recommend to synod such alternative ministry vehicles as will meet the ministry goal.

(*Acts of Synod 1991*, p. 741)

Acting according to the mandate, the Youth-Ministry Committee discussed with UCY the need for more denominational support for middle-school ministry. UCY agreed and had, in fact, been holding similar discussions on its own. To hasten the development of early teen ministry, YMC encouraged UCY to proceed to develop a director of early teen ministry position with the knowledge that YMC was willing to seek funding from the denomination to help launch this ministry. The UCY board has now approved a director of early teen ministry position, the separate divisions of UCY have committed funds from their divisions for the early teen ministry division, and the UCY board has begun to solicit applicants for the position. The new director will be responsible for vision development, communication with the churches about early teen ministry, early teen leadership-training events, and directing the production of necessary materials. YMC believes that this position will be a key to intensifying denominational efforts to minister to early teens.

YMC proposes that UCY be supplied a three-year decreasing grant to hire a director of early teen ministry. YMC understands that Synod 1995 can approve only the first year of this grant. But YMC hopes that Synod 1996 and 1997 will

recognize Synod 1995's vote as direction-setting for the next three years and will not change that direction without weighty decision (see Recommendations below).

D. Classical youth-ministry committees

Synod 1991 mandated classes to appoint classical youth-ministry committees. YMC reported in *Agenda for Synod 1994* (p. 160) that little progress has been made in this area.

YMC believes that such committees have not been formed because of vagueness regarding the function of a classical youth-ministry committee. YMC is in communication with classes to encourage them in the formation of such committees and to provide suggestions for the function of such committees. The suggestions include communicating and promoting to classes and local congregations the various CRC Publications' materials for youth and activities and other available resources from United Calvinist Youth; serving as a liaison between congregations, classes, and the Youth-Ministry Committee; and investigating and addressing the needs of youth within each local congregation. Suggestions will also be provided about membership on classical youth-ministry committees so that the committees will be comprised of people with a heart for youth. The YMC will continue to communicate with classes to ensure that classical youth-ministry committees begin and function as advocates for youth.

IV. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Youth-Ministry Committee chairperson, Rev. Jacob P. Heerema; its secretary, Rev. Joel W. Zuidema; and YMC member Dr. Robert C. De Vries.

B. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to the United Calvinist Youth division directors, Ms. Jan Boone, Mr. Richard Broene, and Rev. Brian Bosscher.

C. That synod acknowledge Mrs. Joanne Ilbrink, former executive director of Calvinettes, for her nineteen years of outstanding service ministering to girls. Mrs. Ilbrink retired in February 1995.

D. That synod appoint a study committee to consider how the 1973 guidelines pertaining to ecclesiastical office apply to persons engaged in ministry to youth and in other specialized ministries. The study should include, but not be limited to, a consideration of the relationship of these specialized ministries to the preaching of the Word and the administration of sacraments, the nature of ordination as defined by Synod 1973, and the manner by which the church recognizes and authorizes the use of specialized gifts for ministry.

Grounds:

1. The Christian Reformed Church has recognized that offices and ordination follow upon and do not precede the form which ministry takes.
2. Congregations are increasingly employing persons who are specially trained and specifically commissioned to engage in specialized ministries in the church.
3. An increasing number of persons are receiving special training for these specialized ministries and are serving congregations in a career capacity.
4. The proposed study extends beyond the scope and capacity of the Youth-Ministry Committee.

E. That synod approve YMC's plan to publish, market, and distribute the Relational Model for Youth Ministry in booklet, poster, and video form and to conduct a follow-up mailing to assess effectiveness.

Grounds:

1. This request is motivated by Synod 1991's mandate to develop a model for youth ministry and the endorsement of such a model by Synod 1994. Such actions of synod imply taking the necessary steps to get such a model into the hands of those doing youth ministry.
2. The Relational Model for Youth Ministry fills a ministry gap. The Christian Reformed Church offers no other tool to help local congregations gain an overall, unified vision for ministry to youth.
3. The Relational Model for Youth Ministry can raise an awareness in the local congregations of their need to develop such an overall, unified vision for youth ministry.
4. The UCY agencies—Youth Unlimited, Cadets, and Calvinettes—in spite of their effective ministry to youth, are not designed to offer this "overall, unified vision" for congregations within the denomination because
 - a. They are parachurch organizations and as such do not speak for the denomination.
 - b. They are separate, independent agencies with a narrow focus on a specific area of youth ministry and as such do not offer a broad ministry perspective.
5. A video would be one of the most effective forms of communicating the Relational Model for Youth Ministry to a visually oriented society. The booklet alone could too easily be lost in the overload of printed material and be ineffective if not reinforced by the visual medium.
6. It is urgent that youth workers, some of whom may be doing relational ministry intuitively, come to understand relational ministry and its importance so that the needs of the denomination's youth can be met more intentionally.

F. That synod approve funds for YMC's plan to publish, market, distribute, and assess the Relational Model for Youth Ministry as described in *Agenda for Synod 1994*, Appendix D, pages 198-208.

G. That synod endorse YMC's approval of a director of early teen ministry position for UCY to stimulate the denomination in early teen ministry.

Grounds:

1. Promotion of early teen ministry is necessitated by the lack of early teen ministry in the denomination.
2. The early teen stage is a unique developmental stage different from elementary- or high-school stages. Early teens need ministry targeted to their unique developmental stage.
3. UCY is the most appropriate organization for undertaking the role of developing early teen ministry.

H. That synod approve a \$25,000 grant as the first installment on a three-year \$60,000 decreasing grant for UCY to hire a director of early teen ministry.

Ground: UCY needs some short-term financial assistance to launch this ministry.

I. That synod elect one of the two nominees as proposed and reelect Mr. Peter Duyst and Mrs. Joanna Meyer to serve additional three-year terms (see Section II).

Youth-Ministry Committee
Jacob Heerema, chairman
Joel Zuidema, secretary

UNITED CALVINIST YOUTH: Calvinettes

Calvinettes praises God for another year of blessing in ministry. In 1994, its thirty-sixth year, it ministered to approximately 20,000 girls in more than 750 churches in North America. Almost 5,000 women gave their time and talents to be Christian role models for girls in local churches and in their surrounding communities.

In July, 650 counselors met for a Calvinettes convention in Wheaton, Illinois. The theme for the convention and the past season was "On Wings of Hope." Throughout the year, counselors and girls have discovered what it means to hope in the Lord in all situations of life.

Twenty-four leadership trainers received advanced training at a three-day seminar led by Calvinette staff members. These leadership trainers then returned to their home areas to share what they had learned with other counselors so they may more effectively reach girls with the gospel. These leadership trainers and staff members provided training to more than 3,000 counselors at the annual convention, regional conferences, and local workshops.

In the fall of 1995, Calvinettes will introduce the first-grade material for Awareness Calvinettes. In it, girls will see how God has used children in his service. Girls will be encouraged to see that they, too, are special to God. Calvinettes staff is in the process of updating the program for grades two and three.

Calvinettes will continue to focus on leadership-training priorities by hosting a convention at San Jose, California, in July 1995. The theme, based on John 14:6, is "Do You Know the Way?" Staff members will lead regional conferences in British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba, Illinois, and Ontario. They will also train twenty-four leadership trainers at a seminary in March 1995 and will oversee their leadership at training events throughout the United States and Canada.

Calvinettes
Joanne Ilbrink, executive director

Note: For nearly twenty years Joanne Ilbrink has served as the executive director. It is appropriate that synod note her closing reflections in this her last report:

It has been my privilege to serve the Lord as executive director of Calvinette ministries for the past nineteen years. In those years I have witnessed many changes in society and in the Calvinette program. We have grown numerically, but, more importantly, we have also grown to meet the changing needs of girls in today's world.

I have been blessed by this ministry and by the lives of dedicated women, many of them former Calvinettes, who have reached out in the love of Jesus to touch the lives of girls in his name. I have heard many accounts of how Calvinettes has been a blessing in the lives of girls, of women, and of families. I believe the Christian Reformed Church has demonstrated its commitment to youth by having

the vision to encourage this ministry. I thank God that he has blessed us with the support and encouragement of Christian Reformed pastors, consistories, and membership.

As I look forward to a new phase in my life, that of retirement, I am confident that the Lord will continue to be faithful in guiding Calvinette ministries in the future. He has provided the support of the church, the commitment of hundreds of women in the church, and a loyal staff and board. I know that Jan Boone, who has been appointed to serve as the next executive director, will look to him for wisdom, strength, and inspiration as she leads Calvinettes in the future.

To him be all the glory!

Joanne Ilbrink

UNITED CALVINIST YOUTH: Calvinist Cadet Corps

Cadet counselors from around North America came to East Hanover, New Jersey, last summer to continue their training at the annual counselors' convention. Much of that training comes in the form of counselors teaching boys, helping them to grow in all areas of life. But some of the training also comes in the form of ongoing leadership training, and this year twenty-three counselors from different parts of North America began an extensive three-year training program to become developers of counselor education in their home councils. It's not always easy to find people willing to make a commitment to a job for which there is no pay, but God has provided a good number of people over the years, and the men and boys of Cadeting have been blessed by their ministry.

An important topic in the news today is sexual abuse. Christians would like to think that it never happens in church circles, but they know better. Therefore, the Cadet Corps has decided to produce a booklet dealing with this issue to heighten awareness of its existence and offer suggestions for how to combat it. The booklet will contain sample policies for churches and encourage them to put policies into place not just for Cadet leaders but for all their youth leaders.

The Calvinist Cadet Corps thanks God for the 4,200 men who have accepted his calling to reach and teach boys in Christ's name.

Calvinist Cadet Corps

G. Richard Broene, executive director

UNITED CALVINIST YOUTH: Youth Unlimited/Young Calvinist Federation

The Youth Unlimited/Young Calvinist Federation board and staff are once again grateful to the Lord and to the churches whose participation in YCF ministries has resulted in spiritual growth and kingdom service. Leadership training at regional events and the annual convention equipped more than two thousand adults and students for more effective service in their own churches. The League Trainer program is also expanding. The goal is for every league to have a specially trained individual in close proximity to local churches to assist with youth programs.

Youth Unlimited's summer programs experienced record numbers of participants this year. The 1994 "In His Name" convention in Kingston, Rhode Island, drew a record number of conventioners with 3,750 students and adults attending. SERVE projects in seventeen cities throughout North America and

Honduras drew 917 participants. SWIM sent out 168 young people to forty-two churches for evangelistic endeavors. Project Bridge had 30 young people serving in cross-cultural teams and settings in two cities.

Youth Unlimited's 563 member churches made good use of the print and video resources available to them through the organization. Churches are increasingly using study aids, devotional material, hands-on tools, songbooks, discipleship courses, meeting guides, and a wide variety of other youth-ministry tools to meet the needs of youth ministry.

In 1994 Youth Unlimited also received invitations from churches in Puerto Rico, Cuba, and Australia to partner with them in their youth-ministry activities. Youth Unlimited is responding to the call, building ties with these churches for the mutual benefit of their ministries.

Everyone involved in Youth Unlimited is grateful for the fiscal blessings of this past year, which are enabling YU to progress steadily in the pursuit of its mission.

Youth Unlimited/Young Calvinist
Federation

Brian P. Bosscher, executive director

I. Introduction

The Historical Committee is the standing committee of the Christian Reformed Church that oversees the work of the denominational archives and promotes the publication of denominationally related historical studies. The archives are located in Heritage Hall at Calvin College and are staffed by Dr. Herbert Brinks, denominational archivist; Ms. Zwanet Janssens and Ms. Wendy Blankespoor, assistant archivists; Mr. Nick Huizenga, archival assistant and denominational field agent; Dr. Henry Ippel, adjunct field agent; Rev. Marinus Goote and Mr. James De Jonge, archival assistants; Ms. Hennie Van Spronsen, secretary; and several student assistants.

II. Archival work during 1994

During the past year the archivists

A. Maintained at forty-two the number of classes with designated regional representatives (contact persons). Only four classes (British Columbia Northwest, Georgetown, Quinte, and Red Mesa) do not currently have such representatives.

B. Published the fourteenth annual newsletter, in January 1995, which was sent to all regional representatives, classical stated clerks, and other denominational leaders.

C. Sent a complete updated inventory of archival holdings of CRC congregations to the stated clerk and regional representative of each classis. This inventory includes the dates of the minutes microfilmed and stored in the vault as well as other materials on file from individual churches, such as anniversary materials and lists of charter members.

D. Acquired historical records from sixty-one Christian Reformed congregations and seven Christian schools; received anniversary booklets or historical sketches from twenty-four churches as well as newsletters and bulletins from various churches and classes.

E. Microfilmed the minutes of various classes as received; processed materials from twelve CRC ministers, five CRC organizations, and twenty-six individuals or agencies associated with Calvin College or Calvin Theological Seminary.

III. Publications

This first year of its expanded mandate the committee devoted to discussing priorities for and types of publications it should encourage or commission. It expects to present a more formal report on these matters next year after it has met with appropriate denominational officials. It welcomes suggestions from anyone interested.

IV. Reminders

A. Some ninety-two Christian Reformed congregations will celebrate a significant anniversary within the next three years. They are reminded to send the archives a copy of materials they produce for the occasion. This contribution

is just as important for (the fifty-seven) churches founded ten or twenty-five years ago as for those marking full or semicentennials.

B. The year 1997 will mark the sesquicentennial of the founding of Dutch settlements in Iowa, Michigan, and Wisconsin, where the CRC would eventually take root. The denomination itself will mark its sesquicentennial in only twelve years. The historical committee urges CRC members to reflect upon ways to observe these anniversaries and to forward suggestions to this committee.

V. Recommendation

That one new committee member be elected from the following nominations to replace Mr. Hero Bratt, who has served two three-year terms:

- *Ms. Swenna Harger*, a local historian and immigration genealogist, is a member of Graafschap CRC.
- *Ms. Thelma Meyer*, an adult-education teacher in the South Kent Community Education District, is a member of Roosevelt Park Community CRC.

I. Membership

The members of the Interchurch Relations Committee (with the years in which their terms expire) are Dr. Carl G. Kromminga, president (1995); Rev. Edward A. Van Baak, vice president (1996); Rev. Peter W. Brouwer (1997); Rev. Leonard J. Hofman (1997); Dr. John B. Hulst (1996); Ms. Eldean Kamp (1995); Rev. Alfred S. Luke (1996); Dr. George Vandervelde (1995); and the general secretary, Dr. David H. Engelhard (ex officio). Rev. Clarence Boomsma serves as the administrative secretary of the committee. Ms. Sharon Vander Ark, who was elected to serve until 1997, resigned from the committee. Nominations for members to replace Ms. Vander Ark and those whose terms expire this year are submitted below.

II. Information regarding ecumenical relations

A. *Fraternal delegate*

The IRC made the following appointments of fraternal delegates in 1994 to the assemblies of churches with which the CRC is in ecclesiastical fellowship:

1. To the general assembly of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, meeting in Pompano Beach, Florida, June 22-25, 1994, Rev. Mark A. Davies.
2. To the general assembly of the Korean American Presbyterian Church, meeting in Fort Meyers, Florida, June 14-17, 1994, Rev. Kook-Sung Kim.
3. To the general assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, meeting in Harvey Cedars, New Jersey, June 8-15, 1994, Rev. LeRoy G. Christoffels.
4. To the general assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America, meeting in Atlanta, Georgia, June 6-9, 1994, Dr. Carl G. Kromminga.
5. To the general synod of the Reformed Church in America, meeting in Pella, Iowa, June 6-10, 1994, Rev. James A. Holwerda.
6. To the general synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America, meeting in Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania, June 18-23, 1994, Rev. John G. Zevalking.

B. *Representatives and observers to ecumenical organizations*

Fulfilling the mandate of the Ecumenical Charter, the IRC continues to appoint representatives and observers to various ecumenical organizations. These appointees report to the IRC.

1. Rev. Leonard J. Hofman serves on the executive committee of the National Association of Evangelicals and currently is first vice president of the NAE. He will become president of the NAE in 1996. The IRC has appointed Rev. Leonard J. Hofman, Dr. David H. Engelhard, and Rev. Clarence Boomsma as voting members to the NAE convention in March 1995.
2. Dr. George Vandervelde continues as our observer on the Faith and Order Commission of the National Council of Churches (NCC).

3. Dr. John Bolt is our observer on the Theological Commission of the Caribbean and North American Area Council (CANAAC) of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC).

C. Churches in corresponding fellowship

In 1993 the IRC informed synod that it had established the category of "churches in corresponding fellowship" (*Acts of Synod 1993*, pp. 407-10). The implementation of this new relationship is going on, but in view of the facts that the churches are overseas and some of the church assemblies meet infrequently, the processing of the relationship requires considerable time. Thus far, corresponding fellowship has been established with the following churches: the Christian Reformed Church of Myanmar; the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian, Nkhoma Synod; and the Philippine Christian Reformed Church.

III. Ecumenical organizations

A. The North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC)

The twentieth annual meeting of NAPARC was held in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, November 1-2, 1994, hosted by the Korean American Presbyterian Church. All member churches were represented. Our delegates were Dr. David H. Engelhard, Rev. Leonard J. Hofman, Rev. Alfred S. Luke, and Dr. Edward A. Van Baak. Dr. Carl G. Kromminga serves on the Interim Committee of NAPARC but was unable to be present, so Dr. Engelhard substituted for him. The following items of interest to synod emerged from the NAPARC meetings:

1. The issue of "weighted voting," whereby the larger denominations would be allowed to cast more votes than the smaller denominations, a proposal submitted by the Presbyterian Church in America, was not adopted.
2. Consistent with the above decision, it was decided to require equal payment of dues from all members churches. Dues for 1995 were set at \$400 per church—a reduction of \$2,000 for the CRC.

3. NAPARC decided to address the following statement to the CRC:

That NAPARC express to the Christian Reformed Church in North America its deep thanks to God for the decision to which he led the CRC Synod 1994 to disapprove the ordination of women to ruling and teaching office in the church and to express the devout hope that that position will not change.

4. NAPARC recommends the admission of the Reformed Church of the United States (RCUS) to its membership. The constitution of NAPARC requires that two-thirds of the assemblies of member churches must approve the recommendation. The IRC submits the following to synod:

That synod approve the admission of the Reformed Church of the United States into NAPARC membership.

Grounds:

1. The Reformed Church (U.S.) earnestly desires to become a member denomination of NAPARC.
2. The denomination and its application meet the formal requirements of the NAPARC constitution.

5. The officers of NAPARC for 1994-1995 are Rev. Myung Doh Kim, chairman (KAPC); Dr. David H. Engelhard, vice chairman (CRCNA); Rev. Donald J. Duff, secretary (OPC); and Rev. Robert Henning, treasurer (RPCNA).
6. The next meeting of NAPARC will be hosted by the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, on either November 28-29 or October 31-November 1, 1995.

Our four delegates to NAPARC expressed concern about various aspects of NAPARC, including its constitution and the regulations for conducting its business. The IRC appointed the four delegates as an ad hoc committee to present recommendations to the IRC that may be placed on the agenda of NAPARC.

B. Reformed Ecumenical Council (REC)

The next assembly of the REC will meet in Grand Rapids in 1996 and will observe the fiftieth anniversary of its founding in this city in 1946. The CRCNA is serving as the calling and host church. The local arrangements committee consists of Dr. Emily Brink, Rev. Alfred S. Luke, Rev. James C. Lont, Ms. Eunice Vanderlaan, and Dr. Richard L. van Houten. The IRC presents several items that require synodical action.

1. The REC Interim Committee proposes to the member churches a constitutional change in Article IV.2—Membership of the REC—which was mandated by the Athens Assembly of 1992. The change concerns the procedure for admitting members into the Council.

a. The present constitution Article IV.2 reads:

Admission to membership shall be by decision of the Council by a two-thirds majority of the ballots cast after consideration and recommendation by the Interim Committee. Application for membership shall be made to the Council through the office of the General Secretary six months before a Council meeting. Member churches shall be informed of any application at least three months before a Council meeting.

b. The Interim Committee proposes the following revisions of Article IV.2:

Admission to membership shall be by decision of the Interim Committee subject to ratification of the Assembly by a two-thirds majority of the ballots cast. A new member shall not vote on the ratification of its own membership. Application for membership shall be made to the Council through the office of the General Secretary six months before a Council meeting. Member churches shall be informed of any application at least three months before a Council meeting.

Grounds:

- 1) This places the primary decision on the evaluation of the Interim Committee, where it in practice actually is made today.
- 2) The applying churches are received as members earlier than under the former procedure. They can begin to function as full members immediately, although ratification will not take place until the following assembly.

The IRC recommends that synod endorse this constitutional change in Article IV.2 re the procedure for admitting members into the council.

2. A second recommended constitutional change, also mandated by the REC Athens Assembly of 1992, has to do with the inclusion of a provision for suspension of membership. The Interim Committee decided to include this

in Article IV.3 by adding the words which appear in italics below. The proposed new text reads:

3. *Suspension or termination of membership shall be*
 - a. By decision of the member church to *suspend or* withdraw its membership; or
 - b. By the decision of the Council by a two-thirds majority of ballots cast, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) Such action shall be proposed by one or more member churches to the Council, after such church or churches have previously presented their concerns to the church in question.
 - 2) The Council shall respect a member church's affirmation that it holds to the authority of the Scriptures and the Reformed faith and shall take no action until the church has been given sufficient opportunity to defend itself.
 - 3) Such action shall not occur until the Interim Committee plus its advisers, upon determination of the Council, has investigated the charges and presented its recommendations to the next assembly of the Council.
 - 4) Such action shall be taken only when the Council is convinced by adequate evidence that the member church's expressions of allegiance are not true to fact.
 - 5) *In case of suspension, the terms shall be defined by the Assembly.*

The Interim Committee submitted the following grounds:

- a. The REC Athens Assembly of 1992 mandated the Interim Committee to "draft provisions for suspension to be included in the constitution" (Art. 78).
- b. The inclusion of the reference to suspension clarifies an action that is implicit in the right to terminate membership.
- c. The procedures for suspension retain the safeguards and principles of fairness that were previously prescribed in our constitution for termination of membership.

The Interim Committee adopted the following observations regarding the proposed changes:

- a. Membership in the REC is an agreement or understanding among churches, in which there is mutual recognition and cooperation. Members voluntarily bind themselves to the constitution, and thereby receive certain rights and privileges, such as the right to send communications to an assembly, the right to send delegates to an assembly, and the right to vote on and move motions. Members also undertake an obligation to support the costs of the REC, according to their abilities.
- b. Suspension of membership means that the rights and obligations of a member are temporarily inoperative, but membership is not ended.
- c. Suspended members retain the right and obligation to communicate with the Council concerning the conditions of their suspension.
- d. The aim of suspension is the full restoration of membership. The suspension may be indefinite or for a definite period of time, but the conditions for restoration should be clear. Failure to meet the conditions will eventually lead to termination; hence the grounds for suspension should be sufficient for termination.

The IRC recommends that synod not accede to the request to include the proposed provision for suspension of membership in Article IV.3.

Ground: This kind of terminology on the international scene is interpreted as being tantamount to termination. The constitution already provides for termination procedures.

(Dr. John B. Hulst, who serves on the REC Interim Committee, registered his negative vote against this decision.)

3. The IRC received an appeal from the REC Interim Committee to consider contributing a special financial gift to offset the costs of the 1996 Assembly. In view of the fact that the CRCNA will not incur major travel costs of overseas travel for its delegation, the IRC has approved a grant of \$7,500 to help defray the costs of the upcoming Assembly.
4. The CRCNA is entitled to four voting and four nonvoting delegates to attend the 1996 REC Assembly, provided the denomination's total membership is 300,000. The IRC will submit nominations in its supplementary report.

C. *The National Association of Evangelicals (NAE)*

The fifty-third annual convention of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) met in Louisville, Kentucky, from March 5-7, 1995. The theme of the convention was "One Faith, One Witness, One Hope." Rev. Leonard J. Hofman, Dr. David H. Engelhard, and Rev. Clarence Boomsma represented the CRCNA. At this convention Dr. Billy Melvin retired as executive director of the NAE after twenty-eight years of distinguished service.

Rev. Leonard J. Hofman currently serves as first vice president of the NAE and will become its president for two years, beginning in March 1996. He served as cochairman of the search committee to find a replacement for Dr. Melvin and as chairman of the Committee on Bylaws.

IV. **Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (RCN)**

(Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland) (GKN)

Synod 1992 referred Overture 79 (*Acts of Synod 1992*, pp. 566-67), requesting the termination of our ecclesiastical fellowship with the RCN, to the IRC for its consideration. Synod asked the IRC to recommend in its report of 1993 whether or not to terminate the CRC's relationship with the RCN. The IRC was not ready to present its recommendation in 1993, so synod extended its mandate until 1995 (*Acts of Synod 1993*, pp. 412-13). In keeping with its mandate, the IRC presents its report on the RCN with recommendations; it appears as Appendix A to this report.

V. **Reformed Churches in South Africa (RCSA)**

In a supplementary report to Synod 1994 the IRC reported receiving a letter shortly before the convening of synod from the Deputies for Correspondence with Churches in Foreign Countries of the Reformed Churches in South Africa (RCSA). The letter was reproduced as an appendix in the supplementary report of the IRC (*Acts of Synod 1994*, pp. 384-86). The secretary replied to the letter on behalf of the IRC, expressing appreciation for its positive and hopeful spirit and supplying the factual information requested by the deputies.

In a response dated September 22, 1994, the deputies replied to the secretary's letter of May 9, 1994. This reply is included as Appendix B to this report. The primary matter raised in the letter is the RCSA's insistence that, if ecclesiastical relations are to be reinstated between the RCSA and the CRC, the RCSA charge that the CRC committed a grievous injustice against the RCSA by suspending relations must be addressed. Therefore, they press for a reply to the matters listed in previous communications, particularly the decisions of the RCSA

synod of 1991, which reacted to our synod's suspending of relations in 1989. (A full review of CRC relations with the RCSA since 1989 appeared in the *Agenda for Synod 1994*, pp. 215-18. The text of the RCSA Synod 1991 response and communications from the Deputies for Correspondence with Churches in Foreign Countries appear in *Agenda for Synod 1992*, pp. 162-69.)

In response to this second letter, the IRC, at its December meeting, instructed the secretary to prepare on its behalf a reply to the contents of the letters of February 25 and October 16, 1991. The IRC may have a response to the RCSA letters available for synod in the supplementary report.

Originally synod decided in 1989 that either the suspension should be lifted or ecclesiastical relations terminated in 1992. Upon the advice of the IRC, synod extended the time to 1995.

Now the IRC recommends that synod extend the suspension of CRCNA ecclesiastical relations with the RCSA until 1997, on the following grounds:

A. The opportunity is available to continue the dialogue with the RCSA regarding the issues that resulted in the suspension of ecclesiastical relations. The principles of ecumenicity require that every effort be made to restore full fellowship between our two churches. This is especially true in view of our long history of ecclesiastical fellowship.

B. The extension to Synod 1997 will give the IRC time to continue the exchange of correspondence and possibly to arrange for an IRC delegation to meet with the deputies of the RCSA.

C. By June 1997 the IRC will have been informed of the position of the RCSA on the issues that occasioned the suspension, since the next meeting of the RCSA triennial synod is in January 1997.

VI. Churches in ecclesiastical fellowship in North America

A. Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC)

The IRC reported in 1993 on the concern of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church regarding developments within the CRC and on the exchange between the OPC Committee on Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations and the IRC (*Agenda for Synod 1993*, pp. 211-13). In 1994 the IRC reported receiving a critical communication adopted by the general assembly of the OPC in June 1993 and addressed to our synod (*Agenda for Synod 1994*, pp. 218-19). In June 1994 the general assembly of the OPC adopted several motions severely critical of the CRCNA that were addressed to synod in a letter dated June 15, 1994. The relevant passages follow:

The following motions [of the general assembly] passed:

1. That the General Assembly instruct the Committee on Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations carefully to confront representatives of the CRCNA with our concerns about what we perceive to be their church's (corporate) sinful conduct, including but not limited to:
 - a. Its toleration of the ordination of women to the office of elder contrary to the Scriptures and the Church Order of the CRCNA, and
 - b. Its toleration of the unbiblical aspects of CRCNA statements concerning homosexuality, e.g. 1) that some homosexuals "may . . . bear only a minimal responsibility" (*Acts of Synod 1973*, p. 631) for their condition (our underlining), and 2) that some who have this condition "cannot be healed" and must accept permanent limitations of their homosexuality" (ibid p. 632) (our underlining), and

c. Its failure to exercise church discipline in the case of those classes, consistories, or individuals who have clearly violated the principles of scripture and its confession, and

If the CRCNA, having been so advised fails to exhibit . . . adequate evidence of repentance and the will to correct those corporate sins, the question of severing our fraternal relationship with the CRCNA be placed on the docket of the 1995 General Assembly, with the provision that should the 1994 Synod of the CRCNA adopt any change in its confessional standards and/or Church Order, that the question of severing our fraternal relationship with the CRNA will be placed on the docket of the 1995 General Assembly.

And further that the General Assembly instruct its fraternal delegate to the CRCNA Synod of 1994 to present the following message to the Synod:

The 61st General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church sends greetings to you, Brothers in Christ, by way of this message which was approved by the General Assembly on June 13, 1994.

We want you to know we have been in much prayer for you in regard to our deep concern for your denomination. We want you to know how much we praised God for your faithful stand in the truth of the Gospel in years past and the example you have been to us over the years. We have sent our children to your churches and you have sent your children to our churches, and we have rejoiced in the common cause that has united us over the years.

The General Assembly this year instructed our Committee on Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations to meet with your representatives and discuss with them matters of great concern to the OPC. We sincerely request you to meet with them and listen to what we are saying to you through them.

The unity that has been so precious to us in the past is threatened. May it not be said of the OPC or the CRCNA many of those things Christ said to the churches in Revelation 2 and 3, except, "Be faithful even to the point of death and I will give you the crown of life. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes will not be hurt at all by the second death."

Your brothers in Christ,
61st General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church
[Seventeen negative votes were recorded.]

2. On motion the Assembly decided that the CRCNA be informed of this action and was respectfully requested to appoint representatives to meet with the Committee on Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations of the OPC.

3. That the General Assembly inform the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church that

1. At this time we do not commend that our churches or judicatories take initiative to seek members from the CRCNA or encourage them to withdraw from the church.

2. We believe that at this time our congregations and judicatories have both a right and a duty to welcome into membership former members of the CRCNA: members who, having left the CRCNA because they could not longer in good conscience continue to take corporate responsibility for positions of their church which they deem to be seriously contrary to the Word of God, and who having made a good profession seek our fellowship.

The IRC has agreed to meet in Grand Rapids with the OPC Committee on Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations on March 24, 1995. The committee plans to report to synod on this meeting in its supplementary report.

B. Presbyterian Church in America (PCA)

An important issue before the 1994 general assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America was its ecumenical relations with the CRCNA (cf. *Agenda for Synod 1994*, pp. 219-20). On the docket of the assembly was the generally favorable report from its Interchurch Relations Committee regarding the CRCNA as a result of an investigation mandated by the previous general assembly. The

report was not adopted, but the end result was the decision of the assembly that "except for examining official acts and pronouncements of the CRC, the 'General Assembly now terminates all its efforts at an investigation of the CRC, for which there is questionable warrant, and is beyond the scope and competency of a committee of the PCA.'"

The general assembly did dispatch to the CRC Synod 1994 a call "to reverse the steps you have taken to open the offices of minister and elder to women."

VII. Nominations for committee members

The three-year terms of Ms. Eldean Kamp, Dr. Carl G. Kromminga, and Dr. George Vandervelde expire in September 1995. Only Ms. Eldean Kamp is eligible for reelection, but she has declined to be placed on nomination for a second term. The IRC presents the following nominations:

A. To replace Ms. Eldean Kamp

Ms. *Claire Elgersma* is a graduate of Calvin College and is working toward a master's degree in public administration at Queens University. She is the manager of the Kitchener Canadian Employment Center. She is a member of First CRC, Kitchener, Ontario, and has been active in various positions in the congregation.

Ms. *Diane Klein* is a graduate of Concordia University, Montreal, Quebec, with a master's degree in business administration. She currently is engaged with Educom Consulting, which designed and executed the denominational listening conference program, a six-month visioning project for the CRCNA. She is a member of Alliston CRC, Alliston, Ontario, and serves as an executive member of the Citizens for Public Justice.

B. To replace Dr. Carl G. Kromminga

Rev. *Charles Steenstra* is pastor of Westview CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan. He is a graduate of Calvin College and Seminary. He has served on the boards of CRC Publications and Home Missions. He is currently regional pastor for Classis Grand Rapids North.

Dr. *Henry Zwaanstra* is professor of church history at Calvin Theological Seminary and has served on the IRC for two terms. He has written a book on ecumenicity and the CRC entitled *Catholicity and Secession*. He is a member of Woodlawn CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

C. To replace Dr. George Vandervelde

Rev. *Robert J. Haven* is pastor of Good News CRC, London, Ontario. He is a graduate of Calvin College, and he received his theological education in Knox College at the University of Toronto. Before joining the CRC in 1990, he was a minister in the Presbyterian Church of Canada.

Rev. *Gordon H. Pols* is pastor of Clarkson CRC, Mississauga, Ontario. He is a graduate of Calvin College and Seminary and has served on the board of CRC Publications. He has served on various synodical committees and as an advisory-committee reporter at synod.

D. To replace Ms. Sharon Vander Ark (for a two-year term)

Ms. *Martheen Griffioen* is a graduate of Calvin College and Seminary, where she obtained a master's degree in church education. She is pastor director of education at Madison Square CRC and director of education and evangelism at

Fuller Avenue CRC, both in Grand Rapids, Michigan. She is a member of Archer Avenue CRC, Chicago, Illinois.

Ms. Cynthia Roelofs is a graduate of the University of California, Fullerton. She has been a junior-high teacher in the Christian-school system and has served as a board member of The Back to God Hour, functioning on several of its committees. She is a member of Montello Park CRC, Holland, Michigan.

VIII. Hospitality Committee

The IRC has appointed Rev. Gerard and Mrs. Margaret Bouma to serve as host and hostess for the delegates and observers to synod from other denominations.

IX. Representation at synod

Dr. Carl G. Kromminga (president), Rev. Edward A. Van Baak (vice president), and Rev. Clarence Boomsma (administrative secretary) have been appointed to represent the IRC at synod.

X. Matters requiring synodical action

A. IRC representation at synod (see Section IX).

B. Admission of the Reformed Church of the United States to membership in NAPARC (see Section III, A, 4).

C. Change in REC constitution Article IV.2 re membership of the REC (see Section III, B, 1).

D. Change in REC constitution Article IV.3 re suspension of membership (see Section III, B, 2).

E. Approval of financial grant to REC Assembly 1994 (see Section III, B, 3).

F. Recommendations re GKN relations with the CRCNA (see Appendix A, Section IV).

G. Continuation of suspension of Reformed Churches in South Africa until 1997 (see Section V).

H. Election of committee members (see Section VII).

Interchurch Relations Committee

Clarence Boomsma, administrative secretary

Peter W. Brouwer

David H. Engelhard (ex officio)

Leonard J. Hofman

John B. Hulst

Eldean Kamp

Carl G. Kromminga, president

Alfred S. Luke

Edward Van Baak, vice president

George Vandervelde

APPENDIX A: Report on GKN/CRC Relations

I. Introduction

Overture 79 received by Synod 1992 requested that synod terminate the ecclesiastical relationship, restricted by Synod 1983, between the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) and the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (GKN), also known as the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (RCN) (*Acts of Synod 1992*, pp. 566-67). Synod referred the overture to the Interchurch Relations Committee (IRC) for its consideration and instructed the IRC to recommend in its report to Synod 1993 whether or not to terminate the CRC's relationship with the GKN (*Acts of Synod 1992*, p. 617).

Synod gave two grounds for its request:

- a. The IRC is in the best position to consider all the ramifications of terminating or not terminating our ecclesiastical relationship with the GKN.
- b. After many years of expressing disapproval of the GKN with regard to the issues of scriptural authority as expressed in "God with Us," the practice of homosexuality and its justification in "Homophilia," and more recently its ambiguity about the indispensability of Jesus Christ for the salvation of the Jews, the time has come for synod to deal with a specific recommendation regarding continued ecclesiastical relationship with the GKN.

The IRC was not ready to present its recommendation in 1993, so synod extended its mandate until 1995 (*Acts of Synod 1993*, pp. 411-13).

II. Analysis of the mandate

A. Background of the mandate

The agenda between the CRC and the GKN has been taken up largely with CRC concerns about trends in the GKN and the actions of its general synod for more than thirty-two years.

Uneasiness was expressed as far back as 1962 about the GKN's wavering attitude toward the World Council of Churches (WCC). It continued when concern was registered about the teachings of prominent theologians in the GKN during the mid sixties. By 1969 the GKN had joined the WCC, had approved women's serving in the offices of the church, and had revoked the decisions of Assen on the interpretation of the first chapters of Genesis, raising the issue of biblical interpretation and authority. More than once synod requested the IRC to consider whether any of the disturbing changes in the GKN warranted a change in our relations with the GKN.

In 1974, to protect "the ecclesiastical and doctrinal integrity of the CRC" but allow the CRC to continue relations with the GKN, synod, upon advice of the IRC, replaced the existing "sister church" and "corresponding church" categories with the single category of "churches in ecclesiastical fellowship." Full ecclesiastical fellowship with another church, where possible and desirable, included six provisions:

1. Exchange of fraternal delegates at major assemblies.
2. Occasional pulpit fellowship.
3. Intercommunion (i.e., fellowship at the table of the Lord).
4. Joint action in areas of common responsibility.
5. Communication on major issues of joint concern.
6. The exercise of mutual concern and admonition with a view to promoting the fundamentals of Christian unity.

Degrees of fellowship with churches were now possible by specifying the provisions that applied. A strong motivation for the change was acknowledged to be that the six provisions of the churches in ecclesiastical fellowship relationship made it possible for the CRC to modify its relationship with the GKN.

In 1983, after the GKN's 1979 decision on homosexuality, synod did limit our ecclesiastical fellowship with the GKN by removing the provisions of pulpit and table fellowship.

As will be noted below, in 1984 the IRC submitted its critique of "God with Us" to the GKN and delegated two professors to communicate its concerns to the GKN. Two years later the IRC shared the responses of our scholars to the "Sequel" to "God with Us" with the Church and Theology Commission of the GKN. In 1990 synod, on the advice of the IRC, urged the GKN to respond favorably to the Reformed Ecumenical Council (REC) decisions because relations between the GKN and CRC were involved. From 1991 to 1994 the IRC addressed the Jewish-mission issue repeatedly with GKN delegates to clarify the issue.

From 1983 to 1990 the IRC reported its concerns and actions to synod about (1) the GKN statement on the nature and authority of Scripture in "God with Us" and its "Sequel"; (2) the decisions on homosexual practice and "Homophilia," the study report of the GKN on homosexuality; and (3) the changes in the GKN church order on mission to the Jew—matters which synod had mandated the IRC to evaluate.

From 1967 through 1990 the CRC has addressed its concerns to the GKN eight times, five times with special letters directly from our synods to their synods, three times with special delegations from the IRC. In addition, our fraternal delegates to the GKN general synod have on numerous occasions expressed our concerns and admonition, and repeatedly the fraternal delegates from the GKN to our synods have been informed about CRC concerns and uneasiness with trends and developments within their churches. Therefore, synod is correct in saying that the time has come to make a decision clarifying the CRC's relationship with the GKN.

B. Occasion for the mandate

Overture 79 (1992) requested

synod to terminate the CRC's ecclesiastical relationship, as defined by Synod 1983, with the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (GKN) because of its refusal to repent of its pro-homosexuality position and its efforts to present tolerance of homosexuality as a legitimate option for members of the Reformed Ecumenical Council. . . . This position creates a conflict of moral standards for CRC representatives to the REC since the REC executive-committee decision that there are not sufficient grounds to discontinue GKN membership in the REC. Reformed ecumenism tolerates biblically allowable differences, but it may not tolerate biblically defined sin.

(*Acts of Synod 1992*, p. 566)

The six grounds for the overture argue on the basis of Scripture and the CRC report on homosexuality (*Acts of Synod 1973*) that homosexual practice is sin and that CRC attempts to encourage the GKN to change their position are consistently refused. For the CRC, which disciplines its members for homosexual practice, to continue ecumenical relations with the GKN, which, at ecclesiastical and ecumenical levels tolerate such practice, is an ethical contradiction. The 1983 restrictions of pulpit and table fellowship do not cover fraternal delegates and

ecumenical representatives. Therefore, after so many years, the overture argues, the time has come to sever all relationships with the GKN.

Synod did not adopt the overture but referred it to the IRC for consideration and then formulated its own mandate to lead the IRC in its resolution of the GKN matter.

C. The content of the mandate

Synod did not ask the IRC to respond to Overture 79 but used the overture as the occasion to recognize that the time has come for synod to decide definitively the status of ecclesiastical fellowship between the CRC and the GKN. Therefore, synod requested the IRC to present a recommendation with grounds on which synod can decide whether or not to terminate our relations with the GKN. Synod judged the IRC to be in the best position to consider and weigh all the ramifications of such a decision.

D. Agenda of the IRC to fulfill its mandate

To present a recommendation to synod, the IRC saw its task as involving primarily two aspects:

1. An evaluation of the GKN positions on the pertinent issues. This required two stages: (a) determining as accurately as possible what the GKN positions on the issues of concern are and (b) forming a judgment of their significance for CRC/GKN ecclesiastical relations.
2. An evaluation of any IRC recommendation(s) in the light of the principles of CRC ecumenical responsibility.

III. Evaluation of the three issues of concern

A. The GKN position on scriptural authority as expressed in "God with Us" and its "Sequel"

The mandate of the IRC is not to provide a comprehensive and in-depth critique of "God with Us" but to advise synod whether "God with Us" and its "Sequel" present a view of Scripture that so diverges from the CRC position on biblical authority that it calls into question the basis for our continuing ecclesiastical fellowship.

1. Occasion for "God with Us" in the GKN

The issue of Scripture—its inspiration, authority, and interpretation—has had an intensive history in Reformed circles since World War II. At its organizational meeting in 1946 the Reformed Ecumenical Synod (renamed Reformed Ecumenical Council in 1988) placed the subject of the Bible's inspiration among the first doctrinal questions to be addressed. In 1958, on the basis of a long report, the RES approved six statements that formulate the classic Reformed view of Scripture. These statements were adopted by the CRC in 1959 (*Acts of Synod 1959*, pp. 64, 250-51).

At the RES 1963 assembly the GKN expressed their basic agreement with the statements but questioned the adequacy of the declarations

to satisfy the demands which may be made of a new, elucidative confession of the inspiration and authority of Scripture. In particular, [we fail] to find in the pronouncements of the RES any connection between the content and purpose of Scripture as the saving revelation of God in Jesus Christ *and* the consequent and deducible authority of Scripture.

(*Acts of the RES 1963*, p. 202)

In response the RES requested the GKN to present their study on inspiration, which suggests solutions to the problems they raised. In 1968 the RES asked its member churches to study the issue of biblical authority and share their findings with the other churches (*Acts of the RES 1968*, p. 74). The CRC report on "The Nature and Extent of Biblical Authority," adopted in 1972, was the CRC's response to the issues raised by the GKN.

In view of the considerable ferment within the GKN regarding the interpretation of Scripture, the GKN Synod of Haarlem (1973-1975) appointed a commission "to promote the best possible relationship between church and theology, i.e., between the congregation on the one side and the scientific research and teaching of the Bible, of church history and the doctrine of the church, on the other." After experiencing some difficulties, a reorganized commission presented to the Synod of Delft in 1980 a report on "the understanding and the authority of Scripture ("God with Us," p. 1).

The Synod of Delft declared this report "a clear and confessionally responsible exposition of the way in which the Scripture wants to be understood so that we can hear what the God of the Word has to say to us." The synod instructed the commission to prepare the report in a form that could function on the level of the congregations. The result was "God with Us: The Nature of Biblical Authority."

2. The response of the CRC to the GKN concerning "God with Us" and its "Sequel"

The appearance of "God with Us" created a considerable stir within the GKN, among the member churches of the RES, and in the RES assembly. The CRC synod of 1981 instructed the IRC to study "God with Us" with a view to its implications for interchurch relations, citing the fact that "many of our differences with the GKN appear to be embedded in how one understands the Scriptures." The IRC appointed an ad hoc committee to study the document. After several meetings the committee appointed Dr. Fred H. Klooster and Dr. Gordon J. Spykman to draw up its report. This report was forwarded by the IRC to the GKN, calling attention to several areas of concern in "God with Us." At the same time "the IRC affirmed that it seeks to keep channels of communication open with the GKN for serious discussion on an authentically Reformed view of the authority and normativity of Scripture" (*Acts of Synod 1984*, p. 169).

The IRC appointed Dr. Fred H. Klooster and Professor John H. Stek to meet with the GKN commission in April 1984 (*Acts of Synod 1984*, pp. 168-69). In May 1984 the two delegates informed the IRC it had engaged in a concentrated dialogue with the GKN Commission on Church and Theology, particularly discussing the problems raised by the ad hoc committee. Later, when the "Sequel" appeared in 1986, the IRC submitted it to the delegation and several other theologians for their evaluation, and the resulting critiques were forwarded to the GKN. Through these efforts the IRC sought to fulfill its ecumenical responsibility to the GKN in "the exercise of mutual concern and admonition with a view to promoting the fundamentals of Christian unity."

3. The ambiguity regarding the status of "God with Us"

From the outset there was an ambiguity about the status of "God with Us" in the GKN. It appeared that the report had received substantial approval

when the GKN synod introduced it as "a clear and confessionally responsible exposition of the way in which the Scripture wants to be understood so that we can hear what the God of the Word has to say to us."

It was explained to the CRC delegates, however, that the intention of the Committee on Church and Theology in its report on Scripture was strictly to meet certain pastoral needs within the GKN. Assuming that the historic Reformed confessional statements regarding Scripture were in need of no fundamental alteration or further confessional elaboration, the GKN committee undertook rather to address the hermeneutic question of how the inscripturated Word of God should be "listened to" by believers so that it functions properly as God's authoritative Word today for the believer and the church.

There were problems within the life of the GKN that the committee sought to address in "God with Us," problems such as a view of organic inspiration that differed little from mechanical inspiration, confusion between literary-historical criticism and "Scripture criticism," tendencies in theological and ethical matters simply to quote isolated passages apart from their literary and redemptive-historical context and to ignore the culturally conditioned character of the biblical documents, and the resulting polarization within congregations over new issues that preoccupied the church.

"God with Us" was not composed for ecclesiastical adoption but to aid understanding. It was a study-committee report and neither a new confession nor a preliminary document in the formulation of a new confession. The GKN synod, according to the GKN committee, did no more and no less than authorize and encourage its use in the churches of the GKN as a "confessionally responsible" elucidation of how Scripture should be listened to. The GKN committee had to admit, however, that its synod had given special status to the report by calling it "confessionally responsible" and by its decision that the minor assemblies make local congregations "conversant with the contents of this valuable report."

4. Disputed positions in "God with Us" that create concern

It is not easy to define the positions of "God with Us" and the "Sequel" nor how far they articulate the position of the GKN because their answers to hermeneutical questions are not formulated as "official" pronouncements said to be definitive and final. They are presented as "pastoral advice" that reflects a process of study. It is furthermore difficult to assess the role of these documents now, more than ten years later, while we seek to evaluate the current situation in the GKN. The moderator of the GKN general synod recently told the IRC that little is heard of "God with Us" today in the GKN and that the majority of pastors and church members simply accept the Bible as the Word of God.

Does "God with Us" depart from the confessional position of Reformed churches on the authority of the Bible?

As noted above, the GKN maintain that "God with Us" does not intend to present a new doctrine of Scripture. It is clear from the report itself that its use of the relational concept of truth is not intended to detract from the authority of Scripture as the Word of God, as the following quotation from page 46 of "God with Us" makes clear:

The Holy Scripture derives its *authority* however not from any human being. On the contrary, its authority rests exclusively on the fact that it is God who speaks. Therefore, we confess that the Scripture is the *Word of God*. . . . The reliability of the Bible lies in this, that in the Scripture written by people the infallible Word of God comes to us; that is the unlimited treasure of all that which we need for our praise of God and our salvation (cf. Belgic Confession, Art. 2).

A problem in reading "God with Us" is that it lacks clarity, precision, and an apparent integration of its parts. The distinguished theologian and New Testament scholar Dr. Herman N. Ridderbos, a critic of the report within the GKN, writes,

The weakness of the Report is that its various parts do not have enough inner coherence. It is known that a professionally highly diverse committee worked on the writing of the Report for a long time. The traces of the diverse vantage points of the writers are unmistakably present and do not always converge. Nevertheless all the contributors can subscribe to the whole Report. The dogmatic emphasis with which the authority of Scripture is maintained has not suffered from the philosophical starting point. Conversely, those who introduced the philosophical concept of truth apparently did not take offense at this confessional "objectivity." (*RES Theological Forum* 9:54)

The inspiration of the Bible is recognized and accepted, but at issue are the implications of holding to *organic* inspiration for the authority and interpretation of the Scripture. The GKN does not question the authority of Scripture as the Word of God but asks what the exact nature of that biblical authority is. "God with Us" holds it is the content of the Bible that legitimates its authority, which is discerned when the Scripture is read as a witness to Christ. Traditionally the authority of the Bible is understood to reside objectively in the Bible itself and not primarily in the subjective encounter between the reader and the text. In "God with Us" the GKN stress that it is through faith in Jesus Christ that the believer is bonded with the Word, which bears witness to Christ. And by being bound to the Word of God, the believer learns to acknowledge the authority of the Bible. The trustworthiness of the Bible means that this Scripture is a faithful and trustworthy revelation of God in which it is clear who God is in Christ and how God desires humans to be and to live. The intention of "God with Us" has been to overcome the subject/object distinction. Many critics question whether the report really succeeds in doing this. In fact, this view leads to the problems raised by all critics of the report.

At the heart of the criticism of "God with Us" are two central problems: the relational concept of truth, which appears to introduce a subjectivity that undermines the objective authority of the Bible as the undeniable Word of God, and the blurring of the distinction between legitimate literary-historical criticism of the Bible and, from a Reformed perspective, illegitimate Scripture criticism. These two concerns deserve consideration.

- a. The dubious presentation of the relational nature of truth in "God with Us"

No part of "God with Us" has received more criticism than the first chapter, "Changes in the Concept of Truth." It lies behind the view of Scripture described above. Written by a philosopher, it was interpreted to be employing the idea of modern philosophy that truth is relational, i.e., truth is not purely objective nor solely subjective but lies in the fusion of the two. According to the relational theory of truth, the Bible's authority lies

in the encounter between the inspired Scripture and the believer illumined by the Holy Spirit.

The IRC delegates received from Dr. van Peursen, the author, an explanation which they found to be lucid of a position they found to be objectionable. Van Peursen made clear that in the context of "God with Us" "truth" was meant to be the human apprehending of revelation (not the reality of the revelation in and of itself) and that by its "relational" nature was meant the role of human apprehending, which is affected in every person by his spiritual, cultural, and social conditioning. In other words, in speaking of the "relational" nature of truth, the report was bringing to bear on the discussion of revelation what has become almost a commonplace today . . . that all human apprehending of truth is historically and culturally conditioned to a greater or lesser degree. Those who reviewed the "Sequel" found its explanation of "revelational truth" an improvement, but it still did not answer all their questions and concerns.

- b. The tendency in "God with Us" to slip into Scripture criticism when dealing with matters of literary-historical critical studies

The distinction between Scripture criticism and literary-historical criticism is important but not always easy to define. Scripture criticism assumes a critical attitude toward the Bible as the Word of God in which the critic decides what is credible and what is not. Historical-critical studies approach the Bible and its contents by applying a scientifically analytical method. It includes such disciplines as textual criticism, literary criticism, and historical-critical investigation to learn what the Bible is saying.

Pertinent passages from "God with Us" reveal its awareness of the danger of slipping from legitimate historical criticism into an unacceptable Scripture criticism:

In practice it is not always easy to distinguish between both sorts of criticism. It is a fact that criticism of the contents and the message of Scripture often came in the garb of a scientific critical approach. It is likewise true that not everyone was always consciously aware of the fact that the scientific approach and study of the Bible is never without certain presuppositions. (For instance, one's view of inspiration or of miracles has an influence on the result of his investigation of the prophetic or historical text.) That however does not alter the fact that it is necessary to distinguish between the two types of criticism. ("God with Us," p. 20)

And again, these words:

Precisely if in its study the historical-critical research has brought to light all kinds of problems which cannot be avoided, it is of greatest importance that this study be done by people who commence their work with the confession that the Bible is the Word of God which has been inspired by the Holy Spirit. ("God with Us," p. 31)

It may be regretted that further study so essential in this area appears no longer on the agenda of the GKN, in spite of what the report itself recommends:

It is not possible in this chapter or even in this report to discuss the principal questions in the area of historical-critical investigation of the Bible. Such a discussion is definitely necessary and, moreover, belongs to the mandate given to our Commission by the General Synod of Maastricht. We shall have to make a further study of it. ("God with Us," p. 30)

Our IRC delegates also stressed the need for further study, in view of the fact that several historical-critical hypotheses and conclusions have found general acceptance among GKN biblical scholars and theologians that would generally be thought among us to involve Scripture criticism and would undoubtedly be judged incompatible with the CRC report on "The Nature and Extent of Biblical Authority."

Recognizing the problems in distinguishing the two types of criticism that confront all exegetes in interpreting the Bible, the report of our delegates concluded, "Needless to say, the Reformed churches will have to learn patiently how to find their way through this uncharted thicket, while they hold firmly to the faith that Scripture addresses us as God's Spirit-inspired infallible Word."

Other problems are also associated with "God with Us," such as the problematic nature of its hermeneutic "point of entry"—the assumption that the proper interpretation derives not from the perspective of the origin of the Scripture in the past, but more from the functioning of the Bible in the present. Another difficulty is the lack of a clear distinction between the inspiration of the Holy Spirit on the writers of the Bible, which undergirds its authority, and the illumination of the Holy Spirit, which enables the believer to recognize and accept the Bible's trustworthiness. A very important issue arises from the fact that the Reformers' confession of the perspicuity of Scripture and its normativity, by which appeal to the Bible can be made, particularly in ethical matters, appears problematic in "God with Us."

5. Observations on "God with Us" and the "Sequel" as they bear on CRC relations with the GKN

We note that:

- a. To terminate CRC ecclesiastical relations with the GKN because of "God with Us" and the "Sequel" appears unwarranted in the light of the GKN's continued confession of the Bible as the authoritative, infallible Word of God. However imprecise the GKN's discussion of the Scriptures is, however inconsistent their affirmations about the nature, extent, and character of the Bible as the Word of God may appear, and however unsatisfactory their interpretation, which must be freely acknowledged, discontinuing our fellowship at this time would be difficult to justify.
- b. To ignore the serious questions raised by "God with Us" would be remiss on the part of the CRC. Acknowledging that in the past the CRC has dialogued with the GKN on these issues with some success, the IRC believes a resumption of the discussions between our two churches is necessary. Such an ongoing discussion is essential if our ecclesial relations are to be helpful for the GKN and because the profound issues involved are problems for all Reformed churches, including the CRC. Current examples of these issues in the CRC are the unresolved questions and tensions in the church about interpreting the Bible on the issue of women serving in the offices of elder and minister and interpreting the first chapters of Genesis. Germane to the debate on these problems is the question of what constitutes legitimate biblical-historical studies and illegitimate Scripture criticism.

B. *The GKN position on homosexuality*

It was the decision of the GKN General Synod of Delft to send a pastoral letter on homosexuality to the churches in 1979 that unleashed a storm of protest in the CRC and among member churches of the RES. While there have been several reasons for CRC concern about the GKN, it is the GKN position on homosexual practice that accounts for the present questioning of our continuing relationship. Overture 79 (1992) is grounded entirely on the homosexual issue.

1. The GKN letter on homosexuality sent to the churches in 1979

The homosexual issue surfaced in the GKN in the mid sixties when university chaplains brought to the attention of the GKN synod the high incidence of suicide among students tortured with their homosexuality. After twelve years of inconclusive committee study, the Synod of Delft in November 1979 decided to address a pastoral letter to the churches, intending, it said, to foster discussion among heterosexual and homosexual church members. The key passage in the letter read,

Notwithstanding the difference in viewpoint on the relevant scriptural data, to bear in mind—out of respect for each other's life secret, honoring one's own responsibility before God, and in the light of God's justification of our common humanity—that it does not behoove us to condemn fellow human beings as concerns their homophilial disposition and the way they experience it, because the final word about it is God's prerogative.

("Homophilia," p. 1)

Three years later, "Homophilia," a report from the GKN Committee on Church and Theology, was released. It was a "report regarding the use of Scripture in relation to questions concerning homophilia." The report came to no unified conclusions, but the tenor of the entire report supported the synodical position. That position is expressed in these words:

The concept of homophilia as we use it today does not occur in the Bible. The commandment of love for the neighbor should be taken so seriously that we must respect as their life secret the choice, made by homophilial fellow-Christians before the face of God, to regard themselves bound or not bound by the biblical prohibition. Though the biblical prohibition of homosexual relations is clearly place-and-time determined, there are situations that are so similar to what the Bible rejects that the church must say that in such cases the prohibition remains in force. Conversely, the church is no longer at liberty to keep silent about the permissibility of something the Bible does not express itself on: homophilial relationships in love and fidelity in which justice is done to the deepest intention of the prohibition passages, the sanctification of life. Of such relationships the church will have to say that these are, even though the Scripture does not speak directly about them, permissible according to her best insight.

("Homophilia," p. 4)

The issue of homosexuality invokes little discussion in the GKN anymore, as is indicated by the following summary of a June 1994 IRC meeting with Rev. Peter Boomsma, the moderator of the General Synod of the GKN:

... homosexuality in the church is not an issue anymore. It raises few questions in recent years; the people are weary of the entire discussion. The general attitude seems to be that while people are not critical of the church's stance most members do not want practicing homosexuals in their pulpits. He is aware of only two pastors who are practicing homosexuals and other such homosexuals do not find pulpits and congregations open to them. Two opinions seem to be accepted: 1) the verses of scripture which deal with

homosexual practice are not applicable to what we know about homosexuality today, and 2) it is believed that it is established psychologically that homosexual orientation cannot be changed.

2. Response of the CRC to the position of the GKN in the pastoral letter

The gravity of the situation in the eyes of Synod 1980 was evident when it expressed to the Synod of Delft, still in session, its alarm that the decision apparently judged homosexual practice not to be in disobedience to the Word of God. Synod requested the IRC to learn whether that was the position of the GKN, and, if so, to reexamine the provisions of table and pulpit fellowship as they applied to the GKN.

In 1981 synod learned that it was not the intention of the Synod of Delft to make an ethical pronouncement but to create room for homosexually disposed members in the church, leaving the final word about their sexual expression, including its practice, to the judgment of the Lord. The GKN did not approve of licentiousness, but they did not bar mutual physical expression between homosexuals.

In 1983 the CRC synod decided to restrict the terms of ecclesiastical relations with the GKN by declaring that the elements of pulpit and table no longer applied. Two grounds were advanced:

- a. The recent decisions of the synods of the GKN allow ministers and members to engage in a lifestyle that in our judgment is contrary to the Scriptures and in conflict with the decisions of our Synod of 1973; nor have the concerns and protests regarding these decisions moved the synod of the GKN to modify its position.
- b. The laxity within the GKN in dealing with ministers and other leaders who openly promote views conflicting with the Reformed confessions.

(Acts of Synod 1982, pp. 678-80)

The elimination of table and pulpit provisions did not mean that no GKN members could partake of holy communion in the CRC, nor that all ministers of the GKN were barred from CRC pulpits. It remains the responsibility of the local consistory to guard the table of the Lord and decide who may minister the Word in the church. The action was taken to alert consistories that in the GKN practicing homosexuals may take communion and may occupy GKN pulpits.

From 1984 on, the IRC has not pursued with the GKN their stand on homosexuality because the GKN position had become a major and crucial issue in the four assemblies of the RES/REC from 1980 to 1992. The RES/REC was judged to be a better forum for study of and discussion about homosexual practice.

A point of contention between the GKN and their critics for a number of years was whether the pastoral advice of 1979 involved an ethical judgment on the part of the synod. After several denials the General Synod of Emmen in 1989 judged that the pastoral advice of the Synod of Delft did entail an ethical pronouncement.

After receiving the report on RES Harare 1988, the IRC drew up a series of statements to serve as guidelines for the committee in its relations with the GKN. To these guidelines we will return later.

3. The Reformed Ecumenical Council (REC) and the GKN position on homosexuality

Since the IRC deferred the issue of homosexuality in the GKN to the REC, it is informative to review what the REC has done.

The decision of the Synod of Delft immediately evoked serious concern and even shock and distress among REC member churches. The REC has repeatedly declared its position that "according to Scripture all homosexual practice is sin."

The issue of homosexuality became part of the larger REC agenda concerned with developments within the GKN that occasioned long-standing and increasingly intensified unrest among members of the REC and brought into question the GKN's continuing REC membership. The GKN decisions on homosexuality brought these concerns to a head. It created an agonizing and crippling crisis for the REC. Already by 1984 five churches had left the RES because they were convinced they ought not to remain in the RES with the GKN. In Chicago (1984) the assembly appealed to the GKN to respond to the disappointment and disillusionment of the churches of the RES and to withdraw its pastoral advice on homophilia. It warned that if the GKN were unable to move away from their position, they must seriously consider that several churches would find it difficult to stay in the RES.

At RES Harare 1988 the issue of homosexuality dominated the debate on the GKN. The assembly accepted with minor changes the report of the RES Committee on Homosexuality as a responsible answer to "Homophilia." Since the report was deemed somewhat theoretical in nature, a guideline from the RES publication *The Family in Crisis Today*, which leaned heavily on the 1973 CRC report, was added. We include it here as a clear statement of both the REC and the CRC positions:

In this day and age in which the larger community increasingly tends to see homosexual behavior as an acceptable variant of sexual behavior or at least is willing to tolerate it as such, the church must maintain that *sexuality as willed and intended by God is that between a man and a woman*. Homosexuality is not just an alternative form of sexuality, but it is a divergence from the order that God established in his original creation. In the face of the changing morality in society at large, the church must continue to say that homosexual practice is contrary to God's will. At the same time, however, the church must give evidence that it is aware of the heavy burdens its homosexual members have to bear in a life of sexual abstinence. They often feel very lonely and frustrated, either by not daring to tell others that they are homosexually inclined or by not being understood and not being able to fulfill the sexual urges they observe in themselves. The church must support them in a loving and understanding way, accepting them as full members of its community, surrounding them by its prayers and offering them the warmth and security of the communion of the saints.

(Acts of RES Harare 1988, p. 109)

The assembly in Harare instructed the REC Interim Committee to present to the next synod a recommendation regarding the continued membership of the GKN in the REC. Unhappily, when the assembly did not ask the GKN to resign their membership, several more churches withdrew or suspended their membership.

The issue of GKN membership was an exceedingly painful matter for REC Athens 1992. The GKN delegates presented a statement on the first day

asking for a quick decision regarding the membership of the GKN in order that they could ascertain the extent of their responsibility in the assembly. The statement presented a summary of the GKN position on homosexuality and their response to any demand that they reverse their stand. It is illuminating for our purpose:

If in discussing the position of the RCN/GKN this Assembly wants to speak about the topic of homosexuality as such, we will keep silent. We have adopted the following approach. We are quite willing, by means of personal conversation, to explain our churches' position on the acceptance of homosexuality in love and faithfulness but will no longer discuss the issue in committee meetings and plenary sessions. In its report . . . the IC [Interim Committee] notes that our [Reformed] churches clearly affirm the rule "ecclesia semper reformanda" and we should be willing therefore to submit all our positions, including that of homosexuality, to review. The IC is right in theory. There are two reasons for our decision to remain silent on this issue.

Firstly, we have pastoral reasons. In 1979, after a long process of reflection our churches decided to accept "homosexuality in love and faithfulness" while rejecting promiscuity and intercourse with people other than one's partner for both heterosexual and homosexual relationships. Within the boundaries of love and faithfulness, people are able to know for themselves what to do—it is their responsibility for which they must give an account to the Lord. Such is the RCN position on homosexuality. Homosexual brothers and sisters have been frequently hurt through the debates in the REC (RES) and we do not want to create any uncertainty about our churches' acceptance of them. Our first and foremost concern in not re-opening the discussion about their position in our churches is therefore a pastoral one.

Secondly, further discussion of homosexuality in love and faithfulness is pointless unless we take up the issue of hermeneutics. Questions with respect to the nature of Scriptural authority and hermeneutics have been central in our churches for more than twenty years. Several issues have stimulated this discussion, e.g., the exegesis of Genesis 1-II, historical criticism, the position of men and women in church and society, and homosexuality. Because it is impossible to deal with any one of these questions without going into the deeper hermeneutical issues we are very glad that the REC now has a report on Hermeneutics and Ethics and will discuss it at length. Reflection on hermeneutics may take several years and in those years we will have the opportunity to grow together in obedience and wisdom and to deepen our understanding of the Gospel.

(*Acts of REC Athens 1992*, pp. 67-68)

The REC Interim Committee recommended to REC Athens that there were "insufficient grounds to terminate the membership of the GKN in the REC." After much debate and frustrating parliamentary complexities, the assembly decided "to maintain the status quo as far as the membership of GKN is concerned, but asked the Interim Committee to draft provisions for suspension to be included in the Constitution . . ." (*Acts of REC Athens*, p. 121). The GKN have since responded, saying that if the REC adopts constitutional changes to include "suspension of membership," they will resign their membership in the REC. The rationale for the GKN position is as follows:

The inclusion in the REC Constitution in 1996 of the possibility of suspending a church membership would make it impossible for the RCN to continue membership in the REC, since at this stage it could not be seen but in connection with the procedure regarding the termination of the RCN membership which was concluded by the Athens decisions; moreover, it would change the REC's character fundamentally: the REC is not meant to be a Synod but a Council.

(*Acta van de Generale Synode*, Mijdrecht 1991, Art. 203)

4. Observations on the issue of homosexuality as they bear on CRC relations with the GKN

We note that

- a. The position of the GKN is clearly at variance with the position of the CRC as adopted in 1973. The CRC report holds that the New Testament explicitly teaches that homosexual practice cannot be condoned. The GKN position does not affirm, however, that the apostle Paul was wrong in his condemnation of homosexuality as he knew it in his times. He knew homosexuality in its licentious, promiscuous, and idolatrous forms, the practice of which is sinful for homosexuals today. But, the GKN holds, the apostle's judgment need not apply to the homosexual who lives in a loving, trusting, monogamous relationship.
- b. From the GKN statement at REC Harare 1992 (see above) we must be aware that to dialogue with the GKN regarding our differences on homosexuality, we must not begin on the premise that our continuing relations are dependent upon their reversing their position. The GKN have a pastoral concern not to submit their homosexual members who live in "love and faithfulness" to the uncertainty and distress of reopening the question of whether the church accepts them. Furthermore, they maintain that any dialogue about their position on homosexuality (into which the GKN are willing to enter) must be in the wider context of the issues of biblical hermeneutics.

C. *The question of mission to the Jews*

Recent changes in the church order of the GKN redefining the relationship between the church and Israel have also raised concern within the CRC.

1. GKN change from mission to dialogue with Jews

The older version of the GKN church order spoke of the proclamation of the gospel to the Jews and to non-Christianized people. The purpose of the proclamation was to testify that Jesus is the Christ, and the goal was to win Jews to salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

The newer version speaks of the proclamation of the gospel to all who do not know it, but it no longer specifically mentions Jews. Concerning the Jews, reference is made to the indissoluble tie that the church has with Israel and to the calling of the church to engage in dialogue with Israel so that Jews and Christians can bear witness to each other.

The change has been summarized as a change from mission to conversation. The official RCN *Bulletin* (December 1991) reported under the heading "Jews and Christians: Witnessing to One Another" that

The change [in the church order] involves a historic decision, according to the Committee [for Church and Israel], since the Reformed churches in the Netherlands have now once and for all dissociated themselves from mission among the Jews. In keeping with this changed perspective the GKN no longer have "Deputies for Mission Among the Jews" but "Deputies for Church and Israel."

2. IRC response to the GKN change re Jews

Through IRC correspondence with the GKN, personal contact with representatives of the GKN, and the addresses of fraternal delegates to synod, the circumstances under which this change has come about and the reasons for it have been outlined for the CRC. Preeminent among them is the

tragic history of the holocaust during World War II, which affected the Netherlands very directly and very profoundly. Another reason for the change includes the realization that both church and Israel share a common heritage in the Old Testament, and, beyond that, is the uncertainty presently surrounding the church's interpretation of Romans 11.

These considerations have compelled a greater degree of modesty in the church's contact with Israel than was formerly the case. The church has come to respect Jewish resentment of efforts to evangelize Jewish people. Evangelization virtually amounts to the annihilation of Jewish identity, a painful reminder of what was imminent in the holocaust.

Representatives of the GKN have assured synod and the IRC that the changes in the church order do not espouse the view that there are two ways of salvation, one through Christ for the church and another without Christ for the Jews. Rev. Everet Overeem, chairman of the GKN Ecumenical Committee, in an interview with the IRC, explained that "the way of introducing Jews to Jesus Christ cannot be the method of evangelism and mission, but must be attempted through dialogue in which Christians can present Christ as the Messiah to Jews."

In his address to synod Rev. Overeem spoke of this issue:

For many decades we have not spoken anymore of "mission" with regard to Israel. You can talk about mission to Hindus or animists. But with Israel we do have the Old Testament in common. We are as a church rooted in Israel and in the promises God gave to his people. . . . The God of the Old Testament is the God of the New Testament! Therefore we do not speak of "mission" to Israel.

. . . a process of reorientation and rethinking is going on. Questions are reaching not only into our conscience, but into the heart of our theology. Has the church indeed replaced the old people of the covenant? Are you taking the God of the Old Testament seriously maintaining the replacement-theory? That theory has contributed to the suffering of Jewish people in Europe during many centuries. And does God have His own holy mystery with the people of Israel? It is only a sample of the questions we are facing. . . .

We do have serious and intense talks with Jewish people. On the agenda are three issues: the understanding of the Old Testament; the witness of Israel of the Holy One with the unspoken name; and the witness of the church that Jesus Christ is the Messiah of Israel. . . . But let me reassure you: a "two ways doctrine," in which Israel is being saved without Christ and behind the back of Christ, is out of the question for our synod. . . . There are more Jewish people living in the USA than in the country of Israel . . . are we doing—have we done—all we can to make Jewish people jealous of our salvation in Christ? You don't have such a dark heritage as we do in Europe. Perhaps you could give new impetus to this part of the work of our Lord.

3. Observations

- a. A concern persists for some critics about the GKN change from mission to dialogue as a method by which Christians witness to the Christ. Their focus is not so much on whether the GKN have embraced the theory that there are two ways of salvation, but rather, given the fact that salvation comes only through faith in Jesus, on whether abandoning a mission to Jews, comparable to mission to other non-Christianized peoples, calls into question the need to win Jews over to faith in Jesus. Such a mission is required in fulfillment of the great commission (Matt. 28:19). These concerns among others, such as the distinction between religious and secularized Jews, are appropriate topics for an ongoing discussion with the GKN.

- b. It must be acknowledged that while the GKN have decided to discontinue "missions" to the Jews, they have not ignored the question of Israel and the Christ and have proposed a dialogical method of witnessing to Jews. The CRC, in mid-century, recognizing the limited results of its Jewish missions, discontinued them and declared in 1971 that no distinctive method was required to witness to Jews (*Acts of Synod 1971*, p. 59). It may be questioned how meaningful CRC witness to Jews has been. After 1971 the subject of Jewish evangelism no longer appears in the *Acts of Synod*. The CRC and the GKN might both profit from discussing the question of the relation of Israel to the church in the light of the Old Testament and such New Testament passages as Romans 9-11 and might profitably dialogue on how to bring the gospel of Jesus Christ to Jewish people today.

IV. Ramifications of terminating or not terminating ecclesiastical relations with the GKN

Before the IRC received the mandate of 1992, as we have noted, the IRC and synod had been very much aware of the strains on CRC ecclesiastical fellowship with the GKN. But neither synod nor the IRC seriously considered terminating our ecclesial ties, even when there were overtures on the floor of synod requesting such.

A. Past perspectives on evaluating relations with the GKN

When the most serious difference between our churches developed—the homosexual issue, synod restricted pulpit and table fellowship but turned down an overture to terminate relations with the GKN. The grounds for rejecting the overture are relevant to synod's present concern about the ramifications of terminating or not terminating our relations with the GKN. In 1983 synod said,

- a. . . the new structure for ecclesiastical contacts initiated by the Synod of 1974 was designed specifically to make it possible to differentiate in our contacts with various churches with whom we are in ecclesiastical fellowship, thus affording opportunities for continued mutual assistance, encouragement, and admonition without compromising our own denominational integrity.
- b. The judgment . . . that meaningful and mutually helpful contacts between these two churches can be more effectively pursued at the present time by termination of the relationship of Churches in Ecclesiastical Fellowship between them is unwarranted.
- c. For synod to terminate all elements of the relationship of Churches in Ecclesiastical fellowship which now define the mutually agreed upon basis for contact between the CRC and GKN *would be to act contrary to the basic principles governing interchurch contacts adopted by the Synod of 1944*, especially in view of the fact that our bond with the GKN is our longest and has continued to be in many respects our most intimate ecclesiastical relationship.

(Acts of Synod 1983, pp. 678-79; italics added for emphasis)

In 1988, after reviewing the considerable exchange regarding "God with Us," the restrictions on table and pulpit fellowship because of the homosexual issue, and the delegate reports on the decisions of RES Harare 1988 regarding the GKN, the IRC adopted a series of guidelines to monitor its future relations with the GKN. We quote portions of those statements that have relevance for our present study:

1. The GKN and the CRC have common historical roots of faith and practice which are a basis for ecclesiastical relationships. As long as this basis functions

in a viable manner in our common commitments to the Reformed faith, it should continue to be acknowledged, encouraged, and used to maintain serious dialogue and substantive exchange on important issues that are of mutual concern to our churches. To abandon each other at this time would call into question the continuing validity and value of this historical heritage for each other.

2. Although our relationships during the past decade have been strained and the differences between our two churches in doctrine and practice have posed serious problems and tensions that have not been solved, both churches have gained a greater insight into the faith and life of the other in their respective social, cultural and ecclesiastical settings, enabling them to serve one another more ably. To abandon each at this time would render our past efforts at understanding and correction a failure and would mean forfeiting the opportunity to minister to each other.
3. In view of the reality that the CRC lives in the environment of a Christian community strongly influenced by American fundamentalism, we ought to maintain the relationship with the GKN as a means to retain our own distinctively Reformed faith and life and as a counter-balance to the influence of the fundamentalist strain in American evangelicalism upon us.
4. *The fact that ecumenicity demands that we relate faithfully to the whole Church of Jesus Christ in whatever ways are prudent*, it follows that the CRC should not surrender its opportunities for interchurch fellowship with the GKN when such interchange is readily available. This requires that we maintain a high level of involvement with the GKN as long as it continues to welcome our dialogue and exchange of positions with a view to positive results.
5. With respect to the continuing conversations between the GKN and the CRC, we need to move to a level that is less confrontational and more of a dialogue as these conversations focus on foundational issues of mutual importance. The recent exchange on the issues posed in GOD MET ONS provides a model for dealing with controversial issues.

(IRC Minutes, September 23, 1988, italics added for emphasis)

B. Principles of ecumenical responsibility

The CRC policy of ecumenicity that guides the CRC and the IRC is based on scriptural principles first enunciated in a landmark report adopted by Synod 1944 (*Acts of Synod 1944*, pp. 330-67). This report declares it will not do to declare all non-Reformed churches to be "non-churches." "If the constituency of a given church be indeed a company of believers, they are a church in the fundamental sense of the term" (*Acts of Synod 1944*, p. 342). That the CRC holds this position is evident by its recognition of the baptism administered in all the historical churches of Christendom. The report affirms, "On the assumption that other churches and our own are Christian churches, indeed, those churches and our own are closely related as being all and severally manifestations of the one and indivisible body of Christ" (*Acts of Synod 1944*, p. 357). Secondly, the CRC therefore has a duty and task toward all churches, although its ecumenical responsibility, involving many factors, will necessarily differ for each of the main types of churches.

This recognition and responsibility apply to the whole spectrum of churches in ever-widening circles from the CRC, as classified according to the report of 1944. The circle of which the CRC is itself a part consists of those Reformed churches that (allowing for nonessential differences) share our doctrines, polity, and liturgy, officially and in practice. With them we have the most intimate relationship and most familial responsibility. A second circle embraces churches that are Reformed in their confession but not in their practice. To these churches the CRC has a different kind of ecumenical responsibility. A third circle includes other Protestant churches, such as Lutheran, Methodist, Baptist, Pente-

costal. The final circle is composed of Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches. The report does not specify how and by what means CRC responsibilities to these circles of churches are to be exercised.

The significance of this principle for our purpose is that clearly the CRC has an ecumenical responsibility to the GKN. The italicized sentences in the quotations above point to the synod's and the IRC's awareness of this basic perspective. The report of 1944 does not speak of terminating an ecumenical relationship, nor does the Ecumenical Charter of the CRC envision severing ecumenical ties. In fact, they both affirm that the CRC has an ecumenical responsibility to the GKN, no matter what developments create tension between our two churches. It may be argued that synod has posed the wrong question by asking whether the CRC should or should not terminate relations with the GKN. The real question is, What is the CRC's ecumenical responsibility to the GKN? The question is not whether there are sufficient reasons to terminate CRC relations with the GKN but what the CRC's ecumenical responsibility to the GKN is in view of the changes in the GKN and how can that responsibility can be met.

C. Observations that bear on our relations with the GKN

1. The GKN have been from the beginning of our denominational life our primary ecumenical relationship. First viewed as our "mother church" in 1857, throughout the years they have remained our oldest and closest sister church, to whom we looked for leadership, advice, theological training, and supportive fellowship. In view of these long and meaningful ties of fellowship, the CRC has been reluctant to discontinue ecclesiastical relations with the GKN when changes have taken place within the GKN, though other Reformed churches have felt free to do so. Yet the CRC has felt compelled, out of its own convictions, to admonish the GKN with one criticism after another over the past thirty years as apparent departures from the classic Reformed positions continued to develop within the GKN.
2. In evaluating the CRC's ecclesiastical fellowship with the GKN, it is important to know something of the situation in which the GKN is seeking to be the church and to understand something of the forces that have shaped and continue to shape the GKN since World War II. The Netherlands today is considered one of the most secularized societies in the world, a society not so much opposed to the Christian faith as dismissing it as irrelevant to modern life.

The delegates sent to the GKN in 1984 believed it was helpful to know something of the general conditions and circumstances of the GKN to understand the report "God with Us." They sketched some of the salient aspects of the current situation. These factors include (a) the trauma of the 1944 split in the GKN and the heart-cry "It must never happen again"; (b) the impact of World War II on the GKN that thrust them into the maelstrom of national and international affairs in a radically new way; (c) for many church members, the questionable adequacy of the old Reformed ethos—with its theological and moral certainties and separate institutions—to cope with the larger world of many uncertainties into which they have been thrust; (d) the polarization within congregations and the denomination as a whole as a result of differing responses to the developments in the ecclesiastical world

of the Netherlands; (e) the influence of the radical spirit of individualism that has deeply infected the Dutch people, expressing itself in many ways: in the cry for democratization of all structures perceived as oppressive, in the tendency to reject authority and emphasize personal freedom and responsibility, in a high level of concern for oppressed peoples everywhere, and in a conviction that the way to truth and authentic existence is through personal experience and dialogue with others; (f) the widespread pressure in the GKN to embody the kingdom of God in the affairs of humankind by engaging the church in the service of the world: to relieve its suffering, to ease its crises, and to be God's agency for peace and justice; and (g) the general preoccupation, as a result of these developments, with moral issues, both personal and social, which focus all the pastoral ministries of the church: her preaching, synodical decisions, and even theology.

3. It is vitally important to remember that the intention of the GKN is to confront the issues of the day out of loyalty to the gospel and not to destroy the faith, however mistaken we may believe they are in addressing those issues. Their concern is to defend and witness to the gospel and the Word of God in the indifferent and even hostile world of their time and place. From our analysis of the three issues of concern, it is evident that the GKN mean to accept the Scriptures as the Word of God, even when suggesting new and questionable interpretations of the Bible. This recognition is not to deny the dangers of wrong theology and practice or the need to express our convictions opposing such dangers because of our own devotion to and understanding of the Word of God, but it must caution the CRC in its dealings with the GKN.
4. The GKN have steadfastly maintained their ecclesiastical commitment to the CRC by regularly sending fraternal delegates to our synod (often two of them, who attend most of the sessions). They have been more faithful than the CRC has been in the exchange of ecumenical delegates. To this day the GKN affirm that the CRC is their most significant and meaningful interdenominational relation and would be very disappointed were the CRC to terminate relations with them. Some leaders in the GKN consider it important for their church to benefit from the more conservative influence that the CRC can bring to our mutual fellowship.
5. The GKN not only welcome but desire dialogue with the CRC concerning the issues that pose problems for our relationship. The Committee for Ecumenical Relationships has urged the IRC to send a delegation to the Netherlands for discussion prior to submitting a report to synod. (*Note: The IRC has been informed that the union of the Reformed and Lutheran churches in the Netherlands in "Together on the Way" ["Samen Op Weg"] will be a union in which each denomination will continue to have its own ecclesial relations; therefore the CRC relations with the GKN will not be discontinued by the merger when the final union is effected.*)
6. In pursuing our ecumenical responsibility to the GKN through dialogue, we must be reminded of the Ecumenical Charter's statement on unity and truth:

The unity of the church of Christ is a unity in truth. Enroute to achieving unity, major differences in the perception of biblical truth must be overcome. In seeking to overcome these differences we must not only share with others our perceptions

but also be open to theirs. Through such ecumenical dialogue we must trust God to teach us all, and thereby unite us through a deeper common grasp of the truth. As we struggle for unity in the truth we do so fully committed to the Reformed faith and the confessions affirmed by the Christian Reformed Church.

(Agenda for Synod 1987, p. 171; Acts of Synod 1987, p. 588)

V. Recommendations

The Interchurch Relations Committee, in response to the mandate assigned to it in 1992 to advise synod whether to terminate or not to terminate the ecclesiastical relationship of the Christian Reformed Church in North America with the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, recommends the following:

A. That synod not terminate its ecclesiastical fellowship with the GKN as defined by the Ecumenical Charter with the restrictions by Synod 1983 on table and pulpit fellowship.

Grounds:

1. The GKN confess the Bible to be the authoritative, infallible Word of God in conformity with the Reformed confessions, even though their affirmations about the nature, extent, and character of the Scriptures as the Word of God seem questionable and some interpretations appear unsatisfactory to the CRC.
2. The principles of ecumenicity demand that we relate faithfully to the whole church of Jesus Christ in whatever ways are prudent; it follows that the CRC should certainly not surrender its opportunities for interchurch fellowship with the GKN when such exchange is readily available.
3. The CRC has an ongoing ecumenical responsibility to the GKN particularly as they struggle to be a Reformed church in a radically secular European environment. This responsibility may not be abandoned as long as the CRC has opportunity to fulfill its ecumenical task with the GKN.
4. The GKN consistently express their desire to remain in ecclesiastical fellowship with the CRC and would be distressed by our termination of fellowship. They continue to express appreciation for the way in which the CRC seeks to exercise its ecclesiastical fellowship and responsibility.
5. The GKN tolerance of homosexual practice is in the judgment of the CRC contrary to the Scriptures and in conflict with the decisions of our Synod of 1973, and therefore the restrictions on table and pulpit fellowship should be maintained.

B. That synod mandate the Interchurch Relations Committee to discuss with the official representative of the GKN the issues and trends in the life and practice of the GKN that are of deep concern to the CRC and trouble our ecclesiastical relations.

Grounds:

1. The GKN and the CRC have common historical roots of faith and practice which are a basis for ecclesiastical discussion. As long as this basis functions in a viable manner in our common commitments to the Reformed faith, it should continue to be acknowledged, encouraged, and used to maintain serious dialogue and substantive exchange.

2. The issues between our churches are of such gravity as to require ongoing discussion to seek mutual understanding for a common confession.
3. The GKN have always been open to hearing and considering our concerns, even when disagreeing with our criticism.
4. The Ecumenical Charter requires that we seek our unity in truth and strive to overcome major differences in the perception of biblical truth not only by sharing our perceptions with others but also by being open to theirs. Through such ecumenical dialogue we must trust God to teach us all and thereby to unite us through a deeper common grasp of the truth (cf. *Agenda for Synod 1987*, p. 171; *Acts of Synod 1987*, p. 588).

C. That synod instruct the IRC to report regularly to synod on its dialogue with the GKN.

Interchurch Relations Committee
Clarence Boomsma, administrative secretary

APPENDIX B

22nd September, 1994

From:

Deputies for Correspondence with Churches in Foreign Countries
Reformed Churches in South Africa
P.O. Box 20004
Noordbrug
2522
Republic of South Africa

To:

General Secretary
Christian Reformed Church in North America
c/o Rev. C. Boomsma
Administrative Secretary
1150 Gladstone Drive S.E.
Grand Rapids
Michigan 49506
USA

Dear brethren

Thank you very much for your speedy reaction (7th June, 1994) to our letter of the 9th May, 1994. We appreciate your willingness to have candid correspondence about these issues. We hope that this letter will be of help towards our common goal of clarifying the issue of rebuilding the ties between us or not.

1. Re: Point 9 of our letter of the 16th October, 1991

We regard it as an unfortunate misunderstanding that this point has become a problem. Our deputies did indeed attend to your letter of the 14th September, 1995 and took it—along with the other correspondence—into consideration when they finalized their report for our Synod of January 1994. With hindsight gained from the letter we have now received from you, we realize that the

remark in Point 9 of our letter raised the expectation that we would answer you specifically on this point. We sincerely apologize in so far as we raised this expectation and then didn't meet it. It was not done intentionally.

We are, however, somewhat at a loss at how to proceed on this point. The fact is that the convictions of our churches about these matters are contained in synodical decisions. We as deputies can communicate these decisions and try to clarify misunderstandings where they occur, but we cannot amend or supplement them materially.

We are also somewhat perplexed by the importance you attach to the decision of our synod of 1991 on the ideology of apartheid. This decision of our synod is in its tenor in line with several decisions taken by previous synods of our churches—decisions which we tried to communicate to you more than once in correspondence as well as on occasions of personal contact.

Perhaps it may help us to understand your viewpoint if we can receive an indication of what you expect from us in this regard.

2. Re: Unresolved matters in our letters dated 25th February, 1991 and 16th October, 1991

Our problem boils down to this: The decision to suspend relations was taken by you and not by us. We were confronted with a *fait accompli*. You did so because of the issue of apartheid, which you regard as a stumbling-block in our relations. Seen from our side, this issue didn't play the same role in our relations. But the way in which you handled this whole matter, left us with a strong sense of being treated unjustly, as reflected in our above-mentioned letters. As this has become in our mind a stumbling-block, we are of the opinion that the broken ties cannot be mended and full ecclesiastical ties not be reinstated unless this reputed injustice is addressed. This is why we are pressing for a discussion of the matters mentioned in our letters. We admit that it may prove time-consuming, but we believe that the ties which lasted more than a century, justify this kind of effort to clear the air.

3. Re: Disturbances in your churches

We can understand that these tensions must make it a very difficult time for all involved. But we must be frank with you: we are worried about the developments in your churches. Studies which were done by our churches concerning the question of women serving as elders or ministers, led us to the conclusion that one can only allow women serving in these offices if dangerous hermeneutical premises are accepted.

However, as we do not know on which grounds your synods took such decisions, and as we don't want to come to any kind of conclusions before having all relevant information, we are eagerly awaiting the promised Agendas and Acts of your synods of the last couple of years.

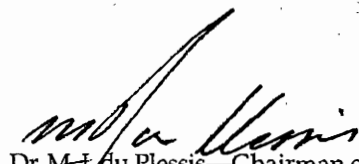
We have also asked the Reformed Churches of New Zealand and the Christelijk Gereformeerde Kerken of the Netherlands about their views on this issue, and we are awaiting their responses as well.

We would also like to get first-hand information from the separated churches, but we don't want to contact them without your knowledge. Would you concede

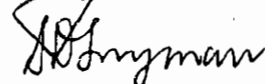
to a request to help us with an address where we can get into contact with them? We apologize in advance if this is asking too much.

Our prayer is that the Lord will bless you as well as us with the wisdom from above in dealing with all the matters which lie between us.

For the Reformed Churches in South Africa



Dr. M. J. du Plessis—Chairman of the Deputies



Rev. S. D. Snyman—Secretary

I. Brief overview

In 1994 the Sermons for Reading Services Committee was privileged to serve churches, especially vacant ones, and interested individuals with *The Living Word*, sermons for reading services. Three booklets of nine sermons each were published, one in March, one in July, and one in October. The total of twenty-seven sermons included twenty-three general-topic sermons and one each for Advent, New Year's Day, Lent, and Pentecost.

For 1994-1995 the committee consists of Rev. Adrian Van Giessen (1995), chairman; Mr. Ray Vander Ploeg (1996), secretary-treasurer; Rev. William Koopmans (1996); Rev. Harry Vander Windt (1997); and Rev. Paul Stadt (1995), alternate. Rev. Van Giessen has completed one term on the committee, and the committee is grateful for his work as editor and chairman. Rev. Stadt has also completed one term and is willing to be nominated for a second term as alternate.

The work of this committee has continued as in previous years with three members soliciting and editing manuscripts for publication and the secretary-treasurer looking after subscriber records, payments, and correspondence. Mr. Stan de Jong of Calvinist Contact Publishing Limited serves as an advisory member of the committee. He and his staff look after the publication and distribution of *The Living Word*.

Although expenses are beginning to outstrip receipts, subscription rates will remain unchanged at \$55.00 U.S. and \$60.00 Canadian. Our financial statement is reviewed annually by a chartered accountant, and copies of the report are sent to the denominational financial coordinator.

II. Recommendations

- A. That synod approve the publication of *The Living Word* for 1996 to provide sermons for reading services for the churches.
- B. That synod urge churches and ministers to subscribe to this service for the benefit of individuals and churches.
- C. That synod elect one regular member for the committee from the following nominations:
 1. Rev. Fred Heslinga, pastor of First CRC of Hamilton, Ontario.
 2. Rev. John Luth, pastor of First CRC of Barrie, Ontario.
- D. That synod elect one of the following to serve as alternate:
 1. Rev. Paul Stadt (incumbent), pastor of Georgetown CRC, Georgetown, Ontario.
 2. Rev. Kenneth Benjamins, pastor of Wyoming CRC, Wyoming, Ontario.

Sermons for Reading Services Committee
William Koopmans
Paul Stadt, alternate
Ray Vander Ploeg, secretary-treasurer
Harry Vander Windt
Adrian Van Giessen, chairman

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DENOMINATIONALLY RELATED AGENCIES

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The academic year began for Dordt with a 5 percent increase in enrollment, for a total of 1,156 students. Also at the beginning of the year, *U.S. News and World Report* recognized Dordt College as one of the best buys in the Midwest—which means that the college is in the top 20 percent in terms of quality and offers this quality at a comparatively low rate of tuition.

Just one indication of high quality came when Professor John Hofland, of Dordt's theater arts department was granted a Fulbright Scholarship to teach at the Kharkov Pedagogical Institute and to practice design at the Kharkov Puppet Theatre in Kharkov, Ukraine. More recently Hofland received a second Meritorious Achievement Award at the Regional Festival of the American Theater Festival for his set design of *Peer Gynt*.

On December 8, 1994, the Dordt community was saddened by the death of its first president, Rev. B.J. Haan. During the previous summer the college had named its chapel-auditorium the B.J. Haan Auditorium. Following Rev. Haan's death, a memorial service was held in the auditorium, gratefully acknowledging Haan's leadership in the founding of the college and his commitment to Christian education on all levels.

During the 1995-1996 academic year the college will celebrate its fortieth anniversary, focusing on the theme "Dordt College, Our Story." There will be a number of commemorative activities throughout the year, but the celebration will be concentrated during the week of October 16-21, 1995. It will include two chapels, a theater production, a music festival, and parents' day. A few weeks later, Dr. George Marsden, author of *The Soul of the American University*, will be the speaker for the president's convocation. He will address the issue of how an institution such as Dordt can retain its Reformational perspective while educating its students for life and work in contemporary society.

Even as we reflect on the past, however, we are engaged in planning for the future. The campus plan calls for the construction of faculty offices, a maintenance building, and an indoor recreation complex within the next two to three years. But just as important is the long-range plan for the entire institution. As a result of long-range planning, the college has committed itself to six goals and challenges:

1. Rearticulation of our Reformed distinctives

It is essential that Dordt maintain its Reformed distinctiveness. Therefore, we are committed to the ongoing development of a shared vision that gives clear expression to the distinctives of our understanding of Reformed, Christian higher education.

2. Academic excellence

We pursue excellence not as an end in itself but in order to better prepare our students to live the Christian life in today's world. Since we have not yet arrived, we continue in our efforts to improve the quality of our academic program.

3. Development of facilities and technology

We are grateful for the facilities and technology presently available to us. But as programs expand and requirements for graduation increase, our facilities and technical capacity must keep pace. We continue to follow the

direction set by our long-range campus plan, always aware, of course, of the importance of caring for the environment in which we find ourselves.

4. Fostering communal support

The educational task of Dordt College places great demands on all of us. No individual person or group can perform this task alone. Therefore, it is essential that in their various offices and tasks the members of the Dordt community—constituents, board, faculty, students, administration, and staff—seek to support one another.

5. Keeping Dordt affordable

As the costs of higher education continue to rise, we must put forth every effort to keep Dordt affordable. This is a constant struggle as we balance the need to provide an excellent education with the need to keep tuition affordable. The ongoing support of the churches is very helpful in this regard. We greatly appreciate the \$573,940 received in 1994.

6. Increasing diversity

While Dordt remains committed to unity of perspective, it also desires to increase diversity on campus. This can and will be done in a number of ways, e.g., increasing the number of women and minorities on staff, recruiting a more diverse clientele, and enhancing the cross-cultural and global component of the curriculum.

This plan, with its challenges, is significant because, as we move into the future, it is important that we not be complacent, rest on past laurels, or assume that we have arrived. Together we must press forward, seek to improve our academic program, and make progress toward our goals. Based upon and reflecting our founding principles, these goals and challenges will help us do so, with the blessing of our Lord.

Dordt College
John B. Hulst, president

This past year was the first full year since the completion of the Institute for Christian Studies' "Rooted in Faith; Growing in Service" anniversary campaign, which raised \$2.5 million in cash and pledges to fund new programs. Our focus has been on implementing the campaign-funded program. Consequently, the second half of the campaign slogan, "Growing in Service," is a fitting theme for this report.

I. New faculty

In July 1994 our newest faculty member, Dr. Sylvia Keesmaat, began her work at ICS. She represents some firsts for ICS: first female professor to teach full-time at ICS, first new academic area funded with the campaign funds, and, consequently, first biblical-studies specialist at ICS.

II. New student assistance

Thanks to the anniversary campaign and continuing benefit from our 1992 Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council grant, we have been able to offer more significant graduate-student assistanceships for research than ever before. The additional financial aid has helped bring out the best in students. Several were successful in getting articles published and papers accepted for presentation at academic conferences. In this regard it was, perhaps, the best year ever.

Also, enrollment is very positive. Over sixty students are enrolled in degree programs this year, and about eighty students attended our summer-school program cosponsored by Wycliffe College in Toronto.

III. New staff

This fall, Tia Frazee, assistant to the president, took on a new half-time position at ICS called the communications and conference coordinator. This position was added to the regular budget as a way of better serving the broad Christian community and especially the CRC, of which most of our supporters are members. This renewed effort at providing expanded community services also suits the theme "Growing in Service."

IV. Planning

Academic planning as an institution is a rare thing in higher education, but at ICS, with its commitment to interdisciplinary scholarship, it is important. With our small faculty of ten persons, it is possible to do, and it was highly successful this year. More work is being done in this regard, especially to ensure that all are working with an eye to the mission of the ICS.

V. Leadership

Faculty have in the past year demonstrated leadership in their academic fields and in their community. They have presented papers, published articles and three books, and given many speeches. Thanks be to God for the many opportunities to bring the gospel to bear on various areas of life in these public settings.

VI. Finances

Financially, 1994 was a roller-coaster ride. Between January and December of 1994 our deficit was, at times, quite significant, whereas at other times we were blessed with unexpected income which brought us much closer to a balanced budget. We began fiscal 1995 with good hope and anticipation for a positive financial year. However, our first six months left a larger than anticipated deficit. Much work needs to be done to improve this situation. Please remember us in your prayers and with your gifts.

VII. Thanks

The faculty, students, and staff of the ICS thank the members, individual supporters, and contributing churches for standing behind us through this past year. May God bless each of us as we work to continue growing in service to the kingdom.

Institute for Christian Studies
Dr. Harry Fernhout, president

We at Redeemer College are thankful to God for his direction and blessing this past year. As the newly appointed president, I take up my task with a sense of expectation and the challenge of relating to other Reformed and evangelical churches and revitalizing the Reformed basis of the college.

Redeemer's enrollment of 479 students (461 full-time equivalent) this past September was a modest increase over last year; it included students from twenty-seven denominations. In addition to their studies, these students are doing an admirable job of reflecting the love of Christ to a needy world. In February, seventeen of them went to Mississippi, where they helped repair homes for the less fortunate. In May, thirteen students spent three weeks in Honduras to work on a water-distribution system. In February and October, a group went to Montreal to reach out to the seafarers from abroad. Our students recognize that Jesus Christ is Lord of all and study in an environment which encourages active service in response to his lordship over life.

In November, we celebrated an event that is significant for the Reformed community. The opening of the Dooyeweerd Centre at the college begins a new initiative, the primary purpose of which is to translate Herman Dooyeweerd's major works from Dutch into English. It is our prayer that this work will contribute to the furtherance of Christian scholarship.

This year saw some interesting changes for Redeemer College. A new business coop program will provide students with an opportunity to complement their studies with valuable work experience. An upgraded missions minor will serve the needs of students with an interest in this area. Three one-year certificate programs now offer students foundational studies, general studies, and liberal arts. In all our programs we continue to offer an education which exemplifies academic excellence and a sound scriptural basis.

These new programs are made increasingly accessible to students by the enhanced financial aid available through both the college and the Redeemer Foundation. Students will now be able to take advantage of an improved scholarship program as well as bursaries and an improved work-study program. We wish to make Christian higher education as accessible as possible.

With respect to finances, we are grateful for the support we have received even in difficult financial times, though donations did not meet budget goals, partly because of a decrease in church support. However, we trust that this situation will improve in the coming year.

We appreciate and thank God for all of our supporters from the Christian Reformed churches who strongly believe in Christian education and faithfully stand by us. Their contributions in finance and prayer encourage us and enable us to carry out our mandate of providing a Reformed Christ-centred university education.

Justin D. Cooper, president

Reformed Bible College continues to enjoy the blessing of God on its expanding programs and ministries. Though enrollment in traditional courses was slightly down from the previous year, the number of students served was greater than ever.

I. Courses and programs

During the fall semester RBC offered on campus for the first time the well-known mission course *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*, co-taught by a variety of professors from RBC and from other institutions. This course drew nearly ninety students, most of whom were not from RBC. The course not only provides a biblical and historical overview of missions but also challenges students to consider seriously personal involvement in a mission-related ministry. The *Perspectives* course will likely become a regular part of RBC's course offerings in the future.

RBC also began a cooperative program with Cornerstone College, a local Christian college, which will give students the opportunity to get two accredited bachelor degrees (Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Religious Education) and a primary teaching certificate within a five-year period.

Trinity Evangelical Divinity School offered for the first time a number of graduate-level courses on the RBC campus to students from the broader evangelical and geographical community. TEDS is currently seeking to develop a longer range program by which such courses will continue to be offered at RBC in the future.

As the college developed new dimensions in its program of preparing men and women for positions in youth ministry, RBC enlisted the services of such well-known youth leaders as Doug Fields, Ken Medema, Jim Burns, Ridge Burns, and Bart Campolo. RBC is also pleased to continue working with Brian Bosscher (an RBC trustee) and others from the Young Calvinist Federation.

Cooperative relationships with other colleges in Grand Rapids permit RBC students to get a degree from RBC while also pursuing minors in child development, business, and other areas.

Several evangelical Christian organizations continue to use RBC facilities, staff, and services in pursuit of their educational and ministry objectives.

II. RBC alumni

A survey of RBC alumni who have graduated within the past fifteen years revealed that 61 percent are working for a church, church agency, or mission and another 22 percent are presently in graduate school. Approximately one-third of last year's graduates entered one of the Reformed seminaries, continuing a recent trend of our alumni to enter the pastorate or other ordained positions in the church. It is noteworthy that, of Calvin Theological Seminary's 1994 Master of Divinity (M.Div.) graduates, over one-third are RBC alumni. These join the more than two thousand other RBC alumni who have gone out to serve the Lord in some sixty countries on six continents.

III. Finances

RBC continues to be grateful for the financial support of Christian Reformed churches and individuals. Since the college does not receive support by way of ministry shares, it is both dependent upon and grateful for the voluntary gifts received over the years.

During the past few years the college has continued to operate in the black, though this has become increasingly difficult. Gifts for buildings and scholarships have been very generous, but recent gifts for the general fund have not kept pace with expenses. This is a significant concern for us, leading us to appeal to our people more strongly than ever for their thoughtful support.

The board of trustees has also decided to conduct a new financial campaign, beginning in the spring of 1995—our second such campaign in the past fifty-six years. The campaign will focus on debt reduction and the establishment of endowment funds to provide future financial security for college programs. The campaign has a goal of \$3 million, very modest compared with the campaigns of other educational institutions but very significant for us. We are praying that God's people will respond positively both to the campaign and to RBC's continuing needs for operational expenses.

IV. Faculty and administration

RBC's faculty continue to serve with distinction. Though their academic qualifications are exceptional (with 92 percent of full-time faculty holding an earned doctorate), their personal commitment to Christ and to Christian ministry is their most distinguishing characteristic. Coupled with this commitment to Christ is a commitment to RBC; the result is remarkable longevity in terms of service to the college.

With the retirement of Dr. Edwin Roels, scheduled for the summer of 1995, RBC will be experiencing a change in administrative leadership. RBC's newly appointed president, the fourth in its fifty-six-year history, is scheduled to begin his service to the college on July 1, 1995.

V. Looking ahead

During the past year the board established the William and Martha De Witt Chair of Cross-Cultural Missions. The college hopes to have in place a full-time missions professor by the fall of 1995. The new professor is scheduled to teach in the classroom and also to promote cross-cultural mission activities both on campus and in the broader ecclesiastical community.

The trustees have also announced the establishment of the Frank and Bernice Deppe Chair of Biblical Studies to help the college maintain its strong position in the area of biblical and doctrinal studies in the future. In this connection it may be noted that RBC continues to be the only North American college in the Reformed tradition that offers a major in biblical studies and also the only one to require all its four-year students to complete a course in Calvinism.

While continuing to promote and strengthen already-existing programs, RBC's faculty, staff, and trustees are also examining other ministry and educational opportunities for the future. Among opportunities being thoughtfully considered are degree-completion programs and strengthening and expanding our distance-education programs, which already make use of or may in the

future make use of correspondence courses, computer-based training, video, T.V., and other modern technologies.

With God's continued blessing and the continued faithfulness of our faculty and staff, we believe that some of RBC's finest years lie just ahead of us. We ask you to pray with us that God will graciously provide all we need, that we may remain faithful to him in every way, and that RBC may be used of the Lord in increasingly effective ways to his glory.

Reformed Bible College
Edwin D. Roels, president

During 1994, The King's University College was blessed with continued growth in a number of respects.

Enrollment grew by about 20 percent to just over five hundred students in the fall of 1994. This growth was undoubtedly related to the fact that King's now has its own campus, with attractive and functional facilities for its academic programs as well as for student life and athletic programs. The new campus is a great blessing, and it has attracted considerable attention in western Canada and beyond. The college has also increased its promotional activities in many communities, and this effort has in all likelihood contributed to its growth. In the fall of 1994, King's received official accreditation of a degree program in elementary education (Bachelor of Education). This event marks the end of a long process to acquire official permission to offer a program in teacher education. There were many hurdles to overcome, especially political ones. The college's B.Ed. program makes King's the first privately operated postsecondary institution in Canada to offer an independent accredited degree program in education leading to teacher certification of teachers in public- and private-school jurisdictions. The college community praises God for providing this opportunity to King's and for the important precedent it sets in Canada.

King's receives partial funding for operational expense from the Alberta government. With recent cutbacks in government expenditures on all fronts, this funding was reduced by about 20 percent over three years. This reduction, coupled with rising interest rates on the college's substantial loans for its new campus, necessitated significant adjustments in the college budget in the past year. Fortunately, the growth in enrollment and strong donor support provided some financial relief, and the situation looks somewhat better now.

The King's University College wishes to acknowledge with gratitude the strong financial support it receives from Christian Reformed congregations by way of ministry shares designated for the support of area colleges, as determined by synod. The ministry-share support for King's comes from churches in western Canada; together with collections taken for the college throughout Canada and the United States, these funds contribute to the education of hundreds of Christian Reformed students attending the institution. The King's University College would not be able to offer its current programs without these important contributions from the churches.

Recently the college has developed plans for a new program in environmental studies, which would prepare students with a variety of interests to work in jobs dealing with environmental concerns. This interdisciplinary program will allow students to combine a disciplinary major in the humanities, social sciences, or the natural sciences with an interdisciplinary major in environmental studies. The program will begin in the fall of 1995, provided accreditation and funding approvals are obtained.

The King's University College is thankful for the opportunity to continue to serve students from a variety of backgrounds with quality Christian education at the university level. It covets the prayers of the members of the Christian Reformed Church as it strives to serve the Lord in this area of his kingdom.

The King's University College
Henk van Andel, president

Trinity Christian College celebrated its thirty-fifth year of operation on March 4, 1994, with a night of praise at Orchestra Hall in Chicago. Trinity continues to function as an undergraduate Reformed Christian liberal arts college, striving by the grace of God to build his kingdom in the lives of young men and women, according to the model of our Lord: "And he grew in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man" (Luke 2:52).

In the fall of 1994 a total of 624 students were enrolled, the highest number in the history of the college, and in spite of the two additional residence halls built in 1987 and 1991, resident population is at capacity. Plans are underway to construct another residence hall by September 1996. Nearly 70 percent of the student body are from church homes within the Reformed community.

The mission of Trinity is to graduate students who combine excellence in academic preparation with a commitment to practice Christ-like service toward others in their personal and professional lives. Twenty-two academic majors are offered, including a broad range of arts and sciences and professional and preprofessional programs. Degrees awarded are Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Science, and Bachelor of Science in Nursing. Business administration, nursing, and elementary and secondary education continue to have particularly strong interest with college-age young people today.

In 1991 a program was added in communication arts, offered with the cooperative assistance of The Back to God Hour staff at their facility adjacent to the Trinity campus, and in 1994 we began offering a major in church education, which prepares students to work as staff members in the areas of education, youth ministry, evangelism, or a combination of these tasks.

God has blessed Trinity with continuing growth in physical resources. Within the past four years, a new 33,000-square-foot library and a 124-student residence hall were constructed, and two older buildings were completely renovated. The former clubhouse, which served as Trinity's administration building since 1959, has been transformed into the Molenhouse Student Center; it contains a new lounge; fast-food service; recreation area; new bookstore; upgraded admissions, student-development, and business offices; and a nicely appointed chapel. The dining hall, built in 1972, has been redecorated and refurnished, and the food-service line has been expanded. We are pleased to continue our affiliation with the Calvin-Hope-owned Creative Dining food service.

West Hall, a very comfortable residence facility, includes a large meeting room to accommodate conferences of up to two hundred participants. This facility is designed to accommodate summer programs: it is completely furnished and air-conditioned, as are the dining hall and library. These facilities are well appointed to serve visitors, family reunions, summer programs, and conferences.

Efforts are continuing toward completion of Trinity's campus-development plan, which includes a well-designed 45,000-square-foot science building to house biology, chemistry, physics, and pre-engineering as well as a 1,200-seat chapel/auditorium/concert hall, a black-box theater, large classroom, and space for the music and communication-arts departments.

Although budgets have been tight because of expansion in facilities, staffing, and programming, God has richly provided the resources to balance the budget and retire debt on schedule for the past ten years. Giving is very positive, and our financial projections are on target at this time. The need for fiscal responsibility will continue to be a challenge for most institutions of higher education in the future because fewer dollars are being made available from federal and state governments, reauthorization bills disqualify many middle-income families who once received financial aid, and state institutions are attracting more students by their size and cost of tuition. For Trinity this means that there is an ever-increasing need for strong financial support in the form of endowment so that our Reformed families and young people will be able to afford Christian education in the future, and we intend to continue our efforts to expand this base.

Two-thirds of Trinity's students live on campus. Our goal is to provide an environment of Christian integrity and love that enhances and supports the entire learning/living experience. We strive for a learning community based on the biblical requirements of justice, humility, and love. We place great emphasis on student-development programs that encourage students to assess their attitudes and relationships in community with one another and in communion with God. Our staff members work diligently to provide opportunities for growth in all facets of the lives of young people, and we continue to see substantial student interest in chapel and prayer services, residence-hall Bible-study groups, and volunteer service projects, thanks to the work of our newly appointed full-time chaplain, Dr. Sam Hamstra, Jr., and the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Trinity is blessed with a dedicated and stable faculty and staff who possess a broad range of educational experiences and are committed to the goals of the college as a Reformed Christian witness in higher education in an urban environment. Faculty members continue to take advantage of the many educational opportunities provided by the Chicago area, such as field trips, visiting lecturers, teacher-education placements, internships, hospital clinical sites, Argonne National Laboratories, and similar facilities.

Trinity continues to participate with other Reformed colleges in the Chicago Metropolitan Studies Center in the Chicago Loop, for which Trinity serves as the administrative agent. This program has proved to be very successful as a means to bring students from the six Reformed- and Christian Reformed-affiliated institutions in the Midwest to Chicago for internships and seminars in urban-related subjects. Each semester our Semester in Spain program enrolls students from colleges and universities throughout the United States for intensive language, literature, and cultural studies in Seville. And we now have an affiliation agreement with the Christelijke Hogeschool, Windesheim University, in Zwolle, the Netherlands (thanks to the assistance of Drs. John De Boer, a Trinity alum and dean at Windesheim), whereby Trinity students have the opportunity to participate in an international education program, and Dutch students spend a semester at Trinity. Additionally, the college is active in the Christian College Coalition, and our faculty and administration participate in the work of the church and the denomination. There are thirty members on Trinity's board of trustees, of whom three are CRC pastors, ten are business people, six are in education, and eleven work in law, medicine, finance, construction, and a variety of other fields.

It is with grateful hearts that the board of trustees, administration, and faculty express thanks to God and to his people for the wonderful blessings of the past year. Through the continued prayers, encouragement, and financial support of believers, Trinity will be able to continue training young people for leadership in the church and in their chosen professions. The challenge of providing such leadership has never been more urgent.

Trinity Christian College
Kenneth Bootsma, president

STUDY COMMITTEES

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Report A

Synod 1991 appointed a study committee "to clarify the requirement of public profession of faith for admission to the Lord's Supper on the part of younger covenant children." According to the grounds stated by synod, this committee had a two-part mandate: (1) to resolve numerous practical difficulties (Ground 1) and (2) to clarify the requirement of public profession of faith (Ground 2). This clarification committee reported to Synod 1993, but because of procedural problems, the report was sent back to the committee. In its 1993 report the clarification committee could not reach a consensus with regard to Ground 2 (above) and so concerned itself only with the practical difficulties. The reconfigured committee now presents two reports. The following report (Report A) argues for an expression of personal faith as a prerequisite for participation in the Lord's Supper and, in Section II, proposes implementation procedures to resolve the practical difficulties raised by Synod 1991.

I. Support for an expression of personal faith as a prerequisite for participation in the Lord's Supper**A. Baptism**

Baptism is the sign and seal of initiation into the covenant of grace. We in the Reformed tradition understand that "God graciously includes our children in his covenant, and all his promises are for them as well as us" (Gen. 17:7; Acts 2:39). Although children are a part of Christ's church through baptism, we have not invited children to the covenant meal until they personally express their faith. This difference in practice is grounded in a difference between the two sacraments.

1. The relationship between baptism and the Lord's Supper

Baptism and the Lord's Supper are both means of grace which visually proclaim our union with Christ in his death and resurrection. They are New Testament substitutes for the Old Testament rites of circumcision and Passover. The blood of the Old Testament rites has been replaced by the water, the bread, and the wine of the New Testament sacraments because they celebrate the finished work of Christ's redemption. The primary difference between the two New Testament sacraments is that baptism is administered once, as an initiatory rite into the covenant (like circumcision), whereas the Lord's Supper is administered more frequently (like Passover), to represent the sustaining and continual deepening of the covenant relationship.

An additional difference between baptism and the Lord's Supper lies in the degree of involvement of the recipient of the sacrament. The very nature of the Supper demands that communicants be physically active in their eating and drinking, whereas those receiving baptism are physically passive in the event. The invitation to "take and eat" (Matt. 26:26) implies the active initiative of personal faith. Therefore, whereas the sacrament of baptism for children is based upon the corporate faith of the community, partaking of the Lord's Supper demands an active response by the participant. This second difference between the sacraments is the reason why the Reformed community has not practiced paedocommunion. As Bavinck states,

Baptism is a sacrament of the new birth, wherein the individual is passive. The Lord's Supper is the sacrament of growth in fellowship with Christ, of the nurture of the spiritual life, and it assumes a conscious, active participation by those who receive it.
(*Gereformeerde Dogmatiek* IV: 641-42. Kampen: Kok, 1911)

2. The relationship between baptism and profession of faith

The differences between the two sacraments become more apparent when we clarify the relationship between adult baptism and participation in the Lord's Supper. In the New Testament missionary situation, adult converts evidenced repentance and personal faith before participating in the Lord's Supper (Acts 2:38). In the case of the children of adult converts, a profession of faith is separated from baptism in time, but it is still expected—as an expression of personal appropriation of the covenant promises—before participation in the Lord's Supper. Therefore, baptism and profession of faith must be tied closely together. Just as baptism and a profession of personal faith are prerequisites for adult participation in the Lord's Supper, our baptized covenant children must give evidence of personal faith before they participate in the Lord's Supper. The CRC Form for Public Profession of Faith explains that the participants "will publicly accept and confirm what was sealed in their baptism." Thus, a profession of faith is necessary both in the case of baptized adults and baptized children before their participation in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper is permitted.

B. The Lord's Supper

Whereas baptism is the *initiatory* rite of the covenant, the Lord's Supper is the sacrament which nourishes the participant toward *maturity* of faith. The purpose of the sacrament is not to nourish *to* faith, but "to nourish and sustain those who are already born again and ingrafted into his family," as Belgic Confession Article 35 declares. If we said that being born again happens through the communal covenantal faith evident at baptism, then we would be teaching baptismal regeneration, which we have always vigorously denied. The Lord's Supper is given only to believers, those who have personally appropriated the promises given at baptism.

1. The relationship of the Passover to the Lord's Supper

It is often argued that because children participated in the Passover, they should likewise be welcomed to the Lord's table. However, the New Testament sacraments are not exactly parallel to the Old Testament rites of circumcision and Passover; instead, they fulfill the Old Testament rites.

The nature of the new covenant changes certain aspects of the Old Testament rites. Just as the Easter resurrection changes the sabbath day of worship from Saturday to Sunday, so the universalizing and internalizing of the new covenant alter who may participate in the sacraments. If children partake of the Lord's Supper simply because children participated in the Passover, then the church would also have to baptize only male infants, since they were the only participants in the Old Testament rite of circumcision. But because the new covenant universalizes the promises of the old covenant, the recipients of baptism are both male and female. The universalizing of the covenant also influences who may participate in the Lord's Supper. Whereas the Passover was a feast for God's people born into the Jewish family and nation, the Lord's Supper is for those reborn into the family of God among all nations.

The new covenant also implies an internalization of faith, whereby God's law is written on the hearts of his people (Jer. 31:31-34). Therefore, since the Lord's Supper is the sacrament of the new covenant (Luke 22:20), regeneration and a faith commitment of the heart are the necessary prerequisites. Just as the universalizing of the new covenant affects who in the covenant community may participate in baptism, so the internalizing of the new covenant affects who may participate in the Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper, unlike the Jewish Passover, assumes the internalizing of faith on the part of the participant.

2. The interpretation of I Corinthians 11:17-34

The chief passage describing the practice of the Lord's Supper, I Corinthians 11:17-34, assumes that the communicant must have both personal faith to proclaim the death of Jesus (I Cor. 11:26) and a self-consciousness to discern the meaning of the sacrament (I Cor. 11:29) and to examine his or her spiritual readiness to participate (I Cor. 11:28).

Admittedly, the main concern of this passage is not whether children may participate at the table. Paul's concern is to warn the disobedient rather than the immature. However, as Berkouwer points out, "even though we fully acknowledge this special character of unworthy eating and drinking [namely the breaking up of the communion], it cannot be denied that this was just one form of unworthiness, and that others can also appear in the course of history" (*Sacraments*, 255-56). The general instructions given in the middle of this passage (I Cor. 11:23-29) can be applied to other situations of impious and irreverent participation such as might occur with the participation of very young children who do not understand the spiritual significance of the elements. As Bavinck says, "This requirement is set forth in an entirely general fashion, directed to all participants in the supper, and therefore, in the nature of the case, excludes children" (*Gereformeerde Dogmatiek* IV: 641-42. Kampen: Kok, 1911).

In John 6, the other major New Testament passage describing the nature of the Lord's Supper, participation in the body and blood of Christ (John 6:52-58) is similarly based upon coming to and believing in Jesus as the bread of life (John 6:35). Personal faith is presupposed. The eating of Christ's flesh and the drinking of his blood refer to the spiritual and mystical eating of faith.

C. Profession of faith

The New Testament passages describing profession of faith call Christians to confess their faith before God (Rom. 10:9-10), the world (Matt. 10:32), and the church (I Tim. 6:12). Confessing one's faith before the church was certainly connected with baptism. Acts 8:37 indicates that a profession of faith from the Ethiopian eunuch was expected at his baptism. Such confessional statements and ancient hymns like I Timothy 3:16 and Philippians 2:6-11 are also thought by biblical scholars originally to have been tied to baptismal events. In the case of infant baptism, profession would occur later in time as an appropriation of the promises which God made at baptism. Profession of faith looks back to baptism and provides an occasion at which the baptized may express their covenantal response to God's grace and then be nourished by the Lord's Supper. This personal covenantal response is at the heart of profession of faith in the New Testament.

In the Christian Reformed Church we have come to associate profession of faith with both an appropriation of the covenantal promises and an acceptance of certain adult responsibilities. Those who see covenant status as the sole prerequisite for participation in the Lord's Supper contend that profession of faith is primarily an adult rite of passage which in our society would probably not occur until at least 18 years of age. Profession of faith would then emphasize a commitment to the nuances of the Reformed faith and a decision to be involved in the ministry of the church with one's time, talents, and treasures. The members of the committee signing this report judge that the primary association of profession of faith with a rite of passage to adulthood undermines the close ties between baptism and profession found in the New Testament. Presently the CRC has one ritual that must mean different things under different circumstances. The time has come to recognize that, in the faith development of children, two important decisions occur and that they are frequently separated in time. One is the appropriation through personal faith of God's covenant promises made at baptism. The other is a commitment to the ministry of the church and to the nuances of Reformed doctrine. This second commitment implies a rite of passage into adulthood, whereas the appropriation of the baptismal promises can happen at a much younger age. Therefore, we should commemorate the appropriation of the baptismal promises with a public profession of faith during a worship service and at the same time should encourage a later commitment to adult responsibilities through an interview with the church council at the conclusion of catechetical training.

Our creeds support personal faith as a prerequisite for coming to the table. Belgic Confession Article 35 states that the Lord's Supper was instituted "to nourish and sustain those who are already born again." The Heidelberg Catechism contends that the purpose of Holy Communion is "to nourish and refresh believers" (Q. 77), who "accept with a believing heart the entire suffering and death of Christ" (A. 76). Likewise, in "Our World Belongs to God" we confess that "In the Supper our Lord offers the bread and cup to believers." Because of this consistent testimony of our creeds, Church Order Article 59-a reads, "Members by baptism shall be admitted to the Lord's Supper upon a public profession of Christ according to the Reformed creeds." This requirement began already in Article 61 of the Church Order of Dort, which stated that "no person be admitted to the Lord's Supper but those who make a profession of their faith."

The different requirements for baptism and the Lord's Supper are upheld by the broader Reformed creeds as well. The Westminster Larger Catechism (Q. and A. 177) explains,

The sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper differ, in that baptism is to be administered but once, with water, to be a sign and seal of our regeneration and ingrafting into Christ, and that even to infants; whereas the Lord's Supper is to be administered often, in the elements of bread and wine, to represent and exhibit Christ as spiritual nourishment to the soul, and to confirm our continuance and growth in him, and that only to such as are of years and ability to examine themselves.

These statements follow the lead of John Calvin, who declared that God does not

hold forth the Supper for all to partake of, but only for those who are capable of discerning the body and blood of the Lord, by examining their own conscience, of proclaiming the Lord's death, and of considering its power.

(Institutes 4.16.30)

Calvin here asserts that the ancient custom of admitting children to the table "has deservedly fallen into disuse." Instead, he concludes that "a self-examination ought to come first, and it is vain to expect this of infants." Thus, a profession of faith must continue to be tied to participation in the Lord's Supper.

In conclusion, the synodical decision of 1988 that "the Bible makes clear that participation in the Lord's Supper is the result of status in the covenant and also entails an act of faith on the part of those participating" should be upheld. Our theology has not changed. There are two requirements for participation in the Lord's Supper, namely, baptism, signifying covenantal status, and a profession of faith, signifying personal appropriation of the baptismal promises.

II. Implementation procedures to resolve practical difficulties

The practical difficulties raised by Synod 1991 in Ground 2 can be categorized into four areas: (1) the evidence of faith in the life of the child, (2) an adequate procedure for assuring ourselves that faith is present, (3) concerns about nurturing and expressing a Reformed understanding of the faith, and (4) membership categories.

A. Evidence of faith in the life of the participant

The following concerns were raised at Synod 1991:

- What should be expected as "evidence of faith" from a five-year-old, a seven-year-old, a ten-year-old?
- Does the statement "I love Jesus, and I believe that he died for me" give evidence of "discerning the body"? Does I Corinthians 11 require a more theological explanation of who Jesus is?
- Is a covenant child ever too young to take part in the Lord's Supper?

If personal faith is presupposed for admission to the Lord's Supper, what level of faith is necessary? Should a profession of simple love of God and trust in Jesus be enough, or is an articulate explanation in adult thought forms necessary? This question has to be answered before the list of other practical difficulties with respect to children at the Lord's Supper can be cleared up.

The professions of faith in the Bible are all quite simple and straight forward. Peter says to Jesus, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt. 16:16). The Pauline confession indicating the presence of the Holy Spirit is "Jesus is Lord" (I Cor. 12:3). The profession of faith necessary to receive the promises of baptism in the early church is "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God," as indicated by the addition of Acts 8:37 to the early manuscripts. Therefore, a profession of faith that lays hold of Christ simply and sincerely is all that Scripture requires. Profession of faith is not necessarily connected with a rite of passage to adulthood. Neither does it require a fully developed cognitive understanding of Reformed theology.

From the references to profession of faith in the Bible, it appears that belief in one's heart and confession with one's mouth are of utmost importance, as in Romans 10:9-10. Likewise, repentance is necessary (Acts 2:38) as well as an acknowledgment of Christ before the church (I Tim. 6:12) and the world (Matt. 10:32). These same responses are necessary in adult baptisms, as evidenced in Acts 2:38. Therefore, what is necessary for profession of faith is the ability to appropriate the divine promises given at baptism. Profession of faith is, then, the receiving of the baptismal promises so that the recipient can confess that he or

she is born again. This certainly can be done at a much younger age than has been the tradition in the Christian Reformed Church. Although we would not want to specify any appropriate age for participation, we conclude that churches should allow participation also to those in elementary school and junior high as well as to those in high school or college, whom we already welcome to profession and communion. Certainly younger children can fulfill the requirements set forth in Question and Answer 81 of the Heidelberg Catechism that those who come to the Lord's table be displeased with their sin, trust that their sins are pardoned by the death of Christ, and desire more and more to strengthen their faith.

B. An adequate procedure for assuring that faith is present

Concerns were also voiced by Synod 1991 with respect to these matters:

- Appearing before council or the congregation is frightening to many younger members.
- Public profession of faith was required for coming to the table before the 1988 decision and after. There is a confusion in the churches. Has anything changed?

It is advantageous that the church have an effective method for assuring that faith is present, a method which is sensitive to the spiritual, emotional, and conceptual development of children. Therefore, the following procedure is recommended for children in elementary and junior high school.

Step 1: The child expresses interest in participating in the Lord's Supper to his/her parent(s) or perhaps to a church-school teacher or another faith mentor within the church.

Step 2: The parent(s) discusses with the child the meaning of the sacrament and assesses the motivation of the child for participating. Convinced that this inquiry arises from a genuine stirring of the Spirit in the heart of the child, the parent(s) contacts an elder and/or pastor.

Step 3: The elder and/or pastor meets with the child and parent(s) to hear the testimony of the child with respect to his/her faith and desire to participate in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. It is recommended that the child then participate in a short process of preparation for profession of faith taught by a pastor, elder, Sunday-school teacher, or potential faith mentor. This training will focus on the nature and meaning of the sacrament and on a basic explication of the Apostles' Creed. It will be carried out at the cognitive level appropriate to the child. When satisfied with the faith commitment of the child, the elder and/or pastor will recommend to the council that this child be admitted to the table of the Lord. If the elder or pastor is unable to make such a recommendation, he will provide clear counsel and advice to the child and parents on how to address the area(s) of concern. It may also be helpful to assign an adult faith mentor to nurture a child toward full adult responsibilities in the church after he/she is recommended for profession.

Step 4: The child will make a public profession of faith in a simple and appropriate manner during a regular worship service. Since baptism is commemorated during a worship service, the appropriation of the baptismal promises should also be celebrated during a public worship service. Furthermore, a regular worship setting offers an opportunity for the people of God to celebrate a child's first communion and to make public promises of support.

The trial form for the public profession of faith of children found in the *Agenda for Synod 1989* can meaningfully be used for children of all ages. However, each church has the freedom to determine the most contextually appropriate way by which a person can make his/her profession of faith. In any case, the church ceremony should be sensitive to the specific, concrete ways in which children think and function and should use music and language that are appropriate to children so that an atmosphere of joy and celebration is created. It may be helpful for the child to stand with his/her family during the profession so that God's covenant with the whole family is acknowledged.

C. Concerns about nurturing and expressing a Reformed understanding of the faith

The following concerns troubled some at Synod 1991:

- The traditional public profession of faith made at the age of discernment is no longer required. When does a full member commit him-/herself to the confessions of the church, to sharing faithfully in the life of the church, to the authority of the church?
- Peer pressure leads some younger members to profess their faith with little reflection.

We as a church are dedicated to training young people who are knowledgeable in their faith, nuanced in their doctrinal understanding, committed to the Reformed confessions, and dedicated to employing their gifts and resources in the ministry of the church. Therefore, in the process of continued faith development, children who have professed their faith at a young age need a procedure whereby they can make a commitment of adult responsibility. We recommend the following procedure to church councils as they supervise the educational ministry of the church.

Toward the conclusion of catechism instruction (grade 12), the church council will conduct an interview with all young adults who have made profession of faith at a younger age. Assuming the young adults' readiness to accept responsibility for the church's ministry and to assent to the doctrinal standards of the church, the church council (or a representative group) will examine their knowledge of the Reformed faith, their loyalty to the Christian Reformed Church and its confessions, and their commitment to the ministry of the church through their time, talents, and treasures. Upon acceptance by the church council, the catechumens will be welcomed into full participation in the organization of the church, including the right to vote and to be eligible for church office.

Their commitment to adult responsibility will then be communicated publicly to the church either from the pulpit or through the church bulletin. Because a commitment to these adult responsibilities is more of a pastoral or consistorial matter than a liturgical act, it is unnecessary to have a public profession of adult responsibility within a worship service.

Those who are 18 years of age or older when they make public profession of faith will affirm their trust in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord and make the adult commitments of church membership at the same time.

D. Membership categories

Synod 1991 was also concerned about categories of membership:

- The separation of public profession and acceptance of adult responsibilities leads to three classes of members: baptized members, confessing members without full rights, confessing members with full rights.
- Where do we record for membership a ten-year-old admitted to the table—under baptized or confessing members?

The way in which we as an organization keep record of membership should flow from the process of faith development in the lives of believers. Since we have distinguished three important times in the life of a covenant child—baptism, profession of faith in Jesus as Savior, and a commitment to adult responsibilities in the church—it is best for our record keeping to distinguish three types of membership: (1) baptized members, (2) communicant members (professing members), and (3) corporate members (voting members).

In the transfer of family membership papers, the children should be identified as either baptized or communicant members. With regard to determining denominational ministry shares, only corporate (voting) members should be counted when the amount for each church is set.

Although we distinguish these three events in a Christian's life, it is important to realize that there are multiple occasions for professing our faith (including such times as preparing for the Lord's Supper, transfer of membership, installation into church office, and communal recitation of the Apostles' Creed). However, our hope and prayer is that this specified procedure will allow younger children to experience the sustaining nourishment of the Lord's Supper as they develop into mature disciples of Jesus Christ. Jesus' words "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these" can certainly apply to coming to communion as well as to baptism.

III. Recommendations

- That Dean Deppe and Robert C. De Vries be given the privilege of the floor when this report is being discussed.
- That churches be encouraged to implement the decision of Synod 1988 (Art. 72, C, 3, a, b, and c) by use of the four-step procedure outlined in this report (see II, B above).
- That the trial form of 1989 (printed below) be accepted as the form for public profession of faith by children.

Brothers and sisters in the Lord:

Today we are happy to celebrate God's grace in the lives of (names). When they were baptized they were welcomed into the covenant family of God. Now they want to join that family at the Lord's table. So today they will respond in faith to God's promises in baptism, tell us of their faith in the Lord Jesus, and commit themselves to grow in that faith.

The Questions

- Q Whom do you trust as your Savior and Lord?
- A. I believe in Jesus Christ as my Savior and Lord.
- Q Do you know that you belong to the family of God through your baptism?
- A. I do.
- Q Will you continue to learn more about God and his Word, and will you continue to serve him with your life and worship?
- A. I will.

(Alternate Questions)

- Q Do you believe in Jesus as your savior?
- A. Yes, I believe that God sent him to die for all my sins.
- Q What does your baptism mean to you?
- A. That I am a member of God's family.
- Q Do you desire to grow in your faith in God and service to him?
- A. Yes, by learning more about God's Word, worshiping God with his people, and serving God with my life.

- Q Congregation of Jesus Christ, will you welcome _____ at the table of the Lord and continue to support him/her/them with your prayers and help him/her/them grow by the example of your discipleship?
- A. We will, God helping us.

The questions can also be stated in such a way that the child gives a memorized answer or gives the answer in his/her own words.

Examples:

I love Jesus who has paid for my sins on the cross.

I want Jesus to lead me and guide me.

I know that I belong to God's family through baptism.

I want to learn more about God and his Word and serve God with my life and worship.

Welcome

_____(names)_____, because you have responded to your baptism by telling us of your personal faith in Jesus Christ, we now welcome you to join the family of God at the table of the Lord. Strengthened by this heavenly food and drink, we invite you to join with us on the journey of faith that brings us to the promised land of God's kingdom.

Prayer

Our covenant God, we thank you for leading _____(names)_____, your children, to the faith they expressed today. May the fellowship of the Lord's table strengthen them in faith and service to you. Help them to continue to learn more about you through your Word and grow in faith and love with all your people. Bring us all, one day, to that great wedding feast, where, clothed in the white robes of Christ's righteousness, we will eat and drink with him in the heavenly kingdom forever. Amen.

Hymn

D. That a commitment to the creeds of the Christian Reformed Church and the responsibilities of full membership in the local church be made through an interview with the church council when those children who have made an earlier profession of faith reach age 18.

E. That membership in the Christian Reformed Church be counted in three categories:

1. Baptized members—persons who have been baptized but not admitted to the Lord's Supper.
2. Communicant members—persons who have been admitted to the Lord's Supper on the basis of a personal expression of their faith ("profession of faith") but who have not attained the legal age of 18.
3. Corporate members—persons who, having attained the age of 18, have committed themselves to the creeds of the church.

F. That Church Order Article 59-a be divided into two parts to reflect this change in membership categories:

Article 59-a

Members by baptism shall be admitted to the Lord's Supper upon a public profession of their faith in Christ with the use of the prescribed form(s). Their membership shall be designated as "communicant member." The names of those who are to be admitted to the Lord's Supper shall be announced to the congregation for approval at least one Sunday before the public profession of faith.

Article 59-b

Baptized and/or communicant members shall be admitted by the consistory to "corporate membership" with all its privileges and responsibilities at the age of 18 after they have given a testimony before the church council of their understanding of and agreement with the Reformed creeds.

G. That CRC Publications be encouraged to produce for the churches study materials containing the history, decisions, sample forms produced by the Worship Committee, and any other materials for children and adults which may provide congregations with guidance for implementing these decisions.

H. That the work of this committee be declared completed and the committee be discharged.

Committee to Study Clarification of Public
Profession of Faith for Covenant Children
Report A

William D. Buursma
Dean Deppe, reporter
Robert C. De Vries
George Hettinger

Report B

Outline

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I. Introduction

As history shows (see Section II), there has been no unanimity in the Christian Reformed Church on the question of children participating in the Lord's Supper. The two reports submitted by the Committee to Study Clarification of Public Profession of Faith for Covenant Children reflect the divisions of the past. Even after spending much time listening to one another's arguments, the members of the committee were not persuaded to come with one report.

What we developed in our discussions was a respect for both positions and a realization that there is sufficient evidence on both sides of the discussion to ensure that the two positions will continue to be held even if synod would accept one position rather than the other. Consequently, the undersigned propose that synod allow room for both views to be practiced within the denomination, rather than choosing either Report A or Report B.

We acknowledge that this approach fosters the congregationalism that is growing in the denomination. We believe, however, that such a movement is not necessarily unhealthy, that it probably should be encouraged in a growing, diversified denomination, and that, if synod permits local option on this issue, synod can also give guidance and direction to the changes that result.

The issue of why or how covenant children participate in the Lord's Supper is not at the heart of what it means to be Reformed. In accordance with Acts 15, we urge, therefore, that the principle "In essentials unity; in non-essentials, liberty; in all things, charity" be followed.

II. History and mandate

The question of children at the Lord's Supper has been before the CRC for decision since 1984, when Classis Rocky Mountain asked for a study committee to determine whether covenant children should be allowed to participate in the Lord's Supper, on the grounds that its "classical study committee has set forth compelling theological arguments from our own framework of covenant theology for children being included in the Lord's Supper" (*Agenda for Synod 1984*, p. 424). Synod granted the request.

Synod 1986 received a majority report that reiterated the necessity of "a faith that discerns, remembers, and proclaims the body of Christ while partaking"; a minority report that urged that children beginning at the age of seven be encouraged to take part so that "the mustard seed" of faith can be nourished; and a minority report that asked synod to declare that "it is desirable for covenant children to begin partaking of the Lord's Supper at whatever age they begin to be part of the worship service" (*Agenda for Synod 1986*, pp. 346-70). Synod referred the report to the churches, augmented the membership of the committee, and asked it to return in two years.

Synod 1988 was faced with two reports. The majority report asked synod to declare (1) "that the churches are warranted in admitting the children of the covenant to participation in the Lord's Supper because of their inclusion in the Covenant of Grace and because of the covenantal promise they have of a saving union and communion with Christ" and (2) "that since participation in the Lord's Supper is an act of faith on the part of those communing, the consistory should admit to the Lord's Supper those covenant children who evidence both the capacity and the desire to remember and proclaim the Lord's death until he comes" (*Agenda for Synod 1988*, pp. 286-87). Three members of the majority added an addendum stating their conviction "that the arguments of this report lead to the conclusion that the nourishing of faith, which is a function of the Lord's Supper, should be given and should be made available as soon as a child is a participating member of the worshiping covenant community, regardless of age or capacity" (*Agenda for Synod 1988*, p. 288). They view the majority report as "a greater improvement in the inclusion of children in the worship of the covenant community." The minority report of 1988 reiterated that the sole basis for

participating in the Lord's Supper is an individual profession of faith that discerns, remembers, and proclaims the body of Christ.

The reports differed on the basic question of the grounds for participation. The majority report stated two grounds—covenant status and the desire to remember and proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. The minority report said, "... it has become clear that the majority secured that majority only by incorporating into its report a fundamental contradiction on the critical theological issue in the study, whether youth are admitted to the Lord's Supper because of a demonstration of faith or simply because of their status in the covenant" (*Agenda for Synod 1988*, p. 289).

The advisory committee of Synod 1988 felt that neither study committee was theologically convincing in its efforts to ground participation in the Lord's Supper upon an expressed faith. The advisory committee then presented the formulation (stated as a ground) that synod adopted as its own: "The Bible makes it clear that participation in the Lord's Supper is a result of status in the covenant and also entails an act of faith on the part of those participating" (*Acts of Synod 1988*, p. 558).

Synod 1988, after stating that "the church is warranted in admitting to the Lord's Supper covenant children who give evidence of faith and are able to discern the body and remember and proclaim the death of Jesus," also declared that "the profession of faith of covenant children required for admission to the Lord's Supper is not necessarily an acceptance of adult responsibilities within a congregation" (*Acts of Synod 1988*, p. 560). For this reason synod urged that instruction of children who had professed their faith be continued and that children who had been admitted to the table upon profession of faith be granted adult responsibilities at age 18 or at the age permitted by the articles of incorporation of the local congregation.

Since synod still required a public profession of faith for participation in the Lord's Supper, it requested "the CRC Worship Committee to review the forms for public profession of faith in the light of these declarations concerning the public profession of covenant children" (*Acts of Synod 1988*, p. 560).

In 1989 the Worship Committee noted synod's desire that younger children than before participate at the table and that public profession of faith as the entrance requirement also be maintained (*Agenda for Synod 1989*, pp. 63-68). It then said, "It is clear that our present forms for public profession of faith assume a more mature, even adult understanding of the Christian faith and life than what is commonly found in children." The Worship Committee subsequently recommended that the present forms be retained "but supplemented with a new form and that our entire practice be thoroughly examined." It was the Worship Committee that drew the attention of synod to the fact that public profession of faith is *one* ritual that signifies at least *five* different milestones or processes and that there are, in addition, in the popular mind, at least *three* more associations with profession of faith (*Agenda for Synod 1989*, p. 64); for this reason the Worship Committee suggested that "the CRC practice of profession of faith needs some thorough reworking."

Synod 1989 decided to submit the report of the Worship Committee to the churches for study, to send out the proposed form for public profession of faith of children to the churches for trial and reaction, and to add three members from the 1988 study committee to the Worship Committee's task force to study the question of public profession of faith.

In 1991 the Worship Committee reported relatively few responses to the trial form and asked for more time for the churches to use it and to react and for the Worship Committee to continue its study (*Agenda for Synod 1991*, pp. 49-50). At the same synod there was an overture from Classis Alberta North asking "synod to clarify the requirement for public profession of faith by covenant children" by declaring that "the church should provide ways for covenant children to profess their faith consistent with their individual stages of physical, intellectual, emotional, and faith development, and the church should distinguish these professions of faith from a late-adolescent/adult reaffirmation of faith" (*Agenda for Synod 1991*, pp. 516-18).

Synod 1991 appointed the present Clarification Committee with the mandate "to clarify the requirement of public profession of faith for admission to the Lord's Supper on the part of younger covenant children" (*Acts of Synod 1991*, p. 785). Two grounds were given for this mandate: first, "the implementation of the 1988 decision . . . has confronted the churches with numerous practical difficulties" and, second, "the clarification of the requirement for public profession of faith by younger members raises significant theological issues concerning the basis of participation in the Lord's Supper (the covenant or personal confession, for instance), which neither this committee [the advisory committee of Synod 1991] nor synod is able to address properly at this time" (*Acts of Synod 1991*, p. 785).

The Clarification Committee submitted a report in 1993, in which it acknowledged that the contentious issue was the basis on which one may participate in the Lord's Supper—personal faith, covenant membership, or a combination of the two—and professed that "we cannot resolve the theological issue at this time" (*Agenda for Synod 1993*, p. 239). However, in line with Synod 1989's decision, the Clarification Committee proceeded with recommendations for guidelines that assume the necessity of some form of public individual profession of faith for all who would partake of the Lord's Supper.

At Synod 1993 there were two advisory-committee reports reflecting on the Clarification Committee report and recommendations. The majority of the advisory committee recommended that "Synod continue its practice of admitting persons to the Lord's Supper upon a public profession of faith according to the Reformed creeds" (*Acts of Synod 1993*, p. 552). The minority of the advisory committee saw "no reason why the profession of faith required for admission to the Lord's Supper and the profession of faith required for admission to adult responsibilities cannot be separated" (*Acts of Synod 1993*, p. 556). After much discussion, which did not give any direction, synod recommitted the matter of clarification to the Clarification Committee for another year. This year has become two years because there are only two months between one synod and the date that material has to be submitted for the following year's synod.

III. Analysis

For ten years the CRC has been discussing the issue of covenant children participating in the Lord's Supper without coming to any resolution. Part of the problem, it seems to us, is that it is not clear what the issues are, what has been decided, and what has been changed. We want to clarify the issues, believing that this is part of our mandate and that this will be of great help to synod and the denomination.

A. *The issues*

1. The basis for participation in the Lord's Supper

The debate has focused upon whether participation in the Lord's Supper should be based upon a personal, individual profession of faith (either according to the Reformed creeds or according to a more simplified version) or, in the case of small children incapable of such a confession, upon membership in the covenant, that is, upon the basis of the faith of the community.

The support for individual profession of faith by all participants is derived from an interpretation of I Corinthians 11, which demands remembering and proclaiming the death of Jesus and self-examination in connection with the Lord's Supper, and from the tradition of the Christian Reformed Church and all Reformed churches tracing their roots to Calvin.

The supporters of the "covenant" basis for participation interpret I Corinthians 11 in another way—covenantally; they point to our practice of infant baptism, which is based on a covenantal reading of texts; they refer to circumcision, the Passover, and infant baptism as all involving the faith of one person standing in for another as precedents for acknowledging the same in connection with the Lord's Supper; they point out how the understanding and practice of profession of faith have changed; and they point to the long tradition of paedocommunion in the church, a practice that predates the establishment of any Reformed tradition. The reason for appealing to the covenant and to the practice of infant baptism is to point out that participation in the grace of God is possible without individual, personal expression of faith: In the Passover, circumcision, and infant baptism, on the basis of the faith of the parents or the community, children from birth are initiated into the covenant of grace and become partakers of all its benefits, such as the meal of the Passover or the Lord's Supper.

Traditionally these two have been seen as either/or positions.

Rather than making a choice between what many saw as two contradictory theological grounds for participation—individual expression of faith and communal expression of faith—Synod 1988 said that both were grounds for participation, not that some persons come on the basis of the one and some on the basis of the other, but that these coexist as one ground. We believe that the subsequent confusion stems from this combination of what we see as two mutually exclusive grounds, though others apparently see no contradiction between these two grounds and see them as basically one. We note that historically they have been seen as two separate, contradictory grounds.

However, it is understandable that synod came to this conclusion because it is true to say that everyone who makes a profession of faith is by virtue of that profession a member of the covenant. In effect, everyone who comes to the table upon an individual profession of faith is a member of the covenant. But this explanation fails to address the theological question of the *basis* for participation in the Lord's Supper. Is the table of the Lord open to a person because that person professes his or her faith or because he or she by baptism has membership in the covenant and the communal faith that this implies?

2. The nature of profession of faith

If the question of the basis for participation in the Lord's Supper is not resolved, any discussion about the nature of profession of faith will be somewhat confusing. The discussion is valid once it is clearly decided that an

individual profession of faith is the only entry to the table. It is then appropriate to talk about whether there ought to be various kinds of professions (possibly one before admission to the table and possibly another at the time of transition to corporate membership); whether profession is something that is ongoing; whether there are various times when it is appropriate to publicly state one's faith; whether the church wants to use forms; and, if it does, whether it wants many forms that are age and situation appropriate.

However, when the question of basis for participation is unresolved, the discussion in connection with profession of faith turns to topics like whether it was historically connected to communion; what its relationship is to confirmation and hence to baptism; whether it should be connected to a rite of passage; and whether a rite of passage ought to be connected to the Lord's table. In the past, even when study committees concluded that an individual profession of faith is not required for participation, they would still address the question of public profession of faith, trying to show that it ought not to be connected to the Lord's Supper.

3. The Lord's Supper and the Passover

There are many arguments that have been presented for and against a close relationship between the Lord's Supper and the Passover. It is readily granted that, at certain stages in Israel's history at least, children of all ages partook of the Passover meal; hence, so the argument runs, if the close connection between it and the Lord's Supper can be established, then the principle of children of all ages partaking of the Lord's Supper is also established. All are agreed that there is a relationship between the two religious rites. However, those who believe in an individualized profession of faith as a requirement for the Lord's Supper will seek to demonstrate that the two ceremonies are dissimilar in that Passover allows participation of children by virtue of their being members of the covenant, whereas the Lord's Supper does not do so, and they will argue their case by asserting the uniqueness of the new covenant in its demand for an individualized faith response to the death and resurrection of Jesus as a prerequisite for partaking of the Lord's Supper.

We think that the issue that needs to be addressed is the issue of *communal* faith. Too often the discussion about participation in the Lord's Supper loses sight of the communal aspect of faith and overemphasizes *individual* faith. In many instances and situations individuals share in the grace of God by virtue of the faith of the community. In circumcision, in the Passover, in baptism (and in the Lord's Supper, as some believe) some individuals share in the grace and blessings of the covenant apart from a profession of faith on their part. Is the Lord's Supper the exception? If so, why? Shouldn't the exclusion of children from the table be just as disturbing to Reformed people as exclusion of children from baptism would be?

In broad outline, these are the issues as they lie before us; it is the answers to these questions that continue to divide us.

B. *Changes resulting from the decisions of Synod 1988*

1. Participation of younger children

The decision of Synod 1988 was made in the context of the question whether covenant children should be allowed to participate in the Lord's

Supper because there seemed to be warrant for allowing them to do so on the basis of their being members of the covenant. As Classis Rocky Mountain's overture said,

In summary, although the Scriptures do not expressly address the issue of paedocommunion, they do lean decidedly in its favor. They do so by (1) showing us that covenant children were sacramentally involved throughout Old Testament times, (2) indicating by their silence the greater probability of sacramental involvement by New Testament covenant children, and (3) clearly communicating the status of believing children and the children of believers from God's point of view (which alone can be the standard we adopt and practice).

(*Agenda for Synod 1984*, p. 420)

We believe that because of this context, Synod 1988 was heard to say that children should be allowed to participate in the Lord's Supper, in other words, that Classis Rocky Mountain had successfully built a case that there is indeed a covenant basis for children's participation in the Lord's Supper. Certainly some of the media reported that the CRC had decided to permit children to participate.

However, the actual decision is more restrictive than many people think. Synod's exact words were that "The church is warranted in admitting to the Lord's Supper covenant children who give evidence of faith and are able to discern the body and remember and proclaim the death of Jesus in celebrating the Lord's Supper" (*Acts of Synod 1988*, pp. 558-60). Synod did not institute the sweeping change that some thought it did.

In our opinion, Synod 1988's decision encouraged professions of faith on the part of younger children and their subsequent admission to the Lord's table, but what is allowed to take place after 1988 was already allowed before 1988. It was always possible in the CRC for covenant children who gave evidence of faith and were able to discern and proclaim to participate in the Lord's Supper. There was never an age limit in the CRC, and so, if a consistory deemed that a twelve- or fourteen-year-old or anyone, regardless of age, gave evidence of faith and was able to discern and proclaim, such an individual joined the church as a communicant member and sat at the Lord's table with the covenant community.

2. Three kinds of membership

With more younger children than ever before making profession of faith, the denomination has a question regarding the membership status of these children. We now have some children who are baptized and some children (pre-18) who are baptized and may participate in the Lord's Supper, and we have adults who are baptized, participate in the Lord's Supper, and are corporate members of the church; but we have only two official membership categories—baptized and communicant.

Should we change to listing three categories of members—baptized, communicant, and corporate? We must have some change in membership categories if we insist upon the necessity of an individualized profession of faith in order to participate in the Lord's Supper.

If, however, children would be allowed to participate on the basis of the faith of the covenant community, we would then have baptized members—who have the right to participate in the Lord's Supper—and corporate members—who are baptized and have joined the church in a formal ceremony or rite of passage (which includes a profession of faith) at the age of 18.

3. The necessity for simpler forms

Synod 1988 asked the "CRC Worship Committee . . . to review the forms for public profession of faith in the light of these declarations concerning the public profession of covenant children." We say, with the majority of the advisory committee of Synod 1993, that it was always possible for members desiring participation in the Lord's Supper to give evidence of their faith "appropriate to their age, ability, and spiritual giftedness, as determined by the local consistory" (*Acts of Synod 1993*, p. 552). What we then need to decide is whether we want a multiplicity of forms to cover all age and ability levels. The majority of the advisory committee at Synod 1993 certainly had a desire to prevent extensive regulations and foresaw no end to the situations that might arise and require additional regulations. We sense that currently the mood in the denomination does not favor more forms or regulations and that a considerable number of consistories want the matter of how to satisfy themselves with regard to the faith of a candidate left to their discretion.

Simpler forms for profession of faith become unnecessary if we decide to allow children to participate in communion on the basis of the faith of the community. However, we would need to revise the present Form for Public Profession of Faith into a rite of passage ceremony and to separate profession of faith from permission to participate in the Lord's Supper if we would decide to open the Lord's Supper to all baptized members.

IV. Our position

A. *Rationale*

It can be argued that it goes beyond the mandate of the Clarification Committee to get into the substance of the issue, but Synod 1991 left room for that when its advisory committee said that the overture from Classis Alberta North raised the underlying theological question as to the basis for participation in the Lord's Supper; and we believe that we help to clarify the situation by assisting synod in giving a direct answer to the main question: On what basis do covenant children participate in the Lord's Supper? It is fruitless to clarify requirements for faith when there is a segment of the church that rejects those efforts because it believes in another basis for participation.

The two accepted bases for being allowed to participate in the Lord's Supper have been stated as membership in the covenant and individual profession of faith. The crucial question is this: Is an individual expression of faith required for participation in the Lord's Supper? Part of the church has said yes, and part has said no. Strong grounds are brought forward by the defenders of both positions. Those who say yes turn to I Corinthians 11, and those who say no talk about covenant membership. For whatever reasons, pastoral, political, or confessional, synod took the two positions and merged them into one, to the dismay and chagrin of some.

When a person who has professed faith partakes of the meal of the Lord's Supper, such a person does that as a member of the covenant. In such a case covenant membership and individual profession of faith belong together. However, as a church we confess that believers *and their children* are members of the covenant, yet we allow only some members of the covenant to participate in the Lord's Supper. Obviously, we do not officially hold that membership in the covenant is basis enough for participation in communion. Our practice says that only those members of the covenant who have "publicly professed their faith"

may participate. In most congregations there are more members of the covenant who do not participate than there are those who do. As a committee we judge that it is not legitimate, with these givens, for the church to say that covenant membership and public profession of faith are equally valid bases for a person's participation in the Lord's Supper. By our practice we send a different message: Membership in the covenant does not entitle one to participate; only public profession of a faith that discerns, remembers, and proclaims does so.

But the discussion is precisely on the question of whether membership in the covenant is a sufficient ground for participation. Hasn't synod already answered that by saying no? Not really. In light of the discussion in which we have been engaged as a denomination, what is needed if we as a church are to reject covenant membership as a sufficient ground for participation is a clear, unambiguous statement to that effect, e.g., "Participation in the Lord's Supper is by individual profession of faith only. [That those who profess their faith are by virtue of their faith members of the covenant is incidental to the matter.] Covenant membership alone does not entail the privilege of the table."

We believe that such a clear, unambiguous statement has not been made because there is too much evidence supporting the position that covenant membership *does* entail some rights regarding the table, just as it entailed certain rights in connection with circumcision, the Passover, and baptism. In these ceremonies, are benefits granted to individuals on the basis of their membership in the covenant, apart from individual faith? The obvious, uncontested answer to this question is yes.

The question that then needs to be answered is whether the benefits that result from being a member of the covenant can ever be experienced apart from faith. That they can be seems to be implied when it is argued that some persons (children) should be allowed to participate in communion solely on the basis of their membership in the covenant, without their having affirmed a personal faith. Those who argue this position, however, do not mean to disconnect faith and the Lord's Supper. They mean to argue that the Lord's Supper is open to all covenant members on the bases of their covenant membership and the communal faith. The covenant community is always a community of faith and always acts out of and in faith. That faith is first and foremost a communal faith; members of the covenant community are benefited immensely through faith, though not necessarily through their own individual faith. In circumcision, the Passover, baptism, and also in the Lord's Supper, participation is on the basis of being a member of the covenant community of faith—on the basis of *faith*, but not always or necessarily on the basis of individual faith.

In what follows we will try to lay the theological groundwork for the position that communal faith has great implications for the individual. We do not mean to say that individual faith is not called for or hoped for. We do mean to say that even without individual faith a member of the faith community participates in the grace of God and therefore should be allowed a place at the Lord's table.

B. Theological considerations

1. The nature of the sacraments

We must begin forming an understanding of the sacraments from events recorded in Scripture. Our quest is to see if from the nature of the events (particularly the Lord's Supper) as recorded in Scripture there is anything that can be learned about the participation of children apart from individual faith.

The New Testament practice of baptism cannot be understood correctly apart from its roots in circumcision and its connection with the covenant. The same can be said of the Lord's Supper, which has its roots in the Passover of the old covenant. There are similarities and differences between circumcision and baptism and between Passover and the Lord's Supper; not all elements of either Old Testament sign are carried through to the New Testament. But of particular interest, and applicable to our discussion, is the relationship of faith to these practices. It was this question of the role of faith that sharply separated the Reformers from the Roman Catholics and that lies at the bottom of our present discussion regarding the participation of children or infants at the table today. The Roman Catholics held that the sacraments are efficacious, or have effect, *ex opere operato*, i.e., by a power inherent in themselves, whereas the Reformers, Luther as well as Calvin, held that the benefits of the sacraments are contingent upon the exercise of personal faith.

However, as soon as this has been said, it becomes obvious that faith in Christ is either not required for the efficacy of the rites in all cases or that, if faith is required, it has to be supplied in certain instances by one person for another. The benefits of circumcision, the meal of the Passover, and the privileges of baptism, particularly as applied to households and to infants, are received apart from individual faith. It is only in connection with the Lord's Supper that part of the church of Christ has, since about the thirteenth century, excluded all or most of those incapable of an individual profession of faith. The exclusion is made largely on the basis of an understanding of I Corinthians 11 as it applies to the Lord's Supper. The fact that a large part of the Christian church does not read I Corinthians 11 this way now and didn't do so in the past ought to give us reason to look at the issue afresh.

2. The sacraments and faith

a. Various alternatives

One of the primary theological questions in the church has been what it is that makes the sacrament effective in the life of the recipient. Several alternatives have been suggested:

- 1) The sacrament is efficacious in and of itself, by its very nature, *ex opere operato*, without that nature being further specified.
- 2) The sacrament is efficacious as a result of correct *administration or manipulation*, involving who does it, when, and by whose authority; in the words of consecration that the priest speaks, the elements are transformed and become efficacious for the participant apart from faith or understanding (the sacrament was administered in Latin at one time, a language that the majority of the participants could not understand).
- 3) The sacrament is efficacious only when it is received in *faith* (so for an unbeliever nothing takes place in the sacraments). It is the personal faith of the participant that applies the benefits of the death and resurrection of Jesus to the individual. In this view, personal understanding and faith, discernment of the body of Jesus, and knowing the meaning of the death and resurrection of Jesus become vital.
- 4) The sacrament has no efficacy and is simply *memorial*. This view is attributed to Zwingli, although he expressed different thoughts as well.
- 5) The sacrament is effective because of all of these factors or because of two or more in combination.

b. The Roman Catholic understanding

For the Roman Catholic Church the correct *manipulation* of the sacraments is important, but once the elements have been consecrated by the priest, the sacrament is seen as having efficacy in and of itself (*ex opere operato*). The faith of neither the priest nor the recipient is a factor. The method of the consecration (the right manipulation) gives efficacy to the sacrament. In the words of consecration spoken by the priest, the elements become the body and blood of Jesus, and the body and blood of Jesus are efficacious for the purpose of his coming. In Roman Catholic theology the mass is not only a consecration of the elements but also an act of consecration on the part of the participant. Going to mass is a good work, and it builds up merit. The more one goes, the more faithfully one participates, the more one's salvation is guaranteed.

c. The Reformers

1) Zwingli

Zwingli at one time saw no efficacy in the sacraments at all. They were memorials in the sense that they served only to remind us that at one time Jesus lived and died for a special purpose. However, at the Marburg Colloquy, Zwingli was willing to affirm a spiritual presence of Christ at the table.

2) Luther

Luther continued to celebrate the mass for many years after the official beginning of the Reformation. It was not the issue for him that it was for Zwingli or that it was for Calvin later on. When Luther gave his attention to the mass, he taught that the elements are not transformed; rather, "he held that on the altar are real bread and wine, not merely 'the accidents,' as the Pope has said, and that in them are the 'real flesh and blood of Christ.' Yet he would allow Christians to hold either for transubstantiation or with him. His own view is usually called, somewhat inaccurately, consubstantiation" (Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of Christianity*. New York: Harper and Row, 1953, p. 712).

For Luther the important thing was that the mass be received in faith (so too with baptism). The sacraments had no effect if they were not received in faith. (In the case of baptism, he held that the infants were aided by the faith of those who brought them for baptism.) The mass is not a work through which we gain merit, but it is a gift of God to be received in faith and with thanksgiving. The sacraments were not seen by him as acts of consecration on the part of the participants; they are God's actions, which we receive.

Does the mass have efficacy in and of itself for Luther? The fact that Luther practiced the mass for years and that he did not insist on a rejection of transubstantiation would indicate that he saw some validity to this idea. But the efficacy of the sacrament would come for him from the faith of the participant rather than from the manipulation of the priest or from the inherent power of the sacrament. However, opponents of Luther's position believed that according to his view there is still something magical about the mass or the Lord's Supper, some efficacy that it has from the "real presence" of Christ.

Luther was willing to state at the Marburg Colloquy that the real efficacy comes from the faith of the participant. However, when the German Reformers present drew up a statement that they would be willing to live by, they declared that their view was "that Christ is truly present, that is, substantively, essentially, though not quantitatively, qualitatively, or locally" (Roland H. Bainton, *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther*. Mentor Books. New York: New American Library, 1963, p. 249). The Swiss—Bucer, Oecolampadius, and Zwingli—rejected this statement as "not clearly safeguarding the spiritual character of the Lord's Supper, because they could not understand how something could be present but not locally present. Luther told them that geometrical conceptions cannot be used to describe the presence of God" (Bainton, pp. 249-50).

3) Calvin

As one of the second-generation Reformers, Calvin stepped into this controversy. Calvin rejected transubstantiation and, with Luther, held that the bread and wine remain in substance what they are and that they are not incidental properties. But Calvin also rejected Luther's idea that in the elements "are the real body and blood of Christ." Calvin opted for a *spiritual* presence of Jesus, and in the *Institutes* Calvin talks of *how* Jesus is present. Christ is in heaven, and we are to lift up our minds to him and his kingdom, but

this kingdom is neither bounded by location in space nor circumscribed by any limits. Thus Christ is not prevented from exerting his power wherever he pleases, in heaven and on earth. He shows his presence in power and strength, is always among his own people, and breathes his life upon them, and lives in them, sustaining them, strengthening, quickening, keeping them unharmed, as if he were present in the body. In short, he feeds his people with his own body, the communion of which he bestows upon them by the power of his Spirit. In this manner, the body and blood of Christ are shown to us in the sacrament.

(Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960, 4.1718, p. 1381)

d. The presence of Jesus

The essence of the issue seems to be the notion that any retention of the physical presence of Jesus in the elements lends some magical quality to the sacrament; it was this that the Swiss Reformers and Calvin wanted to avoid; they also wanted to guarantee the humanness of Jesus by the recognition that his physical body could not be everywhere present at the same time.

The "magical quality" is the thing that is feared by opponents of paedocommunion who believe that one of the desires for early participation in communion comes from the belief that the sacrament has some efficacy in and of itself apart from faith. In the *Kerkinformatie* (*Church Information*) of December 1976 (no. 65, p. 8) someone writes (our translation), "But one thing is clear: without faith it cannot be done. And that has its consequences. It entails, e.g., that suckling communion can be defended only on the basis of a magical conception of the Lord's Supper."

So the Calvinist branch of the Reformation has strongly emphasized the spiritual presence of Jesus Christ for the believer. But has it settled the question of the efficacy of the Lord's Supper with that emphasis?

We need to note that all Christians believe that it is the *presence of Jesus*

(whether through a change in the elements, a presence under and in the elements, or a spiritual presence behind the elements) that is the source of grace in the sacraments. The question that divides is how the presence of Christ comes to the table and flows from the table.

Is the *faith* either of the church or of the individual the key to the *presence of Christ*? Christ comes into the community of faith gathered in his name, and Christ comes when the table is prepared; so faith and correct manipulation or administration do play a role, but would we say that Christ is present because of our faith or because of the proper administration of the sacrament? Not really. That would tie Jesus down and exalt our power. Christ is present, we would say, because he sovereignly decides to be present. God's grace, not our works (faith and administration), stand in the forefront, although our works are not absent.

Faith is the channel by which the grace of God comes to and is received by the believer, but there is an efficacy or working or power attached to the sacraments apart from that faith; hence the warning about eating and drinking judgment upon oneself if the sacrament is not taken in faith. The sacraments are observed in the community of faith, but in the midst of that community there are hypocrites, unrepentant sinners, and unbelievers as well as the uninitiated and the non-members, and the sacrament has effect for them as well. When those who did not discern the body participated anyway, the consequence in Corinth was that some became weak and sick, and some even died (I Cor. 11:30). What gave the sacrament that power apart from true faith? An efficacy inherent in the Supper, as we shall show.

If one still maintains that individual faith is the key to efficacy, then what exactly is it that this faith does? Does faith add a dimension to the table and to the elements? Is it the faith of the individual only or of the individual and the community? What is the sacrament apart from faith? A memorial? A nice ceremony? Is there then a magical quality to faith so that it transforms something empty in and of itself into a meal that is a "holy sign and seal" for us to see? How is it possible that in the absence of discernment, in the absence of demonstrated faith, people get sick and die by partaking?

Does the efficacy perhaps come from the *presence of Christ*? After all, the spiritual presence is a real presence, is it not? Ridderbos quotes Schweizer to the effect that "spiritual" means that it is a food and drink "which comes directly from God's sphere and gives divine power" (Herman Ridderbos, *Paul*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975, p. 420).

Berkouwer, in *The Sacraments* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969, p. 225), relates that Bavinck complained that the critics of Calvin's teaching regarding the spiritual presence of Jesus have understood this to mean "unreal" and "imaginary." Do we not, in effect, in our accepted understanding, look upon it in the same way that these critics do, viz., as an unreal, imaginary presence of Christ?

Christ is really present at the Supper, and *spiritual* does not mean present in our head or in our spirit or by our faith, but really and truly present, though in a sense apprehended only by our spirit and not by our physical senses of sight and hearing. The bond between bread and wine and body and blood does not rest

on the physical constitution of the elements of the Supper, but arises from the nature of the fellowship of the Supper as a sacrificial meal. Thereby the elements are the bread and cup of the Lord [emphasis ours], i.e., by virtue of his institution and the living relationship wherein Christ stands as the Lord of the table to his own.

(H. Ridderbos, *Paul*, p. 426)

A little later Ridderbos says,

We have to do here with the same thought that we have already met above in I Corinthians 10, that communion with the body and blood of the Lord means both that one enters into *Christ's holy sphere of life and power* [emphasis ours], and that, whoever therefore wishes to combine the table of the Lord with the table of demons may wonder whether he does not wish to defy the Lord and fancy himself stronger than he.

(*Paul*, p. 426)

Ridderbos places the emphasis on the power and life sphere of the table. That sphere is there because Jesus is present, just as at the demonic altars the demons are present (I Cor. 10:14-22). No doubt Jesus is present in the context of the faith of the community, but in that context an individual present without faith in Jesus will still be confronted by Jesus and will notice the consequences.

Berkouwer mentions that the charge of Lutherans and Roman Catholics against the Reformed teaching concerning the sacrament demonstrates a lack of "sacramental reality," in particular concerning the comforting and sanctifying presence of Jesus in holy communion (*The Sacraments*, p. 219). But he also goes on to show that for Calvin, no less than for Lutherans and Roman Catholics, the real bodily presence of Jesus was important and maintained. The understanding and explanation of it differ, but Christ is present.

All along the question has been this: What makes the sacrament efficacious? The response is *the presence of Jesus*. Jesus is present in the context of the faith of the community, but this faith is not the reason for the sacrament's efficacy even if the blessings of the table come only in the context of faith. Is Jesus present apart from individual faith? The answer to that is a very clear yes. Faith is essential in making the meal a meal of and with the Lord, both for the community and the individual, but it is the meal of the covenant community with its Lord. Within that covenant community there will be some who believe poorly, some who discern the body (both the church and the Lord) clearly, and some who don't; there will be those who pretend faith; there will be hypocrites; and there will be unbelievers. The clear message of I Corinthians 11 is that because of the character of the meal (it is the supper of the Lord), the Lord is present, and his presence works for grace and judgment on all who participate. It is faith that determines whether the sacrament is efficacious for grace or judgment, but faith does not determine whether the Lord will be present.

The invitation to partake is first to the community and then to the individual, not the other way around. Jesus responds to the faith of the community, and because he responds to the community, his presence also has implications for the nondiscerning. Only those who give evidence of not discerning the body should be encouraged to change their way or not to attend, but covenant children of all ages should attend and partake as

soon as they can, out of obedience to Jesus' desire (Matt. 19:14; Luke 22:19) and out of the recognition that the presence of Jesus nourishes as bread and wine do.

3. The covenant and the mediation of grace

Who are the members of the covenant? Believers and their children, or *more inclusively*, believers and those who are in various ways connected with them. Children are, by birth to believing parents, brought within the covenant community, and the promises are to them as well as to the adults. When only one of the partners in a marriage is a Christian, God's grace is such that he looks upon the children of such a union as holy and even upon the unbelieving partner as holy (I Cor. 7:14; see also Article 17 of the Canons of Dort). When Abraham believed God and received the sign of the covenant, all the males in his household (at least 318 adult warriors, Gen. 14:14) received the same sign. In the case of the household baptisms in the New Testament, regardless of whether there are infants involved or not, the same principle applies; included in the covenant of grace are believers and those associated with them. The holiness of these "additions" does not come from being in the presence of a believer but from the Lord and his grace. From the time that children are born into a Christian family, "God graciously includes our children in his covenant, and all his promises are for them as well as us. Jesus himself embraced little children, and blessed them . . ." They are God's own children, and all God's children are to heed the obligation to eat and drink in remembrance of him and so to proclaim the death and resurrection of Jesus until he returns. A child does that as a child, and some adults who never become more than children do it in their way; teens do it in their way, and adults according to theirs. When the disciples wanted to forbid children to come to Jesus, he said that no one ought to stop those to whom the kingdom belongs (Luke 18:16). What is coming to the table but a coming to Jesus, who is really and truly at the table, and who is to forbid any child to come to Jesus?

4. Faith and I Corinthians 11

I Corinthians 11 is the definitive passage for an understanding of the place of infants and children at the Lord's table. It is understood among us to clearly teach the necessity of individual faith as the basis of participation. But that "clarity" may come as much from our assumptions and from the environment influencing the way we read the text as it does from the text or the context itself.

Bavinck tells us that the Council of Trent still defended the practice of children at the mass, condemning only the efforts that made it mandatory for children to participate (presumably for their salvation). After citing the reasons that one Reformed theologian gave for why children should participate, Bavinck proceeds to dismiss as invalid the central argument—that I Corinthians 11 was not intended as a universal demand upon every individual. He appeals to differences between circumcision and Passover without making those clear. In the matter of baptism and Lord's Supper, he simply states, "Baptism is the sacrament of rebirth, wherein the person is passive; the Lord's Supper is the sacrament of growing up in the community of Christ, of the nurture of the spiritual life, and presupposes conscious, active participation on the part of those receiving it" (Herman Bavinck, *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek* IV: 642. Kampen: Kok, 1911).

Does the Bible say that? And what exactly is being claimed here? We suspect that an individualistic interpretation of I Corinthians 11 lies behind such declarations and that someone's theology is intruding into the Scripture. Baptism is never passively received. It is administered in the context of active faith. Without faith there can be, or at least should be, no baptism. But the parents assist (Luther), or stand in for, the faith of the child and so supply the active faith. Certainly the children of believers, from the moment of birth or even of conception, are members of the community of Christ. They are holy, and we confess that if they die in infancy we are to consider them elect and saved (*Canons of Dort*, I. 17). They don't join the active faith community at some future time when they make public profession of faith; they *are* part of the faith community from birth and as such need the spiritual nurture provided for the faith community in the Lord's Supper.

If we would start from the point of view that children belong at the table, we would read the text differently, and so we need to recognize that often we draw conclusions and then seek to prove them from the Scriptures. Usually we can prove whatever we want.

As a committee we are asking that synod look at I Corinthians 11 in the light of covenant-communal theology, in the same way that we read the texts concerning baptism. We ask the delegates to look at the text with us and to note the questions we raise.

a. The text

- 1) Says that the eating and drinking *proclaim* the Lord's death.

Is such proclamation verbal and intellectual only, or can the proper presence at the table, such as that of an invited child of believers, also proclaim the death and life of Christ?

- 2) Talks about an *unworthy* manner of partaking.

Gluttony, greed, and pride certainly represent an unworthy manner of partaking; but is the eating and drinking of a covenant child unworthy participation, comparable to greed, gluttony, and pride?

- 3) Calls for *self-examination*.

It is generally believed among us that this implies a knowledge of the standards of community, of the meaning of the table, and of the death and resurrection of Jesus on the part of every participant and that anyone incapable of such self-examination is excluded from participation. Is it possible to see these words addressed to those who are capable of self-examination without intending to eliminate all those, e.g., the mentally challenged, the infants, and children, who are incapable of doing so?

- 4) Maintains the requirement to eat and drink with *discernment* of the body.

This, it is averred, requires a certain mental ability to know and understand standards and an ability to evaluate. Is it possible, as with self-examination, to see these words as addressed only to those of the covenant community who are capable of discernment, without intending to exclude others?

The net effect of the statements or requirements of I Corinthians 11, so runs the argument, is that personal faith in Jesus and an intellectual understanding of the meaning and significance of the death and

resurrection of Jesus are prerequisites for participation, and therefore infants are excluded, and children may not participate until they give evidence of faith expressed in a statement consistent with the Bible and the creeds and acceptable to the church.

b. Intended audience: the community

We think that the key to seeing the passage in a different light lies in asking ourselves whether the words are addressed to the *community* as a whole or to each *individual*. This is not playing with the text; it is calling upon our covenantal understanding, which influences the way we read the Bible.

Those who reject infant baptism read the biblical texts about baptism in a way that we, from our covenantal perspective, would label as individualistic or noncommunal. If we dispense with the covenant perspective, Acts 2:38 has to be read as a demand that each person wishing to be baptized *repent* and *believe* before baptism is permissible. Surely, no infants are capable of repenting and believing; if they are, we have no way of measuring or gauging or knowing it. When Paul calls baptism the "washing of regeneration" (Titus 3:5), an individualistic interpretation would conclude that every infant who is baptized is regenerated (either before baptism or in baptism doesn't really matter), and, if we cannot say this of infants, we ought to wait to baptize them until they are able to repent and to declare their faith. An individualistic interpretation leads one to claim either that there were no infants in the households that were baptized in the New Testament or that, despite the silence of the texts in this regard, all those who were baptized made individual professions of faith. On the other hand, a communal or covenantal understanding allows for the possibility that in the household baptisms an Old Testament practice is being continued, namely, that the head of the household speaks for and acts on behalf of the household.

c. Faith required of the community

A covenantal understanding does not eliminate the necessity of faith; rather, it transfers the responsibility for faith to the community.

Faith is never not required; faith is a *prerequisite* for circumcision, the Passover, baptism, and the Lord's Supper. But the important question is Whose faith?

1) Faith and circumcision

Abraham believed and was circumcised by God, and on the same day he circumcised Ishmael (whose faith is not mentioned and later proves to be faulty) and all the males of his household (whose faith is not mentioned and not considered to be important to the issue). Sons and slaves belonged under Abraham's headship, and through the act of circumcision Abraham was brought by God into the covenant as were all the others—through Abraham's act but by God's design and intent (Gen. 17:22-27). Abraham's faith was the vehicle through which the others entered. Why were the others circumcised? Because of faith—Abraham's faith, no doubt, but faith nevertheless.

2) Faith and the Passover

The Passover is a celebration of the faith community. It obviously would not be celebrated if there were no knowledge of and faith in

God's deliverance from Egypt through signs and wonders. However, did every individual person believe this? Perhaps the first generation of adults did, but certainly even then there were children participating who did not understand or appreciate the significance of what they were doing. Yet they and the slaves brought with them were part of the faith community that was told to celebrate the Passover of the Lord. What was required to sit down and eat the Paschal lamb and meal? Faith. But the faith of parents covered for children, and the faith of the community covered for the slaves and foreigners among them.

3) Faith and baptism

We don't need to go to great lengths to show our covenantal understanding of baptism, but it is worth repeating that no one is baptized apart from faith—in the New Testament or in our denomination, which practices infant baptism. Faith is an absolute requirement for baptism. The way we differ from those who reject infant baptism is not that they base baptism upon faith and we base it upon membership in the covenant; the difference is that they emphasize individual faith before baptism, whereas we emphasize communal-covenantal faith. In the instance of infant baptism, the parents represent the community and testify of their faith, on the basis of which the children are part of the covenant family of God and thus ought to be baptized. As Ishmael and Isaac and the men in Abraham's household were circumcised on the basis of faith (the faith of Abraham), so our infants and those who come into the charge or responsibility of the believer (adopted children, servants?) are baptized on the basis of faith (the faith of the parents).

4) Faith and the Lord's Supper

The Lord's Supper is no different from the other ceremonies. It requires faith. Individual faith is not one ground for participation and covenant membership another; the only requirement or necessity for participation is faith. However, it is precisely at this point that some begin arguing from an individualistic perspective and say that in the Lord's Supper, and only here, individual faith is required and that the faith of the parents or the faith of the community covers no one.

This stance is highly inconsistent. Only this ceremonial rite is excluded from the claim that we make concerning the others, namely, that the faith of the community can stand in for the individual.

It is claimed by some that we take this stance because the Bible demands it. But that is a circular argument. If one starts with the presupposition that individual faith is required before baptism, one approaches the individual texts from that perspective and ends up proving what one believed in the first place. However, suppose one assumed that faith relates to the Lord's Supper in the same way as it does to the other ceremonies, namely, that the community can stand in for the individual in certain situations. Would one then be able to hear I Corinthians 11 supporting this? In other words, what if we read and heard I Corinthians 11 covenantally or communally—as we do in the instance of baptism—rather than individualistically?

d. A covenantal hearing of I Corinthians 11

1) Proclaiming

In Corinth it was the whole community that proclaimed the Lord's death by its eating and drinking, and it was that same community that was proclaiming by its actions that it saw no implications for communal behavior in the death of Jesus. Undoubtedly, Corinth contained people who were doing it right even in the midst of abuse. But the overall practice was a bad one. Paul is saying in effect, "People, you are not proclaiming the Lord's death as a community even though there may be among you those who understand and do so correctly." The church or the community must proclaim the Lord's death, but this does not mean that every individual must understand precisely what is involved in proclaiming in order to participate. *Proclaim* in this instance is to be understood no differently from *repent* in connection with baptism—absolutely necessary but required first of all of the community and then of the individuals within it. In both the Passover and the Lord's Supper, the children will learn, through their participation and the instruction of the parents and/or the community, what the Passover and the death mean. They are not to be kept away from the table until they have the correct understanding, any more than they are excluded from the daily table until they have learned proper manners.

Baptism, no less than the Lord's Supper, proclaims the Lord's death, and all who are baptized, young and old, are held responsible for the fact of their participation in the sacraments. In both sacraments the grace of God is received by faith for faith, and in neither instance is the emphasis on the recipients' actions. Our actions in being baptized and in eating and drinking proclaim the Lord's death and point to what he has done.

Much is made of the supposition that infants can only be passive in regard to the table, as they are in baptism, though the demand is for an active faith. This remains a problem only in the context of an individualistic interpretation and understanding of what takes place. In both sacraments faith is active, but in baptism, as Luther said, the faith of the children is aided by the parents' faith or, more aptly put, supplied by the parents. We argue the same thing for children participating in the Lord's Supper.

2) Worthy participation

Eating and drinking in a worthy manner obviously require a belief in what Jesus accomplished for the individual and for the community. It precludes partaking in a selfish, gluttonous, greedy, jealous, or proud way, which would profane his death and resurrection. The question pertinent to this discussion is whether children are capable of partaking of the Lord's Supper in a worthy way. Since I Corinthians 11 does not exclude them from the requirement of *worthy* participation, we conclude that they *may* participate if they do so in such a way that Jesus and the members of the body are honored, served, and respected. It is part of the responsibility of parents to be teaching their covenant children as they participate in communion what it is the Lord desires from those who come to the table.

It is the faith of the parents and the community that brings children

to the table; there they are continually faced with the call to believe for themselves. Children should not be kept from the table until they prove that they have a faith worthy of it, just as they are not kept from family meals until they learn what those meals signify and how they are supposed to respond. Children learn a "worthy manner" by participating in the communal rites.

It can be argued that one can profane the table only if one knows what is right and deliberately does what is wrong. If so, the wrongs that children do out of their lack of knowledge surely cannot be considered profane.

3) The need to discern

Is the requirement to discern the body laid upon each individual? To answer yes is to accept the individualistic interpretation of I Corinthians 11. But it is entirely possible that this requirement is laid upon the community and that discernment must be taught to the children as they are participating. This text does not require us to exclude from the table those who can not yet discern the body. If it did, certain persons, e.g., the mentally challenged, would be forever banned from the table.

4) The need for self-examination

The argument with respect to self-examination is that, since infants are incapable of such, though sinful as part of the human race, it is inevitable that small children or infants will participate in an unworthy manner and so will eat and drink judgment upon themselves. It is true, of course, that small children can't look at themselves critically and that they are sinful, but we do not believe that it is warranted to draw the conclusion that therefore they will eat unworthily and to their own judgment. There are two reasons for rejecting this conclusion. First, it ignores a covenantal reading of the text and so makes the assumption that all the words of Paul are to be applied individually and that any individual incapable of self-examination is to be excluded. Second, it does not take into account the fact that the words of self-examination in the text are intended to be heeded by both men and women even though they are addressed to the man. The mention of the man does not exclude the woman, nor does the mention of self-examination on the part of those capable of it exclude those who by circumstance of age or mental challenge cannot self-examine. How do we know that these words are addressed also to women and that really the text means that all people must examine themselves? From a covenantal, contextual understanding of the passage. Children participate on the basis of their parents' or the community's faith and *hence* self-examination.

If we read I Corinthians 11 in the same way that we read the Bible passages about circumcision, Passover, and baptism, nothing leads us to exclude children of any age. Only an individualistic interpretation based upon an individualistic understanding and interpretation of I Corinthians 11 leads some to demand individual faith for admission to the table and excludes those not able to give such a statement.

5) The Lord's Supper and the Passover

Much has been written regarding the relationship between the Lord's Supper and the Passover. Those who would include everyone of

the faith community at the table point out that all ages sat down at the Passover meal; hence all in the New Testament covenant community ought also to participate in the Lord's Supper. Those who wish to limit participation only to those who can express their individual faith attempt to show that not all the parts of the Passover carry over to the Lord's table. This interpretation asserts that an almost totally new covenant was instituted in the Lord's Supper and that one of the features of the new covenant is that the right of participation is based upon individual faith.

This discussion is not germane to the argument being presented in this report. What is the same in all covenants of both the Old and New Testaments is that, despite the changes, God deals *covenantally* with his people. Examples of God's dealing communally/covenantally with people in the new covenant, of which we too are a part, are the household baptisms, the imputed holiness of unbelieving spouses and of children of mixed Christian-non-Christian marriages, the way the new humanity is in Christ as the old humanity was in Adam, and the sickness and even death of people in Corinth because of improper observance of the communion meal.

6) The established tradition

The tradition of which we are a part clearly maintains the necessity of an individual faith for participation in the Lord's Supper. However, it is not the only tradition, and, in fact, our tradition has been extant in the church for a far shorter period of time than the other. In addition, there are many Christians today who practice the tradition that has been in the church from the beginning, the practice of allowing children of all ages to participate in the Lord's Supper. We say this to create room for a new look at the question.

In addition, the CRC is part of a Reformed heritage that prides itself on being always reforming. We believe that we read the Bible in the context of our times, and we believe in listening to the Holy Spirit. The result is that there are some things believed now that were not believed by Calvin and Luther and vice-versa; and we do not think this is bad. We acknowledge that part of being a Reformed church is *semper reformanda* ("always reforming"). We have the right, the responsibility, and the precedents to differ with those who have gone before us. All of these factors plead for a reexamination of the issue of children at the table.

a) A primary focus on soteriology in the sixteenth century

The state of the church in the sixteenth century determined in many ways what was emphasized and what was passed over or scarcely mentioned. We generally agree that the primary issue of the Reformation was soteriology, how one is saved. Ecclesiology received comparatively little attention. Missions were not the concern then that they have become in later years. It was not so much that the issues that received little attention were not considered important; rather, the pressure of the moment demanded response, and the question of salvation was most urgent. Authentic community is probably the primary issue today. What is primary in

an age influences the discussion, the practice, and the exegesis of Scripture in that age.

b) A sacramentalist church

The late medieval church had become a sacramentalist church, where merit was built up by manipulating and attending the sacraments. They, in and of themselves, were means of grace to the participants, and individual faith was not required for participation in them. There was no word to which assent could be given; there was no demand to believe in Jesus, at least not one that the people could understand. The Bible was in the hands of only a few, so only a few could know God or his will directly. People were asked to trust "mother church," who would look after their welfare. Against this the Reformers rightly posited the thesis of individual responsibility for faith. This meant that people had to hear and understand the gospel claim and respond individually to it. The climate was hardly right for discussion of the role of communal faith in the Lord's Supper. In the thought of the Reformers such an idea would have been reminiscent of the papal church, and so faith individually expressed was maintained as the prerequisite for attendance at the table.

The same requirement of individual faith was not maintained by all the Reformers with respect to baptism when issues of the state intruded themselves upon the church. There was, however, a segment of the church which, being consistent with the position of individual faith demanded by the Reformation, rejected infant baptism and held out for believers' baptism on the grounds that baptism also requires individual expression of faith. In places where citizenship in the state was synonymous with membership in the church, whether Roman Catholic, Lutheran, or Calvinist, the Anabaptists condemned this practice as unbiblical and refused to baptize infants and anyone who did not evidence individual faith. This close relationship of church and state continues in some places until today; it was not challenged in the Netherlands until 1834.

Our thrust is that at the time of the Reformation the issue of baptism did not receive all the attention that it deserved. We look at the question of state and church and baptism much differently today than the Reformers did, as is evident from the changes brought into Article 36 of the Belgic Confession.

In context, what the Reformers said made sense; yet it would have been better for all if they had listened to one another at the time and had sought together to hear more clearly what the Bible was saying.

c) Individualism and community

Today the climate is one of rampant individualism, at least in the Western world, and the concept of community is weak among us. For this reason there is interest in a new communal-covenantal look at the question of the Lord's Supper. We have established that faith is important to participation in the Supper. Having said that, we now look more closely at the role of communal faith with regard to holy communion.

d) The effect of the early mystery religions

The Reformers, laboring in the context of sacramentalism and believing the bread and wine to be the body and blood of the Lord, feared that the body and blood would be profaned if children or adults dropped or spilled it. Infrequent celebration was the rule rather than the exception in both Roman Catholic and Protestant practice, probably because it was reasonable to think that if they did not celebrate, they could not profane, just as in the Old Testament people did not use Yahweh's name so that they would never be guilty of misusing it. Calvin, who desired weekly celebration of the Lord's Supper, faced constant opposition on that issue.

There is great concern and care taken with the consecrated host in the Roman Catholic Church. It is the body of Christ and may be kept only in certain places under certain conditions and may be accessible only to certain people. The mass has always been a solemn, serious, awe-inspiring, and, in some ways, dreaded celebration. That attitude is reflected in the awe and reverence (and sometimes fear) with which some people in the Reformed tradition participate in the Lord's Supper. Dressing in one's best clothes, infrequent celebration, preparatory and applicatory sermons, checking attendance, fencing in the table—all are examples of the awe in which the ceremony was and is held.

Certainly what underlies a large part of this attitude about the Lord's Supper is the influence of the mysterious nature of sacrament that developed in part under the influence of pagan mystery religions. We would be hard pressed to support many of these practices biblically. When Christ was among us, it was quite appropriate to be familiar with him, to touch him and deal with him on a human-to-human level. The ceremony we now call a mystery and a sacrament was a communal meal, the breaking of bread with one another, the Lord's Supper—ordinary, simple, familiar.

7) The nature of profession of faith

a) The history

The ceremony that has come to be known as "confirmation" originally began as the second half of the church's baptismal rite. It was the act of "confirming" the Christian identity of the person received into the fellowship; it was done by way of a bishop's prayer pronounced with extended hands over the individual. Only the *church*, not private individuals, could *confirm* the validity of baptism in Roman and African expressions of Christianity. Since local leaders were allowed to baptize but a bishop was required for confirmation, this latter act tended to become detached from baptism in both practice and meaning, as a bishop's services were not always immediately available.

Once the two rites were separated in the West (this separation never occurred in the Eastern church), the significance of confirmation began to change. It became an act in which the individual confirmed his or her *own* place in the membership of the church. It took place after certain criteria were met (usually a time of focused

training in doctrine). A bishop's official consecration of the confirmation was still required, but the rite shifted from being a baptismal reception into the fellowship of the church to being a confirmation of individual worthiness for membership participation.

Of course, the shift elicited a new theological debate: At what age should a person be confirmed? Certainly babies were too young to make conscious decisions about voluntary association with the church. In the thirteenth century, the English Archbishop Peckham first regulated the matter by officially requiring confirmation for admittance to holy communion. Until then, working from residual ideas of what confirmation had once meant, other English and continental councils had mandated that children be confirmed by the age of two. When Archbishop Peckham made confirmation the prerequisite for holy communion, the debate shifted to when a person passes from childhood to "years of discretion." No age younger than seven seemed to fit the circumstances, and the Council of Trent (1566) pushed in the direction of twelve as the ideal.

The Reformers viewed confirmation as "idle ceremony" and dispensed with it altogether as a sacrament. However, the idea of a public rite of passage to celebrate the movement of covenant children from participation in the church under the umbrella of family life to participation on the basis of maturing expressions of personal faith received wide support. Controversies with the Anabaptists added momentum, and eventually Reformed churches began to require knowledgeable devotion in addition to infant baptism as prerequisites for partaking of the Lord's Supper.

So began the present practice of *public profession of faith* in the Reformed denominations. Reformed and Presbyterian groups splintering off from other groups took with them the practice of confirmation as the rite of admittance to holy communion and continued to practice it under the name "public profession of faith."

b) Problems

Several problems remain, however. First, the historic theology of the church said that baptism was the entry rite into Christian fellowship and was all that was needed to share in the Lord's Supper meal. Modern confirmation was an illegitimate child born during the late Middle Ages, creating new terms for admittance to holy communion as well as to church membership.

Second, the only theological argument for denying baptized children a place at the Lord's table rests on an interpretation of I Corinthians 11:27-30. If the "examination" therein required in order to "recognize" the body before participating in holy communion is a rational understanding of the atonement, then children are not likely to meet the requirement. However, if, as most contemporary exegesis points out, "recognizing the body" means understanding the unity of the church as community of Christ, then it is precisely *when* baptized children *participate* in the Lord's Supper that such community is experienced.

Third, requiring an intellectually mature testimony of faith as the prerequisite for communion denies participation to those who

are unable to make such assent, including those who are mentally challenged. Thus, the "table of Christian unity" becomes the table of division even *within* the faith community, something not likely to be Christ's own design.

Fourth, recent attempts to urge younger public professions of faith subvert the inherent "rite of passage" intentions of the Reformers. Whereas Anabaptists urged the delay of baptism until persons could make adult statements of personal faith and could support those statements with adult life-style commitments, the Reformers saw public profession of faith as a more proper rite to highlight the changing personal involvement of the individual in the church's fellowship *without* denying the previous sovereign act of God in including children of believers in the Covenant of Grace prior to their personal acknowledgment of faith.

c) Conclusion

Thus, as the early church affirmed and as most of the church has practiced throughout the majority of its existence, baptism—dependent upon the grace of God and the faith of parents—should be the only prerequisite for children to participate in the sacrament of communion. To require a public profession of faith from one who has been baptized is, in effect, to question or deny the faith (of the parents) that led to the baptism. Public profession of faith, as the Reformers taught, is a legitimate expression of a younger church member's passage by rite into adult involvement in the church's corporate structure and witness. Public profession of faith should happen at roughly the same age as most similar expressions of transition happen in society (i.e., when people are choosing their places of residence apart from the parental home, their course of study for personal professional development, their marriage partners, and their careers). The criteria of evaluation for the public-profession-of-faith rite of passage should be (1) a basic understanding of the church's teachings (at minimum an understanding of the articles of the Apostles' Creed), (2) the ability to give personal expression of Christian faith, and (3) enough maturity to maintain the commitments involved in a relationship with God on an individual level.

In other words, the historic practices of the church suggest that baptized children should participate in the sacrament of communion and that the intentions of the Reformers are best preserved by understanding public profession of faith as a rite of passage marking the transition between adolescence and the adult responsibilities of faith in the church community. Baptized children belong at the table; public profession of faith usually ought to take place at the age of normal social transitions into adulthood.

8) Church membership

When does a person become a member of the church? Reformed Christians believe that the church consists of believers and their children. These children are no less members of the church than their parents or other adults are. Our traditional categorizing of members into baptized and communicant is not very helpful except to tell us

who partake of communion. According to popular perception, one does not become a full member of the church until one makes public profession of faith and thereby is admitted to the table. If only the professing members are "full" members, are the rest "partial" members? Theologically we would say that one is a member or one is not a member and that the members of the church are believers and their children, in other words, all those who have been baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

If we continue the old division of baptized and communicant members, intending to say thereby that the communicant member has privileges and responsibilities that the baptized member does not have, we run into a real problem when twelve-year-olds become communicant members. They are certainly not ready to assume adult responsibilities. Hence, the pressure is created for a three-tiered membership: baptized, communicant, and corporate (or some such designation).

Since all three classifications of persons are members of the church and what we are trying to distinguish is mature, adult corporate members from immature, young nonvoting members, we would be better served to approach the issue from that perspective. If our question is how many members the church has, the answer is as many as have been baptized. If our question is how many have assumed adult responsibilities, we can list all of those who have passed through a rite of passage such as detailed above. As for who participate in the Lord's Supper, *the answer is all the members of the church.*

C. Creedal considerations

The creeds of the Reformed churches reflect our traditional understanding that an individual personal profession of faith is required for attendance at the Lord's table. That was the belief current at the time the Reformed confessions were written; hence, they reflect that faith. If we decide, in good Reformational fashion and thought, that upon further reflection, we now see things differently, or more clearly, either we can edit the confessions to reflect our current belief, or we can let them stand as historical documents and write our own confessions. We have precedent for both actions. We have amended Article 36 of the Belgic Confession because we thought its original language was unbiblical; we have moved a whole paragraph from that same article and placed it in a footnote; we have written "Our World Belongs to God," which reflects our conviction that the church can commit to print at any age the faith by which it lives.

V. Summary

The two reports of the Clarification Committee speak for their particular perspectives as persuasively as possible so that the churches may have the issues clearly before them. We think each to be convincing, biblically grounded, rooted in Reformed theology, and concerned for the well-being of the church.

Both positions affirm the continuity and discontinuity of the old and new covenants. One stresses the elements of continuity (Report B), the other, the elements of discontinuity (Report A).

Both positions affirm the vital necessity of faith in celebrating the Lord's Supper. One stresses personal, individual faith (Report A); the other emphasizes the role of communal or corporate faith (Report B).

Both positions affirm that profession of faith is important and that it needs to be done frequently and at various stages and events in a person's life; the difference is that one position insists that profession of faith needs to be done personally and individually before one can sit at the table, whereas the other says that a communal expression, as in infant baptism, will suffice for small children (Report B). One stresses profession of faith as a single event connected to one's baptism and the Lord's Supper; the other views profession of faith as a way of life, oft-repeated and connected to major rites of passage (Report B).

Both stress the importance of the Lord's Supper for the nurture of faith; one sees the nurturing of faith through participation in the communal meal (Report B), whereas the other sees that faith nurtured for a time by children's observing and listening without participating.

Both see the sacrament as efficacious, but one stresses that the grace of the sacrament is channeled through personal, individual faith, whereas the other emphasizes that the presence of Jesus at the table works for grace for those who come in faith (personal, individual, and corporate, communal) and for judgment for those who do not discern the body (Report B).

Both positions deny baptismal regeneration and this kind of "baptism" as a ground for participation in the Lord's Supper. Report A therefore stresses that both baptism *and* profession of faith are required for participation in the Lord's Supper; Report B focuses not on baptism as a requirement, but upon faith, either of the individual or, as is the case with small children, of the community.

Both have support in the ecclesiastical tradition. Report A refers to the tradition that came out of the Reformation affirming the Roman Catholic practice of requiring confirmation before communion and seeing profession of faith as that confirmation. The other points to the fact that children were participating in the Lord's Supper prior to the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 and to the changing pattern in some Presbyterian and Reformed churches today. As well, it points out that confirmation and baptism were done at the same time in the early church and came to be separated only for some practical reasons (Report B).

VI. Recommendations

- A. That Rev. Henry Lunshof be given the privilege of the floor when the reports are being discussed.
- B. That synod recognize that there are two clearly distinct perspectives on the grounds for participating in the Lord's Supper—individual faith and communal faith—and that both perspectives have support in the tradition, theology, and practice of the church of Jesus Christ.
- C. That synod allow room within our denomination for the differing practices which each perspective requires.

Grounds:

1. There is probably no argument that is persuasive enough to cause advocates on either side to change their perspective.
2. This avoids the necessity of having to say that one perspective is right and the other wrong.

3. If a decision is made for one of the perspectives, a certain segment of the church will be alienated.
- D. That the children of covenant families would follow the policy regarding participation in the Lord's Supper that is in effect in the local congregation.
- E. That our categories of membership be two: "baptized" members to describe our total church membership count and "corporate" members to describe those who are baptized, have reached the age of majority, have publicly professed their faith in Christ, and have committed themselves to the confessions, practices, and ministries of the church. Each local congregation would be free to decide how it wants to track the children who do or do not participate in the Lord's Supper.
- F. That when a church council transfers memberships, it would note for the receiving church whether the children involved have been participating in communion or not so that any pastoral problems arising from that issue can be addressed. Some modifications may need to be made in the forms for transfer of membership.
- G. That the following changes be made in the Church Order if the above recommendations are adopted by synod (the proposed changes are underlined; the brackets indicate present wording):
 1. Article 3-a
[Confessing] Corporate male members of the church who meet the biblical requirements are eligible for the offices of minister, elder, and evangelist.
 2. Article 3-b
All [confessing] corporate members of the church who meet the biblical requirements are eligible for the office of deacon.
 3. Article 59-a
Members by baptism shall be [admitted to the Lord's Supper] received into corporate membership in the Christian Reformed Church upon a public profession of Christ according to the Reformed creeds, with the use of the prescribed form. Before the profession of faith the consistory shall examine them concerning their motives, doctrine, and conduct. The names of those [who are to be admitted to the Lord's Supper] involved shall be announced to the congregation for approval at least one Sunday before the public profession of faith.
 4. Article 59-b
[Confessing] Corporate members coming from other Christian Reformed congregations shall be [admitted to communicant] received into corporate membership upon the presentation of certificates of membership attesting their soundness in doctrine and life.
 5. Article 59-c
[Confessing] Corporate members coming from churches in ecclesiastical fellowship shall be [admitted to communicant] received into corporate membership upon presentation of certificates or statements of membership after the consistory has satisfied itself concerning the doctrine and conduct of

the members. Persons coming from other denominations shall be admitted to [communicant] corporate membership only after the consistory has examined them concerning doctrine and conduct. The consistory shall determine in each case whether to admit them directly or by public reaffirmation or profession of faith. Their names shall be announced to the congregation for approval.

6. Article 66-a

[Confessing] Corporate members who remove to another Christian Reformed church are entitled to a certificate, issued by the council, concerning their doctrine and life. When such certificates of membership are requested, they shall ordinarily be mailed to the church of their new residence.

7. Article 81-c

[Confessing] Corporate members who have been excluded from membership in the church shall be received again into its fellowship upon repentance of their sin.

H. That the work of this committee be declared completed and the committee be discharged.

Committee to Study Clarification of Public
Profession of Faith for Covenant Children

Wayne A. Brouwer

Eldean Kamp

Henry Lunshof, reporter

Bert Polman

I. Mandate

Synod 1994 appointed a study committee

to clarify the expression "expounding the Word" as used in the decision of Synod 1992 (*Acts of Synod 1992*, Art. 105, B, 5) and report to Synod 1995.

Ground:

The term "expounding" needs to be clarified in relationship to "preaching" and "exhorting" and the Church Order articles relating to each.

(*Acts of Synod 1994*, p. 526)

II. Background

Synod 1992 faced the question of ratifying a change in Article 3 of the Church Order that was proposed by Synod 1990. Synod 1992 failed to ratify the proposed change. It did, however, pass a recommendation to "encourage the churches to use the gifts of women members to the fullest extent possible in their local churches, including allowing women to teach, expound the Word of God, and provide pastoral care, under the supervision of the elders" (*Acts of Synod 1992*, p. 700).

Synod 1993 decided to "reconsider the decision of 1992 concerning women in ecclesiastical office since there are 'sufficient and new grounds' for reconsideration and therefore, according to Church Order Article 31, 'a request for revision shall be honored'" (*Acts of Synod 1993*, p. 591). Though Synod 1993 referred to "the decision [italics ours] of Synod 1992" (albeit Synod 1992 made more than one decision on the women-in-office issue), it had the decision regarding the use of women's gifts in mind when it decided to reconsider "the decision of 1992," as is apparent from the reference made to that decision in its grounds (*Acts of Synod 1993*, p. 595, Ground c). Thereupon Synod 1993 decided to propose once again the deletion of the word *male* from Church Order Article 3.

Synod 1994 decided not to ratify the proposed change. However, it also approved the advisory committee's recommendation that synod rule Synod 1992's decision regarding the use of women's gifts to be still in effect. At the same time Synod 1994 also recognized the need for clarification of the expression "expounding the Word."

III. Observations and analysis

A. What did Synod 1992 mean by "expounding the Word"?

The present committee is aware of the hazards of trying to reconstruct the rationale for synodical decisions. But in order to carry out its mandate, we thought it important to try to understand what motivated Synod 1992 with respect to its decision on the use of women's gifts. We think it is accurate to say that synod's decision was prompted largely by a desire to keep the churches of the denomination together. That this desire weighed heavily on the members of the advisory committee is reflected especially in the majority report (*Acts of Synod 1992*, pp. 689-91). Though it did not ratify the proposed change in the Church Order, Synod 1992 wished to send a message to the churches that they use all gifts of all their members.

In this context of a desire for unity and for the full use of women's gifts, the expression "expounding the Word" was used, along with "teaching and pastoral

care." Some believe that these specific references are significant: in encouraging the full use of women's gifts, synod referred to functions traditionally associated with the offices of minister and elder. Others believe that Synod 1992 was saying that these areas of service need not be identified exclusively with the offices of minister and elder. In any case, the problem of the expression "expounding the Word" was called to the attention of Synod 1992 by way of a minority report of the advisory committee (*Acts of Synod 1992*, p. 695). Perhaps due to the prevailing desire for unity, this synod was unwilling to specify what a female member ought to be allowed to do by way of "expounding the Word." It seems that deliberate vagueness about the expression was allowed to stand. In the minds of some, the churches ought to be given the freedom to experiment with the use of women's gifts without women being given the offices of minister and elder, until the church eventually comes to a clearer understanding and a consensus on this issue.

To accommodate the wider use of women's gifts in church ministry, Synod 1992 presumably wished to avoid making any changes in the Church Order. The term "expounding" was used in distinction from "exhorting" or "preaching"—terms that have technical meanings in our ecclesiastical usage and carry with them Church Order stipulations. It was not noted by Synod 1992 that the expression "expound the Word" is already found in Church Order Article 20 in regard to the duties of professors of theology who train seminary students for the ministry of the Word. It may be safely assumed that Synod 1992 did not intend what Article 20 intends with this expression.

The 1992 decision could be interpreted in a way which would permit a consistory to invite gifted women to bring the Word of God in the setting of public worship by means of sermons they themselves have made. In such instances, it could be argued, licensure for these women need not be sought from a broader ecclesiastical assembly or an agency thereof because Synod 1992 used the term "expounding," not "exhorting," which would have required licensure, according to the Church Order. Synod 1992's decision that women may "expound the Word of God . . . under the supervision of the elders" could be interpreted to mean that women may have pulpit rights as long as they are supervised by the local eldership.

But exactly what Synod 1992 meant by the expression "expounding the Word" would not be appropriate for our committee to say, since this was not specified in writing by that synod. However, the last two synods seem to indicate the unwillingness of the church to live with the vagueness of the expression. Consequently, Synod 1994 appointed a committee to clarify it.

B. What did Synod 1994 ask for?

The ground for synod's decision to appoint a committee states that "the term 'expounding' needs to be clarified in relationship to 'preaching' and 'exhorting' and the Church Order articles relating to each" (*Acts of Synod 1994*, p. 526). We as a committee understand our mandate, therefore, to be an examination of the meaning of "expounding the Word" (as it relates to the use of women's gifts) within the parameters of the Church Order.

C. What does the Church Order say?

The Church Order is our agreed-upon covenant to regulate the life and ministry of our churches. It gives rather extensive and specific delineation to the duties of officebearers. At the same time, it recognizes the general offices of all

believers as it encourages all believers to assist in the work of Christian service. For example, Articles 63, 64, and 72 call for the church to nurture the faith of her youth and adult members. Though this work is supervised by the consistory, members gifted for this task serve the church in this capacity. Also, in Articles 73 and 74, the churches are challenged in their mission responsibilities, and councils are instructed to enlist the involvement of all church members to bring the gospel by word and deed to people near and far. The Church Order definitely recognizes without gender specificity the significant role that all members have in the ministry of the church.

What about the area of church worship? The Church Order assumes a rather protective posture in this area of church life. It is quite explicit about those who are authorized to conduct an official worship service and those who are authorized to bring the Word of God. We cite the following articles:

- Article 6 requires a theological training for those admitted to the ministry of the Word. (Article 7 allows for an exception to that rule when certain conditions prevail.)
- Article 22 speaks of students being permitted to "exhort" in the public worship services. Such exhorting is permitted only after the student has fulfilled the requirements for licensure. Synod has carefully outlined in the Supplement to the Church Order what these requirements are.
- Article 43 deals with regulations a classis is to follow in granting licensure to exhort within its bounds. It says, "The classis may grant the right to exhort within its bounds to men who are gifted, well informed, consecrated, and able to edify the churches. When the urgent need for their services has been established, the classis shall examine such men and license them as exhorters for a limited period of time."
- Article 53 says that "the ministers of the Word shall conduct the worship services." It also says that "persons licensed to exhort and anyone appointed by the consistory to read a sermon may conduct worship services. They shall, however, refrain from all official acts of the ministry. Only sermons approved by the consistory shall be read in the worship."

It is clear from these articles that the church through its Church Order intends to carefully guard the pulpit to assure the purity of the Word proclaimed. Those who exhort or preach are to have proper training and must fulfill certain prescriptions the church has adopted for those who are to conduct official worship and bring the Word of God. Furthermore, the Church Order stipulates that the three ecclesiastical assemblies have a role in governing the pulpits of our churches. Though some room is given in Article 53 to the local consistory to appoint someone to read a sermon and conduct a service, only classis and synod (through the Board of Trustees of Calvin Theological Seminary) may grant licensure to exhort. And the Church Order requires that both classis and synod must authorize the ordination of someone to preach. It is the clear intent of the Church Order that if someone is to bring the Word of God to a congregation on a regular basis with personally made sermons, the consistory of that congregation must have authorization from the broader assemblies for that person to do so.

Though the Church Order uses two terms to describe the bringing of the Word of God, namely, "exhorting" and "preaching," it does not define what these terms mean. The way most people in our church understand these terms

is in line with the way the late Martin Monsma spoke of them in his Church Order commentary:

... exhorters instruct their fellow believers and others in the Word of God and its Gospel of salvation, and they encourage and exhort all to fully embrace the Gospel of God and to walk in conformity to its demands. They speak as brother among brethren. They are unordained witnesses and instructors who by way of exception have received the right to lead in the worship services as exhorters, as lay-leaders. Or again, to preach really signifies to proclaim upon the authority of and as legal appointee by one in authority. He who preaches ... comes upon special authority of God and His Christ to speak as a representative of God.

(The New Revised Church Order Commentary, p. 90)

We regard this differentiation of meaning between “exhorting” and “preaching” to be common among us in our interpretation of our Church Order.

Furthermore, we understand our Church Order to say that those who bring the Word of God, either by exhorting or preaching, must be male. Article 3-a explicitly states that only males are eligible for the office of minister. The language of Article 43 is also gender specific in speaking of classis granting to “men” the right to exhort.

Having made these observations, we have yet to explore to what extent the Church Order allows for the “expounding of the Word” by females. “To expound” by definition means to explain or interpret and to clarify. Women as well as men are encouraged to minister in this way in a variety of contexts. However, according to the Church Order, only those who are authorized by the church through the appropriate assemblies may bring the Word of God in an official worship service. The Church Order stipulates that those so authorized be male. Therefore, it is our judgment that the expression “expounding the Word of God” as it refers to the use of women’s gifts be restricted to ministry contexts other than official worship services.

If synod wishes in the case of women to extend the meaning of “expound the Word” to include exhorting in the churches, a change in the Church Order is required. (The word *persons* will have to be substituted for the word *men* in Article 43.) Presently the Church Order does not recognize a third category of Word proclamation in worship services by those who prepare their own sermons. It should also be noted that, if a change in the Church Order is made to allow for the licensure of women to exhort, this change will apply only to licensure granted by a classis and not to licensure granted by the Board of Trustees of Calvin Theological Seminary. Licensure by the board is granted as a step toward eventual ordination, which the Church Order does not permit for women. Therefore, it would not be appropriate for the board to grant licensure to female seminary students under Article 22 and its supplement.

IV. Recommendations

In light of the above analysis, we recommend

- A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to the chairman and secretary of the committee when this report is considered.
- B. That synod declare the expression “expounding the Word” as used in the decision of Synod 1992 to mean that women ought to be encouraged to use their gifts of interpreting, teaching, and applying the Word of God in a variety of ministry contexts but not for exhorting and preaching in official worship services.

Grounds:

1. The Church Order calls for the church to enlist the service of all members in the work of the Lord.
2. The Church Order requires that those who bring the Word of God in a worship service be authorized by the church through classis and synod.
3. According to the Church Order, exhorters and preachers of the Word must be male.

C. That synod declare that a change in Church Order Article 43 would be required to authorize women to bring the Word of God in official worship services.

Ground: Granting women permission to bring the Word of God in official worship services is not in accord with the Church Order because Article 43 specifically refers to "men" as those who are given the right to exhort.

D. That synod note that the committee has fulfilled its mandate.

Committee to Study Clarifying the
Expression "Expounding the Word"
Peter W. Brouwer, chairman
Henry De Moor, Jr.
Leonard J. Hofman
Allen Petroelje, secretary

Note: Although we are in full agreement with the above report and its recommendations, the undersigned nonetheless believe that it is necessary to append this note.

We considered that if Synod 1995 adopts only the recommendations as proposed, the net effect upon the life of our congregations will be the removal of all authorization—real or perceived—for the practice of women bringing the Word of God in official worship services. Because some of our churches believe in good faith that such authorization was granted by Synod 1992 and upheld by Synod 1994, we were of the opinion that we should request Synod 1995 to take decisive action as to whether or not to formally provide for such authorization.

We believed that our committee would not have exceeded its mandate by doing so. In our opinion, clarifying the expression "expounding the Word" is not an abstract exercise; it is necessarily done in the context of the life and practice of our congregations. A clear signal at this time would have served the churches well. However, in the awareness that churches and classes are at liberty to overture synod with respect to this matter and in the interest of coming to synod with a unanimous report, we have decided not to press our case.

The other members of our committee disagreed with the idea of our committee's requesting further action of synod because the committee's mandate to clarify "expounding" by women is fulfilled by the committee's report and recommendations. They judged that such a request by the committee would be beyond the mandate and, therefore, not in good order.

Henry De Moor, Jr.
Leonard J. Hofman

I. The mandate

The Committee to Study Structure for Ministry in Canada has its origin in Synod 1990. That year synod considered seven overtures from Canadian classes, each asking for the implementation of a regional-synod structure in the Christian Reformed Church. One purpose of these overtures was to enhance Christian Reformed ministry in Canada and ministries done by the Canadian churches. Synod did not accede to the overtures but chose instead to appoint a committee to "review and study the issues related to regional synods" and to report in 1993. The result was a report (see *Agenda for Synod 1993*, pp. 247-74) giving an overview of regional synods in Reformed and Presbyterian history, the course of discussion in the Christian Reformed Church, and a survey of possible options. In the light of recommendations made by the study committee, Synod 1993 declared that "the introduction of regional synods is not advisable at the present time." In addition, however, it approved a change in Church Order Article 44-b to strengthen the present ministry structure in Canada. Ratified by Synod 1994, the article now reads as follows:

Classes engaging in matters of mutual concern may organize themselves into an ecclesiastical assembly that will function on the level of classis, with freedom to determine the delegation from the constituent classes and the frequency of meetings. Such an assembly's authority, jurisdiction, and mandate shall be approved by synod. It shall have direct access to synod in all matters pertaining to its mandate.

(*Acts of Synod 1994*, p. 434)

At present all Christian Reformed classes in Canada are members of the Council of the Christian Reformed Churches in Canada (hereinafter CCRCC). The CCRCC meets every other November, each classis sending one minister, elder, and deacon. One purpose of synod's decision was to give the CCRCC access to synod in such a way that it could be integrated more fully into the ministry structure of the denomination.

Synod 1993 also acknowledged "the importance of the argumentation . . . toward an ecclesiastical assembly in Canada that could deal authoritatively and effectively with ministry in Canada." It recognized the "perception that the CCRCC, as presently structured, does not have adequate status to function with maximum effectiveness in the Canadian context." It heard expressions of the "need for an ecclesiastical structure that will facilitate effective ministry within the unique challenge of the Canadian setting." Consequently, Synod 1993 adopted the following recommendation:

That synod appoint a committee from the Canadian classes to develop a proposal for a more effective structure for ministry in Canada in light of the anticipated ratification of Article 44-b in the Church Order. This committee shall report to Synod 1995.

(*Acts of Synod 1993*, p. 576)

The committee has reflected at length on the scope of this mandate. It involves not only CCRCC work but also all other denominational ministry done within Canada. It includes as well denominational ministries outside Canada to the extent that they are supported, through prayer and giving, by churches in Canada. We can develop a "more effective structure for ministry in Canada" only by reading our mandate in these broad terms.

II. Issues requiring resolution

Of 978 congregations in the Christian Reformed Church, 241 are Canadian. Eleven and a half classes, out of a total of forty-six, are in Canada. The 1994 *Yearbook* counts 75,439 families in the denomination, 20,037 living north of the border. Canadians represent 28 percent of the total membership of the Christian Reformed Church.

There is much to celebrate in the Canadian part of the denomination. We give thanks for congregations actively reaching into their communities, for classical campus chaplaincies and harbor ministries, for church-planting projects across the country, for the diligent work of denominational agencies and CCRCC committees. In the Canadian setting, the Christian Reformed Church has been more prominent than might be expected from its small membership numbers. We praise God for his blessing.

However, a number of issues and difficulties create the need for a "more effective structure for ministry in Canada." We begin by outlining the most persistent.

A. *Missed opportunities for effective ministry in Canada*

That the denomination is missing opportunities for ministry in Canada becomes evident in a variety of ways. Canadian members of the Christian Reformed Church often perceive an American slant to Christian Reformed publications and broadcasts. Some of these are small issues, and they need not trouble us (Americanized spelling in *The Banner*, for instance). Other issues, however, are more significant.

Mission opportunities are perceived differently in our two nations. For example, the Cuban mission field was long neglected because of American foreign policy. Canadians acting independently could have done what the American churches could not do. More ethnic ministries (to immigrants from China or Hong Kong, for example) could be developed in Canada. Broadcast ministry on the VISION network could be expanded. Canadians often recommend opportunities for new ministries but feel thwarted in developing such ministries because of limited Canadian representation on boards and staffs.

Our ecclesiastical cultures are distinct. For instance, the megachurch model, used successfully in the United States, has prospered less in Canada. Church developers need to be aware of such differences.

Interchurch activity in the two countries has developed differently as well. Synod itself has formal ecclesiastical fellowship with no Canadian denomination—as it does with a number of American churches. No Canadian denomination is invited to greet synod. In Canada ecumenical activity is the province of the Interchurch Relations Committee (IRC) of the CCRCC. That committee has exercised considerable freedom and, we might add, a spirit of adventure not always evident south of the border. Canada's IRC, for instance, has entered into dialogue with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada. These conversations have given rise to a significant question: How much independent authority does Canada's IRC have? May it establish something like pulpit fellowship with the Lutherans? Or must it take such an innovation to the general synod for approval?

B. *Ownership of denominational ministries by local congregations*

Another concern in Canada (and in the entire denomination) is the diminishing sense of ownership for ministries beyond the local congregation.

Congregations have been developing visions for ministry to their local communities. While that can surely be seen as a positive development, one negative result is the diversion of interests and energies away from denominational work. Churches that attempt to develop vibrant local ministries and maintain strong support for Christian Reformed agencies (as well as the local schools and regional colleges) find themselves overburdened. The presence of many other parachurch organizations calling for support further complicates the problem.

Currently the Christian Reformed Church and her agencies are taking constructive steps to bridge the distance between local congregations and denominational ministries. Listening conferences have given church members an opportunity to involve themselves in denominational planning. Agencies have appointed regional, classical, and/or local representatives to bring their ministries closer to the people. Likewise, the CCRCC has given attention at its last two meetings to the matter of communication with the churches. The problem, however, needs further attention. Our committee believes that it must be taken into account in determining a "more effective structure for ministry in Canada."

C. Limited CCRCC mandate and profile

The Christian Reformed Church has adapted to her binational character by creating the CCRCC. As a result of a limited mandate, however, the CCRCC has several limitations. Its staff and volunteers have been devout and diligent in their work, yet the CCRCC remains relatively unknown to many Christian Reformed Canadians and almost completely unknown in the United States. For its enthusiastic supporters, the CCRCC has an inadequate mandate, inadequate staff, and too minor a role in Christian Reformed ministries. Its low profile is an obvious consequence. The CCRCC can assume greater responsibility for ministry in Canada only after its profile is raised. But its profile cannot be raised until its mandate is expanded. The last two CCRCC gatherings have considered the possibility of employing a communications specialist to raise the CCRCC profile in Canada. Both times the assembly backed away from the suggestion. The problem seems to feed on itself.

The CCRCC is more than just an interclassical project. In Canada it performs (at additional expense) roles that synod performs for the Christian Reformed Church in the United States. The CCRCC conducts interchurch relations in Canada (including, for instance, membership in the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada), whereas synod conducts interchurch relations in the United States (including, for instance, membership in the National Association of Evangelicals). This example shows that the denomination has never fully adapted to its binational character.

D. Insufficient integration of the CCRCC and denominational ministries

Christian Reformed Canadians can celebrate the many ministries done on their behalf. The denomination is active in a host of ways. The CCRCC is active in still more ways. However, Canadians cannot always see how these various projects are integrated with one another.

To some extent fragmentation and lack of integration were inevitable. The CCRCC was constituted to do what synod and its agencies were not doing. Its mandate is a short list of activities which synod, because of its international character, is not able to perform. In other words, division of labor is part of the original design. The effect, however, is not always a happy one. Church mem-

bers find themselves confused by the sheer number of agencies and activities supported by their own churches. The Sunday bulletin becomes a clutter of announcements and special inserts, some from synodical agencies, others from CCRCC entities, and still others from parachurch organizations.

A corollary to this plethora of agencies is duplication of funding and administration. Although the mandate of the CCRCC is to do the work synod and its agencies cannot do, some CCRCC work has close parallels and overlap at the synodical level. A few brief examples:

1. Canadians support all Back to God Hour broadcasts; in addition, they pay 50 percent of CRC air time on the Canadian VISION national television network.
2. The CCRCC Committee for Ministry with Indians and Metis in Canada is a \$620,000 (Can.) ministry in Edmonton, Regina, and Winnipeg. Its directors are pastors employed by the CCRCC. To many it would seem to be another CRC Home Missions ministry since, after all, Home Missions has been involved in Indian ministry in New Mexico for a hundred years.
3. SCORR, a denominational ministry established in 1968, has not been visibly active in Canada. Only in 1993 did it join forces with the CCRCC to create a Canadian group to deal with race relations in Canada.

In Canada, church budgets typically show three levels of ministry shares beyond the local congregation. Members are asked to provide support for denominational ministries, for classical ministries, and for the work of the CCRCC. To be sure, the ministry visions of the different organizations are distinct, but it can justifiably be asserted that Christian Reformed Canadians are supporting overlapping broadcast and evangelistic ministries.

At present there is no body to coordinate all ministries done in Canada and by Canadian Christian Reformed churches. The CCRCC could conceivably play that role, but, because some of its ministries seem to "compete" with denominational ministries, that does not seem advisable. There should be a body that coordinates all Christian Reformed work done in Canada.

E. Integration of agency functions in Canada and the United States

The Christian Reformed Church has an inadequate administrative presence in Canada. The reason for this is primarily historical. When immigration into Canada reached its peak in the 1950s, all CRC ministries operated out of the United States. It could not have been otherwise. The Back to God Hour worked out of the Chicago area; the other agencies operated out of Grand Rapids. The pattern of having a central office in the United States, then, was firmly in place as the denomination developed in Canada. Thus far the Canadian role in denominational administration has been limited to branch offices in Burlington and an occasional agency executive in the Canadian office. A strong ministry in Canada requires a more substantial denominational administrative presence in Canada.

E. The distinct Canadian legal and corporate setting

Canadian law requires that funds gathered by charities in Canada be administered by agencies in Canada. According to the well-known terminology, Canadian governing bodies must maintain "direction, supervision, and control" over any funds gathered in Canada. This means that the governing body must have a majority of Canadian residents.

Compliance with Canadian tax law has at times been difficult for Christian Reformed agencies. They function out of offices in Grand Rapids and Palos Heights yet must comply with codes written in Ottawa. Synod 1990 called for uniform compliance to tax law, but agencies have pursued different approaches to the problem. Christian Reformed World Relief and World Missions have complied most fully. Others have created boards for purely formal purposes. These boards are technically answerable to a Canadian Board of Trustees, but that board is not yet autonomous in a meaningful way. Staff in the Canadian office are answerable to the executive director of ministries, located in the United States. At present, then, our structures may perhaps satisfy the letter of Canadian law, but they do not satisfy its spirit and intent. We need more satisfactory solutions. Funds gathered in Canada must be under the "direction, supervision, and control" of Canadian church members, which means that boards operating in Canada must provide meaningful governance.

A number of other issues bear some resemblance to this one. While our denomination spans the border as one ecclesiastical body, in corporate terms it is clearly two bodies. It has a corporate presence in the state of Michigan and the province of Ontario. Laws governing charitable donations, personnel policies, and the like are different in the two nations.

Both Canada and the U.S. have a monetary system based upon the dollar. They are, of course, two different systems, which fluctuate daily on the international market. Currently all denominational agencies and services state their budgets, salaries, ministry shares, and other financial information in differing dollars. This can be confusing for Canadians involved in setting such figures. Moreover, significant changes in the exchange rate, which occur often, can lead to a great difference in agency receipts from Canadian churches and individuals.

G. Distinct emphasis on diaconal ministries

An important feature of the Christian Reformed churches in Canada has been their emphasis on the integration of Word and deed ministries. This had led, wherever possible, to diaconal involvement in both governance and ministry delivery mechanisms. One example of this is the delegation of representatives to CCRCC meetings. Council delegation is comprised of a deacon, an elder, and a minister of the Word from each classis. These have equal standing in the assembly. Another example is the vitality of diaconal conferences and agencies such as Eastern Canada Diaconal Ministries, a body which provides a host of educational and ministry services to diaconates in the Ontario and eastern Canada classes. Although these diaconal agencies routinely report to their regional classes, they consistently urge that their work be better integrated into the work carried out under the governance structures of these major assemblies. Whatever change we contemplate for the Christian Reformed churches in Canada will need to preserve this distinct feature of Canadian ecclesial life.

III. A ministry structure for Canada

Our extensive survey of CRC ministries in Canada at the local, classical, CCRCC, and agency levels has convinced us that the concerns we have outlined are significant and systemic. Doing nothing or merely fine tuning our present structures will not be adequate. Voices calling for a full division of the denomination along national boundaries are increasing. Some believe that the CRC will not be able to stem the tide which has brought almost all other binational denominations to such a division.

It is the view of this committee that such an outcome is neither necessary nor desirable at this time. The churches of the CRC have benefited immeasurably from our unity. Our unity in Christ can and should remain more fundamental than our nationality. Going our separate ways would constitute a great loss for our members on both sides of the border and weaken our contribution to the Lord's work in the world.

As we approach the new millenium, however, we must give serious attention to the challenges of being one denomination in two countries. We join our Lord in his prayer for unity. In addition, we must demonstrate mutual trust, kinship, tolerance, and a willingness to invest in each other. In such a context we can meet the challenge of doing ministry in a binational setting.

This committee suggests three major structural changes to allow for more effective ministry:

- Integrating existing CCRCC ministries into denominational structures.
- Strengthening our denominational vision for an implementation of ministry in Canada.
- Integrating deacons and diaconal ministries into the governance of the denomination.

The changes the committee suggests are comprehensive and far reaching. But we are convinced that they are realistic, workable, and effective. Like three legs of a stool, they stand together—each requires the others. While the specific subsidiary recommendations under each of these three parts are negotiable and flexible, the major headings represent a “package deal” and are essentially interdependent. Because they stand or fall together, all three need to be adopted. Only a sufficiently comprehensive plan will allow us to come to grips with the fundamental issues involved.

A. Integrating existing CCRCC ministries into denominational structures

For many years the CCRCC has done Christian Reformed ministry in its unique Canadian setting. It has served us well, helping us to carry out a vision of being one denomination in two countries. We commend the tireless work of staff, missionaries, functionaries, delegates, committee members, and volunteers. God has blessed their efforts in many ways.

However, it has become increasingly clear that the CCRCC, even with enhanced status or widened jurisdiction, will not yield the most effective ministry possible in the Canadian context. It cannot be fully effective because of the handicaps it has suffered since its inception: the CCRCC does not and cannot fit within the primary governance structure of the CRC.

The Christian Reformed Church Order recognizes an ecclesiastical structure of council, classis, and synod. Authority and accountability flow from local to broader assemblies along this line. The insertion of another assembly which is limited by geography introduces an anomaly into the structure. It creates “double taxation” for Canadian churches, and, more important, it leaves the impression that doing ministry in Canada is a task and responsibility for only the Canadian segment of the denomination. The CCRCC claims a large ministry share in every classis in Canada. It carries out significant work which ought to be governed through the major structures of the church, not by an ill-fitting entity somewhere in the shadows.

Canadian churches have recognized this difficulty. On more than one occasion they have overtured synod to adopt a regional-synod model. Because

there is little interest in such a structure in the United States, Synod 1993 again declined, seeking to overcome the problem by elevating the status of the CCRCC to that of an ecclesiastical assembly functioning "on the level of classis," with direct access to synod.

The reason this solution falls short of the mark, however, is that it continues the fragmented and unintegrated work of the denomination in Canada. The central problem lies not on the legislative level but on the administrative level. The real challenge is that we, Canadians and Americans together, take ministry in Canada (as well as in the United States) seriously enough to do it together. A poorly defined ecclesiastical structure of Canadians outside the main governance structure will not allow that to be achieved. We must work together to create administrative and agency structures to carry out distinct ministries in both nations.

For this reason, our **first major recommendation** is that synod propose to the next meeting of the CCRCC a plan to integrate the CCRCC's present ministries into appropriate synodically governed denominational structures and allow the CCRCC to return its present mandate to synod and to disband.

We make the following **subsidiary recommendations**:

1. That the work of the CCRCC's Committee for Ministry with Indians and Metis in Canada be made the responsibility of Christian Reformed Home Missions, Canada.
2. That the work of the Electronic Ministries Committee of the CCRCC be made the responsibility of The Back to God Hour, Canada.
3. That the work of the CCRCC's Committee for Contact with the [Canadian] Government (CCG) and the Consultative Committee on Task Forces (CCTF) be made the responsibility of a committee under the governance of the Board of Trustees, Canada.
4. That the Interchurch Relations Committee of the CCRCC amalgamate with its denominational counterpart, which will function with Canadian and U.S. subcommittees.
5. That all ministry shares assessed by the CCRCC be dropped and the above ministries be funded by denominational ministry shares adjusted appropriately for the change.

B. Strengthening our denominational vision for an implementation of ministry in Canada

Any business or agency that works cross-culturally will eventually differentiate its enterprise to respond effectively to different conditions in different settings. The CRC has been no exception. The work of setting up ministry units in Canada separate from those in the United States has already begun to some extent in most CRC agencies.

The Christian Reformed Church is of course eager to minister effectively in both Canada and the United States. We are convinced that this requires sensitivity and freedom to respond to the uniqueness of each nation. We are also convinced that this sensitivity and freedom must be built into the administrative machinery of the denomination. It is on the administrative level that our vision for ministry is largely shaped, shared, and implemented, and here the flexibility to work within two different ministry contexts must be fully given.

Recently the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee has implemented a restructuring process in which both Canada and the United States form national committees to provide oversight of work done by the agency within their respective nations. These national committees combine to form a binational committee, which provides a denominational thrust and common theme for communications as well as a strategic ministry plan for the whole of the work in each agency. The plan allows for cooperative and coordinated initiatives by way of joint-venture and partnership arrangements. Here ministries would be tailored to the distinct needs and aspirations of each nation yet united under one confessional and denominational umbrella.

Our challenge is to integrate the ministries of the CCRCC and at the same time to enhance our ability to respond to a Canadian environment. Therefore, our **second major recommendation** is that synod instruct its Board of Trustees, Christian Reformed World Missions, Christian Reformed World Relief Committee, Christian Reformed Home Missions, Back to God Hour, Pastoral Ministries, and denominational support services to establish separate Canadian and U.S. board and administrative structures to direct and operate their ministries in each country and, further, to set up joint agreements between these cross-national counterparts to engage in ministry projects that are best done in partnership.

We make the following **subsidiary recommendations**:

1. That synod increase the membership of the Canadian Board of Trustees to allow representation by one delegate from each Canadian classis.
2. That synod appoint a full-time executive director of ministries (EDM) for Canada who functions at the same administrative level as an EDM for the U.S. (Currently we have one EDM for the entire denomination.)
3. That regular joint meetings of U.S. and Canadian Ministry Coordinating Councils be held in addition to the separate meetings in each country.
4. That all U.S. and Canadian branches of the agencies and standing committees normally report jointly to synod but have direct access to synod if required.

C. Integrating deacons and diaconal ministries into the governance of the denomination

Integration of the diaconate into the governance structure of the church has been a feature of our ministry in Canada. We believe that the CRC as a whole is beginning to share that vision. The day is gone when we can afford to let deacons simply be elders in training. The needs of our increasingly hurting world demand that we fully develop our gospel ministries in both Word and deed.

The Church Order itself encourages greater integration of the diaconate into the major assemblies of the church. Article 75-b of the Church Order calls for each classis to have a classical diaconate committee, though many classes have not done so. If classes do have such a committee, it seems strange that only elders and ministers, but not deacons, would be directly involved in their governance.

That observation would also apply to Article 76-b of the Church Order, where synod is mandated to "encourage and assist congregations and classes in their ministries of mercy, and carry on such work as is beyond their scope and resources." Again, the present structure keeps leadership and control of that diaconal work in the hands (and hearts) of ministers and elders.

It seems inconsistent that deacons are given equal standing with other officebearers in the council of the local church, the governance structure to which our Church Order attributes original ecclesiastical authority, while they are excluded from delegation to major assemblies, which we deem to have only delegated ecclesiastical authority. As our major assemblies routinely address issues and take on challenges of a diaconal nature, it becomes increasingly important to better integrate the perspectives, gifts, and efforts of deacons into our major assemblies.

For these reasons, the committee feels compelled to address the issue of diaconal representation at major assemblies in this report. Our **third major recommendation**, therefore, is that synod better integrate the office and work of the deacons by providing diaconal representation at major assemblies and by including diaconal ministries, where desirable, in the classical and synodical structures.

We make the following **subsidiary recommendations** (changes in italics):

1. That synod revise Article 40-a of the Church Order to read, "The council of each church shall delegate a minister, an elder, and *a deacon* to the classis. If a church is without a minister, or the minister is prevented from attending, *an elder or deacon shall be delegated in his stead.*"
2. That synod revise Article 45 of the Church Order to read, "The synod is the assembly representing the churches of all the classes. Each classis shall delegate *one minister, one elder, and one deacon* to the synod."
3. That synod appoint a study committee mandated to work out a plan with diaconal conferences and organizations to integrate their work, where desirable, into classical and synodical structures. This committee will report to Synod 1997.

IV. Recommendations

- A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to those members of the committee who are present when these matters are under consideration.
- B. That synod instruct the Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church, with the concurrence of the Council of the Christian Reformed Churches in Canada, to implement the plan as described in the three major recommendations of Section III and their subsidiary recommendations.

Committee to Study Structure for Ministry in Canada

Leonard Batterink, reporter
Fred Bennink
Robert De Moor, chair
Ruth Krabbe
David J. Tigchelaar
William C. Tuininga
Ben Vander Lugt

Peter Borgdorff, adviser
Arie Van Eek, adviser

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OVERTURES, APPEALS, AND COMMUNICATIONS

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OVERTURES

Overture 1: Review Process by Which Advisory Committees Are Assigned

I. Background

It was once a well-established synodical principle that synodical advisory committees were made up of persons open to the deliberative process in the area of a particular advisory committee's assignment, especially on controversial matters. Because an advisory committee's role is to assist synod in coming, as nearly as possible, to sound and unifying decisions, publicly outspoken proponents and opponents on a controversial matter were automatically excluded from advisory committees because of the leverage gained by such committee membership. Delegates who were highly outspoken proponents or opponents might be interviewed by an advisory committee and would be heard when a matter came to the floor of synod, but they were not handed the leverage to defeat the deliberative process by polarizing advisory committees before an item even came to the floor of synod. That important principle is being lost.

II. History

Prior to 1970, advisory-committee assignments were all made at synod, as one of the first items of business. Every classical delegation had input into the selection process because the distribution of committee assignments was recognized as vitally important. Before 1970, synods repeatedly rejected overtures to have advisory-committee appointments made in advance. The reason repeatedly given for the rejection was that the power to control advisory-committee appointments was too strategic to be handed off to some agency outside the membership of synod itself. It was argued that such power could be misused to defeat the deliberative process or to exercise undue influence on decision making and should therefore be controlled by the synodical delegates themselves.

In 1970, synod received overtures proposing a procedure for nominating advisory committees in advance without surrendering synodical control. It was proposed that the officers of the previous synod meet in March, study delegate questionnaires, and propose to the following synod "tentative appointments" to advisory committees, which synod would then review and confirm or adjust when it met. Under the proposed system, most delegates could then prepare in advance for their advisory-committee assignments, and synod itself would retain control of appointments. Synod 1970 adopted that arrangement.

However, both synod's review of advisory-committee appointments and synod's protection of the deliberative character of advisory committees are no longer practiced. Delegates to synod no longer seem to know that it is their job to scrutinize the roster of advisory-committee appointments and make such

adjustments as may be necessary to maintain the deliberative role of advisory committees. Adjustments related to that concern are not being made, even when the need for them is conspicuous. *Acts of Synod 1994* records no hint that nominations are being treated as "tentative appointments" subject to careful scrutiny. There is not even any recorded decision indicating that Synod 1994 approved the list of appointments.

Furthermore, in recent years delegates known to be publicly outspoken proponents or opponents of controversial positions have been placed in powerful positions on advisory committees, sometimes in adversarial balance against one another, virtually assuring quick polarization and the death of the deliberative process. A healthy deliberative process could bring healthy consensus building; quickly polarized advisory committees tend to leave synod with only a choice between highly partisan and divisive positions. Then synod looks more like a shootout than a body of believers seeking the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

III. Overture

The council of Neland Avenue CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan, in the interest of guarding the deliberative character of advisory committees, overtures synod

A. To review the process by which delegates to synod are assigned to advisory committees, noting especially the importance of maintaining the deliberative character of advisory committees.

B. To adopt a clear guideline for the Program Committee that requires the committee to promote and protect the deliberative character of advisory committees by selecting, to the best of its ability, delegates open to the deliberative process on the items assigned.

C. To change the delegate questionnaire so that delegates with adamantly partisan views on an issue are not encouraged to expect assignment to an advisory committee on that issue.

D. To set in motion a process whereby each synod will specifically review how the deliberative character of each advisory committee will be affected by the proposed appointments and will make adjustments as seem appropriate.

Grounds:

1. The deliberative role of advisory committees is essential to the healthful functioning of synod.
2. Recent synods show the need for guidelines that will more adequately guard that deliberative role.

Council of Neland Avenue CRC,
Grand Rapids, MI
Ronald J. Sjoerdsma, clerk

Note: This overture was submitted to Classis Grand Rapids East but was not adopted.

Overture 2: Clarify Meaning of "Settled and Binding" in Church Order Article 29

Classis Wisconsin overtures synod to clarify the meaning of the phrase "settled and binding" in Church Order Article 29.

Grounds:

1. *Acts of Synod 1975*, Article 46, attempted to clarify the phrase "settled and binding" as follows:

That synod adopt the following statement as expressing the use and function of synodical pronouncements on doctrinal and ethical matters and their relation to the confessions:

- a. The Reformed Confessions are subordinate to the Scripture and accepted "as a true interpretation of this Word" (Church Order, Art. 1). These confessions are binding upon all the office-bearers as is indicated by their subscription to these confessions in the Form of Subscription. These confessions are binding upon all confessing members of the church as is indicated by their public profession of faith.
- b. Synodical pronouncements on doctrinal and ethical matters are subordinate to the confessions, and they "shall be considered settled and binding, unless it is proved that they conflict with the Word of God or the Church Order" (Church Order, Art. 29). All office-bearers and members are expected to abide by these synodical deliverances.
- c. The confessions and synodical pronouncements have nuances of differences. They differ in the extent of their jurisdiction, in the nature of their authority, in the distinction of purposes, in the measure of agreement expected, and in their use and function.
- d. The use and function of synodical decisions are explicitly or implicitly indicated by the wording of the particular decision itself:
 - 1) When a synodical pronouncement is set forth as an interpretation of the confession, this is its use and function.
 - 2) When a synodical decision involves pronouncements that are related to the confessions or go beyond the confessions, the use and function of such decisions is to further express the faith of the church without such statements thereby becoming additions to the confessions.
 - 3) When a synodical decision involves adjudication of a certain issue, this is its particular use and function although the decision may have doctrinal and ethical implications for the future.
 - 4) When a synodical decision is expressed in the form of a testimony or letter, this is its use and function.
 - 5) When a synodical decision is expressed as a guideline for further study or action, this is its use and function.
 - 6) When a synodical decision is set forth as pastoral advice to churches or individuals, this is its use and function.

(*Acts of Synod 1975*, p. 44)

In this decision we are not told what it means to "abide" by synodical deliverances or even what "binding" means. Does it mean that a person may not disagree with certain kinds of synodical pronouncements? Does it mean that one must go along with pronouncements though one privately disagrees with them? Does it mean that one must be silent until able to present new and compelling grounds that cause a change in the synodical pronouncement?

2. Classis Wisconsin, from a communication of the Calvin College Board of Trustees, discovered that the board tolerates/allows faculty members to hold positions that "may present some probing questions in the light of synodical decisions" (quoted from Calvin College Board of Trustees' letter

to Classis Wisconsin, 19 May 1994). It is not clear whether this tolerance is within the parameters of either Article 29 or the 1975 decision.

3. We cannot help noting that there are many who disagree—publicly—with various ethical and doctrinal pronouncements of synod (e.g., with the 1972 Study Committee on Abortion, which recommended more than synod was willing to go along with). Various magazines, organizations, churches, ministers, and members affiliated with the CRC do not hesitate to express themselves when they disagree with synod. What is their relationship to Article 29 of the Church Order? Neither Article 29 nor the 1975 decision speaks clearly to this question.
4. The 1975 decision (quoted above) speaks about officebearers and members. But what about non-CRC employees of the CRC and its agencies—are they bound by synodical pronouncements? Neither Article 29 nor the 1975 decision speaks to this question.
5. Lastly, in its letter to Classis Wisconsin, the Calvin College Board of Trustees refers to academic freedom. What role (if any) does academic freedom play with regard to Article 29 of the Church Order? This issue also is not addressed either in Article 29 or the 1975 decision.

Classis Wisconsin

Adrian Dieleman, stated clerk

Note: Supporting documents will be made available for the advisory committee of synod.

Overture 3: Identify “Official Acts of Ministry” Referred to in Church Order Article 53-b

Classis Alberta North overtures synod to identify specifically those acts referred to by Church Order Article 53-b in the phrase “official acts of ministry.”

Grounds:

1. More and more churches are developing staff ministries. Gifted persons with MCE (Master of Christian Education) or other degrees are doing much of the work traditionally done by the minister. Most of them also have been given licensure to exhort by their respective classes. Defining those areas that are specifically the responsibility of ordained persons would greatly assist churches with staff ministries.
2. The *Manual of Christian Reformed Church Government* (Brink and De Ridder) notes that this phrase is nowhere defined in the Church Order or in synodical regulations.

Classis Alberta North

Nicholas B. Knoppers, stated clerk

Overture 4: Appoint Study Committee to Address Church Order Issues

Classis Columbia overtures synod to appoint a study committee to address the following Church Order matters:

1. Some articles of the Church Order appear to be based upon principle and therefore are binding. Others appear to be less principal and more practical in nature and therefore are commonly consented to for purposes of facilitating ministry, etc. Are both kinds of articles equally weighty and authoritative?

Ground: It appears that in the churches there is not uniform compliance with all Church Order articles. Some Church Order matters not being equally complied with in all churches are frequency of Heidelberg Catechism preaching, observance of special days, and meeting twice on the Lord's Day.

2. Conscientious objection has generally been understood to be an individual response to a corporate decision, not a corporate response. Are there differences between how an individual conscience is bound and a corporate conscience is bound?

Ground: The whole question of binding a corporate conscience is presently at issue among us.

Classis Columbia
Howard Spaan, stated clerk

Overture 5: Revise Church Order Articles 36-a and 40-c to Standardize the Election of Officers for the Assemblies of the Church

I. Background

Church Order Article 36-a currently states in part that "a minister shall ordinarily preside at meetings of the council and the consistory, or in the absence of a minister, one of the elders shall preside. The diaconate shall elect a president from among its members."

Church Order Article 40-c currently states regarding classis that "the ministers shall preside in rotation, or a president may be elected from among the delegates; however, the same person shall not preside twice in succession."

Rules for Synodical Procedure (I, D, 3) states that "the officers of synod shall be chosen by the delegates from their own number, by ballot, in the following order: president, vice president, first clerk, and second clerk. Whoever receives a majority of the valid votes cast shall be elected."

II. Overture

I, James J. Achterhof, a member of LaGrave Avenue Christian Reformed Church, Grand Rapids, Michigan, overture synod to standardize the election of officers for church councils, consistories, and classis to be consistent with that for the election of officers for synod so that all officers are chosen by the delegates to these bodies from their own number, by ballot, without restriction. Such actions would require changes in Church Order Articles 36-a and 40-c, as demonstrated in the quotations in Background above.

Grounds:

1. Several church councils and consistories, such as those of LaGrave Avenue CRC, are already now electing all officers from their own number, by ballot.
2. This change would make the rules for the election of officers within churches and classes consistent with the rules for choosing the officers of synod.
3. This change would allow individual church councils, consistories, and classes to recognize the inherent differences in the employer and staff relationship and free them from the pressure of the Church Order to place a church staff person in the position of presiding over board-of-governance meetings.
4. This change allows for appropriate use of spiritual gifts: "There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different tongues" (I Cor. 12:4, 28).

Member of LaGrave Avenue CRC,
Grand Rapids, MI
James J. Achterhof

Note: This overture was submitted to the council of LaGrave Avenue CRC and to Classis Grand Rapids South but was not adopted.

Note: Supporting documents will be made available for the advisory committee of synod.

Overture 6: Change Church Order Articles 51-a and 54-b; Add New Question to Classical Credentials

I. Introduction

At the fall 1993 meeting of Classis Alberta North, it came to the attention of the assembly that one of the congregations was experiencing difficulties with the second service and that the council had imminent plans to cancel the evening service indefinitely. In response, classis commended the council for its forthrightness in bringing the situation to classis, recognized that more congregations are troubled by similar concerns and realities, and formed a study committee to

gather as much factual material as possible, to consider positive alternatives for achieving the purposes our fathers had in mind when they instituted the second service, and with this material in hand to formulate an overture to synod which can help the churches deal in an upbuilding manner with this very real problem.

The committee reported its findings, and the fruit of that study and the resulting overture to synod are before you.

II. Goals for the second service

The practice of two services on Sunday can be traced back to the early church, when it was common for Christians to gather early in the morning and

once more in the evening. This practice may itself have been based on the Old Testament Sabbath observance, when morning and evening sacrifices were offered by the priests on the seventh day (Exod. 29:39; Num. 28:4-10). These early Christian services bracketed a regular working day because workers and slaves could meet only after their regular working hours. This practice clearly indicates a willingness of the early church to be flexible in meeting the spiritual needs of all its members.

The second service in our tradition began with the National Synod in the Hague meeting in 1586. The requirement that churches gather for services twice on the Lord's Day seems to have met with a less than enthusiastic response, however; the Synod of Dordt thirty-two years later, while upholding the requirement, instructed pastors to preach twice on a Sunday even if only their own families showed up for the second service.

The Synod of Dordt had two goals for the church in requiring two services (see "Historical goals" below):

- A. Appropriate Sabbath observance: To ensure that the Day of the Lord would be spent in a God-glorifying manner, rather than in "idle entertainment."
- B. Education: To teach biblical and doctrinal truths to many believers who were either illiterate or very ignorant of basic Christian beliefs.

It adopted the Heidelberg Catechism as a guide to preaching in the second service since it laid out Reformed doctrine in a beautiful and coherent confessional format.

A survey of the churches of Classis Alberta North revealed that the following reasons were given for holding a second Sunday service today (see "Current goals" below):

- A. Education: "We love to hear the catechism."
- B. Fellowship: "It's wonderful to come together as God's people."
- C. Worship: "You can't worship enough."
- D. Tradition: "We've always done it this way."

III. Evaluation of our meeting of the goals for the second service

A. Historical goals

- 1. Appropriate Sabbath observance: With respect to the avoidance of "idle entertainment," it should be noted that the second service has had limited success in attracting people away from "idle entertainment." Also, holding a service for the purpose of preventing people from enjoying other activities casts the second service as a religious killjoy and demeans the service itself.
- 2. Education: The concern regarding biblical literacy and knowledge was historically an issue and remains a pressing matter today. Many pastors and church leaders today have voiced their alarm and dismay at the evident biblical and doctrinal ignorance of many church members. Clearly, there is a desperate need to teach the Christian community about the Bible, Reformed doctrines, and the history of the church. Just as clearly, the present structure of the second service is not meeting the urgent needs so manifest in the Christian community.

B. Current goals

1. Education: The concern of our forebears with regard to education should be our concern, and their vision, our vision. As explained in the paragraph above, this primary goal of a teaching service is not being adequately met for people of all ages and of all stages of spiritual development. In many of our churches, a certain segment of the congregation attends the second service, and many other segments do not.
2. Fellowship: This goal is partially met for the limited number who attend the second service and who take the time to talk together afterward. A deeper sharing and fellowship can be found, however, and for greater numbers of people, in small group settings.
3. Worship: While every gathering of God's people should have an element of worship, worship is not intended to be a primary goal of the second service. Historically, the second service was not meant to duplicate the morning service; today, however, such duplication is common in most churches. Thus the goal of worship is met, but the goal of education is slighted.
4. Tradition: While tradition is to be treasured, it must not restrain the church from engaging in ministry approaches that are more suitable for the present day. We do not honor our tradition by allowing it to hinder future growth and blessing of God's people and his kingdom. If we uphold tradition for tradition's sake, it becomes a dangerous and subtle form of idolatry. Thus, while we are upholding our tradition, we are also missing opportunities for greater blessings.

IV. Overture

The status quo has proven to be ineffective in meeting the primary purpose of the second service: helping God's people grow in their understanding of and obedience to Scripture and the Reformed confessions. Therefore, in order to help the churches correct the situation and to take reforming, corrective steps, we present the following overture to synod:

Classis Alberta North overtures synod

- A. To change Church Order Article 51-a to read (change indicated by italics),

Ordinarily, the congregation shall assemble for worship twice on the Lord's Day to hear God's Word, to receive the sacraments, to engage in praise and prayer, and to present gifts of gratitude.

Grounds:

1. Insertion of *ordinarily* allows congregations some flexibility in responding to local needs by, for example, replacing one of the worship services from time to time with Bible study and fellowship groups or other gatherings of an educational nature, as is already being done in a number of congregations.
2. God calls believers to be part of worshipping communities. However, Scripture nowhere indicates the frequency of worship on the Lord's Day.
3. The current wording causes problems for congregations who wish to use the time usually reserved for the second service for educational purposes in a format other than a traditional worship service. Since educational ministry is vitally important to living congregations (cf. Church Order

Art. 64), the church should encourage the most effective means possible to educate its members.

B. To change Church Order Article 54-b to read (italics indicate changes),

The minister shall regularly preach the Word as summarized in the Heidelberg Catechism, the Belgic Confession, the Canons of Dort, or the "Contemporary Testimony."

Grounds:

1. Present practice in the churches shows that few churches abide by the letter of the present reading, and if confessional preaching does take place, various approved confessional documents are used.
2. This change will allow for a greater diversity of timely issues and topics to be dealt with in the light of God's Word.
3. Use of the three forms of unity and the "Contemporary Testimony" enriches the educational ministry of the church.

C. To add to the questions on the Classical Credentials, as per Church Order Article 41, the following:

7. Does the council ensure that one or more worship services are held on the Lord's Day and that all members of the congregation are given the opportunity to grow in their understanding of God's Word, the ecumenical creeds and the Reformed confessions so that they may live as true disciples of Christ?

Grounds:

1. This addition will keep before the churches the twin imperatives to worship the Lord and to grow in understanding and obedience.
2. This is a tool for keeping the churches accountable to each other in our denominational covenant.

V. Postscript

At its October 1994 meeting, Classis Alberta North adopted the following recommendation, which is passed along for the information of synod:

[Classis Alberta North encourages] councils to explore various communication strategies in the second service or its alternative that will help people comprehend and grow in their understanding of biblical and confessional truths.

Grounds:

- A. The unique needs of people raised in a visual age can be taken into account.
- B. Our members can be assisted in growing in their understanding through presentation of the facts of Scripture and the confessions in an accessible format.
- C. Jesus and Paul both used formats that were appropriate for their audiences (Jesus in his parables, Paul in his addresses to the Areopagus and in synagogues).

Classis Alberta North

Nicholas Knoppers, stated clerk

Overture 7: Change Church Order Article 55

Classis Red Mesa overtures synod to change Church Order Article 55 to read as follows:

The sacraments shall be administered upon the authority of the consistory, in the public worship service, *by those who have been properly authorized to bring the Word*, with the use of the prescribed forms.

Grounds:

1. Synod has already stated in its guidelines for understanding the nature of ecclesiastical office and ordination that "there are no valid biblical or doctrinal reasons why a person whom the church has appointed to bring the Word may not also administer the sacraments" (*Acts of Synod 1973*, p. 714).
2. The Reformed perspective has always placed the preaching of the Word above the administration of the sacraments. It is important that we recognize that while the church has always guarded the sacraments, according to I Corinthians 11:27-32, and should continue to do so, we ought not, however, place their administration above the Word; it appears we have done this by credentialing some to preach but not allowing them to administer the sacraments.
3. In Classis Red Mesa we have an increasing number of organized churches moving toward bivocational ministry. In most of these situations there is little likelihood that these churches will ever again be able to have full-time, regularly credentialed and ordained pastoral ministry. In these churches, while elders and others are being licensed to preach by classis, these same people are not permitted to administer the sacraments. When the need for baptism arises or when the congregation wishes to celebrate the Lord's Supper, someone from outside the immediate family of God must always be sought. This arrangement not only detracts from the role and pastoral ministry of bivocational ministers but also is unsatisfying and unfair to the worshipping community and a hindrance to growth.

Classis Red Mesa

James Vande Lune, stated clerk

Overture 8: Appoint Study Committee to Correct Misunderstandings about Ratification

Classis Grand Rapids East overtures synod to appoint a study committee to recommend ways of bringing the current misunderstandings about ratification of Church Order changes in line with Church Order Article 47.

Grounds:

1. Ratification is not mentioned in the Church Order and is presently used without adequate regulation. The Church Order does not use the term. Article 47 says instead,

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.

2. Ratification is mentioned only in the Church Order Supplement, Article 47, which quotes a 1989 decision defining "prior opportunity" as "the time between the adoption of the proposed change by one synod and its ratification by a following synod."

The source for this quotation is a Committee for Organization of the Church Order, which was appointed in 1987 and reported in 1989. Its brief report makes no case for or mention of the change from "prior opportunity to consider" to "ratification by a following synod." This study spent more time on a distinction between minor and substantial Church Order changes and noted by the way that

In recent years practice has moved in the direction of requiring that all changes in the Church Order, of whatever character, must be ratified by a following synod. In addition, some matters which were descriptive or procedural in character were given Church Order status. We believe this creates confusion in the mind of the churches, calls into question the right of synod to make final decisions, and unnecessarily delays affirmative action on minor changes proposed and adopted.

(Agenda for Synod 1989, p. 265)

What this committee observed about "minor changes" is true about major changes as well. Confusion has been created in the churches, synods are unable to make final decision, and directions that are encouraged by one synod are frustrated and delayed by the next.

3. The alleged link between ratification and implementation whereby the former is required before the latter may occur is not found in the Church Order or even in its Supplement. A basic shift in sacramental practice such as allowing children at communion (on which opinions and study reports differ to this day) was implemented immediately. But the implementation of decisions concerning women in office was delayed because of some assumed link, although tenuous, between ratification and implementation.

- Synod 1978 opened the office of deacon to women and asked for ratification in 1979.
- Three years later Synod 1981 asked churches not to implement the decision in order to wait for the report of the committee on headship.
- Synod 1984 reaffirmed the 1978 decision allowing women deacons and immediately ratified the decision of 1978.
- Synod 1990 opened all offices to women, referred ratification to Synod 1992, and "requested" no implementation until 1992.
- Synod 1993 gave each council the option to open all offices to women, referred ratification to Synod 1994, and again "requested" churches not to implement until 1994.

As the Committee for Organization of the Church Order (see 2 above) stated, our practice of ratification has "moved," but not in a deliberate and intentional way. On the issue of women in office, the requirement of ratification and the request to delay implementation seem to be inconsistent and even prejudicial.

4. A study of ratification is necessary because, though there is a proper place for ratification, as in the case of the rare Church Order change that arises out of an unstudied action of a synod, ratification is too often used on Church Order changes that have been the subject of long years of discus-

sion and study. The result with respect to the women-in-office issue is that ratification creates the kind of dilemma that the Committee for Organization of the Church Order was trying to prevent.

Classis Grand Rapids East
Philip R. Lucasse, stated clerk

Overture 9: Revise the Ratification Process

Classis Toronto overtures synod to revise the ratification process along the following lines:

- A. The synod which is to ratify a decision of a preceding synod shall refrain from reentering the substance of the debate which led to the original decision unless new and compelling grounds are brought forward by the churches. It shall limit its concerns to matters of wording, clarification, consistency, or previously unforeseen implications arising from the decision.
- B. Whenever it is appropriate, the committee which originally recommended the proposed changes shall be retained as a committee to advise the ratifying synod concerning communications and/or overtures, in keeping with the spirit of A above.

Grounds:

1. The churches are becoming increasingly cynical about the ratification process as it is currently perceived to operate, a following synod overturning what a preceding one has prayerfully accomplished.
2. The present system, which allows endless replays, undermines the meaning of the phrase "settled and binding." Some continuity and sanctified common sense are urgently needed.

Classis Toronto
John Tenyenhuis, stated clerk

Note: Supporting documents will be made available for the advisory committee of synod.

Overture 10: Replace Supplement to Church Order Article 47 by Adopting New Regulations

I. Introduction

In recent years the word *ratification* has become part of the ecclesiastical vocabulary of the Christian Reformed Church. Neither the word nor the practice to which it refers arose directly from the Church Order. The concept did not enter our discussion as a result of a careful study or a deliberate proposal. Ratification has been defined, for the most part, "on the fly." Not surprisingly, questions have risen almost yearly about what it means in a given instance. Hours of synodical time have been spent debating these issues. Classis Lake Erie believes it is time to take a careful look at what has come to be known as ratification, to define terms, and to agree on the basic dimensions of the process.

II. History

In 1965 the Christian Reformed Church adopted a new Church Order. While much of the new Church Order had roots in the Church Order of the Synod of Dort, Article 47 was new. It states that

The task of synod includes the adoption of the creeds, of the Church Order, of the liturgical forms, of the *Psalter Hymnal*, and of the principles and elements of the order of worship, as well as the designation of the Bible versions to be used in the worship services. 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.

Basically this article does two things: it specifies a number of tasks that belong to synod alone, and it requires that, before synod takes action with respect to any of the items listed, it give the churches notice of the proposed changes so they can communicate to synod about the advisability of the changes. Since the adoption of the Church Order in 1965, synods have had many opportunities to put the provisions of Article 47 into practice.

A quick perusal of the chronology suggests that Article 47 has meant different things in different contexts. A closer reading shows how much the debate over women in office has affected the reading of the article with regard to some Church Order changes. Gradually, Article 47 was read less and less in terms of the requirement of "prior opportunity," which is the language of the Church Order, and more and more in terms of "ratification"—a word and a concept that do not appear in the Church Order.

The following historical overview highlights the different ways "prior opportunity" has functioned in the CRC during the past thirty years and shows that many decisions did not require ratification:

Acts of Synod 1966

In response to an overture, synod added to Article 41 two questions concerning follow-up of members who move to a new area (p. 87).

Acts of Synod 1969

Upon the recommendation of a study committee, synod designated the Revised Standard Version of the Bible as an acceptable version for use in worship services (pp. 48-50).

Acts of Synod 1971

Synod gave final approval to the new Form for Ordination (p. 46). The form had been given provisional approval in 1965.

Acts of Synod 1972

In response to an overture, synod added to Article 41 a sixth question about evangelism (pp. 56-57).

In response to an overture, synod revised Article 42 to permit elders to serve as church visitors (p. 27).

An overture asked that the following be added to Article 96, the article stating that any revision of the Church Order be made only by synod: "Any proposed alteration in the Church Order shall first be *provisionally* adopted by a synod, shall then be brought to the attention of the churches for possible reaction, and shall finally be adopted by the next synod" (p. 625). Synod defeated the overture, stating that "the classis has not demonstrated that hasty action has been

practiced" and that "Article 47 of the Church Order sufficiently covers the matter" (p. 28).

Acts of Synod 1973

In response to an overture, synod changed Article 36 to allow elders to chair consistory meetings (p. 82).

Acts of Synod 1974

In response to an overture, synod provisionally added to Article 52-c the sentence "These regulations shall also apply when supplementary hymns are sung by the congregation as a whole." Synod declared that final adoption was to be considered by Synod 1975 (pp. 108-09). This was the first time a Church Order change was referred to another synod for final approval.

In response to the report of the Interchurch Relations Committee, synod changed Article 8 so that "ministers of sister churches" were not eligible for call (p. 57). Synod did not refer this change to a following synod for final approval.

In response to an overture, synod revised Article 86 to permit the consistory to mention the name of a member in the first announcement in the discipline process (p. 78). Synod did not refer this change to a following synod for final approval.

In response to the recommendation of the Synodical Interim Committee, synod deleted Item III, C, 6 from the Second Supplement to the Church Order. This provision required congregations calling ministers from outside the denomination to send them the denomination's positions on oathbound societies, common grace, and worldly amusements (p. 21). Synod did not refer this change to a following synod for final approval.

In response to an overture, synod amended the "five-fold declaration regarding unfaithful members-by-baptism" in XIII, 3 of the Second Supplement to the Church Order (p. 110). Synod did not refer this change to a following synod for final approval.

Acts of Synod 1975

Synod gave final approval to the provisional change of Article 52-c (p. 47).

In response to the recommendation of the Interchurch Relations Committee, synod revised Article 59-b and c, since Synod 1974 had replaced the terms "sister church" and "corresponding church" with the term *churches in ecclesiastical fellowship*. Synod also adopted the recommendation of its advisory committee that these changes "must be ratified by the Synod of 1976" (pp. 40-41). This was the first time the word *ratify* was used by synod.

Synod defeated an overture requesting that reports of synodical study committees dealing with "major doctrinal and liturgical matters, ethical and pastoral guidelines, and important church polity additions or revisions" be submitted to the churches "for at least a year before synod takes action either to adopt or reject them." One of the grounds was that this "tends to curtail synod in its deliberative task" (p. 19).

Synod adopted a new translation of the Heidelberg Catechism (pp. 90-93). Synod did not refer this decision to a following synod for final approval. Synods of 1970, 1971, and 1972 took note of the progress in a new translation of the Heidelberg Catechism and asked the churches to respond. Synod 1973 encouraged the churches to react to the translation so that final approval could be given in 1975.

Acts of Synod 1976

Synod ratified the provisional changes of Article 59-b and c (p. 43).

Synod adopted new forms for the baptism of children and adults and for profession of faith (p. 89). Synod did not refer these decisions to a following synod for final approval. Synod 1969 had instructed the Liturgical Committee to solicit reactions to a new baptismal form for children. Synod 1971 approved that form and a form for adult baptism for use on a trial basis for three years. Synod 1972 approved the Form for Public Profession of Faith for provisional use for three years. Synod 1974 voted to have all three approved by Synod 1976 since there was a delay in getting the forms to the churches because Synod 1973 had voted to place them in the new *Psalter Hymnal* Supplement.

Synod adopted the revision of the "old" baptismal form (p. 89). Synod did not refer this decision to a following synod for final approval. Synod 1973 had approved provisional use for three years.

In response to a study committee, synod added 13-b to Article 13 to allow a minister to be loaned temporarily to a congregation outside the denomination (pp. 32-34). Synod did not refer this change to a following synod for final approval. (The wording received final approval in 1978, when it became 13-c in yet another revision of Article 13 by Synod 1977)

Synod defeated an overture asking that a two-thirds majority vote be required "for all future decisions that deal with matters concerning our Confessional standards and the Church Order" (p. 52).

Acts of Synod 1977

In response to a study committee, synod made revisions in Articles 11-14, articles referring to the tasks and supervision of ministers. These revisions were "subject to final ratification by Synod of 1978 . . ." (pp. 59-60).

In response to the Judicial Code study committee, synod revised Article 30 to include, "When written charges requiring formal adjudication by an ecclesiastical assembly are made, the relevant provisions of the Judicial Code shall be observed" (p. 55). Synod did not refer this change to a following synod for ratification.

Synod defeated an overture requesting the revision of Article 96 to require that any Church Order revision made by synod becomes effective only after it is ratified by two-thirds of the classes. The ground for defeating this proposed revision was that "Article 47 . . . adequately deals with the matter of ratification of changes in the Church Order. . . . Synods have, therefore, postponed final ratification of substantial alterations . . . until a following synod" (p. 15).

Acts of Synod 1978

Synod ratified the revisions of Articles 11-14 (pp. 45-48). A sentence provisionally proposed in Article 14 was inserted in Article 94 instead.

In response to a study committee, synod revised Article 3 to allow women to serve as deacons and added a supplement to this Article specifying that "the work of women as deacons is to be distinguished from that of elders." The wording of both the article and the supplement were to be ratified by Synod 1979 (p. 105).

In response to a study committee, synod voted to "establish the office of evangelist" (p. 77). Synod referred "to an appropriate committee the revision of the Church Order which is necessitated by the above decisions" (p. 78).

Synod adopted a revision of the "old" form for the baptism of adults (p. 57). This decision was not referred to a following synod for final approval. Synod 1977 had referred the form back to the Liturgical Committee because of weaknesses in style and wording. The form had never been referred to the churches on a trial basis, but some of the form paralleled the already adopted new translation of the form for infant baptism.

Acts of Synod 1979

In response to an overture, synod revised the supplement of Article 8 to require consistories and classes to give written specification of "need" when calling a minister from outside the denomination (p. 74). Synod did not refer this change to a following synod for final approval.

Synod 1979 received twenty-nine appeals from the 1978 decision to open the office of deacon to women (pp. 718-40). Seventeen of them alleged that Article 47 had been violated. Six objected to the fact that only the *wording* of the revision and not its substance was to be ratified. Synod also received seven overtures on the subject of ratification. Six asked that ratification be done by a majority of the consistories, by a majority of the classes, or by a two-thirds majority of the classes. The advisory committee, in recommending the defeat of all six, observed that "our present church polity, which has been tested over many years, sufficiently alleviates these concerns" (p. 89). Synod agreed. Synod responded to the seventh overture by attempting to give greater clarity to Article 47. It declared that proposed changes ought to be specified (p. 89) and that "Church Order Article 47 implies that whenever changes in the Creeds and/or substantial changes in the Church Order are made by synod, the churches shall be given adequate opportunity to consider the advisability of the changes before they are ratified by a following synod" (p. 90).

Synod did not ratify the changes made to Article 3 and its supplement to permit women to serve as deacons (p. 122).

The study committee to propose Church Order revisions for the office of evangelist recommended changes in thirteen Church Order articles and three supplements. Instead, synod revised Articles 2, 23, 24, 88, and 91 and added a supplement to Article 23 (pp. 64-67). Synod did not refer these six changes to a following synod for final approval.

Synod adopted a new marriage form (p. 73). Synod did not refer this decision to a following synod for final approval. The form had been approved for trial use by Synod 1977.

Acts of Synod 1980

In response to the majority report of the Bible Translation Committee, synod designated the New International Version of the Bible as a version acceptable for use in worship services (p. 71). Synod did not refer this decision to a following synod for final approval.

Acts of Synod 1981

In response to a report of the Council of Indian Churches, synod revised seven Church Order articles and prepared a new Form of Subscription written for Red Mesa, a new classis (pp. 14-17). Synod did not refer these changes to a following synod for final approval. Classis Red Mesa overtured Synod 1983 to do that (*Acts of Synod 1983*, pp. 660-62).

Acts of Synod 1982

Synod approved the forms for the ordination of elders and deacons, the ordination of evangelists, excommunication, and readmission (p. 84). Synod did not refer these decisions to a following synod for final approval. The first three forms were approved for trial use by Synod 1979; the last, by Synod 1980.

In response to a recommendation of the Synodical Interim Committee, synod added a section to Article 14 to regulate ministers who enter a nonministerial vocation (p. 71).

In response to a recommendation of the Healing Ministries Committee, synod revised Article 17 (p. 76).

Acts of Synod 1983

Synod ratified the changes made to Articles 14 and 17 by Synod 1982 (p. 660).

Synod revised Article 40-c regarding the president of classis (pp. 632-33).

Acts of Synod 1984

Synod defeated an overture requesting that it "require a two-thirds majority vote on the recommendation of the committee on Headship in the Bible and/or the recommendation of the advisory committee of synod, if such recommendation is to allow women to serve in the ecclesiastical office of deacon" (p. 622).

Synod ratified the changes made by Synod 1978 to Article 3 to permit women to serve as deacons. Synod also ratified the supplement added to Article 3 (p. 655).

In response to a study committee, synod adopted a new supplement to Article 8 regarding the calling of ministers from other denominations (pp. 640-43). Synod did not refer this change to a following synod for final approval.

Synod ratified the change Synod 1983 had made in Article 40-c (p. 573).

Acts of Synod 1985

Synod adopted a new translation of the Belgic Confession (p. 789). Synod did not refer this decision to a following synod for final approval. Synod 1983 had submitted the translation to the churches for study.

Synod 1983 had provisionally approved a new Form for the Ordination of Ministers (p. 643). The form was to be given final approval by Synod 1986, but that apparently happened in 1985. Synod did not refer this decision to a following synod for final approval.

Synod defeated four overtures asking that Church Order revisions be made by a two-thirds vote of the delegates or by a two-thirds vote of the classes (pp. 800-01).

In response to an overture requesting that "all reports of study committees affecting doctrinal, ethical and Church Order matters . . . be published in the *Acts of Synod* the year before they are acted upon," synod approved a change in the Rules for Synodical Procedure to require the mailing of study reports to the churches "not later than December 1" (p. 802).

Acts of Synod 1986

Synod revised Article 23-b regarding the service of evangelists (p. 601) and revised the supplement to Article 23-b concerning the examination of evangelists (pp. 625-26).

In response to an overture, synod instructed the Liturgical Committee to revise Marriage Form 2 so "that the vows will reflect the principle of headship in marriage" (p. 479). The revision was to be "processed through the CRC

Publications with final approval by the SIC" (p. 724). Synod did not refer this decision to a following synod for final approval.

Synod adopted a new translation of the Canons of Dort (p. 636). Synod did not refer this decision to a following synod for final approval. Synod 1985 had submitted the new translation to the churches for six months for their reactions.

Synod approved the publication of a new *Psalter Hymnal*. Synod did not refer this decision to a following synod for final approval. A number of synods had addressed the matter of revision. Synod 1986 decided that the changes it had mandated "be referred back to CRC Publications for final handling and to the Synodical Interim Committee for final approval. . . ." Two members of synod's advisory committee registered their opposition to this recommendation "because synod alone has the task of adopting a *Psalter Hymnal* (Church Order Art. 47) and should give final approval to all changes only after reviewing the change" (p. 723).

Acts of Synod 1987

Synod ratified the change Synod 1986 made to Article 23-b (p. 582). The change made to the supplement was not submitted to synod for ratification.

In response to the committee studying the authority and functions of elders and deacons, synod revised Articles 4, 9, 15, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 35, 36, 37, 38, 40, 41, 73, 74, 75, 76, and 77, supplements to Articles 4 and 40, and the heading to Article 35. In light of these revisions, synod deleted the supplement to Article 3 ("The work of women as deacons is to be distinguished from that of elders") (pp. 615-19; 637-43).

In response to the committee studying the ordination of pastors from multiracial groups, synod revised Articles 4 and 62 and added supplements to Articles 22 and 52 (pp. 620-23).

In response to a committee studying the calling system, synod revised Articles 16 and 17 and the supplement to Article 8 (pp. 574-76).

The officers of synod were concerned that the Church Order was being changed too frequently and wondered if some of the "changes and additions may well be more appropriately placed in the synodical regulations." The officers also believed that synod needed "a criterion for determining when a decision affecting church government is a change in the Church Order requiring ratification by a succeeding synod" (pp. 651-52). Synod appointed a committee to study these matters.

Acts of Synod 1988

Synod ratified all changes made to Church Order articles by Synod 1987 with the exception of those made to Articles 26 and 27 and the heading to Article 35. New changes were proposed for Articles 26, 27 (pp. 609-10), and 35 (p. 551). Synod ratified the changes in the supplements to Articles 4 and 40 regarding the authority and functions of elders and deacons and also ratified the deletion of the supplement to Article 3 ("The work of women as deacons is to be distinguished from that of elders."). The changes made to the supplements of Articles 8, 22, and 52 were not submitted to synod for ratification.

In response to an overture, synod deleted Article 60-c, requiring preparatory and applicatory sermons around the Lord's Supper (p. 610).

An overture observed that because Synod 1985 required study-committee reports to be sent to the churches by December 1, committees now had only sixteen months to complete their work. The overture asked that study commit-

tees be given three years instead of two and that reports be sent to the churches by September 1. Synod defeated this overture (p. 607).

Acts of Synod 1989

Synod did not ratify the changes made by Synod 1988 to Articles 26 and 27 and the heading to Article 35. Instead, synod ratified the changes adopted by Synod 1987 but not ratified by Synod 1988 (pp. 522-24).

Synod ratified the deletion of Article 60-c (p. 524).

The committee appointed by Synod 1987 to study the organization of the Church Order observed that "in recent years practice has moved in the direction of requiring that all changes in the Church Order, of whatever character, must be ratified by a following synod. In addition, some matters which were descriptive or procedural in character were given Church Order status. We believe that this creates confusion in the mind of the churches, calls into question the right of a synod to make final decisions, and unnecessarily delays affirmative action on minor changes proposed and adopted" (p. 264). The committee recommended, and synod adopted, the following three recommendations with respect to the implementation of Church Order Article 47:

- a. That synod define "substantial alterations" as any alteration which changes the essential (or actual) meaning of the creeds or articles of the Church Order, or which changes the church's regulation of its worship through the adopted liturgical forms, *Psalter Hymnal*, principles and elements of worship, and the designated "Bible versions to be used in the worship services."
- b. That synod define "prior opportunity" to consider the proposed change(s) by the churches as the time between the adopting of the proposed change by one synod and before its ratification by a following synod.
- c. That synod decide that when any synod adopts a recommendation which requires "a change in the creeds and/or Church Order" (*Acts of Synod 1979*, pp. 89-90) or which changes the church's regulation of her worship through the adopted liturgical forms, *Psalter Hymnal*, principles and elements of the order of worship, and the designated "Bible versions to be used in the worship services," it shall:
 - 1) clearly specify what change(s) has/have been made, and
 - 2) declare whether or not such a change(s) is/are a "substantial alteration."

(*Acts of Synod 1989*, p. 526)

Synod added the three recommendations above as a supplement to Article 47. Synod did not refer this change to a following synod for ratification.

In response to a recommendation of the Synodical Interim Committee, synod began appointing study committees for three years instead of two and revised the deadline for the submission of their reports to the churches from December 1 to November 1 (pp. 443-44).

Acts of Synod 1990

In response to an overture, synod revised Article 3 to allow women to serve in all the offices of the church. Synod deferred the ratification of this decision to 1992 (p. 657).

In response to a study by the Synodical Interim Committee, synod substituted the word *council* for "consistory" in Articles 4, 5, 10, 14, 16, 17, 18, 24, 41, 66, 71, 72, 90, 91, and 92 and in Supplements 4-30 (p. 634). Synod did not refer these changes to a following synod for final approval, perhaps because they were not regarded as "substantial alterations."

In response to an overture, synod added a supplement to Article 16 to clarify the transfer of the credential of a released minister (p. 614). Synod did not refer

this change to a following synod for final approval, perhaps because a note indicated that "this article is analogous to Supplement, Article 17"

Acts of Synod 1991

In response to a study committee, synod revised Articles 78-94 and their supplements (Section IV of the Church Order) and Article 65 (pp. 715-20).

In response to a committee to study the appeal process, synod revised Article 30 and its supplement and the supplement to Article 28 (pp. 714-15).

Synod defeated three overtures requesting a two-thirds or three-fifths vote of the delegates for ratification of Church Order changes (pp. 809-10).

Acts of Synod 1992

Synod ratified all the changes made to Church Order articles by Synod 1991 (p. 612). The changes made to the supplements were not submitted to synod for ratification.

Synod did not ratify the change made by Synod 1990 in Article 3 to permit women to serve in all church offices (p. 699).

In response to a recommendation of the Worship Committee of CRC Publications, synod approved the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible for use in worship. Synod did not refer this decision to a following synod for final approval (pp. 670-71).

In response to the committee to study youth and young-adult ministry, synod revised Articles 63 and 64 (pp. 662-64).

Synod defeated three overtures requesting a two-thirds vote of the delegates to make Church Order changes (pp. 613, 636).

Acts of Synod 1993

In response to an overture, synod revised question 3 in Article 41. Even though this was not a "substantial alteration," synod referred this revision to Synod 1994 for final approval (p. 506).

In response to the Committee to Study Regional Synods, synod revised Article 44 and its supplement (p. 574).

Synod ratified the changes made by Synod 1992 in Articles 63 and 64 (pp. 577-78).

Synod revised the 1992 decision so women could serve in all offices. Because synod's advisory committee was informed that synodical rules prohibit the immediate ratification of this decision, it recommended that this rule be waived. Synod's chairman ruled this motion out of order (pp. 598-99).

Acts of Synod 1994

Synod ratified the changes made by Synod 1993 to Articles 41 and 44 (p. 434). The change made to the supplement to Article 44 was not submitted to synod for ratification.

Synod defeated an overture requesting that any Church Order change approved by a majority vote at synod be ratified the following year by a two-thirds vote of the classes (p. 486).

Synod defeated an overture asking that Article 47 be revised so that "all proposed changes to the Church Order shall be approved by voice vote or by polling each classical delegation during an open session of synod" (p. 485).

Synod did not ratify the change made by Synod 1993 in Article 3 (pp. 513-17). Synod declared that "there is now no synodical decision in effect to allow women to serve in the offices of elder, minister, or evangelist" (p. 518).

In response to advice it received, the majority of synod's advisory committee recommended that "synod note that the decision of Synod 1992 to allow women 'to expound the Scriptures' was reconsidered and revised by the action of Synod 1993; therefore the decision of 1992 is not presently in effect in the Christian Reformed Church." Synod voted on this matter twice, defeating the above motion (p. 518) and later passing another motion stating that the expounding decision is in effect (pp. 525-26).

In response to an overture regarding the release of ministers, synod revised Article 14 (p. 492) and moved the material at the end of the Supplement to the Article 14 supplement.

In response to an overture regarding evangelists, synod revised Articles 23, 24, and 25, the headings introducing those articles, and the supplement to Article 23 (pp. 488-91).

In response to the Worship Committee, synod revised Articles 52 and 53 regarding the adaptations of the liturgical forms (p. 494).

III. Observations

A. Synod adopted Article 47 as part of the new Church Order in 1965.

B. From 1965 to the present, no changes in the creeds, the liturgical forms, the *Psalter Hymnal*, or the designation of Bible versions to be used in the worship services were referred to a following synod. The requirement of "prior opportunity" was fulfilled by the publication of a report in the synodical agenda or by the submission of materials to the churches for study or trial use.

C. From 1965 until 1974, final changes in Church Order articles were made by the synods that adopted the changes. The requirement of "prior opportunity" was fulfilled by the publication of a report or an overture in the synodical agenda. In 1972 synod rejected an overture that synods provisionally adopt changes and submit them to the next synod for final approval, stating that Article 47 prevents hasty actions and that there was no demonstration of hasty action by synods.

D. Beginning in 1974, some Church Order changes were provisionally approved and submitted to the next synod for final approval while others were approved immediately. For example, in 1974 one of the five changes made to the Church Order and its Supplement was submitted to Synod 1975.

E. In 1982 the practice of submitting changes in Church Order articles to a following synod for final approval was solidly established.

F. The word *ratification* is not found in Article 47. The word was first used at Synod 1975 in an advisory-committee recommendation.

G. The women-in-office debate has greatly influenced the interpretation and application of Article 47:

1. Synod 1978 recognized a fourth office, the office of evangelist, without making any Church Order changes, and it appointed a committee to recommend Church Order changes to Synod 1979. Synod 1979 gave final approval to the changes recommended. Not one communication was received protesting the actions of these two synods. Synod 1978 also *provisionally*

revised Article 3 to allow women to serve as deacons and submitted this change to Synod 1979 for final approval. Synod 1979 received twenty-nine appeals from this decision, seventeen of them asserting that Synod 1978 did not have the authority to make even a *provisional* decision. The contrast between these two issues is striking. It is even more striking when we observe that the action of Synod 1978 was only the fourth time a synod *provisionally* adopted a change and referred it to the next synod for final approval. Otherwise, all synods made *final* decisions on Church Order changes. There had never been a case in which a synod thought it had no authority to make a decision on a matter presented to it.

2. After every decision allowing women to serve in church office, each succeeding synod (1979, 1985, 1991, 1992) received a flurry of overtures attempting to revise Article 47 or Article 96 in order to make it more difficult to change the Church Order.
3. When changes to Church Order supplements were related to the women-in-office debate, the changes were submitted to synod for ratification. When changes were made to supplements not related to this issue, the changes were not submitted to synod for ratification.

H. No synod has comprehensively addressed Article 47. As a result, confusion concerning the application of this article continues.

1. In response to an overture, Synod 1977 declared that "synods have, therefore, postponed final ratification of substantial alterations . . . until a following synod" (p. 15). This declaration did not accurately reflect the church's past practice. It did reflect a new practice that was emerging. In the twelve years since Article 47 was adopted, only three Church Order changes had been submitted to a following synod for ratification, one each in 1974, 1975, and 1977.
2. Two years later, Synod 1979, referring to the 1977 decision, also declared that "Church Order Article 47 implies that . . . the churches shall be given adequate opportunity to consider the advisability of the changes before they are ratified by a following synod." Again, this was a description of an emerging new practice. Synod 1978 had submitted a change to a following synod for ratification, but it had also recognized the office of evangelist without changing the Church Order. Synod 1979 itself made changes to five Church Order articles and two supplements without referring them to a following synod for ratification. The practice of ratification by a following synod was not solidly established until 1982.
3. The attempt of Synod 1989 to clarify Article 47 focused on the phrases "substantial alterations" and "prior opportunity." Though it mentioned the liturgical forms and the designation of Bible versions, synod did not mention how differently the church had handled these. Though this synod attempted to answer questions about the ratification process, it also raised an additional question by its decision to ratify immediately three 1987 changes that Synod 1988 chose not to ratify.
4. Confusion exists on the status of a provisional decision to which a following synod does not give final approval. Synod 1984 ratified a decision that

Synods 1979 and 1981 chose not to ratify, and Synod 1989 ratified a decision that Synod 1988 chose not to ratify. However, Synod 1993 was told that it could not ratify a 1990 decision because Synod 1992 chose not to ratify it.

5. Confusion exists on the status of a provisional decision that has not yet received final approval. Synod 1994 was told that a provisional 1993 decision nullified a 1992 decision. Synod 1994 debated that issue for more than four hours and twice defeated that interpretation.

- I. Sometimes additions/deletions of Church Order supplements were ratified and sometimes they were not.

- J. As a way of creating "prior opportunity," synod ruled that study-committee reports must be sent to the churches by November 1 of the year before synod.

IV. Analysis

A. The interpretation of Article 47 has distorted its original intent. Article 47 was intended to make sure that the church had opportunity to consider substantial alterations. It has been used to deprive synod of the authority to make an immediate decision and to make revisions of the Church Order unnecessarily difficult. It has been used in this way primarily because of the influence of one issue with which the church has wrestled since 1970, the issue of women in ecclesiastical office.

B. There is no good reason why a synod cannot make a final decision on any Church Order change recommended by a study committee. A study committee, composed of people with expertise, studies a particular issue for over two years. Its report is sent to all churches by November 1 of the year before synod meets, giving all churches and classes adequate time to consider and respond to the report. To assert that a synod to which a study committee reports is ill equipped to make an immediate decision fails to take seriously the deliberative nature of synod. In fact, this synod is best equipped because the issue receives very thorough discussion and study-committee members are present. This is well illustrated by the actions of Synods 1987 and 1989 regarding Articles 26, 27, and 35. In response to the recommendations of a study committee, Synod 1987 revised a number of Church Order articles. An overture to Synod 1988 requested that three articles be changed by adding the consistory and the diaconate as assemblies of the church. This overture was considered outside of the thorough discussion of Synod 1987 and without the benefit of the committee that studied this issue. Synod 1989 wisely discarded the changes proposed by Synod 1988 and adopted the changes recommended to Synod 1987 by the study committee.

C. There is good reason to ask a following synod to approve substantial alterations to Church Order articles recommended by standing committees and overtures. This material is available only through an *Agenda* that arrives two months before the meeting of synod and one month after twenty-seven of the forty-six classes have held their last meeting before synod. There is not adequate time, especially for the majority of classes, to consider the advisability of substantial alterations recommended through these avenues.

D. The use of the term *ratification* has probably politicized the process described in Article 47 and contributed to its misunderstanding. Ratification is a common term in the secular world. In United States constitutional law an amendment adopted by Congress must be ratified by state legislatures. The ecclesiastical equivalent of this procedure has been recommended and defeated frequently. Because of its associations, the term ratification is inherently misleading. The church would be better served by using the language of Article 47—i.e., a synod will submit a substantial alteration to a following synod, which will consider the advisability of that substantial alteration.

E. It is a mistake to assert that a change proposed by one synod but not adopted by a following synod nullifies other decisions in conflict with it. This would mean that every time a synod proposes a change to a Church Order article, the denomination would operate for a year with no rules in the area governed by that article. For example, Synod 1994 proposed changes in the rules regarding evangelists. Those rules are to take effect when they are adopted by Synod 1995. If the 1994 decision nullified previous rules, then there currently are no rules regarding evangelists, and churches may do as they please in that regard.

F. When a proposed change is submitted to a following synod, currently the status of that change is no different from a change that is being considered for the first time. This does not take seriously the study and the deliberation of the previous synod. A change proposed by one synod should have the status of a study-committee recommendation and should enjoy the privileges of such a recommendation. It should have precedence over any advisory-committee report and, if desired, the synod proposing the change should be able to designate people to represent it.

G. If it is still part of the ongoing discussion, a proposed change not adopted by a following synod need not be proposed again by another synod before it is adopted. This precedent has already been established by Synods 1984 and 1989, which adopted decisions not ratified by previous synods instead of proposing them a second time. In so doing, Article 47 was respected since the church had prior opportunity to consider these changes. The 1978 decision had been before the church for more than six years and had been specifically discussed at Synods 1978, 1979, 1981, and 1984. The 1978 decision had been before the churches for two and a half years and had been specifically discussed at Synods 1987, 1988 and 1989.

H. It is not necessary to apply the regulations of Article 47 to additions/deletions made to Church Order supplements. The church is more consciously attempting to put *principle* in Church Order articles and is using the supplements to describe *practice*. When *principle* changes, *practice* will automatically change with it. The church should be able to change *practice* more easily than *principle*.

V. Overture

Classis Lake Erie overtures synod

A. To replace the supplement to Church Order Article 47 with the following:

1. A *substantial alteration* is any alteration which changes the essential meaning of the creeds or the articles of the Church Order or which changes the church's regulation of its worship through the adopted liturgical forms, *Psalter Hymnal*, principles and elements of worship, or the designated Bible versions to be used in the worship services. A committee recommending any change in these matters shall specify what change is being recommended and shall state whether or not the change is a "substantial alteration."

[Note: This change incorporates 1 and 3 of the supplement to Article 47 as it currently exists. This note is only for explanation for Synod 1995. It is not to be included in the supplement.]

2. *Prior opportunity* is sufficient time for churches and classes to be able to respond to a substantial alteration with overtures or other communications to synod before the substantial alteration is adopted. Generally, churches and classes have prior opportunity in the case of study-committee reports because such reports are received by November 1 of the year before synod meets. Generally, churches and classes do not have prior opportunity in the case of standing-committee reports and overtures because the printed *Agenda for Synod* is received only two months before synod meets and one month after the majority of the classes have had their last meetings before synod.
3. If the churches and classes have not had prior opportunity to consider a substantial alteration, it must be submitted to a following synod, which will consider its advisability. The first decision shall be understood as a decision to *propose*; the action of a following synod shall be understood as a decision to *adopt*.
4. A proposed change may not be implemented until it is adopted by a following synod. It has no effect on any other synodical decisions until it is adopted.
5. A proposed change has the same status as the recommendation of a study committee. The synod proposing the change may designate a person(s) to represent the change at the synod to which it is submitted for adoption. The proposed change and its representatives have all the rights and privileges of the recommendations and representatives of a synodical study committee.
6. If a proposed change not adopted by one synod is still part of the ongoing discussion, it need not be proposed a second time before another synod adopts it because the churches and classes have had prior opportunity to consider its advisability.
7. Changes to Church Order supplements are not subject to the above requirements.

Grounds:

- a. These statements eliminate the confusion surrounding the concept of *ratification*.
- b. These statements preserve the language and simplicity of the Church Order.

- c. These statements safeguard the church's desire that churches and classes are fully informed about major changes in denominational policy while preserving the authority of synod to act decisively.

B. To instruct the general secretary to incorporate a reference to Supplement, Article 47 in materials given to study committees, synodical advisory committees, and any other committees that may recommend changes in materials described in Article 47.

Grounds:

1. These are the committees that will be proposing changes to synod.
2. Supplement, Article 47 mandates these committees to notify synod if proposed changes are *substantial alterations*. Such notification will alleviate the confusion on the floor of synod that results when advisory committees give synod no guidance concerning this question.

Classis Lake Erie

George Vander Weit, stated clerk

Overture 11: Reject Proposals re Smaller Churches

I. Background

The Subcommittee for Ministry to Smaller Churches states in the introduction to its report, "'If it's not broke, don't fix it,' goes the proverbial advice. But what if it is breaking under the strain and will soon be broken? This is the case with the present system of denominational assistance carried out under the ministry of the Fund for Smaller Churches" (*Agenda for Synod 1994*, p. 42).

Whenever a mechanic looks under the hood of a car and suggests fixing things that seem to be working just fine, the owner gets extremely suspicious. Of course, the mechanic's advice is always said to be in the owner's interest, but if the owner is not sure, he or she tells the mechanic, "I'll think about it." This strategy gives the owner opportunity to get a second or third opinion if needed. It usually also saves money.

Synod 1994 was very wise not to adopt the recommendations of the Subcommittee for Ministry to Smaller Churches (SMSC) and instead to give the churches a year to reflect on the recommendations, to anticipate some of the consequences, and/or to respond with alternatives—a year for the owners to "get a second opinion." This overture is meant as just such a second opinion.

Although there may well be a need for some modification of our present vehicle of assistance to smaller churches, the denomination should not be too quick to adopt the proposed demolition of the current assistance program. *The SMSC's proposals are much too radical* and are not the most effective or beneficial way to enhance the ministries which these churches represent. The report concedes that these churches *do* carry on significant ministry. It admits that some of the blessings of God on these ministries are experienced by the denomination as a whole more than by any individual congregation or any local ministry which has provided the setting out of which these blessings grew.

What is most troubling about this report is that it simply assumes that the minimal cost saving to be realized by these radical ministry-wrecking or

ministry-killing recommendations is a worthy trade-off for the denomination. Let us explain what we mean.

In its Preamble the subcommittee says that "the focus for this subcommittee's work was the enhancement of the ministries of smaller congregations." Yet the "Anticipated outcomes if recommendations are adopted" (*Agenda for Synod 1994*, p. 45) make it clear that the intent is to reduce the number of recipient small churches from 108 churches "to fewer than twenty-five by the end of the fifth year after the recommendations are adopted. The corresponding effect will be to reduce the Fund for Smaller Churches budget by 75 percent."

The total annual budget to help these 108 churches is currently less than one million dollars (*Agenda for Synod 1994*, p. 42). That averages out to approximately \$9000 a year for each church. Presumably, for a savings of \$9000 each, the denomination is willing to terminate the ministries of these churches. If it costs on average one-half to one million dollars to begin a church-planting effort (five years of salary subsidy plus property and a new building), do we not get far more ministry per dollar from these small subsidies to congregations which are already in existence and which do not require property purchase, brand-new buildings, and 100 percent subsidy for staff in the initial stages?

To cut a budget of less than \$1 million by 75 percent will save the denomination at most \$700,000 per year. All of that \$700,000 is currently going directly into ministry. None of it is going into buildings or high-end salaries of administrators. If the denomination needs to save \$700,000 dollars each year, wouldn't it be much less ministry inhibiting to cut \$700,000 out of the budget in some other way, for example, by cutting the administration costs of the denominational agencies, rather than by terminating eighty small churches?

It has never been proved that more ministry per member or more fruit per member results, for example, from one church with two thousand members than from twenty churches with a hundred members each. Analysis of evangelism growth in the CRC demonstrates that all the proof, in fact, leans in the other direction. More souls per member are won in the smaller churches than in the larger churches. Also, more diaconal ministry to the local communities will take place out of twenty small churches than out of one large church. It is true, on the other hand, that more support per member is raised for denominational ministries of mercy and other denominational agencies from the larger churches than from the smaller churches. But what is really more important—supporting denominational agencies or multiplying and supporting our ministry outposts?

The objections made above to the subcommittee's proposed recommendations should not be read as disagreement with "the importance of short-term subsidies for ministries" (*Agenda for Synod 1994*, p. 44, IV, E). This is an excellent principle for healthy missions. However, a callous application of this principle which takes no account of varying economic levels is not true to the gospel of Jesus. Some communities require much more support than others. In fact, as a denomination, the CRC can fulfill the mandate of Christ with better stewardship if the first cutbacks are in administrative positions. Why not let the other denominational agencies learn from FSC with its volunteer administrators and classical oversight of ministries? A more effective, growth-oriented use of denominational resources might well be to place 50 percent of the present ordained and/or unordained administrators in the top-heavy denominational offices back in frontline ministry to the world at frontline salaries.

II. Overture

In light of the above observations and others listed below as grounds, Classis Chicago South overtures synod

A. Not to accede to the recommendations of the Subcommittee for Ministry to Smaller Churches.

Grounds:

1. The significance of the savings for the denomination is greatly exaggerated by the committee. The committee fails to weigh those savings in dollars over against the cost of ministries lost to the CRC with the snuffing out of seventy-five to eighty churches. Nor does the committee compute into the equation that all savings are at the expense of frontline ministry, with no savings in denominational administrative costs.
2. There are many other ways for the denomination to save expenses without inflicting such devastating damage on so many local churches bought with the precious blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.
3. Few, if any, denominational ministry programs have done as much good for as many churches, for as many members, for as many years, and for such low administrative costs as this assistance program for smaller churches.
4. It is our contention that there is no proof or evidence submitted by the study committee, or available, to demonstrate that it is no longer possible to find qualified volunteer personnel to administer this program as in the past, without full-time staff. We are an aging denomination with an ever-increasing percentage of retired members, many of whom have both the expertise needed and the willingness to devote their time to administer this program without the costly administrative overhead suggested by the committee and required by most of the denominational agencies.
5. If denominational Home Missions has been guilty of merely shifting her children from one denominational financial source to another, as the committee states, rather than enabling them to mature sufficiently enough to be weaned entirely, the Fund for Smaller Churches program should not be faulted for providing the nourishment these infants still need. Perhaps it would be more useful to question the parenting skills or practices of Home Missions. Further, if one of the chief objectives of the recommendations is to save the denomination money, perhaps the committee should take a look at the cost to the denomination of each new church planting compared to the average annual cost of \$9,000 each for maintaining the ministries of the smaller churches currently being assisted.
6. Although the accountability structure to various individual classes does not allow for uniform enforcement of guidelines, ultimately the classes are in a much better position to watchdog expenditures on the local level than denominational agencies are. How else can anybody account for the astronomical expenditures that are made for church planting in promising suburbs while proposals such as those from the SMSC threaten to close down eighty churches that cost the denomination an average of only \$9,000 a year? For example, how does Classis Chicago South participate in comparing the cost (in dollars and in converts) of planting new Illinois churches in Darien, Lockport, Richton Park, Roseland, or

Springfield—or in Houston, Texas, or in California, for that matter—with the modest cost for ensuring the continuing ministry of Archer Avenue CRC with over a million people living within fifteen minutes of her front door? It seems obvious that it is far more difficult to monitor the actual monies allocated and expended by multimillion-dollar denominational agencies than to oversee and monitor the much smaller allocations that are given to ministries owned and overseen by the local classes.

7. In this era of computerized computation and analysis there are much less drastic solutions to the so-called "significant errors in computation and arithmetic . . . found in 20 to 25 percent of the applications each year" (*Agenda for Synod 1994*, p. 43, IV, A, 1). Why cut off support for 75 percent of the recipients because of computation errors in 25 percent of the applications? What is the resultant dollar cost of these errors to the denomination compared to the committee's suggestion that full-time staff, secretaries, offices, and equipment be set up to monitor this program? If those errors, presumably not caught by anyone in classis, result in an average additional cost of \$1,000 too much assistance for each of these struggling churches, that's still a total of only \$25,000 to the denomination, a far smaller cost (and more beneficial for ministry) than the additional cost of setting up full-time administration over the program at a cost that would likely begin in the neighborhood of \$100,000 each year.
8. If the current Ministry Review procedures are inadequate, as the committee contends (see *Agenda for Synod 1994*, p. 43), certainly there are ways they can be improved that fall short of striking a death knell to approximately eighty churches. Why junk the car when all it needs is a couple new bulbs in the instrument panel?
9. Disparities in denominational salaries will not be removed by the recommendations of the committee. Those disparities are present for many different reasons, such as the relative size and/or wealth of the various congregations. Such disparity cannot be blamed on FSC any more than on Home Missions. Furthermore, the disparities will increase, not decrease, if aid is cut off to small churches.
10. The leveling off of growth of Home Missions churches at the thirty-family figure when they are turned over to FSC support may well be a result of Home Missions' policy of saddling these churches with an unrealistic building debt based on unrealistic growth projections. It simply has not proved to be true that new churches planted in prosperous new suburban areas will soon be able to support themselves and the denominational programs as well. Many of them are ultimately strangled by their debt load and are closed down after five, ten, or fifteen years, never succeeding in reaching the growth potential projected by Home Missions and never able to make significant contribution to the denominational ministry-share programs. The historical record of quota payments from FSC recipients has been far more exemplary, even before ministry-share was built into the subsidy equation.
11. The rapid increase in FSC recipients resulting from Home Missions' push for church growth through planting as many new churches as possible may indeed be causing an overload problem to the system (see D, *Agenda for Synod 1994*, p. 43). How can that problem be best solved? Is it by terminating the ministry program that, without a full-time paid

administrator, disburses funds to many church ministries? Or can it be done better by insisting that Home Missions not begin more ministries than Home Missions can support with its own budget and by not allowing Home Missions to shift its liabilities to another agency?

12. The Home Missions-led denominational mania to grow to 400,000 by the year 2,000 has resulted in numerical decline rather than increase. If synod approves a plan to save the denomination money by forcing seventy-five or eighty churches to close their doors in the next five years, is it not merely promoting additional numerical decline? Can synod reasonably expect to end financial shortages by ending financial incentives to small churches that have supported denominational ministries for many decades? Can it realistically expect the new churches planted by Home Missions to contribute more loyally to denominational ministry shares than the churches that will be closed presently do?
13. Planting new churches is a very expensive way to replace all the existing churches that would be closed by the recommendations of this committee. Has the committee tried to compare the cost of replacing these ministries with the cost of continuing the present modest subsidies to enable these churches to continue viable ministries? Each newly planted church requires initially 100 percent subsidy for one, two, or more staff. Property, usually in very high-cost areas, needs to be purchased. New building construction does not come cheaply. And after ten or fifteen years these high-cost ventures frequently are closed because of lack of fruit, a changing economy, or relocation of key members of the initial core group or because conflicts on the field—frequently between the Home Missions' subsidized pastor and the vision of the congregation—can't be resolved.
14. It is not likely that more than two or three church plantings could be financed each year by the meager savings that would be realized by this plan. At that rate it would take at least twenty-five years to replace all the congregations that would be snuffed out by the SMSC recommendations.

B. To explore possibilities of reducing denominational expenses in other ways, such as (1) by reducing overhead for all denominational-agency office personnel by 25 percent rather than by picking on one agency that has almost *no* administrative overhead, (2) by convening synod once every three years instead of annually, (3) and/or by encouraging classes normally to meet not more than twice a year.

Grounds:

1. The rate of growth in the office staffs of all denominational agencies has greatly exceeded the growth rate of CRC denominational membership in the last thirty years. This growth is causing denominational strangulation, which, if not stopped, will kill the Christian Reformed Church as it is known today.
2. The work committed to synods and classes increases in direct proportion to the amount of time and money devoted to it. That time, money, and work is always at the expense of local ministry.
3. Ministry ideas, incentives, and programs that are initiated from the top down are always more costly and less effective than those that are initiated, supported, and governed locally. The movement away from

locally initiated ministry has decreased the number of church plants, specialized ministries, and denominational church growth.

4. Denominational offices, buildings, personnel, and programs have been excessively expanded in the last three or four decades without comparable growth of the supporting membership or growth in mission effectiveness. Now that a time for trimming the denominational budget has come, the problem will only be exacerbated if the least costly ministries are cut and those with high administrative overhead are retained.

C. To request a modified revision of the Fund for Smaller Churches which does not set arbitrary numerical goals such as decreasing support to 75 percent of the churches currently receiving funding and which includes new rules for financial and ministry accountability for churches receiving FSC assistance.

Grounds:

1. Greater accountability of FSC recipients is needed and can easily be insisted on if the rules are clearly spelled out and consistently and emphatically applied.
2. A consistent application of sensible rules for the program is a far more graceful way to phase out those ministries that cannot meet the requirements than is the setting of arbitrary goals to terminate support to 75 percent of the recipients in five years and then to maintain a total of no more than twenty-five subsidized churches.

D. To adopt the policy that no church planted by Home Missions will be eligible to apply for assistance from the Fund for Smaller Churches for at least five years after its last subsidy check is received from Home Missions.

Grounds:

1. The current arrangement, which allows a new church to simply change financial sources rather than be appropriately weaned as a step toward maturity, creates long-term dependency and infancy.
2. This rule will require responsible birth control by Home Missions and fewer abortions.
3. The five-year waiting period allows for possible denominational assistance for unusual medical or surgical expenses these infant churches may need in order to survive.

Classis Chicago South

Henry Vanden Heuvel, stated clerk

Overture 12: Change the Name of Fund for Smaller Churches

The council of Beacon Light Christian Reformed Church, Gary, Indiana, overtures synod to move quickly to change the name and purpose of the Fund for Smaller Churches back to the Fund for *Needy* Churches, making appropriate changes so that this agency once more can be an effective tool for workers who need not be ashamed (II Tim. 2:15). Such reforms would enhance the CRC's ability to claim strategic opportunities for ministry by needy churches and help economically strong churches increase their share in "preaching good news to the poor" (Isa. 61:1-2; Luke 4).

Grounds:

1. The change in name and focus to "smaller churches" and a few years of tinkering have transformed a modest, fundamental structure into a network which "is breaking under the strain and will soon be broken" (*Agenda for Synod 1994*, p. 42).
2. Blanket offers of subsidy according to a formula based on size of congregation encourage opportunistic manipulation, not good Christian stewardship. The original terms for qualifying for assistance, set out in 1958, should be reclaimed, and the focus on a congregation's *need* should also be indicated in the committee's name:

Qualification for assistance from this fund is based on conditions of need as related to congregational income, congregational giving toward its own financial requirements, and congregational giving toward synodically-set denominational quotas; with special consideration being given to exceptional cases (e.g. heavy debt on church property, poverty of the congregation, or special conditions in pastor's home, etc.)

(*Acts of Synod 1958*, p. 75)

3. The category "small" is virtually irrelevant for theological decisions about local use of FNC money. If the classes were allowed full consideration of the scope of the ministry and the extent of the target population as well as the number of members involved in the ministry, then a minimum number of ten families (or leadership units) could be used instead of thirty to determine eligibility for FNC monies (see Matt. 18:20 and Van Dellen and Monsma, *Revised Church Order Commentary*, p. 160).
4. The 1994 report rightly points out the difficulty of maintaining direct control of this ministry by a central committee (IV, G); adding salaried staff would increase cost and remove accountability even further from the congregations giving and receiving aid.

Each classis, through its committees, church visitors' reports, and other local assessments, is best qualified to judge requests for assistance from local needy churches. Denomination-wide collection (through ministry shares) does require a central FNC Committee. But this denominational committee should return to the policy of accepting the decisions of the various classes on difficult cases. The FNC Committee should steadfastly resist temptations to broaden or deepen its own claims for accountability.

5. With its focus on stewardship (not ownership) the FNC was important for denominational loyalty and solidarity in at least two ways: (a) the FNC scale set the standard for ministers' salaries so that CRC ministers' salaries were more nearly equal than ministers' salaries in any other denomination in North America; (b) members of affluent congregations were eager to use the FNC quota as a mechanism for fairness, realizing that members of poor congregations often pay significantly higher percentages of their income to support local ministry.

The extremely low cost and high value of the Fund for Needy Churches ministry was one of the strengths of our old denominational structure; this particular ministry, it seems, was "unique among North American denominations" (*Agenda for Synod 1994*, p. 42).

Council of Beacon Light CRC, Gary, IN
Joel Strickland, stated clerk

Note: This overture was submitted to Classis Illiana but was not adopted.

Overture 13: Reject 1994 Report on Ministry to Smaller Churches and Appoint a New Committee to Study This Matter

I. Background

Synod 1994 had before it a report from the denominational Board of Trustees calling for a radical restructuring of the present Fund for Smaller Churches (FSC) (*Agenda for Synod 1994*, pp. 41-48). Synod postponed action on this until 1995 in order to give the churches time to evaluate the proposals. Classis Northcentral Iowa studied the report and presents the following evaluation and two-part overture for synod's consideration.

II. Classis Northcentral Iowa's study of the proposed changes in the Fund for Smaller Churches

Part One: Analysis of the 1994 Subcommittee for Ministry to Smaller Churches Report

The following is a point-by-point analysis of the report of the Board of Trustees' Subcommittee for Ministry to Smaller Churches, found in the *Agenda for Synod 1994* (pp. 41-48). Each line in italics following a numeral or letter identifies the general content of the corresponding part of the report and is numbered like the report. In the paragraphs following each of these lines is the analysis. To best understand this analysis, please read each complete report section in the *Agenda for Synod 1994* before reading the analysis of that item. In the beginning of the analysis of Section VI we have added a section that was not in the original report but should have been. There we detail some likely negative outcomes of adopting the recommendations of this report.

I. Preamble

This report originally came to the Board of Trustees from its Subcommittee for Ministry to Smaller Churches. The Board approved it and brought it to synod. The stated focus of this subcommittee's work was the "enhancement of the ministries of smaller congregations. We attempted to address the concerns and expressed needs of smaller churches."

Very little can be found in the report that reflects this stated focus. Instead, the report focuses on perceived problems with the FSC system. Moreover, the solutions presented could be very detrimental to the ministries of smaller congregations.

II. Introduction

The Introduction declares that the FSC fund system "is breaking under the strain and will soon be broken."

The arguments of the report (Section IV) are inadequate to support this conclusion. (See the analysis below.)

III. Present system

The report lacks a description and analysis of the goals and purposes for which the FSC was originated and continued.

A. History

This section includes the following statement: "Most other North American denominations have, over the years, had to rethink their practice of subsidies for

smaller churches. The present CRC practice of long-term subsidies to relatively small congregations is unique among North American denominations."

The unspoken argument here seems to be that, since other denominations either never did subsidize smaller churches or have quit doing so, we should not do so either. We find this a weak argument for changing our present practice. Should we not instead be an example of how denominations ought to treat their smaller congregations?

B. Size: factual data

C. Manner of affiliation: factual data and notes

D. Length of dependence upon FSC

This section is misleading. It lists the dates of organization but does not list how long the churches have received FSC support. It thus implies that all of these churches have continuously received support since the date of organization, which is not at all the case.

Furthermore, notice that only one newly organized church is receiving assistance. This hardly warrants the conclusion that the system is overburdened.

IV. Present stresses upon the system

A. Insufficient accountability

What is striking about this section is that the recommendations made later in the report do not address the matter of accountability. There appears to be a fear (or assumption) that FSC money is being wasted if a church cannot be self-supporting after five years. Such an across-the-board assumption fails to consider the particular circumstances of individual congregations. Instead of imposing sink-or-swim conditions on them, we should be seeking to ensure accountability from the recipient churches. It is not too much to ask of churches that want FSC funding to demonstrate that they are implementing programs, plans, and actions to grow spiritually, physically, and in self-sufficiency. If a church cannot show such data, it could be denied all or part of its funding request. Synod could put together criteria upon which the church's ministry would be evaluated. To avoid concerns that a local classis might not provide sufficient and unbiased oversight for its own needy churches, the accountability review could be done by a neighboring classis in much the same way that synodical deputies oversee examinations of ministerial candidates.

B. One salary level

It is at this point that the failure of the report to research and analyze the purposes of the present FSC system becomes very apparent.

The statement "The present system establishes one salary level" simply is not true. The literature sent out by the FSC has always made it clear that it was setting a *minimum* salary for pastors serving churches receiving FSC funds. The churches were always encouraged to pay their pastors more if local conditions made that necessary. The same local conditions that would make it necessary to pay a pastor more would enable that church to do so. The report displays a strange bias on the way salaries should be set. For rural churches the standard seems to be what a neighboring church will pay. For urban churches it suddenly shifts to "congregational average salary." Both depart from our traditional letter of call, which reads, "knowing the laborer is worthy of his hire, to encourage you in the discharge of your duties and to free you from material need." Are we

going to start paying inner-city pastors based on the inner-city average salary? Rural salaries may be lower than urban salaries, but that does not mean the needs of rural pastors are less.

The report's conclusion from the fact that FSC pastors are sometimes paid more than pastors in neighboring rural churches seems to be that the salaries of FSC pastors in rural areas should be decreased. This fails to consider how inadequate such salaries might be. A better conclusion might be to consider how to encourage such churches to pay their pastors adequately. One of the intents of the FSC system was to make sure that pastors in smaller churches were adequately compensated. The system has encouraged even non-FSC churches to pay more than they might have without the example and competition of the FSC churches. Adopting the report's recommendations may well result in an erosion of salary level for pastors in the smaller (especially rural) churches.

Moreover, the report assumes that pastors in rural churches need less salary than those in urban areas. This is a very debatable assumption. Regional variation in cost of living results largely from variation in housing costs. Since pastors are provided housing along with salary, they are largely immune from the effects of regional variation in cost of living. Surprisingly, in many cases the cost of living is higher for rural pastors since they do not benefit from a competitive marketplace and must drive many miles for basic services. So we are not convinced that the anticipated outcome "clergy salaries will become more reflective of local conditions" (VI, H) is at all well thought out. In some places pastors' salaries should not reflect local conditions.

We think that another value of the FSC system was to ensure that there would not be a talent drain from smaller church ministries. If a smaller church is assisted to pay an adequate salary, then it can attract and hold a pastor with the required gifts for ministry in that church and will not be forced to take anyone it can get at the low salary offered from the small church's own limited resources.

C. Stagnation of growth and enthusiasm

The report declares this as fact but does not prove this. The report blames this assumed stagnation on lack of programmatic resources and lack of financial accountability. If this stagnation does, in fact, take place, we need further research to demonstrate the causes. Churches plateau for a wide variety of reasons.

Moreover, the report fails to define "stagnation" and to address the various aspects of stagnation. Is it only the raw number of families and members reported at the end of the year that shows whether a church is stagnant in growth, or is it the lack of new families and members joining a church within a year? For example, a church with an active evangelistic ministry may attract several new members in a year's time. However, due to our mobile society and the economic realities of small cities and rural areas, a similar number of established families may move away during the same period, leaving the church with the same number of families at the end of the year. Are we to say that such a church's ministry is stagnant?

D. Speculation that a large number of "new" churches may seek FSC assistance in the future

The report lacks precise data on the potential number of churches involved. We can also benefit from some historical perspective on this point. Research into past activity by the FSC reveals that we have for many years supported signifi-

cantly more smaller churches than at present. In 1980 we supported 155 congregations as compared to the present 108 congregations. What we did in the past we could do in the future without "breaking" the system.

E. "Best" current missiological thinking says subsidies should be short-term

In whose judgment is this the "best" current missiological thinking? Are we to be dictated to by the latest trend? What if the thinking changes tomorrow? Furthermore, this assumes that the purpose of the FSC programs was primarily church growth, mission oriented. This entire report seems to be predicated on the assumption that the only valid use of money is for churches that are increasing in size. This denies the validity of the ministry of those smaller churches that for a variety of reasons will never grow to become large congregations. These assumptions and predications ought to be more widely debated before we move in the direction suggested by the report.

It is not cost effective to maintain the life of the elderly ill in nursing homes and to assist parents in raising handicapped children, but we do it as a society because we judge life to be worthwhile. Is the continued life of an elderly declining congregation worthwhile? Is not the denominational family important? Could I Timothy 5:8 be applied here to the church family: "But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel"? (KJV).

Some new churches will not grow at the rate of "five years and out." Is souls-per-dollar-per-year the only consideration? May not these "church runts" have some value not seen by the tunnel vision of this report?

F. Long-term subsidies create dependence

There is a logical fallacy in this paragraph. Long-term help may create dependency in *some* churches, but it does not necessarily create dependency in *all* churches receiving long-term help, as the report seems to assume. Some churches simply need long-term help.

The report's argument is about like saying that welfare creates poor people. Now, to be sure, poorly designed and administered welfare programs may not lift people out of poverty and may, in fact, bind them in poverty. But the answer to this problem is not to stop helping needy people but to design better programs.

Likewise, maybe we should accept the challenge to design FSC programs that will meet immediate needs and encourage independence in those that are able. Shall we simply say, "Five years and out, able or not"? Aren't we wise enough to discriminate between situations where help is "imperative to ministry" and where it is not? Aren't we compassionate enough to "bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ"? (Gal. 6:2).

G. Need for salaried staff

The report's assertion about the need for salaried staff simply is not true. Note the comments on the number of churches in IV, D above. If we maintain the present policy and practices of the FSC, it will be very easy to continue without salaried staff. FSC had no salaried staff in 1980, when there were many more FSC churches. Furthermore, if one committee can not handle the work, we can simply form another committee and divide the work between them. It is only if we make radical changes in FSC that salaried staff would become necessary.

V. Observations

A. *Scope of the recommended changes*

The report is correct when it says it is proposing radical changes. In effect, it is eliminating the whole FSC system. Moreover, we do not believe it is correct that its recommendations "would best serve the denomination as a whole as well as individual congregations." In place of the radical changes proposed, we have other suggestions. We suggest emphasis should be placed on better accountability.

B. *Pastoral concerns*

To say that adopting the recommendations of this report would cause "pain and discomfort for a specific number of churches" understates the trauma involved. Adopting these recommendations will likely result in the death of a number of churches. Moreover, the report ignores the "pain and discomfort" that pastors of the affected churches will experience.

C. *Factors that influenced the committee's recommendations*

1. The present system injures the smaller congregations and the denomination.

Has the cause for the alleged injury been adequately demonstrated? Also, it has not been made clear that the cure will be better than the disease or that other cures, such as better accountability and analyzing the whole purpose of FSC, might not be better than the one proposed.

2. Long-term assistance lessens incentives for change and creativity.

This may be true in some cases, but it begs the question of whether in other cases long-term assistance is necessary and worthwhile. The logic of the report seems to be that, if we put the financial screws to the smaller churches, they will get busy and grow and become self-supporting. That kind of thinking is insulting to the present ministry of the smaller churches and naive because it does not recognize the realities of their ministry contexts.

Moreover, to suggest as the example does that smaller congregations may not need an ordained pastor involves a radical change in denominational thinking and policy. Are we as a denomination ready to move in that direction without more debate and discussion? If smaller churches do not need ordained pastors, do larger churches need them? One could make a good case that larger churches have many more resources among their memberships than smaller churches do, and so, if churches are to do without pastors, it should be the larger ones that go without.

3. Reasons for adopting these recommendations are not limited to financial considerations.

But are these other factors valid?

4. Smaller churches are "hampered" by ignorance of available resources and by not being held accountable for their use of FSC funds.

The first part of this observation has not been demonstrated by the report. Many resources are now available (see first paragraph of Part Two below, where we detail the resources available to and used by one classis). In addition, the problem with many resources may be that they are not truly "available" for the smaller churches. They may be unsuitable for the small-

church context. Considerations of expense, distance, personnel, and smaller church ethos may prohibit their use. Furthermore, the report seems to assume that if these smaller churches would only use such resources, they would quickly cease being smaller churches. This is an unproven assumption.

The second part of this observation has been commented on earlier in this analysis (see the comments on IV, A).

VI. Anticipated outcomes of the recommendations

Some of the report's anticipated outcomes are questionable, and other likely negative outcomes are not included.

Let us first consider some likely negative outcomes not included in the report.

1. Smaller churches will not be able to attract and keep the pastors with the ministry gifts required for smaller church ministry. Smaller church ministry does not have the glamour of home missions or the prestige of larger church ministry. If we add to that a financial penalty for serving in a smaller church, smaller churches will be reduced to taking the pastors they can get, not the pastors they need. They will face the ecclesiastical equivalent of the "brain drain." This will cause a deterioration of ministry in the smaller churches (see also item 6 below).
2. A number of CRC churches will close, and their members will be lost to the CRC.
3. The number of church-planting ministries by classes will decline. Churches and classes will hesitate to start ministries in areas that can not sustain the rapid growth pattern envisioned by the report's recommendations (see the comments below on the report's Recommendation VII, F).
4. There will be a further erosion of CRC denominational loyalty since long-standing CRC families will feel betrayed by their church.
5. The smaller churches will not build the habit of participation in denominational ministry shares (see the comments under item C below).
6. The report's Recommendations VII, A-C represent a further centralization and bureaucratization of denominational ministry. All of these will require the expenditure of denominational funds and increased denominational personnel. Note also Ground 4 of Recommendation VII, C: "The Fund for Smaller Churches will benefit from identifying persons skilled in smaller-church revitalization." That comment makes sense only if the FSC begins to dictate who shall pastor an FSC-supported church. Are we envisioning this kind of hierarchy?
7. Pastors' salaries in the FSC and post-FSC churches will not increase to match inflation and may even decline as their congregations face a financial crunch. This is hidden in the report's anticipated outcome VI, H: "Clergy salaries will become more reflective of local conditions" (see our comment in IV, B above and in VI, H below). This will also bring other results.
 - a. Pastors serving non-FSC rural churches will face even more disparity in salary than presently exists, since FSC has served as a pattern and incentive for churches to maintain adequate salaries.

- b. A number of pastors may be forced to leave the ministry and enter nonministerial vocations to adequately support their families.
- c. Fewer men may decide to prepare for the ordained ministry when the denomination decreases its commitment to maintain adequate salaries for pastors in smaller churches and decides that "the presence of an ordained pastor may not be necessary for a church to minister effectively."

Now let us consider the questionable nature of the report's anticipated positive outcomes (*Acts of Synod 1994*, p. 45, VI, A-H).

A. Smaller churches challenged to become more creative and selective in ministries

Note our earlier comments on Observation V, C, 2. The report implies that present FSC churches are wasting money on ineffective ministries. Such a comment can only come from those unfamiliar with the realities of smaller church ministry. Even with FSC support a small church is hard pressed to find resources for much beyond the basics of ministry. FSC, after all, provides funds only toward a pastor's salary. Increasing the financial stress on these churches may well lead not to creativity but to despair, resignation, and giving up.

B. Other options for ministry

Again see our earlier comments on Observation V, C, 2. Are we really sure as a denomination that we are ready to move toward some of these options? Which options are acceptable? We already see churches making questionable arrangements for pulpit supply.

C. Drop in denominational ministry-share contributions from smaller churches

This not only "may" happen; it certainly will happen. Moreover, in the future, if and when these churches do achieve the ability to contribute to the denomination, they will have very little motivation to do so. Since they were allowed to sink or swim on their own, they may well apply this principle to denominational ministries. One of the values of the present system is that it allows churches to participate in the ministry-share program early in their history and thus to build this habit of denominational participation.

D. Drop in number of FSC churches

These projections contradict the report's basic argument regarding the need for change. Where are all the newly started ministries which, according to the report, threaten to overload the present FSC in the near future (report, IV, D)? If there are fewer than twenty-five new churches waiting in the wings, why is there panic for the present FSC? Certainly a number of existing FSC churches are moving toward leaving FSC anyway, including the three in Classis Northcentral Iowa.

E. No need for FSC paid staff

In any case, we can function well without FSC paid staff. We have done so for years (see our comments on the report's IV, G above).

F. More programmatic assistance

The increased denominational expense and bureaucracy involved in accomplishing Recommendations VII, A and VII, B may well have little positive benefit for the smaller churches (see our first comments on Observation V, C, 4 above and the first paragraph of Part Two below).

G. Stimulation of creativity, stewardship, and vision for growth

This is simply a restatement of item VI, A and is subject to the same criticisms.

H. Clergy salaries will become reflective of local conditions

This apparently means that clergy salaries will decrease in the rural areas and urban ghettos and increase in the wealthy suburbs. Is this really what we want as a denomination? (See our comments on these items in IV, B above.)

VII. Recommendations

A. FSC regional conferences and B. More Home Missions resources

See the comments on V, C, 4 above and the first paragraph of Part Two below.

C. Assessment of pastoral skills for smaller church ministry

This is meaningless unless we make it possible for a smaller church to compete in the ministerial marketplace (see negative outcome 1 in VI above.)

D. and E. "Five years and out"

The above analysis invalidates Grounds 1 and 2 presented for Recommendation D of the report.

F. Support for beyond five years on two conditions

How strange that VII, E, 2 says support "will in no case exceed five years," yet here the committee is talking about exceeding five years.

1. Classes must pay one-third of the cost of such extended support.

The apparent intent of this provision is to force classes to consider well such requests and to test classes' commitment to such ministries by demanding their financial support. As well-intentioned as this is, it places an impossible burden on some classes. Classis Northcentral Iowa is made up of smaller churches. The only way we could fund such a proportion would be to reduce our already small contributions to denominational ministry shares. Doing so would weaken already fragile denominational loyalty and participation.

2. Evangelism and community oriented

Note the ground here: "Denominational resources are merited only if the ministry seeks to fulfill the Great Commission." Really? A look at the list of denominational ministry-share causes shows a number of items that are not directly "evangelistic in character" and "community oriented in scope." Are there not some churches that are worthy of denominational support even though they are located in areas without great potential for church growth?

3. This item clarifies how VII, F is to be implemented.

Basically this gives the FSC Committee absolute control of any extensions of help.

G. Decisions to provide framework

We are unable to understand what this means. Does it mean all previous decisions on eligibility and help levels are superseded by these new actions?

H. A proposed study re block grants to classes

What a strange recommendation coming at this place after the other recommendations! Nothing in the report prepares us for this recommendation except

the charge that classes have not done very well in overseeing those churches applying for and receiving FSC funds. How strange to all of a sudden be concerned about congregationalistic thinking (Ground a) after proposing a series of actions abandoning denominational responsibility for congregations!

Part Two: Impact on Classis Northcentral Iowa

The report's recommendations (VII, A and B) for conferences and resource materials might be of help to the churches of classis. We wonder, however, how necessary additional conferences and resource materials are. CRC Home Missions already provides materials and resources. We availed ourselves of the opportunity to send representatives to the church-growth sessions in California. Many of our pastors are involved in ongoing vision and revitalization sessions with the regional director. Classis through its home-missions committee and its continuing-education committee provides conferences for the churches and for pastors. While a system of formal assessment of skills for smaller church ministry (see report, VII, C) could be of help to our churches when calling pastors, our problem has not been so much how to identify those skills as how to attract and keep ministers with such skills.

The heart of the report's proposals is to make all future FSC support short term (five-year limit) and to phase out support over five years for those churches now receiving support. Classis Northcentral Iowa now has three churches receiving FSC support. It is our conclusion that each of these churches is already nearing the end of its FSC support. The proposed phaseout of support will not adversely impact these churches. We do not accept the judgment of the report that, because they had support for many years, these churches have been less than creative and needlessly dependent on FSC support.

However, adoption of the report's proposals will have several negative effects upon Classis Northcentral Iowa.

1. The ecclesiastical "brain drain" will hurt the churches of classis.
2. The report's proposals will mean ecclesiastical euthanasia for some churches of classis. We have a number of declining and small town churches. The pastoral needs of some of these can be met by sharing pastors and by merging. Others will die premature deaths, and their members will scatter to other denominations because of these rules.
3. The report's proposals will serve as ecclesiastical birth control. Adopting these proposals will effectively end any thought of new church planting in and by our classis. The history of church planting in our classis indicates that we cannot reasonably expect the kind of growth patterns demanded by these proposals. We now have four healthy churches (Ames, Britt, Cedar Falls, Mason City) that have required lengthy FSC (over ten years) help to reach their present situation. Another four new churches in our classis will never be born with these rules in place.
4. The already fragile denominational loyalty and minimal support of denominational ministries will be further eroded (see Part One, VI, 4 and 5, C).

III. Overture

Classis Northcentral Iowa overtures synod

A. Not to adopt the recommendations of the Subcommittee for Ministry to Smaller Churches (*Agenda for Synod 1994*, pp. 41-48).

Grounds:

1. Adoption of the recommendations would have several negative effects upon Classis Northcentral Iowa. See Part Two above.
2. The report does not adequately demonstrate that the present system is "breaking" or "broken." The data supplied is very incomplete and sometimes misleading.
3. The report does not have an analysis of the goals and purposes for which the FSC was originated and continued through the years. We should not abandon these goals and purposes without a thorough discussion of the issues involved.
4. The report is based on several unproven and debatable assumptions concerning ministerial salary needs, the need for long-term assistance, and the effects of long-term assistance.
5. The report ignores the negative results of its recommendations (see Part One, VI, 1-6).
6. The report's anticipated positive outcomes are questionable (see Part One, VI, A-H).

B. To appoint a special study committee (independent of the Fund for Smaller Churches Committee, Board of Home Missions, and the Board of Trustees, but including a representative of FSC, a representative of BHM, and a representative of BOT, along with people with a passion for and experience in smaller church ministry) to

1. Examine the history and purposes of the FSC, the possible future stresses on the system, the assumptions behind the 1994 recommendations, and the full range of outcomes of the suggested changes.
2. Recommend to synod how best to support the life and ministry of smaller churches.

Grounds:

- a. If the present system is "breaking" and "broken," this should be demonstrated by supporting facts.
- b. We should thoroughly and openly debate the matter of the goals and purposes of the FSC before we change policies.
- c. We may be able to structure our mutual assistance in ways that will be more effective and still maintain denominational integrity and ministry.
- d. Those who do this study should be independent of the present structure and the competition for the denominational dollar.

Classis Northcentral Iowa

Gerald De Vries, stated clerk

Overture 14: Appoint a Committee to Study Ways FSC Subsidies Can Be Reduced

I. Background

Classis Lake Erie was very interested when it received the proposed changes in Fund for Smaller Churches (FSC) policies recommended to Synod 1994. For years Classis Lake Erie has supported the denomination's long-standing commitment to assist its smaller churches in continuing ministry. Though Christian Reformed congregations practice ministry in varied ways, the FSC gives all of them the privilege of assisting one another in the particular kingdom work to which each church is called. Through this fund, all Christian Reformed churches are enabled to affirm their essential unity and mutual commitment to the breadth of the work of the Lord's kingdom.

The changes recommended by the task force would radically alter the mandate and nature of the FSC. Under the new plan, churches would be eliminated from FSC support after five years if they are small and have limited local and classical resources. Those churches added to FSC would be small and have very limited local need. The FSC would no longer be a fund to support ministry of small churches, but a fund to support emerging churches. A denominational commitment to small churches would be present only where local resources were available, either at the congregational or classical level.

Classis Lake Erie is not opposed to change, but change should take place when there are sound reasons for change. Any new guidelines proposed should directly address the reasons cited for change and should not, by their very nature, erode the foundation of the ministry in question.

The task force enumerates the reasons why change is necessary. It lists seven "stresses on the system" which warrant the proposed changes:

- A. Low accountability of FSC churches (specifically with regard to use of FSC funds). Signs of this low accountability are
 1. Arithmetic errors in FSC applications.
 2. Ministry Reviews done over the phone by classical committees with only one or two persons from the FSC church.
- B. A single salary level and disparities between FSC salaries and those of churches not receiving FSC support.
- C. Discontinuation of program resources and accountability structures previously available from sponsoring agencies.
- D. The recent increase in the number of young churches, which are potential recipients of FSC funds.
- E. Emphasis on short-term subsidies as the "best of missiological thinking."
- F. Assumption that money is "there" and "owed," promoted by subsidies.
- G. Need for salaried FSC staff if work load continues to increase.

We have several problems with these identified stresses. First, no evidence is supplied to demonstrate the extent of any of them. We do not know the source of the increase in new ministry locations nor the projected dependence on FSC

(cf. D). We do not know the present work load of FSC, nor its projected increases, nor possible projected staff needs (cf. G).

Second, evidence that is given does not support the perception of a "stress" present in the system. Arithmetic errors in an application are not evidence of low accountability for fund use. While Ministry Reviews done over the phone *may* be done hastily, they are not necessarily less extensive than other reviews. Further, this practice does not give evidence that improper use of funds is present (as is implied by the mention of "low accountability").

Third, though synod has repeatedly encouraged all churches to compensate pastors in line with FSC minimums, the committee recommends setting aside such minimums because disparities exist between compensation for FSC ministers and ministers not under FSC.

More important than these questions about the current stresses is the fact that expected outcomes of the proposed recommendations do not address these stresses. A summary of the anticipated outcomes follows:

- A. Without monetary subsidy, FSC churches will be forced to be more creative in ministry and will continue only "effective" ministries.
- B. FSC churches will examine options.
- C. FSC churches' ministry-share contributions may decrease.
- D. The number of FSC participants will drop by more than 75 percent (from 108 congregations to fewer than 25).
- E. No full-time staff will be needed to administer FSC.
- F. More conferences will be sponsored by Christian Reformed Home Missions.
- G. Creativity, stewardship, and growth will be stimulated.
- H. Salaries will reflect "local conditions."

There is nothing here about accountability in general nor about increased accountability for fund use. The committee's plan to increase accountability seems to be to remove funding. An alternative to the arbitrary deadlines for end of funding might be to increase accountability by requiring extensive review of ministry goals and progress. The work load for such review could be greatly reduced if FSC grant applications were made to cover a two-year period. The applications could be processed for half the FSC churches each year.

The fact that salary guidelines were created to enable small churches to call pastors and to offer them salary-package minimums which reflect international guidelines rather than local ability to pay is pointedly ignored. Synod has repeatedly reaffirmed its encouragement to all churches to attempt to meet these minimums.

Three times in the seven outcomes anticipated by the committee increased creativity is reported in slightly different words (cf. A, B, G). Yet "lack of creativity" was not listed as a stress on the system. In addition, there is no indication that the creative solutions listed in B of the report are realistic. Are there people available for shared or bivocational ministries? Can the Church Order be changed so unordained leaders may administer the sacraments, or do we really expect congregations to call in a "stranger" for those occasions? It may be true that to remove support will cause increased creativity. It may also be true that removing support will cause despair, loneliness, and lethargy.

While it is not stated directly as a stress on the FSC system, the ability or willingness of the denomination to support small-church ministry seems to be a major factor in the recommendations of the task force. Allegedly the withdrawal of money will challenge congregations to become more creative in their ministry and force them to examine other options. Will it cause them to grow? Will it cause their ministry to be more active and Christ centered? Will it foster mutual encouragement among Christian Reformed churches?

Classis Lake Erie is not at all convinced that FSC is under great stress. We are not at all convinced that "missiological" thinking should be a stronger factor than the best of ecclesiological thinking. Whether or not a church is in a major evangelism field ought not to be the overriding factor determining broad ecclesiastical support for that church. Have we reached the point where the only thing we will whole-heartedly support is growth in numbers and ability to pay?

Though termination of FSC grants after five years will reduce the number of congregations in the program, we are convinced that a more comprehensive address must be made to the matter of FSC funding. Do resources such as "shared ministries, bivocational ministries, circuit-riding pastors, [and] unordained leadership" actually exist? Is it possible to share clergy with other denominations in ecclesiastical fellowship or even denominations not in ecclesiastical fellowship? What changes in the Church Order and in seminary training need to be made to create or facilitate the use of such resources? Is it possible to grant ministry-assistance monies to specific classes rather than to specific congregations? While these questions are being addressed, a number of adjustments can be made to the present FSC procedures in an effort to increase accountability and to stimulate ministry.

II. Overture

Classis Lake Erie overtures synod

A. To appoint a committee to make a comprehensive study, including Church Order implications, of the ways by which the total levels of FSC subsidies can be reduced.

B. To instruct FSC to develop a new and extensive application procedure which will

1. Be conducted biennially for a two-year term of grant.

2. Include review of progress in ministries with reference to specific goals in education, worship, evangelism, missions, fellowship, and finance.

3. Be so timed for submission to classis and FSC that applications with insufficient progress reports could be sent back for reapplication.

C. To encourage each classis to ensure that its FSC churches have thorough assistance in goal formation, progress review, application submission, and conference attendance.

Classis Lake Erie

George Vander Weit, stated clerk

Overture 15: Reject the Recommendations of the Board of Trustees' Subcommittee for Ministry to Smaller Churches and Adopt Other Recommendations in Their Place

I. Introduction

The preamble of the report of the Board of Trustees' Subcommittee for Ministry to Smaller Churches states,

The size of a congregation has no relationship to the effectiveness of that congregation. Congregations of every size struggle to be faithful to the responsibilities which God has given in light of the resources he has allocated. We salute the ministry of smaller churches, give thanks for what they accomplish, and wish to enhance the ministry of smaller congregations.

(*Agenda for Synod 1994*, p. 41)

Fine words. Unfortunately, given the remainder of the report, they are merely words. Later, when the report finally gets around to its recommendations, we find that *effectiveness* is essentially defined as "no longer being small." This is particularly evident in Recommendation F, its subpoints, and grounds (*Agenda for Synod 1994*, p. 47). Small churches must grow to the point where they are no longer small, or they are not worth the trouble and expense—this is the general tenor of the report. It would have been more honest had the authors said, "We salute the ministry of smaller churches . . . but now it's time to move on."

There are, undoubtedly, some strains on Funds for Smaller Churches (FSC) and the current system of providing aid to smaller churches. This situation does require a serious look at FSC, what it is intended to accomplish, whether it accomplishes this purpose, and whether we want to continue the attempt. Perhaps it is time to move on. But if we do not continue, then we should be honest enough to say so and phase out FSC rather than hide behind the half steps of this report. Let us also make it very clear, however, if we believe FSC can still serve a very useful purpose in the denomination. If we are to continue FSC, then we should clarify its purpose and revise the rules to achieve that purpose more effectively.

II. Background

According to the *Acts of Synod 1988*, the purpose of FSC is

to assist smaller churches with financial need to provide proper support for an ordained minister. The FSC is intended to assist smaller churches on the way to maturity after they become independent from the sponsoring church or agency and those [churches] which are neither growing numerically nor achieving financial independence (*Acts of Synod 1988*, p. 569).

The FSC Committee acknowledges that there are two basic types of small congregations—those which have graduated from Home Missions' funding and then require additional outside income ("smaller churches on their way to maturity") and those older congregations which are shrinking in the face of a steady population decline ("those which are neither growing numerically nor achieving financial independence"). Any revision of FSC policy must be premised on, among other things, a recognition of the differences between these two types of small congregations, a recognition nowhere evident in the report from the Subcommittee for Ministry to Smaller Churches.

Recognition of these differences presents synod with essentially four options:

- A. End FSC, leaving all small congregations to their own devices.
- B. Establish two separate policies (not necessarily administered by the same agency) to meet the diverse needs of the two kinds of small congregations identified in the purpose of the FSC.
- C. Apply a single policy to one of these congregation types and ignore the other.
- D. Retain the status quo.

The Board of Trustees' Subcommittee for Ministry to Smaller Churches offers what amounts to a gradual implementation of the first option. This is contrary to the entire history of the denomination and Reformed church polity, serving to isolate individual congregations from their sister congregations, engendering competition rather than cooperation among these congregations, and essentially cutting off several historic, long-standing congregations from the rest of the CRC.

The second option would be the best. The ongoing administrative effort necessary to distinguish between the different congregations and establish specific policies to meet their respective needs is beyond the resources available to FSC. Restricting the scope of FSC to a single congregational type seems more appropriate. Because we accept the missiological wisdom of requiring new congregations to become financially independent as quickly as possible and because we also believe strongly in the need for the denomination to minister to smaller congregations, we advocate this position. We recommend that FSC focus on those congregations "which are neither growing numerically nor achieving financial independence" (*Acts of Synod 1988*, p. 569).

The third option would be workable, but we are reluctant to advocate abandoning a certain number of congregations.

The fourth option is untenable under existing financial limitations and the increased effort required to administer the FSC.

III. Overture

Classis Minnesota South overtures synod

- A. Not to adopt the recommendations of the Board of Trustees' Subcommittee for Ministry to Smaller Churches.

Grounds:

- 1. The recommendations of the subcommittee do not address the problems listed in their report.
- 2. The report does not adequately distinguish between different types of small congregations.
- 3. The recommendations would effectively eliminate many small congregations and severely hinder the ministry of many others.
- 4. Given the fact that New-Church Development ministries will no longer require FSC funding (cf. Board of Trustees' Subcommittee for Ministry to Smaller Churches report, IV, E), the recommendations amount to a de facto dissolution of the FSC.

- B. To adopt the following recommendations in place of those found in the original report:

1. That the purpose of FSC (cf. *Acts of Synod 1988*, p. 569) be amended to read as follows: "The purpose of FSC is to assist smaller churches which have financial difficulty in order that they may provide proper support for an ordained minister. The FSC is intended to assist smaller churches which experience little numerical growth because of their location and which have no other means for achieving financial independence."

Grounds:

- a. Christian Reformed Home Missions is already moving to eliminate the need for FSC funding by "maturing" its congregations (cf. Board of Trustees' Subcommittee for Ministry to Smaller Churches report, IV, E).
 - b. Many small congregations warrant continued denominational assistance.
2. That specific guidelines be adopted for smaller churches and the FSC Committee by which it may be easily determined if a congregation meets the two criteria, i.e., location making numerical growth very difficult and inability to achieve financial independence by other means.

Ground: This would be necessary to implement 1 above.

Note: Synod would no doubt need to appoint a new committee to provide such guidelines for consideration by Synod 1996.

Classis Minnesota South
Norman J. Visser, stated clerk

Overture 16: Reject the Recommendations from the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA re Ministry to Smaller Churches

I. Introduction

The council of the Hancock Christian Reformed Church, Hancock, Minnesota, herein expresses its concerns and feelings about the Board of Trustees' proposal concerning the Fund for Smaller Churches.

Even though we realize that the proposal contained in the *Agenda for Synod 1994* is now outdated and that some of the references in our overture may be slightly wrong and misinformed, we want synod to hear how a small church feels.

Since the Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church in North America has proposed that the subsidies to smaller churches be cut back and finally stopped after five years, the council of Hancock CRC would like synod to consider the following:

It appears that most North Americans have a fixation with the "new." If something is new, it must be better than anything that is old. We see this with the need to keep up with the latest model of automobile, clothing styles, electronics, etc. In fact, consumers suspect that manufacturers build in obsolescence. If you use a computer, you know that as soon as you learn one program, the company has a new and better version. And it appears that this is the case in many fields of work—there is always something new, which is better. So we see new homes, new automobiles, new tractors, new medicines, new ways of teaching children, and the list goes on. The church, too seems to be caught up in this thinking that new is better. We spend millions of dollars on new churches

and on new Christians. Somehow, they have become more important than old/present churches and old/present Christians.

But we are fixated not only on the new; we also think that bigger is better. So we can brag that we live in the state with the biggest mall, the biggest this, the biggest that. The church has not escaped this idea either, for it too has begun to think that bigger is better, and, consequently, that small must become big if it is to have value. All efforts of the church must be directed toward bigger and bigger. And now it appears that the bigger and newer will triumph at the expense of the smaller and the older.

However, bigger does not necessarily mean better. Dr. John Bolt in the spring 1994 issue of Calvin Theological Seminary's magazine *In Focus* writes that it is good for the church to have a "heightened sense of mission" ("Maintenance or Mission—A Reformed Option," p. 6), and we agree. But he further notes that "A particularly insidious suggestion is the notion that a church which is not visibly and vigorously growing through outreach is less than a true church" and that those not in new, big, growing churches are in "maintenance" ministry, which is a slight to the church of Jesus Christ. Finally, Dr. Bolt says, "... I want to plead 'cease and desist' with respect to denigrating reference to maintenance ministry. The cause of Christ and the advance of his mission are hindered, not helped by such rhetoric. And faithful pastors should not be burdened with undue guilt if they have not managed to create megachurch empires."

Though Dr. Bolt does not refer directly to the recommendations of the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA, which recommends that the churches receiving help from the Fund for Smaller Churches not receive subsidies after five years, what he says can be true also of these churches that, through no fault of their own, are located and have been located for many decades in areas of decreasing population. If the beginning of these churches was the Lord's will seventy-five or more years ago, should it not also be left up to the Lord of the church to set the date for their closure?

There are three and four generations of people who are and/or have been members of some of these churches. How much hurt are we willing to inflict on these people? Many of the "thriving" and "prosperous" churches in the area (and throughout the U.S. and Canada) can count among their members people who have come to them from these smaller churches. It is not as if the smaller churches of today never produced anything at all, though it is true that they are smaller today than they used to be. Hancock CRC has former members scattered throughout the area and the United States. Some former members are also in ministry in other CR churches. There are strong, deep ties to many of the smaller and older churches.

Even the federal government with all of its bureaucracy does not say to smaller states, counties, and towns that they are of no value and then completely cut them off from all federal funds. No, even the government sees the value of each citizen and continues to help keep even small towns healthy and financially sound.

We pride ourselves as a church body, and rightly so, on our biblical stand on the right to life. On that issue we believe that

- All conception of life is God directed.
- All pre-born children are identified by God (cf. Psalm 139).

- All pre-born children, whether normal or deformed mentally or physically, are under an all-knowing God and have a right to life.
- All children ought to have two parents' love and care.
- All human life is precious in God's sight.
- No human life may be carelessly or wantonly taken (i.e., murder).
- No human ought to take his or her own life.
- No health-care system ought to ration health care on the basis of "quality of life" or ability to produce/productivity.

On the issue of church we believe that

- The church is a living organism.
- All churches are part of the body of Christ.
- All believers come to Christ through the Spirit and Word.
- God knows all believers.
- God gives gifts to his people: physical, economic, training, experience.
- All believers should be part of an organized local church.
- All believers are precious in God's sight (cf. Rom. 5:8ff.).
- Churches, due to the lack of financial strength or numerical growth, ought NOT to be left to die.

Isn't there a parallel between the human right to life and the right to life of the organism called the church? We can see the error and sin of the Hemlock Society and the actions of a Dr. Kevorkian, but isn't the proposal to end help to the (financially) weaker churches really morally the same?

What has happened to the biblical instruction to "Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2)?

The proposal to cut off help to (financially) weaker churches is an ecclesiastical euthanasia.

II. Overture

The council of Hancock CRC overtures synod

A. Not to accede to the recommendations of the Board of Trustees' Subcommittee for Ministry to Smaller Churches report, which requires the cutting off of funds in five years.

Grounds:

1. In light of the present shortage of ministers in the CRC, smaller churches without the help of the Fund for Smaller Churches would find it very difficult to get an acceptance to a call.
2. Ministry is taking place in smaller churches, i.e., the Word of God is being taught in Sunday school and catechism, young people are being taught, marriages are taking place, baptisms are performed, and the dead are laid to rest.
3. The Heidelberg Catechism says the mission of the church is "to gather, protect, and preserve for himself a community chosen for eternal life and united in true faith" (Lord's Day 21). Small churches are doing this also.
4. The Great Commission has at least two parts: make disciples and teach them. The Fund for Smaller Churches was specifically established for the second part, and Home Missions and all churches were established to do the first. The Fund for Smaller Churches allows even the smallest church

to contribute toward "making disciples"; without this help, all the financial efforts of a congregation would be directed toward itself.

5. We should not fall into the "consumerism" mentality that newer and bigger are better, nor should they take precedence over the smaller and older.
6. No consistory or classis has overruled synod to discontinue the FSC fund.

B. To dismiss the present FSC committee and name an all new volunteer committee for the Fund for Smaller Churches Committee.

Grounds:

1. The committee members complain that serving on the FSC Committee takes too much of their time, and their councils complain about the amount of time it takes from local-church ministry.
2. The committee members complain about the number of telephone calls they receive concerning the rules.
3. The committee members complain that the classical committees assigned to deal with the FSC applications do not do their jobs.
4. The committee members complain about the fact that the treasurer must donate much time to the mailing of checks and bookkeeping.

C. To allow a church receiving FSC subsidies to negotiate a salary package with its prospective pastor according to a mutually agreed on contract at the time that the congregation is calling a new pastor.

Council of Hancock CRC, Hancock, MN
Kenneth Evink, clerk

Overture 17: Reject Both Reports re Children at the Lord's Supper

I. Background

Synod 1988 declared that children may partake of the Lord's Supper if they profess their faith. This issue was brought to the floor of synod again in 1991, and a committee was assigned to clarify the requirement that children who wish to partake of communion must make profession of their faith. The committee reported in 1993, and when synod could not resolve the issue, a reconfigured committee was continued. The new committee has not been able to offer obvious clarity, and therefore it comes to Synod 1995 with a divided report. One half of the committee desires to retain public profession of faith as a requirement for taking the Lord's Supper; the other half argues that children may partake at any age without publicly professing faith simply by virtue of their membership in the covenant. Report A argues that both baptism (membership in the covenant) and profession of faith are required for partaking of the Lord's Supper; Report B argues that only baptism (membership in the covenant) is required for partaking of the Lord's Supper. Report A does not require commitment to the Reformed creeds as part of public profession of faith; Report B recommends that public profession of faith take place at the time when other adult responsibilities in life are being accepted and that commitment to the creeds be part of the profession.

We are concerned that neither Report A nor Report B accurately reflects the Reformed tradition and the commitment of our creeds. Historically, the

Reformed churches have always required that members profess faith before they partake of communion, and this is implied in Article 35 of the Belgic Confession (see also Heidelberg Catechism, Q. 76). The CRC has also required that members professing their faith make a public commitment to the truth of the creeds and confessions of the church. Synod 1988 did not contradict either of these requirements, nor did it change the Church Order when it declared that younger children could be present at the Lord's table but would be required to make a profession of their faith in order to partake. Since this has always been the case, Synod 1988 was simply recognizing the fact that some younger members may be able to discern the Lord's body and therefore be eligible for partaking of the Lord's Supper. With this position we have no quarrel. The reports offered to the churches for action at Synod 1995, however, do not clarify this position and in fact would require changes in the Church Order.

II. Overture

Classis Hudson overtures synod to reject the recommendations of both Report A and Report B of the Committee to Study Clarification of Public Profession of Faith for Covenant Children.

Grounds:

- A. The church is again faced with two different positions regarding children at the Lord's Supper. The meaning of profession of faith and the membership categories do not clarify anything but only further confuse the issues and do not give evidence that the position taken in 1988 is unworkable.
- B. When significant changes are being made in our practices, in the Church Order, and even in our confessions regarding baptism, faith, the Lord's Supper, and membership in the church, far more substantial biblical support is expected for the new recommendations than the discussions of I Corinthians 11 offer. Our historic belief is that I Corinthians 11:28-29 requires that each individual must recognize the body of the Lord.
- C. With respect to the recommendations of Report A, we note that
 1. The suggested form for public profession of faith does not adequately reflect needed discernment regarding sin, guilt, assurance of forgiveness, and salvation and a commitment to the teachings of the church.
 2. The four-step procedure for professing faith and the separation of profession of faith and commitment to the creeds minimize the role and responsibility of the consistory and complicate supervision of discipline among communicant members (e.g., no guidance is given regarding the communicant member who declines commitment to the creeds and other membership responsibilities at age 18 but continues to partake of the Lord's Supper).
- D. With respect to the recommendations of Report B, we note that
 1. These recommendations are inconsistent with the study committee's mandate to "clarify the requirement of public profession of faith," directly contradict the decisions made in 1988, and lack theological and scriptural grounds. Recommendation B particularly, which requests synod to recognize "two clearly distinct perspectives on the grounds for participating in the Lord's Supper—individual faith and communal faith—and that both perspectives have support in the

- tradition, theology, and practice of the church of Jesus Christ," does not rest on the doctrine and practice found in the Reformed tradition.
2. Recommendation C (to allow room for differing practices) undermines the principles of denominational government and fosters congregationalism (which the report recognizes and seems to condone). We are not convinced that cultural diversity either requires or is well served by congregationalism.
 3. These recommendations and the report on which they are based rest on a very biased reading of the history of the requirements for public profession of faith, offer little information about the position of the Reformers on the question of children at communion, and even imply, without evidence, that the Reformers were under the influence of early mystery religions (IV, B, 4, d, 6, d)). Another reading of the history of children at communion and of the influence of mystery religions might lead one to conclude that the practice of having young children or even infants at the communion table actually arose out of the superstitious view that the Lord's Supper is automatically efficacious whether children have faith or not.
 4. These recommendations contradict the teaching of the Belgic Confession (as the committee acknowledges), which declares, "Therefore no one should come to this table without examining himself carefully, lest 'by eating this bread and drinking this cup he eat and drink to his own judgment'" (Art. 35). This report offers the alternatives of either editing "the confessions to reflect our current beliefs" or letting the confessions become cultural relics while we "write our own confession." Here the committee has gone far beyond the scope of its mandate, has bypassed the procedures for revision of the creeds outlined in the Form of Subscription, and taken lightly the place of the Reformed confessions in our denomination.

Classis Hudson

Donald Wisse, stated clerk

Overture 18: Reject Report B of the Committee to Study Clarification of Public Profession of Faith for Covenant Children

Classis Columbia overtures synod to reject Report B of the Committee to Study Clarification of Public Profession of Faith for Covenant Children.

Grounds:

A. Biblical

1. Scripture calls for a personal faith for participation in communion: I Corinthians 11:17-34 and John 6:35 and 52-58 assume that the participant has a personal faith in Christ when they call for participation in a worthy manner, self-examination, and discerning the body of Christ.
2. It is biblically wrong to assume that identification with the covenant community (be it through the external sign of Old Testament circumcision or New Testament baptism) is to be equated with being part of the redeemed, believing people of God (see Col. 2:11-12; Rom. 2:29; Rom. 9:6-8; Phil. 3:2-3). Personal faith is of the utmost importance (see

Matt. 10:32; John 1:12; John 3:15-16; John 20:31; Acts 2:38; Acts 13:39; Rom. 3:22; Rom. 10:9-10, I Tim. 6:12; I John 5:1, 5, et al.). Report B tends to blur the distinction between the visible and invisible church.

B. Creedal and Reformed tradition

Our creeds support a personal faith as a prerequisite for our participating in the Lord's Supper.

1. Heidelberg Catechism

- Heidelberg Catechism Q 75: "Christ has commanded . . . believers to eat and drink."
- Heidelberg Catechism Q 76: Speaking concerning the Lord's Supper, the catechism call us "to accept with a believing heart the entire suffering and death of Christ" and "by believing to receive forgiveness of sins and eternal life."
- Heidelberg Catechism Q 77: "Christ promises to nourish and refresh believers."
- Heidelberg Catechism Q 81: Response is required on the part of the partakers—self-examination, "[displeasure] with themselves because of their sins," and faith ("who trust . . . and who desire more and more to strengthen their faith").

2. Belgic Confession Article 35 states that the Lord's Supper was instituted "to nourish and sustain those who are born again."

3. "Our World Belongs to God" states, "In the supper our Lord offers the bread and the cup to believers" (par. 40).

4. This report differs from the broader Reformed tradition as seen for example in the Westminster Confession, Article 29, the Shorter Catechism Q 95-97; and John Calvin's *Institutes* IV.16.30.

C. Theological

1. This report weakens the importance of profession of faith in Christ as personal Savior and Lord as it moves toward viewing profession of faith as primarily an adult rite of passage, a decision in the ministry of the local congregation and in the nuances of the Reformed faith.
2. This report adds to the confusion concerning baptism and leads toward the assumption that if we are in the faith of the covenant community, we are therefore in a saving relationship with God. This report moves toward baptismal regeneration.
3. This report redefines our understanding of the Lord's Supper and moves in the direction of the Roman Catholic view of the sacraments, wherein the elements per se (in the context of the faith of the community) bestow benefit.

D. Pastoral

1. The sacrament which was created by God to, among other things, express our corporate unity will, if Report B is accepted, be the cause of division and difference within the Christian Reformed Church as we continue to drift as a denomination toward congregationalism.
2. This practice will create pastoral difficulties as families transfer between congregations which have different practices.
3. It will create difficulties in congregations as the elders will need to meet with every visiting family to explain the local congregation's position.

4. In our very mobile society, imagine the confusion raised in the mind of a young child when he/she is sometimes invited to partake and sometimes prohibited from partaking, depending on which congregation he/she happens to be visiting.
5. The emphasis upon the faith of the community will foster the false notion in the minds of our young people and young adults that they are Christians because they were baptized or raised in a covenant community, not because they have a personal relationship with God in Jesus Christ.

E. Procedural

1. Report B's recommendation to open the Lord's Supper to all covenant youth apart from a personal profession of faith is beyond the scope of the mandate given this committee. Synod 1991 charged this committee "to clarify the requirements of profession of faith for admission to the Lord's Supper on the part of younger covenant children." Report B does not clarify requirements of profession of faith. Instead it denies the requirement.
2. Report B alters synod's previously declared ground for participation in the Lord's Supper: Synod 1988 stated, "[T]he Bible makes clear that participation in the Lord's Supper is the result of status in the covenant and also entails an act of faith on the part of those participating." Report B separates this ground into separate grounds, in essence saying covenant or profession of faith (instead of synod's covenant *and* profession of faith).
3. Report B runs contrary to synodical decision. Synod 1988 decided, "The church is warranted in admitting to the Lord's Supper covenant children who give evidence of faith and are able to discern the body and remember and proclaim the death of Jesus in celebrating the Lord's Supper."

Classis Columbia

Howard B. Spaan, stated clerk

Overture 19: Reject the Recommendations of Report A and Report B re Clarification of Public Profession of Faith for Covenant Children

Classis of the Heartland overtures synod to reject the recommendations of Report A and Report B regarding the clarification of public profession of faith for covenant children and to retain our present practice with regard to profession of faith and participation in the Lord's Supper.

Grounds:

1. Report A properly grounds its arguments in favor of profession of faith as a prerequisite for participation in the Lord's Supper in Scripture (I Cor. 11:17-34) and our confessions (Belgic Confession Art. 35). However, its recommendation for three categories of membership is not similarly grounded in Scripture and the confessions but, rather, seems to be grounded in expedience.

2. Report B contradicts our common understanding of I Corinthians 11:17-34, suggesting that all baptized members should participate in the Lord's Supper on the basis of communal expression of faith. The Bible states, "Let a man examine himself," clearly implying the personal nature of this activity. Report B further advocates local option among the churches with respect to this issue, which undermines the Church Order, our agreed-upon covenant to regulate our life and ministry as churches.
3. The current practice of requiring public profession of faith (including an interview by the council or consistory) prior to partaking of the Lord's Supper does not preclude covenant children who demonstrate a love for the Lord, recognition of their sinfulness, and a commitment to the body of Christ (i.e., ability to discern the body) from doing so. It would appear that there is, then, no reason to advocate a change in our practice.

Classis of the Heartland
Jack M. Gray, stated clerk

Overture 20: Reject Recommendations of the Committee to Study Clarifying the Expression "Expounding the Word"

I. Background

After almost a quarter century of biblical study on the issue of women in office, Synod 1994 declared that the "clear teaching of Scripture prohibits women holding the offices of minister, elder, and evangelist." Anyone even vaguely familiar with the serious wrestling of many study committees over the years realizes the folly of such a declaration. It is difficult to imagine that the integrity of synod could be damaged more than it was when it adopted this false declaration, but in the recommendations of the Committee to Clarify the Expression "Expounding the Word" synod's integrity will be tested again.

Synod 1994 appointed this committee "to clarify the expression 'expounding the Word' *as used in the decision of Synod 1992*" (emphasis ours). Very early in its report the committee frankly admits that it has not fulfilled its mandate: "But exactly what Synod 1992 meant by the expression 'expounding the Word' would not be appropriate for our committee to say, since this was not specified *in writing* (emphasis ours) by the synod." In spite of this admission, the committee goes on to recommend that Synod 1995 declare what "the expression 'expounding the Word' *as used in the decision of Synod 1992*" means (emphasis ours). In so doing the committee notifies synod that there is absolutely no relationship between what Synod 1992 said about expounding and what the committee now requests Synod 1995 to say about expounding. The report begins with the Church Order and applies the Church Order to the 1992 decision instead of beginning with the 1992 decision and trying to determine how it did or did not handle the Church Order. The committee does not seek to understand or clarify the 1992 decision; it seeks to alter it with its explanation of the Church Order.

Recommendation B asks synod to "declare the expression 'expounding the Word' as used in the decision of Synod 1992 to mean that women ought to be encouraged to use their gifts of interpreting, teaching, and applying the Word of God in a variety of ministry contexts *but not for exhorting and preaching in official worship services*" (emphasis ours). Of course, that is true. No one can dispute that.

Women who expound the Word may not "exhort." The Church Order identifies that as the activity of licensed men. Neither may women who expound the Word "preach." The Church Order identifies that as the activity of ordained men. Repeatedly, members of the advisory committee that recommended the expression "expounding the Word" told the synodical delegates that they "very purposely" avoided the terms "exhorting" and "preaching." Initially the committee recommended the phrase "proclaim the Word," but delegates saw that as a synonym for "preach" and observed that Church Order Article 11 states that "the calling of a minister of the Word is to proclaim, explain, and apply Holy Scripture. . . ." Because of objections to the word *proclaim*, the chairman of the advisory committee, with the concurrence of the committee's reporter, changed the word to *expound*, saying, "we don't want to get tied up into any Church Order matters."

Recommendation B does not tell us what the expression "expounding the Word" means. It tells us what it *does not* mean. It does not mean that a woman will be licensed to exhort or ordained to preach in official worship services. Before this study committee put one word on paper, the church knew what Synod 1992 *did not* mean when it used the expression. The church knew that women may not exhort or preach. May they expound in official worship services? The denomination will find no clarification of that question in the report of its study committee.

Just how unwilling the study committee is to clarify the decision of 1992 and how eager it is to take away from women what Synod 1992 gave to them is apparent also in Recommendation C. Recommendation C asks synod to "declare that a change in Church Order Article 43 would be required to authorize women to bring the Word of God in official worship services." That interpretation of Article 43 is true only if the church operates with one category to describe unordained people who bring the Word of God. As the committee itself admits in the ground to Recommendation C, Article 43 specifically refers to "the right to exhort." It says nothing about the right to expound. During the 1992 debate, a delegate made an amendment to change the expression "proclaim the Word of God" (which later became "expound the Word of God") to "exhort God's Word" and to add the statement that "this provision does not abrogate the rule that anyone who is permitted to exhort God's Word receive licensing from classis." He made the amendment so "this will fit within our present rules concerning licensing." One of the committee members spoke against this amendment, informing synod that the "old structures are smothering the use of women's gifts. If we right away put this into the old structures, we're in danger of smothering them again." Synod 1992 agreed and defeated the amendment. It "very purposely" avoided the terminology of Church Order Article 43 and created the new category of "expounding" so that women could conduct worship services "under the supervision of the elders," without licensure.

Synod 1995 can receive solid instruction in this matter if it pays attention to the full content of Synod 1992's "expounding" decision. Unfortunately, the church has examined this decision only in terms of the office of minister because it has stumbled over the expression "expounding the Word." This decision also speaks to the office of elder, the other office in every local congregation that Synod 1992 continued to close to women.

Synod 1992 did not officially authorize (license) women to bring the Word of God in worship services just as it did not officially authorize (ordain) women to

be elders. Synod did create room so that women could bring the Word of God in official worship services under the supervision of the elders just as it created room for women to serve as adjunct/associate elders under the supervision of the elders. Technically, room for adjunct/associate elders was created in 1989 in response to an appeal, but the reporter of the advisory committee told Synod 1992 that the church should not be responding to appeals about adjunct or associate elders. Instead, the committee wanted to actively, even aggressively, encourage the use of women's gifts in this way.

Article 3 of the Church Order assigns official elder functions to "confessing male members of the church." Because the church could not officially authorize (ordain) women as elders, it created the category of adjunct/associate elders to allow women to perform the ministries performed by their male counterparts. Article 43 of the Church Order assigns exhorting to "men who are gifted, well-informed, consecrated, and able to edify the churches." Because the church could not officially authorize (license) women as exhorters, it created the category of "expounding the Word" to allow women to perform the ministry performed by their male counterparts. If Synod 1995 is going to use the Church Order to prohibit the use of expounders, it should also use the Church Order to prohibit the use of adjunct/associate elders.

The study committee's use of the Church Order is seriously flawed. The committee does not clarify how Synod 1992 used or did not use the Church Order any more than it clarifies the expression "expounding the Word of God." Can that expression be clarified? It is very true that Synod 1992 did not specify *in writing* what the expression "expounding the Word" means. But the meaning of an expression is not determined only by a written explanation of it. There are other ways to understand what the expression "expounding the Word" means.

The best way is to listen to the discussion in which the expression was proposed and adopted. That is very easy to do since all the sessions of synod are taped. Anyone who listens to the tape will have absolutely no doubt about the meaning of "the expression 'expounding the Word' as used in the decision of Synod 1992." That is apparent from the following:

A. When the reporter of the advisory committee introduced the expression "expounding the Word," he illustrated it with an example from his own congregation. He told of the female director of youth ministry and outreach who had a very special relationship to the congregation's young people, and said, "When we have a youth service, it would be *great* if the church could say to her, 'You're on. You bring the Word.'"

B. Before allowing other delegates to speak, the reporter asked the chairman of synod to call on two other people to make comments. The first, another member of the advisory committee, told synod that the committee had "very purposely" avoided the words *preaching* and *exhorting* and had chosen another word "to indicate that we are thinking about a public exposition of the Word by those who are qualified to do so."

C. The president of the seminary, the second person asked to speak by the committee's reporter, told synod that it was "wonderful that this committee is now giving women the opportunity, by means of this motion, to exposit the Word of God for our people."

D. When the floor was open for the comments of other delegates, the fact that this motion entailed the public proclamation of God's Word in an official worship service was obvious. Another member of the advisory committee reminded synod that there "was nothing new about having an unordained person, who does not participate in the official acts of ministry, speak an edifying word to the congregation."

E. When the committee's reporter was asked to explain the difference between this expression and the other terms currently used to describe the bringing of the Word, he replied, "Preaching is for those ordained to the ministry of the Word and sacraments; exhorting is for those who have been licensed by classis; expounding is for those not licensed by classis but who do it under the supervision of the elders."

F. Though all who spoke to this motion were aware that "expounding" would allow the public proclamation of God's Word in an official worship service, not all were in favor of that. One delegate made an amendment to delete the word *expound* and to change the motion so that women encouraged to teach and exercise pastoral care would do so only in the discharge of the general office of believer. When synod's chairman asked the committee chairman and reporter if this changed the substance of the committee's motion, they informed synod that this would "take the heart out of it." The word *expound* stayed, and when the delegate again tried to have synod say that women should be encouraged to teach, expound, and exercise pastoral care only in the discharge of the general office of believer, he was unsuccessful again. Synod knew that its women-in-office discussion concerned the specific offices of elder, minister, and evangelist, not the general office of believer.

This last exchange was not confined to a tape stored in the synodical archives. This was publicly related by the minister himself on Sunday evening, July 27, 1992, when the delegates of his classis gave their churches a report of Synod 1992. In addition, his account of this incident was distributed by a news service and published in one of the church papers read by people in our denomination. Very shortly after synod many people knew from synodical delegates themselves that consistories were permitted to invite women to bring the Word of God in an official worship service.

Many more examples could be given to illustrate that anyone who goes back to the original context in which the expression was adopted will have all the clarification needed to understand what "the expression 'expounding the Word' in the decision of Synod 1992" means. Nothing more is necessary if the church wants clarification, but much more is available.

A second way to understand the meaning of "the expression 'expounding the Word' as used in the decision of Synod 1992" is to ask what other possible reference it can have. If expounding does not mean that a consistory may invite a woman to bring the Word of God in an official worship service, then Synod 1992 spent a great deal of time debating nothing, because for years women have been permitted "to use their gifts of interpreting, teaching, and applying the Word of God in a variety of ministry contexts . . ." The only ministry context related to the Word that was closed to women was the pulpit in an official worship service, something Synod 1992 opened by creating a new category called "expounding."

A third way to understand the meaning of "the expression 'expounding the Word' as used in the decision of Synod 1992" is to note how this decision was reported in *The Banner*, the official publication of the church. The editorial in the Synod 1992 *Banner* states:

Delegates hoped that, by giving in a little bit to both those who oppose the ordination of women and those who favor it, they could coax the two sides closer together. Whether synod's strategy will work is an open question. Those opposed to women in office bristle at the notion that women are now permitted to expound the Word in a public worship service. Those in favor feel, at best, that they have been patronized, and, at worst, that they have been thrown a bone.

When you now hear a person deliver a message at a worship service in a Christian Reformed Church, that person could be preaching, exhorting, or expounding the Word. The person's gender will be your primary clue in deciding what is going on. If the person is male, he is either preaching or exhorting. If the person is female, she is expounding.

A fourth way to understand the meaning of "the expression 'expounding the Word' as used in the decision of Synod 1992" is to observe the actions of the leaders who are most closely affected by this decision, those responsible for the training of our seminarians. At synod the president of the seminary suggested that perhaps the seminary might be able to offer some kind of certification in expounding. However, it would be inappropriate for the seminary to do this since certification (licensure, ordination, or whatever) is an ecclesiastical, not an academic, matter. Nonetheless, the president's comment was a very positive indication of a desire to supervise this new category in a way somewhat comparable to existing regulations for males.

Although no ecclesiastical certification has been given to expounders (that is precisely what Synod 1992 sought to avoid), the seminary, in conjunction with the executive committee of its board of trustees, immediately developed a policy through which the female students it would offer to the church to conduct official worship services would meet the same *academic* standards as their male counterparts. Unlike exhorters, expounders would not be licensed by the seminary's board of trustees because the church was not giving them official authorization, but, like exhorters, they would be well qualified to bring the Word. This policy, adopted on July 15, 1992, and revised on December 11, 1992, was subsequently discussed by the full board and reported to Synod 1993 (*Acts of Synod 1993*, p. 54).

The action of the seminary and its board of trustees leaves no doubt that those closest to the majority of expounders understood the expression "expounding the Word" to mean that female students would bring the Word of God in official worship services. It also demonstrates that the church was finding ways to supervise this new category. Supervision was also happening on classical and congregational levels.

A fifth way to understand the meaning of "the expression 'expounding the Word' as used in the decision of Synod 1992" is to observe the reactions of the churches. Some churches were incensed because of the 1992 decision. Why? Because they knew it meant that women would be allowed to bring the Word in official worship services. Other churches were thankful. Why? Because even though Synod 1992 slammed the door in the faces of women by not ratifying the change in Church Order Article 3, this action prevented the door from slamming shut completely. Women would be able to bring the Word in official worship services.

Though it is true that Synod 1992 did not specify *in writing* what it meant by the expression "expounding the Word," anyone who desires to make a fair assessment of the expression as used in the decision of Synod 1992 has a variety of ways to discover its meaning. The comments made when this issue was debated on the floor of synod, the comments made by synodical delegates and reporters when this decision was announced to the churches, and the practice of the church over the past three years leave no doubt that "the expression 'expounding the Word' as used in the decision of Synod 1992" means that women were permitted to conduct official worship services even though this new category did not fit into the Church Order.

The clarification study committee spends its time telling the church that the expression "expounding the Word" doesn't fit into the Church Order. That observation offers no help in clarifying the term. There was not a delegate at Synod 1992 who did not know that because the advisory committee that recommended the expression repeatedly informed them of that. After synod's decision was reported, there was not a person in the denomination who didn't know that—and not everyone liked it. Those who were opposed to women serving in this capacity publicly stated that this new category didn't fit into the Church Order (cf. "Expounding Needs Explaining," *Outlook*, January 1993). Even those who were appreciative of this additional opportunity extended to women informed synod of the same (cf. Overture 30, *Agenda for Synod 1993*, pp. 302-07; Communication 1, *Agenda for Synod 1993*, pp. 325-27). Synod 1993 itself declared that "the use of the word 'expound' is foreign to the Church Order and *evades* (emphasis ours) the rule that public proclamation of the gospel requires licensure (Church Order Art. 43)" (*Acts of Synod 1993*, p. 595).

Because some in the denomination didn't understand the relationship of "expounding" (the public proclamation of God's Word not regulated by the Church Order) to "preaching" and "exhorting" (the public proclamation of God's Word regulated by the Church Order), Synod 1994 asked a committee "to clarify the expression 'expounding the Word' as used in the decision of Synod 1992 [emphasis added] and report to Synod 1995." Synod 1995 did not receive a clarification of the expression. It received an explanation of various Church Order articles. That is unnecessary, since all parties in this discussion are well aware of what the Church Order says. The explanations given are also irrelevant. The committee is correct when it says, "Presently the Church Order does not recognize a third category of Word proclamation in worship services by those who prepare their own sermons." That does not change the reality that, since Synod 1992, the church does.

If Synod 1995 acts with integrity, it must declare that "the expression 'expounding the Word' as used in the decision of Synod 1992" (emphasis ours) means that synod intentionally created another category outside the Church Order's categories of "exhorting" and "preaching" to allow women to bring the Word of God in official worship services. As the note attached to the report indicates, there are very good reasons why in good faith the church believes that.

The attached note also indicates that it would be wise for synod to give some kind of official authorization to the practice it introduced in 1992. That is also true for the practice, introduced in 1989, of allowing adjunct/associate elders. The easiest way to do so is to ratify the proposed change in Church Order Article 3, a change that would automatically affect other Church Order articles

regulating the life of the church. That change would bring the options given to the churches by Synods 1992 and 1989 *inside* the Church Order instead of leaving them *outside* the Church Order, where they currently exist.

Synod 1992 judged that the denomination was not ready for a change in Article 3 and decided instead to give women another ministry context in which to use their gifts because of its "desire to keep the churches of the denomination together." There is no doubt that Synod 1995 will drive the churches further apart if it supports the attempt of its study committee to take away from women what Synod 1992 granted to them.

Ruth Hofman, denied candidacy in 1992 and now serving one of the churches as an expounder, encouraged synod to "be faithful to its decision to make full use of women's gifts in the expounding of Scripture, pastoral care, and teaching. This will take a concerted effort by the leadership of the church to especially offer support and direction to the women who are presently training for ministry in the Christian Reformed Church. Please do not neglect them" (*Acts of Synod 1992*, p. 710). Little did anyone realize how prophetic the words of this gracious letter would be. It is our hope that Synod 1995 will have enough integrity to keep faith with the church, especially with the women members of the church, and will reject the recommendations of its clarification study committee.

II. Overture

Classis Lake Erie overtures synod

A. To reject the recommendations of the committee appointed to clarify the expression "expounding the Word."

Grounds:

1. The committee has not fulfilled its mandate. Synod 1994 mandated the committee "to clarify the expression 'expounding the Word' as used in the decision of Synod 1992 . . ." (emphasis ours). The committee itself admits that it has not done that: "But exactly what Synod 1992 meant by the expression 'expounding the Word' would not be appropriate for our committee to say, since this was not specified *in writing* [emphasis ours] by the synod."
2. The committee makes no attempt to understand how Synod 1992 did / did not handle the Church Order. Instead, the committee explains various Church Order articles and then applies those articles to the 1992 decision, altering rather than understanding or clarifying the decision.

B. To declare that Synod 1992 adopted the expression "expound the Word" to give churches the option to invite women to conduct official worship services.

Ground: The tape recording of Synod 1992 and the reports of synodical delegates and official media indicate that this was synod's intention, and the practice of the church over the past three years indicates that the church has correctly understood that intention.

Classis Lake Erie

George Vander Weit, stated clerk

Overture 21: Adopt the Recommendations re "Expounding the Word"

I. Background

Synod 1992 faced the question of ratifying a change in Article 3 of the Church Order that was proposed by Synod 1990. Synod 1992 failed to ratify the proposed change. It did, however, pass a recommendation to "encourage the churches to use the gifts of women members to the fullest extent possible in their local churches, including allowing women to teach, expound the Word of God, and provide pastoral care, under the supervision of the elders" (*Acts of Synod 1992*, p. 700).

Synod 1993 decided to reconsider the decision of 1992 concerning women in ecclesiastical office, apparently for reasons regarding the use of women's gifts. Synod 1994 did not ratify the proposed change to delete the word *male* from Church Order Article 3. However, it did adopt the advisory committee's recommendation that synod rule Synod 1992's decision regarding the use of women's gifts to be still in effect. At the same time, Synod 1994 also recognized the need for clarification of the expression "expounding the Word" and appointed a study committee with the mandate to clarify the expression as used in the decision of Synod 1992 (*Acts of Synod 1992*, p. 700, B, 5) and to report to Synod 1995. The ground given for establishing this study committee was that "the term 'expounding' needs to be clarified in relationship to 'preaching' and 'exhorting' and the Church Order articles relating to each" (*Acts of Synod 1994*, p. 526).

The Committee to Study Clarifying the Expression "Expounding the Word" has produced some observations and analysis on the history of this debate and has made recommendations for consideration by Synod 1995.

II. Overture

Classis of the Heartland overtures synod to adopt the recommendations of the study committee appointed to clarify the expression "expounding the Word."

Grounds:

- A. Synod 1994 adopted Recommendation 1 of Advisory Committee 10, Women in Ecclesiastical Offices, in light of the clear teaching of Scripture (*Acts of Synod 1994*, pp. 513-17).
- B. The Church Order as it stands in Article 3-a upholds the clear teaching of Scripture and upholds what the Christian Reformed Church has biblically and historically believed, that "exhorters" and "preachers" of the Word must be male.
- C. This would help bring to a conclusion the debate on women in the offices of minister, elder, and evangelist in the Christian Reformed churches. Should synod declare that the expression "expounding the Word" as used in the decision of 1992 means women may use their gifts of teaching and applying the Word of God in a variety of ministry contexts but not for exhorting and preaching in official worship services, it would give clear direction for the churches of the CRC. Such a decision should not belittle or negate the gifts and talents women have to serve the church in many areas other than official worship services.
 1. *Acts of Synod 1994* (pp. 515-16, Ground f) states that synod cannot allow what Scripture does not allow.

2. *Acts of Synod 1994* (p. 516, Ground g) states, "This decision will not bind Christian consciences in any inappropriate way. Christ is Lord of the conscience, and a Christian cannot claim freedom of conscience where the Scripture has spoken."

Classis of the Heartland
Jack M. Gray, stated clerk

Overture 22: Reject Any Proposal to Change Church Order Article 43 re Gender of Exhorters

Classis of the Heartland overtures synod not to make any proposal or decision to change Church Order Article 43, which specifically refers to "men" as those who are given the right to exhort.

Grounds:

1. Any change would be a direct contradiction of the decision that Synod 1994 made (*Acts of Synod 1994*, pp. 513-17, Art. 80), based on clear teachings of Scripture, not to allow women to preach or exhort in official worship services in the Christian Reformed Church.
2. Any action on the part of synod to formally provide under Church Order Article 43 authorization for the practice of women bringing the Word of God in official worship services will clearly contradict the unanimous recommendation of the study-committee report to clarify the expression "expounding the Word."
3. Classes should not be allowed to examine and license women to exhort or preach within their bounds. Synod 1994 said that Scripture does not allow women to hold the offices of minister, elder, and evangelist. Classes should not espouse or practice what synod does not allow or what Scripture does not allow.

Classis of the Heartland
Jack M. Gray, stated clerk

Overture 23: Take Action re Congregations Not Complying with Synodical Decisions Concerning Women in Office

I. Background

Synod 1994 affirmed the historic practice and belief of the church when it did not ratify a change in Church Order Article 3. This overture is a response to the many local congregations that are publicly and clearly breaking the denominational covenant. They refuse to act in accordance with God's Word as expressed in the Church Order. They have ordained women as elders and continue to allow them to exercise the authority of the office of elder in their local congregations. In addition, three classes, as reported in *The Banner*, refuse to intervene in these local congregations and to exercise special discipline on the officebearers involved. In some cases the classes seem to encourage breaking the denominational covenant.

II. Overture

In response to these disruptive practices, Classis Hudson overtures synod

A. To urge all congregations ordaining women to the office of elder, pastor, or evangelist immediately to bring their activity into conformity with the Word of God and the Church Order of the Christian Reformed Church.

B. To adopt a policy, effective immediately, that members of congregations refusing to remove women from authoritative office and to change their practice of ordaining women into authoritative office not be allowed to function as synodical delegates, synodical deputies, members of denominational boards and committees, or classical delegates.

C. To declare all churches which refuse to submit to the urging of Synod 1994 to be outside the CRC and removed from the official registry of the Christian Reformed Church in North America, effective immediately.

Grounds:

1. These churches by their action and inaction have broken the denominational covenant: by their action of ordaining women to the office of elder and by their inaction of failing to heed the urging of Synod 1994.
2. Synod 1994 has already warned the churches which currently are violating Church Order Article 3 and has urged them to bring their practice into conformity with the Church Order by June 1, 1995:

That synod (a) urge all councils which have ordained women elders, evangelists, or ministers to release them from office by June 1, 1995, and (b) urge all councils not to ordain any additional women elders, evangelists, or ministers.

Grounds:

- a. This practice has always been in violation of Church Order Article 3.
- b. The June 1, 1995, date for release of women elders, ministers, and evangelists from office is reasonable.

(Acts of Synod 1994, p. 520)

3. Faithfully observing the Church Order is an important visible expression of the denomination's unity in Christ and is a moral obligation churches assume by denominational covenant. Disregarding both Scripture and the Church Order breaks this covenantal unity, which ought to be expressed in the church of Jesus Christ, a unity which is important to the witness of the CRC in the world.
4. Strong action by synod is legitimate.
 - a. The CRC has long recognized the right of major assemblies to intervene in the affairs of a local congregation when the local council refuses to act in accordance with God's Word as expressed in the confessions of the Church Order (*Acts of Synod 1990*, Art. 13, 33, and 67, pp. 11-13, 28-30, 62, 63; *Acts of Synod 1982*, Art. 53, pp. 55, 628, 629; *Acts of Synod 1993*, p. 526; a full list of references can be found in *Acts of Synod 1993*, p. 526).
 - b. Widespread violations of God's Word and the Church Order by congregations and toleration of these violations by some classes cannot adequately be dealt with by a local congregation or classis. The widespread abuse of the Church Order in the CRC and the refusal of classes to respond appropriately make a denominational response imperative. Church Order Article 28-b states, "A major assembly shall

deal only with those matters which concern its churches in common or which could not be finished in the minor assemblies."

5. Failure to respond to violations of Church Order Article 3 will render the authority of synod null and void. Denominational unity will be broken, and congregationalism will replace it. "In those days Israel had no king, everyone did as he saw fit" (Judg. 21:25).

Classis Hudson

Donald P. Wisse, stated clerk

Overture 24: Urge Churches to Abide by Synodical Decisions

Classis Niagara overtures synod to urge all churches to abide by recent synodical decisions regarding women in office in order to safeguard the denominational covenant.

Grounds:

1. Article 29 of the Church Order states that decisions by church bodies are binding.
2. As Paul states in I Corinthians 14:40 and the Church Order affirms in Article 1, "Everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way."
3. Noncompliance with synod's decisions causes unrest, continues to polarize the CRC, and threatens the unity of the denomination.

Classis Niagara

Nick Overduin, stated clerk

Overture 25: Disenfranchise the Delegates of Classis Grand Rapids East

I. Background

On September 13, 1994, Classis Illiana sent a pastoral letter to Classis Grand Rapids East expressing concern about the actions taken by Classis Grand Rapids East at its special meeting on July 21, 1994. Classis Grand Rapids East responded with a letter dated October 1, 1994, informing Classis Illiana of the actions taken at the September 15, 1994, meeting of Classis Grand Rapids East. In response to this letter, Classis Illiana adopted the following overture.

II. Overture

Classis Illiana overtures synod to disenfranchise the delegates of Classis Grand Rapids East at Synod 1995.

Grounds:

- A. The September 15, 1994, decision of Classis Grand Rapids East to "permit its individual churches the freedom to decide whether or not the word 'male' in Article 3-a of the Church Order is operative in their particular settings" is contrary to the decisions of Synod 1994 and undercuts the authority of synod.
- B. The additional resolution "not to attempt to force its congregations to comply with the decisions of Synod 1994 urging churches to release women elders by June 1, 1995, and not to ordain more women elders" is

also contrary to the settled and binding character of both the Church Order and the decisions of synod.

- C. This officially approved ecclesiastical disobedience threatens the unity of the denomination and its communal life as a church of Jesus Christ.

Classis Illiana

Laryn G. Zoerhof, stated clerk

Overture 26: Discipline Churches and Classes Which Defy or Do Not Comply with Church Order Article 3-a

Classis of the Heartland overtures synod to discipline the churches and classes of the CRC which defy or do not comply with Church Order Article 3-a.

Grounds:

1. The marks of the true church are the pure preaching of the gospel, the pure administration of the sacraments as instituted by Christ, and the practicing of church discipline for correcting faults (Belgic Confession, Art. 29). Discipline should be applied to the assemblies as well as to members in the local congregations, for all should bear the marks of the true church.
2. Disciplining those churches and classes which defy or do not comply with Church Order Article 3-a would send a clear signal to all the churches that the CRC is committed to upholding the clear teaching of Scripture in the matter of women in office.
3. This action would serve well those churches that are at present struggling over their affiliation with the CRCNA because of the women-in-office issue, which is tearing at the seams of the denomination. It should serve as a clear, final, and decisive end to the debate about women in the office of minister, elder, and evangelist. It would show to the churches struggling with affiliation that there is still a commitment by synod to adhere to the clear teachings of Scripture on this matter.
4. The marks of the true church include Christian discipline. Therefore, just as the decision not to allow women in the offices of minister, elder, and evangelist should not bind Christian consciences (*Acts of Synod 1994*, p. 516, Ground g), so applying Christian discipline should not bind Christian consciences in any inappropriate way. Christ is the Lord of the conscience, and a Christian cannot claim freedom of conscience where the Scripture has spoken.

Classis of the Heartland

Jack M. Gray, stated clerk

Overture 27: Take Action Relative to Violations of Church Order Articles 3, 27-b, and 42-b

I. Background

A number of churches in Classis Grand Rapids East have ordained women elders in violation of Church Order Article 3 and the decisions of synod. Classis

Grand Rapids East has decided not to carry out the obligations of the Church Order assigned to it in Articles 27-b and 42-b.

II. Overture

Classis Minnesota South overtures synod to take the following actions relative to the violations of Church Order Articles 3, 27-b, and 42-b:

A. To declare that an officebearer of a church which has women elders, in violation of Church Order Article 3 and the decision of synod, may not be delegated to synod.

Ground: An officebearer of a church which does not follow the Church Order and the decisions of synod should not be allowed to share in making synodical decisions, which other churches and their officebearers are expected to follow (cf. Church Order Art. 29).

B. To declare that a member of a church which has women elders, in violation of Church Order Article 3 and the decision of synod, may not serve on any denominational board or committee unless such a person sends a letter to his (her) church council expressing disagreement with the council's violation of Church Order Article 3 and the decisions of synod and sends a copy of this letter to the Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church in North America. In the absence of such a letter the Board of Trustees will terminate (or refuse to begin) this person's service on a denominational board or committee.

Ground: Special service for the denomination is a privilege which presupposes support of the Church Order and synodical decisions.

C. To declare that Classis Grand Rapids East is not allowed to send delegates to synod during the time it continues its official decision, made on September 15, 1994, not to fulfill the responsibilities assigned to it by Church Order Articles 27-b and 42-b in dealing with its churches that have women elders.

Grounds:

1. A classis which officially decides not to follow the requirements of the Church Order should not share with other classes at synod, where decisions must be made in accord with the Church Order (cf. Rules for Synodical Procedure, VIII, B, 2 and the Public Declaration of Agreement, to which all synodical delegates give assent at each synod).
2. The presence at synod of delegates from a classis which deliberately violates the Church Order takes away respect in the denomination for the Church Order and the decisions of synod and therefore undermines our denominational unity.

Classis Minnesota South
Norman J. Visser, stated clerk

Overture 28: Modify Balloting Process

I. Background

For years delegates have complained that the balloting process at synod is virtually meaningless. They are often asked to vote between two people who are personally unknown to them. Some decline to vote; others do the best they can.

Inasmuch as we want representatives of the entire denomination to elect members of denominational boards and committees, all the difficulties with this procedure cannot be eliminated. The process can, however, be improved.

Our boards and agencies do a good job of securing capable nominees and giving good descriptions of their giftedness and qualifications via the printed synodical *Agenda*. The synodical balloting process could be improved by a formal connection between the *Agenda* material and the ballot distributed at synod. This connection could be made in the following way:

A. Months before synod, material is sent to synodical delegates informing them of their responsibilities. As part of this material the delegates could be encouraged to consider carefully the nominees for various positions. The page numbers in the *Agenda* on which the nominees are described could be indicated. Thus, when each delegate has the luxury of adequate time, the qualifications of each nominee could be thoroughly and thoughtfully read and a selection could be made.

B. The ballot distributed at synod could give the *Agenda* page number from which the ballot information has been reprinted. As voting proceeds, delegates could turn to these pages and transfer their selection to the ballot.

Our procedure could also be improved when regional positions are being filled. There is no good reason why all synodical delegates vote for people who are going to represent only a particular region of the denomination. In such cases voting should be done only by the delegates of the classes in the region. All denominational balloting could be done first; all regional balloting could be reserved for the end of the balloting process.

II. Overture

Classis Lake Erie overtures synod

A. To modify its balloting process in the following way:

1. The material sent to the synodical delegates prior to synod shall call attention to the nominees for various boards and committees. Page numbers on which this material is found shall be indicated. The delegates shall be encouraged to indicate their selection in their *Agendas*.
2. The ballot presented at synod shall contain the *Agenda* page number from which the nominee information has been reprinted.
3. When the general secretary leads the delegates through the ballot, he shall give adequate time for the delegates to turn to the appropriate *Agenda* page so their prior selection can be transferred to the ballot.

Ground: These modifications will assist delegates in giving more thorough consideration to the qualifications of nominees.

B. To restrict balloting for regional representatives to the delegates of the classes which comprise each region.

Grounds:

1. Since regional representatives do not represent the denomination, there is no good reason for delegates of every classis to vote for all regional representatives.
2. Delegates of the classes in the region affected are more likely to have personal knowledge of the nominees for that region.

(Note: The printed ballot shall indicate which classes will vote for each open regional-representative position.)

Classis Lake Erie

George Vander Weit, stated clerk

Overture 29: Improve Opening Session of Synod by Amending Rules for Synodical Procedure I, D, 3 and I, D, 4 and Preparing List of Nominees

I. Background

Though delegation to synod is a rewarding experience, the initial session generally has a negative impact on first-time delegates. The procedures used to elect officers are unnecessarily cumbersome, and considerable time is wasted. Synod needs to find ways to exercise better stewardship of time and talent during this session.

A. Balloting

Currently, synodical rules obligate the president pro tem to read the names of all delegates who receive even one vote during balloting for officers. This procedure is terribly inefficient. It would be far better for the president pro tem to read the highest numbers of votes, to ask for a motion to include on the next ballot the people represented by those numbers, and then to read the names of people when those numbers have been approved.

For example, at Synod 1994 the vice president was elected by approximately 125 of the 184 delegates. Instead of announcing his election and the next highest numbers, the president pro tem read the names of every person who had received a vote.

The current system could be improved by the adjustments suggested above. It could also be improved by the presentation of a slate of nominees to fill the officer positions. Nominees for other positions are submitted to the delegates for election, but no nominees are ever submitted for officers. The emphasis falls on popularity, not on giftedness. Not surprisingly, elders are rarely elected to be officers even though elders serve well in business as board chairmen and in the church as stated clerks.

Even if our four officers continue to be clergy, the delegates would be well served by a nominating process. Currently, information about potential officers is circulated via word of mouth or a "campaign" by a delegate himself. A nominating process would give accurate information to all delegates and a legitimate forum through which a minister or an elder could express his desire to serve synod as an officer.

Nomination could be accomplished in two ways. Currently, the Program Committee forms the advisory committees and appoints officers for each committee, subject to the approval of synod. This committee could also formulate a list of officer nominees and information about each nominee and send it with the advisory-committee information. This procedure has a number of liabilities: it can easily be perceived as "top down," and it assumes that the Program Committee will know the giftedness of all synodical delegates.

It would be better to send a nomination form to each delegate along with the other synodical materials being sent to him. A delegate could then submit a form on his own initiative, or delegates could be encouraged by their classical delegation to do so. Delegates from one classis could also encourage delegates from another classis to submit a form. Nominees could indicate their interest in serving in one or more of the four offices. All nominees would need to indicate their willingness to serve.

The deadline for the submission of nomination forms would be two weeks before synod so the general secretary's office could compile the list of nominees. Since nominating speeches on the floor of synod would prejudice this process, no nominees could be nominated after the nomination deadline.

B. Effective use of ballot-counting time

The balloting process is only one difficulty encountered at the first session. The other is the time wasted while ballots are counted. Though there is a limited number of things that can be done because synod is just beginning, the following are ways that ballot-counting time could be used more effectively:

1. Announcements that are made at the beginning of every synod could be made.
2. The general secretary could lead the delegates through the balloting process used to fill open positions on denominational boards and committees.
3. The general secretary could probably suggest other items of business that could be covered at this time. The fact that some business would be conducted even before clerks are elected to take minutes is not a concern. Currently, the secretary of the general secretary takes minutes until the clerks are elected. The same would be true under any adjustments synod chooses to make.

Currently, the president pro tem does not turn over the chairmanship of synod to the newly elected president until all four officers are elected. Since business will be conducted during the balloting process, it would be better for the newly elected president to assume the chairmanship as soon as he is elected. He could thank the president pro tem for his service and welcome the other officers to the rostrum as they are elected.

II. Overture

Classis Lake Erie overtures synod

- A. To amend the last part of Rule I, D, 3 (cf. Rules for Synodical Procedure, p. 65) from:

In conducting the election of officers of synod, the results of the balloting (names and number of votes) shall be revealed at every step in the election procedures.

to:

At each step in the election process, the numbers of votes shall be read, and synod shall decide which numbers shall be included on the next ballot. After that decision has been made, the names corresponding to the numbers shall be read in alphabetical order.

Ground: The balloting procedure needs to be streamlined.

B. To prepare a list of nominees from which synodical officers will be elected. This procedure will be used for a trial period of five years and will be evaluated by the Board of Trustees at Synod 2000. The following procedure shall be used:

1. A nomination form shall be sent to each delegate along with the other synodical material.
2. Nominees shall return forms to the office of the general secretary no later than two weeks before synod begins. (No nominations will be accepted on the floor of synod.)
3. A list of nominees shall be available to each delegate at the first session of synod.

Grounds:

- a. This procedure will provide a way whereby interested and gifted nominees will be known to all delegates.
- b. This procedure increases the possibility of utilizing the gifts of qualified elders.

C. To instruct the Board of Trustees, in consultation with the general secretary, to suggest appropriate items of business to be handled during the balloting process.

Ground: Time during the first session of synod can and should be used more efficiently.

D. Amend Rule I, D, 4 (cf. Rules for Synodical Procedure, p. 65)

from:

The president pro tem shall thereupon request the elected officers to take their places upon the rostrum and introduce the president and the other officers to the assembly.

to:

The president pro tem shall introduce the president to the assembly as soon as he is elected. The president shall take his place on the rostrum, thank the president pro tem for his services, and introduce the other officers to the assembly as they are elected.

Ground: Since some business will be conducted during the balloting process, it is more appropriate for the newly elected president to chair the meeting.

Classis Lake Erie

George Vander Weit, stated clerk

Overture 30: Change the Name of the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA

I. Background

The name *Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church in North America* originated when the CRC became incorporated and the long-standing Synodical Interim Committee (SIC) was given a board-of-trustees function for legal purposes.

In 1974 the Christian Reformed Church became legally incorporated as a denomination (distinct from local-church incorporation) in the state of Michigan. Synod 1974 approved the newly proposed "Articles of Incorporation and By-Laws of the new corporation, the Christian Reformed Church in North America." Article X of the bylaws specified that "whenever it is necessary that the denomination deal with or report to any governmental authority or agency, the Synodical Interim Committee shall be the Board of Trustees of the corporation for all legal purposes" (*Acts of Synod 1974*, pp. 49, 410). "On October 3, 1974 the corporation's Board of Trustees consisting of all members of the Synodical Interim Committee (Article X of By-Laws) held its organizational meeting" (*Acts of Synod 1975*, p. 378).

Later a section on the corporate function of the SIC was introduced into the rules of the SIC. It included this statement: "The members of the Synodical Interim Committee shall serve as the Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church in North America" (*Acts of Synod 1981*, p. 552). When the CRC was incorporated in Canada in 1980, this corporate function was also present, and the Christian Reformed Church in North America—Ontario Corporation became legally distinct from the Christian Reformed Church in North America—Michigan Corporation.

Recognizing its corporate function, the SIC usually began its reports in the *Agenda for Synod* (from 1982 to 1993) as follows: "The Synodical Interim Committee, serving corporately as the Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church in North America . . ." (see *Agenda for Synod 1982*, p. 300).

Synod 1991 adopted the Strategic Plan for Organizational Restructuring of the Agencies of the Christian Reformed Church in North America (*Acts of Synod 1991*, pp. 619-33, 780). Included in this restructuring plan was an expanded mandate for the Synodical Interim Committee. In addition to its synodical-interim and corporate functions, the SIC was given the task of managing synodical ministries in an integrated and coordinated way (pp. 623-26). In their corporate function, members of the SIC then began to be referred to as "directors" of the U.S. and Canadian corporate entities known as the CRCNA (pp. 624-25).

Since the SIC mandate had been expanded, the name *Synodical Interim Committee* no longer adequately described the functions of this committee, although the name was retained for two more years. In 1993 the name of the SIC was formally changed to the *Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church in North America*. This change occurred in a revision of the SIC constitution when synod provisionally adopted the Constitution of the Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church in North America (*Acts of Synod 1993*, pp. 342-53, 583). What was formerly a name for the SIC in its narrow legal, corporate function thereby became the official ecclesiastical name of this committee. The first Board of Trustees Report to synod appeared with the new name in *Agenda for Synod 1994*.

II. Overture

Classis Chicago South overtures synod to change the name *Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church in North America* (see title and Art. 1 of its constitution, *Acts of Synod 1993*, pp. 342-43) to a name that more appropriately reflects the legitimate functions of this entity.

Grounds:

- A. The Board of Trustees of the CRCNA is primarily an *ecclesiastical* entity and only secondarily a *legal* corporate entity. The ecclesiastical should not be confused with the legal. Nonecclesiastical names should be avoided in designating what is ecclesiastical. The regular name of this entity in its full ecclesiastical functions should not be the legal name formerly used only to designate its narrow corporate function. The legal name should not be expanded to cover its ecclesiastical functions. As an *ecclesiastical* term, *Board of Trustees* is foreign to our Reformed tradition of church government and its principles of church polity.
- B. The name *Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church in North America* is too broad and wrongly gives the impression that this board has authority over the *whole* CRC, its joint denominational ministries as well as classical and local-church ministries. The mandate of this board, however, is much more limited than the name suggests. Its mandate includes synodical-interim and corporate functions as well as authority, under synod, over the "mission agencies, the service committees, and educational institutions established by synod" (*Acts of Synod 1993*, p. 343). It has no authority over synod, classes, or local congregations.
- C. The name *Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church in North America* gives the impression that the ecclesiastical structure of the CRC has become hierarchical. The name of this board should instead suggest that it is a servant of synod.
- D. Other names that are more appropriate, more limited in scope, and more ecclesiastical in character are available, for example, *Synodical Ministries Committee* or *Board of Denominational Ministries*.
- E. Since members of the board in their legal corporate functions are now referred to as *directors*, it is no longer necessary to use the designation *Board of Trustees* for this function. If, for some legal reason, it should be necessary to do so, the formerly used description ("serving corporately as the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA") would adequately serve this purpose.
- F. The Constitution of the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA was only provisionally approved by Synod 1993 (*Acts of Synod 1993*, p. 583), so improvements such as a name change are possible and desirable before adoption of the constitution by Synod 1996.

Classis Chicago South

Henry B. Vanden Heuvel, stated clerk

Overture 31: Include Ethnic Advisers at Synod

I. Introduction

The CRC espouses the beauty of nations coming to the Lord Jesus Christ through and in the CRC. It claims a vision for diversity in the church, for the all-nations character of the church, for the beauty of many colors and cultures in the church, and this vision is well grounded.

However, at Synod 1994 there was 1 delegate who is Native American; there was 1 who is Hispanic; there was 1 Asian. There were 181 other delegates who are white, most of them Dutch.

At Synod 1994, when the proposed size of the new Pastoral Ministries board was debated and when the Board of Home Missions proposed adding two ethnic-minority persons to the board, there were statements made (both by those against enlargement and by those for it) about the need to enroll persons of the nations on our boards. Both efforts to enlarge minority participation by increasing board sizes were defeated, however.

There is, we believe, a genuine desire in the CRC to be inclusive. But inclusivity has not happened yet, nor is there a sure plan for it to happen. We want to propose a plan, based on scriptural principles, which will lead, we believe, to inclusivity on the various boards and, eventually, in the normal course of events, to inclusivity at synod itself.

From the mouths of the minorities there is a clear though gentle and soft voice that calls for inclusion (cf. the speeches at the Saturday morning, 18 June 1994 session). Stated another way, there is a sense of being discriminated against.

It is essential that the church hear this voice. To hear it is not to panic or to get on the defensive. The church can learn from the marvelously succinct story of how the New Testament church responded to a similar voice. Acts 6 tells the story. The grounds are there. The action plan is described. A decision, made quickly, is carried out. We can do the same.

II. Overture

Classis Chicago South overtures synod to include a minimum of ten members from the various ethnic communities in the CRC to serve as advisers to synod. Their function will be to help synod be alert to the perspectives of the nations. They will attend plenary sessions of synod and be assigned to each of the advisory committees of synod, where they will have the privilege of the floor but will not vote.

Grounds:

- A. There is clear precedent in Scripture, based on a nearly parallel situation (Acts 6). When discrimination was alleged, the church appointed deacons indigenous to the discriminated-against community.
- B. Several of the boards of the CRC have expressly stated their desire to include minorities.
- C. Several of the minority members of the CRC have expressly stated that they yearn to be at the table of policy and decision making at the synodical level.

- D. It is not the practice of CRC boards or of synod itself to establish a quota system guaranteeing proportionate representation. Another, more biblically compelling way can guide us.
- E. Attendance and participation at synod and on its advisory committees will be an effective training ground for persons from the nations to become so conversant with CRC policies and practices that delegation to synod and/or appointment to boards will be quickly forthcoming.

Classis Chicago South

Henry Vanden Heuvel, stated clerk

Overture 32: Postpone Final Approval of Mission and Vision Statement

I. Background of the vision statement

In the spring of 1990 the Interagency Advisory Council endorsed in principle the first draft of a strategic plan for the agencies of the CRC. To that end the agencies worked together "to develop a missions statement, a statement of goals, and strategies to be followed in the achievement of these goals." A brief "vision statement" was then formulated by the agencies (*Agenda for Synod 1991*, pp. 214-15).

Synod 1991 adopted a plan for organizational restructuring of the agencies of the CRC which expressed the need for a "vision for denominational ministries." This plan noted that one of the key concepts that would help shape the vision of the CRC is that such a vision "is shared by all of the churches and the agencies of the denomination and moves the church toward a common mission and strategy for ministry." It also noted that there were several mission and/or vision statements then in use which could serve as models for the development "of a single statement for the denominational agencies" (*Acts of Synod 1991*, pp. 621-22). In this same plan the Synodical Interim Committee (SIC) was given the task of "developing and implementing a strategic denominational ministries and agencies plan" to be used "as the basis for managing the planning, coordinating, and integrating of the work of all ministries and agencies" (*Acts of Synod 1991*, p. 626). "Denominational ministries" here refers to the synodically supervised ministries, not classical or local-church ministries. As part of the process to develop this strategic denominational ministries and agencies plan, Synod 1991 also instructed the SIC to "instruct the executive director of ministries to develop in consultation with all agencies, definitive mission and vision statements which will guide the ministries of the denomination" (*Acts of Synod 1991*, p. 781).

As the process resulting from the actions of Synod 1991 developed, it became apparent that the proposed vision statement was seen by the SIC as applying to the denomination as a whole and not just to the denominational agencies and ministries. Thus the general secretary's report to Synod 1993 mentioned SIC's plans to devote the first day of this synod to focusing on ministry in order that delegates might "develop together a common vision and a sense of ownership with respect to the ministries" of the CRCNA and might "participate in shaping a vision and a strategic plan for the denomination" (*Agenda for Synod 1993*, p. 28; cf. p. 39; emphasis added). On the first afternoon of Synod 1993, presentations were made on the ministries of the CRC; these were followed by group meetings that

focused on "the mission and needs of the church" (*Acts of Synod 1993*, p. 482). No recommendations regarding the results of these sessions were adopted by this synod.

During the course of 1993-1994 the Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church (formerly SIC) held twenty-seven listening conferences throughout the denomination to solicit input into the denominational strategic-planning process from grass-roots CRC membership. The information and insight gathered at these sessions, along with that provided by Synod 1993 (first session) and the agency directors, became the basis for the newly proposed vision statement (*Agenda for Synod 1994*, p. 33). Produced at a planning conference held in April 1994, this new statement was intended to be presented to Synod 1994 delegates so that they might "discuss and refine (but not yet adopt) the proposed vision and the proposed goals for the ministry of the denomination" (emphasis added). The Board of Trustees' report to synod adds, "It is our intent to circulate the synodically refined vision statement and ministry goals throughout the denomination before bringing them to Synod 1995 for final approval. It is a wonderful opportunity and an appropriate time for the CRC to refocus her ministry vision . . ." (*Agenda for Synod 1994*, p. 33).

In the third session of Synod 1994 the executive director of ministries introduced synod to "the proposed denominational vision statement" (*Acts of Synod 1994*, p. 432). Copies of the document, titled "Catch the Vision: Developing a Vision Statement for the Ministries of the Christian Reformed Church in North America," were distributed to delegates. A brief informal time for comments followed. Then Synod 1994 adopted recommendations "that synod agree to submit the 'Catch the Vision' materials to the churches for their discussion and comments in anticipation of possible action at Synod 1995" and that another document, titled "The Christian Reformed Church: Toward a New Vision," be referred to the Board of Trustees for the purpose of integration into the "Catch the Vision" document (*Acts of Synod 1994*, p. 432).

It may be noted that, although the full title of the "Catch the Vision" document specifically refers to a "vision statement for the ministries" (agencies) of the CRCNA, the content of the document clearly applies to the denomination as a whole.

The latest opportunity to respond to the vision statement was during the second phase of listening conferences, held in 1994 and 1995 throughout the denomination. Interested CRC members and local council representatives were invited to attend these conferences and give their reactions to a newly revised version of the vision statement. The document there presented, described as "a new 'Mission and Vision Statement' for the Christian Reformed Church" and titled "The CRC in the Future: Who We Are . . . Where God Is Leading Us," was not provided (except by special request) to councils or church members in advance. According to a sheet distributed at these conferences, "the purpose of the listening conference is to determine whether the Mission and Vision Statement reflects what the membership of the CRC desires the church to achieve . . ." (emphasis added). The goal is to present a final version, based on input from these listening conferences, to Synod 1995 for approval.

Two concluding observations may be made. First, though the original mandate from Synod 1991, which began this process, called only for development of a "strategic denominational ministries and agencies plan," four years later (without a change in this mandate) the resulting "Mission and Vision

Statement" has become denomination-wide in scope. Second, other than the second phase of listening conferences, no opportunity has been given to local CRC councils to study the "Mission and Vision Statement" and develop formal responses, notwithstanding the decision of Synod 1994 cited above.

II. Overture

Classis Chicago South overtures synod to delay final action on the new "Mission and Vision Statement" until 1996 so that local CRC councils may have the opportunity to have direct input into the formulation of this statement.

Grounds:

- A. The process by which the "Mission and Vision Statement" has developed thus far reveals that it is intended to function not only as a vision statement for the denominational agencies and committees, but also as a vision statement for the whole denomination, including local-church ministries.
- B. Since this will be a vision statement for the whole denomination, the regular ecclesiastical channels should be followed in developing its final formulation. Synod 1994 indeed decided "to submit the 'Catch the Vision' materials *to the churches* for their discussion and comments in anticipation of possible action at Synod 1995" (*Acts of Synod 1994*, p. 432; emphasis added). This implies that local church councils should directly have the opportunity for input into the formulation of the vision statement. Grass-roots input from the second phase of listening conferences does not adequately fulfill the requirements of this synodical decision.
- C. Although local church councils were invited to send representatives to the area listening conferences, copies of the latest version of the "Mission and Vision Statement" were not sent directly to councils for their input.
- D. It would be a healthy exercise for local CRC councils to discuss and have input into the formulation of the vision statement as a way of sharpening their own vision for local-church ministry.

Classis Chicago South
Henry Vanden Heuvel, stated clerk

Overture 33: Allow Canadian Churches to Deduct Ministry Share for Home Missions

Classis Alberta North overtures synod to allow the Canadian Christian Reformed churches to deduct the amount assessed for Indian ministries by the Council of the Christian Reformed Churches in Canada from the ministry-share assessed by synod for Home Missions.

Grounds:

1. The synodical Home Missions ministry share is providing financial support for Indian missions *only* in the United States.
2. The Canadian Christian Reformed churches are assessed an *additional* ministry share for Indian ministries in Canada.

Classis Alberta North
Nicholas B. Knoppers, stated clerk

Overture 34: Reject the Recommendations of the Committee to Study Structure for Ministry in Canada

I. Background

Synod 1990 considered several overtures from Canadian classes asking for a regional-synod structure in the Christian Reformed Church. Synod did not accede to these overtures, but instead it appointed a committee to "review and study the issues related to regional synods," which reported to Synod 1993 with its recommendations (*Agenda for Synod 1993*, pp. 247-74). Synod 1993 declared that "the introduction of regional synods is not advisable at the present time." It did, however, approve of a change in Church Order Article 44 to allow classes to engage in matters of mutual concern by organizing themselves into ecclesiastical assemblies to function at the level of classis, with freedom to determine the delegation from the constituent classes and the frequency of meetings. This assembly's authority, jurisdiction, and mandate shall be approved by synod. It shall have direct access to synod in all matters pertaining to its mandate (*Acts of Synod 1993*, pp. 572-76, Art. 87). Synod 1994 ratified this proposed change (*Acts of Synod 1994*, p. 434). One purpose of synod's decision was to allow the Council of the Christian Reformed Churches in Canada (CCRCC) to more fully integrate into the ministry structure of the denomination.

Synod 1993 also appointed a committee from the Canadian classes to develop a proposal for a more effective structure for ministry in Canada in light of the anticipated ratification of Article 44-b of the Church Order. This committee is coming to Synod 1995 with its recommendations. Although we do believe that the Canadian churches face unique problems and challenges for ministry within the structure of the Christian Reformed Church, we do not believe that the committee's recommendations are in the best interest of the denomination. Its view is that all three major recommendations must stand or fall together. Adoption of these three recommendations would, however, create more concerns for many of the churches in our denomination. If the committee's proposals are adopted, many churches may again reconsider their affiliation with the CRC.

II. Overture

Classis of the Heartland overtures synod not to adopt the recommendations of the Committee to Study Structure for Ministry in Canada.

Grounds:

- A. Integrating deacons and diaconal ministries into the governance of the denomination would severely weaken and in essence reverse the decision that Synod 1994 made concerning women in the offices of minister, elder, and evangelist. Church Order 3-b allows women to serve as deacons. If a minister, an elder, and a deacon were delegated to classis or synod, it is possible that women would be seated among the delegates.
- B. Synod should not put the churches in a position of compromising their commitment to the truth of God's Word. Many churches would have to consider their willingness to participate in the broader assemblies if women deacons could be delegated to them.
- C. While it is possible that integrating CCRCC ministries into the denominational ministry-share structure would lessen the burden of ministry

shares for Canadian churches and classes, it may very well create more problems in ministry-share collection from other regions of the denomination. Many churches are at present struggling to fulfill local, classical, and denominational commitments. Some churches are not collecting for, or are withholding, denominational ministry shares because of unbiblical teachings and practices that are being allowed and tolerated in the CRC (e.g., women in office, historicity of Genesis, etc.). Adopting all of the recommendations of the Committee to Study Structure for Ministry in Canada could compound the problem of collecting denominational ministry shares. This point is made not to diminish the importance of or opportunities for ministry in Canada but to offer a possible consequence of implementing some of these recommendations.

- D. The committee states that all three of its recommendations stand or fall together. For this reason we believe synod should not adopt the recommendations of this committee. Integrating deacons and diaconal ministries into the governance of the denomination would only serve to undermine the clear teaching of Scripture and the biblical decision of Synod 1994 concerning women in office (*Acts of Synod 1994*, pp. 513-17, Art. 80). Adoption of these recommendations would serve only to further alienate some of the churches of the denomination.

Classis of the Heartland
Jack M. Gray, stated clerk

Overture 35: Consider Suggestions Before Adopting Recommendations of Committee to Study Structure for Ministry in Canada

I. Structure for ministry in Canada

We are encouraged that the report on the structure for ministry in Canada is before us and that we are engaged as a denomination in the process of thinking about effective ministry in Canada. The report is a significant step in the right direction.

Since the report recommends that we Canadians lose the CCRCC, it needs to be noted that in that loss we stand to lose an effective vehicle for coordinating the ministries of the CRC in Canada and an integrated and effective diaconal involvement in those ministries.

II. Overture

Classis Toronto overtures synod to consider the following recommendations before adopting the recommendations of the Committee to Study Structure for Ministry in Canada:

A. That the position description for the separate executive director of ministries (EDM) in Canada explicitly express that the Canadian EDM will have a job description similar to that of the U.S. EDM and will be on a par with the EDM in the U.S.A. (see report, III, B, 2).

B. That two national boards be created for a number of the denominational ministries (as is the case presently for CRWRC). While there will be joint

ventures on which the two boards act together, a certain autonomy needs to be allowed for a distinct Canadian ministry by the Canadian CRC and its agencies.

C. That, if synod does not adopt the recommendation to include deacons in all ecclesiastical assemblies as recommended, the following recommendations be enacted:

1. That the Canadian Board of Trustees have adequate diaconal representation and that all other denominational agencies and boards include diaconal representation.
2. That councils in Canada, under the principle of local option, be allowed to delegate a pastor, an elder, and a deacon to classis as regular delegates and that classes be allowed to seat deacon delegates regularly and not just by way of exception. In a church without a pastor, two elders and a deacon would be delegated.
3. That synod appoint a study committee
 - a. To review the place of the deacon in ecclesiastical assemblies and equality of office in the CRC.
 - b. To discern and cite the appropriate grounds for deacons' being included in a wholistic word/deed ministry.
 - c. To prepare the required Church Order changes to allow for deacon delegates to major assemblies.

D. That the wording of IV, B of the Canadian ministry-structure report be changed from "with the concurrence of the Council of the Christian Reformed Churches in Canada" to "with the full consultation and agreement of the Council of the Christian Reformed Churches in Canada and all denominational agencies and boards in Canada"

E. That there be an occasion before this matter comes up for discussion on the floor of synod for all the delegates from Canada to come together for a time of reflection and concentrated effort to bring to synod unitedly the mutual concerns of Canadians.

F. That diaconal representatives be available to the gathering of Canadian delegates (described in E above) and to the advisory committee assigned to review and make recommendation to synod on the report of the Committee to Study Structure for Ministry in Canada.

Classis Toronto

John Tenyenhuis, stated clerk

Overture 36: Reject Recommendation III, A of the Committee to Study Structure for Ministry in Canada

I. Background

Whereas the Council of Christian Reformed Churches in Canada (CCRCC) is the only totally Canadian institution within the denominational structures, and

Whereas approximately 25 percent of the delegates to synod represent Canadian churches, the remaining delegates representing U.S. churches,

It is submitted that to disband the CCRCC would be to eliminate the only Canadian institution capable of independent Canadian action.

The proposal to enlarge the number of Canadian members on the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA to eleven does not address the more serious imbalance that exists between Canadian and U.S. representation at synod. The imbalance at synod has produced negative consequences for Canadian proposals and initiatives. This imbalance is best addressed by an enhanced CCRCC.

II. Overture

First Christian Reformed Church of Toronto, Ontario, overtures synod

A. To reject Recommendation A of the Committee to Study Structure for Ministry in Canada.

B. To give the CCRCC sole responsibility for Home Missions Canada and all chaplaincy work, race relations, and disability concerns in Canada.

Grounds:

1. This work takes place in Canada, deals with Canadian institutions, and is and should be subject to Canadian laws and interests.
2. Recommendation A of the committee does not adequately address Canadian concerns.

C. To approve subsidiary Recommendations A, 2, A, 3, and A, 4 of the committee.

D. To give the CCRCC sole responsibility for determining and setting the denominational ministry shares for Canadian churches with respect to Home Missions, Chaplaincy, SCORR, and Disability Concerns with the intent that Canadian churches entirely support these ministries in Canada.

E. To entrust the funding of these same ministries (D above) in the U.S. solely to the U.S. churches.

Ground: This is the logical result of Recommendation B of this overture.

F. To adopt Recommendation B of the committee.

G. To amend subsidiary Recommendation B, 3 of the committee by adding the following:

That such regular joint meetings be attended by an equal number of persons from Canada and the U.S. and that votes be taken on the basis of equal representation.

H. Not to adopt subsidiary Recommendation B, 4 of the committee but in place thereof to adopt the following:

That all activities and finances of all CRC independently chartered and registered charitable agencies in Canada be reported separately to synod and that all such agencies be given direct access to synod.

Council of First CRC, Toronto, ON

Peter Dale, clerk

Note: This overture was submitted to Classis Toronto, which endorsed the sentiment of the overture but did not adopt the overture as its own.

Overture 37: Adopt Recommendations III, A and III, B of the Committee to Study Structure for Ministry in Canada; Appoint Study Committee re Integrating Deacons

Classis Minnesota North overtures synod

- A. To adopt and implement Recommendations III, A and III, B of the Committee to Study Structure for Ministry in Canada.
- B. Not to accede, at this time, to Recommendation III, C of the committee, which proposes changing Church Order Articles 40-a and 45 to provide diaconal representation at major assemblies.
- C. To appoint a committee to study the biblical and confessional warrant for, the feasibility of, and the different possible ways of integrating deacons and diaconal ministries into the governance of the denomination.

Grounds:

1. The current separation of ministries run by the CCRCC from those administered by the rest of the denomination has led to an isolation of certain Canadian ministries, e.g., Indian and Native ministry in Canada.
2. Integration, as recommended by the committee, would answer the desire of Canadian churches that have repeatedly been asking for a regional synod.
3. Our historical and present practice, based on sound biblical and confessional interpretation, places the burden of ruling the church and the consideration of doctrine and church policy upon the pastors and elders (cf. Acts 15:6; Titus 1:5-9). Any proposal to change this practice needs thorough discussion, study, and consensus.

Classis Minnesota North
Anthony Schweitzer, stated clerk

Overture 38: Reject Recommendations III, A and III, B of the Committee to Study Structure for Ministry in Canada

I. Introduction

In response to reactions on a report to Synod 1993 which reflected on the request of seven Canadian classes for forming a Canadian regional synod, Synod 1993 appointed the Committee to Study Structure for Ministry in Canada. Its report has been sent to the churches for study.

The report acknowledges the amount of work done by the committee's relatively small membership. It also recognizes a list of what it calls "Missed opportunities for effective ministry in Canada" as well as the CCRCC's limited authority and mandate to fill the need in Canada.

The report ignores the fact that Canada and the U.S.A. are two different countries with unique laws and regulations. It affirms, instead, that the real problem is the fragmented and unintegrated work of the denomination in Canada, a problem which administratively should be possible to solve in the present structure. The real challenge, according to the report, is to get the denomination as a whole to take ministry in Canada seriously. The report fails

to address the keenly felt and clearly expressed need of the Canadian churches as was indicated in the overtures to Synod 1990 from seven Canadian classes.

As history and culture have formed and shaped the specific characters and worldviews of Canada as well as the U.S.A., and their distinct needs, so each will continue to be formed and shaped. One denomination will not be able to serve both parts of the CRC. It will either be geared to the needs of the one or the other. The unique identity of Canada and its needs for ministry in the twenty-first century can be met only with the formation of an indigenous Canadian denomination which is aware of uniquely Canadian issues and will be able to address these as a Canadian denomination in a Canadian setting.

The report underestimates this need when it states, "A strong ministry in Canada requires a more substantial denominational administrative presence in Canada." Our reason for believing that the report underestimates the real needs is that the executive director of ministries for Canada will be responsible to synod, whose two-thirds majority of delegates are not Canadian and whose offices are located outside Canadian borders, in Grand Rapids.

We wish to join the report in emphasizing the church's unity in Christ. Our unity in Christ, however, does not rest in one cross-boundary denomination but in ministering shoulder to shoulder under Christ's cross, in the unique places the Lord calls us. According to the original overtures, a stringent application of Church Order to such an important issue as the question of full denominational status for the Christian Reformed churches in Canada hampers the healthy development of such ministry for the Canadian churches and keeps it remote from its roots.

II. Overture

Classis Eastern Canada overtures synod

A. Not to accept the committee's first major recommendation, which reads as follows: "that synod propose to the next meeting of the CCRCC a plan to integrate the CCRCC's present ministries into appropriate synodically governed denominational structures and allow the CCRCC to return its present mandate to synod and to disband."

B. To reject the second major recommendation, which reads, "that synod instruct its Board of Trustees . . . and denominational support services to establish separate Canadian and U.S. boards and administrative structures to direct and operate their ministries in each country and, further, to set up joint agreements to engage in ministry projects that are best done in partnership."

Ground: The recommendations fail to address the concerns of the Canadian churches as expressed in the study report itself.

Classis Eastern Canada
James Kooistra, stated clerk

Overture 39: Implement in Canada the Formation of a Regional Synod

Classis Eastern Canada overtures synod to undertake steps to implement in Canada the formation of a regional synod of the Christian Reformed Church.

Grounds:

1. The Canadian churches have indicated their desire to be organized into a regional synod because a regional synod would give them the structure they need to minister independently in Canada, within the denomination.
2. A negative reaction to the proposal "to integrate the CCRCC's ministries and to return its mandate to synod" may affect the unity of the church.

Classis Eastern Canada

James Kooistra, stated clerk

Overture 40: Reject Proposal to Delegate Deacons to Major Assemblies; Organize Regional and Denominational Deacon Conferences

The consistory of Transcona CRC, Winnipeg, Manitoba, overtures synod

A. To uphold the present practice of the Christian Reformed Church to delegate only elders and ministers to meetings of classis and synod and thus not accede to the Committee to Study Structure for Ministry in Canada's proposed change in Church Order Articles 40-a and 45 to include deacon delegates in the major assemblies.

Grounds:

1. Scripture in Acts 15:6 shows the apostles and elders alone meeting to consider questions of doctrine and church policy. St. Paul instructs that elders are to be ordained for the purpose of ruling the church (Titus 1:5-9).
2. The study committee nowhere shows any scriptural warrant for its proposed innovation.
3. Our Reformed confessions nowhere lay the burden of ecclesiastical authority in the major assemblies upon the deacons.
4. Delegating deacons to major assemblies will create tension and disunity in the denomination, as many congregations do not recognize the validity of women serving in the diaconate.

Synod 1984 (Art. 88) made women deacons a local matter. To send deacons to major assemblies would make this a classical or denominational matter.

Synod 1984 (Art. 101) declares, "The work of women as deacons is to be distinguished from that of elders." To send deacons to major assemblies is to blur the distinctions between the several offices of the church.

5. There is no report of any groundswell of desire among deacons themselves to take up the additional burden of attending major assemblies.

B. To organize official regional and denominational diaconal conferences to deal with diaconal matters (for example, CRWRC) if it can determine a genuine and widespread interest among deacons.

Grounds:

1. Scripture in Acts 6:1-7 records that the ministry of mercy belongs to the deacons.
2. Synod 1961 suggested the organization of such diaconal conferences, which has not yet been done on a denominational level.

Consistory of Transcona CRC, Winnipeg, MB
Leonard Menheer, clerk

Note: This overture was submitted to Classis Minnesota North but was not adopted.

Overture 41: Provide Annually Updated Index of Synodical Decisions on Computer Disk

Classis Alberta North overtures synod to provide an annually updated index of synodical decisions on computer disk.

Ground: Most pastors and churches have a fairly good collection of *Agenda for Synod* and *Acts of Synod* from past years for reference. The synodical studies contained therein have taken up much time and thought. If they were more readily available, pastors and churches would likely use them more. Printed indexes seem to come out only sporadically and are outdated in one year. Computer diskettes would cost less to produce than printed materials and would be easier to use and to update.

Classis Alberta North,
Nicholas B. Knoppers, stated clerk

Overture 42: Appoint Committee to Study Feasibility of Biennial Synods

The council of Immanuel CRC, Hamilton, Ontario, overtures synod to appoint a study committee to study the feasibility of biennial synods.

Grounds:

1. Candidates for ministry could be processed by way of the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA.
2. New denominational structure makes such a change feasible.
3. Time and human resources would be saved.
4. Redundancy of reports from standing committees would be reduced.
5. Financial savings would be realized.

Council of Immanuel CRC, Hamilton, ON
Dick Mostert, clerk

Note: This overture was submitted to Classis Hamilton but was not adopted.

Overture 43: Remind Executive Director of Ministries and the Board of Trustees That Appointing Study Committees Is the Work of Synod

I. Background

Because many believed that our denominational ministry could be enhanced by joint strategic planning and coordination of goals, an executive director of ministries and a stronger Board of Trustees were proposed. Some objected to this change because they were afraid synod would lose its authority and a "superboard" would run the church. The constitution of the Board of Trustees and the job description of the executive director of ministries were formulated with that concern in mind.

Classis Lake Erie believes that increased coordination has taken place and is grateful for the work of the executive director of ministries and the Board of Trustees. We are also concerned that a dangerous precedent has been/is being set by the task force appointed to study and propose new policy for the Fund for Smaller Churches program.

This task force was appointed in 1992 by the executive director of ministries because of "some concern about the propriety of synod's policies governing the Fund for Smaller Churches." Because of this concern, the executive director of ministries "requested representatives of both the FSC committee and Christian Reformed Home Missions to study the matter of FSC support and to recommend appropriate policy changes for consideration by SIC [Synodical Interim Committee, now the Board of Trustees] and synod" (*Acts of Synod 1993*, p. 340). The task force completed a draft report on April 15, 1993, and submitted it to the Board of Trustees. The board approved the executive director of ministries' appointment of the task force and its mandate, asked the task force to serve as a subcommittee of the board, received the task force's April 15 report as information, and asked the task force to report back to the board in sufficient time so the board could include its recommendations in the *Agenda for Synod 1994*. It also asked the executive director of ministries to inform Synod 1993 that a study review of the Fund for Smaller Churches was underway (*Acts of Synod 1993*, p. 340).

We find this highly irregular. The position description of the executive director of ministries asks him to "provide the Board with analyses and reviews of programs, and make recommendations with respect to the distribution of the resources of the denomination" (*Acts of Synod 1993*, p. 357, V, C), but it does not authorize him to appoint task forces to propose changes in denominational policy. The constitution of the Board of Trustees calls it to "serve synod with analyses, reviews, and recommendations with respect to the programs and resources of the denomination" (*Acts of Synod 1993*, p. 347, II, B, 4), but it does not authorize the board to appoint task forces to proposed changes in denominational policy. Such appointments are the responsibility of synod. In this case, Synod 1993 was simply informed "that a study review of the Fund for Smaller Churches is underway" (*Acts of Synod 1993*, p. 340).

The irregular appointment of this task force was compounded by the fact that churches and classes did not have adequate opportunity to respond to the far-reaching changes that directly affect over one hundred congregations and every classis. On December 15, 1993, the draft report was sent to congregations assisted by the Fund for Smaller Churches, and they were invited to respond at meetings held during the last week of January and the first two weeks of

February. Letters were also sent to classical home-missions committees, inviting their input on the report.

Since Classis Lake Erie would not meet until March 4, 1994, we were unable to submit any suggestions to the subcommittee by its early February deadline. In spite of that, our classical interim committee and our classical home-missions committee talked about the possibility of discussing this report at our March 4 meeting. Even this was not possible because the subcommittee report recommended to Synod 1994 would not be available until February 15, two weeks before our meeting. That report would not be given final approval until the March meeting of the Board of Trustees, a meeting held one day before our classis meeting. Thus, our classis would have no opportunity to review recommendations which propose significant changes affecting congregations in our classis and classis itself.

One of the ministers in our classis did send a letter to the executive director of ministries requesting that Synod 1994 be asked to "submit this report to the churches for study so that Synod 1995 can act on this." That letter was forwarded to the subcommittee. At our March 4 meeting we called the Board of Trustees and were informed that the request was not granted. We then overtured Synod 1994 to refer the report to the churches for study.

Synod 1994 responded affirmatively to our request but then instructed the churches to send responses to the Board of Trustees. Again, we find this procedure highly irregular. For example, this year the reports of three study committees were sent to the churches. The churches were not instructed to respond to the Board of Trustees so the board could forward the responses to the committees, which might or might not revise their reports on the basis of those responses. Instead, the churches were told to respond directly to synod, and synod itself will weigh the merits of those responses.

Apparently, all responses regarding the Fund for Smaller Churches report will be evaluated by the study committee, and a revised report will be included in the *Agenda for Synod 1995*. Once more synod will be acting on a report that the majority of classes have been unable to consider and to which it is impossible for them to respond. While a report is being formulated, study committees frequently find it beneficial to solicit the response of the church. By rule, a committee's final report is to be distributed to the churches by November 1, after which churches and classes communicate directly to synod about that report.

In another overture, Classis Lake Erie is responding directly to the substance of the report. That overture responds to the report printed in the *Agenda for Synod 1994* because we do not have any way of responding to revisions which may or may not be submitted to Synod 1995. This overture is written to register our difficulties with the process used in the study of this issue and to ask Synod 1995 to take appropriate steps to make sure that

A. Synod itself mandates study committees which affect the congregations and classes of the denomination.

B. All churches and classes have adequate opportunity to respond to the final version of any report.

As instructed by Synod 1994, we sent both of our overtures regarding the FSC task force report to the Board of Trustees, but we are also sending them directly to Synod 1995.

II. Overture

Classis Lake Erie overtures synod

A. To remind the executive director of ministries and the Board of Trustees that, although they are mandated to "serve synod with analyses, review, and recommendations with respect to the programs and resources of the denomination," it is synod's task to appoint study committees.

Ground: The authority to appoint study committees to examine synodical policy rests with synod itself.

B. To reaffirm the synodical rule that "study committee reports shall be filed with the general secretary on or before September 15 and the general secretary shall distribute them to the churches no later than November 1."

Ground: In 1994 the churches and classes received the final report of the Fund for Smaller Churches study committee in the printed synodical agenda.

Apparently, the same will happen in 1995. This procedure does not give churches, and especially classes, adequate opportunity to respond to policy changes which may significantly affect them.

Classis Lake Erie

George Vander Weit, stated clerk

Overture 44: Appoint Persons to Boards, Committees, and Synod Who Reflect the Diversity of the Church

I. Background

For many years synod has encouraged the church to utilize the gifts of women and ethnic minorities. Some positive things have resulted from such efforts. The number of women and ethnic minorities who serve on the congregational, classical, and synodical level has increased. We still have room for improvement. For example, Home Missions asked Synod 1994 to add two at-large board positions that would be filled by ethnic minorities because the classes were not supplying these people. Recently, the secretary of the Calvin Theological Seminary board notified the churches that no women serve on that board.

We are realizing that, to further express the diversity of the church, we must make very intentional efforts. For example, at Synod 1994, the Board of Trustees submitted two female nominees for a vacant position instead of submitting a male and a female. The above-mentioned action of the Board of Home Missions also illustrates intentionality in this area.

Such intentionality increasingly must characterize our decisions in all areas, including the appointment of committees. In March 1993 the Board of Trustees appointed a committee to search for a general secretary. That committee did not reflect the diversity of the denomination. Fortunately, Synod 1993 instructed the Board of Trustees "to appoint at least two or more members to the search committee to reflect ethnic and gender diversity" (*Acts of Synod 1993*, p. 533). Unfortunately, those persons were added after the committee "met to organize itself, to conduct interviews with [the current general secretary and the execu-

tive director of ministries], and to develop a schedule and plan for its search" (p. 333) and after several other meetings were held.

Synod 1994 did something very similar when it appointed a committee to clarify the meaning of the word *expound*. A number of letters were sent to the Board of Trustees encouraging it to add women to this committee since it was studying an activity in which only women were involved. The Board responded by saying that "we discussed the issue at some length and decided that it was not possible to change the action of synod in the matter. Furthermore, we determined that it was too late to add members to this committee inasmuch as the committee is under some obligation to complete its work by September 15, 1994."

Synod 1994's formation of the Committee to Study Inclusive Language for God illustrates another area that needs attention. Though this committee reflects our denomination's gender and ethnic diversity, we question whether it reflects our theological diversity. There is reason to believe that all four theologians/ministers appointed hold the same position on this issue. This is lamentable, especially when the names of competent theologians/ministers with another perspective were submitted to the synodical advisory committee that formed the committee. The committee's composition gives the church little confidence that the questions being asked in the current church world will be fairly addressed and therefore aggravates the tension and division on theological issues related to women.

We need to find a way to address these difficulties. Our history demonstrates that we cannot depend on synods, synodical delegates, or the Board of Trustees to catch/correct oversights made when committees are formed. Even if that were possible, committees have frequently completed their foundational work before these corrections are made. We must devise a better way to reflect our diversity when committees are appointed, especially since our denomination really does desire to give full recognition to the diversity with which God has blessed us.

One of the ways to do that is to ask the Board of Trustees to appoint a small subcommittee to maintain a database of gifted people who can serve in a variety of areas. In this database boards, agencies, and synods could find names of qualified persons besides those suggested by their own members. Though the committee would have no authority to approve or disapprove the nominees proposed, it would review the nominees before a committee is officially appointed and, if necessary, would suggest ways in which a proposed committee could better reflect our denomination's diversity.

II. Overture

Classis Lake Erie overtures synod to

A. Encourage our boards, agencies, and synods to include in their committees persons who reflect the gender, ethnic, and racial diversity of our denomination and, where applicable, the range of opinion that exists in our denomination on a particular matter to be studied.

B. Instruct the Board of Trustees to appoint a small subcommittee from its membership to work with boards, agencies, and synods as they appoint committees. This subcommittee shall maintain a database of gifted people who

are available to serve in a variety of areas and shall be consulted before all committee appointments are approved.

Ground: This will better ensure that committees appointed to do the work of the denomination reflect its rich diversity.

Classis Lake Erie

George Vander Weit, stated clerk

Overture 45: Appoint a New Committee to Study Inclusive Language for God

I. Background

Synod 1994 appointed a committee to study the appropriateness of using inclusive language to address God. This is an important issue in the denomination, and the prospect of a study committee found considerable favor on the floor of synod. In the synodical discussion several voices expressed dismay that feminine language would ever be used for God in any context, and other voices dissented from such an opinion. On this issue there is diversity of opinion in the denomination, and there are a number of issues that need to be discussed.

A study committee appointed to discuss these issues should represent some of the diversity of opinion. Indeed, one delegate specifically encouraged synod to include a broad range of opinions on the study committee so this issue would be fairly addressed and the church well served. Names of competent theologians and ministers with perspectives different from those articulated in overtures and published articles were suggested to the advisory committee in charge of recommending names for the study committee. Unfortunately, there is reason to believe that the four theologians/ministers appointed to the committee hold the same position on this issue.

The church will not be well served by such a committee. If the range of opinions on the committee is much narrower than the range of opinions in the denomination, the chances that the committee will find a position that will bring together the whole denomination are very much diminished. Such a committee is likely to polarize the churches even further and make it more difficult to find common ground.

Our history on another controversial issue is instructive. Synod 1970 appointed a committee to formulate a current statement of the CRC position on lodge membership. That committee presented a majority and a minority report, indicating the diversity that existed in the denomination on this issue. Synod 1972 responded to that diversity by appointing another committee entirely of one opinion. Though Synod 1974 adopted the report of that committee, Synod 1975 found it necessary to appoint yet another committee to study the same issue. In the long run the interest of the denomination was not well served by a committee stacked in favor of one point of view.

In appointing theologians and ministers to the Committee to Study Inclusive Language for God, synod has not assured the church that this subject will be fairly discussed. This is especially unfortunate in light of how divisive our discussion of theological issues pertaining to women has been. The church will have lasting confidence in a committee's recommendations only if it senses that the appointed committee reflects the range of opinion that exists in the denomination.

II. Overture

Classis Lake Erie overtures synod to appoint a new Committee to Study Inclusive Language for God.

Ground: The theologians/ministers appointed to the committee do not adequately reflect the range of opinion in the denomination on this subject, giving the church little confidence that the various issues surrounding this important subject will be raised or that the committee will bring the denomination together.

Classis Lake Erie,
George Vander Weit, stated clerk

Overture 46: Appoint a Committee to Evaluate the Provisional Constitution of the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA

Classis of the Heartland overtures synod to appoint a select committee of recognized and experienced church leaders to evaluate the provisional constitution for the trustees of the Christian Reformed Church in North America and make appropriate recommendations to Synod 1996 regarding its final adoption.

Grounds:

1. Synod 1993 recognized the need for careful evaluation of the provisional constitution when it specified a three-year trial period for the document prior to final adoption by Synod 1996.
2. While both the Board of Trustees and the agency boards will need to provide Synod 1996 with their advice, synod also would be well served with advice from discerning church leaders who are not currently involved directly in implementing the provisional constitution.
3. Appointment of such a committee by Synod 1995 allows ample time for a thorough assessment of any questions of principle or feasibility which may have arisen during the provisional period for the new constitution.

Classis of the Heartland
Jack M. Gray, stated clerk

Overture 47: Approve Formation of a Korean-Speaking Classis in California

I. Background

In October 1992, Classis California South, after receiving an overture for the formation of a separate Korean classis, appointed a committee to study this matter. In January 1993, Classis Greater Los Angeles also appointed members to this committee. The Korean Classis Study Committee consisted of two representatives from each of the two classes, two representatives from the Korean Council, and two advisers. Based on the results of its study, the committee recommended to both classes that synod be overtured to create a Korean classis. Classis California South did not adopt the recommendation; Classis Greater Los Angeles adopted it unanimously. The Appendix to this overture lists the thirteen churches desiring affiliation with the new classis. The Appendix also includes commitments made by the interested Korean churches.

II. Overture

Classis Greater Los Angeles overtures synod to approve the formation of a Korean-speaking classis out of Classes California South and Greater Los Angeles. This classis will serve Korean Christian Reformed churches in southern California, Nevada, and Hawaii. The new classis will become effective in September 1995 and will have a term limit of fifteen years.

Grounds:

A. Language and cultural differences

Many of the decision-making positions in Korean congregations are held by first-generation Korean pastors and elders. The marked difference in both language and culture between Korean-speaking and English-speaking congregations in our classis inhibits meaningful participation in classical meetings and committees by the delegates of many Korean congregations.

The difficulties in communication have been addressed by way of interpreters, simultaneous-translation equipment, and special meetings, but the results have been less than successful.

B. Capable but underutilized leadership

Most Korean pastors and elders are strong and capable leaders, but language problems have kept them from exercising these and other gifts at the classical level. There is among some of them a sense of disenfranchisement.

C. Greater sense of ownership

A Korean classis, by allowing Korean church officers and members to participate fully in the life of the denomination, would enhance their sense of ownership and would address their sense of disenfranchisement. The Korean classis would also serve as a means for a stronger Korean voice in the denomination.

D. Numerical growth

Korean congregations without denominational affiliations would be encouraged to join our denomination if they would have the possibility of participating in a Korean classis.

E. Training opportunity

Many of the Korean leaders and congregations that have joined our denomination have come out of a Presbyterian, rather than Reformed, background. They need additional training and adaptation to our Reformed system. Classical meetings and committee work which would be accessible to them in a Korean classis would help in this training and adaptation.

F. Historical precedents

Within our own denomination we have the precedent of the formation of Classis Red Mesa, established in order to do justice to the cultural needs of Native American Christian Reformed believers. Although there are many differences between the formation of Classis Red Mesa and the formation of the classis requested in this overture, the need to address ethnic and cultural differences is the same.

Other denominations, such as the Presbyterian Church in America and the Presbyterian Church U.S.A., have already established Korean classes or assemblies with term limits.

It is also worth noticing that Articles 51 and 52 of the original Church Order of Dordrecht allowed the formation of separate classes for German- and French-speaking congregations that were established in the Netherlands while also promoting close contacts among leaders of all groups.

G. Committed leadership

The Korean congregations whose requests are enclosed with this overture have sufficient mature leadership, and they have committed themselves to following the Church Order and all classical rules of procedure.

Classis Greater Los Angeles

Dick Van Weerthuisen, stated clerk

APPENDIX

Churches desiring affiliation

<i>Church</i>	<i>Classis</i>
California Cho Won	Greater Los Angeles
Chosen People	Greater Los Angeles
Faith	Greater Los Angeles
First Union Presbyterian	California South
Galilee	Greater Los Angeles
Mt. Sinai	Greater Los Angeles
Orange Dongsan	California South
Orange Hanmin	California South
Rok Won	Greater Los Angeles
So-Mang Presbyterian	California South
Torrance Glory	Greater Los Angeles
Valley Dong San	Greater Los Angeles
Valley Shinil	Greater Los Angeles

Questions and answers

The Korean Classis Study Committee formulated practical questions that had to do with the proposed Korean classis. The congregations interested in the formation of that classis gave the responses that we record below and have committed to abide by these answers.

1. Will the Korean classis be a "local" classis?

Yes, it will include only congregations located in Southern California, Nevada, and Hawaii, which is the area covered by Classes California South and Greater Los Angeles.

2. What procedure will a church use to become part of this classis?

It will be by congregational decision.

3. What will be the relationship between the proposed Korean classis and the Korean Council?

There will be no special interaction. The Korean classis will be a local body. The Korean Council is a denominational advisory body.

4. Will the Korean classis nominate delegates to the Race Relations Committee, which now has representatives from the other two classes? Will it accept Rev. Norberto Wolf as director for race relations, and will it be concerned with the relationship between the diverse churches that make up the CRC in Southern California? Will the classis be financially supportive of race-relations work?

The answers to all these questions are in the affirmative.

5. A memo dated March 19, 1993, indicated that the churches of the Korean classis will contribute to the ministry shares of the entire CRC denomination "gradually." How will this happen?

The Korean classis will develop creative ways of contributing to ministry shares. For example, Christian Reformed World Missions is now considering the possibility of recognizing the contribution of Korean congregations to foreign missions as their World Missions share.

6. Will the Korean classis expect funds from other CRC congregations in support of its classical expenses or its student-aid fund or its church-planting efforts?

The Korean classis will raise its own funds to support its classical expenses, the student-aid fund, church-planting funds, etc. The Korean classis will not expect funds from other CRC congregations.

7. There is a stated interest in exchanging ministry concerns with other classes. How can this take place?

The Korean classis will seek to have joint workshops, seminars, or celebrations with neighboring classes.

8. Will the Korean classis seek any special cultural adaptations of the Church Order?

The Korean classis will follow the standard rules of Christian Reformed Church Order. The participating Korean congregations believe they will do better when they do this in their own language.

9. How will the leadership of the new classis be chosen?

The Korean classis will have committees similar to those of neighboring classes. For example, it will have an interim committee, and the chairperson will be chosen by majority vote. It will request guidance and advice from other classes when needed.

10. How will the churches hold each other accountable? How will the ministers of the churches be held accountable for meeting their responsibilities?

The Korean classis will hold churches accountable to each other, and it will also hold ministers accountable in accordance with the Church Order. It will also send deputies to neighboring classes. The Korean classis anticipates participation in denominational boards and agencies and synod. The Korean classis will send bilingual leaders to all ecclesiastical bodies.

11. Is it clear to the Korean congregations and leaders who wish to start this classis that there must be a commitment to a term limit of fifteen years on the requested Korean classis?

The Korean classis expects to have a term limit. The next generation, which will be bilingual, will take about fifteen years to take over the

leadership from the first-generation leaders. The Korean classis will consider setting up some checkpoints after five and ten years.

12. Will the creation of the Korean classis violate our denominational vision for unity and diversity?

The creation of this Korean classis does not necessarily violate our denominational vision for unity with diversity. Some of the points mentioned earlier in the Appendix show how unity may be maintained. The need for unity is further underscored by the term limit proposed in the overture, which envisions a future organic unity.

Overture 48: Appoint an Issue-Awareness Committee

I. History

A. Acts of Synod 1977 (p. 691)

Classis Hackensack proposes that synod establish a standing Committee on Social Justice, which shall be concerned with the application of scriptural principles of social justice to current injustices and abuses of power. This committee shall not be concerned primarily with the self-interest of the Christian Reformed Church and its constituency, but shall attend primarily to the plight of the powerless, both of this country and of the world. Specifically, it shall 1) keep abreast of social justice issues; 2) prepare position papers on issues of present and pressing concern; 3) provide leadership to the members of the Christian Reformed Church, informing them concerning the issues, giving analyses of these issues, and suggesting ways in which the church can take effective political action; 4) supervise the work of a full-time representative of the denomination to the legislative bodies and agencies of the United States government, communicating with them concerning matters of social justice; and 5) seek to establish cooperative efforts toward social justice with the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council and its member churches, and with the Reformed Church in America.

The members of this committee shall be persons with expertise in political affairs and, in addition, one person representing each of the following: Board of Home Missions, Christian Reformed World Relief Committee, and Synodical Committee on Race Relations.

Supportive arguments:

1. The Scriptures provide numerous examples of and directives regarding God's demand for justice and his sending of prophets with this testimony to those in high places. (Cf. Exod. 6:10-13, Isa. 3:14, Ezek. 45:9, Dan. 4:27, Luke 3:18-20, and Acts 24:25)
2. The Committee for Contact with the Government of the Council of CR Churches in Canada provides us with a working model for the proposed Committee on Social Justice.
3. Little influence is being brought to bear by the people of the CRC in an organized way on the politically powerful forces of the United States.
4. Non-ecclesiastical organizations which may aspire to the task can only represent segments of the denomination with their viewpoints.
5. The voice of the people of our denomination can be spoken with greater unity and effectiveness if that voice is an official one.

In response to the overture, Synod 1977 appointed a one-year study committee.

B. Acts of Synod 1978 (p. 63)

Synod 1978 endorsed the following conclusions of the study committee:

- a. The matter of social justice is important for the Christian Reformed Church, involving the relationship of action by the church as an organization and action by believers as individuals and as groups.
- b. The experience and activity of other organizations functioning as part of the church organizational structure or as voluntary groups of Christians point to the need of concern and activity at the local level.
- c. A review of past actions of synod on social justice matters indicates that the synod has in the past:
 - 1) adopted positions on social issues,
 - 2) communicated its positions and views directly to government officials,
 - 3) urged lower church assemblies to act on social justice issues, and
 - 4) urged Christians to use their rights as citizens to correct social injustice.
- d. There is, in our society, great need for humble and obedient action by informed and sensitized Christians to work for social justice in the small and large communities and provincial and state government and on the national and international scenes.
- e. A Christian's concern and action for social justice is not isolated from his total life. The Scriptures reveal that seeking justice is an integral part of the Christian life.

The following recommendations were adopted by Synod 1978 (*Acts of Synod 1978*, pp. 63-64):

3. That synod urge each congregation to establish a social justice committee to gather information and to recommend action on social justice matters of local concern, and to initiate procedures for consideration of broader social justice issues at broader ecclesiastical assemblies.

Grounds:

- a. The issues of social justice are most sharply identified and demand the most direct response on the local level.
- b. This procedure is consistent with Article 28 of the Church Order which asks the church to do as much as possible on a local level before moving to a broader ecclesiastical assembly.
4. That synod through the Synodical Interim Committee, call upon its Christian Educational Institutions and agencies, its Board of Publications, CRWRC, and SCORR to enlist the skills of knowledgeable people to speak and to write publicly so that the church will be alerted to issues of social justice that challenge a Christian response.

Ground: These agencies are already in existence, and are committed to similar informational activities.

5. That synod require each denominational agency specified above to include in its annual report what has been accomplished in alerting the church to the issues of social justice.

II. Overture

Classis Pella overtures synod to appoint a small denominational standing committee named the Issue-Awareness Committee to keep abreast of social-justice issues and provide leadership to the members of the Christian Reformed Church, informing them concerning the issues, giving analyses of these issues, and suggesting ways in which the church can take effective action.

Grounds:

- A. The current requirement of Synod 1978—"That synod require each denominational agency specified above to include in its annual report what has been accomplished in alerting the church to the issues of social

justice" (*Acts of Synod 1978*, p. 64)—is not being carried out by our denominational agencies. The agencies specified in the *Acts of Synod 1978* were "its Christian Educational Institutions and agencies, its Board of Publications, CRWRC, and SCORR" (p. 63). This is not to fault the agencies, but it makes us aware that another means is needed. The *Acts of Synod* from 1979 through 1994 have been reviewed by the Issue Awareness Committee of the Peoria Christian Reformed Church for such information, which found that this annual requirement is not being met. Another way of alerting the church to the issues of social justice needs to be established.

- B. Synod 1978 urged that social-justice committees be set up in the churches. The Issue Awareness Committee of the Peoria Christian Reformed Church has sent out fifty-two questionnaires, of which thirty-four were returned to us. The survey was sent out to the first-listed organized congregation on pages with the last digit of 0 or 5 from the 1994 *Yearbook* of the Christian Reformed Church. The following question was asked: "Does your congregation have a social-justice committee or a committee by another name for gathering information and recommending action on social justice matters? Yes ___ No ___." The following results were received: 12 Yes; 1 Yes with a qualification; 1 in process of starting; 20 No.
 1. The work of existing congregational committees could be helped by a standing denominational committee.
 2. About 60 percent of the congregations report that they do not have such a committee as that which Synod 1978 urged. A denominational standing Issue-Awareness Committee could help our congregations start such local committees.
- C. The churches need help with their "ringing testimony" against the sin of abortion, as Synod 1972 urged. We have recognized the need for denominational help in the areas of education, missions, and response to the needy. Our churches also need help with our response to the social issues we face.
- D. Synod needs to help with what it called others to do in 1976. Synod has called "the classes, consistories, and members of our congregations in both the United States and Canada to do all in their power to protect and promote the sanctity of human life, at any age; publicizing the issues, educating people, organizing committees, and doing whatever is considered necessary to confront people with the crucial physical and moral issues which are at stake" (*Acts of Synod 1976*, p. 64). Synod does not even have its own committee.
- E. The stands and statements of the Christian Reformed Church on areas of social justice are largely unknown by our membership. We need help to keep these important issues before us.
- F. Since the decision of Synod 1978, gambling, abortion, pornography, gay rights, and other social evils have become increasingly prevalent. We do not have any standing committee or coordinated effort to help us be alert and respond to these dangers.

- G. We need a committee in place to deal with injustice that our members might face in the future because of their commitment to Jesus Christ.

Note: The Canadian committee known as the Committee for Contact with the Government (CCG) could fulfill this need for Canada. A separate small standing committee for the United States is needed.

Classis Pella

Siebert Kramer, stated clerk

Overture 49: Declare Synod 1994's Claim re Binding Conscience to Be Untenable

I. Introduction

To maintain unity in diversity and allow for diversity in unity seems often an illusive goal. Its practice has certainly escaped us to some degree in our discussion about the qualifications for officebearers. This overture searches for a way to help us more successfully practice unity in diversity in the CRCNA. The Scripture shows us a more excellent way of dealing with diverse opinions. Jesus himself encourages such a pursuit when he advises, "Therefore every teacher of the law who has been instructed about the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures [new interpretations] as well as old" (Matt. 13:52; cf. Belgic Confession, Art. 7).

Below we will consider the marriage and gender issues as these relate to holding church office, and we will search for a way to maintain unity while diverse opinions about this issue and other issues are held among us in the CRCNA.

II. Biblical data

A. Qualifications for church office

1. Acts 6:1-7: *Spiritual* qualifications for holding church office

Deacon—Being filled with the Spirit and having wisdom.

2. I Timothy 3: *Spiritual* qualifications for serving in church office

Elders—Above reproach, faithful in marriage, temperate, self-controlled, hospitable, able to teach, gentle, able to manage personal belongings (household), of good reputation in society, not violent, not quarrelsome, not a money lover, not a drunkard.

Deacons—Worthy of respect, sincere, doctrinally informed, faithful in marriage, able to manage personal belongings, not violent, not a drunkard, not a cheat.

3. Titus 1:6-9: *Spiritual* qualifications for holding church office

Elder—Blameless, faithful in marriage, children are believers, hospitable, loving what is good, self-controlled, upright, holy, disciplined, not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not a drunkard, not a cheat.

Q. What qualifications are mentioned in these passages that are not necessarily "spiritual" qualifications?

A. Being married and male.

B. *The marriage qualification*

Paul emphasizes the "marriage qualification" in I Timothy 3 and Titus 1:6-9. Anyone speaking about the subject of who may be an officebearer must face this issue. We need to ask whether there are other passages besides I Timothy 3 and Titus 1:6-9 that speak to the marriage qualification.

The Christian church in addressing the question of single males serving in church office has historically pointed to Christ himself, to Paul, to I Corinthians 7:32-35, and to Matthew 19:12.

The Roman Catholic Church has based its policy of celibacy for clergy on these passages.

On the basis of these same biblical givens, Protestant churches by and large ordain unmarried males in the various church offices if those men feel called and meet the spiritual requirements. In doing this, the church has interpreted I Timothy 3 and Titus 1:6-9 in the light of other passages and has concluded that the marriage qualification is not normative for holding church office in spite of what appears to be the teaching of these two Pauline passages.

C. *The gender qualification*

As the church has been led to go beyond the qualifications listed in I Timothy 3 and Titus 1:6-9 with respect to single males serving in office, so it has also found Scripture passages to justify ordaining women to the office of deacon. Romans 16:1-2 was in 1978 too compelling a passage to deny sisters in Christ access to the office of deacon. Paul is breaking the gender bias concerning office when he highly commends Phoebe to the Christians in Rome. He asks everyone to honor and assist her. How could Paul do this?

The clue to Paul's attitude may be found in Galatians 3:26-28. In verse 26 the word "sons" is used for all Christians—Jews and Greeks, male and female, bond and free. To be a "son" meant a great deal in Israel and in the ancient world. It still does for some today. Sons in Israel were heirs to the patrimony (God's appointed real estate in Israel) and privilege (leadership, judgeship, and teaching in society and synagogue). Since we are sons regardless of gender, social status, or ethnic background, all have received full rights to patrimony and privilege in God's household.

Many Scripture passages use the masculine image, yet they apply to men and women alike, for example, the parables of the talents and the prodigal son. Numbers 6 uses the masculine pronoun when it describes the Nazarite obligations for men and women, etc.

Unlike Paul, most of us have not been brought up on Moses. Paul saw a theological connection between Numbers 27:1-11, Numbers 36, Deborah's being a judge, Huldah's being a prophetess, Joel 2, Anna, Acts 2, the daughters of Philip being prophetesses, and Acts 21:8-9. Even though Paul did not know the term "the redemptive historical method of Bible understanding," he practiced it instinctively, guided by the Holy Spirit, taught by Christ himself (cf. Gal. 1:6-24). Paul is inclusive and expansive where Synod 1994 grew rigid and exclusive. In fact, synod became more legalistic than Moses.

The revelation recorded in Galatians 3:26-28 guided Paul to honor Phoebe as deacon. It also enabled Paul to assemble around himself in every place men and women who became spiritual leaders in the churches.

Why do we not use the same line of argument about opening the offices to all qualified women as we use to declare that single males may serve in all church offices and that women may serve as deacons? Some say that it is because of two passages which seem clearly to prohibit women from speaking up in the assembly of believers. Let us briefly look at these two passages. We wish to show that these passages do not prohibit women from serving in church office but, instead, censure the inappropriate behavior of married women.

I Corinthians 14:33-35 seems to teach that all women must remain silent in the churches. Some questions and answers may lead us to a different conclusion.

Q. Is there any indication in this passage that it is directed to a certain category of women?

A. It is addressed to married women, because only married women can ask their own husbands (v. 35).

Q. What was their problem?

A. These women asked questions or prattled in fellowship meetings when they should have waited to ask their husbands at home. Their inquiries had no place in the public meeting. They went off on their own tangents without consulting their husbands. By their behavior during the religious services these women were undercutting their husbands' understanding, importance, and respect, and they were causing their husbands embarrassment. The *regard* for husbands and their wisdom is implied in Genesis 2:23-24 and taught in Genesis 3:16 (the law) and Ephesians 5:22-23.

Disregard for their husbands or minimizing the marital bond certainly seemed to have been a problem for the women in Corinth (cf. I Cor. 7:1-7; I Cor. 11:1-16). But the *married state* and being *women* as such did not prevent them from engaging in public prophesying and praying (cf. I Cor. 11:1-10). Therefore, I Corinthians 14:32-35 *should not be understood as a prohibition* against women serving in public church office.

Q. How must this passage then be understood?

A. It must be understood as *censuring the unbecoming behavior of these married Corinthian Christian women* (cf. also I Cor. 11:1-16). The Lord strongly disapproves of the speech, behavior, dress, and questions of the married women in public worship—all actions that dishonor, disregard, or endanger the marital relationship.

I Timothy 2:11-15 seems to teach that women may not exercise authority or teach men. But let us ask some questions about this text as well.

Q. Is there anything in this passage that indicates that it may be addressed to a limited group of women?

A. The references to Adam and Eve certainly highlight the *marital relationship*. Especially the second mention of Adam and Eve highlights (1) disregard of the marital relationship by Eve when she acts on her own and follows Satan and (2) her misuse of the marital relationship to bring sin and death to her husband.

The Greek words for *woman* and *man* in both of the above disputed passages are used interchangeably for husbands and wives as well as for women and men. *The context warrants* that we interpret these words as husbands and wives. Furthermore, isn't it true that "women saving themselves through childbearing" belongs to marriage? This passage definitely designates married women as being the subjects of this censure.

Note: The significance of Adam's having been created first and then Eve may be seriously questioned because of what Paul wrote in I Corinthians 11:11-12 (cf. *Acts of Synod 1994*, Art. 77, C, 1, b).

Q. What is the context of I Timothy 2:11-15?

A. Throughout the centuries these verses have always been attached to the **2nd** chapter of Timothy, *not the 3rd* chapter. Although the original manuscripts didn't have chapters and verses, it is plain that these verses belong to the subject of chapter 2. The advisory committee did not serve Synod 1994 well by joining it to chapter 3 (*Acts of Synod 1994*, pp. 506-07).

Chapter 2 is concerned with order and activities in worship services. Apparently, some women were using the worship service to instruct their husbands in a domineering way. Even the Greek word translated "authority" (*authentain*) is translated in extrabiblical literature as meaning "defying, domineering, abusive exercise of authority." This is the *only* place in the Bible where the word is used. This, no doubt, is an indication to what extent the abusive teaching was done by some married women in public worship services at Ephesus. They had taken on a totally worldly and godless character. Paul strongly censures such behavior.

Note: There seems to be a thin line between serving with the gifts of the Spirit and usurping power, as these married women may have done. One wonders how much power is usurped by the male leadership of the church in keeping the Holy Spirit's work from coming to greater fruition through the leadership gifts of women. Both male and female need to learn anew the lesson taught in Zechariah 4:6: "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord almighty."

The overtones of this passage constitute *censure* of the behavior of some married women. They may even have refused to bear children. Paul *severely censured* their attitude and behavior and commends godliness.

But such censure in no way constitutes a prohibition to prophesy, pray, and lead in the church of Christ (cf. I Cor. 11:1-10).

Given the above discussion, *these passages do not constitute a clear and definite prohibition* for women to serve in church office. *These passages censure unholy behavior* by married women that threatens the marital bond or is abusive of the marital bond and a rejection of the blessings of marriage. Salvation comes when there is obedience to the Lord's will for marriage and a joyful acceptance of all marital blessings (including giving birth to children) and when it springs from faith, love, and holy propriety. *But censure is not a prohibition. In fact, it may be stated that there is no passage that clearly prohibits women from serving in the offices of the church.*

Note: Paul himself had experienced the grace of a wonderful working model between husband and wife in Aquila and Priscilla. He knew about the mutual

deference Deborah and Barak showed each other. There was no power struggle between them (cf. Judg. 4 and Heb. 11:32). Many women served well in leadership positions in the churches (cf. Phil. 4:2-3; Rom. 16; II Tim. 4:21). Yet Synod 1994 made a strident declaration that "All pastors and elders in the New Testament were males."

In addition to these passages, many passages throughout the Bible teach equality in honor, dignity, rule, spiritual gifts of service and office for men and women. One need only mention Genesis 1:26-28 (not just the reference to image of God but also to rule and mandate), Joel 2, and Acts 2. All of us know these passages well. We may also point to the biblical teaching of the priesthood of all believers (cf. I Pet. 2:9-10; Rev. 5:9-10), of sharing in Christ's anointing, Lord's Day 12 of the Heidelberg Catechism, the examples of Deborah, Huldah, Anna, and Philip's daughters (Acts 21:8-9).

Throughout the Bible men and women are shown to have been created in the image of the same God, endowed with the same authority and mandate; they have fallen in the same sin; they have been redeemed by the blood of the same Savior and share in the anointing of the same Lord; they have been empowered by the same Holy Spirit with the same gifts of the Spirit; they are called upon to use their gifts for the same purpose, and they will be held accountable for the use of their gifts by the same Lord (Matt. 25:14-30).

In the church we should not prevent anyone from using gifts for the building up of the body of Christ in love. To say to anyone that she is mistaking her call to the pastoral ministry for the sole reason of her gender seems tantamount to censuring the work of the Holy Spirit in a person's life. This is all the more true in the light of the fact that there is no specific Scripture passage that clearly forbids women to serve in offices of spiritual leadership.

D. The way out of the gender dilemma

What is the way out of our predicament as a denomination? As a denomination we have experienced a bruising battle that can hardly be said always to have been fought in Christian love. Is there something that we can learn from the Scripture in terms of how to deal with issues that have worked such division among us but are not issues of cardinal importance to the faith? We can learn a better way. We can learn a great deal from Acts 6, 10, 11, and 15 as to how we should deal with new developments in the church.

One way of determining issues is seeing everything in black and white, "either this or that." The fact is that in many situations the "either - or" is not so clear. Sometimes it is "both - and." That's how the apostles seemed to operate in Acts 6, 10, 11, and 15. These situations didn't involve basic elements of the faith, but *applications* of the faith. In these cases the questions were **How can the church's ministry be enhanced? How is the Spirit leading us?**

Acts 6 - Prejudicial treatment was given to certain widows.

Solution: Choose deacons of various ethnic descent to heal the rift and serve the needs of all the widows equitably.

Acts 10, 11 - The first gentile believers were baptized and taken into full fellowship by Peter and his assistants.

Solution: After a full explanation of what happened, the whole congregation rejoiced in this new direction that the kingdom of God had taken. They were obedient to the Holy Spirit's leading.

Acts 15 - Should Christians from gentile origin be forced to be circumcised and abide by all the laws of Moses.

Solution: Christians of gentile origin need not be circumcised, but they must separate themselves from all idolatry and immorality. They rejoiced in the ministry of Paul (cf. also Gal. 2:11-16).

The church's dealing with these issues can very well be a model in the present crisis. Our present problem does not involve a basic tenet of faith or morality. To follow this biblical course of action requires spiritual maturity on the part of the church and church leaders. And *love* ought to be given highest priority (I Cor. 13).

If we were to follow the pattern set forth in Acts 6, 10, 11, and 15, it would require an addition to the Church Order or synodical rules. The addition would read something like this: **"Synod has the option at certain times to declare that differing opinions about applications of the Christian faith and morality are permitted when more than one view appears to be warranted by Scripture after thorough discussion and when the applications further the ministry of the gospel and do not nullify God's Word."** This would enhance the Christian character of all discussions in the church. It would enhance careful and prayerful listening to the Scriptures and each other without the threat of being declared a heretic or the risk of schism. Such discussion and debate can only enhance the health of the church. And it will prevent the kind of bruising battles that we have just experienced.

III. Overture

Although not all agree on the eligibility of women for all church offices, a confessionally Reformed way of interpreting Scripture has led to the conclusion that there is no biblical prohibition forbidding women to serve in the offices of the church of Christ (cf. the accompanying scriptural explanation, denominational study-committee reports of 1973 and 1975, various synodical decisions). Therefore Classis Hackensack overtures synod

A. To declare, on the basis of the foregoing Bible discussion and conclusions as well as the conclusions of synodical study committees, that Synod 1994's claim that its interpretation of Scripture is to bind our consciences on the issue of women in office cannot serve that function because it is not based on inclusive biblical information.

B. To adopt the following policy for this and future debates: **"Synod has the option to declare, after thorough discussion, that differing opinions about applications of Christian faith and morality are permitted when more than one view appears to be warranted by Scripture and when the applications further the ministry of the gospel and do not 'nullify the Word of God' "** (cf. Mark 7:9-13).

C. To declare that the issue of who may serve in church office has proven to be such an issue.

Grounds:

1. More than twenty years of debating biblical data on the issue by responsible and mature biblical and Reformed scholars using sound exegetical methods of Bible interpretation has not produced a unified result.

2. The narrow margin of votes by which this issue is decided either way continues to show lack of consensus and makes it impossible for us to say that "the decision seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us."

D. To declare that all confessing members of the church who meet the biblical requirements are eligible to serve in all church offices.

Grounds:

1. The question whether there are any Scripture passages prohibiting women from serving in church offices is real.
2. There are many Scripture passages that teach that men and women are heirs to the same grace, spiritual gifts, authority, and service.
3. This leaves each congregation free to decide whether the gender qualification established by synod is binding on the consciences of those who accept a different interpretation.

E. To call upon all church leaders and members to observe Ephesians 4:1-6 as we serve our one Lord and Savior in the world. We do not live unto ourselves. We are bidden by him who is our Savior and Lord to live in peace with one another. Let us listen to him who is our King, who teaches us how we ought to live with each other (cf. Rom. 12; 14:13-21).

F. To declare the Sunday following synod to be a Sunday of mourning and fasting to confess the hurt that we have brought to one another, the damage we have done to the church of Jesus Christ, the lack of humility to confess at certain times that "we now see as in a glass darkly." Let us also pledge to Jesus Christ, the author and finisher of our faith, the perfecter of his church, which he bought with his precious blood, that we will search for the unity of his church in all our discussions and disagreements. Let us implore the Lord to fill us with his Spirit and not take his Holy Spirit from us, lest we become a church that has lost its saltiness and thereby has lost its right to be called his church.

Classis Hackensack

Terry J. Lapinski, stated clerk

Overture 50: Ratify Decision of Synod 1993 to Delete "Male" from Church Order Article 3; Reaffirm Guidelines of 1993

I. Background

Synod 1994 declared that "the clear teaching of Scripture prohibits women from holding the offices of minister, elder, and evangelist." Not only is this declaration difficult for many members of the denomination to accept, but it also does not take seriously the study of Scripture done by many committees on this issue over the past quarter century. A decade ago theologians studying this matter wrote,

The fact is that on the matter before us there are differences between honest, sincere, committed, devout, and well-intentioned Christian brothers and sisters. While this acknowledgment does not solve the problem, it does place the problem in a context where Christians who differ significantly on these matters can speak with each other, accept each other, and live with each other in the same family of faith. Important as the matter before us is, it does not concern an essential creedal affirmation such as the church faced in the controversy with Arius.

We urge everyone who is considering the question of the ordination of women to do so with charity and humility. We ask everyone to acknowledge that the matter is not crystal clear. If it were, it would have been solved long ago. Some of the most gifted theological minds and pastoral hearts in our denomination have wrestled with this matter and have come to different conclusions. This alone should suffice to eliminate stridency from our discussions.

(Acts of Synod 1984, p. 286)

Unfortunately, in the decade since those words were written, our denomination has witnessed an increase in the stridency of our discussions and a decrease in the desire to "accept each other, and live with each other in the same family of faith." This attitude was given denominational expression as Synod 1994 rejected a plea to create room for Christians who believe Scripture allows women to serve in all areas of church life.

In 1993 Classis Lake Erie communicated to synod its deep concern about this issue, an issue our classis has discussed for the past twenty years. We informed synod "that though we do not officially approve the actions of congregations which ordain women as elders, we are also unable to reprimand congregations for such actions." Obviously, the declaration of Synod 1994 and its accompanying request that all member churches release women currently serving as elders and refrain from electing others greatly affected us. At our October 1994 meeting we reaffirmed our previous statement that we are unable to reprimand congregations that have ordained and will continue to ordain women elders. As responsible members of the denomination, we also felt it was necessary to communicate our disagreement with the decision of Synod 1994 and to overture Synod 1995 to ratify the 1993 decision to delete the word "male" from Church Order Article 3.

We take Scripture seriously. We also take seriously our denominational studies of Scripture as they relate to the matter of women in office. Though we recognize that fellow Christians do not believe that women may serve in all the offices of the church, we also believe that Scripture does not clearly prohibit all congregations from extending to women the opportunity to serve in the offices of minister, elder, and evangelist. In fact, there is enough scriptural warrant for synod to declare that it is permissible for women to utilize their gifts in this way.

In the beginning both male and female were equal before God. In Genesis 1:26-28 we read, "Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule . . . over all the earth.' So God created man in his own image, . . . male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, ' . . . rule over . . . every living creature.' " Male and female ruled together as imagebearers of God. Together they exercised God-given authority over creation.

Without a doubt sin distorted that reality, but without a doubt the equality of male and female as imagebearers of God and recipients of his gifts and grace is anticipated in the Old Testament and proclaimed repeatedly in the New. When God pours out his Spirit at Pentecost, Peter, quoting the prophet Joel, reminds his hearers that daughters as well as sons will speak the word of God (Acts 2:17). Paul echoes the same in I Corinthians 12, where he teaches that the gifts of God's Spirit are given to all Christians—Jews and Greeks, slaves and free, and, certainly, male and female. Though in I Corinthians 11 the apostle gives certain regulations about praying and bringing God's Word in worship, verse 5 of that chapter declares that he expects women, as well as men, to be engaged in such activities. Men and women are one in Christ, are recipients of the Spirit's varied

gifts, and share equally in the privileges and responsibilities of God's kingdom work.

As it was in the beginning, as it is now because of Christ's new creation, so shall it be in the end, when every effect of sin will be erased and every barrier that separates us from each other will be removed. In the new Jerusalem all God's servants—Jew and gentile, black and white, slave and free, male and female—"will reign for ever and ever" (Rev. 22:5). The challenge for all Reformed Christians is to embody the characteristics of the New Jerusalem in the life we now live. That is true also of our partnership as males and females.

Affirming the equality of men and women in Christ and acknowledging women as full partners in the work of Christ's church has been difficult for our denomination. Citing particular passages of Scripture and interpreting them in a particular way, some have emphasized male authority at the expense of our equality in Christ. We operate as if spiritual authority is a possession of males, something that the Savior withholds from females. The Word of God, however, declares that all authority in the church is Christ's and that all officebearers in the church exercise his, not their own, authority. Leaders are those "who must give an account" (Heb. 13:17) to Christ, "the only universal bishop, and the only head of the church" (Belgic Confession, Art. 31).

We are continually tripping on the concept of "authority." In 1957 we allowed women to vote at congregational meetings only after stating that congregational meetings "have only a *limited* authority and are a matter of *helping* to govern the church . . ." (*Acts of Synod 1957*, p. 311). Women could help, but they could not exercise authority.

In 1984 we allowed women to serve as deacons, but in 1987 we downgraded the office to strip it of authority and revised the Church Order to reflect this departure from Reformed tradition. That satisfied those who opposed women in the office of deacon, and those who desired the service of women settled for this inequality. At least it was better than nothing.

The issue of authority was evident again in 1992, when synod acknowledged the gifts of women to expound the Word of God in official worship services and to serve as associate/adjunct elders but gave them no authority (licensure/ordination) to exercise their Spirit-given gifts. Again, they could only *help*.

Now the same debate about authority is being waged as the denomination discusses the offices of minister, elder, and evangelist. In spite of Scripture's declaration of our equality in Christ, some assert that only men may exercise spiritual authority. Though the apostle Paul permits women to pray and to bring a word from God in worship (I Cor. 11:5), some assert that I Timothy 2:12 prohibits what I Corinthians 11 allows. Why more weight should be given to I Timothy 2:12 than to I Corinthians 11:5 is perplexing, especially since the church for years has regarded the apostle's other instructions in I Timothy 2 (instructions in verses 8-10 concerning worship style and dress) as culturally conditioned. That Paul universally prohibits the leadership and spiritual authority of women in the church is contradicted by I Corinthians 11:5.

It is not true that "the clear teaching of Scripture prohibits women from holding the offices of minister, elder and evangelist." Scripture teaches that Christ, the head of the Church, calls both men and women to serve in his kingdom and equips both men and women for service. The church, recognizing these gifts, appoints people to particular tasks so they may serve in Christ's

name and exercise his authority. It is time for synod to grant churches the option to allow women to do that in all church offices.

II. Overture

Classis Lake Erie overtures synod

A. To ratify the 1993 decision to delete the word "male" and merge Church Order Article 3-a and 3-b to read, "All confessing members of the church who meet the biblical requirements are eligible for the offices of minister, elder, deacon, and evangelist."

Grounds:

1. Scripture's teaching about the equality of men and women in Christ and the apostle Paul's recognition that women, too, give spiritual leadership in the church (I Cor. 11:5) demonstrate that it is biblically permissible for women to exercise their gifts under the authority of the Savior in all areas of Christian service.
2. This revision of Article 3 respects the differences of interpretation held by "honest, sincere, committed, devout, and well-intentioned Christian brothers and sisters" and creates room so that we can "live with each other in the same family of faith" (*Acts of Synod 1984*, p. 286). It allows churches to do what they believe God's Word calls them to do without forcing other churches to do what they believe God's Word prohibits them from doing.

B. To reaffirm the guidelines adopted by Synod 1993 (*Acts of Synod 1993*, p. 614-15) for implementing the change in Church Order Article 3 and urge all church leaders and members to "make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3) as they minister with fellow believers.

Ground: These guidelines will assist the church as it implements the change in Church Order Article 3 because they take seriously and attempt to respond sensitively to the varying positions held on this issue.

Classis Lake Erie

George Vander Weit, stated clerk

Overture 51: Revise Synod 1994's Decision Not to Ratify Church Order Article 3

I. Background

When Synod 1994 voted not to ratify the change in Church Order Article 3 as adopted by Synod 1993, it adopted six grounds to support its action. These grounds are clearly inadequate and, at times, seriously distort what Scripture teaches on the matter of women in ecclesiastical office. Specifically, we call synod's attention to the following:

A. Ground a of the 1994 decision states, "The biblical texts cited by Synod 1993 to support the proposed change . . . are not persuasive" (*Acts of Synod 1994*, p. 506). The ground considers Genesis 1:26-28, Acts 2:17-18, and Galatians 3:28 and finds that neither the Genesis nor the Acts text proves that women may hold

ecclesiastical office. No doubt that is true. None of these texts mentions church offices. The ground distorts the situation, however, in that Synod 1993 never claimed that individually these texts *prove* that the offices should be opened to women. Synod 1993 included reference to these texts to make its claim that "the New Testament teaches that men and women are equal in Christ as they were at creation; therefore, women as well as men have the full privilege of using their gifts in the church" (*Acts of Synod 1993*, p. 596).

This ground distorts the purpose and significance these texts had for Synod 1993. This distortion does great harm because it leaves the impression that Synod 1993 claimed to have texts that proved that the offices should be open to all. Synod 1993 in fact said that these texts teach us about our equality in Christ and that therefore it is reasonable for all to have the full privilege of serving in the offices. It is no wonder Synod 1994, being misinformed by this ground, found the biblical case of Synod 1993 to be unpersuasive.

B. Ground b of the 1994 decision states, "The clear teaching of Scripture prohibits women holding the offices of minister, elder, and evangelist" (*Acts of Synod 1994*, p. 506). We find two distortions in this ground. First, the experience of the denomination during our efforts to understand Scripture leads *at least* to the conclusion that Scripture is not clear on this issue. The very fact that we have spent over two decades considering this issue is evidence of this. In addition, one can cite the findings of numerous study committees, e.g.,

... the practice of excluding women from ecclesiastical office cannot be conclusively defended on biblical grounds.

(*Acts of Synod 1973*, p. 588)

Biblical teaching is not opposed in principle to the ordination of women to any office that men may hold in the church.

(*Acts of Synod 1975*, p. 593)

... the biblical evidence for allowing or denying women admission to the office of elder and minister as presently understood is not clear.

(*Acts of Synod 1978*, p. 531)

There is no clear and unquestionable testimony of Scripture to compel the church to prohibit women in their equality in Christ from church office in all time, places, and circumstances.

(*Agenda for Synod 1992*, p. 367)

As further evidence that we have not found Scripture clearly to prohibit women from serving in these offices, one can cite synodical decisions. Synod 1990 believed Scripture permits women to serve in these offices. Synod 1992 did not believe it prudent to open the offices, but it never found Scripture to prohibit such a policy. Synod 1993 believed Scripture does not prohibit this change in our practice.

For Synod 1994 to state that a biblical teaching disputed for twenty years has suddenly become *clear* is a profound distortion of the experience of the CRC, of the exegetical findings of many scholars, pastors, and study committees, and of the actions of various synods.

The second distortion in this ground concerns its major premise, namely, that the teaching of Scripture prohibits women from holding the offices of minister, elder, and evangelist. This is a distorted claim regarding biblical teaching. The ground cites two groupings of texts for support, I Corinthians 11:2-16 and I Corinthians 14:33-35 and I Timothy 2:11-15 and Genesis 2. While some

exegetes think these texts teach that women are prohibited from the offices, this is not the only, or even the best, interpretation of these passages.

Neither of the I Corinthian passages cited supports the statement that "men are to have authoritative leadership in the church" (*Acts of Synod 1994*, p. 507). These passages do not address qualifications for church offices; they address proper conduct in worship. I Corinthians 11 discusses the appropriateness of head coverings for people at prayer, and the words translated "male" / "female" are just as correctly translated "husband" / "wife." I Corinthians 14:35 limits Paul's advice to wives. To assert that these passages prohibit women from holding office distorts both the meaning and application of these texts.

Something similar is claimed about the teaching of I Timothy 2:11-3:15. Most significant is the tie this ground makes between I Timothy 2 and I Timothy 3. The ground claims that Paul's statement in I Timothy 2:11-12—"A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or have authority over a man; she must be silent"—is immediately applied to the teaching about the offices in I Timothy 3. There is simply no exegetical reason to claim that I Timothy 3 is an immediate application of I Timothy 2:11-12. Such a linkage of I Timothy 2 to I Timothy 3 is a distortion of this passage because it fails to take into account the full context of I Timothy 2. Without this immediate application, the significance of I Timothy 2 to the issue of the qualifications for church office is highly questionable.

Ground b also claims that the reference to Genesis in I Timothy 2 teaches that "before the fall there was male leadership in the original created state" (*Acts of Synod 1994*, p. 507). In I Timothy 2:9-15, Paul, asserting that Adam, as first, was to be the leader, refers to a well-known story of trouble that occurred when a wife acted inappropriately. Paul teaches that, while it is appropriate for wives to dress modestly (v. 9), to do good works (v. 10), to have children, and to continue in faith, love, holiness, and propriety (v. 15), it is not appropriate for wives to teach or have authority over their husbands, as the disaster that happened to Adam and Eve illustrates. Paul uses this story to illustrate proper conduct for wives. Its reference is to marriage, not to church office. To interject a creational principle of male leadership that is applicable outside the marriage relationship distorts Paul's teaching. This ground further distorts the text when it adds references to federalism, the naming of Eve, and the leaving of father and mother.

C. Ground c states, "The general analogy of Scripture supports the exclusion of women from the offices of minister and elder" (*Acts of Synod 1994*, p. 507). We do not believe that I Corinthians 11:3, 7-9 teaches that "man is in general the head of woman" (*Acts of Synod 1994*, p. 507) nor that the relationships within a family are clearly applicable to the offices of the church. Synod 1984 declared that headship applied to both home and church settings (*Acts of Synod 1984*, p. 623). Synod 1987 questioned that finding and appointed a study committee "to provide clear biblical and confessional grounds for extending the 'headship principle' from marriage to the church" (*Acts of Synod 1987*, p. 647). Synod 1990 considered the results of this study committee and determined that "Report 26, taken as a whole, does not 'provide clear biblical and confessional grounds for extending the 'headship principle' from marriage to the church'" (*Acts of Synod 1990*, p. 654).

Even though male leadership was the predominant practice throughout the Bible, the ground distorts the biblical evidence by failing to mention that, contrary to major cultural norms of the ancient world, women also served in

leadership positions. Besides Old Testament women leaders such as Miriam, Deborah, and Huldah (II Kings 22:14), there are clear New Testament references to women in leadership roles, e.g., Priscilla (Acts 18:26; I Cor. 16:19; Rom. 16:3-5), Euodia and Syntyche (Phil. 4:2-3), Phoebe (Rom. 16:1), Apphia (Philem. 2), and Nympha (Col. 4:15). The general analogy argument as it is presented in Ground c is a distortion because it accounts for only a part of the biblical evidence.

D. Ground d claims that "a variety of evidence shows that the church historically has believed that the Scripture plainly opposes women in the offices of elder and minister" (*Acts of Synod 1994*, p. 508). We do not dispute that this has been the predominant practice of the church. We also observe that the church sanctioned slavery for some 1,850 years and was willing to change that position based on a reexamination of Scripture. Due weight should be given to tradition; greater weight should be given to the goal of being constantly reforming according to the Word of God. Our very name, *Reformed*, reminds us of our regular need to examine ourselves and our assumptions. Scripture, not tradition, has the authority to restrain us in our freedom in Christ. In answering the question of whether or not women may serve as elders, ministers, and evangelists, Scripture needs to be decisive, not the tradition of the church nor the opinions of other denominations. We do not find this ground to be a compelling support for prohibiting women from serving in all offices of the CRC.

E. Ground e states that "the Synod of 1993 acted contrary to the Church Order when it reconsidered and revised the 1992 decision regarding women in ecclesiastical office. New grounds were offered to justify reconsideration, but no new grounds were offered for the motion to revise Church Order Article 3" (*Acts of Synod 1994*, p. 508). Ground e admits that Synod 1993 had new grounds to reconsider the decision of Synod 1992 but denies that it had the right to revise the 1992 decision. However, if the grounds to reconsider were adequate, then a subsequent revision is valid even though previously considered grounds are used for the revision. Reconsideration has within it the possibility of returning to "old" grounds on which to base a revision. Ground e demonstrates an inadequate understanding of Church Order.

F. Ground f claims that "the issue of women in office cannot be left to local option because the Scripture does not allow women to serve in these offices . . . , and the offices do not function only in the local church but also in the broader assemblies" (*Acts of Synod 1994*, p. 508). We find this ground inadequate for two reasons. First, we reject the assertion that Scripture does not allow women to serve in the offices. Second, this ground fails to recognize that Synod 1993 adopted guidelines (*Acts of Synod 1993*, pp. 614-16) in an attempt to address this issue in a way that is sensitive to those who hold differing positions on this issue.

G. Ground g says, "This decision will not bind Christian consciences in any inappropriate way" (*Acts of Synod 1994*, p. 508). This would be a convincing statement if we all agreed that Scripture clearly prohibits women from serving in the offices in question. Ground g totally lacks sensitivity to the numerous CRC members and interpreters who do not understand the Scripture to teach such a prohibition at all, let alone teach it clearly. This ground ignores the conflict that these CRC members now experience, because it presumes that there is only one authentic way to interpret Scripture on this matter. When

Christians in good faith disagree and the matter cannot be settled definitively by Scripture or Christian principle, freedom must be allowed.

It is painfully obvious that the grounds used to support the 1994 decision not to ratify the change in Church Order Article 3 are profoundly inadequate and in some instances seriously distort what Scripture teaches on the matter of women in ecclesiastical office.

II. Overture

Therefore, Classis Lake Erie overtures synod

A. To revise the decision of Synod 1994 not to ratify the change in Church Order Article 3 as adopted by Synod 1993.

Grounds:

1. This decision is based on grounds that are woefully inadequate and in crucial ways distort what Scripture teaches on the matter of women in ecclesiastical office.
2. The 1994 decision is tremendously offensive to those who in good conscience and with solid exegesis come to a different conclusion with regard to what Scripture teaches on this matter because it presumes that there is only one authentic way to interpret Scripture on this matter.

B. To revise the decision of Synod 1994 by giving churches the option to ordain women to the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist.

Grounds:

1. Our denomination's lengthy study of this issue has demonstrated that there are no clear and compelling reasons to prohibit the ordination of women to all the church offices.
2. When Christians in good faith disagree and the matter cannot be settled definitively by Scripture or Christian principle, freedom must be allowed.

Classis Lake Erie

George Vander Weit, stated clerk

Overture 52: Declare That Biblical Teachings about Justice Require Removing Gender as Qualification for Office

Classis Eastern Canada overtures synod to declare that biblical teachings about justice require the church to remove gender as a qualification for serving in the offices of the church and to modify the Church Order by deleting the word *male* from Article 3-a and merging Articles 3-a and 3-b to read, "All confessing members of the church who meet the biblical requirements are eligible for the offices of minister, elder, deacon, and evangelist."

Grounds:

1. Justice, a fundamental principle of creation and redemption, is a guiding principle for relationships in the body of Christ, including any policies relating to the role of women within the church.
 - a. Importance of justice: Throughout the Bible God establishes justice, along with love and humility, as a guiding principle for obedience in

all areas of life. "What does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God" (Mic. 6:8).

- b. Basis of justice: Biblical teachings about justice, or "giving all persons their due," are rooted in the fact that every person is created in the image of God and shares the mandate to serve God and be a steward of creation. Women share fully in the image of God and in the mandate to use all the gifts, talents, and abilities God gives them to their greatest potential (Gen. 1:27).
- c. Nature of biblical justice: In the Old and New Testaments, "doing justice" is part of God's work of reconciliation. It removes barriers created by sin and restores people to dignity and freedom. In Christ, "there is no longer Jew or Greek, slave or free, there is no longer male or female; for all of you are one in Christ" (Gal. 3:28). Doing justice is described as liberating the oppressed and restoring those without power. Justice unfolds in the continuing work of building God's kingdom. The Pentecost story (Acts 2:17-21) explicitly states that Christ's work of reconciliation removes human barriers and includes men and women, young and old, in the pouring out of the Holy Spirit and the exercise of the Spirit's gifts.
- d. Fruit of just relationships: Justice is essential to the wholeness, or shalom, of the Christian community, a wholeness which includes male and female in mutual service. In the Bible doing justice is often accompanied with the promise of peace and fruitfulness, like a "well-watered garden" (Isa. 58). "Justice, and only justice, you shall pursue, so that you may live and occupy the land that the Lord your God is giving you" (Deut. 16:20).

Other references:

Psalms 89:14 — "Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne, steadfast love and faithfulness go before you."

Psalms 145:17 — "The Lord is just in all his ways, and kind in all his doings."

Psalms 30:18 — "For the Lord is a God of justice."

- 2. Biblical teachings about justice were not given due consideration in synod's previous deliberations about the role of women in the church.
 - a. This issue was considered a matter of church order, and primary attention was given to Scripture texts about rules for behavior in church assemblies. It was not considered as a question of justice.
 - b. According to the Bible, doing justice is more significant in the Christian life than rules for religious assembly. In fact, God sends harsh warnings to those who strictly observe rules for worship but ignore injustice in their midst.

In Amos 5:21-24 God says, "I hate, I despise your festivals and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies. . . . I will not accept them. . . . Take away the noise of your songs. . . . But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an everflowing stream." In Isaiah 1:10-17, God says that religious exercises are an abomination and insult to God if they are not accompanied by repentance and obedience to this command: "cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphans, plead for the widow." In Matthew 23:23 the Pharisees were reprimanded by Christ for emphasizing religious

rules and neglecting the "weightier matters of the law: justice, mercy, and faith."

3. Current circumstances in the church can only be described as unjust when examined in the light of all the biblical teachings about justice.
 - a. Synod recognizes the importance of using women as partners in doing the church's work, but it denies women the dignity and authority that should accompany the capable discharge of their responsibilities and service to God. In effect, current policies make it impossible for women to fully exercise their biblical calling to be imagebearers of God and stewards of all aspects of creation, including the abilities God gives them.

Requirements for extra supervision based on gender alone, not on spiritual maturity, gifts, training, or experience, can not be described as just, when no connection has been established between gender and the exercise of gifts. Such a requirement demeans the dignity of women and is not consistent with the church's interpretation of the sixth commandment, as articulated in Lord's Day 40, which requires that "I am not to belittle my neighbor."

The situation is more unjust when the voice of women is totally silenced in the decision-making process and women are not allowed to speak even in their own defense. Giving voice to those without a voice is part of "doing justice" in the Bible, and opportunities for participation by all parties are built into biblical teachings and church policies for adjudicating disputes and discipline.

- b. Basing eligibility for church offices on gender is inconsistent with synodical statements on the nature of office.

The *Acts of Synod 1973* based the concepts of office and ordination on calling for designated tasks, services, and responsibilities within the church, in keeping with the principle of justice. Distinguishing on the basis of gender alone, when no relationship has been shown to exist between gender, the service, and ability to perform the service, is unjust and therefore unbiblical. The continuation of this situation demeans the dignity of all the offices and of all who perform them, with serious implications for the future well-being of the church.

- c. Current policies are inconsistent with the Form for Public Profession of Faith.

All professing members are welcomed to "full communion with the people of God. Rest assured that all the privileges of such communion are now yours." Excluding women from some of the privileges and responsibilities inherent in communion with the people of God is inconsistent with the promises made to women in the profession of faith.

- d. The current policies with respect to the role of women in the church are inconsistent with previous synodical decisions on race.

Synodical teachings on race give precedence to biblical teachings on justice and the dignity of all people over specific texts that permit slavery. Why do the same principles of biblical interpretation not apply in discussions of the women-in-office issue?

- e. The current situation binds the ability of congregations and individual members to live in keeping with their own consciences.

Given that previous synodical studies on the specific texts dealing with women in office have been inconclusive and given the weight of other biblical teachings, there is not a sufficiently clear scriptural basis to require individual churches and believers to make a choice between (1) violating their own consciences on a fundamental question of justice and (2) membership in the CRC. Allowing individual churches to use their discretion is a more just policy when there is a difference of interpretation.

4. God's call to do justice and to be agents of reconciliation is essential to our Christian witness in the world.

The church's refusal to remove injustice from within its own ranks is a serious impediment to its witness. In this case, the church's refusal to treat women with justice and dignity is a serious impediment to its witness to women and men outside the church. It invalidates the CRC's efforts to call other social institutions to act justly and weakens the integrity of the denomination's outreach to people who are suffering from injustice in society.

On the positive side, the Bible promises that all nations will be blessed when the people of God demonstrate God's ways in the world. In Jeremiah 4 God calls Israel to return to justice and includes this promise: "in truth, in justice, and uprightness, then nations shall be blessed. . . ."

Other references:

Isaiah 42:3-4 — Creation itself yearns for justice.

Matthew 12:18 — Jesus proclaims justice to the gentiles.

James 2:1-5 — Acts of favoritism in the church raised doubts about how firmly its members believed in Jesus.

5. Authority is crucial to effective pastoral care, and women are both gifted and essential for dealing with some elements of pastoral care, such as abuse.

Pastoral care involves not only diaconal care but also teaching and participation in decision making, including decisions about church discipline and provision for pastoral care. The experience of the church demonstrates that women are essential partners for effectively dealing with pastoral concerns such as sexual abuse, sexuality, and family life. Women must also be in positions of authority if the church is going to have integrity in its diaconal work and outreach to victims of abuse and breakdown in the church and in the community.

More specifically, secrecy has been a major barrier to dealing with abuse in the church. If the church is going to be a safe place for victims of abuse to disclose intimate fears and experiences to individuals whom they trust, victims must know that those individuals have authority and are accountable to provide safety and take remedial action if required, employing all the resources of the church to protect victims from reprisal.

As the report of the Synodical Committee on Abuse Prevention states, "Presently the Church Order is interpreted and implemented only by men. But dealing with matters of abuse must not be restricted to members of either sex. . . . Therefore, it is of critical importance that both men and women are represented in any bodies evaluating and adjudicating abuse allegations" (*Agenda for Synod 1994*, pp. 147-48; see also report of the Committee to Study Physical, Emotional, and Sexual Abuse, *Agenda for Synod 1992*, Report 30).

Justice and mercy go hand in hand. In order for the church to be effective in pastoral care, the perspective of women must be included in teaching and supervisory functions as well as in diaconal functions of the church.

Classis Eastern Canada
James Kooistra, stated clerk

Overture 53: Revise Synod 1994's Decision re Not Ratifying Change in Church Order Article 3

I. Preamble

Servants of the Lord Jesus Christ, we express our regret that Synod 1994 took such a strident and unequivocal position regarding women serving in the offices of the church on the basis of the interpretation of a few biblical texts.

Though there are members who agree with synod's decision, there are others who have been deeply pained, not only by the decision preventing women from serving in certain offices in the church but also by synod's unequivocal interpretation of certain texts relating to matters of church order.

We now find ourselves bound by a synodical decision dependent upon a particular interpretation of these texts. This we find difficult to reconcile with Reformed principles for biblical exegesis and church government. The CRC has consistently allowed latitude of interpretation with regard to biblical directives for church order.

We regret that synod decided not to allow a level of greater freedom on a matter that Synod 1989 regarded as a "church order matter" rather than a "creedal matter."

II. Overture

Classis Alberta North overtures synod to revise the 1994 decision "not to ratify the change in Church Order Article 3" by changing Article 3 to read, "All confessing members of the church who meet the biblical requirements are eligible for the offices of minister, elder, deacon, and evangelist."

Grounds:

A. Several of the grounds given for the 1994 decision are questionable.

1. Synod's Ground a: That "the biblical texts cited by Synod 1993 to support the proposed change in Church Order Article 3 are not persuasive" (*Acts of Synod 1994*, p. 514) is a subjective argument. Such an argument regarding the lack of persuasiveness can be made against the grounds of the decision of Synod 1994 as well.
2. Synod's Ground b: "The clear teaching of Scripture prohibits women from holding the offices of minister, elder, and evangelist" (*Acts of Synod 1994*, p. 514) is a presumptuous declaration when seen in the light of twenty years of study-committee reports and in light of the fact that only the slimmest majority of Synod 1994 saw it this way. Synod has demonstrated scriptural ambiguity rather than clarity in regard to women in office by reaching different and opposing conclusions over a period of years.

3. Synod's Ground f: "The issue of women in office cannot be left to local option because (a) the Scripture does not allow women to serve in the offices of minister, elder, and evangelist, and the synod cannot allow what Scripture does not allow, and (b) the offices function not only in the local church but also in the broader assemblies" (*Acts of Synod 1994*, p. 515) goes against the spirit in which the CRC has historically wrestled with difficult issues when, after extensive discussions, no common scriptural basis could be found. We list several issues here that have been left to local option and have not contributed to congregationalism but rather have promoted healing and room for diversity:
 - use of the English language during worship.
 - use of individual communion cups.
 - baptism of children adopted by believing parents.
 - women's participation and voting rights at congregational meetings. (Discussion on this issue began in 1914 and ended in 1957, when synod declared "that consistories which determine to invite women members of the congregation to participate with the right to vote, in congregational meetings, do so without objection from synod.")
4. Synod's Ground g: "This decision will not bind Christian consciences in any inappropriate way. Christ is the Lord of the conscience, and a Christian cannot claim freedom of conscience where the Scripture has spoken" (*Acts of Synod 1994*, p. 516) declares that all who disagree with Ground b ("The clear teaching of Scripture prohibits women from holding the offices of minister, elder, and evangelist") have no freedom of conscience in this matter because to think otherwise is un-Christian. Yet when the synodical delegates who failed to see this as the clear teaching of Scripture questioned whether they could be seated at synod following this decision, the president of synod declared "that no synodical delegate or officebearer is disallowed from serving in his office because he interprets Scripture texts differently than synod did in using these texts as a basis for its decision on Church Order Article 3" (*Acts of Synod 1994*, Art. 83, p. 517). We believe CRC members who interpret Scripture differently in regard to women in office genuinely desire to obey God and to be true to Scripture. Believers, regardless of their views on women in office, ought not to be denied what they conclude to be obedience to God and his Word in this non-creedal, non-salvation issue. By Synod 1994's decision, we have become a church where only one view is acceptable. In effect, Synod 1994's decision has become a confessional statement on a matter not related to salvation history.
- B. The denial of office to women on the basis of gender violates a fundamental principle of creation: justice.

Throughout the Bible, God establishes justice, with love, as a guiding principle of obedience. "What does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God" (Mic. 6:8). Biblical teachings about justice, or "giving every person his or her due," are rooted in the fact that every person created in the image of God shares the mandate to serve God and to be a steward of creation, including the gifts, talents, and abilities which God gives. In the Bible, "doing justice" is part of God's work of reconciliation. It removes barriers created by sin and

restores people to dignity and freedom. It liberates the oppressed and defends those without power, such as widows and orphans. The Pentecost story (Acts 2:17-21) explicitly states that Christ's work of reconciliation removes human barriers and includes men and women, young and old, in the pouring out of the Holy Spirit and the exercise of the Spirit's gifts. Justice is essential to the wholeness of the Christian community, a wholeness which Genesis 1:27 says is comprised of both male and female. To limit the role of women within the church on the basis of gender violates the principle of justice and creates a barrier to wholeness.

Classis Alberta North

Nicholas B. Knoppers, stated clerk

Overture 54: Appoint a Committee to Study Appropriate Restrictions re Service of Female Elders and Ministers at Major Assemblies

The council of Third CRC, Kalamazoo, Michigan, overtures synod to appoint a committee representative of the two predominant positions within the denomination to study and bring recommendations to Synod 1996 regarding appropriate restrictions to be honored with respect to the service of female elders and ministers at major assemblies.

Grounds:

1. While both sides should feel compelled to "accept one another" (Rom. 15:7), those whose faith permits them to welcome women into all offices ought to feel a weightier burden of responsibility to be sensitive to the concerns and fears of those who do not share their assurance on this matter.
2. If churches are given the freedom of local option on the women-in-office question and if some churches, feeling it is God's will for them, ordain women to the offices of elder and minister, other churches in our denominational fellowship which do not feel so inclined will find such freedom unsettling. Out of respect for these churches, we should adopt a policy restricting women elders and ministers from serving as full or voting delegates (though perhaps they might serve as "advisory" delegates) at major assemblies for a specified period of time or until such time as an agreed-upon majority at such assemblies should decide to lift this restriction.
3. This course of action holds significant promise for denominational unity and for an effective Christian witness to the power of God's healing and reconciling love within and among us.

Council of Third CRC, Kalamazoo, MI
Nelson J. Grit, clerk

Note: This overture was submitted to Classis Kalamazoo but was not adopted.

I. Background: the decision of Synod 1994

In the early stages of Synod 1994's debate on the women-in-office issue, a delegate offered his opinion concerning the choice synod had to make: "Ultimately both positions cannot be right. Ultimately the church must decide." Judging by the result of synod's vote, it would appear that most delegates agreed. They felt compelled to choose between the two positions, to declare one right and the other wrong, to adopt one line of biblical interpretation as "clearly" correct and, by implication, to dismiss the other as "clearly" unacceptable. The conviction that such a choice had to be made is as disturbing as the choice that was made. Faced with a similar struggle in his own ministry, the apostle Paul chose a different path of resolution, one that provides a model for the CRC today. Since the biblical case which we present has received little or no attention in our denomination's recent debate, it provides a fresh approach to a sensitive issue and new and substantial evidence that warrants fresh consideration.

II. The situation in first-century Rome

From the greetings in Romans 16 we learn that Roman Christianity in the mid-fifties A.D. embraced both Jews and gentiles and that the community was divided into a number of house congregations. From the list of individuals appearing in this chapter, we conclude that Paul knew (or knew of) twenty-six believers in the capital city, three of whom were Jews. He refers to Andronicus, Junias, and Herodian as "my kinsmen" (Rom. 16:7, 11). These Jews were living proof that God had not rejected his people (11:1). It is apparent, nonetheless, that most of Paul's personal connections were with gentile believers, which means he had inside information about attitudes and behavior within the gentile camp. The fact that Paul identifies and addresses at least three (and possibly as many as five) house churches shows that a decentralized organizational structure had developed in Rome. Considering the predominance of gentile contacts, we may also surmise that at least some of them were persuaded by Paul's law-free understanding of the gospel and were instrumental in the spread of this Pauline influence in Rome.

In Romans 14 and 15 we discover that a gulf developed between the Jewish and gentile constituents of the Roman church. It arose because of a difference in their understanding and interpretation of God's will for their lives as it relates to two matters: dietary practices and the observance of special days.

In Romans 14:1ff. Paul identifies the parties and issues involved: "One man's faith allows him to eat everything, but another man, whose faith is weak, eats only vegetables" (v. 2). The faith of the strong gives him [them] the assurance that it is permissible to eat anything. The "faith" which permits the strong to eat anything is that very "faith" in Jesus Christ which Paul prescribes throughout the epistle (note especially Rom. 1:16-17; 3:21 ff.) as the God-revealed way by which believers *now* (emphasis of 3:21) achieve righteousness. The strong one exhibits such trust in God/Christ—which entails also the conviction of acceptance by God/Christ on the basis of that trust (see 14:3b; 15:7)—that he feels liberated from any restriction when it comes to dietary practice.

The weak in faith, on the other hand, lack assurance about what their faith allows them to do. The contrast is not between those who have faith and those who do not or between those who have unconditional trust in God and those whose trust is conditional. The contrast is between those who feel assured that their faith permits them to eat anything and those who lack such assurance about what their faith permits them to do.

In verses 14 and 20 we learn that the dietary scruples of the weak are due to sensitivity about what is "clean" (v. 20) and what is "common," "profane," "unclean" (v. 14). These scruples indicate that the weak feel at least some degree of obligation to make such distinctions in the working out of their faith. It is also apparent, however, that the weak are not completely settled in their conviction on this score. Paul implies that their belief on this point is so shaky that they are "distressed" (v. 15) by the behavior of the strong. Not only do the actions of the strong cause the weak to fall (or "take offense," v. 21), but the very faith and salvation of the weak are put at risk by the possibility that they will be tempted to violate their beliefs by the actions of the others.

On what basis would Jewish believers interpret God's will to require such behavior and convictions? From their authoritative Scriptures. The Mosaic law specifies two major restrictions regarding what foods Jews may eat. Some creatures are ruled to be forbidden on the basis of their impurity (Lev. 11; Deut. 14), and the blood and fat of permissible meats must also not be consumed (Lev. 3:17; 7:26f; 17:10-13). The terminology Paul uses in Romans 14 is the same as that which is used in the Greek Old Testament in the cited passages. It would appear, then, that the weak are sensitive about the normativity of Mosaic law concerning clean and unclean foods. At any rate, they do not feel free to cease their observance of these laws.

It is also significant to note that Diaspora Jews (Jews of the dispersion, such as those in Rome) were generally very careful to observe dietary laws. In fact, next to circumcision, "purity regulations [which included food laws] were the most obvious and universally kept set of laws" among Jews (E. P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief*, 63 BCE - 66 CE. London: SCM Press, 1992, p. 214). The impact of such food laws upon the early church is apparent from Jesus' words in Mark 7:15, the revolutionary vision of Peter in Acts 10, and the decision of the Synod of Jerusalem in Acts 15:29.

While it is true that the Mosaic laws nowhere require vegetarianism (as in Rom. 14:2), it is also clear that Diaspora Jews *did* practice vegetarianism under certain circumstances. In Judaism as well as in the paganism of the Roman world, the slaughter of animals was usually sacrificial. The slaughtered animal was sacrificed to a pagan deity. Recognizing this practice, pious Jews in pagan environments sometimes chose to abstain from meat altogether rather than risk defiling themselves by eating meat sacrificed to idols. Jewish believers only had to look to the story of Daniel to find a heroic example of a dedicated believer who went beyond the call of duty in his zeal to remain pure. To be sure, not all Diaspora Jews were of a mind to follow such noble examples, but some were, and the "weak" in Rome may have been among them. We conclude, therefore, that it would "scarcely be surprising that Christians in a pagan city, wishing to be sure of avoiding meat which was in one way or another unclean according to the Old Testament ritual laws, should decide to abstain altogether from meat" (C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*. Edinburgh: Clark, 1975, II: 696).

As for the position of the "strong," it is summarized clearly in verse 14, where Paul, as representative of the strong (15:1), asserts, "As one who is in the Lord Jesus, I am fully convinced that no food is unclean in itself." This conviction is reiterated in verse 20, where he boldly declares that "all things are clean." It is a belief the apostle comes to "in the Lord Jesus." This last expression may mean that he came to this on the basis of Jesus' own words, as recorded in Mark 7:15-23 or Matthew 15:10-20. It may also represent an insight which he derived on the basis of his fellowship with the risen Christ or as a result of his Spirit-led reflection on the implications of what God has done through his Son. However he came to hold this conviction, Paul did so upon the authority of the Lord Jesus. He is personally convinced that dietary strictures are not appropriate, or at least not necessary. And he is "fully convinced" (literally, "knows," v. 14) that this is true.

The second disagreement separating the Jewish and gentile Christians in Rome has to do with God's will concerning observance of days. "One man considers one day more sacred than another; another man considers every day alike (v. 5). Paul states the matter in such general terms that we are hard pressed to determine the precise nature and expression of this distinction between days on the part of the weak. Considering the close parallel between verses 2 and 5, we assume that Paul is citing another example of how the sensitivities of the weak, with respect to the normativity of the Mosaic law, invited conflict with the strong. This being the case, Paul probably had in mind the keeping of the Sabbath and other Jewish festivals (e.g., the three pilgrim festivals—Passover, Booths, and Weeks). The fact that Paul himself was accustomed to worshiping on the Sabbath (Acts 17:2) and that he did make room in his schedule to share in the feast of Pentecost (1 Cor. 16:8) does *not* mean that he endorsed the continued validity of the Jewish Sabbath and festivals (see Gal. 4:9-10; Col. 2:16-17).

This is likely another case—like his agreement with the food-laws policy for gentiles in Acts 15—in which the apostle accommodated to Judaistic observances which, in themselves, he considered harmless but not necessary. What we do know is that compliance with dietary and festival/Sabbath laws was a distinctive feature of Diaspora Judaism. Continued loyalty to such laws would be quite understandable on the part of Jewish Christians unsure of, or unconvinced about, Paul's (i.e., "the strong's") interpretation of what the work of Christ means for the validity of such laws.

*What is clear from the above discussion is that the source of tension and disagreement between the weak and the strong in Rome lay in a fundamental difference in understanding and interpreting God's will. What is remarkable in this situation is that the apostle affirms the legitimacy of both positions and commands each "camp" to be accepting of the other (15:7). Paul credits both the weak and the strong with the same honorable intention of serving the Lord (14:4-6). In 14:7-9 he sums up the intention of all concerned ("we," v. 8) to devote their entire existence "to the Lord," as those who belong to the Lord. Paul takes pains to affirm that, differences notwithstanding, both weak and strong "are aiming at the one essential thing, to render service to God, to live as men who are to give an account to Him" (William Sanday and Arthur C. Headlam, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*. International Critical Commentary. Edinburgh: Clark, 1925, p. 387). What he urges of both parties, however, is that they come to a settled conviction in their own minds about the course they are pursuing. This is the force of Romans 14:5b: "Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind." Such*

advice is consistent with what Paul expects of persons who are saved by the mercies of God displayed in Christ Jesus: "Be transformed by the renewing of your mind, in order for you to test out what the will of God is . . ." (12:2).

All of this discussion leads the apostle to admonish the strong to "keep on accepting one another" (15:7). The theological ground for such acceptance is indicated in Romans 14:3 and 15:7. The ongoing acceptance urged of the Roman Christians is to be based upon the decisive past action of God in accepting these believers through Christ's saving work (see 3:21f.). The acceptance Paul urges leaves no room for judging or despising (14:3-4, 10, 13). Rather, they must welcome one another in fellowship (14:1) and love (14:15), make a concerted effort to achieve peace and mutual upbuilding (14:19), and try to please the other for the sake of the other's edification (15:2).

Of the strong Paul also urges an acceptance that is full and unconditional. They must not welcome the weak for the purpose of scrutinizing the latter's sensitivities. Since the Lord is judge of all and he has accepted both strong and weak into his fellowship (14:3; 15:7), the strong must demonstrate that same acceptance toward the weak in the Roman Christian community (14:1). In love, they must permit their own liberty to be curtailed for the sake of the weak and their salvation. In spite of their liberating insight, the strong ones should conduct themselves in a way that will contribute to the building up of the weak. They must be willing to put their shoulders under the burdens of the weak and help them carry on with their sensitivities, even though they disagree with them about the binding nature of the law as it relates to the important issues (in Paul's day) of food and days. Such a strenuous acceptance on the part of both parties is commended by Paul as Christ-like (15:3-9) and holds promise for the fulfillment of God's desire for Jew and gentile to join voices in glorifying him for his mercy (15:8-12).

Here, surely, was a situation where the apostle could have concluded what was affirmed on the floor of Synod 1994: "Ultimately both positions cannot be right. Ultimately the church must decide." Certainly Paul could have made a "clear" case from Scripture for the rightness of his own position. He could have cited the dangerous "isms" of his day (traditionalism, legalism, etc.). In all likelihood he also would have had the votes necessary to pass a binding resolution guiding the actions of the church in Rome. Paul could have taken a stand to halt the "slippery slope" slide back into Judaism.

But he didn't. Paul *didn't* force the issue. He *didn't* press for an ultimate endorsement of one position over the other. Instead, he advocated a path of strenuous acceptance, a path of unity and edification. More importantly, he affirmed the sincerity and legitimacy of each position, knowing full well that he could make a powerful case for the one against the other. He was able to recognize that, beneath the surface of this agonizing dispute, persons on both sides of the issue were believers in the sovereign grace of God, which had provided righteousness through Jesus Christ alone.

III. The situation in the CRC today

On the one hand, there are those among us who believe that it is God's revealed will that women *should not be* permitted to serve in the offices of elder and minister. As evidenced by numerous study reports in the past twenty-five years, and especially by the grounds adopted for last year's decision, these persons are able to cite a number of passages that they find convincing for their

position. Though they recognize the giftedness and qualifications of women and their greatly expanded role in service and leadership in other areas of life, the sincere Christian faith of these brothers and sisters does not allow them freedom to permit the service of women in the offices of elder or minister.

On the other hand, there are those among us who believe that it is God's revealed will that women *should be* permitted to serve in all offices in the church. As evidenced by numerous study reports over the past twenty-five years, they also are able to cite a number of passages which they find convincing for their position. According to them, the full use of women's gifts in the offices of the church is a fruit and implication of the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. The sincere Christian faith of these brothers and sisters gives them assurance that they may welcome the service of women in the offices of elder and minister.

Each camp among us seeks to pursue its adopted path as "to the Lord," "giving thanks to God," as those who "belong to the Lord" (Rom. 14:5-9). Each camp holds firmly to the atoning sacrifice of Christ as the only foundation for salvation (Rom. 3:21f.). Furthermore, each camp subscribes to the three forms of unity, which bind us together as a Christian Reformed community of faith. *As in the Christian community in Rome, the difference between us is one of interpretation of God's revealed will.* Those opposed to women serving in the offices of elder and minister fear for the faith of the church should all offices be opened to women. They find themselves questioning the integrity of the faith and biblical commitment of those who advocate this position. Those in favor of women in all offices feel impatient with the scruples of the others and may at times find themselves looking down on their fellow members for holding them back from practicing what they believe to be God's will for his church today. Their insight into the implications of Christ's work stirs them to want to "get on with it."

In such a context, we must hear the admonition of God's Word to practice a strenuous acceptance of one another in the Christian Reformed Church, an acceptance which leaves no room for judging or condemning. Together we must seek to remove stumbling blocks, to earnestly strive to do what leads to peace and mutual edification, and to please one another for the sake of building up.

IV. Overture

The council of Third CRC of Kalamazoo overtures synod to amend Article 3 of the Church Order to read as follows: "All confessing members of the church who meet the biblical requirements are eligible for the offices of minister, elder, deacon, and evangelist."

Grounds:

- A. This decision would exhibit the strenuous acceptance urged in Romans 14:1 and 15:7 by giving room for "fully convinced" believers and churches to follow conscience and conviction in determining who are eligible for ecclesiastical office.
- B. This decision would spare us of making a judgment regarding the rightness or wrongness of one position over the other. It grants legitimacy to both positions, recognizing that ultimately "we all stand before God's judgment seat" (Rom. 14:10) and "each of us will give an account of himself to God" (Rom. 14:11).
- C. This decision would enable us to clearly and boldly exhibit "a spirit of unity among ourselves as we follow Christ Jesus, so that with one heart

and mouth we may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 15:5-6).

- D. This decision is based upon biblical grounds and principles which, up to this point in our denominational debate, have received no substantial attention in the study reports and communications addressing the issue before us.

Council of Third CRC, Kalamazoo, MI
Nelson J. Grit, clerk

Note: This overture was submitted to Classis Kalamazoo but was not adopted.

Overture 56: Ratify the Change in Church Order Article 3

I. Introduction: the value of Synod 1994's decision

A. Synod's decision expresses a genuine and legitimate concern that the CRC adopt policies that have solid and compelling biblical grounds. After twenty years of discussion, proponents of women in office have, in the eyes of synod and of many in the churches, failed to provide compelling biblical grounds for that position. There may be good reason for that sentiment. The gist of argumentation has often seemed to be something like this: "We can get around the proof texts used against women in office by reinterpreting them; we can cite counter texts that leave room for our position." This approach has failed because it reinforces the *impression* that the primary impetus for change comes from contemporary societal and cultural trends rather than from Scripture. Synod's concern that the church remain solidly biblical is valid, even though the 1994 decision does not provide a final resolution.

B. Synod's decision obligates churches who favor women as elders and ministers to ask and answer some basic questions: Why, *really*, do we persist in taking this stand? Why don't we now just conform to synod's urging and return to excluding women from office? Shouldn't we do so now for the sake of unity in the church? If we acquiesce in excluding women from office, what would we be giving up?

Synod's action rightly prompts us to ask ourselves and to answer these questions:

1. Are we motivated by our stubbornness, caught up in an all-too-human tendency to insist to the end that we are right and others wrong? Wherever stubbornness plays a role, we would do well to give it up.
2. Do we have a naive belief in the "inevitability of progress"? Some say that women will surely be admitted to all the offices if we just give it more time. This assumption of inevitable progress is alien to faith. We do well to give up this false assumption, if it plays a role.
3. Are we glibly relying on a too-easy appeal to *conscience* or *justice*? A simple appeal to conscience or to justice is inadequate. The critical question that needs to be addressed is this: *What influence forms our conscience and shapes our sense of justice?* A conscience shaped by radical feminism, for example, does not justify a policy change. A sense of justice formed largely by the influence

of humanism or some current social trend gives no warrant for following a course different from synod's urging. A simplistic appeal to conscience or to justice is worth giving up, lest the message of the church unwittingly be shaped by the shifting sands of a secular society.

4. Or is it possible that, though our conscience and our sense of justice are shaped by submission to the Word of God, we have failed to bring the biblical issues into focus and to articulate them as well as we need to? If this is the case, as we believe it is, then if we revert to excluding women from office, what we are abandoning is nothing less than *faithfulness* to God and obedience to the gospel of grace. Only if this is at stake do we have valid reason for continuing to ordain women as elders despite synod's urging to the contrary.

We want to elaborate on this theme as the basis for this overture to synod to ratify the change in the Church Order endorsed by Synod 1990 and again by Synod 1993 which removes the restrictive work "male" from Article 3 to allow for local church option in electing women to the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist.

II. Reformational roots: the hermeneutical question

The position any of us takes on the question of women in office is likely to reflect the way we read or interpret the Bible, that is, the kind of hermeneutics that we employ. If we as a church are to remain faithful to our Reformed heritage, it is important that we are conscious of our Reformational roots. Unconsciously we may adopt a way of interpreting Scripture that is foreign to our Reformed principles. What needs to be considered is that opposition to admitting women to office may stem largely from loyalty to merely human traditions and be buttressed by a hermeneutic that is consonant with Arminian and Fundamentalist perspectives and not with genuine Reformed principles. The primary concern in this appeal is to make clear how support for women in office comes out of a Reformed way of reading and interpreting the Scriptures.

At the heart of the Reformation movement was the principle of *sola gratia*, "by grace alone." Salvation is from the Lord and not from human beings. Along with this was the companion principle of *sola fide*, "by faith alone." Salvation does not come through our human striving but comes to us only by way of faith in Jesus Christ. A third principle was equally at the heart of the Reformation: *sola scriptura*, "by scriptures alone." The knowledge of salvation does not come to us through the traditions or the reasonings of human beings but in the divinely inspired Scriptures alone.

These three *sola*'s are not three distinct and separate principles, each referring to a different truth or reality. If they were, each one would limit the others instead of each enriching the others. Rather, the three Reformation principles are like three windows by which we look into the same truth. Each principle enlarges our vision of one and the same truth. The Reformation confesses the oneness of truth. The entire Heidelberg Catechism, for example, is an unfolding of the single comfort found in belonging to a faithful Savior.

An illustration helps to clarify the importance of this Reformational perspective. Suppose a man says the following about the love of his life: "She is my devoted wife." And then he also says, "She is my dearest friend." And finally he confides, "She is a wonderful lover." Beautiful sentiments, each of these. But what makes all the difference in the world is whether these sentiments are all

spoken about one and same person who is the object of his affection. If they are, each sentiment further enriches the significance of the other two. But what if each sentiment refers to a different reality, to a separate person? One person is his "devoted wife," a different woman is his "dearest friend," and still a third is his "wonderful lover." In this case the "dearest friend and the "wonderful lover" do not enrich the meaning of "my devoted wife" but severely limit it. *Sola gratia*, *sola fide*, and *sola scriptura* are three expressions of one and the same truth.

Arminius began to treat the meaning of faith as if it were a distinct and separate truth from that of divine grace. When we separate faith from a simple confession of trust in the grace of God, we significantly limit our confession of God's grace. Grace is then something that God offers to us, but nothing more. Its power is gone. Our act of faith is now the real power that brings about salvation. God does 50 percent by offering us his grace, but we contribute the other crucial 50 percent. That separation limits the grace of God. In place of the Reformation confession of "grace alone," Arminius asserted "grace, but . . ." What follows the "but" is what we do that limits grace. The Arminian separation of faith from the confession of grace was clearly rejected by the Synod of Dort in the early seventeenth century.

Fundamentalism, the contemporary heir of Arminianism, has taken the Arminian process one step further by separating the *sola scriptura* from the *sola gratia* and *sola fide*. Fundamentalism's view of the Bible and its method of interpreting Scripture are both separated from the content or message of the Scriptures, that "salvation is of the Lord alone." Quite apart from this powerful message of the Bible, human reasoning now ascribes certain qualities to the Bible that we must affirm if we are to have a high view of Scripture. The anomaly in this viewpoint is that one can ignore the message of God's grace and still have a "right" or high view of Scripture. But there is a further problem.

Interpreting a Scripture passage is no longer a discovery of yet another facet of God's redeeming grace. In the Fundamentalist approach, some passages speak of grace, but many passages are seen as giving us instruction in what we must do right if grace is to be effective. Since eternity depends on what we do with our 50 percent, our getting the right interpretation of instruction becomes all important. The text comes to be used as independent "proof" of the interpreter's right moral viewpoint or theological stance. Here Scripture is used to reinforce our belief that we are right and others wrong. The "proof-text" method of interpreting the Scriptures does not have its origin in Reformed thought but in the Fundamentalism that is heir to Arminianism and influences all of us.

In the Reformed perspective, the sufficiency of Scripture is one and the same with the sufficiency of God's grace in Christ. Similarly, the perspicuity, or clarity, of Scripture does not refer to each individual phrase or verse looked at by itself. Much is left unclear in the Scriptures in this regard. Perspicuity refers rather to the clarity that is present in Scripture from beginning to end regarding the grace of God as the only source of our life and salvation. That becomes important in dealing with the issue of women in office.

Every doctrine is a window looking in on the grace of God. Every biblical instruction for life is a directive for living wholly out of the grace of God. Any part of doctrine or life that is separated from that central message of grace functions as a work of our own that obscures the grace of God, like a lover who draws us away from a devoted spouse.

This Reformational perspective has much to do with the issue of women in office. All too often in debating this issue, both sides have attempted to discern the intent of Scripture by looking at isolated texts as "proofs" of their own viewpoint. This is a hermeneutic that derives from Fundamentalism and is consistent with an Arminian approach to the gospel. The end result is a focus on ourselves and what we do that is right and all important. But this focus is always divisive. The Reformed alternative is to keep our focus on the great things that God has done. Out of that we discern what God's good, acceptable, and perfect will makes possible for those who live by his grace. What emerges is not a position that we have "proven to be right"; it is a viewpoint grounded in a living faith that is responsive to the Word of God's grace alone. What is compelling in such a viewpoint does not depend on human reasoning buttressed by "proof texts." It will be determined neither by the latest cultural trend nor by long-hallowed tradition. The power in every Reformed viewpoint comes from the message of God's grace alone, which enables us to trust in and be responsive to the God of grace. In that grace alone we find our unity.

We want to look through three windows that display the singular grace of God and compel us in faith to receive men and women alike in the offices of the church: (1) responsibility as responsiveness to divine sovereignty, (2) the righteousness of the kingdom of God, and (3) the mind of Christ. And these three, too, are one.

III. Three windows of grace

A. *Responsibility as responsiveness to divine sovereignty*

At the heart of the Reformed faith is the confession of God's sovereignty. This confession acknowledges that everything in creation is from his hand. Every capacity that we experience in ourselves or in others is a gift from him that can be received with joy and gratitude. But more than that, everything that brings about the restoration of all things is also from him. Salvation in its entirety is from God. Faith itself is God's gift to us.

At the same time, we human beings are responsible in all we do. Yet we experience a mystery in how our responsibility and freedom can be understood in relation to divine sovereignty. Louis Berkhof wrote: "Problems arise here which have never yet been solved and which are probably incapable of solution by man" (*Systematic Theology*, Eerdmans, 1939, p. 78).

The problem may be that we are already separated from God as we reflect on our relationship with him. Most of the meanings of responsibility (blame, duty, accountability) presuppose our fallen condition. In our separation from God, anything we credit ourselves with doing seems to limit what God does in his sovereignty. And what the sovereign God does appears to limit our freedom and responsibility.

Beneath those fragmented meanings of responsibility that relate to sin and law, however, we discover that God created us to be responsive. As God worked his sovereign will in creation, creatures emerged each day with a heightened capacity to respond. The culmination of creation is the human being, who more than any other creature has an awesome capacity to respond to God, created as we are in God's own image.

In the beginning, God and the human pair live in an intimate covenantal relationship. Here divine sovereignty and human responsiveness do not limit

each other at all. Instead, each enriches the other. As the human pair acknowledge the creator as the source of their life and of every gift in themselves and every provision in the rest of creation, they can only magnify the greatness of God and his sovereign glory. Being responsive to God implies getting to know him for who he is as sovereign Lord. The more they get to know the goodness and care of their creator, the more they grow and expand. Their capacity and freedom to be responsive grows and develops the more they live in responsiveness to him.

And the man and the woman in their naked, open relationship of responsiveness to each other do not limit but enrich each other. Here, too, responsiveness implies discovering and getting to know and learning to value every trait in the other as a gift from God—to the other but also to oneself. The more each responds to the other with a sense of wonder and gratitude, the more that very capacity to be responsive develops and expands. For as each discovers the other, each discovers more also about oneself. The man in the garden first discovers his own sexuality as he greets the woman who is different from him. And the more they discover the wonders of the world around them, the more their capacity and freedom to respond grows. In the original state of creation, we have a picture of responsive trust that knows no limits but is ever free to develop and grow.

The tragedy of the fall into sin is that the trust was broken, irretrievably. The man and the woman broke trust with God, and the trust between them was broken at the same time. Each grasped for a knowledge of good and evil that rivals God's. God is the essence and source of all goodness. He knows good and evil by his own will and good pleasure. When we become like him by making our own individual will or pleasure the measure of good for ourselves and others, we destroy trust and thereby *diminish* our capacity to be responsive to God and to each other. We develop new responses, yes, but they no longer enhance our mutual growth but instead *restrict* our capacity to be responsive to each other. We hide from each other and from God (Gen. 3:7-8). We blame each other and God (Gen. 3:12-13). The ultimate curse is that one comes to rule over the other (Gen. 3:16). The gift of a shared dominion that God had entrusted to the human pair has turned into never-ending power struggles in all areas of human life. Where trust breaks down, we invest our energy into defending ourselves and trying to prove that we are right and others wrong. The responsive capacity that promised continuing discovery and growth has become ever more rigid and narrow in a movement toward destruction and death. The capacity to experience life responsively, with joy and as a gift, is almost snuffed out.

We live in a world where trust is still badly broken and our responsiveness toward others still rigidified. The kind of trust for which God created us is impossible in our world. The kind of responses that trust makes possible are severely limited for all of us. But redemption brings us not only forgiveness but also the renewal of our capacity to be responsive—in faith, hope, and, yes, love. Herein lies the whole meaning of Christian discipleship. We are called again to the possibilities of faith and trust. We are called again to receive all of life—our own and that of others—as a gift from God rather than a production of our own. A gift given us from God can only be valued, unwrapped, discovered, and enjoyed (cf. I Cor. 4:7; Ecd. 2:24-25; 3:12-13; 4:22; 5:18-19).

All this is involved in our "responsibility," seen as our new responsiveness in relation to a sovereign God of grace, mercy, and peace. And it is out of this new responsiveness to God and to each other that we who confess God's grace alone as the source of all good are able to discover God's will for the relationships of men and women together, whether in the home, in the church, or in society.

We make "a small beginning" in this new responsiveness, and even the best of that is "stained with sin" (Heidelberg Catechism, Q 114; Q 62). But the direction of growth is clear from the message of the Scriptures. In the light of that renewed responsiveness to grace, how can we males continue to place restrictions on our valuing and being responsive to the gifts of women in the church? How can we as men place restrictions on the capacity of women to respond to God and his people in the church and its offices? In doing either, we limit the working of his grace. All too often we as males have been unresponsive to both the needs and the gifts of women. And when we as women accept such restrictions on our responsiveness, we limit the working of God's grace in us and his working through us to bless others. We deprive others of the opportunity to be responsive to our ministry of grace. Such restrictions, we can all now confess, express the rigidity that remains in us from the fall and still resists the working of God's Spirit. But we are now free to invest our energy, not in restricting responsiveness in ourselves and others, but in discovering still richer ways to promote continuing growth in the responsiveness that the sovereign God created and is renewing within all of us.

B. The righteousness of the kingdom

As he began his ministry, Jesus preached the good news of the kingdom and healed the sick. The dominant theme of that kingdom is "righteousness." The entire Sermon on the Mount is devoted to the righteousness of God's kingdom, which we are to seek first of all (Matt. 6:33). If we have that righteousness, everything else of value comes to us.

Throughout the Sermon on the Mount, the righteousness of the kingdom of God is sharply contrasted with the righteousness of the Pharisees. "For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:20). The central theme of Paul's letter to the Romans is the same contrast between human righteousness and the righteousness of God. "For being ignorant of the righteousness that comes from God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness" (Rom. 10:3; cf. also 1:17 and 3:21; and Phil. 3:9). In seeking to do right in the matter of women in office, the question we need to ask is this: Does the right we seek to do belong to "the righteousness of God" or is it merely "our own righteousness?" What are the differences between these two forms of righteousness?

The main characteristic of the righteousness of the Pharisees is that it was, as Paul says, "their own." It was not inherently evil. In many ways it represented exemplary behavior, high moral standards, religious earnestness, and traditional values. But its main focus was what they did and what they did right. They carefully measured what they did right, and they used their own right as a yardstick for measuring others, too, and distinguishing themselves from those who were not sufficiently righteous. The way they focused on their own right and measured others by it was very much like the original sin in which our first parents broke trust by making themselves, like God, the measure of good and

evil. And it had much the same effect. It engendered further brokenness and hurt. The righteousness that was "their own" led them to distance themselves from sinners, to stand in judgment on and condemn others, and to control and restrict them by the heavy burden of their laws. To maintain their position, they asserted an "authority over" others that reinforced their own power. "Their own" righteousness produced the same restrictive responses found in Genesis 3: hiding, blaming, and ruling over.

The righteousness of the kingdom, which Jesus both taught and embodied, was not just a quantitative extension of the Pharisees' righteousness, as if he merely succeeded where they fell short. If it were only that, his would merely be "his own" as theirs was "their own" and ours is "our own." No, Jesus' righteousness was of a wholly different order. It belonged to the kingdom of heaven. Its focus was on what God has done and is doing. "I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me" (John 6:38). Jesus did not pursue his own righteousness. His main goal in life was not to maintain his own innocence, to preserve himself from sin, to prove himself right, and so to enhance his own goodness. He had no need to do that. There would have been no reconciliation from that kind of self-righteousness. His was a different kind of righteousness from that of the Pharisees, and Jesus pursued it to the very end, even to his dying on the cross. It was a righteousness that proved redemptive and reconciling.

God's way of doing right in Jesus is to embrace sinners, to lift up the weak and fallen, and to exalt those of low estate. The essence of Jesus' righteousness is that he imparted a sense of worth and dignity to those he encountered (Matt. 6:26; 12:12). Instead of separating from sinners, he touches them. Instead of judging them, he blesses them. Instead of condemning them, he values them. Instead of restricting them, he opens new doors and invites them to follow him. He dines in fellowship with prostitutes and cheating tax collectors, and he feasts with hypocritical Pharisees. This way of doing right Jesus pursued to the end, in doing God's will. From his own cross, he ushered a dying thief into his kingdom and prayed forgiveness for the Pharisees who were crucifying him. His way of doing right embodied the very responsiveness to God and to others for which God created us in the beginning. Instead of more brokenness, his righteousness brought healing and peace. In doing God's will, he exercised no "authority over" others but embodied within himself a clearly authentic disclosure of God's will (Matt. 7:28-29).

What shapes our conscience and our sense of justice is neither the latest trend in society nor any long-honored tradition among mankind but rather the righteousness of the kingdom of God that is embodied in and pursued by Jesus. Our calling is not to become righteous in ourselves; he calls us away from our own righteousness, by which we become obsessed with our being right in contrast to those we judge to be wrong. Instead, the fruit of his righteousness is that we "become the righteousness of God" (II Cor. 5:21). We who are the body of Christ become the arms of Christ, by which God embraces and lifts up and reconciles a broken world to himself. It is with a conscience and a sense of justice shaped by Jesus' righteousness that we address the question of women in office.

In the light of the righteousness of the kingdom and a sense of justice shaped by it, how shall men and women relate to each other? How shall we respond to the gifts that we recognize in each other? Are we not compelled to help each

other discover the workings of God's grace in all of us alike and find ever new contexts in which these gifts can come to expression? How can we not expect that these will be of value in all the offices? To restrict the use of gifts by women to contexts outside the offices of the church is to limit the working of God's grace and the righteousness that is of one piece with his grace. To place limits on the working of God's grace in the name of our having to be right is not a perspective that comes from the Reformed faith and life. A human righteousness that is separated from and limits the working of grace is consistent only with an Arminian and Fundamentalist way of thinking.

Those of us who belong to churches that have felt compelled to elect men and women alike to the office of elder and to welcome ordained women as well as men into our pulpits have been moved to do so by a biblical sense of justice. Our single concern is to lift each other up and not to hold some down. Some of us have experienced the blessings and fruit of this new righteousness through years of working together as males and females in serving Christ's church in office. We have made a "small beginning" in obedience to the righteousness of Christ and his kingdom. To turn back once again to the injustice of treating women as if they are, by gender alone, inherently unsuited for office would be for us to turn our backs on the righteousness of Christ and to deny as surely as Peter did that we ever knew him. It would be deliberately to limit our responsiveness as surely as our first parents did when they broke trust by eating the forbidden fruit. It would involve nothing less than abandoning the way of mutual servanthood, to which Jesus calls us.

C. *The mind of Christ* (Phil. 2:5ff.)

No more fruitful and powerful image for the Christian life exists in the New Testament than that of "the mind of Christ" as Paul describes it in Philippians 2:5ff. He commends to us the same mind as that present in the incarnation of the Son of God and lived out in the life of Jesus of Nazareth. Though he was God, he emptied himself rather than grasping for or clinging to the glory and power and authority that was his by right. Self-emptying servanthood characterized Jesus' life and teaching throughout the gospel story. He called his disciples away from an obsession with their own greatness and toward following him in the way of self-emptying service (cf. Matt. 16:24-25; 18:1-4; 19:13-14). He washed his disciples' feet and directed them to do the same toward each other (John 13:1-17). He took on the form of a servant so that all of us might be lifted up and exalted with him. His obedience to God's will went all the way, even to death on the cursed cross (Phil. 2:8).

Paul consistently refers to this self-emptying mind of Christ as the key that transforms all human relationships: subjects and rulers, wives and husbands, children and parents, slaves and their masters (cf. Rom. 13 and Eph. 4-5). At the outset Paul reminds both parties that they are together subject to one Lord and Master, Jesus Christ. Then he addresses the party that is in the position of weakness: subjects of Rome, women, children, and slaves. He does not spur them on to grasp for power over their suppressors. That only perpetuates the power struggles that have plagued human life ever since the fall, as each side makes its own interests the measure of what is good and evil. No, Paul calls for the weaker party to be subject to those with power or authority. They are to be servants in accordance with the mind of Christ. But then Paul turns to those who have historically possessed power and authority. He urges them to embrace

the same model for self-emptying servanthood, the mind of Christ. They need no longer grasp or cling to their power and authority. The result is a relationship of mutual servanthood, in which each party can value the gifts and the person of the other without restrictions. And together they can be servants to the world in Christ's name.

As this mind of Christ slowly works as leaven in the life of God's people over the centuries, we have seen the tyranny in the divine right of kings gradually giving way to democratic forms of government, although despotic regimes are still common. We have seen slavery giving way to civil freedom, although ethnic and racial bigotry are still prevalent. We are just beginning to see children in some respects being valued as persons with the same dignity and worth that adults have, although the reality of child abuse is still a major problem. In each instance it has often been the voice of the church which has cried out for justice, but that voice has usually sent mixed signals for a time. And in each instance, the new beginning is small and still stained with sin.

In our time we are privileged to see a similar process at work in regard to women. It is heartening to observe that even those who most strongly oppose women in office are raising their voices, too, to affirm the dignity and worth of women and to call on the churches to give recognition to the gifts of women in ways that past generations never did or could. In our time the mind of Christ is still growing in us in a way that is powerfully influencing all of us for good in the church as well as in society, in marriage, and in family life. This new beginning, too, is small and still stained with many restrictions.

The mind of Christ that transforms all human relationships can be described in a variety of ways, for it includes all that the Christian life encompasses. But at its core, to have the mind of Christ in us is to acknowledge the grace of God in everything. All of life is again received as a gift from God. That leaves no room for making claims for ourselves above others, or for maintaining some advantage for ourselves that we deny to others, or for the boasting that elevates some above others. It leaves room only for humility.

The mind of Christ enables us to value others as "better than yourselves" (Phil. 2:3). Every other person in the church has gifts, talents, traits, experiences, feelings, or ways of understanding that are different from and surpass our own. All these are of value to that person in herself or himself, but they are of value also to each of us. The mind of Christ thus counters our natural human tendency (from the fall) to measure others by ourselves and to discount them or put them down for those ways in which they differ from us.

But each of us is also of value to them. They, too, have their weakness, their neediness, their brokenness, their sin. As we become servants to them, we acknowledge at one and the same time their worth to us and our value to them. Having the mind of Christ in us, we can take delight in discovering the differences among us and in finding new ways to give expression to these gifts. They are all gifts given to us through a sovereign God's own goodness and grace. Who are we to limit their expression?

The mind of Christ includes within it all of the responsiveness to others that God intended for us by creation, that became rigidified in us through the fall, and that is being renewed in us through Christ's redemption and Spirit. With the mind of Christ in us, the righteousness which belongs to the kingdom of God envelops us, in contrast to "our own," which does not bring us even to the entryway of the kingdom (Matt. 5:20).

How differently we view the issue of women in office when we look at it with the mind of Christ. What happens when we let that mind determine the relationship of men and women to each other in the home, in the church, and in society? We seek new opportunities to value and benefit from the gifts of all persons, women as well as men, and to encourage, not limit, their expression in ever new contexts. Controlled by the mind of Christ, we sense the incongruity of males insisting that they must cling to the authority of office for themselves alone and must guard against allowing women to use God's gifts in that capacity. We sense also the incongruity of women refusing even to consider whether God has gifted them to serve his church in office. And we sense the same incongruity when limits are placed on women, whether by men or by women themselves, in the home or in society. The mind of Christ works in us in the same way in all areas of life, to set us free to discover, use, and value the gifts that come to all of us from his sovereign grace.

How far shall we let the mind of Christ work in and among us? Can we ever go too far in adopting the mind of Christ? As it is, we make only a "small beginning." When we place limits on its influence, however, we limit the working of God's grace. We separate his grace from our working. To limit God's grace for the sake of preserving even one arena for us to do "our own" right thing is to follow the way of Arminianism and Fundamentalism (as in its rejection of infant baptism) rather than that of the Reformed faith.

Some churches have sought to embody the mind of Christ by making full use of women's gifts, in response to Synod 1974's admonition, first by inviting women to serve as adjuncts or allowing them to "expound" and finally by recognizing their gifts in office. For these churches to turn back from that growth would be for them to turn away from the mind of Christ and limit the grace of God. Surely, synod does not want to urge this on us.

IV. Circumcision: the archetypal denial of grace

No issue stirred the passion of the apostle Paul more deeply than that of circumcision. Yet Paul speaks in two strikingly different ways about circumcision. In Romans he refers to circumcision as a "sign or seal of the righteousness which [Abraham] had by faith," that is, a sign and seal of the covenant of grace, no less (Rom. 4:11).

But in Galatians, Philippians, and Colossians Paul vents his spleen against those who insist that gentiles must be circumcised according to the law of Moses. To them "Christ will be of no advantage"; they are "severed from Christ" and "fallen away from grace" (Gal. 5:2ff.). They are "foolish" and "bewitched" (Gal. 3:1), "deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and turning to a different gospel" (Gal. 1:6). They are "dogs," "evil-workers . . . who mutilate the flesh" (Phil. 3:2ff.). They try to make "a prey of you by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition . . . and not according to Christ"; they make you "submit to regulations" that "have indeed an appearance of wisdom . . . but . . . are of no value" (Col. 1:8-23). Strong words, these of Paul regarding those who insist on circumcision, the sign or seal of God's grace.

How can Paul speak in such divergent ways about circumcision? How can circumcision be both a sign or seal of grace and a falling away from grace? The answer becomes evident when we consider four facets of what circumcision was:

- First, circumcision was indeed a gift from God to signify his sovereign grace, to keep God's people aware of their dependence on him and his grace.
- Second, circumcision by its nature became a permanent mark in those persons who received it.
- Third, circumcision clearly distinguished those who possessed it from those who did not—the "uncircumcised," like gentiles and women.
- Fourth, circumcision became the measure in themselves by which those who possessed it began to devalue, stand in judgment on, restrict, and distance themselves from those who lacked it.

What God gave as a sign and seal of his grace came to *function*, inescapably so after Christ's atonement, as a righteousness of our own and therefore as something divisive and contrary to the gospel of Christ and his grace.

Every gift of God's grace can suffer the same fate in our hands. Once we receive a gift from God, we can treat it as something that makes us superior to others. We can begin to look down on those who do not have the gift as we do. We can make *the gift* the object of our loyalty rather than *the giver* of the gift. That is the essence of all idolatry (cf. Rom. 1:25) and of the sin that stains the best we do. All sin is in essence a reenactment of the original sin, by which our first parents made something in themselves the measure of good and evil instead of continuing to trust the sovereign Creator. Circumcision, as a gift of God, is the archetype of all denial of grace.

Every doctrine that we profess is a celebration of God's boundless grace. But we can turn our possession of the truth into a claim we make for ourselves in distinction from and in judgment on others, thereby denying the grace we profess. We can even do so with the doctrine of grace itself. Every Christian moral or ecclesiastical practice that we follow is also a testimony to the working of God's grace. But we can turn any of them into a form of our own righteousness that, like circumcision, distinguishes us from the unrighteous, on whom we stand in judgment. In this way we deny the very grace which we claim to depend on. Every controversy in the church tends to take on this form.

Consider the Dutch-language controversy in the early twentieth century. That was no silly controversy. The heart of the gospel of grace was at stake. For centuries our forebears had heard and received the blessings of God's grace and salvation through the beautiful Dutch language. That language was truly a gift or vehicle of grace. But in a new land, English was the new language, especially of the youth. The value of Dutch came to be questioned. To those who made grace dependent on Dutch, it seemed as though the old values would all be lost. Grace had to be associated with Dutch. But that limited God's grace. Had the church agreed to require the Dutch language alone, the church would have turned away from grace, and the gospel itself would have been lost. The issue in the Dutch-language controversy was similar to that of circumcision in Paul's day.

The issue of women in office is in danger of becoming a form of circumcision in the church today. For centuries the grace of God came to the people of God through the ministries of male officebearers only. Male dominance or superiority was largely unquestioned either in society or in the church. As we are led to examine this issue more closely, in ways that never occurred to us before, we are tempted to make grace dependent on our having the "right" view of office, which excludes women. We still profess *grace*, but we also have to have the right

view of women in office. Here our own righteousness sets limits to the working of grace as surely as circumcision did. And note that either side on this issue can make its viewpoint function as a form of circumcision. We do so whenever we make our own view mandatory, while we judge and condemn the other side.

Every biblical passage places us before the question of grace versus circumcision. We can interpret every passage either as a discovery of how we may live by trusting God's grace alone or as a call to "circumcision," where we determine *what we must do right* in order to be acceptable. The latter gives us a standard in ourselves for excluding or judging others. The meaning of individual passages is not necessarily clear in each instance, but everywhere the message of God's saving grace is unmistakably clear for those who trust him.

This is the first question we face in interpreting passages like I Timothy 2:12. In approaching this text, are we looking for a word that instructs us in "circumcision" or for one that proclaims the grace of God, for a righteousness of our own or for the righteousness of the kingdom? This passage powerfully expresses the abiding principle of the mind of Christ, in which there is no room for grasping for "authority over" others but only for the humility that comes from genuine servanthood.

In any case, Paul does not explicitly address the question of women in office either in this passage or in any other. If it really were as important to God as it is to some opponents of women in office that women be excluded, God would surely have made that instruction as unmistakably clear as he did the original probationary command. The specific circumstances which led Paul to write as he did in I Timothy 2 may be unclear or open to differing opinions. What is neither in doubt nor time conditioned is the message of God's grace that is expressed here as everywhere in the Scriptures. Let us not turn that powerful message into our own form of "circumcision."

V. Giving in and giving up: a summary of what it would involve

Looking back on the various "windows of grace" through which we have been peering, we can identify more clearly just what it would mean for those of us who are compelled by Scripture to support women in office to abandon that position now and return to excluding women from office. It would mean the following:

- A. Embracing an Arminian or Fundamentalist view of Scripture and grace.
- B. Resisting the message of Scripture and its gospel of "grace alone."
- C. Limiting our responsiveness (our "response-ability") toward women in the church.
- D. Following our own righteousness rather than the righteousness of the kingdom.
- E. Suppressing the "mind of Christ" in us and in the church.
- F. Insisting on a form of "circumcision" that limits the gospel of grace.
- G. Turning away from the truth of the gospel.

VI. What of our covenant unity?

If we sincerely believe that the gospel of grace itself compels us to admit women to office, how does that affect our covenant unity with those who reject the admission of women to office in the church? To be consistent, must we not insist that they have forsaken the gospel? To maintain our integrity, some may ask, should we not separate from them and form our own church?

The same gospel of grace that compels us to affirm women as qualified for office also compels us to embrace as brothers and sisters in Christ those who we believe are wrong on this issue. Not to do so would be to deny that God's grace alone is the source of our unity. We would then be seeking and finding a unity based on something in ourselves and our own righteousness. We would be turning support for women in office into a form of circumcision much like some opponents do in leaving the denomination. We would also be ignoring our confession that the best of our works—this perhaps being one of them—are only a small beginning and even at that are stained with sin. If all sides of controversial issues would make that confession their starting point, even serious differences could be vigorously discussed and debated without either destroying or coercing unity.

Romans 14 shows us the way to preserve unity. When Paul addresses the issues of whether it is permissible to eat meat and necessary to observe holy days, he is not talking about a matter that is recognized to be indifferent or peripheral. He is dealing with some Christians who firmly believe that faith in God's grace forbids eating meat and requires the observance of holy days. But other Christians believe with equal fervor that God's freeing grace entitles them to eat meat and be free of the observance of holy days.

Paul's resolution is to refuse to resolve the issue for them. But he warns both sides against standing in judgment on the other side. That is something we all need to hear and heed. He further instructs those who insist on abstinence to do their abstaining to the glory of God. Likewise, he instructs those who affirm their right to eat, to do their eating to the glory of God. The same applies to the observance of days. Unity is not found in their own human understandings and agreements, where we often seek it, but in the reality of God's glory and grace. Our unity is found in having the mind of Christ, which pursues not our own righteousness but the righteousness of the kingdom of God, which frees us anew to be responsive to each other as men and women, yes, but also as proponents and opponents of women in office. If our unity as a Christian Reformed Church is to endure and be meaningful, it will be the kind of unity of which Paul here speaks and not one based on our own claims to being "right" where we believe others are wrong. If we live by the precepts and spirit of Romans 14, we will experience as a church a far deeper unity than we ourselves could ever create by our human agreements.

VII. Overture

Hope Christian Reformed Church of Oak Forest, Illinois, overtures synod to ratify the change in the Church Order rejected by Synod 1994 but endorsed by Synods 1990 and 1993, which removes the restrictive word "male" from Article 3-a to allow for local-church option in electing women to all the offices of the church.

Grounds:

- A. Synod has not previously considered all the implications that the central and pervasive biblical message of "grace alone" has for the admission of women to office.
- B. Human responsibility, understood as our created and renewed responsiveness both to our sovereign God and to each other, provides compelling reason for many churches to begin admitting qualified women to all the offices of the church.
- C. Both the righteousness of the kingdom of heaven and the "mind of Christ" (Phil 2:5ff.) offer further compelling biblical reasons for admitting women to all the offices.
- D. For those churches who ordain women as elders on these biblically compelling grounds to revert now to excluding women from office would be for them to turn away from God's grace, from the responsiveness to each other to which he calls us, from the righteousness and justice of God, and from the mind of Christ, contrary to Christian conscience.

VIII. Addendum to the overture

The above overture was presented to Classis Chicago South in September 1994 with the request that classis appoint a study committee to give it serious consideration. This committee solicited responses from all the churches of classis. In the light of the responses received, extensive modifications were made by a majority (2) of the committee, with one member in a minority report advising rejection of the overture. On January 18 Classis Chicago South defeated the modified overture by a tie vote, fifteen to fifteen.

During the debate on the floor of classis, several concerns were raised about the intent or implications of the theological portion of the overture. Clarification of intent by the Hope Church spokesperson were met with comments that if the report actually said what was being stated orally, it might be acceptable, but that classis could only respond to the written report before it. Because the concerns raised are legitimate ones, we want to identify those concerns in order to clarify our intent and, if possible, to prevent misunderstandings at synod of our intention and viewpoint.

We note that while Classis Chicago South was not ready to endorse the theological statement in our overture, another similar overture, originating independently from another church and having different grounds from ours, was adopted by classis and sent to synod.

The concerns expressed at classis essentially come down to the following three basic ones:

Concern 1:

One major concern, which led to significant modification of our study by the committee of classis, was that Hope's theological statement was unduly harsh and divisive in implying that anyone who rejects women in ecclesiastical office is guilty of the heresy of Arminianism or of Fundamentalism, legalism, and "circumcision" and must, if we are consistent, be considered "anathema," as in Galatians 1.

Clarification:

Hope Church's intention is to give a reason for the faith that is in us and for the practice of ordaining women as elders that comes out of that faith. We do this in the context of Synod 1994's urging churches like ours to expel women from office by June 1, 1995. We want to be accountable for what we do, but we cannot deny our faith. We cannot return to a practice that we believe is contrary to God's Word. We cannot resume doing what our conscience regards as sinning against women.

In saying this, we are deliberately not passing judgment on others or accusing them of heresy or sin where they differ from us. We are simply identifying what we see as the issue that needs to be addressed. There is a vast difference between identifying an issue as involving an Arminian tendency and charging a person or group with sin or heresy because they differ on one point of practice with us. Please also note that by Arminianism we are not referring to the five points of the Remonstrants but are talking about the nature of all sin, including our own, namely, turning from and limiting the grace of God. The same perspective applies to our discussion of circumcision. Our assumption in all of this is that the intention of all sides is to affirm a Reformed view of grace.

But we all make only a "small beginning" in obedience to God's grace (Heidelberg Catechism, Q 62; Q 114). What we are saying to the church and to synod is this: "Here is how we see the grace of God, which compels us to accept women in all the offices of the church. We affirm our covenant union with the CRC, but we cannot deny the faith by which we live as a congregation. Is there room for us? We want to belong." Please read our theological treatise as a disclosure of who we are and what our faith is and not as a judgment on those who, out of their own confession of God's grace, in their "small beginning" in obedience, feel compelled to follow a different practice from ours.

Concern 2:

A second significant concern expressed at classis was that Hope's theology appears to separate its "principle" of grace, its view of righteousness, and its understanding of the mind of Christ from the written Word, as indicated by its rejection of all "proof texts." If we cannot refer to specific texts, it was said, what is our theology and our faith based on?

Clarification:

We know nothing and can say nothing at all about the grace of God, the righteousness of the kingdom, and the mind of Christ apart from what specific biblical texts reveal to us. What we are saying is that any citing of texts, by either side, will not function to "prove" rationally that one position is right and the other wrong. No single text "proves," for example, that infants should be baptized. But that does not mean that the practice of infant baptism is divorced from any reference to specific texts. "Proof" implies a human process of reasoning (deduction and/or induction) on which we base our beliefs. Our faith in God's grace does not rest in human reasoning, not even in deductions from a "principle": our faith rests solely in the God of grace himself, who reveals himself and his will in all the words of Scripture.

Concern 3:

A third concern expressed at classis was that we seem to separate grace from law. It was said that we appear to have no interest in what is right versus wrong, in obedience versus disobedience, when we say that the Scriptures speak only of grace and not also of what we must do right to be acceptable to God.

Clarification:

If read carefully, our overture asserts only that there is no instruction or law that tells us what we can or should do right apart from God's grace. "Without me you can do nothing," says Jesus in John 15. The Bible is, however, full of instructions regarding what it means to live wholly out of the grace of God. Hence we believe that the issue of women in office must be seen in the light of what God's grace means to us. In that light, the matter of ordaining women to office becomes for us a matter of biblical justice, of what is right, and of obedience to God and his Word. It represents a small, still sin-stained, but significant step in the direction God is calling us to go.

In short, we ask that synod and the churches read our overture not as an accusation against those who differ with us but simply as a testimony regarding why we feel compelled in obedience to the very words of Scripture to continue our practice of ordaining women as elders and why we therefore urge synod to delete the word "male" from Article 3 of the Church Order. We are not asking synod to endorse every aspect of our theological statement. We are asking synod only to recognize that our practice of ordaining women to the office of elder comes out of a scriptural confession of God's grace alone and not from some secular influence, as has often been charged. While we are ready always to give a reason for the faith that is in us, we readily acknowledge that we cannot "prove" by human reasoning that we are right and opponents are wrong. The question that we ask synod to address is this: Is synod willing to continue in covenant union with churches who confess the grace of God as we do and who live out of it as we are trying to do? We earnestly desire to preserve our covenant union with the Christian Reformed Church. We urge synod to define the boundaries of that union broadly enough to include within its diversity those churches who believe in God's grace and its implications for justice as we do.

Council of Hope CRC, Oak Forest, IL
Ken Biel, clerk

Note: This overture was submitted to Classis Chicago South but was not adopted.

Overture 57: Revise Synod 1994's Decision Not to Ratify Change in Church Order Article 3

Classis Muskegon overtures synod to revise the decision of Synod 1994 "not [to] ratify the change in Church Order Article 3 as adopted by the Synod of 1993."

Grounds:

1. The decision reached by Synod 1994 rested on an exegesis of biblical texts done by an advisory committee of synod; it differed substantially from the exegetical work done by previous study committees (1973, 1975, 1984, 1992). This exegetical work had been accepted by the synods of 1990 and 1993 as the basis for their decision to open the offices of elder, evangelist, and minister to women.
2. Synod 1994 stated that "the clear teaching of Scripture prohibits women from holding the offices of minister, elder, and evangelist" (*Acts of Synod 1994*, p. 514, Art. 80). This statement contradicts the findings of previous synods and does not recognize the differences of interpretation that exist within the Christian Reformed church family, including members, officebearers, and seminary faculty.
3. The decision reached by Synod 1994 rested on an exegesis of biblical texts done by an advisory committee of synod which had only a limited amount of time to do its work, not by a synodically appointed study committee, which is usually granted a period of three years before it reports to synod.
4. Synod 1994 violated Article 7 of the Belgic Confession and Article 29 of the Church Order when it imposed on the entire denomination a single interpretation of Scripture, which has traditionally been open to a variety of interpretations.

Classis Muskegon

Douglas Van Essen, stated clerk

Overture 58: Revise Synod 1994's Decision Not to Ordain Women

The council of Sacramento Christian Reformed Church overtures synod to revise Synod 1994's decision not to ordain women to the offices of evangelist, elder, and minister of the Word.

Grounds:

1. The 1994 decision inappropriately binds Christian consciences (cf. *Acts of Synod 1994*, Ground g, p. 508).
 - a) What Synod 1994 presented as biblical teaching that prevented it from ratifying the proposed change in Church Order Article 3 is not persuasive to many in the Reformed tradition.
 - b) What is referred to as "the clear teaching of Scripture" that "prohibits women from holding the offices of minister, elder, and evangelist" (cf. Ground b, p. 506ff.) was hardly clear to the delegates of Synod 1994 itself, who approved the recommendation by a narrow majority, 95 to 89.
 - c) Moreover, such teaching of Scripture has not been at all clear to many previous synodical study committees and assemblies of the church. Already in 1973 the first synodical committee on this matter concluded that "The practice of excluding women from ecclesiastical office cannot conclusively be defended on biblical grounds" (*Acts of Synod 1973*, p. 588). Synod 1989 stated that the issue of the ordination of women "has not been regarded as a creedal matter, but as a church order matter"

- (*Acts of Synod 1990*, p. 654). Synod 1993 declared that "synod may not bind the conscience where Scripture does not bind" (*Acts of Synod 1993*, p. 596).
- d) Synod 1994's decision was not informed by a synodical study-committee report, nor did synod present any new argumentation not previously considered by the church.
 2. The hermeneutic that underlies the interpretation of biblical texts presented in the grounds attached to Synod 1994's decision not to ratify the proposed change in Church Order Article 3 fails to reflect the historic Reformed tradition of interpreting Scripture (cf. Grounds b, c, p. 506ff.).
 - a) Reformed hermeneutics hesitates to base a particular teaching on a single, pivotal text (I Tim. 2:11-12) if the meaning of that text is not entirely clear. Rather, it prefers to find such a teaching confirmed by the whole of biblical teaching.
 - 1) With respect to the lack of clarity in I Timothy 2, consider the uncertain meaning of *authentēin* ("authority" in verse 12, used nowhere else in the New Testament) and the obscure referent of verse 15.
 - 2) The specificity of I Timothy 2 raises serious questions about its application for the church of all times and places. After all, the same passage calls for men everywhere to lift up hands in prayer and women to dress modestly, "not with braided hair or gold or pearls or expensive clothes."
 - b) Synod 1994's literalist reading of the Scriptures ignores the need to examine the flow of redemptive history as a whole. Used consistently, such a hermeneutic could easily lead to a rejection of the doctrines of the trinity, infant baptism, amillennialism, and other Reformed teachings.
 - c) Synod 1994's method of interpretation is seductively subjective. If it may be claimed, for example, that Scripture "prohibits women from holding the offices of minister, elder, and evangelist" partly because "Jesus chose only male apostles" (Ground c, p. 507f.), one may also claim that Scripture prohibits non-Jewish Christians from holding office, prohibits women from attending the Lord's Supper, and insists that the seventh day of the week is the time for worship.
 - d) A very similar method of interpretation has been previously used to oppose other practices concerning women, practices the Christian Reformed Church now encourages, such as,
 - participating in civic and political life (women's suffrage).
 - serving as deacons.
 - voting in congregational meetings.
 - removing their head covering in worship.
 - sitting in a place of their own choice in worship.
 3. Much biblical teaching, in contrast to the understanding of Synod 1994, points toward permitting women to be ministers, elders, and evangelists.
 - a) Genesis 1:26-28 teaches that God created human beings in his image as male and female and gave them both dominion and a "cultural mandate." Authority fits the man and woman equally well. "Genesis 1 knows of no restricted dominion for females or extended dominion for

males" (*Acts of Synod 1978*, p. 503; see also pp. 502-04, 530; *Acts of Synod 1973*, pp. 518-20, 585).

- b) Women such as Miriam (called a leader in Mic. 6:4), Deborah (Judg. 4:4ff.), and Huldah (II Kings 22:14) occupied positions of leadership in Israel.
 - c) Joel (2:28-29) teaches that "afterward," God will pour out his Spirit on "all people," "both men and women," and that both "sons and daughters will prophesy." At Pentecost Peter announces that Joel's words have been fulfilled. Here women received the Holy Spirit and attendant gifts. They, along with the men, were charged to be Jesus' witnesses "to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8-14). They too were prominent as first converts and as members of the church (Acts 16:14; 17:34). They served as "disciples" in doing deeds of mercy (Acts 9:36). They "prophesied" (Acts 21:9) and were persecuted for their testimony (Acts 8:3).
 - d) Women collaborated with Paul not only in founding churches on his missionary journeys but also in witnessing and working in the congregations he began. **Lydia**, an affluent business woman, was his first convert in Europe (Acts 16:14-15). **Priscilla**, along with her husband, Aquila, provided a home for Paul and also taught the preacher Apollos (Acts 18:1-3, 18-26). Paul later refers to her as a "fellow worker in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 16:3). **Phoebe**, a deacon, is commended by Paul to the Roman church (Rom. 16:1). **Euodia** and **Syntycha** are described by Paul as those who "contended at my side in the cause of the gospel" (Phil. 4:2-3). Furthermore, women prayed and prophesied (I Cor. 11:5).
 - e) In the New Testament, membership in God's family is signified by baptism, not circumcision. Unlike in the old dispensation, now women, slaves, and gentiles can receive the sign of the covenant (cf. Gal. 3:28). Now, according to this sweeping proclamation of the newness of baptism into Christ, women, slaves, and gentiles are full participants in the people of God.
4. Given the diversity of opinion within both Reformed thought generally and the Christian Reformed Church, the matter is best left to local councils.
- a) Congregations on both sides of the issue are equally convinced of their positions and face real difficulties if forced to act against those convictions.
 - b) Local option is the most just resolution of this difficult issue, as congregations opposed to women's ordination would be directly affected only on the level of broader assemblies.

Council of Sacramento CRC, Sacramento, CA
Donna R. DeVries, clerk

Note: This overture was submitted to Classis Central California but was not adopted.

Overture 59: Revise Synod 1994's Decision Not to Ordain Women

Classis Rocky Mountain overtures synod to revise the 1994 decision not to ordain women to the offices of evangelist, elder, and minister of the Word and to allow individual congregations to ordain women to all the offices.

Grounds:

1. The hermeneutical method used to support the 1994 decision fails to reflect the historic Reformed tradition of interpreting Scripture.
 - a. Accepted standards such as L. Berkhof's *Principles of Biblical Interpretation* (Baker, 1960) emphasize that the intent of the author and the historical circumstances must be taken into consideration in the interpretation and application of Scripture.
 - b. The 1994 decision interprets passages like I Corinthians 14:33-36, I Timothy 2:11-15, and I Timothy 3:2 in a very literal way. To be honest, one must admit that not one of these texts speaks directly to ordination. They can be used against women's ordination only when one argues, "If not this (speaking in church, teaching men), then certainly not ordination." But to be consistent, one must then forbid all women from speaking in church, from wearing short hair, from accepting any position of authority over men. Additionally, all council members would have to be married, not single, men. Historically, we have chosen to understand these texts in their context and not to interpret them merely in a literal way as timeless pronouncements fitting all cultures and ages.
 - c. The same approach must be taken with respect to the argument that, since Jesus chose only male disciples, he intended for all ministers and elders to be male. Obviously, Jesus broke down barriers between males and females as well as Jews and gentiles. In his appointment of disciples who all had Jewish backgrounds, did Jesus intend that all ministers for all time have to have Jewish backgrounds? Almost no one would answer yes to this question. To say yes to this argument is the logical equivalent of saying that Jesus' choosing only male disciples means that women should never be ordained.
2. Many Scripture passages point to the elimination of spiritual barriers in Christ between men and women and in the direction of using women's gifts in ministry.
 - a. Galatians 3:28 teaches that the spiritual distinctions between male and female, Jew and gentile, slave and free are eliminated.
 - b. Pentecost is seen as the day of fulfillment for the prophet Joel's words that both men and women and sons and daughters would prophesy.
 - c. In the Old Testament, women such as Miriam (Mic. 6:4), Deborah (Judg. 4:4), and Huldah (II Kings 22:14) occupied positions of leadership in Israel.
 - d. In the New Testament, the apostle Paul mentions many women who labored and witnessed with him: Lydia (Acts 16:14-15), Priscilla (Acts 18:1-3, 18-26), Phoebe, a deacon (Rom. 16:1), and Euodia and Syntyche (Phil. 4:2-3). In addition, I Corinthians 11:5 tells us that women did pray and prophesy in worship.

3. In light of previous synodical statements on the women-in-office issue, the 1994 decision of synod inappropriately binds the consciences of those who believe that all the offices ought to be open to all members of the church.
 - a. The first of seven study committees which have reported since 1973 said that "the practice of excluding women from ecclesiastical office cannot be conclusively defended on biblical grounds" (*Acts of Synod 1973*, p. 588). Subsequent study committees have all come to similar conclusions. Synod 1989 stated that the issue of the ordination of women "has not been regarded as a creedal matter, but as a Church Order matter" (*Acts of Synod 1989*, p. 433). Synod 1990 judged that "no clear biblical and confessional grounds for extending the 'headship principle' from marriage to the church" has been presented (*Acts of Synod 1990*, p. 654). Synod 1993 declared "that synod may not bind the conscience where Scripture does not bind" (*Acts of Synod 1993*, p. 596).
 - b. Both Synod 1990 and Synod 1993 voted to open all the offices of the church to women.
 - c. The "clear teaching" of Scripture that prohibits women from serving in all the offices was adopted by a majority of six votes. Such a clear teaching was hardly clear to the delegates themselves.
4. In light of many differing statements adopted by synod over the years and the wide diversity of opinion and practice in the denomination, it is best to allow local congregations to decide this matter.
 - a. Many congregations believe they are or will be blessed by using women's gifts in all the offices.
 - b. Such a decision allows for a diversity of practice without binding the conscience of a local congregation.
 - c. Our denomination has not been able to reach consensus on this issue. To mandate that all congregations must abide by the 1994 decision will not bring about healing and peace among us.
 - d. There are precedents in the CRC for leaving controversial matters to the decision of the local congregation, i.e., women voting in congregational meetings.
5. Adopting this overture is in agreement with the Rules for Synodical Procedure, which reads, "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."

Classis Rocky Mountain
Meindert Bosch, stated clerk

Overture 60: Revise the Decision re Women in Office by Amending Church Order Article 3

Classis Toronto overtures synod to revise the decision of Synod 1994 regarding women in ecclesiastical office by amending Church Order Article 3, deleting the word *male* from Article 3-a and merging Articles 3-a and 3-b to read, "All confessing members of the church who meet the biblical requirements are eligible for the offices of minister, elder, deacon, and evangelist."

Grounds:

1. Given the previous discussions within the Christian church as well as at numerous CRC synods, it is evidently not the clear teaching of Scripture that women are to be prohibited from holding the offices of minister, evangelist, and elder.
2. It is inappropriate for synod to bind the consciences of church members on an issue that is neither confessional nor fundamental to the doctrine of salvation found in Scripture.
3. The grounds set out by Synod 1990 to open all offices of the church to women remain appropriate and convincing, and no new and compelling evidence has been brought forward to contradict these grounds.
4. The CRC has seriously and repeatedly struggled for many years to reach consensus on the issue, and to delay again the final decision will result in further hurt and alienation among members of the CRC. It is time to allow congregations the local option of proceeding with the ordination of women to these offices.

Classis Toronto

John Tenyenhuis, stated clerk

Overture 61: Declare Ground b re "Clear Teaching of Scripture" to Be Unwarranted

I. Overture

Classis Quinte objects to the language and grounds of the report which caused Synod 1994 not to ratify the deletion of the word "male" in Article 3 of the Church Order and therefore overtures synod

A. To declare that Ground b of Recommendation 1 regarding women in office (*Acts of Synod 1994*, p. 506), which states that it is "the clear teaching of Scripture" to prohibit women from holding ecclesiastical offices, is an unwarranted simplification of a very complex and difficult exegetical problem.

Grounds:

1. Biblical scholars and people of good repute among us have come to an opposite conclusion.
2. The wording of Ground b denigrates the work of honest and well-intentioned members of our denomination. It ill befits us to so offhandedly dismiss and reject the arduous work of earlier exegetical research.
3. The long and tortuous history of the debate among us shows that biblical clarity concerning this issue is missing.
4. The wording of Ground b, which underlies the conclusion that the committee's findings bind the consciences of believers, constitutes an abuse of authority and spurns the prudence required of us in Article 32 of the Belgic Confession.

B. To accept the position of the 1973 study committee that "the practice of excluding women from the ecclesiastical offices cannot conclusively be defended on biblical grounds" (*Acts of Synod 1973*, p. 588).

Grounds:

1. This formulation is in keeping with the fact that applicable Scripture texts might lead to different exegetical conclusions.
 2. The conclusion of the 1973 report has found substantial acceptance by subsequent synods of our denomination (1990, 1993).
 3. The 1973 report was based on thorough biblical study and gave due consideration to all the pertinent texts.
- C. To repeat an earlier decision made in connection with the ordination of women in the office of deacon, namely, to declare that the decision as to whether women should be ordained to all the offices in any specific congregation be left to the judgment of the local council.

Grounds:

1. Synod 1957 established this principle of "local option"; Synod 1984 endorsed it (see historical overview below).
2. The decision to leave any eventual decision to the local council is in keeping with the Reformed policy that original authority is vested in the local council.
3. The 1984 decision has served the churches well.

II. Historical overview of women-in-office decisions

The following survey and summary of key synodical actions provide a context and some supportive documentation for the above overture from Classis Quinte.

Acts of Synod 1957 - The principle of local option established

"Synod decides that women may participate in congregational meetings with the right to vote subject to the rules that govern the participation of men. The question as to whether and when the women members of any church shall be invited to participate in the activities of its congregational meetings is left to the judgment of each consistory" (p. 314).

Acts of Synod 1958

An appeal against the 1957 decision is rejected.

Acts of Synod 1970

A committee is appointed with the following mandate: "To examine in the light of Scripture the general Reformed practice of excluding women from the various ordained offices in the church."

Acts of Synod 1973

The conclusion of the committee's study: "The practice of excluding women from ecclesiastical office cannot conclusively be defended on biblical grounds" (p. 588).

Advisory committee reports: "The importance of this subject demands that we proceed with care. A long standing policy of the church is substantially affected by this report." The advisory committee recommends that synod appoint a new study committee. This recommendation is adopted.

Acts of Synod 1974

Synod asks its study committee to give specific consideration to the distinction between licensure and ordination and exhorting and preaching, as this

distinction may bear on the place of women in the seminary's field education (pp. 28-29).

Acts of Synod 1975

Although synod declared that sufficient biblical grounds had not been advanced to warrant a departure from our present practice of excluding women from ecclesiastical office, synod also appointed a committee to undertake a study of the hermeneutical principles involved because "the exegesis of several key passages is widely disputed."

Acts of Synod 1977

The 1975 committee reports that it has been unable to complete its work. Synod grants an extension until 1978.

Synod also decides to urge the churches to deal with the problems and changes created by changing sex roles in our society, and to improve their pastoral resources and skills; synod urges the seminary, the Board of Publications, and individuals with competence in this problem area to serve the churches with relevant instruction and written materials.

Acts of Synod 1978 - Opening the office of deacon to women

Synod decides that there is some evidence in the Bible for opening the office of deacon to women. It is therefore decided that consistories be allowed to ordain qualified women to the office of deacon provided that their work is distinguished from that of elders.

Notes of the majority report of the Committee on Hermeneutical Principles Concerning Women in Ecclesiastical Office:

- The evidence from the Bible is not as clear-cut on this issue as might be wished.
- The Bible presents two strands of thought: the one sets forth the female as equal in worth to the male; the other enjoins a certain subordination of the wife to the husband.
- No biblical passage speaks directly to the question of women in ecclesiastical office as presently understood.
- The New Testament, along with the Old, affirms the equal worth of man and woman, but the New Testament goes beyond the Old in affirming the full participation of women in the gifts of the Spirit and in affirming and describing a fuller measure of participation in the work and worship of the church.

Challenging the decision of Synod 1975

The majority of the committee wishes to observe that to insist that it is necessary to adduce "compelling biblical grounds" (*Acts of Synod 1975*, p. 78) for changing the practice of excluding women from the ecclesiastical offices appears to be out of harmony with the Reformed understanding of settling questions of church polity. This rule, for example, is not insisted upon in the case of our structure of church government (consistory, classis, synod) or in prescribing the observance of special days on the church calendar.

Two members of the committee submit a minority report.

Acts of Synod 1979 - 1978 ratification deferred

Synod decides to study the implications of the ordination of women to the office of deacon . . . and to defer ratification of the 1978 decision re women as

deacons. Synod does not accede to Overture 34, which requests that synod study the feasibility of permitting women to serve as elders.

Acts of Synod 1980

Synod decides that women already ordained as deacons prior to the decision of 1979 will be allowed to serve out their terms.

Acts of Synod 1981

Synod postpones the implementation of the decision of 1978 regarding the ordination of women as deacons until after the findings of a study committee on headship. Synod appoints such a committee and expects that committee to report in 1983.

Acts of Synod 1983

Synod grants the committee a one-year extension and asks it to report in 1984.

Synod decides to defer for one more year the ratification of the 1978 decision re women as deacons.

Notes of the advisory committee:

- "After more than a decade of study, prayer, and deliberations we find ourselves in full agreement only when we say that we have a grievous, hurting pastoral problem" (*Acts of Synod 1983*, p. 692).
- "We know that to ratify the decision of 1978 will cause some deep anguish among us, but that it is equally true if we do not ratify the decision. For four years now we have withheld ratification of the decision of 1978 because there were unresolved questions that needed to be addressed and answered. Whether or not we ratify the decision of 1978, there will be anguish" (*Acts of Synod 1983*, pp. 692-93).

The advisory committee then recommends to ratify the 1978 decision allowing women to serve as deacons. The recommendation is tabled, and synod defers for one year.

Acts of Synod 1984 - Principle of local option upheld

Synod 1984 finally ratifies the 1978 decision to allow women deacons. Synod declares that the decision as to whether women should be ordained in any specific congregation be left to the judgment of the local consistory.

Acts of Synod 1985

Synod appoints a study committee to determine the authority and functions of elders and deacons and their relationship in the assemblies of the church, addressing specifically the definition of the work of elders and deacons.

There were many appeals against the 1984 ratification of the decision allowing women to serve as deacons.

Acts of Synod 1987

Classis Grand Rapids East's overture to allow for local option with respect to offices in the church is *not* acceded to.

The petition of seminary graduate Laura Smit is referred to the Judicial Code Advisory Committee. It speaks of serious unrest in the churches over exegetical and theological questions about the issue of women in ecclesiastical offices. It further notes that it is very difficult to come up with texts which have not already been discussed.

Acts of Synod 1988

Synod does not accede to an overture from Bethany CRC, South Holland, Illinois, not to grant credits to women at Calvin Seminary.

The appeal against Eastern Avenue CRC in Grand Rapids is upheld. (Eastern Avenue had women serve as adjunct elders.)

Acts of Synod 1989

Synod declares that those in adjunct positions should be allowed to participate only in those deliberations of the council or consistory or diaconate which are directly related to their positions or tasks and should not be extended the right to vote.

Synod sustains the overture of Classis Zeeland and instructs Washington, DC, CRC to cease its practice of allowing women to serve as elders. Washington CRC had appealed on the basis of Article 29 of the Church Order, where it is stated that decisions of assemblies shall be settled and binding unless it is proved that they conflict with the Word of God or the Church Order.

Acts of Synod 1990

Synod decides to change Article 3 of the Church Order by deleting the word *male* from Article 3-a and merging Articles 3-a and 3-b to read, "All confessing members of the church who meet the biblical requirements are eligible for the office of minister, elder, deacon, and evangelist."

Acts of Synod 1991

Thirty-nine overtures ask to revise the 1990 decision. None of these is acceded to, on the ground that "no new and compelling biblical or confessional grounds have been advanced beyond those involved in making the 1990 decision."

A committee is appointed to gather from the various synodical study-committee reports and related publications the biblical grounds for the decision of 1990.

Synod decides not to postpone ratification beyond 1992.

Acts of Synod 1992

Notes from the advisory-committee minority report:

- "The church has struggled now for over twenty years with the issue of women in office."
- "We long for unity in the church and desire to be a church where women members can make full use of their spiritual gifts, including the gift of leadership."
- "We recommend that synod ratify the proposed change to delete the word *male* from Article 3 in the Church Order."

Synod does not ratify the change in the Church Order, saying that "although biblical arguments have been advanced both for and against ordaining women to the offices of the church, the biblical support for ordination presented in Report 31 is not sufficiently persuasive to win the confidence and support of the church" (*Acts of Synod 1992*, p. 699).

Synod decided, however, to "encourage the churches to use the gifts of women members to the fullest extent possible in their local churches, including allowing women to teach, expound the Word of God, and provide pastoral care, under the supervision of the elders" (*Acts of Synod 1992*, p. 700).

Acts of Synod 1993

Synod decides to reconsider the decision of Synod 1992 concerning women in ecclesiastical office since "there are 'sufficient and new grounds' for reconsideration, and, therefore, according to Church Order Article 31, 'a request for revision shall be honored'" (*Acts of Synod 1993*, p. 595).

Synod decides that the advisability for the proposed change in Article 3 will be decided by Synod 1994.

Acts of Synod 1994

Synod decides not to ratify the change in Article 3 as adopted by Synod 1993.

Synod declares that "the clear teaching of Scripture prohibits women from holding the offices of minister, elder, and evangelist" (*Acts of Synod 1994*, p. 514).

Synod declares that "this decision will not bind Christian consciences in any inappropriate way. Christ is Lord of the conscience, and a Christian cannot claim freedom of conscience where the Scripture has spoken" (*Acts of Synod 1994*, p. 516).

Conclusion

This limited, birds-eye view of more than twenty years of discussion on the subject of women in all the ecclesiastical offices of the denomination is not meant to be exhaustive. (To reproduce the reports, articles, overtures, speeches, and details of the long history of this discourse would fill a rather hefty tome.) It is included here to demonstrate visually that conclusions have been made on both sides of the issue, all on biblical grounds.

To add to this exhaustive theological debate would be presumptuous. The ground has been sufficiently covered to show that it is not easy to come to clarity; perhaps clarity on this subject is so elusive that members of the CRC will never agree. Allowing local churches the option of opening all ecclesiastical offices to women is consistent with our history, yet it respects the legitimate diversity of biblical interpretation held by brothers and sisters in the CRC.

Classis Quinte

Ed W. Visser, stated clerk

Overture 62: Permit Classes to Allow Local Option on Women Elders and Ministers; Adopt Temporary Regulations; Review Decisions at Synod 2000; Incorporate Decisions into Supplement, Article 3

The council of Woodlawn CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan, overtures synod

1. To permit classes, by way of exception to Church Order Articles 47 and 86, to decide whether or not the word *male* in Article 3-a of the Church Order is operative for their constituent churches.

Grounds:

- a. Previous synodical assemblies have failed to provide credible leadership on the matter of women in ecclesiastical office. Addressing the question of whether qualified women might be permitted to hold the offices of elder, evangelist, and minister of the Word, Synod 1985 said no, Synod 1990 said yes, Synod 1992 said no, Synod 1993 said yes, and Synod 1994 said no.

- b. This lengthy and bitter dispute, which has ruptured our unity, obstructed our ministry, eroded our mutual trust, and seriously ravaged our Reformed church polity, must come to an end.
 - c. The current compromise of giving women the function but not the authority of office, though expedient in some ways, is theologically problematic and inconsistent with a Reformed view of office and ordination. Therefore, it has not brought—and cannot bring—healing to our denomination.
 - d. Local option on this matter, whether or not officially sanctioned by synod, is already an established fact, and there is good reason to believe that synod would shrink back from deposing local councils for violations of Article 3 in case a classis refused to do so.
 - e. Given the alternatives of synodical binding of conscience—one way or the other—and outright “congregationalism” in this matter, “regional option” is still to be preferred over “local option.”
 - f. This course of action will allow synod to concentrate on issues far more significant than this long-standing and divisive matter of church polity, will free our denominational ministries from the related turmoil, and will protect the church from public ridicule and scorn.
 - g. There is precedent for declaring parts of the Church Order inoperative. From 1914 to 1965, the articles on particular or regional synods (47-49) were placed in parentheses. The churches were agreed that these would be inoperative, i.e., not implemented, until such time as it might be appropriate to do so.
2. To adopt the following temporary regulations.
- a. A classis which has decided that the word *male* in Article 3-a of the Church Order is inoperative for its constituent churches shall not have the right to delegate women officebearers to synod.
 - b. A classis which has decided that the word *male* in Article 3-a of the Church Order is inoperative for its constituent churches shall not have the right to appoint a woman minister to serve as a synodical deputy.
 - c. A classis which has decided that the word *male* in Article 3-a of the Church Order will remain operative for its constituent churches shall nonetheless acknowledge a church's moral right of conscientious objection with respect to the office of elder and shall not exercise its disciplinary authority to enforce compliance, provided that the role of women elders is restricted to a local church's particular setting.
 - d. In the consideration of applications for candidacy for the office of minister of the Word submitted by qualified women, both the Board of Trustees of Calvin Theological Seminary and synod shall ensure that trustees and delegates will not be forced to participate against the dictates of their consciences. In the declaration of candidacy, delegates will exercise their right to abstain from voting without pressure or reprisal.
 - e. The general secretary shall maintain a list of classes which have decided that the word *male* in Article 3-a of the Church Order is inoperative for their constituent churches and publish that list annually along with the presentation of candidates for the ministry in *The Banner*.

- f. Synodical agencies shall not appoint women ministers of the Word to any field of labor within their jurisdiction nor seek to have them installed by a local church.
 - g. Synodical deputies shall not be asked to participate against the dictates of their consciences in any matter relating to women ministers of the Word as provided in Articles 6-18 and 82-84 of the Church Order.
3. To review the above decisions at Synod 2000.
 4. To designate the above decisions as Supplement, Article 3.

Council of Woodlawn CRC, Grand Rapids, MI
Ina De Moor, clerk

Note: This overture was submitted to Classis Grand Rapids East but was not adopted.

Overture 63: Revise Church Order Article 3

Classis Chatham overtures synod to revise Church Order Article 3 to read, "All confessing members of the church who meet the biblical requirements are eligible for the offices of minister, elder, deacon, and evangelist. However, any ecclesiastical assembly retains the right to seat only male officebearers when conscience and biblical interpretation so guide it."

Grounds:

1. There are clearly two different exegetical/theological interpretations of the biblical teachings regarding the ordination of females to some or all of the offices of the church. The denomination has debated the issues at length and appointed numerous study committees to inform itself, yet it remains divided between two significantly different approaches to the matter. The options for the denomination are four:
 - a. Choose to allow only male members to hold some offices, thus binding the consciences of some who disagree.
 - b. Choose to allow members of either gender to hold all offices, thereby creating situations of conflict when some officebearers might be required to work in situations of conscience conflict at major assemblies.
 - c. Choose to carry on with acrimonious debate until the issues are resolved by further splits and schisms.
 - d. Choose to make room in the denomination for legitimate expression of the differing views on this matter, thereby retaining a larger sense of our unity in Christ and the historic mission of our denomination. By allowing congregations to elect qualified officebearers of either gender and granting classes and synod the option of seating only male officebearers, the CRC would provide some flexibility on this divisive issue.
2. The absolute language of the grounds put forward by Synod 1994 for not changing the wording of Church Order Article 3 (Ground b: "The clear teaching of Scripture prohibits women holding the offices of minister, elder, and evangelist" together with Ground g: "Christ is Lord of the conscience, and a Christian cannot claim freedom of conscience where the

Scripture has spoken" [*Acts of Synod 1994*, pp. 513-16]) denies the theological and exegetical interpretations acknowledged and approved previously by the denomination (cf. reports and decisions of synod in 1973, 1975, 1990, 1993), the possibility of further discussion on the subject, and adherence to other readings of the scriptural data. The president of Synod 1994 realized the wrongness of this approach when he declared that "no synodical delegate or officebearer is disallowed from serving in his office because he interprets Scripture texts differently than synod did in using those texts as a basis for its decision on Church Order Article 3" (*Acts of Synod 1994*, p. 517). The president's interpretation of the state of affairs in the denomination regarding these issues directly contradicted synod's insistence upon reading Scripture in only one way, over against another approach previously affirmed by the denomination. This conflict of interpretations needs to be addressed, and the present overture would do so.

Classis Chatham

Jan H.G. Vandergeest, stated clerk

Overture 64: Revise Synod 1994's Decision re Women Serving in All Ecclesiastical Offices; Delete "Male" from Church Order Article 3; Adopt Guidelines

I. Background

Synod 1994 adopted a recommendation not to ratify an amendment to Church Order Article 3 as adopted by Synod 1993. In the following overture Classis Grand Rapids East asks synod to reconsider the issue of women serving in all ecclesiastical offices, to amend the Church Order by deleting the word "male" from Article 3, and to adopt certain regulations and guidelines. Section II of the following material shows that the issue of women serving in all ecclesiastical offices must be reconsidered because the recent decision not to ratify is both poorly grounded and pastorally unwise. Section III offers sound biblical and pastoral arguments in favor of permitting women to serve as elders, ministers, and evangelists and proposes synodical regulations and guidelines for implementing the decision that is proposed.

The main issue in this overture, the deletion of the word "male" from Article 3 of the Church Order, has been before synod at least twice. Some of the material presented in this overture has never been officially before synod, and some of the material has been before synod but not at the time synod was considering the issue of permitting women to serve as elders, ministers, and evangelists.

II. Arguments for reconsidering the issue of women in all ecclesiastical offices

The reasons for reconsidering the issue of permitting women to serve in all ecclesiastical offices are based in concerns about both the grounds and the pastoral implications of the decision of Synod 1994. The following material shows how both of these sets of concerns justify synod's reconsideration of this issue, thereby meeting the requirement of Church Order Article 31 that a request for revision of a decision "shall be honored only if sufficient and new grounds for reconsideration are presented."

A. *Concerns regarding the grounds for Synod 1994's decision on women in office*

1. The status of the grounds in relation to the decision

In analyzing the grounds of the decision of Synod 1994, it is helpful to begin by considering the status of the grounds. Synod adopted the recommendation not to ratify the change in Church Order Article 3, together with its grounds (*Acts of Synod 1994*, pp. 513-17). The grounds are the reasons given for synod's decision. But consider the following:

- a. The grounds for a synodical decision should be established as true even apart from the decision. That is the point of giving them as grounds. Synod is in effect saying, "Since X and Y (i.e., these grounds) are true, then Z (i.e., our decision) is justified." Yet the grounds given for this decision are not accepted by many CRC members and were not accepted even by some who voted with the majority on this issue. A decision resting on such unstable grounds is not a solid decision.
- b. The substantive grounds of this decision did not arise out of a study committee report but simply from the majority of the synodical advisory committee, whose report reached synodical delegates only the evening before the decision was made. So the grounds are not supported by careful exegesis and reflection within the church, and Synod 1994 had too little time to consider the grounds carefully.
- c. If the grounds of this decision are unacceptable, then the decision is poorly grounded, and the issue it addresses should be reconsidered by synod.

2. Analysis of each ground

- a. Ground a says that "the biblical texts cited by Synod 1993 to support the proposed change in Church Order Article 3 are not persuasive." Ground a claims this by isolating each text from its context and from the other texts cited and by then asserting that *it* (by itself) does not prove that (1) one who bears the image of God, or (2) one who has the Spirit, or (3) women who are one with men in Christ may hold ecclesiastical office. Like a defense attorney who considers separately each piece of circumstantial evidence against her client and argues that *it* does not prove guilt, this ground isolates texts that cumulatively allow the ordination of believers without regard to gender, asserting that each text by itself does not prove the case.
- b. Ground b says that "the clear teaching of Scripture prohibits women from holding the offices of minister, elder, and evangelist." How can Synod 1994 say Scripture is clear on the matter when two decades of study and debate and synodical study reports on the issue have resulted in a variety of interpretations of Scripture? If this ground is true, then those who support allowing women to be ordained either are too ignorant to recognize this clear teaching or distort the clear teaching of Scripture. The ground also dismisses those who find good arguments on both sides but are not persuaded that Scripture allows the ordination of women, when it implies that they too are missing the clear teaching of Scripture.

The biblical texts cited for Ground b do not clearly say what the ground asserts, as the following analysis shows:

- 1) Consider I Timothy 2:8-15, part of which is used in this ground. According to the "clear teaching" of this passage, men should pray with holy hands uplifted, without anger or quarreling; women should dress modestly, not with braided hair, gold, pearls, or costly attire; women should learn in silence with all submissiveness; and a (or the) woman will be saved through childbearing if she continues in faith and love and holiness, with modesty. The passage is as clear on these matters as it is on a woman's not being allowed to teach or have authority over men. Yet we either recognize that these other matters involve specific applications of more enduring principles (e.g., regarding worship style and clothing) or do not understand them (e.g., being saved through childbearing).
- 2) The ground does not make a good case that I Timothy 2:11-12 is a clear teaching that gets applied in chapter 3:1-13. The distinction between principle and application is important, but it is wrongly placed in this ground. Several of the other matters in I Timothy 2:8-15 can best be understood as applications of background principles, such as exemplifying holiness and peaceableness in worship, dressing modestly, and performing good deeds. These principles can be seen as rooted in Paul's concern that believers lead quiet, peaceable lives, godly and respectable in every way (I Tim. 2:2). Ground b arbitrarily isolates, as a clear principle of enduring validity, the statement in verses 11-12 about women keeping silent and not teaching or having authority over men. This statement, like the surrounding material, can best be understood as an application to a particular situation. In addition, the material in I Timothy 3:1-13 regarding bishops and deacons seems to be an application not of 2:11-12, but of 3:14-15, where Paul says he is giving instructions about how to behave in God's household, the church.
- 3) The meanings of important terms in I Timothy 2:11 are difficult to determine. "Silence" means peace, not noiselessness; "to have authority" is the translation of a word used only once in the New Testament—it may mean to domineer or to usurp authority; and "to teach" is associated in the text with having authority, so the teaching that is prohibited may be teaching that involves undue domination. Why would such prohibitions need to be made? Scholarship has suggested that the teaching of women in Ephesus was associated with the cult of Diana (or Artemis). If this is true, then it would be right and proper to prohibit teaching and the exercise of authority by such women (or women who may have been mistaken by unbelievers or new believers as clones of such women). So then the passage should be understood as an application of a principle, not the principle itself.
- 4) The appeal to creation, fall, and salvation in I Timothy 2:13-15 does not clarify verses 11-12, nor does it transfer those verses from the category of application to that of clear principle. Ground b uses verse 13, which states that Adam was created before Eve, but ignores verse 14, which says Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor, and verse 15, which says that the woman will be saved through childbearing. Since so much of this ground turns on this passage, some attempt should have been made to account for verses 14-15. Although presumably Timothy and the church at Ephesus would

have understood the reasoning in verses 13-15, we find it difficult to understand them today.

In addition, with regard to the so-called appeal to creation order in verse 13, it may be pointed out that on two important issues in Scripture the church has regarded a specific application that is based on an appeal to creation order as not universally binding. The first is the appeal to the creation order in I Corinthians 11:8-9 to support the position that wives (women) must have their heads covered when praying and prophesying. The church has judged that in I Corinthians 11 Paul is applying a creational principle to a specific cultural situation. The second example is the grounding of the fourth commandment (regarding Sabbath observance) in the creation order, according to Exodus 20:8-11. Yet early on and until this day, most Christians (except the Seventh-Day Adventists and the Seventh-Day Baptists) have found it permissible to celebrate the Sabbath rest on the first day of the week. Thus an instruction that is based on creation order need not be viewed as itself a universally valid principle. The above considerations support the conclusion that the teaching in verses 11-12 is a local application of a general principle, not something universally binding on the church. Ground b does not adequately address these legitimate considerations.

- 5) The ground also appeals to I Corinthians 11:2-16 and I Corinthians 14:33-35 as teaching that only "men are to have authoritative leadership in the church." The first passage focuses on the need for women who pray or prophesy to have their heads veiled and their hair long. The ground points out that the teaching in this passage is rooted in creation (vv. 8-9), but it does not worry that we nevertheless ignore its statements about head covering and hair length. Verse 3 says the husband is the head of his wife (or man is the head of woman). This idea also appears in Ephesians 5:23, where the context is marriage, not male headship in church or society. Furthermore, although the Ephesians passage does not rule out leadership, it models headship on Christ's giving himself up for the church. Finally, Ground b ignores the passage's implication that women may prophesy as long as their heads are covered. May women preach in the CRC as long as they wear hats while doing so? This passage undermines rather than supports the decision of Synod 1994.
- 6) The passage in I Corinthians 14:33-35 also does not teach that authoritative leadership in the church is restricted to men. This passage involves the application of the principle that worship must be orderly and edifying. After addressing that issue in verses 26-32, Paul says God is a God not of disorder but of peace. He then turns to a further application of that principle, since apparently some women were disrupting worship services by their talking. After more discussion of specific concerns, he returns to the underlying principle: all things should be done decently and in order (v. 40). This passage cannot be a complete prohibition on women speaking in worship services, especially since in I Corinthians 11:5 Paul had given guidelines for how women should pray and prophesy in the worship setting.

- c. Ground c says “the general analogy of Scripture supports the exclusion of women from the offices of minister and elder.” This is a difficult issue because the general analogy of Scripture is not merely a matter of finding references to headship or examples of male leadership, as is done in this ground. The argument from the general analogy of Scripture is a cumulative case. The second part of this overture outlines the cumulative case for opening all offices to believers, regardless of gender.

Also, Ground c too quickly dismisses the parallel to slavery. Contrary to what the ground says, I Corinthians 7:21 does not point in the direction that the institution of slavery should end. It merely says that those who were slaves when called should not be troubled by their status, although if they can gain their freedom they should do so. The letter to Philemon hints that perhaps Onesimus might no longer be a slave but does not criticize the institution of slavery. But Titus 2:9 says slaves should be told to be submissive to their masters, without talking back or pilfering; and I Peter 2:18 instructs slaves to accept the authority even of harsh masters. In any case, the parallel is this: the New Testament permits slavery, but Christians today use a cumulative argument, based on the general analogy of Scripture, to say that slavery is impermissible. Similarly I Timothy 2 prohibits women from teaching and having authority over men in a certain context, but Christians may use an argument based on the general analogy of Scripture to say that, whatever was meant for the church in Ephesus, it does not clearly prohibit women from serving now in the ordained positions of elder, minister, and evangelist.

- d. Ground d says “the church historically has believed that Scripture plainly opposes women in the offices of minister and elder.” Although that may be true and the tradition should be weighed in the balance, it is not decisive. If Scripture does not oppose allowing women to be ordained, then longstanding opinions and practices do not constitute sufficient reason to construct a barrier where Scripture raises none.

The 1968 statement by the RES that “it is the plain and obvious teaching of Scripture that women are excluded from the office of ruling and preaching elders” was a motion from the floor adopted by a vote of 25 to 22. Both the study committee and the advisory committee had recommended that the churches should study the matter. In fact, the 1968 RES study committee’s report stands in conflict with the RES decision that excluding women from certain offices is the plain and obvious teaching of Scripture. Like the decision of the CRC Synod of 1994, that RES decision was not based on solid biblical study and reflection.

The statement by NAPARC should be weighed, but it is not decisive. The CRC has churches with which it is in ecclesiastical fellowship that do allow the ordination of women—the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, the Reformed Church in America, the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (GKN), and the Dutch Reformed Church in [South] Africa (NGK)—but that is not decisive either. Nevertheless, our continuing ecclesiastical fellowship with these latter churches suggests that we do not seriously believe that their ordaining of women into all offices violates the clear teaching of Scripture.

- e. Ground e says "Synod 1993 acted contrary to Church Order" because "no new grounds were offered for the motion to revise Church Order Article 3" and "according to Church Order Article 31, a request for a revision of a decision may be made only upon demonstration of new and sufficient grounds." This is inaccurate, however, because it ignores the distinction between a decision to reconsider and a decision to revise a previous decision. Church Order Article 31 does not require the grounds for *revision* of a previous decision to be new; it does require a synodical judgment whether grounds for a motion to *reconsider* a previous decision are "sufficient and new." Once a motion to reconsider is adopted, the request for revision is in order, and synod is free to adopt any appropriate grounds for such revision. Curiously, Ground e itself acknowledges that, in 1993, "new grounds were offered to justify reconsideration."
- f. Ground f says "the issue of women in office cannot be left to local option because (1) the Scripture does not allow women to serve in the offices of minister, elder, and evangelist, and the synod cannot allow what Scripture does not allow, and (2) the offices function not only in the local church but also in the broader assemblies." Part 1 of this ground stands or falls with Ground b because it entirely depends on Ground b. The second part of this ground ignores two important issues: (1) some restrictions could be allowed regarding women officebearers serving in the broader assemblies, and (2), ordinarily, function in the broader assemblies should conform to denominational decisions, not local ones. If the Church Order allows qualified women to be ordained, then ordinarily they should be allowed to function in the broader assemblies.
- g. Ground g says "this decision will not bind Christian consciences in any inappropriate way. Christ is Lord of the conscience, and a Christian cannot claim freedom of conscience where the Scripture has spoken." This ground is somewhat ambiguous, since Christians may claim freedom of conscience if Scripture speaks in such a way that it allows freedom of conscience (e.g., circumcision of males). Nevertheless, Christians ought not claim freedom of conscience in order to deny the clear teaching of Scripture. So if Scripture is as clear as Ground b states, then Christians must acknowledge the inadmissibility of women into the ordained positions of elder, minister, and evangelist. But Christians do have freedom of conscience in matters on which Scripture (especially as interpreted in the light of the church's confessions) does not speak or does not speak clearly. Such matters are *adiaphora*, and Christian freedom in such matters must not be denied.

In addition, Ground g shows that, in order for the 1994 decision to stand, Ground b must state as strongly as it does that the *clear* teaching of Scripture prohibits women from serving as ministers, elders, and evangelists. Only if the supposed teaching is clear can freedom of conscience be denied as it is in Ground g. However, since the prohibition is not clearly taught in Scripture, Reformed Christians should recognize legitimate freedom of conscience on this matter.

B. Pastoral concerns regarding the decision of Synod 1994

1. It is pastorally unwise for synod to impose a decision upon the church that is not grounded in the serious and sustained study the church has done on this issue.
2. The current decision puts a number of congregations in a difficult position: Should they, on the grounds of their freedom of conscience on this issue, violate the requirements of the Church Order, thereby violating part of their mutual covenant with other congregations in the denomination? To do so involves a painful decision that, while it is being made, distracts the church from its true ministry and usually leaves the congregation divided over whether such violation of Church Order is justified. Or should they adhere to the requirements of the Church Order, thereby mitigating their ministry both within their congregations and to their communities? A prohibition that flies in the face of previous study reports by declaring clear teaching where there is none does not address these congregations in a pastorally appropriate way. Permitting such congregations to ordain women in such a way that it respects the difference of opinion within the denomination is the proper pastoral approach to this matter.
3. Maintaining the current denominational prohibition on ordaining women to the offices of minister, elder, and evangelist is unwise because it contributes to the breakdown of unity and loyalty within the church. Because some congregations have proceeded to ordain women as elders, in violation of the Church Order, loyalty to our ecclesiastical covenant has been diminished. And once it becomes acceptable to violate one part of our ecclesiastical covenant, violations of other parts of the covenant will seem more acceptable and will occur more frequently. So, if maintaining the current prohibition of ordaining women to the offices of minister, elder, and evangelist is a matter of biblical and confessional integrity, then the prohibition should be kept and compliance required of all congregations. But, if Scripture does not clearly prohibit women from holding the offices of minister, elder, and evangelist and if this is not part of what binds us together confessionally, then it would be pastorally wise to allow differences of opinion and practice on this matter (cf. *Agenda for Synod 1992*, p. 382, quoting John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* IV.1.12). Trying to impose an unachievable uniformity on this matter will contribute to long-term harm within the denomination.
4. The decision of Synod 1994 not to ratify the change in Church Order Article 3 has caused some women—as well as some men—in the CRC to experience both pain and a sense of betrayal. Various synods have encouraged women to use their gifts within the church, and the synods of 1990 and 1993 explicitly stated that women were to be allowed to serve in all ecclesiastical offices. Many church members took these synods at their word, and, as a result, a number of women have prepared for ordained ministry within the church. A large number of other members—men as well as women—took encouragement from these synodical decisions and encouraged women to go into the ministry or to consider serving as elders in the church. But now the decision of Synod 1994 has revoked the promises made by earlier synods and has caused a sense of betrayal and deep pain.

In addition, many women have noticed the church's promises to them in

the official forms for public profession of faith, that they are welcomed into full communion with the people of God and that "all the privileges of such communion" are now theirs. They have been welcomed to "full participation in the life of the church." But now they sense that they have not received all the privileges of full communion, and they cannot fully participate in the life of the church. In the wake of previous synodical decisions and in the light of promises the church has made to women for years, the decision of 1994 not to open all ecclesiastical offices to women has unjustly betrayed and hurt members of our denomination.

III. Biblical and pastoral arguments in favor of amending Church Order Article 3

A. *Biblical arguments in favor of permitting women to serve as elders, ministers, and evangelists*

1. Introduction

The case for opening all ecclesiastical offices to women rests upon the general analogy of Scripture, which, as Louis Berkhof has defined it, "does not rest on the explicit statements of the Bible, but on the obvious scope and import of its teachings as a whole" (*Principles of Biblical Interpretation*, pp. 164-65). What follows is a presentation of the biblical witness that warrants the permissibility of opening all ecclesiastical offices to women. For the Reformed teaching concerning Scripture and the Reformed hermeneutical principles lying behind this approach, we refer to the synodical report of 1978, "Hermeneutical Principles Concerning Women in Ecclesiastical Office" (*Acts of Synod 1978*, pp. 484-533). The Reformed view of Scripture and Reformed principles of interpretation have been ably summarized and sharpened by Professor John W. Cooper in *A Cause for Division?: Women in Office and the Unity of the Church*.

It is possible, even likely, that not everyone will be persuaded by this presentation of the biblical witness. Yet it is based on a Reformed approach that respects the authority of Scripture, and it is sufficiently clear and persuasive to many so that synod ought to permit those congregations and classes persuaded by it to ordain believers regardless of gender. In order to protect the rights of those who may not be persuaded by this interpretation, certain safeguards are proposed so that on this issue we may agree to disagree without threatening the unity and harmony of the Christian Reformed Church.

2. The witness of the Old Testament

a. The creation accounts in Genesis 1 and 2

At creation, both male and female are equally created in God's image and equally involved in the assigned task of ruling over God's creation as God's imagebearers. Genesis 1:26 begins, "God said, 'Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish of the sea. . . .'" Then in verse 27: "So God created man in his own image . . . male and female he created them." In verse 28, God blesses both male and female and gives them dominion over other living creatures. Genesis 1 teaches that male and female together, without regard to gender, exercise dominion over God's creation.

Genesis 2 tells the creation story in a complementary way. As contrasted with the animals, woman is created as a "help" or "helper" fit for man (Gen. 2:18). The word translated "help" or "helper" does not imply subordination. It is used twenty-one times in the Old Testament: six times it refers to human helpers and fifteen times to God's help. Thus the woman as "helper" implies no subordination. Rather, it involves an equality of worth: the woman is not the man's servant; she is created from his side as his equal.

Genesis 2:23 does suggest that the man gave the woman her name. But the context indicates that this is related to marriage, since the next verse says, "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh" (Gen. 2:24).

b. The fall and its consequences.

Genesis 3:16 indicates that the parity of the paradise situation was disrupted by the fall: "I will greatly increase your toil and your pregnancy pains. With pain you will bear children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you." This somewhat diminished status of women may also be reflected elsewhere in the law. Significantly, under the old covenant the mark or seal of the covenant, circumcision, was administered only to males (Gen. 17:9-14). A striking example is that, according to Leviticus 12:2-5, a woman was unclean twice as long after giving birth to a daughter (two weeks, and sixty-six days of purifying) as after giving birth to a son (one week, and thirty-three days of purifying).

In spite of the consequences of the fall, even in the Old Testament there are indications that women at special times functioned in special capacities: Miriam, who is called a "leader" along with Moses and Aaron (Mic. 6:4); Deborah, who was a "judge" (Judg. 4:4); and Huldah, who is called a "prophetess" (II Kings 22:14-20; II Chron. 34:20-28). In addition, Hannah functions as an agent of special revelation and continues to be a teacher of the whole church (I Sam. 1:1-10, which is echoed in Luke 1:46-55). There is, however, no record of any woman having served as a priest in the Old Testament. Under the old covenant, with few exceptions men served as the leaders, judges, prophets, rulers, and priests.

c. The Old Testament witness to a coming great day of renewal

The Old Testament prophets proclaimed God's promise that some time in the future (partially fulfilled in the return from exile but ultimately fulfilled in Christ's coming) God would work a new covenant. The prophet Joel emphasized that on that great day of renewal not only would God pour out his Spirit but also the Spirit would work to include all people and be gender inclusive. God says (Joel 2:28-29), "And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy. . . . Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days." The prophetic voices of daughters as well as sons will accompany the outpouring of God's Spirit, and when this happens it will be a sign of the coming of God's kingdom.

The prophet Joel does not stand alone, however. Other prophets were given clear insight into this coming great day, each one stressing different aspects of renewal. Jeremiah (31:31-34) quotes the Lord as saying, "The time is coming when I will make a covenant with the house of Israel and

with the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers." The new covenant is specifically characterized by four things it will do effectively: (1) God will put his law in people's hearts; (2) he will be their God, and they will be his people; (3) all, from the least to the greatest, will know the Lord; and (4) God will forgive their sins. Hebrews 8:7-13 quotes this passage from Jeremiah in order to show that the first covenant has been made obsolete.

Ezekiel (11:19-20; 36:26-27) saw the future day as the time when God would make his people obedient by giving them "hearts of flesh" rather than "hearts of stone" and would give them his Spirit so that they would keep his laws. Then II Corinthians 3:1-3 echoes this passage by saying that the Spirit of God has made the Corinthian Christians an epistle by writing not on tablets of stone but on their "fleshly" hearts.

The prophet Isaiah clearly saw this great day coming and spoke of it as a day that would go beyond the narrow confines of the old covenant. Salvation would include both gentiles and others who, under the law, had been excluded. God says to his servant (Isa. 49:6) that the servant will not only restore the tribes of Jacob, but "I will also make you a light to the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth," which is then quoted in Acts 13:47. God's salvation will include eunuchs and foreigners (Isa. 56:1-8), although they had been excluded under the law (Lev. 21:17-23; Deut. 23:1-8).

Thus the prophets saw this day of new beginnings that would bring back the paradise situation and even surpass it. The movement would be away from the ineffectiveness and exclusiveness of the old covenant to the effectiveness, universality, and inclusiveness of the new. In this context, Joel specifically announces that the new inclusiveness would involve females and males equally.

3. The witness of the New Testament

a. Galatians 3:23-29

- 1) Galatians 3:23-29 is, for several reasons, an appropriate place to begin the consideration of the New Testament witness: (a) Galatians is among the earliest writings of the New Testament (perhaps as early as A.D. 48 and certainly no later than A.D. 53). (b) By contrasting confinement under the law "before faith came" with what happens "in Christ Jesus" "now that faith has come," Galatians 3:23-29 builds upon the universal and inclusive character of the new dispensation with which the Old Testament prophets were concerned. (c) Galatians 3:28 is situated in a context that is rich with blessings and privileges of the new covenant characterized by faith in Jesus Christ: believers are sons of God, are baptized into Christ, have put on Christ and are one in him, are the seed of Abraham and therefore heirs according to the promise. Galatians 3:26-29 may be translated as follows:

You all are sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have been clothed with Christ: there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free person, neither male and female, for you all are one in Christ Jesus. Indeed if you belong to Christ, then you are the seed of Abraham and you are heirs according to the promise.

- 2) Everyone agrees that this text, among other things, declares that male and female share equally in the salvation in Christ. But there are reasons to see broader implications in this text:
 - a) Quite remarkably, here in Galatians Paul includes a reference to "slave or free" and "male and female." Those two issues are not further discussed in the letter, which is primarily about whether gentile Christians must observe the law of Moses. So Paul need not have included these issues here unless either (1) the trio of paired opposites had become an early confession of the implications of faith or (2) Paul wants the "slave-free" and "male-female" references as leverage to support the oneness and equality of Jew and greek. In fact, both of these reasons may be valid. The inclusion here of "slave-free" and "male-female" suggests how widely held it was to include them as indicators of the universality and inclusiveness of the new covenant. It is also likely that these three together constitute an early confession to counter the chauvinistic statements found, for example, in the Jewish cycle of morning prayers: "Blessed be He [God] that He did not make me a Gentile; blessed be He that He did not make me a slave; blessed be He that he did not make me a woman." Against that background, it was appropriate for the early church in its baptismal confessions to proclaim that in Christ the old racial schisms and cultural divisions had been healed.
 - b) The grammatical construction with reference to "male-female" is different from that of the other two sets. The other two sets are related with a "neither-nor" construction. The "male-female" pair, as the above translation suggests, is structured with a "neither-and" construction. As some scholars rightly discern, Paul here picks up the language of Genesis 1:27 ("male and female he created them"), thereby indicating that in Christ male and female are restored to equal participation in the image of God and the concomitant call jointly to exercise dominion over creation.
 - c) Some think that the "oneness in Christ" proclaimed in Galatians 3:28 applies only to the equal receiving of salvation and has no "social" significance within the life of the church. That such is not the case can be clearly seen from the reference to the first pair, "neither the Jew nor Greek." Part of Paul's reason for writing is that at Antioch, Peter, because of the fear of the circumcision party, refrained from table fellowship with gentiles (Gal. 2:11-14). Paul rebuked Peter for this hypocrisy. At the very least, "oneness in Christ" involved for Paul the "social" significance of equal treatment in table fellowship. Then, moving beyond table fellowship, it would be incongruous for believers to treat one another equally at the Lord's table but as unequals outside that context.
 - d) That mutual union in Christ implies full equality of persons can also be seen by looking at the second pair in Galatians 3:26-28—slaves and free persons. Central to the claim that women may be ordained to all ecclesiastical offices is the conviction that men and women are fundamentally equal. Yet Scripture affirms that men and women are united in Christ without explicitly saying that they are equals. So the question arises whether Scripture supports the

equality of men and women in redemption as it does in creation.

The passage's implication of male-female equality is parallel to its implication that masters and slaves are equal. The biblical basis for opposing slavery depends on the church's being able to infer the fundamental and full equality of all who are in Christ. Only if union with Christ implies the fundamental equality of those who are united with Christ does the church have a theological objection to slavery. The *equality* flowing from mutual union in Christ makes the *inequality* of slavery jarring and unacceptable. If mutual union in Christ were compatible with the inequality of masters and slaves, then the church would lose an important theological objection to slavery. Although not all Christians recognized this implication of Scripture at first, eventually Christians came to see that slavery is wrong—not only because it violates moral principles but also because it violates the equality of persons that is implied by their mutual union in Christ. Just as the equality implied by mutual union in Christ undermines the legitimacy of the inequality of slave and free persons, so too it undermines the legitimacy of the inequality of males and females, even though, as with slavery, the church may not have recognized this immediately. In short, if union with Christ implies equality in the master-slave relation, then it also implies equality in male-female relations.

The force of the implied equality in this passage can be seen as follows. Just as it would be inappropriate to say, "Theophilus cannot be an elder because he's a Greek," or "Onesimus cannot be an elder because he's my slave," so too it is inappropriate to say, "Apphia cannot be an elder because she's a woman."

- e) Finally, against the background of Genesis 1, according to which male and female are created in God's image and receive both God's blessing and the task of dominion over other creatures, Galatians 3:26-28 says that all who have faith in Jesus Christ are, without differentiation, "*sons* [italics added] of God through faith in Christ Jesus." All the privileges that go with this sonship are now equally theirs, whether they are Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female. Just as in Christ all who believe are sons of Abraham (Gal. 3:7), so that gentiles are now on a par with Jews, so too in Christ both men and women are sons of God, so that women are now on a par with men. Women who are in Christ are God's sons and therefore deserve the status that accompanies sonship.

b. Baptism as the sign and seal of the new covenant

Under the old covenant, the sign of the covenant, circumcision, was administered only to males. From the beginning of the Christian era, those baptized into Christ included both Jew and gentile, both slave and free, both male and female. Although no text in the Old Testament required the church to baptize females, the dawning of the new covenant signaled to the church the effectiveness, universality, and inclusiveness promised by the prophets and led the church to baptize females as well as males. So we see a radical change from old covenant to new. Although women in the old covenant were not circumcised, they were part of the

covenant. They were equal to men regarding salvation but unequal in other dimensions of their religion. Therefore, the inclusion of women in baptism—the sign of the new covenant—indicates that under the new covenant there is a more profound equality than the simple equality of salvation of the old covenant.

c. Women and men as prophets, priests, and kings

1) The New Testament teaches that women as well as men are prophets of God. As noted above, through the prophet Joel God announced that “afterward I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy” (Joel 2:28). In Acts 2:17 Peter begins his quotation of Joel by interpreting the word “afterward” in Joel’s prophecy: “In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people.” Peter saw that the church was living “in the last days,” in which the prophecy of Joel was being fulfilled. He even extended Joel’s prophecy by saying that God’s servants—both men and women—will prophesy (Acts 2:18). So now men and women, as well as sons and daughters, are prophets. No wonder then that four daughters of Philip the evangelist were known as having the gift of prophecy (Acts 21:9) and that women (or wives) prophesied at the church of Corinth (I Cor. 11:5).

2) The New Testament also teaches that women as well as men are priests and kings. In Exodus 19:5-6 God promised Israel that, if she was obedient to his covenant, she would be to God “a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” In the New Testament this promise of God to Israel is applied to the church—in differing ways, sometimes emphasizing the *priestly* aspect and sometimes the *kingly* aspect of the promise.

I Peter 2:4-10 underscores the priestly side of this promise. Along with some other titles derived from Isaiah 28:16 and Exodus 19:6, the church is given the title “a royal priesthood” and is said to be “a holy priesthood” (v. 5) offering spiritual sacrifices. Revelation 1:6 alludes to Exodus 19:6, underscoring both kingship and priesthood, for it may be translated as follows: “and he made you a kingship, priests to serve his God and Father.” In Revelation 5:10 the kingly aspect is emphasized: “and he made them to be for our God a kingship and priests, and they will reign [or, are reigning] on the earth.” Here it is the kingly reign that is emphasized. So, in the New Testament, the titles of “kings” and “priests” are applied indiscriminately to men and women who are people of God.

3) To demonstrate more clearly the priestly and kingly calling of both “sons and daughters,” II Corinthians 6:16-18 is important. That passage appears to be a “chain” of Old Testament texts, especially from Leviticus 26:11-12, Ezekiel 37:27, and Isaiah 52:11, all of which have Israel in view as a “priestly” nation, called out to holiness. This concept is applied to the entire Corinthian congregation. The last quotation in the chain is from II Samuel 7:14, where, in the context of a messianic promise to David, God says of David’s offspring, “I will be his father, and he will be my son.” Paul broadens that quotation in two significant ways: first, he makes the “his” into a plural “you” and “son” into the plural “sons,” and, second, he adds the significant phrase “and daugh-

ters." Thus II Corinthians 6:18 reads: "I will be to you [plural] a father and you [plural] will be to me sons and daughters." In the New Testament, in contrast to the Old Testament, kingship is conferred on daughters as well as sons. Thus "sons and daughters" not only function in the new covenant as "prophets" but also as "priests" and "kings."

- 4) Thus, following these passages, the Heidelberg Catechism (Q. and A. 32) rightly states that a Christian shares in Christ's anointing and is anointed to confess his name, to present herself or himself to Christ "as a living sacrifice of thanks . . . and afterward to reign with Christ over all creation and for all eternity." No distinction of office or function is made between male and female believers. Given this evidence of women as well as men functioning equally in all aspects of the "office of believer," there would have to be clear and indisputable evidence to the contrary to keep both men and women from functioning in the offices of deacon, elder, minister, and evangelist.

d. Women as witnesses and agents of special revelation

Matthew (27:55-56) reports that women who followed Jesus not only witnessed the crucifixion (unlike the male disciples) but also were first to see the risen Jesus and were thus the first witnesses of the resurrection (28:1-10). The Gospel of Luke (1:39-56) records the prophetic utterances of Mary and Elizabeth, through whom God continues to instruct the church to this day. John (4:7-42) records that Jesus, contrary to Jewish custom, ministered to the Samaritan woman at the well and that she in turn led many to believe in him through her testimony.

e. Women as fellow workers in Christ for the gospel

Romans 16, with its list of greetings, is important because, without polemical motivation, it opens up a tiny window on Paul's associates and shows what an important role women had in the early progress of the gospel. Phoebe (16:1) was both a "deacon" and a "helper" of many, including Paul. Priscilla and Aquila (16:2) are called "my fellow workers in Christ Jesus." Mary (16:6) might be characterized as "a hard worker." Both Andronicus and Junia (16:7) are called "kinsfolk," "fellow prisoners," and, amazingly, "outstanding among the apostles." (Junia according to other uses of the name is almost certainly female; as one recent commentator suggests, only male chauvinism and/or medieval concerns about the apostolate could have led to suggestions that this is a man's name.) Tryphena, Tryphosa, and Persis (16:12) are characterized as "hard workers in the Lord." Others are referred to directly or by implication in this list of greetings. Even among "fellow workers for the gospel" the early church knew no distinction between "male and female." Some were "deacons" or were "among the apostles."

Romans 16 is not alone, however. Other letters incidentally indicate what an important role women had in the early church. Apphia, along with Archippus (Philem. 2) is recognized as a leader in the church that meets in Philemon's home. Euodia and Syntyche (Phil. 4:2-3) needed help in agreeing with each other, but they were nonetheless true "fellow workers" who labored "side by side" with Paul in the cause of the gospel. In addition, the leadership roles of Priscilla and Aquila are noted in the

book of Acts, particularly their teaching of the mighty Apollos (Acts 18:24-26).

These references, once again, are important because they indicate that the baptismal confession of Galatians 3:28 functioned powerfully in the early church. Male and female not only equally shared in salvation in Christ but also equally shared in the responsibility of working for the gospel.

4. Passages that may seem to disagree with the general biblical witness

The case for opening to qualified women the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist rests upon this general analogy of Scripture, that is, on the "obvious scope and import of its teachings as a whole." There would have to be explicit and universally valid scriptural arguments against this teaching in order to overturn it. Some think that such evidence exists in I Corinthians 11:2-16, I Corinthians 14:33b-35, and I Timothy 2:9-15. These texts may not be dismissed; they are to be dealt with according to Reformed hermeneutics, and their teaching must be honored. The first part of this overture, dealing with the analysis of the grounds of the decision of Synod 1994, pointed out that the restrictions in these passages were not intended to be restrictions meant for all times and all places. The following analysis gives the positive teaching of these passages in harmony with the general analogy of the Bible in affirming the role of women in all offices of the church.

a. I Corinthians 11:2-16

In I Corinthians, Paul is addressing abuses of Christian freedom found in the Corinthian church. These abuses did not arise from an opposition to the Christian faith, but from the Corinthian believers' assumption that their faith gave them the freedom to engage in such practices. In I Corinthians 11-14, Paul specifically addresses issues that affect public worship. Two of those passages (I Cor. 11:2-16 and 14:33b-35) address the issue of proper decorum in worship on the part of Christian wives (women). Paul was concerned lest their newfound freedom and equality in Christ hinder the proper worship of God and at the same time undermine the institution of marriage.

In I Corinthians 11:2-16, Paul recognizes the right of the wife (woman) to pray and prophesy. While agreeing that man and woman have equality and mutual dependence in the Lord (11:11-12), Paul insists on the difference in function of husbands (men) and wives (women). Here he insists that wives (women) have their heads covered while praying and prophesying. He insists on that because of the headship of the husband over his wife (11:3), because of the man's being chronologically first in the creation account (11:8-9), because of the presence of the angels in worship (11:10), because of what "nature itself" teaches (11:14), and because of the universal practice of the churches of that time (11:16).

Since the Greek word used here for "man" can mean either "man" or "husband" and the one for "woman" can mean either "woman" or "wife," it is impossible to be certain whether Paul has in mind only the marriage situation. But it is clear in Paul's writings that he does not want to encourage practices that would undercut marriage. He holds marriage in high honor and wants the church to do so as well. Even in I Corinthians 7, where Paul argues that for those who have the gift of chastity it is "better"

not to marry, he encourages complete mutual dependence within marriage (7:3-4). So here in I Corinthians 11, Paul wishes to guard against those things that both violated decorum in worship and threatened Christian marriages.

Most of the church has judged that Paul's injunction about wives (women) wearing head coverings in the worship service is not universally binding. It was appropriate for Paul's day and the situation in Corinth—indeed, for all the weighty reasons Paul enumerates—but it is not always and everywhere applicable. The injunction regarding head covering has been judged to be an application of a principle, not a principle in itself. The church has judged that it can honor the principles that Paul enunciates without practicing the specific application of the principle that he recommends for Corinth.

Finally, this passage clearly permits a woman (or wife) to pray and prophesy in a worship service as long as she does so with proper decorum. So this passage supports rather than opposes the position that the Bible as a whole teaches, namely, that women and men share equally not only in salvation in Christ but also in the responsibility of working for—and even prophetically proclaiming—the gospel.

b. I Corinthians 14:33b-35

The context of this passage (14:26-33a) is the necessary decorum during worship gatherings involving those who speak in tongues and prophesy. People—including prophets—must know when to keep silent as well as when to speak (14:28-30). Wives also should be silent; they are not permitted to speak, and they must be in submission. If they wish to inquire about something, they are urged to ask their own husbands at home, since to do otherwise is disgraceful (14:33b-35).

Two features of this text should be noted. (1) Paul here is applying this instruction to the marriage or family relationship, since he says that the women should ask "their own husbands at home." (2) The injunction for wives to be silent was obviously not meant to be absolute, since in I Corinthians 11 wives (or women) were recognized as legitimately praying and prophesying in worship services. So Paul in this context must be forbidding the kind of disruptive speech that was inappropriate to the marriage situation and dishonoring to the God of peace who had called them. Instead of shamefully clamoring for public explanations, the wives were to discuss such matters with their husbands at home. God is not a God of disorder but of peace.

To hear the enduring message of this passage, we must distinguish again between a principle and the application of a principle. Two principles seem to be at work here: (1) male headship in marriage must be honored, and (2) in worship everything must be done in an orderly and edifying way. As principles, these are valid for all times and places. The application of these principles in Paul's day and in the rather free-flowing worship gatherings at Corinth required forbidding the disorderly speaking indicated in these verses. For our day, compliance with these principles means that participation of wives (or women) in the worship service is allowed as long as it does not violate headship in marriage and is not disruptive or unedifying.

c. I Timothy 2:11-15

I Timothy 2:11-15 is part of a unit of teaching consisting of chapters 2 and 3. The main principle of this unit of instruction is clearly laid out in 3:15, namely, "how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household." This main principle is stated at the end of the section but had already been applied to various aspects of the church's life: 2:1-6, prayer for all people; 2:7-15, how men and women should pray (and learn); 3:1-7, the character and responsibilities of bishops or overseers; and 3:8-13, the character and responsibilities of deacons and deaconesses. Thus the basic principle throughout is that we should conduct ourselves properly in God's household. The purpose of this principle, suggested in 2:2, is "that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness."

Four features of I Timothy 2:11-15 deserve mention: (1) in the church women should dress modestly and adorn themselves with good deeds rather than external finery (2:9-10); (2) women are to learn but must do so in quietness and full submission (2:11); (3) Paul does not permit a wife (or woman) to teach or usurp authority over a husband (or man) (2:12); and (4) he bases this exhortation on an appeal to the story of creation and the fall (2:13-14) but concludes with a message of hope for the woman (2:15).

I Timothy is filled with instructions for Timothy, who, according to I Timothy 1:3-7, was left in Ephesus to combat some false teachers. These would-be teachers of the law were promoting speculative teaching and leading many astray. They seem to have had considerable influence among some women, especially younger widows, as I Timothy 5:11-15 and II Timothy 3:6-7 indicate. According to the best interpretation of I Timothy 5:13, some of the younger widows were even propagating this false teaching and some (5:15) had already capitulated to Satan. It may be inferred from I Timothy 4:3 that these false teachers were forbidding people to marry and advocating other ascetic practices.

It is to warn against falling into this kind of trap that the injunctions in I Timothy 2:11-12 should be understood. The injunctions that women should learn quietly and not teach so as to usurp authority can best be seen over against this false teaching, which was having such an effect on the women in Ephesus. This clear internal evidence may be supported by some external evidence. Some destructive feminism may have existed at that time in Ephesus, perhaps associated with the cult of Diana (Artemis). In any event, the internal evidence is clear enough that these injunctions have such false teaching in mind. These are polemical words addressed to a very particular Ephesian situation.

It also seems clear that Paul here is addressing the marriage relationship, since the word "submission" is the same one used in Ephesians 5:22 (where marriage is under discussion) and since I Timothy 2:15 refers to childbearing, appropriate only to the marriage situation. In that respect it is similar to the I Corinthians 14 passage.

The proper interpretation of the word *authentein* in I Timothy 2:12 has been much discussed. It is used only once in the New Testament. Does it mean simply "to have authority over," or does it have the pejorative force of "to usurp authority over"? Either is possible: the former translation may be found in the New International Version; the latter was preferred by the King James translators. One strong point in favor of the latter

translation is that when Paul speaks of the proper exercise of mutual authority within marriage in I Corinthians 7:4, he uses a different word in order to say that a woman in marriage has authority over the body of her husband just as a husband has authority over the body of his wife. Given this context, what I Timothy 2:12 prohibits is the exercise of the wrong kind of authority within marriage, the domineering kind of usurping authority.

Paul's injunctions in I Timothy 2:11-12 are rooted in an appeal first of all to the creation story: Adam was first formed, then Eve (2:13). (Paul made the same appeal in I Corinthians 11:8-9 in grounding his injunction for women to wear head coverings in worship.) But I Timothy 2:14-15 carries the argument beyond anything we have elsewhere in Paul. This supports the suggestion that the entire passage has in view a very specific problem in Ephesus.

The exact interpretation of 2:14-15 is problematic. Gordon Fee has suggested an interpretation of this passage that is highly plausible because it interprets the passage in the light of other passages in I Timothy (*Gospel and Spirit*, pp. 57-59). Fee sees a close relationship between I Timothy 2:8-15 and 5:11-15. He interprets verse 14 in the following way:

Based on words of Eve in Genesis 3:13 ("the serpent *deceived* me, and I ate"), Paul states that Adam was *not* deceived (by the snake, that is), but rather it was the woman (note the change from Eve to "the woman"), who having been deceived (by Satan is implied) fell into transgression. That is exactly the point of 5:15—such deception of woman by "Satan" has already been repeated in the church in Ephesus. But, Paul says in verse 15, there is still hope she can be saved (eschatological salvation is ultimately in view, but in the context she shall be saved from her deception with its ultimate transgressions), provided she is first of all a woman of faith, love, and holiness.

If Fee's interpretation is correct, it would support the position that I Timothy 2:11-15 is directed toward a specific situation in the church at Ephesus.

In sum, in I Timothy 2:11-15, Paul is seeking to preserve the integrity of marriage by forbidding women to teach their husbands in a domineering way. He connects headship in marriage with the creation account. This affirmation is best understood as countering the false teachers who were forbidding marriage and advocating other ascetic practices by not adequately recognizing the good creation order (I Tim. 4:1-5). So recognizing what Paul teaches here regarding marriage and piety suggests that, if women exercise the authority of leadership that is not authoritarian and if they teach without domineering, then there is no objection to their sharing in these gifts for the upbuilding of the church.

B. Pastoral concerns regarding opening all ecclesiastical offices to women

1. General considerations

- a. If Scripture does not impose restrictions that would prohibit women from being ordained as ministers, elders, and evangelists, then it would be wrong for the denomination as a whole to prohibit what Scripture does not prohibit. Conversely, if Scripture does impose restrictions that would prohibit women from being ordained to these offices, then it would be

wrong for the denomination as a whole to permit such ordination. But there may be a third approach. If Scripture, in the relevant passages, offers prohibitions that are addressed to specific situations (even if they appeal for their grounding to general principles, including the creation order), then those specific prohibitions are not themselves universally binding. The underlying principles would be universally binding, but the way those principles are applied would not be. This approach requires pastoral discernment to know whether the underlying principles do or do not permit women to hold such offices in a specific ecclesiastical situation. The following proposal is intended to address the pastoral issues involved on the premise that the prohibition of I Timothy 2:11-12 is addressed to a specific situation in Ephesus but is not universally binding, though the underlying principles are universally binding.

- b. If the question of whether women may be ordained is not a confessional matter but a matter of Church Order, as synod has previously held (1989), then it should not be taken to be a violation of confessional integrity if the church opens all ecclesiastical offices to women. This conclusion has two important pastoral implications.
 - 1) First, since what we face in this issue is a matter of the *interpretation* of biblical texts and not confessional integrity, it would be wrong for congregations or members to reject the church or leave the church if their interpretation of the relevant texts is not adopted. To leave the church over this matter would require holding that the opposite view involves confessional unfaithfulness. However, since the Reformed confessions do not address this issue, the charge of confessional unfaithfulness would need to be made on the basis of new—perhaps unwritten—confessions. In short, if congregations or members leave the church because it decides to open all ecclesiastical offices to women, they do so only by introducing a new confessional standard as the basis for their departure. Similarly, if congregations or members leave the church because it does not open all ecclesiastical offices to women, they too have introduced a new confessional standard as the basis for their departure. So congregations and members on either side should not abandon the denomination just because their view on the matter is not adopted.
 - 2) Second, if congregations can legitimately hold and follow either interpretation of this text, then the denomination will need to adopt measures that allow us to live and function together as the church in spite of our differences of interpretation and practice. The purpose of these regulations and guidelines would be to address the genuine pastoral needs of the church in this matter. The pastoral considerations and guidelines proposed by the ad hoc committee of 1992 and then modified and adopted by Synod 1993 offer wise leadership to the church regarding how to implement a decision to allow congregations to ordain women as ministers, elders, and evangelists (*Agenda for Synod 1992*, pp. 379-82; *Acts of Synod 1993*, pp. 614-16). The guidelines proposed below are drawn from those proposed in 1992 and adopted in 1993. In addition to those guidelines, however, some new synodical regulations are proposed below. These regulations allow each classis to decide

whether women may be delegates to classis. They also allow synod to permit women to be ordained in local congregations and to serve as delegates to classis (in classes that allow women delegates) without permitting them to be delegates to synod. In this way, freedom of conscience and of the interpretation of Scripture is preserved to the fullest extent possible in every congregation and classis within the denomination.

2. Proposed synodical regulations for implementing women in office

- a. If a majority of the delegates to a classis oppose allowing women to serve as delegates, the classis may vote not to seat women as delegates for a period of up to three years. The classis may renew this restriction, for a period of up to three years each time the restriction expires.

Congregations should wait until one year after the amendment to Church Order Article 3 is approved before sending women as delegates to classis, unless the classis specifically waives this waiting period. If a classis fails to institute this restriction within one year of synod's approval of the Church Order amendment opening all ecclesiastical offices to women or if a classis fails to renew the restriction by the last classis meeting when it is in effect, then member congregations may send women as delegates to subsequent meetings of the classis.

- b. If a majority of the delegates to synod oppose allowing women to serve as delegates, synod may vote not to seat women as delegates for a period of up to three years. Synod may renew this restriction, for a period of up to three years, each time the restriction expires. If the synod that approves the Church Order amendment opening all ecclesiastical offices to women fails to institute this restriction or if synod fails to renew the restriction during the last synod when it is in effect, then classes may send women as delegates to subsequent meetings of synod.

3. Proposed guidelines for implementing women in office

(The *Acts of Synod 1993*, page 616, defines a guideline as follows: "Guidelines are not official synodical regulations, but serious suggestions to guide congregations, councils, classes, synodical agencies, and synod itself in the event that the change in Article 3 of the Church Order is ratified.")

a. Proposed guidelines for councils

- 1) If a majority of the council favors the ordination of women, the minority should respect the judgment of the majority and should not refuse to serve on that ground alone.
- 2) If a majority of the council refuses to ordain women into the offices of the church, the minority should respect the judgment of the majority and should not refuse to serve on that ground alone.
- 3) Where both women and men serve on a council, the council should not demand of those opposed to women in office that they serve with women officebearers in home-visitation teams or in any capacity other than the official meetings of the council and the worship services.
- 4) Councils should not instruct their delegates to broader assemblies to withdraw from meetings merely on the basis of the presence of women delegates. Councils should also respect the consciences of individual officebearers opposed to women in office in making the appointment

of delegates to a broader assembly where women delegates may be present.

- 5) No council should force ministers who oppose the ordination of women to ordain or install them in a worship service.
 - 6) No officebearer should be required by the council to participate in the "laying on of hands" when a woman is ordained into the ministry.
 - 7) No council should decide whether a minister is permitted to occupy its pulpit only by reason of the minister's personal views on the ordination of women.
- b. Proposed guidelines for classes
- 1) In the appointment of church visitors, classes should be sensitive to the views of local congregations regarding women officebearers.
 - 2) Classes should respect the views of a council regarding female ministers when assigning classical appointments to a congregation.
 - 3) Classical counselors should respect the position of a council regarding women in office when providing advice during the process of calling a minister.
 - 4) No classical delegate should be asked to participate against his will in the examination of women candidates for the ministry.
- c. Proposed guidelines for synod and synodical agencies
- 1) Synod and synodical agencies, such as Home Missions, World Missions, and the Chaplain Committee, should be sensitive to local views on women in office at home or abroad, especially in the placement of ministerial personnel.
 - 2) Synod and synodical agencies should be sensitive to the views of other denominations on the ordination of women (e.g., in assigning personnel to visit their assemblies and in sending delegates to ecumenical councils).
 - 3) No synodical deputy should be asked to participate against his conscience in the examination of women candidates for the ministry.
 - 4) If synod allows women to serve as delegates to synod, a delegate to synod should not use his personal views to refuse assignment to an advisory committee on which women delegates serve.
- d. General pastoral guidelines
- 1) Since members of the Christian Reformed Church are bound together by a high view of the Scriptures but do not agree on the interpretation and present application of some passages that speak to the women-in-office issue, we cannot insist on our private interpretation but must deal with each other in openness, mutual respect, and tolerance.
 - 2) In all our searching for the Lord's will regarding the function of women in the church, we must be alert to the dangers of a secular feminism that rejects the teaching of the authoritative Word of God and of a relativism that rejects the timeless normativity of the Word of God as the church confronts the issues of our contemporary world.
 - 3) We should avoid actions and words that are incompatible with Christian love. Let us be "quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to anger" (James 1:19).
 - 4) As members of the Christian Reformed Church we share a common confession and understanding of the Bible as the inspired Word of

God, infallible and authoritative for salvation and the whole of life. Since both proponents and opponents in the present debate share a common confession and use the same principles of Reformed hermeneutics, we may not use this issue to divide the church.

- 5) Members of the church must remember the words of the Belgic Confession of Faith (Art. 29) that the three marks distinguishing the true church from all sects and identifying it as the body from which we ought not to separate ourselves are "the pure preaching of the gospel . . . the pure administration of the sacraments as Christ instituted them . . . [and] church discipline for correcting faults." Therefore we may not use either the issue of women in office or a member's position on this issue as the standard of his or her orthodoxy or the test of the faithfulness and truth of the church.

IV. Overture

In the light of the foregoing material, Classis Grand Rapids East overtures synod

- A. To revise the decision regarding women serving in all ecclesiastical offices.
- B. To amend Article 3 of the Church Order to read as follows: "All confessing members of the church who meet the biblical requirements are eligible for the offices of minister, elder, deacon, and evangelist.
- C. To adopt the regulations and guidelines proposed above (III, B, 1-3) for implementing this decision.

Grounds:

- 1. Synod should revise the decision on the following grounds:
 - a. Synod 1994 did not establish that Scripture clearly prohibits women from holding the offices of minister, elder, and evangelist.
 - b. Synod 1994 did not establish that the general analogy of Scripture supports the exclusion of women from the offices of minister and elder.
 - c. Given the legitimate diversity of responsible interpretations of Scripture on this matter and given the status of the matter as one that does not violate the confessions that unify the church, the decision of Synod 1994 not to allow women to hold the offices of minister, elder, and evangelist inappropriately binds Christian consciences.
 - d. The current prohibition on ordaining women to all offices is pastorally unwise, since a decision unsupported by the church's serious study nevertheless puts a number of congregations in very difficult straits, erodes unity and loyalty within the church, and has led many members to feel betrayed.
- 2. The permissibility of opening to qualified women all ecclesiastical offices follows from the Reformed principle of hermeneutics known as the general analogy of Scripture, namely, a teaching that "does not rest on the explicit statements of the Bible, but on the obvious scope and import of its teachings as a whole." The following items confirm that the obvious scope and import of the Bible is that, under the new covenant, both females and males have all the rights and privileges of the new covenant's blessings and responsibilities.

- a. Genesis 1:26-27 and 2:18 teach that both male and female are created equally in God's image, equally blessed by God, equally assigned the task of dominion over other living things, and of equal worth in marriage.
 - b. Many prophets speak of the coming great day of renewal, in which God will move his covenant people from the ineffectiveness and exclusiveness of the old covenant to the effectiveness, universality, and inclusiveness of the new covenant. Joel 2:28-29 declares that this new inclusiveness involves females and males equally.
 - c. Galatians 3:23-29 teaches that the original creation order regarding male and female has been restored in our being "one in Christ" and implies the full equality of males and females as "sons of God."
 - d. Since only males were circumcised under the old covenant, the baptism of females as well as males under the new covenant signals the oneness and equality of male and female.
 - e. Several Scripture passages (especially Acts 2:17-18 and II Cor. 6:16-18) teach that both men and women are, under the new covenant, prophets, priests, and kings.
 - f. Under the new covenant, women are both witnesses and agents of special revelation (Matt. 27:55-56; 28:1-10; Luke 1:39-56; John 4:7-42) and are described as "fellow-workers in Christ" for the gospel, as "deacon," and as "among the apostles" (Rom. 16; Phil. 4:2-3; Acts 18:24-26).
 - g. The passages in I Corinthians 11:2-16, I Corinthians 14:33b-35, and I Timothy 2:11-15 may be interpreted by Reformed Christians, without detracting from the infallibility and authority of Scripture, as not prohibiting women from serving in the offices of minister, elder, and evangelist. Given this and given the biblical evidence cited above, these passages do not constitute a sufficient barrier to opening all offices to women.
3. The regulations and guidelines presented in this overture are pastorally sensitive and conducive to maintaining the unity of the church.

Classis Grand Rapids East

Philip R. Lucasse, stated clerk

Overture 65: Not to Consider the Subject of Women in the Offices of Minister, Elder, and Evangelist

I. Background

The issue of women in all the offices has been with us for over twenty years. This overture is an effort to end this debate and the division that it has caused and continues to cause in the CRCNA.

Synod has received hundreds of overtures over the past twenty years. These overtures have presented various biblical and social reasons for opening all the church offices to women. Synod has appointed a number of study committees. There appears to be nothing more to say on this issue. It appears that all of those concerned already have their minds made up. Synods continue to spend hours in debate, and synod will do so again this year as it entertains the many overtures received. All of these types of overtures, which are no more than repeats of

earlier overtures, have failed to bring about a solution. It is time for synod to make the hard choice and put an end to this debate. This overture can help save the denomination.

The Bible speaks about wickedness destroying the foundations (Ps. 11: 2-3; 82:5). Israel forsakes God and the Word of God for false gods, and it deteriorates physically, morally, and spiritually as a nation. God sends the Philistines, Assyrians, and others to punish and even destroy it. These are the results of turning away from God and his Word.

Look at what is happening in the CRCNA:

- Thousands of people have left the denomination.
- Many churches have left the denomination.
- Giving is down (Calvin Theological Seminary expects \$120,000 shortfall).
- There is a shortage of ministers and ministerial candidates.
- There is a negative, cynical attitude in the denomination.
- The glue that held us together is gone.
- Many churches are doing what is right in their own eyes.
- The unity among us is gone.
- There is division, tension, anger, hate.

Our foundations are being destroyed. These results of the past twenty-plus years of wrangling over women in the offices of minister, elder, and evangelist show us that the Lord has withdrawn his blessing. We are falling apart. This cannot be the result of our loyalty to the Word of God and the work of the Holy Spirit in us. It points more in the direction of trying to forsake God's Word and of honoring another spirit among us.

It is time to stop this debate. It is time to repent, heal, repair, and rebuild. This synod can go a long way to help us in this direction.

II. Overture

The council of White Lane Bible Way Church of Bakersfield, California, overtures synod not to consider the subject of women for the offices of minister, elder, and evangelist.

Grounds:

- A. Article 29 of the Church Order must be followed.
- B. The historic position of the denomination on this subject has been tested for over twenty years and not found to be contrary to the Scriptures or the Church Order.

Council of White Lane Bible Way CRC,
Bakersfield, CA
Dean E. Whitlach, clerk

Note: This overture was submitted to Classis Central California but was not adopted.

Overture 66: Permit Congregational Discretion re Women in Office and Change Church Order Article 3

I. Background

The issue of women in office has dominated the agenda of the denomination and sapped the energy of our membership. As one synod overturned the work of another, disrespect for synodical decisions has developed, hope has turned to cynicism, and joy has turned to pain and bitterness. It is time to move on.

Study, discussion, and debate over what Scripture teaches concerning the role of women in the church has not led to a unity of understanding of what Scripture allows. The biblical approach to dilemmas of this sort, as taught, for example, in Romans 14:1-12 (particularly verses 1 and 19), is to allow freedom of conscience and action.

II. Overture

Therefore, Classis Holland overtures synod

A. To permit the churches to use their discretion in using the gifts of women in all the offices of the church.

B. To change the Church Order accordingly, by deleting the word "male" and merging Article 3-a and 3-b to read, "All confessing members of the church who meet the biblical requirements are eligible for the offices of minister, elder, deacon, and evangelist."

Grounds:

1. After over twenty years of study and discussion a consensus has not yet emerged with respect to the teaching of Scripture about women serving in the offices of the church.
2. The various study committees of the Christian Reformed Church have demonstrated that two biblically defensible positions based on Reformed methods of interpretation exist on the question of whether women may serve in the offices of elder and minister, and synod has repeatedly declared that this is not a confessional issue.
3. Where Christians conscientiously and in good faith disagree and the matter cannot be settled definitively by Scripture or Christian principle, freedom must be allowed.
4. Adopting this overture will give freedom to those who believe that the offices of the church should be limited to men *and* to those who believe that they should be open to all believers.
5. As the matter stands today, the Church Order is binding the consciences of many congregations by barring women in all churches from service in consistory or in the pulpit, seriously hindering the ministries of these churches.
6. Increasing numbers of our churches are reluctantly going forward in obedience to their understanding of Scripture and have thus been put in the painful position of violating the Church Order.

Classis Holland

Robert J. Timmer, stated clerk

Overture 67: Revise the Decision of 1994 re Women in Office

Classis Kalamazoo overtures synod to revise the decision of Synod 1994 not to ratify Synod 1993's decision allowing women to serve in all church offices because the grounds adduced in the 1994 decision are misleading and of insufficient weight to support Synod 1994's decision on this important matter.

Grounds:

1. Synod 1994 declared a biblical clarity which is demonstrated neither in its grounds nor in the long history of this debate in the CRC. The grounds point to the texts cited by previous synods in defense of women in office (Gen. 1:26-28; Acts 2:17-18; Gal. 3:28) and declare that they do not "prove" that women may serve in church office. The grounds also point to the traditional texts used to bar women from office (I Cor. 11:2-16; 14:33-35; I Tim. 2:11-15) and simply declare, with little consideration for the exegetical problems of historical context, literary context, and linguistic concerns, that they *clearly* teach that women may not serve in ecclesiastical office. Where has this sudden clarity come from? It comes not from a close examination of the texts, including their problems, but from the simple *assertion* of an advisory-committee report coming to the floor of synod.

For at least twenty-one years these texts have been debated in the CRC. The very first report on the subject, a monumental work of eighty pages of close biblical study, concluded that "the practice of excluding women from ecclesiastical office cannot conclusively be defended on biblical grounds" (*Acts of Synod 1973*, p. 588). From that time on, the discussion and the decisions of synod went back and forth on the issue. It would be burdensome and unnecessary to list again in this overture hermeneutical principles by competent people who love the Lord and honor God's Word. (For substantial biblical studies in which the relevant texts have been interpreted, see *Acts of Synod 1975*, pp. 470-593; *Acts of Synod 1978*, pp. 484-533; *Acts of Synod 1984*, pp. 282-386; *Acts of Synod 1990*, pp. 309-30; *Acts of Synod 1992*, pp. 359-83). All these pages of study demonstrate that clarity and common understanding were not achieved and that for each so-called clear teaching and proof against women in office there is a plausible contrary interpretation.

The declaration in 1994 that certain texts *clearly* show that women may not serve in certain church offices ignores these pages and pages of study and testimony over the years and disregards the exegetical work of some of our best theologians and biblical scholars. Clarity is "attained" at the expense of carefully examining and explaining the exegetical difficulties and alternative interpretations of each of the texts cited.

The long history of this debate should amply demonstrate that the Bible is not clear on this point to the satisfaction of all parties in the CRC. This matter, while very important, does not have confessional status, nor does it affect our salvation or damage the integrity and authority of Scripture among us. We must, therefore, make room for both sides out of love, spiritual freedom, and mutual consideration, and the local churches must be allowed to follow their own wisdom and conscience on this matter rather than be bound by a unilateral decision. We must, as Paul urges, "make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3).

We would do well to heed the proposed guidelines of Synod 1993:

"Since members of the Christian Reformed Church are bound together by a high view of Scriptures but do not agree on the interpretation and present application of some passages that speak to the women-in-office issue, we cannot insist on our private interpretation but must deal with each other in openness, mutual respect, and tolerance" (*Acts of Synod 1993*, p. 615).

2. Synod does not show clearly that the New Testament intends to prescribe a binding universal church order regarding such matters as the ordination of women.

The decision of Synod 1994 not only asserts that the New Testament speaks clearly on the role of women in the church but also bases its insistence upon denominational uniformity on the assumption that the New Testament's declarations on church order must be uniformly binding in all ages. This assumption, while essential to Synod 1994's argument, is not itself supported by any clear biblical evidence. Rather, comparing Scripture with Scripture, we find that in the Old Testament, when God intended to reveal a detailed order and liturgy for the people of Israel, he did so at length and with great precision. In the New Testament, on the other hand, there seems to be no such intention of laying down a systematic universal church order. Rather, the New Testament appears to reveal a pattern of leadership that allows for variations and adjustment at local levels to meet differing situations. No two lists of church offices or tasks in the New Testament are exactly the same; they vary, presumably according to local conditions. The New Testament even allows for differences on so sensitive a point as whether Jewish and gentile Christians should retain legal observances such as circumcision. Many other basic issues, such as whether children should be baptized or receive communion, are not discussed directly at all. Others, such as whether members of congregations should vote and, if so, who should vote, seem to be left to later ages to decide. So we learn of some important dimensions of New Testament church practice only in passing. For others, we have advice presented in reference to particular cultural settings (e.g., women should not braid their hair), but we do not find a systematic exposition that ensures consistency.

Perhaps, however, the Pauline recommendations regarding women's ecclesiastical roles should be regarded as exceptions to the general New Testament rule (in the same class as, for instance, the commands to baptize and to celebrate the Lord's Supper). The strongest case for regarding the role that Paul assigns to women as universally binding is provided by I Timothy 2. Yet when Paul draws an analogy from Scripture (the order in which Adam and Eve were created) to support the practice that women may not teach men, he is simply drawing an analogy (a common manner of argument of the time), not arguing from the priority of Adam to a universal rule that women may never hold authority or teach, which would prove too much and contradict other practices in Scripture (see Ground 3 below). Paul uses a similar analogy to the Genesis creation account in I Corinthians 11 and adds an appeal to the cosmic order ("because of the angels") for the recommendation that women should cover their heads. Each of these passages can best be interpreted, then, as addressed to local customs and accommodating the standards of decorum of the time.

The policy, proposed by earlier synods, of allowing congregational

option on the biblically ambiguous issue of ordaining women, of accommodating the standards of decorum of large portions of our society, seems, then, in keeping with scriptural practice and intention.

3. Universal male headship based upon the creation order is untenable, and its implications are ignored. Some of the grounds (a, b, and c, in particular) are based on an interpretation of Genesis 1-3 that demands universal male headship as a creation order ("there was male leadership in the original created state," Ground b; "in general, man is called the head of woman," Ground c). Few scholars in the Reformed community or in the broader evangelical community agree that these texts support a creation order in which male headship is demanded. The study-committee report on headship in 1984 drew back from the implications of this teaching. If male headship is a part of the creation order, then it must be universal in scope, applying to government, education, and business as well as to the home and the church. If not, we are taking the theologically untenable position that God's will in creation is broader and more inclusive than his will in redemption and in the church through Jesus Christ.
4. Synod's declaration that its decision does not "bind conscience in an inappropriate way" (Grounds f and g) ignores the deeply held convictions of many members of the CRC. In classic circular reasoning, Synod 1994 declares that the issue cannot be left to local option "because the Scripture does not allow" for it. Then it declares that this does not violate anyone's conscience inappropriately because "Scripture has spoken." Synod has spoken, but many local churches, pastors, theologians, and members are not convinced that in synod's declaration Scripture has spoken. Contrary to synod's declaration, consciences are being inappropriately bound by this decision because it binds the whole church to an interpretation which many do not and need not hold in order to be faithful to the integrity of Scripture and the canons of Reformed interpretation. This binding of conscience on such a disputed issue forces many members to ignore either synod's voice or the voice of their own consciences. When people of goodwill are forced into such a choice, the result can only be further erosion of synod's spiritual authority and further individualism and congregationalism in our beloved denomination.
5. By its decision Synod 1994 has placed many congregations in an untenable position. From 1990 through 1993 there was a movement by synod toward inclusion of women in all offices. Twice synod voted to open all offices to women. Recognizing this trend, some individuals and groups even left the church. Now synod has suddenly reversed this movement, and by this reversal some congregations have been placed in a "lose/lose" situation. Because of previous decisions, they lost members who could not live with the trend of opening all the offices to women, and now they are in danger of losing others who cannot live without it.

Congregations ought to be able to expect that synods act with due regard to precedent and with the strong recognition of the weight of previous decisions. The authority of synod, which is based on the trust of the members, is threatened when synods lurch back and forth.

Classis Kalamazoo

Robert Arbogast, stated clerk

Overture 68: Declare the Question of Women in the Special Offices to Be a Disputable Matter

I. Background

A. *Historical overview*

Throughout their history, Reformed churches have been cautious about enshrining particular interpretations of Scripture into articles of church order and/or creeds. Within the Christian Reformed Church, previous discussions about marriage, homosexuality, creation, office, gifts, abuse, and worldly amusements, to name but a few issues, have not led to changes in the Church Order or in the confessions. Particularly in times of dispute, the CRC carefully studied, recommended, and urged reflection, but it did not require all members to adhere to a single interpretation of particular passages of Scripture.

Some interpretations, such as those concerning baptism and the Lord's Supper, are reflected in the provisions of the Church Order and confessed in the creeds of the church, but these have been with us from the denomination's beginning in 1857, when the forerunner of the present Church Order was adopted. Even so, where the CRC's interpretation of Scripture differs from other interpretations in the body of Christ, for instance, with respect to infant baptism, the CRC possesses a lengthy tradition of ensuring freedom of conscience for those individuals who want to be part of the denomination but cannot agree with the accepted interpretation.

Gender of elder, evangelist, and minister of the Word was placed in the Church Order in 1965, and now it gives us problems. The Church Order and confessions adopted at the CRC's birth reflected the then nearly universal belief that women did not have the same rights as men. Women voted in neither civic nor church matters, nor did they hold positions of authority. (Being queen was a matter of "divine right," a state of affairs which produced the interesting anomaly that Queen Victoria could be head of state but not a member of the legislature, nor could she even vote for one!)

Church and society shared the same practice with respect to women until the mid-nineteenth century, but over the decades since, women have gradually assumed positions of authority in business, politics, labor, law, and medicine—positions that were once reserved for men only. Some denominations kept pace by opening their doors for women to serve in less restricted ways, but many others deplored the trend as "worldly." The Christian Reformed denomination does not object to women in places of authority *outside* the church, but it still debates whether women should have authoritative roles *in* the church.

Our stance has led to some strange denominational practices. For instance, disregarding the way those people really act, we define the missionary, teacher, intercessor, and deacon ministries (offices) as nonauthoritative and the elder, evangelist, and minister of the Word (including ordained missionaries) as authoritative ministries (offices)—arbitrarily so and partly, some think, to protect the denomination's position on women in special offices.

Even so, historical developments within and outside the church cannot be suppressed. The rather strange and difficult-to-defend distinction between elder and minister of the Word and the other ministries (offices) caused conceptual and practical problems, which synod addressed in 1973. It adopted this guideline for the churches: "[T]he particular ministries are to be distinguished in

function, not in essence, from the comprehensive ministry shared by all believers, and distinctions among the particular ministries themselves also are functional. Since all members are commissioned to serve, there is only a difference in the kinds of service of deacons, elders, ministers and all other members" (*Acts of Synod 1973*, p. 63). Synod also adopted these guidelines: (1) that the term for office in the New Testament is *diakonia*, meaning service or ministry and that "in this basic sense ecclesiastical office is one and indivisible, for it embraces the total ministry of the church [*italics added*], a ministry that is rooted in Christ," and (2) that "this comprehensive ministry (office) is universal, committed to all members of the church and the task of ministry is shared by all."

Officially, for over twenty years churches have been urged to use for congregational organization and function the guideline that all members are called to ministry (office) and that all ministers (officers) are ordained, that is, anointed with and appointed by the Holy Spirit, to serve according to their gifting in a particular ministry. Being anointed and appointed to serve constitutes the authority of office, but it is not a mandate to rule nor an appointment or ordination to a position of "status, dominance or privilege" (*Acts of Synod 1973*, p. 63).

Since 1973, many church members have concluded that the synodical position inexorably recognizes that women are as surely called to all ministries or offices of the church as men are. When ministries differ not in essence but in function and do not imply status, dominance, privilege, or ruling over, but, rather, loving service, how could women be excluded?

Why do discussions and debates about this matter continue for almost forty years when the same issues were involved with regard to women's suffrage in the church, an issue settled synodically in 1957? A large part of the problem is the casting of the debate in the framework of mid-nineteenth-century society instead of in the framework of the 1973 synodical decision. The wrong framework has driven the debate to focus not on the real meaning of office (1973 synodical decision), but on specific and isolated Bible texts which address (or do not address) this question: Does the Bible permit or provide grounds for allowing women to serve in the special offices? To that question the denomination sometimes said yes and sometimes no.

The last four years have made abundantly clear that the denomination is divided on a question of interpretation. People dedicated to the Reformed forms of faith, who love the Lord, and are committed to the Bible as the Word of God, genuinely disagree with one another on what the Bible says about women serving in the special offices and about how to apply what the Bible says.

It has also become clear that not all members have been charitable in granting goodwill and Reformed, Christian motives to their brothers and sisters. *Conservative* and *liberal* labels have been flung about, and commitments to the Lord, to the Bible, and to the Reformed faith have been openly questioned. Charges of heresy have reverberated through the church. Many brothers and sisters on both sides of the issue have already left for other denominations or to form new congregations. Some have left congregational church life altogether, especially some disillusioned women.

All these facts were clear before Synod 1994 met, and it had within its authority a legitimate option for bringing peace and restoring unity, namely, to declare this matter a disputable issue according to Romans 14.

Instead, Synod 1994 chose to do something no synod before it had done on this issue, namely, to declare that the Bible spoke clearly on the issue, to wit, women may not serve in the offices of elder, evangelist, and minister of the Word. That decision impugned the integrity of all those who believe to the contrary or see valid arguments on both sides. Many were, and still are, astonished that a majority vote was allowed to settle an issue still in dispute after forty years of debate—a debate which failed to provide consensus among so many people of goodwill. In fact, the situation is a reminder of what happened in the Netherlands in 1942, when the synod of the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland made an analogous decision with respect to a position on baptism hotly debated for many years. A schism resulted. The GKN synod came to regret its actions, and in 1988 it officially confessed its wrongdoing.

What should happen next in the CRC? We in this overture are not asking Synod 1995 to adopt a position opposite that of Synod 1994, thereby binding consciences once more. Rather, we invite synod to declare the matter of women in all ecclesiastical offices to be disputable and to leave it to individual congregations to decide this matter for themselves.

B. Establishing women in office as a disputable matter

1. Definition of disputable

Romans 14:1 encourages us to avoid passing judgment on, to discuss, to dispute about (**dialogismos**) matters where there are differences of opinion, strife, distinctions, various evaluations (**diakriseis**). Paul is saying something like this: Don't keep on talking strongly about those matters on which there is a difference of judgment. Leave those matters to God to decide (Rom. 14:22). It is not unlike the advice that Gamaliel gave the Sanhedrin when faced with the disciples of Jesus who refused to stop preaching about Jesus: "Leave these men [these issues?] alone! Let them go! For if their purpose or activity is of human origin, it will fail. But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop these men; you will only find yourselves fighting against God" (Acts 5:38-39). In our opinion, Gamaliel's advice touched on a far weightier issue than that of women in all the ecclesiastical offices, namely, on the truth of Jesus' identity and work (see also C below).

2. Evidence that the matter of women in all offices is indeed disputable

Twenty-five (or more than forty) years of discussion, studying, debating, arguing, and wrangling make it obvious that the women-in-office issue is disputable.

- We differ about headship and how that applies to offices in the church, to say nothing of how that applies to male-and-female and husband-and-wife relationships.
- We differ over our understanding and implementation of ministry, or office.
- We acknowledge that ordination in the biblical sense means a setting aside for service, including the concept of being appointed and anointed by the Holy Spirit, and we believe that ordination applies to *all* Christians; yet we continue in practice to associate it almost exclusively with the special offices.
- We teach that all Christians are called to office or ministry, that all Christians are prophets, priests, and kings and, consequently, have

authority; yet we accept that the office (ministry) of deacon, teacher, and unordained missionary have no authority (and allow women to serve in these ministries).

Given these many and serious discussions that bear on the women's issue, it is frankly astonishing that synod declared the matter to be clear.

Everybody in the CRC agrees that we are disputing the issue, but not everybody has seen fit to call it, and treat it as, a disputable matter. In fact, the only way to *avoid* calling it a disputable issue and to maintain that no consciences are being bound is to declare that the Bible is clear on the matter and that all who do not see what the Bible so clearly says have problems with their eyesight.

3. Placing the matter of women in all offices among the "disputable"—not "trifling"—matters Paul mentions in Romans 14:1

Some might argue that Romans 14 has trifling or insignificant issues in mind and that the question of women in office, involving biblical interpretation as it does, could not possibly be declared a disputable issue.

However trifling the issues that Paul mentions in Romans 14 and elsewhere might appear to us today, they were life and death issues in Paul's day. Was a Christian permitted to eat meat at all, or were only vegetables allowed? What about eating meat previously offered to idols, considered by some to be blasphemy because eating it acknowledged the existence of these gods? What about meat with the blood still in it? Some argued strongly that the Sabbath observance and everything accompanying it belonged to the old order, which Jesus had abolished. They argued for every day being a day of the Lord, no day being more special than another; others thought this position sacrilegious. Circumcision was another critical issue, one that also divided the church deeply. (Of course, positions changed over time. Acts 15 recommends abstaining from meat offered to idols, but Paul in I Corinthians 8 says that Christians may freely eat it but may also in their freedom to eat it choose not to do so for the sake of injuring the faith of a believer who still believes in the reality of idols and the power of meat offered to them.)

To call trivial these issues which the early church was dealing with is a judgment formed from the perspective of the present time, when such issues no longer challenge the church. Analogously, it's difficult today to grasp how serious the CRC's debates were over worldly amusements and women's suffrage, and we could easily call them "trifling" today. However, they were not trifling issues when they were before the church.

Furthermore, the word translated as "disputable" in Romans 14:1 does not lend itself to being translated as "trifles," meaning "insignificant." The *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (TDNT) says of *diakrino*, the root word of *disputable*, "since the simple *krino* already means 'to sunder,' *diakrino* is originally a stronger form" (III: 946). Of *diakriseis* TDNT says that the word means "'separation,' 'distinction,' 'strife,' 'appraisal,' 'exposition'" and that it is best to take the word as used in Romans 14 in the sense of "evaluation." "The weak man should be accepted as the Christian brother he claims to be. One should not judge the thoughts which underlie his conduct. This is for God alone to do, cf. v. 22" (p. 950). Whichever meaning one uses for *diakriseis* in Romans 14:1, the conclusion to which we are drawn is that the women-in-office issue ought to be recognized and treated as *diakriseis*, that is "disputable."

C. *What should be done about disputable matters*

1. "Live and let live"

Paul suggests that on issues where feelings run deep, where good arguments can be presented on both sides, people should live and let live. Even though Paul says "each one should be fully convinced in his own mind" (Rom. 14:5), he guards against selfishness when he adds that whatever one does should be done "to the Lord" because "each of us will be accountable to God" (Rom. 14:12). All those who ate, gave thanks to the Lord for their food, whether that was meat or vegetables.

"To the Lord" pleads for tolerance and freedom of conscience. In effect, Paul advocates that both, or all, sides of the dispute can and do honor God and should, therefore, be allowed room to exist.

2. Be cautious about accepting the "stumbling block argument"

Some would raise the question of stumbling block or offense, in the sense that a particular action, such as meat offered to idols (or, in our context, ordaining women to the special offices), should not be undertaken out of consideration for those with weak faith or conscience. Paul mentions weak faith together with the disputable matters (cf. Rom. 14). The person with strong faith may believe that meat offered to idols is quite all right to eat, whereas a person with weak faith argues the opposite. In this situation Paul suggests dropping the issue and allowing both sides freedom to their own belief and practice, which may include not doing something even though one is convinced it's permissible.

But the matter doesn't end there. Paul goes beyond the weak and strong faith positions, however, by raising the issue of more or less sacred days in Galatians 4:9-11. Here he doesn't specify which position is "weak" and which is "strong," but if the passage is employed to say that it is weak to consider one day to be more sacred than another, then what are we to do with our own Sunday observance? And who is to say which position regarding women in office is weak? To each side Paul's admonition is the same: Be considerate of others and put no stumbling block in their way (Rom. 14:13).

We must also consider whether the issue of women in special offices is a "stumbling block" issue at all. Frequently when we say that something offends us, what we actually mean is that we don't like the thing that someone is proposing. That, however, is not at all what Paul has in mind. Obviously, those who eat only vegetables do not like it that others also eat meat, and those who keep a special day do not like it that others consider and treat all days the same. What Paul has in mind becomes obvious when we list the equivalents to "stumbling block" that are used by Paul. To that we now turn.

An action must be judged to be not "to the Lord" if it is to be regarded as a stumbling block. That is far deeper than "I don't like it." We favor women in office and don't like to see them excluded, but we would not think of saying that our brothers and sisters who do not want them in the special offices are not holding their position "to the Lord." That kind of judging Paul specifically forbids a number of times.

"Distressed" (v. 15), "destroyed" (v. 15), and "fallen" (v. 21) in Romans 14 are equivalents of stumbling block. A person receiving offense would in effect be saying that his faith in and relationship with God is shaken (he is in

distress). He claims to lose his mooring in relationship to God, the world, and the people in it (they are being destroyed). He falls out of the relationship that he had with God. Paul's equivalents change the whole understanding of giving offense. Claiming "offense" simply to prevent the church from introducing new and different things is not what Paul had in mind.

3. Prefer peace and unity to being right

In the context of disputable issues Paul says that we ought to do everything possible to promote peace and mutual edification (Rom. 14:19). Some critics might cite the prophet who says, "They dress the wounds of my people as if they were not serious. Peace, peace, they say, but there is no peace" (Jer. 6:14). Others, like Rev. Klaas Schilder, might quote Ezekiel 13:10-13: "Because they lead my people astray, saying 'Peace' when there is no peace, and because when a flimsy wall is built, they cover it with whitewash, therefore tell those who cover it with whitewash that it is going to fall."

Some of us have learned a painful lesson from the Schilder event in the Dutch churches. Positions stoutly defended then have now altered dramatically. Sorrow and regret have been expressed about this sad chapter in the Dutch church. It would have been better, in retrospect, if the church had heeded Romans 14:19 and 15:5-6, especially when brothers and sisters had a genuine dispute about a matter.

It might be reasonably argued that sometimes the cost of preserving the peace is too great, but certainly where there is abundant evidence that those on both sides of an issue love the Lord and want to be faithful to Scripture, there is a need to emphasize that peace and unity are more precious than being right or wrong on the matter in dispute.

4. Honor diversity by allowing local options

If one had the privilege of visiting some of the congregations of the first-century Christian church, one would find vast differences of emphases, practices (e.g., worship), and theologies. Acts 15, Romans 14, and I Corinthians 8 deal directly with the major differences between gentile and Jewish Christians. The Judaizers were but an extreme wing of Jewish Christians who had a strong allegiance to the law of Moses, an allegiance which clearly was a mystery to many gentile Christians. There were differences of opinion about idols; about expressions of sexuality (Acts 15); about who Christ was; about the resurrection; about the law; about husband-wife, parent-child, and master-servant relationships (Eph.); about Jerusalem; about the temple or synagogue; and about the elements of worship. A Christian of Jewish origin from Jerusalem who worshiped with the Christians in Corinth would undoubtedly wonder if the church in Corinth was indeed the church of Christ. In fact, the Corinthians themselves debated whether Paul, Peter, or Apollos represented the real Christian faith (I Cor. 3).

Nationality, culture, tradition (whether we own Luther, Calvin, Knox, Wesley, or Simons as our spiritual forebear), language, gender, age, and life experience are factors determining how we worship, what we value, what we consider important, major, nonnegotiable. When the culture of former Dutch Calvinists was dominant in our denomination, it was easy to be the same in California, Alaska, New Brunswick, or Ontario. But now both Canada and the United States have grown to be multicultural and multilingual countries. The CRC has become Korean, Chinese, Nigerian, Japanese, Dutch, Zuni,

Navajo, Cree, and Inuit. The values, customs, and traditions that each culture brings are different, but who is to say that one culture is better or worse than the other?

We recognize and honor the diversity. To maintain unity and to preserve the native identity, we accommodated the Zuni and Navajo nations through the formation of Classis Red Mesa, a classis with some rules different from those of other classes (*Acts of Synod 1983*, p. 496).

And the differences between us do not stop at ethnic diversity. Congregations otherwise rather similar in their respective memberships are divided by their inward- and outward-looking stances. Some congregations stress the pastoral needs of their membership; other congregations seek to be more in tune with the needs of the community outside the church. In both cases, worship, structure, and organization reflect the congregations' orientation.

Both ethnic diversity and varying views on the mission of the congregation argue for a greater degree of congregationalism among us. Some fear this. In fact, congregationalism has always been a reality, for instance, in the different characters of urban and rural congregations. But recent developments are forcing us to *own divergence*, perhaps even to encourage it, and to engage one another in discussion about what constitutes the essence of the CRC if it is not a common liturgy, a Church Order uniformly applied, or standard interpretations of passages of Scripture. It is no longer possible for the CRC to be the same church in Iowa as in Grand Rapids, Toronto, or Montreal. Rather than deplore that fact, we ought to celebrate it and encourage the variety of expression.

II. Overture

Therefore, Classis Huron overtures synod

A. To declare the question of women in the special offices of the church a disputable matter that cannot be decided without impugning the integrity of one side or the other, a situation similar to the example in Romans 14.

Grounds:

1. Twenty-five to forty years of discussion and conflicting decisions by various synods make this clear.
2. Synod 1994 impugned the integrity of all the brothers and sisters in the denomination who believe the Bible speaks differently than synod did on the issue.
3. Only in this way can we prevent consciences from being unduly bound.

B. To encourage acceptance of one another by making room for both convictions regarding women in the special offices of the church within the assemblies of the church.

Grounds:

1. This can be done by amending the Church Order so that the male reference is removed in connection with the special offices.
2. This would also involve accepting the possible delegation of women to classis meetings and accepting women as preachers. Room needs to be given to those congregations not able to take the step of having a woman

preach, and stated clerks need to know which congregations are willing to receive women as preachers or church visitors.

C. To allow congregations that desire to proceed with the ordination of women as elders to do so.

Grounds:

1. Synod 1957 gave the congregations the freedom to implement the decision that women could vote at congregational meetings if and when the local congregation deemed that it wanted to allow this practice.
2. Local option is exercised whenever synod adopts conclusions and recommendations of study reports. Some congregations implement the recommendations that others do not find relevant or needful to their situation.

D. To allow women to be called and ordained to the office of evangelist and minister of the Word by those congregations that are prepared to do so.

Classis Huron

Hilbert Rumph, stated clerk

Overture 69: Adjudicate Certain Underlying Principles as Grounds for Revision of Church Order Article 3

I. Overture

I, Florence Kuipers, overture synod to eliminate Point 1 ("that synod stay final action") and then to adjudicate the "underlying principles" of personal Overture 55 (see *Agenda for Synod 1994*, pp. 326-27) as to whether or not they provide "sufficient and new grounds," as required by Church Order Article 31, for the revision of Church Order Article 3 in the form proposed by Synods 1990 and 1993. Because it requests adjudication rather than mere consideration of the "underlying principles" of Overture 55, this current overture is regarded as a qualitatively new one.

Grounds:

- A. In the judgment of Synod 1994, Synod 1993 failed to provide the "sufficient and new grounds" required for revising Church Order Article 3. (Note: "New grounds" refers to grounds that are substantially different from the grounds of the decision being revised.)
- B. Overture 55 was submitted to Synod 1994 as a response to the recommendation of Synod 1993 "that the *advisability* of the proposed change in Article 3 of the Church Order be decided by Synod 1994," though it was answered by Synod 1994 on the basis of its decision "*not to ratify*" the proposed change. Neither Overture 55 (1994) nor the minority position of Synod 1994—both favorable to opening all the ecclesiastical offices to women—was answered on its own grounds.

II. Main issues

The main criteria for adjudicating the "underlying principles," if we may judge from debates in the past, are likely to be the following issues: the use of (a) the Bible, (b) conscience, and (c) worldview in decision making. My position on each of these issues is considered below.

A. The use of the Bible in decision making

The proceedings of Synods 1990 through 1994 demonstrate that a more contextualized approach to the Bible is needed for the revision of Church Order Article 3 than the traditional, strictly literal one. The thrust of any Church Order matter is pragmatic—that is, in the direction of not only “hearing” but “doing” the Word. All the “underlying principles” of Overture 55 (1994) focus on Church Order Article 3 to determine what is wrong about it and how it needs to be changed.

The question of the use of the Bible in solving social problems is a trouble spot for many Christian churches. It relates to the subject of hermeneutics, perceived to be two different ways to read the Bible—the one especially identified with Scripture and the authority of the church and the other with the specific application within the concrete situation. This is basically a question of *method* rather than the truth of revelation, but it is often dealt with as the latter. Often the one way is considered to be biblical and the other way unbiblical. This is evident in the current controversy in the Christian Reformed Church. Many churches are calling for “biblical grounds” to justify opening all the offices to women, and more often than not, “biblical grounds” means “proof texting” from the Bible. In the Reformed Church in America warnings about this were issued as early as 1897, when the General Synod stated, “It is the settled principle of General Synod, as it is of the Supreme Court of the United States, and nearly all other judicatories, both ecclesiastical and civil, never to adjudicate an abstract question. . . .”

The fact is that every ethical decision, if it is based on the Bible, is necessarily a blend of the Bible and human experience (the extrabiblical). Moreover, there is always some risk involved with either the contextualized (extrabiblical) method or the decontextualized (strictly literal) method. The former may prove to be so lax that the Bible is no longer recognized as part of the decision. On the other hand, literal interpretation may err in the direction of disinformation and the obstruction of justice.

B. The use of conscience in decision making

The use of conscience in the making of a decision is the most emotionally charged of the three issues I am considering. People are generally less able to tolerate offenses against their consciences than opinions or views that may be different from their own. Offenses against conscience are the hallmark of injustice.

In extreme cases, churches or individual members are in a “double bind of conscience”—through no fault of their own. Such is the case when one is compelled to submit to two contradictory rules—to serve “two masters,” as it were. The conditions apply when, for example, the supreme authority in the synod and the Church Order is opposed by a lower-level assembly, such as a council or a classis, and a church or a member is under such dual authority. For all practical purposes, a double bind of conscience, if not adjudicated, forces members out.

The 1994 synodical decision not to ratify the proposed change in Church Order Article 3 marked a special moment of truth for the Christian Reformed Church in terms of justice. An unrevised Church Order Article 3, which excludes women from the offices of minister, elder, and evangelist, did not restore order but, on the contrary, put the entire denomination in a new state of disarray. On the other hand, both the 1992 and 1994 synods by not ratifying the

revision of Church Order Article 3 on the grounds proposed by Synods 1990 and 1993, respectively, provided the proper dynamic for a Church Order revision. Many of the "No" votes, no doubt, were a negative reaction to the "discretionary" ("conscience" or "local option") clauses on which the 1990 and 1993 synodical decisions to change the Church Order were based.

But we must bear witness to what we believe on the matter of conscience, or we lose the right to call ourselves Reformed. From 1990 to 1994, the prevailing argument among those who favored women's ordination was that this is an indifferent thing—an adiaphoron. They argued that women's ordination is "permissible" because there seems to be no clear guidance from Scripture either for or against it. But if women's ordination once was a matter of indifference, it no longer is. In the days of the Reformation there was the saying "In the state of confession nothing is different" (*"in statu confessionis nihil adiaphoron est"*). What this means to imply is that statements must be adopted and subscribed to as standards of unity. They must speak to the truth of the gospel and the whole counsel of God.

C. *The use of worldview in decision making*

The nonlinear, dynamic worldview that I espouse contrasts with the more traditional linear approach that has predominated in the history of the Christian church. Traditionally, if the church dealt with women's ordination at all, it did so mainly from a historical perspective, rather than paradigmatically, in terms of authority, human rights, and social justice.

The paradox that is inevitably associated with authority (as, for example, between "the people" and "the rulers") has its theological roots in the reflexive or reciprocal nature of God's power. Power, which is derived from God, ultimately returns to him. This is portrayed in Scripture in Isaiah 55:8-11, which is a poetic description of the circularity of God's Word, and in Ecclesiastes 11:1: "Cast your bread upon the waters, for after many days you will find it again." On every level of church government, *original* authority (synonymous with "head") is to be distinguished from *supreme* authority (synonymous with "king")—"king" being the distribution of the power in the "head." It is significant that in Colossians 2:16-19 headship is defined in terms of the "reality found in Christ"—that is, the *original* authority residing in the larger whole. The separation of powers in church government as between "head" and "king" forms a twofold justice base for maintaining a proper relationship, or balance, between the exercise of freedom and the requirements of order in the body of Christ.

Equality within any unit can be understood only through a prevailingly vertical (or paradigmatic) approach to authority. It is always governed by the principle that transcends the unit's two polarities (thus, the council in the case of elders and deacons and personhood in the case of the two genders). This approach is also the only way to explain adequately the social hierarchy in scriptural passages such as I Corinthians 11:3-12 and I Corinthians 15:20-28. Men and women, husbands and wives, Christ and believers, and God and Christ, who, from a horizontal perspective are unequal because of their differences, are vertically (paradigmatically) equal (see Gal. 3:28; Rom. 8:17; and John 17:20-23).

Florence Kuipers

Member of Washington, DC, CRC

Note: This overture was submitted to the Washington, DC, CRC council and to Classis Hackensack but was not adopted.

Overture 70: Revise Decision of Synod 1994 re Not Ratifying Church Order Article 3

Classis Alberta South overtures synod

- A. To revise the decision of Synod 1994 "not [to] ratify the change in Church Order Article 3" regarding women in office (*Acts of Synod 1994*, Art. 80, 1).
- B. To change Article 3 of the Church Order by deleting the word "male."

Grounds:

1. After more than twenty years of sincere debate and study, the denomination lacks unanimity on this issue; therefore this issue should be considered a disputable matter, following Romans 14.
2. After three decades of divisive discussion it is inappropriate for synod to say that Scripture clearly teaches one position or the other. Not a single synodical committee assigned the task of reviewing this issue over the past three decades has submitted a unanimous report to synod. For Synod 1994 to declare by a narrow margin that the issue is now clear denies the church's own difficult experience on this issue and the lack of consensus within the denomination.
3. The decision of Synod 1994 unfairly and unjustly binds the freedom of conscience in Christ of CRC officebearers, ministers, elders, deacons, and evangelists who believe they are faithful to the triune God and Scripture when they support the ordination of women to all church offices.
4. The decision of Synod 1994 regarding women in office ignores the precedent of our denomination on other similar issues. There remain congregations within the CRCNA which presently do not allow women to vote. The muting of women in these congregations has not been taken as ground for expelling them from the ecclesiastical fellowship of the CRCNA. Why should the local option to ordain women be rejected as a means of allowing congregational discernment of the Holy Spirit's will in local situations within the ecclesiastical fellowship of the CRCNA? We allow men who have been elected by men and women or who have been elected only by men to attend classical and synodical meetings. Synod's allowance of local discernment could permit diversity within fellowship and freedom of conscience in Christ to all members of the CRCNA on the women-in-office issue as well. This approach would follow a precedent established and practiced by the CRCNA itself.
5. Synod 1994 failed to refer to Synod 1973's study on the relationship of office and function. Reference to that study could provide material relevant to reconsidering the decision of Synod 1994. ("Ecclesiastical Office and Ordination," *Acts of Synod 1973*, Article 64, p. 61 ff.). Particular ministries are functional and dependent upon the individual. These ministries function with Christ's power and authority and are dependent on the Holy Spirit. Their authority is not dependent on ordination or gender.
6. The decision of Synod 1994 contradicts the position of other denominations with which the CRC has ecclesiastical fellowship. If the CRCNA truly believes that Scripture clearly forbids the ordination of women, it calls into question the integrity, intelligence, allegiance to Scripture, and

faithfulness to Christ of its ecumenical sister churches that ordain women.

7. The biblical texts cited in the grounds for the decision of Synod 1994 are disputed by biblical scholars both within and outside the CRCNA. Additionally, biblical scholars within and outside the CRCNA question the principle of "general analogy of Scripture" as it is applied to the exegesis of the texts cited in the grounds (*Acts of Synod 1994*, Art. 80, 1, c, p. 514). Support for the conclusion that Scripture clearly forbids the ordination of women relies on controversial exegesis and scholarship. This development leads the CRCNA away from the Calvinist theological tradition that a church is always reforming its theology and practice as led by the Holy Spirit and sensitivity to scholarly exegesis that seeks to understand Scripture contextually.

Classis Alberta South
Durk De Jong, stated clerk

Overture 71: Revise Decision of Synod 1994 re Not Ratifying Church Order Article 3

Classis British Columbia South-East overtures synod

- A. To revise the decision of Synod 1994 "not [to] ratify the change in Church Order Article 3 as adopted by Synod 1993 that 'All confessing members of the church who meet the biblical requirements are eligible for the offices of minister, elder, deacon, and evangelist' (*Agenda for Synod 1994*, p. 26; *Acts of Synod 1993*, p. 598) and that the present wording of the Church Order Article 3 be retained" (*Acts of Synod 1994*, p. 506).
- B. To change Church Order Article 3 to read, "Confessing members of the church who meet the biblical requirements are eligible for the office of minister, elder, deacon, and evangelist," and to submit this change to Synod 1996 for ratification.

Grounds:

1. The grounds adopted by Synod 1994 supporting its decision not to ratify the decision of Synod 1993 were in error in stating that "the clear teaching of Scripture prohibits women from holding the offices of minister, elder, and evangelist." For decades Christian Reformed members, clergy, and scholars have been almost equally divided on this issue. For example, our best biblical scholars have arrived at opposite conclusions concerning the general analogy of Scripture. This indicates that the matter is anything but clear from Scripture.
2. The decision of Synod 1994 was decidedly unpastoral when it concluded that "this decision will not bind Christian consciences in any inappropriate way." The decision inappropriately binds the consciences of all those who believe that the Bible requires the gender barrier to our full unity in Christ to be dropped. They hold that this barrier presents an unnecessary and wrongful stumbling block to the world.
3. Integrity and harmony can be restored only if churches are allowed the freedom to decide the issue on the basis of their own interpretation of Scripture on the point. Evidence for this is the way that the CRC dealt

with the issue of the right of women to vote. Here "local option" has worked very well.

4. The above-mentioned changes to Church Order Article 3 would give synod a more neutral reading and therefore allow each local congregation the freedom to interpret the Church Order based on its own interpretation of Scripture.

Classis British Columbia South-East
Gerrit Veeneman, stated clerk

Overture 72: Revise Decision of Synod 1994 re Women in All the Offices of the Church

The council of All Nations CRC of Halifax, Nova Scotia, overtures synod

- A. To revise Synod 1994's decision regarding the use of women's gifts in all the offices of the church.

Grounds:

1. The case for continuing to prohibit women from using their gifts in all the offices of the church, as forwarded by Synod 1994 (*Acts of Synod 1994*, pp. 513-16), is neither clear nor decisive.
 - a. In regard to I Timothy 2:11-15, Synod 1994 claimed that I Timothy 3:1-13 represents "the immediate application of this teaching [learn in silence] to the offices of the church" (*Acts of Synod 1994*, p. 514). This is certainly not obvious. In fact, most commentaries and translations of the Bible separate these two sections. There is therefore no obvious textual link between I Timothy 2:11-15 (a passage about worship) and the following chapter regarding the offices.
 - b. In regard to Genesis 2, Synod 1994 implied that "Adam was appointed federal head and representative of humanity" because of his maleness. Certainly this is not the only way of considering Adam's representative appointment. Most likely he was chosen because of his "first-ness," as I Corinthians 15:45 indicates.
 - c. In regard to I Corinthians 11:2-6 and I Corinthians 14:33-35, Synod 1994 ignored the fact that both passages speak to the issue of propriety in worship rather than directly to the issue of women in office. Furthermore, I Corinthians 11 reveals that women did pray and prophesy in the church in Corinth. What Paul objects to is their lack of proper decorum in doing so.
 - d. In regard to the "general analogy of Scripture" (i.e., what Scripture implies rather than explicitly teaches), Synod 1994 notes that (1) Jesus chose only male apostles, (2) all pastors and elders in the New Testament were male, and (3) Paul teaches male leadership in the church. Synod failed to note that, in regard to (1), the apostles were also all Jewish (and probably also all bearded!). There is no reason to believe that Jesus' choice of only males is any more instructive for the future practice of the church than is his choice of only Jews. As for (2) and (3), they both beg the question: they assume as fact what is actually an aspect of the whole debate. But even if all pastors and elders

in the New Testament era were male (which itself is debatable), that does not imply that pastors and elders for the rest of human history need to be male.

- e. Synod 1994 implied that restrictions on female leadership cannot be culturally conditioned because Jesus and Paul “lived in a broader pagan society where women were religious leaders.” That is certainly not true of Jesus, whose earthly ministry was primarily limited to “the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matt. 15:24). The statement may be only partially true of Paul, whose ministry pattern was “to the Jew first, then to the Gentile” (Rom. 1:16). Jews were largely unaccustomed to female religious leadership. Even in some gentile contexts, Paul might have restricted female leadership in the church precisely because it might have been too readily identified with pagan religious practices (as perhaps was the case in Ephesus).
 - f. In refuting the example of slavery in relation to this issue, Synod 1994 said, “The Bible points in the direction that it would be good for slavery to end (1 Cor. 7:21; Philem.). No parallel teaching indicates that women may hold the offices of minister, elder, and evangelist.” Notice the unequal parallel here: a “pointer” in regard to slavery but a “teaching” in regard to women in office. An equal parallel would read, “There is no indication that it would be good for women to hold the offices of minister, elder, and evangelist.” Those in favor of women in church office would claim that such indications abound in Scripture (e.g., Acts 2:17; Gal. 3:28).
 - g. In summary, every scriptural interpretation of Synod 1994 can be argued against in a manner that both respects Scripture and is fully within the Reformed confessions. If the issue is debatable, then the statement “the clear teaching of Scripture prohibits women holding the offices of minister, elder, and evangelist” is simply false.
2. Permitting women to engage in all the functions of ordained ministry while refusing them ordination to such special service essentially defines church office in terms of title and ceremony rather than in terms of task and service. Such an understanding runs counter to both our historic and recent understandings of the nature and extent of church office (*Acts of Synod 1973*, p. 63).
 3. Synod 1994 has placed many officebearers and members of the CRC in an extremely difficult situation. By declaring that “the clear teaching of Scripture prohibits women holding the offices of minister, elder, and evangelist” and then by later stating that “a Christian cannot claim freedom of conscience where the Scripture has spoken,” synod has essentially given this issue confessional status. Many officebearers and members of the CRC do not believe what Synod 1994 called “the clear teaching of Scripture.” They have even been told that they do not have the freedom of conscience to believe differently. Should they resign from office? Should they be disciplined for delinquency? Should they leave the CRC? Or should they just not take synod seriously, further eroding the integrity of the process? By overstating its case, Synod 1994 declared that the CRC is tolerant of only one position on the issue of women in church office—not only in regard to practice but even in regard to belief. Such a position is destructive to the unity and authority of the church.

B. To change Church Order Article 3 to read, "All confessing members of the church who meet the biblical requirements are eligible for the offices of minister, elder, deacon, and evangelist."

Grounds:

1. A scripturally responsible and confessionally sound case for women in church office can be made.
 - a. There is only one head of the church—the Lord Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:22-23; cf. I Cor. 12). Regardless of how male "headship" may be interpreted (i.e., as "source" or as "leader"), it is only explicitly presented in Scripture in terms of the marriage relationship (Eph. 5; I Cor. 11:3-10).
 - b. Women as well as men have been created in God's image. Female as well as male rulership in creation receives God's blessing in Genesis 2:27-31.
 - c. The prohibition found in I Timothy 2:11-15 may be legitimately regarded as a restriction on a specific church situation rather than as a universal and timeless principle.
 - 1) Paul's concern may be to avoid confusion with the practices of the Artemis (Diana) cult, of which there were hundreds of priestesses. His concern may also be not to offend the Jewish converts of the Ephesian church, who could have taken offense at women serving in a teaching capacity. In other words, it is completely reasonable to believe that Paul's prohibition arises out of a specific situation in the church in Ephesus in the first century.
 - 2) Paul's argument from Genesis—what some have called the "created order"—does not necessarily dictate a timeless practice. For example, Paul uses an argument from creation in I Corinthians 11 in regard to women not cutting their hair and wearing the veil. Yet today women worship with short hair and without hats. Are they in violation of the clear teaching of Scripture? Of course not! Times change. Hair and hats in our culture no longer give the same messages as they did in Paul's day. The principle of decorum in worship, however, still applies. In the same way, Paul's argument from creation in I Timothy 2 does not necessarily mean that the practice of women "learning in silence" is for all times and all places.
 - d. Paul himself refers to women as "fellow workers in Christ Jesus," as "outstanding among the apostles," and as those who have "worked very hard in the Lord" (Rom. 16). These references indicate that women did exercise leadership in the early church and in its ministry (cf. also deacon Philip's four unmarried prophesying daughters in Acts 21:9).
 - e. Paul's teaching in regard to spiritual gifts encourages all members to seek the "higher gifts" (I Cor. 12:31), especially "prophecy" (I Cor. 14:1). Paul also teaches that both the church and the individual must take care to exercise the gifts of the Spirit to the greatest possible extent (Rom. 12:3-8). If God gives gifts of prophecy, teaching, administration, and leadership to his daughters as well as to his sons, shouldn't the church employ those gifts to the greatest possible extent—including even in the special offices of the church?

- f. The overall movement of salvation history is in the direction of greater participation of women in the community of faith (cf. Acts 2:17).
2. If a scripturally responsible and confessionally sound case for the use of women's gifts in all offices of the church can be made, then such a practice does not violate our standards of unity and therefore should be allowed.

Council of All Nations CRC, Halifax, NS
James Covey, recording clerk

Note: This overture was presented to Classis Eastern Canada but was not approved.

Overture 73: Ratify Change in Church Order Article 3

Classis Chicago South overtures synod to ratify the change in Church Order Article 3 adopted by the synods of 1990 (*Acts of Synod 1990*, p. 657) and 1993 (*Acts of Synod 1993*, p. 598) that "all confessing members of the church who meet the biblical requirements are eligible for the offices of minister, elder, deacon, and evangelist."

Grounds:

1. Synod 1994 inappropriately imposed on all the churches an official exegesis of several biblical passages as the centerpiece of its decision not to ratify the proposed Church Order change. That the passages do not present a "clear teaching of Scripture [prohibiting] women from holding the offices . . ." is obvious both from the several reports synods have received over these many years and from the close vote and many recorded negative votes at Synod 1994. Synod ought not to adopt anything as "the clear teaching of Scripture" without widespread agreement.
2. Synod 1994's rejection of the biblical evidence for the inclusion of women in all the offices sets synod's decision against several positive developments in the churches in the years leading up to and following the decisions on office and ordination (*Acts of Synod 1973*, pp. 63-64), namely, the rediscovery of the unity of the offices in prestige and authority, the recognition of spiritual gifts as the primary category of judgment both regarding the ministry of the laity (priesthood of all believers) and the specific offices, and a functional and strategic approach to the nature of offices.
3. The local-option approach for resolving our current difficulties regarding the biblical and theological arguments can work in the context of the Guidelines for Implementation adopted in 1993 (*Acts of Synod 1993*, pp. 614-16). Approval of the Church Order change does not impose a practice on the churches that binds the conscience of churches that are not persuaded in this matter; Synod 1994's decision, however, does bind the conscience of the churches that are convinced by the biblical and theological arguments for the inclusion of women in all the offices.
4. Synod 1995 has the authority to ratify the twice-approved Church Order change without further delay. The intent of the synodical rule has been met by several years of reflection and debate on essentially the same proposed Church Order change. It was an oppressive use of procedure for

Synod 1994 to declare that "no synodical decision [is] in effect to allow women to serve . . ." For approximately half the delegates at every synod since 1990 the weight of evidence has led to favoring this change.

Classis Chicago South
Henry B. Vanden Heuvel, stated clerk

Overture 74: Revise Synod 1994's Decision Regarding Women in Office

Classis Red Mesa overtures synod to revise Synod 1994's decision regarding women in the offices of minister, elder, and evangelist.

Grounds:

1. The decision of Synod 1994 does not adequately address the pastoral concerns of gifts, calling, culture, and need.
2. The decision cannot claim the authority of the "clear teaching of Scripture" since it contradicts the synodical decisions of 1990, 1992, and 1993.
3. The decision of Synod 1994 leaves churches in disharmony and without appropriate guidance. Since the authority of the clear teaching of Scripture is claimed, those disagreeing are in need of pastoral counsel or church discipline. Synod has not provided church councils with guidance on these matters.

Classis Red Mesa
James Vande Lune, stated clerk

Overture 75: Reject Grounds and Revise Decision re Women in Office

The council of Rochester CRC, Rochester, New York, overtures synod

A. To reject the grounds on the basis of which Synod 1994 declined to ratify the change in Church Order Article 3 as adopted by Synod 1993 ("All confessing members of the church who meet the biblical requirements are eligible for the offices of minister, elder, deacon, and evangelist"). Those grounds, in summary, were that

- a. The biblical texts cited by Synod 1993 to support the proposed change in Church Order Article 3 are not persuasive. . . .
- b. The clear teaching of Scripture prohibits women from holding the offices of minister, elder, and evangelist. . . .
- c. The general analogy of Scripture supports the exclusion of women from the offices of minister and elder. . . .
- d. A variety of evidence shows that the church historically has believed that the Scripture plainly opposes women in the offices of minister and elder. . . .
- e. Synod 1993 acted contrary to the Church Order when it reconsidered and revised the 1992 decision regarding women in ecclesiastical office. . . .
- f. The issue of women in office cannot be left to local option. . . .
- g. This decision will not bind Christian consciences in any inappropriate way. . . .

(Acts of Synod 1994, pp. 506-08)

Grounds:

1. "A succeeding synod may alter the stand of a previous synod; it may reach a conclusion which is at variance with a conclusion of an earlier synod. In such cases the most recent decision invalidates all previous decisions in conflict with it" (Rules for Synodical Procedure, VIII, I, 2).
2. Synod 1994's first ground is that "the biblical texts cited by Synod 1993 to support the proposed change in Church Order Article 3 are not persuasive." Biblical texts may be persuasive of a position in two senses: (a) they may succeed in bringing nearly any Christian who considers them to accept the position, or (b) they may be appealed to as part of a strong case or a good reason for accepting a position. No doubt the texts cited are not persuasive in the first sense: they do not compel assent to the claim that it is proper to ordain women to the offices of minister and elder. But they are persuasive in the second sense: they can be appealed to in constructing an account of redemptive history and restoration in Christ, as was done in Report 29, *Acts of Synod 1992*, that makes a good case for the ordination of women. Synod 1994 overlooks this point by considering the texts in isolation and not as part of a biblically based account of redemptive history.
3. Synod 1994's second ground is that "the clear teaching of Scripture prohibits women holding the offices of minister, elder, and evangelist." The history of the debate in the Christian Reformed Church over the last twenty years—including the synodical study committees of 1973, 1975, and 1978; the synodical decisions of 1990 and 1993, which approved the ordination of women; and the teaching and writing of many of the church's pastors—makes it obvious that it is not a *clear* teaching of Scripture that women may not hold the offices of elder, minister, or evangelist at this time in North America.
4. Synod 1994's third ground is that "the general analogy of Scripture supports the exclusion of women from the offices of minister and elder." But according to Report 29, *Acts of Synod 1992*,

The basic equality of men and women as taught in Galatians 3:28 is supported by the flow of redemptive history. Redemptive history moves from creation, where male and female are made in God's image and given dominion over the earth, through the disruption of this equality because of the fall into sin, to its restoration in Christ. This restoration has begun in the church and wherever the redeeming force of Christ's work is felt.

(*Acts of Synod 1992*, p. 366)

This position is based on the analogy of Scripture, it considers more than merely a few passages referring to headship, and it supports the ordination of women.

5. Synod 1994's fourth ground is that "the church historically has believed that the Scripture plainly opposes women in the offices of minister and elder." Perhaps the church historically has *presupposed* that Scripture opposes the ordination of women; it is less clear that this has been a *belief* of the church. However, even if the church historically has believed this, it does not follow that it would be wrong for us today to ordain women. God's ongoing work through his Spirit has led the church in the past to change its beliefs, for example, about circumcision (Acts 15) and slavery.

6. Synod 1994's fifth ground is that "Synod 1993 acted contrary to the Church Order" because no new grounds were offered to revise Church Order Article 3. However, a synod may properly judge whether grounds are "new and sufficient."
7. Synod 1994's sixth ground is that "the issue of women in office cannot be left to local option." This *may* be a ground for making some decision or other; it is not a ground for making the particular decision which Synod 1994 made unless Scripture forbids the ordination of women, but it does not. See Grounds 2 and 4 above.
8. Synod 1994's seventh ground is that "this decision will not bind Christian consciences in any inappropriate way." This claim is correct only if Scripture does clearly forbid the ordination of women; but it does not. See Grounds 2 and 4 above.

B. To revise Synod 1994's decision not to ratify the change in Church Order Article 3 as adopted by Synod 1993 (that "All confessing members of the church who meet the biblical requirements are eligible for the offices of minister, elder, deacon, and evangelist") by ratifying the approved change in Church Order Article 3.

Grounds:

1. This request for revision of a synodical decision satisfies the requirement of Church Order Article 31 that "a request [for revision of a decision] shall be honored only if sufficient new grounds are presented." Synod 1994's claims that the "clear teaching of Scripture prohibits women holding the offices of minister, elder, and evangelist" and that "the general analogy of Scripture supports the exclusion of women from the offices of minister and elder" introduced a new contention, in opposition to the synodical study committees of 1973, 1975, and 1978 and the synodical decisions of 1990 and 1993. Moreover, if the exclusion of women from office is clearly taught by Scripture, then the matter can hardly be merely a church-order matter and not a creedal matter, as judged by Synod 1989.
2. Since the grounds adduced by Synod 1994 are mistaken or inadequate, the decision those grounds were employed to support must either be revised or supported by different grounds.
3. Such texts as Galatians 3:28 and Joel's prophecy (Joel 2:28-32) that spiritual gifts, including the gift of prophecy, will be given without regard to gender (quoted by Peter at Pentecost, Acts 2:17-21), together with a biblically sound account of what is universal and binding on us in such passages as I Corinthians 14 and I Timothy 2, demonstrate that the ordination of women to all church offices is biblically permissible.
4. Approving this change in the Church Order is consistent with the Guidelines for Understanding the Nature of Ecclesiastical Office and Ordination, which state that "particular ministries [are] functional in character, arising under the guidance of the Spirit in the interests of good order and efficiency in the church, to enable the church to carry out Christ's work in the world most effectively" and that "the particular ministries are to be distinguished in function, not in essence, from the comprehensive ministry shared by all believers Since all members are commissioned to serve, there is only a difference in the kinds of service of deacons, elders, ministers, and all other members" (*Acts of Synod 1973*, p. 63).

5. The current prohibition on ordination of women impedes the ministry of churches that witness in communities in which men and women are perceived to have equal worth.

Council of Rochester CRC, Rochester, NY
Gary Harris, clerk

Note: This overture was submitted to Classis Atlantic Northeast but was not adopted.

Overture 76: Declare the Issue of Women in All Offices to Be "Disputable Matter"

I. Introduction

The Christian Reformed Church remains at odds regarding women in office. After last synod the sides are farther apart rather than closer together. The issue appears irresolvable in the near future. This overture asks to make room for both sides, basing its argument on the long-standing debate and the seeming impossibility of resolution.

This overture does not argue for or against women in office, and we hope we can avoid debating that issue. Such discussion has proved contentious. This overture focuses on the nature of "disputable matters" and "biblical freedom." Since we cannot reach consensus, perhaps the best way, and the biblical way, is to allow churches to decide for themselves who should serve as officebearers.

We felt we needed to address Synod 1994's decision which attempted to give biblical directives on this matter. We realize that doing so comes perilously close to debating the issue itself. However, no matter which side a church might take on the issue, the churches need greater clarity and more persuasive conclusions in order to accept and live with the work of synod in good conscience. The inadequacy of the grounds gives sufficient cause for synod to address the issue again. This problem is connected closely with the nature of something that is "disputable," something for which sufficient and persuasive evidence cannot be gathered on either side.

To a degree we have an atmosphere of mutual toleration in the CRC. Some churches have women as deacons, and others do not believe that practice is biblical. Yet we share Christian community together. Likewise, some delegates believe women should be in office, and others believe they shouldn't. Nevertheless, we find a deeper unity in Christ and work together as a community of believers. To promote the peace and well-being of the church, this overture asks to extend that atmosphere of toleration to churches who wish to ordain women. We must somehow get past this issue, or it will continue to sap our energy and siphon off our members.

II. Overture

The council of Mill Creek Community CRC, Mill Creek, Washington, overtures synod

- A. To declare that the question of women serving in all the offices is disputable and therefore to withdraw judgment on this matter.

Grounds:

1. The CRC has disputed this matter without coming to consensus for twenty-five years.
2. A substantial portion of our leadership believes Scripture allows us to ordain women in office, and a substantial portion believes Scripture does not allow us to do so.
3. Synods 1989 and 1990 have declared that it is not a creedal matter.
4. The Reformed tradition, from the beginning, recognized a principle of local option in the area of *adiaphora*, i.e., matters of "indifference" in relation to the faith. Since we are dealing with an issue that is not a "creedal (or faith) matter," it is time for the CRC to make allowances for variety in this matter (cf. Calvin, *Institutes of Christian Religion* IV.10.32).
5. Some Bible references seem to prohibit women leaders. Other references and biblical principles for organizing churches seem to lead in the direction of including women in leadership, i.e., the principles of
 - a. *Spiritual gifts*, which define the role persons should have in church leadership (Joel 2:28-29; John 14:26; 16:13; 20:22; Acts 1:8; 6:3; Rom. 12:1; I Cor. 12; Eph. 4; I Pet. 4).
 - b. *Unity of the body* (Gal. 3:28), which should set aside long-standing social distinctions. This verse closely relates to the "body" passages (I Cor. 12:12-13): one body, many parts; one church, many gifts. Race, social standing, or gender must not interfere with a person's function in the church. The Holy Spirit defines roles by giving spiritual gifts. Some churches are convicted that, when they fail to appoint qualified women to office, they are ignoring the Holy Spirit's distribution of gifts in the body and preventing part of the body from fulfilling its Spirit-directed mission.
 - c. *Freedom in Christ* (Gal. 5:1; I Cor. 10:23-24) allows councils to pursue their own course when there is much disagreement on non-creedal matters. The denomination undermines this principle when it establishes a one-sided policy when we have the present level of disagreement.
6. Paul abandoned the biblically derived rules of Acts 15 when they no longer applied to specific times and places (cf. Rom. 14 and I Cor. 8, where he allows eating meat sacrificed to idols). He recognized that culture and history changed how certain organizing rules and standards applied. He held to a principle of cultural and historical relativity, combined with freedom in the Lord. He allowed churches to set aside "synodical" rules, though many genuine believers continued to dispute the issue. Applying Paul's principle, many churches believe that what applied in Ephesus under Timothy's ministry may not have applied to Rome or to twentieth-century America.
7. Many in our circles believe that Paul grounds his guidelines for women (I Tim. 2) in creation ordinances, which make them lasting and universal decrees (cf. the recommendations from Synod 1994). But we discover equally weighty grounds in the Acts 15 decisions: (a) the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (v. 28), (b) apostolic authority (v. 28), (c) the law of Moses (v. 21), (d) evangelizing gentiles (v. 19), and (e) these commands are combined with the moral issue of sexual immorality. Yet after a decade Paul granted freedom to disobey the injunctions on the meat issue. Something changed in the culture, time, and place, changing the application of the Jerusalem "synodical" rules.

8. Significant and difficult disagreement remains in our denomination about how this method of interpretation and these biblical principles apply to the issue of women in office. It is no longer biblical nor appropriate for one side to impose its standard upon the other.
9. Scripture calls the church not to pass judgment on disputable matters (Rom 14:1ff.).

B. To declare that the grounds for the 1994 decision “not [to] ratify Church Order Article 3” do not adequately support the recommendation.

Grounds:

1. Ground a claims that “the biblical texts cited to support the proposed change in Church Order Article 3 are not persuasive.” However, the same charge is made about texts used to prohibit women in office. The problem is that neither side can persuade the other side.
2. Ground b claims that “the clear teaching of Scripture prohibits women holding office.” The long and difficult debate in the CRC demonstrates that Scripture is not clear on this issue. Synods in the past have regularly recognized that the issue is not clear.
3. Ground b claims that I Timothy 2:11-12 “clearly states that women are not to teach or have authority over men.” But the other side notes several translation and interpretation difficulties in these verses: for example, the meaning of the Greek for “authority,” the kind of teaching referred to, the reasons for prohibition, the meaning of Paul’s “I do not permit” versus a command from God. The text itself is not clear, and its applicability to the churches at large is not clear. Specific texts with this high level of uncertainty are not useful proofs for denominational policy.
4. Ground b claims that “I Timothy 3:1-13 continues with an immediate application of this teaching [that women may not hold office].” This assumes that Paul’s main point was to circumscribe women and that he applied that principle by showing how to appoint only men. However, the main point in chapter 3 was about appointing leadership to uphold pure teaching. The critical issue for Timothy is that false teachers have come (1:3), who subvert the basic teaching of the church (1:15; 2:3). *Chapter 2 is a parenthetical discussion about living peaceful and quiet lives that attract others to the gospel (2:2-4)* I Timothy 3 does not “apply” chapter 2, but it addresses the issue of chapter 1.
5. Ground b claims that “Paul’s teaching is clearly grounded in creation (I Tim. 2:13).” But many leaders and churches believe this verse creates more difficulty than clarity. It says Adam was formed first. But God pays little attention to the social priority we humans give to being first: Abel, Shem, Isaac, Jacob, Judah, Ephraim, Moses, David, etc., and such sayings as “The first shall be last.” How then can I Timothy 2:13 mean that being formed first gave Adam authority or priority?

Verse 14 adds to the difficulties. Eve’s deception has no bearing on whether women are more susceptible to temptation or less able to teach or less knowledgeable. The biblical theology of sin holds men and women jointly guilty. Theories about how to understand these verses abound, but we have not reached consensus, neither in the CRC nor in the broader Christian community.

6. Ground b claims that I Timothy 3:15 says these are guidelines for all the churches, but 3:15 refers to "God's household," not necessarily specifying universal guidelines. Paul's way of dealing with the guidelines of Acts 15 suggests that such guidelines do not necessarily apply literally in other settings.
7. Ground b claims that I Timothy 2:11-13 "shows that Genesis 2 teaches that before the fall there was male leadership in the original created state." There is no consensus of CRC or evangelical biblical scholars on this. It is debatable whether Adam was "naming" Eve. She did not get her name "Eve" until the end of chapter 3. In chapter 2 the man recognized only "what" she was. More significantly, after the fall Adam takes it upon himself to "name" Eve, and from then on men have subjugated women. Neither does Genesis 2:24 mean that only men may take the initiative in forming a relationship that leads to marriage. These speculative applications have no place in official grounds of synodical decisions.
8. Ground b claims "Adam was appointed the federal head and representative of humanity" This has nothing to do with whether women may serve in office. It inappropriately introduces "federal theology" with its "covenant of works" into the decision-making process of the CRC. That issue has been debated in Reformed circles for centuries without coming to resolution.
9. Ground b claims that I Corinthians 11:2-16 and 14:33-35 both "teach that men are to have authoritative leadership in the church." The first reference actually teaches mutuality: "In the Lord, however, woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. For as woman came from man, so also man is born of woman. But everything comes from God" (11:11-12). The second passage is another difficult text. It seems to say that the law requires women to be quiet and submissive. Yet we know that there is no such saying in "the law." Again, we cannot allow an unclear text to formulate rules.
10. Ground c claims that "the general analogy of Scripture supports the exclusion of women" from office. But both sides use the general analogy of Scripture to support their arguments.
11. Ground c assumes that Galatians 3:28 is about being "equally redeemed by Christ." But the Galatians weren't questioning whether women could be redeemed! At issue was the role women, slaves, and gentiles had as part of the body of Christ.
12. Ground c assumes that the idea of the man's being the "head" precludes a woman's serving in office. The understanding of the Greek word for "head" is debatable (cf. past synodical studies on the issue). Furthermore, an individual elder in the church does not gain "authority" over other individuals in the church. Elders corporately hold authority in the church. Even if "head" means that husbands have authority over wives, a wife serving as elder does not gain authority over her husband. Such concerns miss the whole point of servant leadership as defined by Jesus (Matt. 20:24-28; 23:8-12; Mark 9:34-37).
13. Ground c uses the fact that Jesus chose only male apostles as a ground. This fails to consider that Jesus also chose only Jewish apostles, and no slaves. Ground c goes on to say that all pastors and elders in the New Testament are males. In fact, we know of only a few elders and pastors, probably too few to warrant such a conclusion; Ground c ignores the

possibility that there may have been at least two women apostles. The evidence given provides no proof for the recommendation, nor does it adequately support the argument of the analogy of Scripture.

14. Ground c claims that Jesus and Paul had social precedents to appoint women as ministers and elders if they had wanted, because women in that society were religious leaders. However, they were not religious leaders in the Palestinian society Jesus participated in. And in the broader Hellenistic society women were religious leaders in female cults. That may, in fact, have been the reason Paul forbade women in Ephesus to teach or have authority over men.
15. Ground d claims that the church opposed women in office for over nineteen hundred years. In reality, there is dispute about this. All through the nineteen hundred years there are examples of a minority tradition within the orthodox church. Furthermore, this reasoning of using tradition as an authority would have prevented the Reformation from happening and could argue for the propriety of having a pope. There are also exceptions within evangelical Christianity during the last two centuries, for example, the theologically conservative Wesleyan tradition, the Salvation Army, the Four Square churches, and others.
16. Ground g mistakenly claims that Synod 1994's decision "will not bind Christian consciences in any inappropriate way." This reasoning serves only to widen the gap of misunderstanding between the two sides.

C. To revise Synod 1994's decision not to ratify the change in Church Order Article 3 by reaffirming Synod 1993's decision to change Church Order Article 3.

Grounds:

1. The grounds for the 1994 decision do not support the recommendation.
2. Nearly every statement in the grounds is disputed by a significant part of the church, the grounds are simply inadequate, sometimes untrue (g), too theologically restrictive (invoking federal head theology, Ground b), speculatively interpretive (particularly concerning Genesis 2, Ground b).
3. The method of interpretation recognizing "cultural or time-conditioned rules" is biblical. Paul uses this method in relation to the rules developed for the gentiles in Acts 15 (cf. Acts 21:25).
4. Where matters are disputable, we must retain freedom to live in good conscience before the Lord (Rom. 14).

D. To allow local classes to decide for themselves whether to seat women elders as delegates.

Grounds:

1. This carries out the same concept of Christian freedom on the next level of Christian Reformed association.
2. There are some classes for which this is an important consideration.

Council of Mill Creek Community CRC,
Mill Creek, WA
Brian Douthitt, clerk

Note: This overture was submitted to Classis Pacific Northwest but was not adopted.

Overture 77: Designate a "Sanctity of Human Life Sunday"

I. History

A. Synod 1972

1. Adopted the following recommendations regarding induced abortion:

1. That synod affirm the unique value of all human life and the special relationship of man to God as his image-bearer.
2. That synod, mindful of the sixth commandment, condemn the wanton or arbitrary destruction of any human being at any stage of its development from the point of conception to the point of death.
3. That synod affirm that an induced abortion is an allowable option only when the life of the prospective mother is genuinely threatened by the continuation of the pregnancy.

(Acts of Synod 1972, pp. 63-64)

2. Adopted the following recommendations regarding the role of the believing community:

1. That Synod call believers to a recognition of the need for Christian compassion and understanding accompanied by positive Christian action for the unwed pregnant girl, for families for whom the birth of another child looms as a very special burden, for those who are pregnant because of rape or incest, and for those families who already have abnormal children or who face the likelihood or possibility of having an abnormal child.
2. That synod call the churches to offer their full resources of counseling, encouragement, acceptance, and material and financial support to any girl or woman faced with the burdensome reality of an unwanted pregnancy. The churches should offer this support joyfully and without recrimination in the name of Jesus Christ by whose grace we all must daily live.
3. That synod declare that when a person has taken an action in regard to induced abortion which is contrary to the decisions of synod, we should be careful to deal with such a person with loving concern rather than judgmental pronouncements.
4. That synod call believers to a ringing testimony against the evils of abortion as practiced in our society, and encourage them to promote action and legislation that reflects the teaching of Scripture.

(Acts of Synod 1972, p. 64)

B. Synod 1976 called

the classes, consistories, and members of our congregations in both the United States and Canada to do all in their power to protect and promote the sanctity of human life, at any age; publicizing the issues, educating people, organizing committees, and doing whatever is considered necessary to confront people with the crucial physical and moral issues which are at stake.

(Acts of Synod 1976, p. 64)

C. Synod 1981 dealt with Overture 10 from Classis Florida, in which Classis Florida

overtures the Synod of 1981 to declare every January 22 a National Day of Mourning, Prayer, and Fasting as a Christian expression of opposition to legalized abortion in the United States, and as endorsement of the passage of the pro-life amendment to the United States Constitution.

(Acts of Synod 1981, p. 593)

Synod 1981 dealt very little with the importance of the concern of Classis Florida but focused instead on the date of January 22 and the words "national"

and "fasting." Synod 1981 did not accede to Overture 10, on the following grounds:

- a. In multiplying days of observance there is a danger of decreasing effectiveness.
- b. Observance by the members of a denomination of our size could hardly be considered "national" in scope.
- c. Participation of the Canadian members of the Christian Reformed Church would have little meaning on the proposed date, January 22.
- d. Hundreds of members of our congregations march in parades and participate in other types of demonstrations each January 22. It would be impractical for them also to fast on that day.
- e. Synod has spoken effectively to this issue. The Synod of 1972 decided, "That synod call believers to a ringing testimony against the evils of abortion as practiced in our society, and encourage them to promote action and legislation that reflects the teaching of Scripture" (*Acts of Synod 1972*, p. 64). The Synod of 1976, besides encouraging legislative action, called "the classes, consistories, and members of our congregations in both the United States and Canada to do all in their power to protect and promote the sanctity of human life, at any age . . ." (*Acts of Synod 1976*, p. 64).

(*Acts of Synod 1981*, p. 61)

D. Past synods have approved special dates for the following: World Hunger, All Nations Heritage, and Abuse Prevention.

II. Overture

Classis Pella overtures synod to designate the first Sunday in October for Canada and the Sunday on or just prior to January 22 for the United States as a Sanctity of Human Life Sunday for our churches to observe.

Grounds:

- A. We are sadly lacking in a "ringing testimony" against the evils of abortion.
- B. The observance of such a day can promote awareness of abortion alternatives and caring for those with unwanted pregnancies, and it can also be a time when we are called to repentance.
- C. Synod 1972 has given us a very biblical stand concerning abortion. This stand was reaffirmed in 1993. We need to do more as a denomination to promote our awareness of this position. One Sunday designated as Sanctity of Human Life Sunday would help fulfill the mandate of Synod 1976, in which synod called
the classes, consistories, and members of our congregations in both the United States and Canada to do all in their power to protect and promote the sanctity of human life, at any age; publicizing the issues, educating people . . .
(*Acts of Synod 1976*, p. 64)
- D. It is true that "In multiplying days of observance there is a danger of decreasing effectiveness" (*Acts of Synod 1981*, p. 61), but not having any day to observe decreases effectiveness even more. The taking of 90,000 to 100,000 lives in Canada and 1,500,000 lives in the United States each year by abortion is an issue of no less importance than abuse prevention and world hunger, each of which is featured on a specified Sunday annually.
- E. The dates given have importance to our membership in both Canada and the United States

1. The Canadian date of the first Sunday in October is the date that some Canadian churches are already using to call attention to the sanctity of human life by "Human Life Chain" activities.
2. The United States date of January 22 is the anniversary of the Supreme Court decision concerning abortion.

Classis Pella

Rev. Siebert Kramer, stated clerk

Overture 78: Condemn Use of Statue Exercise at Listening Conferences

The council of Champlain Valley CRC, Vergennes, Vermont, overtures synod

A. To condemn publicly and in writing the use and meaning of the statue exercise used at Listening Conferences, Phase 1, across our denomination as grievous to the Holy Spirit, contrary to the Bible and the doctrine of its inspiration, contrary to Belgic Confession Article 5, and harmful to the body of Christ.

Grounds:

1. The statue exercise taught that Christians, being rooted in their upbringings, traditions, etc., all look at the Bible differently, i.e., that the teachings of the Bible are all "in the eye of the beholder" and subject to various interpretations such that when one believer views any teaching of the Bible differently from or in an opposing way to another believer's view, no one should ever say anyone is wrong. However, our Lord told his disciples in John 16:13, "But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth." This great promise was fulfilled when the Holy Spirit moved the apostles to write the rest of Holy Scriptures. Therefore, Paul by the Holy Spirit teaches in I Corinthians 2: 13,

This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words.

Our Lord makes essentially the same point in John 6:63:

The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are Spirit and they are life.

So any exercise giving the impression that the Holy Spirit's words, the Scriptures, are relative to human differences in understanding (human wisdom) and that human understanding, tainted with sin and limitation, cannot be transformed and brought into conformity with God's absolute, changeless truths of Scripture by the Holy Spirit deeply grieves the Holy Spirit.

2. Obviously then, because the Bible, every Scripture, is God's truth, breathed out by the Holy Spirit, it is contrary to the Bible and its inspiration to suggest that its teaching be subordinated to any person's rooted understanding (John 10:35; John 17:17; I Tim. 3:16-17; II Pet. 1:20-21; II Pet. 3:15-16; Rev. 22: 18-19).
3. We confess, and in the Form of Subscription all officers promise to defend before God and his church, the position of Belgic Confession Article 5, on Scripture's books: "believing without any doubt all things contained in them." Therefore, the exercise's strong suggestion of relativism regarding the teachings of the Bible is contrary to our sworn confession of faith.

4. In Ephesians 4:15, we are called to speak “the truth in love” as opposed to “the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming” (v. 14). In Romans 13:10, we read, “Love does no harm to its neighbor.” Misleading the church of Christ into the idolatrous relativism of our age is not loving but harmful to the souls of God’s people.

B. To instruct all church councils to apply biblical discipline to all individuals who planned, organized, promoted, and implemented this exercise.

Ground: According to Heidelberg Catechism Answer 85 and Church Order Articles 81-84, church discipline should be applied to those who practice and promote false doctrine in the church—toward their repentance and restoration to usefulness in Christ.

Council of Champlain Valley CRC,
Vergennes, VT
Cornie Dykema, clerk

Note: This overture was submitted to Classis Atlantic Northeast but was not adopted.

Overture 79: Replace Former Decisions of Synod Regarding Homosexuality

The council of Champlain Valley CRC, Vergennes, Vermont, overtures synod to replace all former decisions of synod regarding homosexuality by making the following declarations:

A. That homosexual orientation, a person’s inner sexual preference for persons of the same sex, is sin for which the homosexual bears the same responsibility before his or her Creator as does any other sinner for any other sin.

Grounds:

1. Our Lord teaches “that at the beginning the Creator ‘made them male and female’” (Matt. 19:4; Gen. 1:27). Therefore, homosexual orientation involves original sin, for which we bear responsibility in Adam (cf. Rom. 5:12).
2. Our Lord teaches that all sin originates in the heart, the center of the human will and desires, not only in the outward practice of it (Matt. 15:18-20).
3. Our Lord teaches that the condition of homosexuality itself is not only a personality disorder as a structural effect of the fall, but is specifically an evidence of God’s wrath on the “godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness” (Rom. 1:18, 21-27). This wrath involves the fact that “God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity” (v. 24) and that “God gave them over to shameful lusts” (v. 26). These “shameful lusts” include the inner sexual desire of the homosexual to exchange natural (heterosexual) relations for unnatural (homosexual) ones (vv. 26-27). Therefore, a person’s inner preference for persons of the same sex is “shameful” and sinful.

B. That the church’s responsibility of compassion to the homosexual is to preach, teach, model, and provide resources of the gospel of God’s grace

involving the Holy Spirit's work of turning the heart away from that shameful sexual preference toward claiming God's created manhood or womanhood through daily repentance and renewal of faith in Jesus Christ, who died to wash sinners' hearts of all sin, including homosexual preferences.

Grounds:

1. Our Lord teaches that "homosexual offenders" (I Cor. 6:9 ["effeminate"-KJV]) can be "washed" and "sanctified" so that their sinful, lost condition is in the past (v. 11; cf. vv. 9-10). Obviously, the gospel of God's grace in Jesus Christ washes and sanctifies the heart, not the outward practice.
2. There are several ex-gay ministries (resources of the gospel) to which the church can and should in Christian love direct the homosexual. These include Metanoia, Exodus, Transformation, Regeneration, and New Journey.

C. That the church should receive as confessing members those with homosexuality as a sin which clings to them only when God's grace, as explained in B above, is discerned and confessed.

Grounds:

1. The church of Jesus Christ is the body of the redeemed—those who not only are restrained from outward sinful behavior, but also are new creatures in Christ (II Cor. 5:17) and are being restored as imagebearers of God to his original creation order and purity (Eph. 4:24; Matt. 19:4).
2. The church of Jesus Christ cannot affirm homosexuality in her membership.

D. That any pastor, elder, or deacon found to be homosexual be suspended from office and placed under special discipline (cf. Church Order Arts. 82-84).

Ground: Our Lord teaches that an elder "must be above reproach" (I Tim. 3:2) and that "deacons, likewise, are to be men worthy of respect They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons" (I Tim. 3:8, 10).

E. That the above declarations replace all previous decisions of synod on this issue.

Council of Champlain Valley CRC,
Vergennes, VT
Cornie Dykema, clerk

Note: This overture was submitted to Classis Atlantic Northeast but was not adopted.

Overture 80: Transfer Morning Star CRC to Classis Greater Los Angeles

Classis Greater Los Angeles overtures synod to permit the transfer of Morning Star CRC (now Glory CRC) from Classis California South to Classis Greater Los Angeles.

Ground: This is the request of the congregation, which has relocated within the boundaries of Classis Greater Los Angeles.

Classis Greater Los Angeles
Dick Van Weerthuisen, stated clerk

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APPEALS

1: Appeal from Decision of Classis Chatham

The council of Maranatha CRC, Woodstock, Ontario, protests and appeals from the decision of Classis Chatham "to table the motion to deal with a communication from Good News CRC—a communication that informs Classis of the church's specific intention of placing into immediate practice her own individual decision to ordain and install women into the official-ecclesiastical offices of the church" (Minutes of Classis Chatham, 31 January 1995). We do hereby ask synod to (1) declare as inappropriate Classis Chatham's decision to postpone addressing an urgent ecclesiastical matter relating to Church Order Article 3 and (2) to rule out of order Overture 63 from Classis Chatham, an overture recommending that synod revise Article 3 of the Church Order. This overture was adopted in a prejudicial context clearly in favor of the communication sent to classis by Good News CRC.

Grounds:

- a. By tabling the motion from one meeting to the next, classis postponed action on a major issue that has already been defined by Article 3 of the Christian Reformed Church Order and reaffirmed by Synod 1994.
- b. By failing to give immediate response to Good News CRC, classis opened the door to possible confusion as to how churches must interpret and abide by the Church Order and synodical rulings.
- c. By deferring action on the Good News communication, classis appears to be giving prejudicial advantage to its own overture to revise Article 3 of the Church Order. Anticipating that synod may adopt its overture and thereby condone the actions of Good News CRC, Classis Chatham has delayed action on this issue and has thereby clearly violated the ruling of Synod 1994 and Article 3 of the Church Order as it presently stands.
- d. By delaying action on the Good News communication and by overruling synod to revise Article 3 of the Church Order, classis appears to contradict itself in that, on the one hand, it has submitted its overture to the proper ecclesiastical forum through which desired changes must be sought while, on the other hand, it has not expressed immediate official disapproval when a member church is ignoring the proper channels by which desired ecclesiastical change must be achieved.

Council of Maranatha CRC, Woodstock, ON
John Schut, clerk

Personal Appeals

1. Rev. John Van Hemert appeals from a decision of Classis Florida
2. Mr. and Mrs. Glenn Baas appeal from a decision of Classis Pacific Northwest

COMMUNICATIONS

Communication 1: Eastern Avenue CRC, Grand Rapids, MI

The council of Eastern Avenue Christian Reformed Church, Grand Rapids, Michigan, protests the decision of Synod 1994 which prohibits women from serving as elders, ministers, and evangelists.

Grounds:

1. Synod 1994, without regard for the texts' background or context, interpreted certain Scripture passages as prohibiting women from office and ignored other Scripture passages and themes which permit women to serve as elders, ministers, and evangelists, even though such passages and themes had been recognized by previous synods and study committees.
2. Synod 1994, in the grounds to its decision, improperly bound the consciences of churches and members on an issue for which there are substantial scriptural grounds in favor of women serving in all the offices of the church.
3. Synod 1994 offended the consciences of those who believe that it is an injustice to women, an affront to the Spirit of God who has gifted them, and a dishonor to the Lord who has called them when the church prohibits women from serving as elders, ministers, and evangelists.
4. Synod 1994, by disallowing local option regarding women in the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist, increased polarization within the denomination and unnecessarily forced some congregations into positions of ecclesiastical disobedience.

Therefore, the council of Eastern Avenue Christian Reformed Church informs synod of its disagreement with the decision of 1994 and communicates that it cannot in good conscience discontinue the terms of office of those women elected and presently serving as elder, nor can it close the offices to women in the future.

Council of Eastern Avenue CRC,
Grand Rapids, MI
Arie Leegwater, clerk

Communication 2: Neland Avenue CRC, Grand Rapids, MI

I. Focus of protest

A. Summary of intent: the council of Neland Avenue CRC of Grand Rapids, Michigan, protests

1. Synod 1994's claim to the power to impose on the churches binding interpretations of Scripture concerning a nonconfessional issue—without due process and by a mere majority vote of synod.
2. Synod 1994's claim to the right to bind the consciences of those not persuaded by the highly disputed interpretations of Scripture given as evidence.
3. Synod 1994's misuse and misapplication of the Lordship of Christ over conscience in an attempt to defend the above claims.

B. Though the entire package of Synod 1994's declarations on the issue of gender and office depends on the claimed right to impose binding interpretations of Scripture on the consciences of members, that claim comes into sharp focus at the end of those declarations, in the following pronouncement on conscience:

This decision will not bind Christian consciences in any inappropriate way. Christ is Lord of the conscience, and a Christian cannot claim freedom of conscience where the Scripture has spoken.

(*Acts of Synod 1994*, p. 516, Art. 80)

The above pronouncement does not deny intending to bind the consciences of all the members who believe that Synod 1994's statements on gender and office misinterpret the Scriptures. It simply claims that this binding of consciences has not been "inappropriate."

The pronouncement then claims that the Lordship of Christ over the conscience is what makes this binding of consciences by Synod appropriate. It justifies its claim to appropriateness by saying, "[A] Christian cannot claim freedom of conscience where Scripture has spoken."

II. Analysis

A. *The claimed right to make binding interpretations of Scripture on a nonconfessional issue*

Synod 1994's assumption that in the CRC system of church government a bare majority of the delegates of synod are empowered to make binding interpretations of Scripture on a nonconfessional issue whenever they decide to do so demands closer scrutiny. The denominational covenant which underlies denominational unity does not assign that kind of power to a session of synod, and the claim to exercise it should not be tolerated.

The synods of 1989 (*Acts of Synod 1989*, p. 433) and 1990 (*Acts of Synod 1990*, p. 650) correctly recognized that in the CRC the issue of gender and office is not a confessional issue but a Church Order issue, because nowhere in our denominational confessions is that issue addressed. That recognition was important, because in our confession-based denominational covenant, synod has a role of responsibility and authority on confessional matters that is different from its role outside the confessions.

In our Reformed system of church government, we have no hierarchical authority coming down from above with an unlimited power to decide all matters of faith and practice for the members. We have no one with that authority but Christ and the Spirit working through the Scriptures. In our Reformed system the basic authority is the consistory of the local church, and all denominational authority comes through delegation from that base. By that delegation local churches have covenanted to stand and act together on the common ground—our forms of unity, our confessions. We have bound ourselves to the

interpretations of Scripture found in the confessions and hold ourselves and one another accountable to them through our assemblies, including synod.

Beyond the range of our confessions, our denominational covenant has empowered no person or assembly to deliver binding interpretations of Scripture. In our denominational covenant, in order for an interpretation of Scripture to be binding on the churches, it must be added to our confessional base by due process. However, Synod 1994 took an interpretation of Scripture on a nonconfessional issue as it was prepared by an advisory committee, passed it by a 52 percent vote, and then claimed it to be binding on the churches.

Synod 1994 did not attempt to refute or even respond to prior declarations that the issue of gender and office is not a confessional issue. It simply overran the boundaries of our denominational covenant, claiming an authority to require all the churches to conform on a matter of Christian faith and practice beyond our confessional base.

On gender and office Synod 1994 was in an area where it lacked authority to impose regulations. It needed to persuade. It needed to persuade not just 52 percent of the delegates but the whole church that its interpretations of Scripture were sound. Synod obviously could not persuade a church with over twenty years of biblical studies on that subject unless it dealt responsively with those studies. It did not deal with them responsively and therefore could not possibly persuade. Instead, despite earlier warnings that the women-in-office issue is not a confessional matter, synod simply tried to bind the churches with a coercive authority it did and does not have.

Although the decisions of synod are considered settled and binding until they are shown to be in conflict with the Scriptures or with our form of church government, Synod 1994 boldly went where the basic framework of our form of church government does not give it jurisdiction. When a synod does that, churches that find themselves unable to comply are not in ecclesiastical disobedience. Instead, they are simply standing up for the denominational covenant that is the very framework of our unity.

B. The claimed synodical right to bind consciences

Synod 1994's claim to the right even to bind consciences carries the misunderstanding and misuse of synodical authority into an even more serious conflict. It is in conflict not only with our form of government but also with the biblical materials on conscience and the understanding of the role of conscience in our confessions and in the Reformed tradition.

Synods of 1990 and 1993 recognized the long-standing presence in the denomination of two interpretations of the scriptural materials on the issue of gender and office as well as the strongly held conscientious convictions on both sides. Those synods recognized that intense denominational study by qualified and committed Christian scholars over a period of more than twenty years had failed to resolve the differences or persuade either side of the other position. Those synods saw that it was not a confessional issue that must be resolved, was not of such a nature as to put faith at risk, and that the biblical evidences were not so compelling on either side as to justify trying to impose the convictions of one side on the consciences of the other. They rightly saw that it was the kind of case where freedom of conscience should be exercised and the conscience of neither side should be permitted to lord it over the conscience of the other.

However, without any responsible new study in which the members of the denomination could participate, Synod 1994 simply imposed the convictions of one side on the other. The 52 percent to 48 percent vote proved again to anyone with discernment that highly disputed interpretations of Scripture were involved. Yet the 52 percent assumed the right to impose their convictions not only on the 48 percent of their fellow synodical delegates who were not persuaded but also on the membership of the whole denomination.

The 1994 delegates who claimed the right to impose on the consciences of others what they saw as the apostle Paul's view of gender and office failed to heed what Paul says elsewhere on how to treat the consciences of other believers on disputed matters.

In I Corinthians 8, 9, and 10 and Romans 14, Paul calls us to respect the Lordship of Christ over the consciences of one another, particularly when dealing with disputed matters. Paul warns us that in those matters, precisely because of Christ's Lordship over conscience, we must refrain from imposing our consciences on others, from pressuring those with a different testimony of conscience to act contrary to their consciences, from permitting our consciences to stand in judgment of the servant of another master (Christ), and from letting one's own freedom of conscience be judged by another person's conscience. Paul shows that even when we are sure that someone else's conscience is mistaken in its testimony as to what Christ wants of us (as Paul was sure that some were mistaken on the issue of eating meats offered to idols), even then we must not pressure that person to violate conscience, mistaken though it be. Paul shows that we must deal carefully with our own consciences and those of one another because each believer's relationship to our Lord is intimately entwined with how that person's conscience responds to his Lordship.

C. The claim that there is no freedom of conscience because Christ is Lord of the conscience and Scripture has spoken

Synod 1994 defends its attempt to bind consciences with a strange logic. It claims that it is appropriate to bind the consciences of believers because "Christ is the Lord of the conscience, and a Christian cannot claim freedom of conscience where the Scripture has spoken." What is strange about the above defense is that the biblical and historical concepts of the Lordship of Christ over the conscience and freedom of conscience for believers are so misunderstood and so misused that they appear to defend what those concepts actually forbid.

After first treating its interpretation of the Bible as if it were the Bible itself, Synod 1994 then goes on to treat the Lordship of Christ over the conscience as if it were the same as synod's lordship over the conscience. But the biblical concept of the Lordship of Christ over the conscience has precisely the opposite point. When we truly yield our hearts to Christ, we yield them to him as our only Lord. We yield to him the sole right to Lordship over our consciences. It is precisely out of respect for Christ's Lordship over the conscience that we should try neither to lord it over the consciences of one another nor permit anyone but Christ to lord it over our consciences. As Calvin so clearly explains, yielding that lordship to someone else puts someone else on the throne that belongs to Christ. For the same reason, lording it over the conscience of someone else not only demeans and wrongs that person, but it demeans the Lordship of Christ by intruding into a realm that belongs only to Christ (see Calvin's *Institutes*, Bk. 3.19 and Bk. 4.10; also see Belgic Confession Art. 32).

A second confusion appears in synod's declaration that "a Christian cannot claim freedom of conscience where the Scripture has spoken." Again, the historic meaning of our "freedom of conscience" seems to be turned on its head. Of course a Christian's freedom of conscience is not freedom from Christ nor from the Scripture. But it is about freedom from any other lordship over our consciences, including that of synod, precisely because Christ is Lord. In no way does the Lordship of Christ over the consciences of believers make "appropriate" Synod 1994's binding of consciences. Instead, it does the opposite. Synod 1994's pronouncement on conscience has misled the denomination on how the consciences of believers should relate to Christ, to Scripture, to the consciences of other believers, and to synodical decisions.

The key conscience question before Synod 1994 was not whether believers can claim freedom from Scripture. At Synod 1994 no one was asking for or claiming freedom from the Lordship of Christ or from the authority of Scripture. The key conscience issue was freedom of conscience from any lordship other than that of Christ and Scripture. The key conscience issue was whether synod may bind and lord it over the consciences of believers with a highly disputed interpretation of Scripture. The key question was whether the freedom of conscience which flows from the Lordship of Christ would be intruded upon. Synod 1994 confused the question, confused the meaning of the Lordship of Christ over conscience, and intruded with very heavy boots where it should not have walked.

III. Request to sustain this protest

We ask synod to sustain this protest against the action of Synod 1994 on the following grounds:

A. Synod 1994 exceeded the powers given synod under our denominational covenant when it tried to impose binding interpretations of Scripture on matters beyond the range of our confessions—without due process and by a mere majority vote of the delegates of synod.

B. Synod 1994 acted in conflict with a biblical and Reformed view of how the Christian conscience should relate to Christ and the Scriptures and with how the conscience should be treated in disputed matters when it claimed the right to bind consciences with highly disputed interpretations of Scripture, treating those highly disputed interpretations as if they were the Bible itself.

C. Synod 1994 misunderstood and misused both the Lordship of Christ over the conscience and the Christian's freedom of conscience in Christ when it defended its attempt to bind consciences with this declaration: "Christ is Lord of the conscience, and a Christian cannot claim freedom of conscience where the Scripture has spoken. Since the Lordship of Christ over the conscience is the basis for a Christian's freedom of conscience and since Christian freedom of conscience in Christ actually means freedom from any lordship other than that of Christ, these biblical concepts prohibit rather than defend synodical binding of consciences (see Belgic Confession Art. 32).

Council of Neland Avenue CRC,
Grand Rapids, MI
Ronald J. Sjoerdsma, clerk

Note: This protest was presented to Classis Grand Rapids East, which endorsed the sentiment of the protest but did not adopt it as its own.

Communication 3: Third CRC, Kalamazoo, MI

I. Introduction

The council of Third Christian Reformed Church, Kalamazoo, Michigan, hereby registers its protest against the decision of Synod 1994 regarding women in ecclesiastical office. It was the conclusion of that synod that the Bible "clearly" prohibits women from serving as elders and pastors in our churches. In this communication we wish to demonstrate that many Christians in our communion have read the will of God otherwise. We base our conclusion on three separate and distinct lines of argumentation concerning deficiencies in synod's decision:

- A. There was an apparent disregard of the 1973 report entitled "Ecclesiastical Office and Ordination."
- B. There was a total disregard for the similarities between the slavery issue and the women's struggle for both civil and ecclesiastical recognition.
- C. There was a disregard for our cultural and social context in contrast to the cultural and social context of the early church.

II. "Ecclesiastical Office and Ordination"

Synod 1973 accepted a comprehensive (eighty-one page) biblically based report entitled "Ecclesiastical Office and Ordination" (*Acts of Synod 1973*, pp. 61-64, 635-716). This report was authored by Dr. John H. Primus, Dr. Anthony A. Hoekema, Rev. William P. Brink, Dr. Willis De Boer, Dr. John H. Kromminga, Dr. Clarence Vos, and Dr. Louis A. Vos, all highly respected men in our denomination. Aspects of this report which we find of particular significance for the issue of women in office are the following:

- A. In 1973 it was made abundantly clear that the word *diakonia* in the Greek New Testament refers to "functions," "service," or "ministry." It never means "offices," suggesting rank or power, exalted status or dignity (p. 650).
- B. The report observes that the King James and American Standard Versions have made an error in translation of the original, using the word "rule" as expressing the duty of the elders and pastor when "care" or "guardianship" would have been more accurate (pp. 702-03).
- C. The committee concluded that Christ himself saw his authority as inherent in his being the chief servant (Mark 10: 43-45) and warned his followers to avoid exercising authority in the church like that exercised in the secular government or the synagogues (Matt. 20: 25-28). Authority in the church is servant oriented, not hierarchial, ruling authority (p. 704).
- D. It is especially relevant to observe that the idea of seeing in the rule of the elders the kingship of Christ, as found in paragraph three of the original form for the ordination of elders and deacons, was questioned as scripturally unwarranted by this committee. In fact, the committee suggested a revision of that

form because of our insistence on seeing elders and pastors as rulers (pp. 712-13). This revision was made, and the revised form is in the new *Psalter Hymnal*. It might be profitable to find out how many churches are still using the original form.

E. It is important to note from the report that, when attributing "authority over" to the followers of Christ, the New Testament speaks only of their "authority over" evil, **never** of their "authority over" other believers (p. 704, emphasis added; cf. Luke 9:1; Luke 10:19).

F. Significantly, the report calls attention to a "tendency in Reformed circles to add a veneer of officiousness to what is essentially a specialized service in the church . . . this tendency takes the form of an uncritical acceptance of growing traditions . . . it involves an inclination to lend biblical weight to what are essentially practical considerations of good order" (p. 688). Several examples are cited of practices widely used in the CRC, such as the use of the translation "office" for *diakonia*, the laying on of hands for ministers only, by ministers only, at ordinations, and the use of terms such as *dominie* and *reverend*, which obscure the servant role of the pastor (pp. 661, 688-89).

G. The report goes so far as to say that "it is for their work's sake that office-bearers are to be esteemed; and **when they are not faithful to their work they are unworthy of office and are not to be followed**" (p. 710, emphasis added). The report nowhere suggests unconditional obedience to the "rule" of the officers in the church.

In the light of these points we find it striking that Synod 1994 made a decision containing no reference to any relationship between ministry or the functions of the church today and the present office of elder or pastor. There was no consideration of how the church can best serve its members and the community in the 1990s.

III. Similarities between the slavery issue and the women's issue

The decision of Synod 1994 summarily dismissed the analogy between the slavery and the women-in-office issues (*Acts of Synod 1994*, pp. 507-08). Willard W. Swartley, in *Slavery, Sabbath, War, and Women—Case Issues in Biblical Interpretation* (Harold Press, Scottdale, PA, 1983), has presented an exhaustive study and comparison of biblical interpretations on the four issues mentioned in the title, demonstrating that in all four cases the Bible gives mixed signals. At least two opposing positions held by devout Christians led by the Holy Spirit can be defended. This apparent contradiction is not due to the nature of God, but to the fact that divine revelation comes into and through history and culture, and we all tend to use the Bible to reinforce our own beliefs (pp. 202-03).

Swartley equates pro-slavery arguments with the hierarchical arguments of those who oppose women in office and abolitionist arguments with the arguments of liberationists, those who favor women in office (pp. 198-204). The following comparisons are some of the conclusions he has reached in his extensive study:

Pro-slavery/Hierarchical**Abolitionist/Liberationist**

- A. Slaves and women are told to submit by God.
- B. Abuses in the present system must be corrected.
- C. Both use Paul as a final appeal (1 Tim. 6:1-6; 1 Tim. 2:11-15).
- D. Specific texts carry much weight.
- E. Both get tangled up in debates on inerrancy, inspiration, and infallibility.
- F. They see their institutions rooted in God's eternal decrees or creation (p. 33).

- Submission is a Christian virtue for all.
- The institutions must crumble—both slavery and the subordination of women as women.
- A final appeal is made to the Galatians 3:28 passage of Paul.
- A greater weight is given to sweeping moral principles.
- There is no accusation of denial of biblical authority.
- They see creation itself as liberating men and women.

G. Swartley's study quotes the following (pp. 49-50), showing how clearly the pro-slavery persons saw the connection between freeing the slaves and losing control of "their women."

"THE HISTORY OF INTERPRETATION FURNISHES NO EXAMPLES OF MORE WILLFUL AND VIOLENT PERVERSIONS OF THE SACRED TEXT THAN ARE TO BE FOUND IN THE WRITINGS OF THE ABOLITIONISTS. THEY SEEM TO CONSIDER THEMSELVES ABOVE THE SCRIPTURES: AND WHEN THEY PUT THEMSELVES ABOVE THE LAW OF GOD, IT IS NOT WONDERFUL THAT THEY SHOULD DISREGARD THE LAW OF MEN. Significant manifestations of the result of this disposition to consider their own light a surer guide than the word of God, are visible in the anarchical opinions about human governments, civil and ecclesiastical, and on the rights of women, which have found appropriate advocates in the abolition publications. Let these principles be carried out, and there is an end to all social subordination, to all security for life and property, to all guarantee for public or domestic virtue. If our women are to be emancipated from subjection to the law which God has imposed upon them, if they are to quit the retirement of domestic life, where they preside in stillness over the character and destiny of society; if they are to come forth in the liberty of men, to be our agents, our public lecturers, our committee-men, our rulers, if, in studied insult to the authority of God, we are to renounce in the marriage contract all claim to obedience, we shall soon have a country . . . from which all order and all virtue would speedily be banished. There is no form of human excellence before which we bow with profounder deference than that which appears in a delicate woman, adorned with the inward graces and devoted to the peculiar duties of her sex; and there is no deformity of human character from which we turn with deeper loathing than from a woman forgetful of her nature, and clamorous for the vocation and rights of men. It would not be fair to object to the abolitionists [in this way] . . . were not these opinions the legitimate consequences of their own principles. Their women do but apply their own method of dealing with Scripture to another case."

H. In a recent historical documentary on the life of Frederick Douglass, the freed slave turned orator ("When the Lion Wrote History," Nov. 2, 1994, WGVU and WTTW), the women of the North were credited with advancing the Abolitionist cause because they saw their emancipation caught up with that of the slaves. It was, however, argued by some that the black male should not be

allowed to vote because then, eventually, women would be allowed to vote. History proved the women right. The first promotion of women's suffrage emerged directly from the nineteenth-century Abolitionist movement.

IV. Our cultural and social context today

Calvin allowed for changes in the offices "as the need of the times demands." The offices arose under the guidance of the Spirit after a need in a particular time and place demanded them. The offices were functional in character, fitting the culture and history of each church (*Acts of Synod 1973*, p. 683). The best word to describe them is "fluid."

What, then, is the context of our times?

A. Our present-day society is characterized by

- divorce
- alienation
- addictions
- children murdering children
- one-parent families
- spouse assault
- abuse so prevalent among us that a new position was created by Synod 1994 to deal with the problem

B. Rarely does a secular agency offer a one-sex counseling staff, nor can the church be content to do so if it means to minister seriously to the needs of its members and its community. How many men would go to a woman about an abuse problem? How many women would be comfortable going to a man?

C. Women can perform a unique service, as attested to by the following churches (*Acts of Synod 1973*, p. 583):

1. The Reformed Church of South Africa, which "speaks very highly of women who try to combat feelings of estrangement and loneliness by visits and guided friendships, and who for many, pave the way back to the fellowship of the church of Jesus Christ."
2. The Reformed Church of Argentina, the Christian Church of Sumba, the Gereformeerde Kerken in the Netherlands have all opened the offices because of the spiritual, social, and economic conditions in which the church today is called to minister. They find that women, with their God-given unique identity, have enriched and broadened the understanding and exercise of the offices.

Our organizational model becomes a testimony to the world. At a time when spouse abuse is rampant the church is obligated to demonstrate men and women complementing each other in the service of the Lord as redeemed equals. Our present official position, denying to women the right to be ordained to all the offices in Christ's church, is hardly an effective contemporary witness. In fact, our denominational posture regarding the use of women's gifts in the church, vacillating among "yes," "no," "wait," "maybe," and "never," presents quite a different testimony. If such vacillation occurs in a family, it is considered abusive. Many women in the Christian Reformed regard our institutional flip-flops in the same way.

V. Conclusion

The 1973 study concludes, "Because the Scriptures do not present a definitive, exhaustive description of the special ministries of the church, and because these special ministries as described in Scripture are functional in character, the Bible leaves room for the church to adapt or modify its special ministries in order to carry out its service to Christ effectively in all circumstances" (p. 715). Some churches within the denomination have felt led by the Holy Spirit to use the unique gifts of women in their councils so they may better serve the church, the community, and their Lord. These churches seem to be in step with the spirit of Christ in the administration of the offices of the church (elder/pastor/evangelist).

Local option should be the way to recognize cultural differences in our communion. Imagine that Paul had, by mistake, sent the letter of II Corinthians to the church at Phillipi or the letter to the Ephesians to the church at Rome. Mass confusion would have resulted (cf. Swartley, p. 188). Similar confusion would follow any action of synod *requiring* all churches to have women elders/pastors/evangelists.

Another writer has said it well: "May the Lord of the Church not find us on the Judgment Day watching a sinking ship, hearing the desperate cries of the drowning passengers, but arguing about just who on the shore should go to rescue them!"

Council of Third CRC, Kalamazoo, MI
Nelson J. Grit, clerk

Communication 4: Maranatha CRC, Woodstock, ON

The council of Maranatha CRC, Woodstock, Ontario, encourages synod to exercise great restraint and careful evaluation before adopting Classis Chatham's overture to revise Church Order Article 3 to read as follows: "All confessing members of the church who meet the biblical requirements are eligible for the offices of minister, elder, deacon, and evangelist. However, any ecclesiastical assembly retains the right to seat only male officebearers when conscience and biblical interpretation so guide it."

Grounds:

1. This overture was adopted in the classical context of inconsistency and prejudice relative to correct ecclesiastical procedure (see appeal of Maranatha CRC).
2. This overture, if adopted by synod, would have the tendency to add to the already existent misgivings and confusion within our churches and would allow for serious challenge to the credibility of former synodical rulings and directives.
3. This overture offers no specific guidelines as to how all the various ecclesiastical assemblies are to reconcile the differences that could arise over "conscience and biblical interpretation" as it applies to whether delegates should be seated or not.

Council of Maranatha CRC, Woodstock, ON
John Schut, clerk

Communication 5: Classis Grand Rapids East

Classis Grand Rapids East, in session September 15, 1994, passed the following motions and grounds:

Classis Grand Rapids East, recognizing synod's legal right to insist on the retention of the word "male" in Church Order Article 3-a, nevertheless acknowledges its congregations' moral right of conscientious objection (with any attendant consequences) to that insistence with respect to the office of elder.

Classis further resolves not to attempt to force its congregations to comply with the decision of Synod 1994 to "(a) urge all councils which have ordained women elders . . . to release them from office by June 1, 1995, and (b) urge all councils not to ordain any additional women elders. . . ."

Grounds:

1. Freedom of conscience. Freedom of conscience may be claimed wherever scriptural teaching cannot be clearly determined.
 - a. What Synod 1994 presented as the biblical teaching that prevented it from ratifying the proposed change in Church Order Article 3 is not persuasive to many in the Reformed tradition (see *Acts of Synod 1994*, p. 514, Ground a).
 - b. What is referred to as "the clear teaching of Scripture" that "prohibits women holding the offices of minister, elder, and evangelist" apparently was not clear to almost half the delegates to Synod 1994, nor was it clear to many previous synodical study committees and assemblies (see *Acts of Synod 1994*, p. 514, Ground b).
 - c. Synod 1989 stated that the issue of the ordination of women "has not been regarded as a creedal matter, but as a church order matter" (*Acts of Synod 1989*, p. 433, Art. 15). Synod 1990 judged that no "clear biblical and confessional grounds for extending the 'headship principle' from marriage to the church" had been presented (*Acts of Synod 1990*, p. 654, Art. 92). Synod 1993 declared that "synod may not bind the conscience where Scripture does not bind" (*Acts of Synod 1993*, p. 596, Art. 95). Synod 1994's decision was not informed by a synodical study-committee report, nor did it present any new argumentation not previously considered by the church.
 - d. The Belgic Confession, in Article 7, says, "Therefore we must not consider human writings—no matter how holy their authors may have been—equal to the divine writings; nor may we put custom, nor the majority, nor age, nor the passage of time or persons, nor councils, decrees, or official decisions above the truth of God, for truth is above everything else."
 - e. Synod's decisions on women in ecclesiastical office inappropriately bind Christian consciences (see *Acts of Synod 1994*, p. 516, Ground g). A similar binding appears in the May 30, 1994, papal letter to the Roman Catholic bishops. This kind of action fits Catholic hierarchical government but violates the spirit of Reformed polity.
 - f. Synod should not coerce involuntary compliance with debatable positions on matters of church polity but should instead encourage submission to a higher authority. Synod 1994 itself recognized that

broader assemblies act with greater prudence when they "urge" but do not "instruct" or compel.

2. Hermeneutics. The hermeneutic that underlies the interpretation of biblical texts presented in the grounds attached to Synod 1994's decision not to ratify the proposed change in Church Order Article 3 fails to reflect the historic Reformed tradition of interpreting Scripture (see *Acts of Synod 1994*, pp. 506-07, Grounds b, c).
 - a. Reformed hermeneutics hesitates to base a particular teaching on a single pivotal text (I Tim. 2:11-12) if the meaning of that text is not entirely clear. Rather, it prefers to find such a teaching confirmed by the whole of biblical teaching (analogy of Scripture).
 - b. The choice of I Timothy 2:11-12 as a pivotal text suggests that for many the main element of office is power rather than service (see *Acts of Synod 1973*, p. 63; Mark 10:42-45; Luke 22:25-27).
 - c. Synod, by interpreting its "proof texts" (see *Acts of Synod 1994*, pp. 506-07, Grounds a, b, c) in the light of a subtheme of biblical revelation (the subordination of women as a result of the fall), ignored the need to examine the flow of redemptive history as a whole. Used consistently, such a hermeneutic could easily lead to a rejection of the doctrine of the trinity, infant baptism, amillennialism, and other Reformed teachings.
 - d. Synod's method of interpretation was subjectively selective. If it may be claimed, for example, that Scripture "prohibits women holding the offices of minister, elder, and evangelist" partly because "Jesus chose only male apostles" (see *Acts of Synod 1994*, p. 507, Ground c), one may also claim that Scripture prohibits non-Jewish Christians from holding office, prohibits women from attending the Lord's Supper, and insists that the seventh day of the week is the mandated time for worship.
 - e. A very similar method of interpretation has been used to oppose the role of women with regard to other practices:
 - participating in civic and political life (women's suffrage);
 - serving as deacons;
 - voting in congregational meetings;
 - removing their head covering in worship;
 - sitting in a place of their own choice in worship;
 - praying and singing in the church; and
 - teaching in the church's educational programs.
 - f. Synod's method of interpretation failed to take into account the diverse cultures to which the Scriptures are applied. In contrast, the apostle Paul himself clearly referred to a particular cultural setting (Ephesus, pagan religious practices, priestesses). Although the gospel retains its authenticity and may not be "relativized," it is applied and heard differently in different contexts. For example, if Synod 1994 were right about this "clear teaching of Scripture," it would follow that the Chinese church's use of women in leadership positions, the Wesleyan Methodist practice of female circuit riders, and the sending of a Johanna Veenstra to Christian Reformed mission fields in Africa were all contrary to God's will.
 - g. The arguments regarding women in ecclesiastical office parallel those regarding slavery (see *Acts of Synod 1994*, pp. 507-08, Ground c). The

New Testament permits slavery, but Christians today use a cumulative argument, based on the general analogy of Scripture, to say that slavery is impermissible. Similarly, the New Testament in certain circumstances prohibits women from "teaching and having authority over men." Christians today, however, use a cumulative argument, based on the general analogy of Scripture, to say that whatever this statement may have meant in the early church, it does not prohibit women today from serving in the ordained positions of elder, minister, and evangelist because women have different qualifications and hold a different place in our society.

3. Biblical teaching. Much biblical teaching can legitimately be interpreted as pointing in the direction of permitting women to be ministers, elders, and evangelists. Though this teaching may not persuade every Christian Reformed Church member, it does persuade many.
 - a. Genesis 1:26-28 teaches that God created human beings in his image as male and female and gave them both dominion and a "cultural mandate." Authority fits the man and the woman equally well. "Genesis 1 knows of no restricted dominion for females or extended dominion for males" (*Acts of Synod 1978*, pp. 503, 502-04, 530; *Acts of Synod 1973*, pp. 518-20, 585).
 - b. Genesis 2:18-24 teaches the social relationship God established between man and woman. It is a "parity" that "involves an equality of worth. The woman is not created as man's servant, but she will have her own role to play" (*Acts of Synod 1978*, p. 505). The woman is man's "suitable helper" in a relationship of parity. The Hebrew word 'ezer does not connote a subordinate place; 'ezer repeatedly refers to God as our helper (e.g., Ps. 37:40; Ps. 46:5).
 - c. Genesis 3:16 teaches that the disruption in this relationship of parity between man and woman is a consequence of the fallen creation. But the very essence of the gospel is that the results of the fall be alleviated or even removed.
 - d. The Old Testament, even after the story of the fall, provides glimpses of that original parity between male and female. Women occupied positions of leadership in Israel, e.g., Miriam (called a leader in Mic. 6:4), Deborah (Judg. 4:4ff.), and Huidah (II Kings 22:14). In the Old Testament God protected women by law, he addressed the wives of the patriarchs, and women took part in worship.
 - e. Many prophetic passages look forward to the restoration of the original parity of men and women (e.g., Num. 11:29; Ezek. 36:27). Joel 2:28-29 teaches that "afterward" God will pour out his Spirit on "all people," "both men and women," and that both "sons and daughters will prophesy."
 - f. The New Testament gospels point to a new status for women in the life and practice of the "new community in Christ."

Matthew includes Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, Bathsheba, and Mary in Jesus' genealogy (Matt. 1). He reports that women who followed Jesus not only witnessed the crucifixion (Matt. 27:55-56) (unlike the male disciples) but also were the first to see the risen Jesus and to be commissioned by him to spread the news (Matt. 28:1-10).

Luke demonstrates that women were agents of special revelation: Mary's and Elizabeth's prophetic utterances were recorded and remain instructive today (Luke 1:39-56). He also records Jesus' observation that Mary, who sat at his feet and listened to his teachings while Martha "served," had "chosen what is better" (Luke 10:38-42).

John reports not only that Jesus, violating Jewish custom, ministered to the Samaritan woman at the well, but also that the woman's testimony caused many to believe in him (John 4:7-42).

- g. Joel's prophecy was fulfilled at Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4, 14-21)—women received the Holy Spirit and attendant gifts. They, along with the men, were charged to be Jesus' witnesses "to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8-14). They too were prominent as first converts and as members of the church (Acts 16:14; 17:34). They served as "disciples" in doing deeds of mercy (Acts 9:36). They "prophesied" (Acts 21:9) and were persecuted for their testimony (Acts 8:3).
- h. Women collaborated with Paul not only in founding churches on his missionary journeys but also in witnessing and working in the congregations he began.

Lydia, an affluent business woman, was his first convert in Europe (Acts 16:14-15). **Priscilla**, along with her husband Aquila, provided a home for Paul and also taught the preacher Apollos (Acts 18:1-3, 18-26). Paul later refers to her as a "fellow worker in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 16:3). **Phoebe**, a deacon, is commended by Paul to the Roman church (Rom. 16:1). **Euodia** and **Syntychē** are described by Paul as those who "contended at [his] side in the cause of the gospel" (Phil. 4:2-3).

Further, women prayed and prophesied (1 Cor. 11:5). Widows were "placed on a list," and qualifications for those who held this office were carefully circumscribed (1 Tim. 5:9-11).

- i. Galatians 3:28 teaches that "there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." This great redemption theme is found in many places in the New Testament (e.g., John 17:20-21; 1 Cor. 10:16-17).
- j. Paul teaches that Christ is "our peace" and has "destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility" (Eph. 2:14-22). The immediate reference is to the wall that divided Jew and gentile. However, when Ephesians 2:14-22 is read together with Ephesians 5:21 and Galatians 3:28, it is a reasonable inference from this teaching that Christ destroyed the "wall of hostility" (erected as a consequence of the fall) between male and female. Further, Paul teaches that God draws men and women together in building a "dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit" and equips them equally for the edification of all (Rom. 12:3-8; 1 Cor. 12:4-31; Eph. 4:1-16).
- k. While people often argue that Paul (in 1 Tim. 2:11-15) prohibits women from "teaching or having authority over a man" and that he "grounds this prohibition in the creation order" (see *Acts of Synod 1994*, pp. 506-07, Ground b), it is not clear that this apostolic teaching was meant to universally bind the church of all ages and places. After all, people do not assume that Paul's remarks (in the same letter) about proper dress, "lifting up holy hands in prayer," and specified care for the elderly (1 Tim. 2:8-9; 5:4) still apply today.

Similarly, it is not clear that parallel passages (I Cor. 11:2-16 and I Cor. 14:33-35) in which Paul restricts women to wearing a veil and "not speaking in church" are meant to bind the church today (cf. John Calvin's *Commentary* on I Corinthians 14:35: "However, the discerning reader should come to the decision, that the things which Paul is dealing with here are indifferent, neither good nor bad; and that they are forbidden only because they work against seemliness and edification").

1. The apostolic teaching in I Timothy 2:11-15 assumes an archaic patriarchal society and gives guidance in that context. The structure of our society is different, and we must make adjustments to respond appropriately to the intent of Scripture.
4. Ecumenical concerns. Messages obtained through ecumenical contacts are mixed (see *Acts of Synod 1994*, p. 508, Ground d).
 - a. It is true that NAPARC churches advised the CRC not to open the offices of minister and elder to women. However, it is equally true that other churches in ecclesiastical fellowship with the CRC have opened all offices to women and would encourage the CRC to do so. These churches are the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, the Reformed Church in America, and the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (GKN).
 - b. The statement of the Reformed Ecumenical Synod 1968 "that it is the plain and obvious teaching of Scripture that women are excluded from the office of ruling and preaching elders" is obviously a preliminary finding. The RES next requested all member churches, including the CRC, "to examine in the light of Scripture the general Reformed practice of excluding women from the various ordained offices in the church," partly because "the views and practices of member-churches of the RES differ markedly on these matters" (*Acts of Synod 1970*, p. 119, Art. 167; cf. *Acts of the Reformed Ecumenical Synod 1968*, pp. 156-59). The 1968 statement cannot be used as an expression of current opinion within the Reformed Ecumenical Council (formerly the RES).
 - c. Although it may be said that "the Catholic and Reformed churches for over nineteen hundred years read the Scriptures" to forbid women's ordination, it is abundantly clear that during the last decade the church of Christ generally has not found unity of practice (e.g., the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican [Episcopal] Church). Many indigenous churches, however, have naturally embraced the "partnership" model of ministry, are fully utilizing the gifts of women, and, as a consequence, often transform society at large.
5. Synod 1993 and the Church Order. It is not true that Synod 1993 "acted contrary to the Church Order when it reconsidered and revised the 1992 decision regarding women in ecclesiastical office" (see *Acts of Synod 1994*, p. 508, Ground e).
 - a. Synod—and synod alone—has the right to decide whether grounds offered to reconsider and/or revise the decision of a previous synodical assembly are "new and sufficient." Synod 1993 could have made the judgment, in keeping with Church Order Article 31, that grounds offered were *not* "new and sufficient," but it chose not to make that judgment.

- b. In any case, Rules for Synodical Procedure, in the section on "Matters Legally Before Synod," states clearly that "all other matters may be considered which synod by a majority vote declares acceptable" (V, B, 12).
6. Synod and local option. Churches that do conscientiously object to synodical decisions on women in office have continued to support classical and denominational ministries and are anxious to retain the Reformed system of church government. They do not advocate anarchy, nor do they reject accountability to broader assemblies in appropriate areas. Rather, they plead for local option in the area of *adiaphora*, a Reformed principle upheld since the time of John Calvin (cf. *Institutes of the Christian Religion* IV.10.32: "... we should refer the entire use and purpose of observances to the upbuilding of the church. If the church requires it, we may not only without any offense allow something to be changed but permit any observances previously in use among us to be abandoned").
 - a. In the CRC the right to decide who is qualified for the office of elder rests with the local church. Synod 1965's insertion of the word "male" in Article 3 of the Church Order has limited congregations in their judgments.
 - b. The CRC has consistently dealt with debatable nondoctrinal issues in a way that respects the local church's right to choose. Such issues include the use of
 - the English language,
 - individual cups during communion,
 - the precise order of worship,
 - hymns in the worship service,
 - choirs in the worship service, and
 - organs and other instruments in worship,
 as well as
 - the right of women to vote at congregational meetings,
 - the ordination of women as deacons,
 - the baptism of children adopted by believing parents, and
 - many other matters.
7. The CRC's ministry. Nothing may be allowed to stand in the way of the CRC's ministry of reconciliation (II Cor. 5:18) in and to the world.
 - a. Since women as well as men are new creatures in Christ (II Cor. 5:17), all barriers placed against women and the services they can render the church contradict the gospel and seriously distort the church's image in the world as well as the image of the Christ it proclaims.
 - b. The church in the United States and Canada may not aid and abet but must firmly challenge all discrimination against women that remains in various contexts, and it must do so in deed as well as word (James 2:14-18).
 - c. Millions of women the world over suffer not only from hunger and poverty but also from patriarchal cruelty that diminishes them as imagebearers of God. The church must lead the way in removing any barriers that prevent women from becoming all God wants them to be.
8. The use of gifts. The church needs all gifts that Christ has bestowed. In fact, the failure of the church to use these gifts in every area of its life and work falls far short of good stewardship and grieves the Spirit of God.

- a. Jesus' harshest judgments are for those who fail to use their talents (Matt. 25:14-30). He calls his followers "friends" rather than "servants" and then appoints all to "go and bear fruit" (John 15:14-16).
- b. Paul writes that "to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good" and that "we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body" and "given the one Spirit to drink." Therefore, "the eye cannot say to the hand, 'I don't need you!'" (I Cor. 12:1-27; cf. also Eph. 4:7; I Pet. 4:10).
- c. The Heidelberg Catechism teaches that "believers one and all, as members of this community, share in Christ and in all his treasures and gifts" and that "each member should consider it his duty to use his gifts readily and cheerfully for the service and enrichment of the other members" (L.D. 21).
- d. The church must be credible when it says to women as well as men, upon public profession of faith, that it welcomes them to "full participation in the life of the church," to "its responsibilities, its joys, and its sufferings," and assures them that "all the privileges of full communion" are now theirs (Form for Public Profession of Faith, *Psalter Hymnal*, p. 964).
- e. The Christian community and society in general no longer educate women differently from men. With thousands of dollars and hours and years invested in education by today's women, the church is foolish and perhaps even sinful in denying women the opportunities to use any or all their gifts wherever possible.
- f. Full use of women's gifts in the office of elder has been a significant blessing in many areas of pastoral care, not the least of which is ministry to victims of abuse. Using women's gifts while withholding concomitant authority demeans women and contradicts a Reformed understanding of office. In their functioning, women as well as men are agents of Christ's ministry among us.

Classis Grand Rapids East
Philip R. Lucasse, stated clerk

Communication 6: First CRC, Grand Rapids, MI

The council of First Christian Reformed Church, Grand Rapids, Michigan, wishes to inform synod of an action we were led to take after Synod 1994.

We had waited with our election of officebearers for synod to complete its consideration of the 1993 change in Church Order Article 3. When synod failed to ratify that decision, we took time to consider our options.

We met as council and as congregation. We requested a special meeting of Classis Grand Rapids East to serve us with advice. We invited letters from the congregation and initiated discussion. After listening to the classis and to our members, after reading letters and reports, after surveying and praying, we were led to the decision to ordain our associate elders, whom we had hoped to ordain in June after the expected ratification of the change in Church Order Article 3. Two of these associates are women who have already ministered effectively in their months on council as associate elders. We also decided to proceed with our

normal elections in the spring and to nominate for office without regard to gender.

We have made these decisions not in a spirit of defiance but in obedience to the Scriptures, which urge us to use the gifts God pours on his sons and daughters. We have been convinced for some time that God wants us to make broader use of the skills and insights he gives to our female members. Our ministry in this hurting neighborhood has benefited from the teamwork of male and female deacons. We rejoiced when the synods of 1990 and 1993 opened the office of elder to women as well. We delayed elections twice to wait for synod's action. And we waited with taking this step in 1991 and in 1993. But we found that we could not believe, on the one hand, that Scripture speaks of men and women being made in God's image, receiving the gifts, and using them in the New Testament church and continue, on the other hand, to wait for annual twists and turns in synodical decisions.

We intend to continue to support the work of our denomination fully. We appreciate your understanding and support in this difficult time.

Council of First CRC, Grand Rapids, MI
Martin Vande Guchte, clerk

Communication 7: North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council

NORTH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN AND REFORMED COUNCIL

Dr. Myung Doh Kim, Chairman
1901 W. 186th Street
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The Rev. Donald J. Duff, Secretary
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December 2, 1994

The Christian Reformed Church of North America
Dr. David H. Engelhard, General Secretary
2850 Kalamazoo Ave. S.E.
Grand Rapids, MI 49506

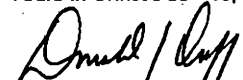
Dear Brethren,

The Twentieth Meeting of the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council, meeting in Philadelphia on November 2, 1994 passed the following resolution:

That this meeting of NAPARC express to the Christian Reformed Church in North America its deep thanks to God for the decision to which he led the CRC Synod 1994 to disapprove the ordination of women to ruling and teaching office in the church and to express the devout hope that that position will not change.

May the Lord continue to bless the Christian Reformed Church as he has done so richly in the past.

Yours in Christ's service,



Donald J. Duff, Secretary

Communication 8: Platte CRC, Platte, SD

In response to the report of the Committee to Study Structure for Ministry in Canada, we would ask synod to take note of the following communication:

Many of the observations in this report are enlightening, and they deserve greater exposure in the churches. It is fully understandable, given the percentages of Canadians and Americans in the CRC (28 percent Canadian), that all too often the majority has overlooked the particular needs of the 241 Canadian churches and their ministries in Canada.

However, three elements of this report give reason to question the intended direction of these recommendations:

First. Beginning with II, B, it appears that the drafters of this report are tending to place nationalistic pride over the superseding concept of the kingdom of God, which exists irrespective of national borders.

Second. Although CCRCC, with its additional level of administration, does entail more church funds north of the border and although the distinct Canadian legal and corporate setting (Section F) necessitates this additional administrative level, nevertheless, the recommendations, we sense, are moving in the direction of further dividing the denomination along the border of the U.S.A. and Canada.

Third. It is our observation that Canadian diaconal agencies have frequently outshone their American counterparts in responding to international famines and other crises. Therefore, it would make good sense to "Increase the membership of the Board of Trustees to allow representation by one delegate from each Canadian classis" (Recommendation 1).

Additionally, the third series of subsidiary recommendations in this report, which ask to include deacons as delegates to classis meetings, violates the very character of the office of elder. The elders in the church have been given the rulership of the church by our Lord, in Scripture. Although a present major concern in Canada (especially on the part of Revenue Canada) is the legal governance of our churches by the "politically correct" representative structure, we are Presbyterian in church polity, and therefore we believe that the proper rulership of the churches indeed rests on the elders.

Finally, it would appear to us that this third series of subsidiary recommendations runs counter to and damages the office of deacon by taking the focus of diaconal work off the mercy of Jesus Christ for his church and instead loading deacons down with administrative burdens.

Therefore, we find especially these last recommendations to be unacceptable, and we urge that they not be adopted by synod.

We trust our response and this communication will be given prayerful consideration and will be beneficial and helpful to synod in its work.

Council of Platte CRC, Platte, SD
Melvin Vanden Bos, clerk

Communication 9: Classis Muskegon

Classis Muskegon recognizes the right of two of its member churches to be conscientiously opposed to abiding by Synod 1994's decision to exclude women from the ecclesiastical offices of pastor and elder.

Ground: The member churches have presented a carefully prepared statement to substantiate their conviction that the synodical ruling of 1994 regarding women in office is in conflict with the Word of God, the Belgic Confession, and the Church Order.

Classis Muskegon

Douglas J. Van Essen, stated clerk

Note: Supporting documents will be made available for the advisory committee of synod.

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Guidelines for Ministerial Personnel in Their Interpersonal Relationships and Procedures and Guidelines for Handling Abuse Allegations Against a Church Leader

(The following guidelines belong to the report of Pastoral Ministries—Abuse Prevention [see *Agenda for Synod 1995*, pp. 178-81] and are sequenced and outlined accordingly.)

IV. Guidelines for Ministerial Personnel in Their Interpersonal Relationships

A. Introduction

This section is intended to offer guidance to the churches regarding interpersonal behavior which is appropriate for all ministerial personnel in positions of leadership or pastoral care. Ministerial personnel are those persons ordained or unordained, appointed by the church or in specialized settings, to provide pastoral care, counseling, spiritual direction, or spiritual guidance.

The foundational principle to interpersonal relationships between parishioner and ministerial personnel is this: in the church, all power and authority comes from Christ and is entrusted to those who hold office or have leadership responsibility in the congregation. This principle equally applies to those ordained in the church but serving in the name of the Lord in other places. Leadership responsibility must be exercised in Christian love after the example of our Lord. This requires the dedicated self-discipline of the leader so that such authority is not abused. It also requires the guidance of the church which holds the leader's membership or to whom the leader is responsible.

Abuse committed by ministerial personnel is always abuse of the authority committed to them by the church, as well as a serious betrayal of trust essentially assigned to ministerial personnel by those who need pastoral care and spiritual direction. The office of ministerial personnel grants authority to individuals to lead, protect, and enhance the spiritual lives of those under their care. To abuse that authority and to violate that trust are a breach of ministerial responsibility that disregards a person's dignity in a setting of unequal power at a time of vulnerability.

Abuse may take the form of nonaccidental injury, exploitation of another for personal gain or sexual gratification, systematic diminishment of another, failure to provide proper supervision for those served by church programs, or coercion or control of another. The harmful effects of these types of abuses are (a) the increased personal power and gratification of the abuser and (b) the weakened spiritual life and personal power of the victim. Together, the resulting imbalance of personal power between victim and abuser casts shame, doubt, and fear upon the victim and provides an impenetrable facade for the abuser.

The sin of sexual abuse by ministerial personnel carries special gravity because human sexuality is a gift from God rooted in divine creation. The expression of human sexuality is physical, emotional, and spiritual in relation to another person. It assumes a loving commitment to and responsibility for the other person. Furthermore, sexual contact between parishioner and ministerial personnel is always abuse because of the authority entrusted to leaders. The abuse of another's sexuality and the misuse of the commitment and the responsibility to another are never acceptable, permissible, or justifiable.

The responsibility to assure that no abusive behavior takes place always belongs to ministerial personnel. The consent of the other person is never a justification, nor is the provocation by another person a defense for abuse. The use of Bible verses to rationalize abusive behavior compounds the abuse of authority, and, as Christians, we denounce it.

B. Guidelines for ministerial personnel in their interpersonal relationships

1. Establish clearly defined boundaries you are committed to maintain in your interpersonal relationships. For example,
 - a. Conduct counseling appointments within normally scheduled daytime hours; have evening appointments only if others are present in the building or present at the appointment.
 - b. Acknowledge the risk of meeting alone in a congregant's or counselee's home. Ministerial personnel may choose to bring a spouse or another officebearer to such a meeting, or the counselee may request the presence of another person. Inform a secretary of your schedule.
 - c. Meet with a minor child or adolescent once or twice and thereafter only with the consent and knowledge of the minor's parent or guardian; avoid transporting a minor alone with you.
 - d. Consider limiting physical affection to a brief hug or a pat on the back or forearm; avoid misinterpretation of affection by choosing not to give gifts to counselees or parishioners.
2. Be accountable to a colleague, spouse, or peer to ensure that you are maintaining proper boundaries in your interpersonal relationships. Openly discuss the threats to those boundaries with a colleague, spouse, or peer.
3. Give adequate attention to your spiritual, emotional, and physical well-being. Maintain a healthy attitude toward your ministry. Be alert to the dangers of negative attitudes in ministry and the potential for temptation and self-destructive behavior. Listen earnestly to the feedback and counsel of others who supervise you or to whom you report when they express concern about your behaviors or attitudes.
4. Be sensitive to and honest about your sexuality and needs and about appropriate avenues for proper fulfillment and mastery of those needs so you conduct yourself in a responsible, moral way.
5. Use your office to promote the spiritual and interpersonal growth and healing of individuals, of the institution or congregation within which you work, and of the denomination you serve. This may take place through sermons, personal visitation, planning the organization's or church's activities, development of new programs, selection and hiring of new staff and officebearers, and training of volunteers or staff.
6. Agree to do your work according to the specified guidelines of your profession and according to the requirements of the organization's or church's malpractice and liability insurance. For example,

- a. Notify either local police authorities, child-protection authorities, or legal counsel when faced with allegations of abuse against a church member or church leader. Refrain from investigating into these matters on your own.
- b. Know the laws governing the reporting of child abuse within your community, organization, or church. The failure to report is a criminal act in many states and provinces.
- c. Keep accurate records of all allegations brought forward to you and any actions taken thereupon.
- d. Keep accurate records of any pastoral-care sessions and maintain them in utmost confidentiality.
- e. Conduct screening of all paid staff or volunteer staff who will have direct contact with children.

V. Procedures and Guidelines for Handling Abuse Allegations Against a Church Leader

This section is intended to offer guidelines for a church to follow when an allegation of abuse arises against a church leader. A church leader is someone with authority and responsibility entrusted to him/her by the church to preserve and enhance the spiritual and emotional well-being of the members. Some examples of church leaders are pastors, chaplains, ordained staff, unordained staff, professional staff, paid staff, unpaid staff, council members, directors, superintendents, teachers, counselors, supervisors, and appointed volunteers.

A. Why a procedure for handling abuse allegations is necessary

1. Many allegations of child abuse surface after a child reaches adulthood. This happens when an adult survivor of child abuse becomes separated from a familial abuser in adulthood. Sometimes in adulthood, the adult survivor comes to recognize the behavior done to him/her as abusive.
2. Sadly, because some church leaders have been unaware of child-abuse reporting laws and procedures, some victims have been placed at risk, some abusers have gone unnoticed, and some have not been reported to local authorities.
3. Insurance companies that handle liability policies for churches may require reasonable policies and procedures that could reduce the risk of abuse and the costly civil litigation that can, and often does, result.
4. Costly civil litigation also results in an enormous toll on the emotional well-being of the litigants and the churches they attend. Church members are often divided in their support of litigants, and they may be uncertain how to respond with Christian concern toward litigants.
5. Because abuse committed by a church leader is always an abuse of authority, the church, as Christ's representative, must move swiftly to protect innocent and vulnerable persons from such unconscionable attacks.

In developing and implementing a procedure to handle abuse allegations, two great tensions exist. First, tension exists because the church wants to respond to the horror contained in the allegations and at the same time wants to

protect the character, office, and family of someone who may be accused of abuse, falsely or not. Second, tension exists when the church wants its members to stay out of civil court and to resolve disputes in an ecclesiastical manner. Because the church procedure is not perceived as essentially different from civil court procedure, nor as more sensitive to the survivors, and because it is perceived by some to be biased in favor of the accused, survivors continue to choose silence or the civil courts for redress.

The absence of a procedure for handling abuse allegations has discouraged abuse victims from coming forward. Some who did come forward were reminded that forgetting is good and forgiving is better. Some were told that proceedings would follow Matthew 18:15-17. The victim and another person would confront the alleged abuser. If the accused spoke of his need for forgiveness, then the victim should be reconciled to the accused, and each would go his/her own way. If the victim could not confront the alleged abuser face to face, usually out of fear of the abuser, then the accused person would be judged "not guilty" on the basis of the fact that the victim would not come forward to press his/her claim against the alleged abuser.

Dealing in such a way with the abused often exacerbated the problem rather than bringing justice. Requiring the abused to forget and forgive often revictimized them because now they struggled with the guilt of not easily being able to forgive such a heinous crime. Furthermore, sometimes they were required to forgive even though the perpetrator had not repented nor confessed the sin. The accused, on the other hand, were not always required to confess their sin or ask for forgiveness, and they were sometimes not even held accountable for their actions and the consequences of those actions. Often the accused went on to abuse again.

The threefold steps of action detailed in Matthew 18:15-17 have been foundational for Christian discipline since New Testament times. These steps, however, assume a parity of relationship between the accused and the accuser, which is seldom true in the case of abuse. Furthermore, Matthew 18 seems to suggest that witnesses will readily be able to acknowledge the accusation, probably on the basis of some public, observable data, even though there may be some disagreement about how to resolve the matter. Accusations of abuse, however, usually identify sins committed in secret, without witnesses and observable data, and often with direct threats of harm if the secret is revealed.

The procedures of Matthew 18 require the accuser and the accused to meet face to face. An abused person is seldom able to encounter an abuser in this way. When the abused is forced to face one who has dealt so cruelly with him/her, the abused person feels like a victim once again. Therefore, abused people have been unwilling to come forward with their stories even though their silence meant that an abusive spiritual leader would continue to serve in a position of authority.

Stories are told that some abusers who were dealt with according to Matthew 18 readily admitted their sins and were just as readily forgiven and restored to positions of responsibility and trust in the church. Even when it seemed wise to remove the abuser from office, it was argued by some that the failure to accept the confession and to forgive the sinner and restore to office would be contrary to the spirit of Scripture. The truthfulness of the confession of any sinner is difficult to discern, but this is especially true for the confessions of abusers.

When forgiveness is granted in order to smooth things over in a congregation, it is an abomination to God, who holds forgiveness perfectly and the same for all.

In situations of easy repentance and forgiveness, victims often continue in brokenness, and so do abusers. Nowadays, it is the survivors who pursue the effort to bring healing and restoration to their lives, to the church, and to their abusers.

The guidelines below are intended to provide a process by which the church takes seriously the claims of abuse, evaluates specific allegations of misconduct, establishes a forum for meting out justice, aggressively seeks repentance from those who are guilty, and removes such persons from entrusted office or function within the church.

B. Guidelines

1. Definitions

For the purpose of these guidelines, the following definitions of abuse shall be in place:

- a. *Physical abuse* is any nonaccidental injury inflicted on another person. It is sometimes a single event but more often a chronic pattern of behavior. It may result from severe punishment.
- b. *Neglect* is chronic failure to meet the basic needs of someone dependent on another for care. It may describe the absence of supervision when it is needed. It may describe the chronic failure of performing the duties of one's position.
- c. *Sexual abuse* is exploitation of a person regardless of age or circumstance for the sexual gratification of another.
- d. *Spiritual abuse* is exploitation, coercion, or control of another person by a leader with spiritual authority which results in the weakening, undermining, or diminishment of the person's emotional or spiritual well-being.

There are two possible procedures to follow when allegations of abuse are made against a church leader. The age of the alleged victim determines which of the two procedures to follow.

2. Suggested procedures and guidelines when the abuse victim is an adult

The guidelines in this section describe the process to follow (a) when the alleged victim is an adult or (b) when the alleged victim comes forward with an allegation as an adult that abuse took place during the victim's childhood or adolescence.

The guidelines for handling abuse allegations against a church leader by an adult envision the use of a hearing panel. The role of the hearing panel is to evaluate the gravity of the allegations and the probable veracity of them. The guidelines are as follows:

- a. The alleged victim or his/her representative contacts the pastor, president, or vice president of the council of the church of which the alleged abuser is a member, presents an allegation of abuse, and identifies the alleged abuser. If any one of these three individuals is alleged to be the abuser, the alleged victim or representative contacts one of the remaining two not implicated by the alleged victim.
- b. The pastor and president or vice president, after consultation with one another (no one of those consulting may be implicated by the victim), notify the classical abuse-response team to convene a hearing panel

- (comprised of members of the classical abuse-response team) regarding the allegation. The hearing panel is convened within fifteen days after the allegation is presented to the pastor, president, or vice president of council.
- c. A representative of the hearing panel contacts the accuser that a hearing will be conducted. The hearing panel chooses the location and the time for the hearing. The accuser and witnesses should be available for the hearing. No public mention of the hearing is made by the panel members, pastor, president, vice president, or accuser.
 - d. When the hearing panel is convened, a chairperson is appointed who is responsible to bring all panel members under a pledge of confidentiality regarding the name(s) of the alleged victim(s), the name of the alleged abuser, and any details of the allegation brought forward. The summary of the hearing panel is also subject to confidentiality, as is any report of the hearing panel.
 - e. The hearing panel receives all the information presented to it, examines the contents of all written materials, questions the presenters, and consults with identified experts as needed. The experts should be knowledgeable in abuse dynamics, legal matters, church polity, child welfare, etc. The pledge of confidentiality extends to them as well. For the hearing panel, supporting evidence may be in the form of written material, witnesses, depositions (taken under oath), or oral testimony, including hearsay testimony. When distance would make it difficult or costly for travel or cause an undesirable delay in convening the hearing panel, videotaping and telephone conferencing are allowable.
 - f. A representative of the hearing panel contacts the accused person and notifies him/her that a hearing has taken place. The accused person is then invited to present his/her defense before the same hearing panel at a time and location chosen by the panel. Whenever possible, the hearing of the accused is conducted seven days after the hearing of the accuser. At the time the accused is notified, he/she is given information about the charges, including specific incidents when possible, dates of specific incidents when possible, and indication of witnesses or corroborating evidence. The charges are presented in writing if requested.
 - g. The hearing panel receives all the information presented to it by the accused, examines the contents of all written materials, questions the accused and witnesses, and consults with experts as needed. For the hearing panel, supporting evidence for the accused may be in the form of written material, witnesses, depositions (taken under oath), or oral testimony. When distance makes it difficult or costly for travel or causes an undesirable delay in convening the hearing panel, videotaping and telephone conferencing are allowable.
 - h. The hearing panel convenes to consider the gravity and the probable veracity of the allegations as quickly as possible. A summary of its findings is put in written form for all panel members to sign. The written report may contain specific recommendations for pastoral care and/or discipline.

- i. The chairperson of the hearing panel reports the summary of the hearing panel to the executive committee of the council of the alleged abuser's church. This meeting is convened within forty-eight hours of the hearing panel's summary. If the accuser requests anonymity, the hearing panel honors this request. All other authors of written materials or persons giving testimony are granted anonymity through the pledge of confidentiality. If the hearing panel does not find the allegations to be weighty or probable, the matter ends with the notification of the executive committee. Members of the hearing panel contact the accuser and the accused orally or in writing with their findings.
 - j. If the hearing panel affirms the gravity and probable veracity of the allegations, the executive committee should convene the consistory within forty-eight hours to bring the hearing panel's summary and its recommendations for pastoral care and/or discipline. If one of the consistory/council members is implicated by the alleged victim, he/she is excused from attendance at any meeting of the consistory/council dealing with allegations against that member.
 - k. After the consistory meeting, two members notify the accused person within twenty-four hours that allegations of abuse have been lodged against him/her. The designees also indicate to the accused the specific charges and the names of those making the charges. These charges are given in writing. Also, within twenty-four hours, the accuser(s) is notified by two members of the consistory that charges of abuse have been accepted against the accused person and that he/she is being notified of such charges. A summary of the consistory's deliberations is given in writing if requested. The accused person may acknowledge or deny his/her guilt at the notification meeting. Such acknowledgment or denial is confirmed by the two consistory members present. This acknowledgment or denial is brought to a full council meeting to be scheduled for seven days after the notification meeting.
 - l. At the council meeting scheduled seven days after notification, the council responds to the charges against the church leader by following the Church Order, specifically Articles 81-83. Both the accused and accuser(s) are notified in writing of the pastoral-care and church-discipline steps taken at this council meeting.
 - m. The accused may appeal the decision of the council in matters of discipline. Such appeals are addressed to the classis, where standard appeal procedures are applied.
 - n. When the council decides either to suspend or remove from office (including deposition), a designee of council informs the congregation at the next scheduled worship service, both orally and in writing, of the action taken at the council meeting.
3. Suggested procedures and guidelines when the abuse victim is a child
- The guidelines in this section refer to the process to follow (a) when the alleged victim is presently a child or (b) when the alleged victim is now an adult but within the individual state's or province's statutes for reporting abuse as a child. Most state statutes will define a child as a person under 18

years of age, whereas in some provinces a child is defined as a person 16 years old or younger.

The guidelines for handling allegations of emotional, physical, and sexual abuse against a church leader by a minor child should include an investigation by an agency outside the church, such as Child Protection Services or the local police authorities. The appropriate authorities are those who have jurisdiction in the location where the alleged abuse took place, regardless of where the alleged victim or alleged abuser lives at the time the allegations are brought forward.

- a. The alleged victim or his/her representative contacts the pastor, president, or vice president of the council or an appointed designee in the church of which the alleged victim is a member or of which the alleged abuser is a member to convey the allegations of abuse and identify the alleged abuser.

If the alleged abuser(s) is among the four above-mentioned people, the alleged victim or representative contacts one of the four not implicated by the alleged victim.

- b. If presented with information which suggests a reasonable suspicion that abuse has occurred, the person contacted should normally notify the authorities within twenty-four hours of receiving the report of an allegation of abuse.

Note: The failure to report a suspected case of child abuse is against the law in many states and provinces. The person contacted should know which authorities to notify. In many instances, the relationship between the child and the alleged abuser will determine whether Child Protection Services or the local police officials are to be notified.

- c. At any point in the process, if the alleged abuser admits wrongdoing against the alleged victim, the admission of guilt is brought to the attention of the consistory, which deliberates and disposes of the matter according to Church Order Articles 81-83.

The matter of admission of wrongdoing against a child should be disclosed orally and in writing to the congregation by a designee of the consistory

- d. The person contacted by the alleged victim requests information from the local police agency or child-protection agency on the progress of its investigation. If the permission of the child's parent or guardian is necessary for obtaining such information, then the person contacted should secure that permission in written form. If the alleged victim and alleged abuser are members of two different churches, the person contacted by the alleged victim notifies his/her counterpart (unless that person is implicated in the allegations) in the other church, and both become contact persons for the matter.
- e. Before formal charges are filed:
 - 1) When the person(s) contacted learn(s) from local police or child-protection authorities that the allegations merit serious investigation or that there is the possibility that formal charges may be filed, he/she notifies the executive committee of the council of the alleged abuser.
 - 2) Within twenty-four hours of the executive committee's being notified, the consistory is convened and presented a written document from the

executive committee specifying the nature of the allegations and the information known at this point. (Note: The consistory at this point needs to balance the dual concerns of moving too slowly and thereby offering too little protection for the child(ren) and moving too swiftly and thereby acting precipitously against the accused). In the light of the information presented, the consistory recommends one of the following options to the full council:

- a) Take no further action until more information becomes available.
 - b) Limit the contact between the accused and the accuser (if members of the same congregation) and/or limit the contact between the accused and any children in his/her congregation.
 - c) Suspend the accused from office, position, or duty pending the outcome of the investigation. Suspension is carried out with full pay (for paid staff) and without prejudice.
- 3) Within one week of the consistory meeting, the full council considers the recommendations of the consistory and implements appropriate action. Suspension of an officebearer is carried out according to Church Order Articles 82-83. The suspension is carried out for the safety of the church leader, who may be subject to rumor, gossip, or prejudice if he/she remains in a position of leadership. A council member is appointed to disclose to the congregation only the facts as known at the time and may not convey any of the particulars relating to the alleged victim's allegations.
- f. After criminal charges have been filed:
- 1) When the person(s) contacted learn(s) from the local police or the child-protection authorities that criminal charges have been filed against the accused, then he/she notifies the executive committee of the council of the alleged abuser.
 - 2) Within twenty-four hours of the executive committee's being notified, the consistory is convened and presented a written document from the executive committee specifying the nature of the allegations and the information known at this point. In the light of the information presented, the consistory recommends one of the following options to the full council:
 - a) Limit the accused from contact with children, or limit the conditions under which this contact is to take place, pending further information.
 - b) Suspend the accused from office, position, or duty. Suspension is carried out with full pay (for paid staff) and without prejudice.
 - 3) Within one week of the consistory meeting, the full council considers the recommendations of the consistory and implements appropriate action. Suspension of officebearers is carried out according to Church Order Articles 82-83. The suspension is carried out for the safety of the church leader, who may be subject to rumor, gossip, or prejudice if he/she remains in a position of leadership. A council member is appointed to disclose to the congregation only the facts known at the time; this council member may not convey any of the particulars relating to the alleged victim's allegations.

- g. In the event the criminal charges are dropped or prosecution does not result in conviction, the council decides whether or not the church leader is restored to his/her previous position or duty. Conviction or lack of it is not the only criterion the church uses to discern ungodly conduct. An alleged abuser is not reinstated to a previous position of leadership until the council, in consultation with the police/child-protection authorities, legal counsel, and child-abuse experts, deems it safe and proper to do so.
 - h. In the event of prosecution resulting in conviction, the abuser is not restored to the previous position or duty within the church. Pastors and officebearers are deposed by the council according to Church Order Articles 82 and 83.
4. Two important footnotes regarding both sets of guidelines
- a. These guidelines are suggested guidelines. The circumstances of abuse may dictate that the church officials deviate from these guidelines. Bylaws that specify the time necessary to convene a meeting or the place of that meeting are to be observed. In addition, state and provincial laws vary somewhat in terms of the manner in which abuse is defined and how it should be reported. The presumption should be in favor of following the guidelines in the case of each allegation of abuse; however, the church is best served by retaining legal counsel to define the legal standards relevant to the particular jurisdiction. Furthermore, the director of Abuse Prevention can be consulted regarding the application of the guidelines.
 - b. The guidelines anticipate that the accuser's allegations will be disclosed to certain entities or individuals at certain times. At each stage of the proceedings outlined in the guidelines, those individuals who receive information relating to the allegations should use extensive precautions to ensure that the allegations and surrounding circumstances are not shared with any other entities or individuals other than expressly described under these guidelines or as may be required by law.

Accuracy is of the utmost importance when disclosing allegations or surrounding circumstances to those individuals or entities anticipated under these guidelines. Wrongful or inaccurate dissemination can potentially lead to adverse legal consequences.

VI. Proposal for classical-response teams

The guidelines above presuppose the existence of classical-response teams which can be called upon to form a hearing panel to assist churches in dealing with alleged abuse situations. The committee recommends that synod request that each classis appoint an abuse-response team with the assistance of the abuse-prevention director.

Grounds:

- A. Under the leadership of the director, there will be uniformity and consistency in the training of volunteers and in the operation of the hearing-panel process.
- B. Each classis ought to have its own hearing panel to enhance accountability, to ensure that every victim has the same course to follow in filing an allegation, and to ensure a swift process that reflects the laws of each community.

VII. Recommendations

A. That the director of Abuse Prevention—Ms. Beth S. Swagman—and members of the Abuse-Prevention Committee—Ms. Carol Topp, Rev. Nicholas Vander Kwaak, and Rev. Edward Tamminga—be granted the privilege of the floor when matters of abuse prevention are discussed.

B. That the members of the Interim Committee on Abuse Prevention be recognized by synod and discharged with deep appreciation for their work.

C. That synod approve the proposed procedures and guidelines contained in Sections IV and V of this report and recommend these to the churches for their use and adoption.

Grounds:

1. Synod requested that the proposed guidelines be reviewed by the churches so that their effectiveness might be assured.
2. Uniform guidelines will be perceived as a mark of unity among the churches and a denominational determination to provide a just process for victims with abuse allegations.

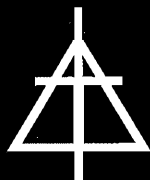
D. That synod approve Section VI of this report.

Abuse-Prevention Committee
Beth S. Swagman, director

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CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA

ACTS OF SYNOD



1995

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FOREWORD

The *Acts of Synod 1995* contains the following:

- Supplementary reports of the Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church in North America and those agencies authorized to file them.
- Supplementary overtures and communications dealing with matters relevant to reports found in the printed *Agenda for Synod 1995*.
- Financial reports.
- Synodical Prayer Service.
- The minutes of Synod 1995.
- An index.

The pagination continues from the *Agenda* to the *Acts*. Supplemental materials begin on page 569, following preliminary unnumbered pages. Financial reports begin on page 619; minutes of synod follow, beginning on page 639. The index references both volumes; the numbers in boldface type refer to pages in the minutes of Synod 1995.

The various sections of the *Acts of Synod*, including the minutes of synod, are identified with black bars on page edges, which help to locate and identify the sections.

It will be necessary for the user to keep the *Agenda for Synod 1995* and the *Acts of Synod 1995* together for ready reference. The *Agenda* is not reprinted in the *Acts*.

May all who read the reports of ministries and study committees and the minutes of Synod 1995 recorded in the *Agenda for Synod* and the *Acts of Synod* discover the ways in which the Lord is leading the Christian Reformed Church in North America and give him thanks for its many opportunities for ministry in the areas of education, evangelism, and benevolence.

David H. Engelhard, general secretary

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BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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BOARD OF TRUSTEES SUPPLEMENT

Joint-Ministries Management Committee

Christian Reformed Church in North America—Michigan Corporation

Christian Reformed Church in North America—Ontario Corporation

Christian Reformed Church Synod Trustees

I. Interim appointments

Classis	Board	Member	Alternate
Atlantic NE	Synodical deputy		Rev. R.D. Steen
B.C. South-East	Synodical deputy		Rev. W.L. Vander Beek
Northern Michigan	Synodical deputy		Rev. R. Klimp

II. Board of Trustees membership

A. Trustees whose terms expire in 1995

District	Member	Alternate
Great Plains	Rev. John Joldersma	Dr. John Van Regenmorter
Central U.S.		
Subgroup I	Dr. Kenneth B. Bootsma	Mr. Milton H. Kuyers
Subgroup III	Rev. Arthur J. Schoonveld	Rev. Jacob W. Uitvlugt
Subgroup IV	Dr. Herman C. Eldersveld	Dr. Robert De Bruin
Eastern Canada		
Subgroup II	Mr. Klaas Terpstra	Mr. Bruce Dykstra
	Mr. Don S. Wiersma	Mr. J. Hans Vander Stoep
At-large	Mrs. Jane Vander Ploeg	Mrs. Sandra Gronsman

Words of thanks are in order for Rev. Arthur J. Schoonveld and Mrs. Jane Vander Ploeg, who are completing their first terms of service to the Board. Five members are leaving the Board after six years of service: Dr. Kenneth Bootsma, Dr. Herman Eldersveld, Rev. John Joldersma, Mr. Klaas Terpstra, and Mr. Don Wiersma. These members will be missed. We recognize with gratitude the contributions they have made and thank them for the hours, days, and years they have served Christ and his church in this way.

B. Nominations for Board member

The Board report in the *Agenda for Synod 1995* (p. 34) indicated that nominations for Central U.S. Subgroup IV would be presented in the supplementary report.

Central U.S. Subgroup IV

Mrs. Mary Jo De Jong is a performance/training consultant. She received a B.S. degree (medical technology) from Calvin College and an M.A. degree from

Western Michigan University. She presently serves on the search committee for an executive director for CR World Missions. She is a member of LaGrave Avenue CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan, where she serves on the Pastoral Care Committee and as chairperson of the Vision Task Force Committee. She was a member of an ad hoc committee to study the Christian Reformed World Missions directorate in 1993, and she served as a deacon from 1993 to 1995.

Mrs. Kathleen Smith is ministries coordinator at West Leonard CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan. She received a B.A. degree from Calvin College and is presently enrolled in the Master of Divinity degree program at Calvin Theological Seminary. She is a member of West Leonard CRC, where she has been active for four years as Coffee Break/Story Hour program director and as study leader for eleven years. She served as a member of the Consolidation Interim Committee for the merger of West Leonard and Twelfth Street CRCs. She has served on various committees at West Leonard CRC, including Vision for Ministry Task Force, Pastor-Search Committee, Membership Committee, and Worship Committee.

III. Judicial Code Committee nominations

A. To replace Rev. Alvin L. Hoksbergen

Rev. Case Admiraal is pastor of Immanuel CRC, Ripon, California. He is a graduate of Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary. He has served in a number of capacities within classis, such as church visitor, member of classical interim committee, and regional pastor. He has been a delegate to synod four times and served as a member of the synodical study Committee on Dance and the Christian Life (1982).

Rev. Jerry Zandstra is pastor of preaching and administration at Seymour CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan. He is a graduate of Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary. He has done further studies in Reformation history at Drew University and is currently enrolled at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois (D.Min. program in church administration). He represented Classis Hudson's interests before the Judicial Code Committee several years ago and is interested in the relationship of law and church order.

B. To replace Mr. William B. Weidenaar

Mr. Eric Schoonveld is a member of Orland Park CRC, Orland Park, Illinois. He received a B.A. degree from Trinity Christian College and a J.D. degree from Northwestern University School of Law. Since 1991 he has practiced law in Chicago for the firm of Lord, Bissel, and Brook. He is a member of the board of Roseland Christian Community Homes Corporation, a member of the advisory council of Breakthrough Urban Ministries, and a member of the Illinois Bar Association.

Mr. Reid J. Smeda is a member of Evergreen Park CRC, Evergreen Park, Illinois. He received a B.A. degree from Calvin College and a J.D. degree from George Mason University School of Law. He is associate general counsel of First National Bank of Evergreen Park. He presently serves as a Cadet counselor, on the Missions and Outreach Committee of his church, and, with his wife, as a leader of a young-adult fellowship group. He is a member of the Illinois Bar Association and the Evergreen Park Chamber of Commerce.

C. To replace Mrs. Sarah Cook

Mrs. Kathy Vandergrift is a member of Kanata Community CRC, Ottawa, Ontario. She is an employee of the Canadian government, serving as a policy analyst. She previously worked as a policy analyst in administration for the mayor of Edmonton.

The Board thanks Mrs. Sarah Cook, Rev. Alvin L. Hoksbergen, and Mr. William B. Weidenaar for their six years of service on the Judicial Code Committee.

IV. Review of the Board of Trustees' Constitution and Bylaws

In anticipation of final approval of the Constitution and Bylaws of the Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church in North America at Synod 1996, the Board appointed an ad hoc committee to review the documents. Members of the committee are Dr. Calvin Bremer, chair; Mr. Milton Kuyers; Rev. Jake Kuipers; Dr. Carol Rottman; Mr. William Weidenaar; Dr. David Engelhard; and Dr. Peter Borgdorff.

V. Review of Articles of Association for member churches

A few of our congregations have been entangled in legal battles over church property following schisms. One issue in these cases has been the article regarding property in the Articles of Association for our member congregations (adopted in 1980, shaped by the property principles adopted in 1970). The presumption that property would remain with the continuing Christian Reformed church was weakened in 1970 when the "just and fair distribution of property" principle was introduced (see *Acts of Synod 1970*, p. 105).

The decisions of 1970 and 1980 were made on the basis of competent legal counsel and judgment at the time. Present legal counsel in both the United States and Canada has informed the Board that there are no legal obstacles to revising the article in question and returning to the pre-1970 position of "implied trust," under which the remaining Christian Reformed congregation is the presumed continuation of the pre-schism church and the properties continue to belong to that congregation and not to those who split off.

Since this is such a nettlesome and potentially emotional issue, the Board decided to appoint a task force which includes polity and legal experts to explore the implications and/or ramifications of changing the church's position regarding property/asset distribution in the event of a schism.

VI. Request from Classis Wisconsin

Classis Wisconsin has requested "that the Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church in North America rule that delegates from Classis Grand Rapids East be given the privilege of the floor but be denied the privilege of voting on all matters before synod until such time as Classis Grand Rapids East complies with the decision of synod on this matter [women in office]."

The Board did not accede to this request because the authority to act in such matters has not been assigned to the Board. These matters are processed by way of an advisory committee to synod. The Board authorized the general secretary to submit the document from Classis Wisconsin as a communication to synod, and it will be assigned to the appropriate advisory committee.

VII. Convening church for Synod 1997

Pillar CRC, Holland, Michigan, has offered to serve as the convening church for Synod 1997 in commemoration of the 150th anniversary of Rev. Albertus Van Raalte's arrival (February 1847) in Holland, Michigan. The Board recommends that synod accept the invitation of Pillar CRC and designate it as the convening church for Synod 1997.

VIII. Permission to place matters on the synodical agenda

The Board gave the general secretary permission to place the following matters on the agenda for Synod 1995:

- The personal appeal of Dr. Florence Kuipers.
- A communication from the Council of Christian Reformed Churches in Canada.
- Two related overtures from Classis Zeeland.
- A communication from Classis Wisconsin.

IX. Request from the Program Committee

The synodical Program Committee (officers of Synod 1994) addressed a written recommendation to the Board of Trustees recommending "that as arrangements are made for Synod 1995, seating for denominational employees and administrators be arranged in such a way that seating on the dais is reserved solely for the officers of the synodical meeting, including the general secretary." Since this recommendation raised a question regarding the relationship between the general secretary and the executive director of ministries as well as a question about the executive director of ministries' relationship to synod, the Program Committee's recommendation was referred to and reviewed by the executive committee of the Board (in the absence of staff), which prepared a response and recommendation to the full Board.

In summary, the Board did not approve the recommendation of the Program Committee to remove the executive director of ministries from the dais at synod. This conclusion was based on the parity that exists between the office of general secretary and the office of executive director of ministries. As the Board understands it, since 1992, when the office of executive director of ministries position was established, synod has had two officers, or agents, serving it, one responsible for "ecclesiastical matters, matters of polity and church practice, denominational and interchurch communications and relations" and the other responsible for "matters pertaining to the agencies, boards, and committees, their programs, personnel and finance" (see the respective position descriptions—*Rules for Synodical Procedure* 1994, pp. 68, 70). The seating arrangements at synod should represent the parity of the two offices and their relationship to synod and should not suggest visually that one position is more prominent or important than the other. Therefore, the Board believes that the parity of the two offices requires that both the general secretary and the executive director of ministries be seated on the dais at synod.

The Board also noted in its response to the Program Committee that the general secretary has been given the responsibility and authority to "make physical arrangements for synod," and it was confident that he will make such arrangements in keeping with the understanding of the relationship of the offices as articulated above. The seating arrangement on the dais used during

the past few years seems to have served synod well and will be retained for Synod 1995.

X. Mission and Vision Statement

Further refinement of the Mission and Vision Statement has taken place since the completion of the Listening Conferences - Phase II. The Board of Trustees, through its executive committee, refers the present draft to Synod 1995 for response and possible endorsement. It would be sufficient for synod to endorse the general direction of the Mission and Vision Statement and then refer it to the churches as information and for response to the executive director of ministries by January 1, 1996.

The Mission and Vision Statement reads as follows:

Who We Are

The CRC, rooted firmly in the Reformed tradition, was born of the faith and vision of immigrants more than a century ago. God's sovereignty and grace have brought us into the twenty-first century, focused our vision, and given us a message of hope to proclaim. Today our denomination has grown to embrace a wonderful diversity of race and culture. For the gathering of this part of God's family, we are excited and grateful.

We have been blessed by a rich theological and confessional heritage, a deep belief in the Scripture's authority, and a far-reaching vision of God's kingdom in our world. Standing on this foundation, we hear God calling us to further growth.

Our Mission

Enabled and led by the Spirit, we will bring the transforming power of our Father's kingdom to our world, embodying the love Jesus revealed on the cross and the victory assured by his resurrection.

Our Vision

We believe that God's vision for us and for our world calls us

... **to grow in worship.** God calls us to a greater use of the Spirit's gifts in celebrative, vibrant worship as we enter his presence with awe and wonder, praise and thanksgiving. We pray for a fulfillment of God's vision of the "great multitude" standing before the throne. Challenged to show loving hospitality to all who join us, we welcome a growing diversity of cultures and worship styles. We wait with excitement to see what God will do in our worship.

... **to grow in wisdom and knowledge.** God calls us to deepen our relationship with him, to know and fully embrace his love and wonderful plan of salvation. We are challenged to search God's Word, to let it penetrate our minds and spirits, and to set aside time for prayer and reflection in God's presence. We anticipate the Spirit's work in changing us into Christ's likeness.

... **to grow in caring for each other.** We hear God's call for a deeper life of intercessory prayer for believers of all denominations and a greater use of Christ's generous gifts. Using these gifts, we will offer each other encouragement and healing as well as training and support for ministry. Our children and young people will experience God's powerful love as they participate in this. We anticipate the Spirit's equipping us to heal, teach, and build up Christ's body.

... to grow in reaching out. God calls us to demonstrate the openness and genuineness of Jesus' love to those outside his family. We anticipate seeing God's power at work in others' lives through our prayers and outreach—restoring those alienated from God, healing the broken, feeding the hungry. Partners with the Holy Spirit, we look forward to being known by those outside the church primarily as people who love deeply, with the life-changing love of God.

... to grow as kingdom citizens. God calls us to work with other believers to shape public policy, care for God's earth, and bring relief to those suffering from disasters or injustice. This work challenges us to greater dependence on the Spirit's work and on Christ's authority. We look forward to seeing God's power unleashed in our world through our prayers and involvement.

XI. Financial matters

The Board of Trustees has completed its review of the denominational agencies' fiscal year 1994 financial reports, fiscal year 1995 revised budgets, fiscal year 1996 proposed budgets, and ministry-share requests for 1996.

The *Agenda for Synod 1995—Financial and Business Supplement* has been prepared from the material reviewed. Copies are made available to all synodical delegates and will be available to churches requesting a copy. This supplement contains the detailed financial reports from the denominational agencies and is published in the interest of financial accountability to the churches. The supplement also provides financial information regarding the nondenominational agencies evaluated and deemed appropriate for financial support by the churches.

A. Denominational agencies

Appendices A-1 and A-2 provide a summary of the operating budgets and ministry-share requests for each agency. The process for development of individual agency budgets began in late 1994. The final budgets reflect the scrutiny provided by a combination of administrative evaluation, interagency consensus, and Board oversight. In March 1995 the Board of Trustees made a preliminary evaluation of the budgets proposed by the agencies and of their ministry-share requests. Based on that evaluation, a mandate specifying two guidelines was sent back to the agencies:

1. That gift and ministry-share income reflect no more than the 1995 budget plus 1 percent for each agency.
2. That the ministry-share request for 1996 be established at no more than a 1.5 percent increase.

In response to these guidelines, the agencies made revisions in their budgets and brought back to the Board of Trustees proposed budgets and ministry-share requests in compliance with the guidelines.

The 1996 ministry-share requests are expressed in terms of professing members (over 18 years of age) and in terms of families, as a result of action taken by Synod 1993, which decided that a five-year phase-in to ministry-share determination solely by professing-member count be implemented. For 1996, 40 percent of the church's ministry-share determination will be on the basis of families; 60 percent will be based on the number of professing members (over 18 years of age).

Appendix B shows total average ministry shares from 1971 through 1996 as expressed in 1970 dollars for both Canada and the United States. This appendix is presented to show the impact of inflation over the last twenty-five years.

B. Denominational and denominationally related agencies recommended for one or more offerings

1. Denominational agencies

Back to God Hour—above-ministry-share needs

CRC TV—above-ministry-share needs

Calvin College—above-ministry-share needs

Calvin Theological Seminary

a. Above-ministry-share needs

b. Revolving Loan Fund

Home Missions—above-ministry-share needs

Pastoral Ministries

a. Abuse Prevention—above-ministry-share needs

b. Chaplain Committee—above-ministry-share needs

c. Committee on Disability Concerns—above-ministry-share needs

d. Pastor-Church Relations Committee—above-ministry-share needs

e. Synodical Committee on Race Relations

1) Above-ministry-share needs

2) Multiracial Student Scholarship Fund

World Literature Ministries—above-ministry-share needs

World Missions—above-ministry-share needs

World Relief—above-ministry-share needs

2. Denominationally related agencies

United Calvinist Youth

Calvinettes

Calvinist Cadet Corps

Young Calvinist Federation/Youth Unlimited

C. Nondenominational agencies recommended for financial support but not necessarily for one or more offerings. Amount or number of offerings should be determined by each church.

1. United States agencies

a. Benevolent agencies

Bethany Christian Services

Calvary Rehabilitation Center

Cary Christian Center, Inc.

Christian Health Care Center

Elim Christian School

International Aid, Inc.

The Luke Society, Inc.

Pine Rest Christian Hospital Association

b. Educational agencies

Center for Public Justice
Christian Schools International
Christian Schools International Foundation
Dordt College
Rehoboth Christian School
Reformed Bible College
Roseland Christian School
The King's University College (through the U.S. Foundation)
Trinity Christian College
Westminster Theological Seminary Ministries, Philadelphia, PA,
and Pasadena, CA
Worldwide Christian Schools

c. Miscellaneous agencies

American Bible Society
Faith, Prayer and Tract League
Friendship Ministries
Gideons International
International Bible Society
Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship
Lord's Day Alliance of the United States
Metanoia Ministries
Mission 21 India
Portable Recording Ministries (PRM) International
Seminary Consortium for Urban Pastoral Education
The Bible League
The Evangelical Literature League (TELL)
Wycliffe Bible Translators

2. Canadian agencies

a. Benevolent agencies

Beginnings Counseling & Adoption Services of Ontario, Inc.

b. Educational agencies

Canadian Christian Education Foundation, Inc.
Dordt College
Institut Farel
Institute for Christian Studies
Redeemer Reformed Christian College
Reformed Bible College
The King's University College
Trinity Christian College

c. Miscellaneous agencies

Canadian Bible Society
Christian Labour Association of Canada
Evangelical Fellowship of Canada
Friendship Groups—Canada
Gideons International—Canada

D. New request for accreditation

Peace Arab-American Ministries

Peace Arab-American Ministries is not recommended for financial support in 1996.

Ground: It appears that Peace Arab-American Ministries has been an official 501(c)(3) organization less than the three years which the guidelines for accreditation require.

XII. Recommended salary ranges for 1996

Synod 1984 directed that "compensation ranges be recommended annually by the Synodical Interim Committee," now the Board of Trustees.

Originally the salary ranges were based on market data provided by Hay, our compensation consultant. For many years these underlying data have not been consistently updated. The model proposed below returns to the use of current market data as a basis for making adjustments in salary ranges for both U.S. and Canada. Proposed salary ranges for 1996 reflect a step toward correction of inconsistencies which have worked their way into current salary ranges. Further details of the compensation model must be worked out in the coming year.

The Board recommends the following salary ranges for 1996:

**THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA
1996 PROPOSED SALARY RANGES**

New	Previous	Proposed U.S. 1996 Range			Proposed Canadian 1996 Range		
Levels	Levels	Min	Midpoint	Max	Min	Midpoint	Max
25	12	\$61,000	\$76,230	\$91,500	\$87,700	\$109,632	\$131,600
24	11	57,800	72,240	86,700	81,000	101,263	121,500
23	10	54,900	68,565	82,300	74,400	93,035	111,600
22	9	52,100	65,100	78,100	68,200	85,278	102,300
21	8	50,000	62,475	75,000	62,400	77,991	93,600
20	7	46,200	57,750	69,300	56,900	71,174	85,400
19	6	44,200	55,230	66,300	51,900	64,827	77,800
18	5	42,300	52,815	63,400	47,200	58,950	70,700
17	4	40,500	50,610	60,700	42,800	53,544	64,300
16	3	35,600	44,520	53,400	38,700	48,372	58,000

XIII. Ministers' Compensation Survey 1995

The Ministers' Compensation Survey 1995 has been compiled from questionnaire responses received from our churches in both the United States and Canada. The survey is published in pamphlet form and distributed as a part of the handbook for the CRC, *Your Church in Action*.

The survey reports several categories of information by classis and is designed to be helpful to our congregations in setting pastor compensation. The information is also used by the Ministers' Pension Funds trustees in determining average cash salaries for pension calculations.

In spite of increased use of the survey by our churches and the favorable comments concerning the information given, the number of churches returning

the questionnaires is decreasing, and therefore the survey is less accurate and effective than desired.

The Board of Trustees reminds the churches of the importance of completing the questionnaires, the urgency for which is noted in the *Acts of Synod 1988*, page 574.

XIV. Youth-Ministry Committee

The Board of Trustees recommends that synod permit the addition of one representative from the new Early Teens Ministry of United Calvinist Youth to serve on the Youth-Ministry Committee.

The Board recommends that the Youth-Ministry Committee's proposal that synod provide a three-year grant to the Early Teen Ministry of United Calvinist Youth *not* be approved.

Ground: The Board judges such a grant to be contrary to the intent of Synod 1991.

XV. Nominations for agency board members

A. Back to God Hour

1. Chicagoland

Mr. John M. Piersma is a member of Second Christian Reformed Church, Highland, Indiana, where he serves as an elder. He is a partner in the law firm of Goldman and Piersma, P.C. He serves on the Highland Christian School board, of which he has in the past served as president and treasurer.

Mr. George Vande Werken (incumbent) presently serves as secretary of the board. He is a member of Second Christian Reformed Church, Highland, Indiana. He is senior vice president of Sandridge Bank, Highland, Indiana. He serves on the Pine Rest Christian Hospital board and has served on the boards of Highland Christian School and the Illiana Foundation.

2. Western Canada

Rev. Peter Nicolai (incumbent), currently serving as vice president of the board, is pastor of Emmanuel CRC, Calgary, Alberta.

Rev. Cecil Van Niejenhuis is pastor of First Christian Reformed Church, Edmonton, Alberta.

B. CRWRC-Canada

1. Alternate pastoral adviser

Rev. John Koster is pastor of First Christian Reformed Church in Richmond, Ontario. A native of Australia, he graduated from the Reformed Theological College in Geelong. He served Reformed churches in Hobart and Blacktown before leaving for chaplaincy work at the Christian University of Satya Wacana in Indonesia. Rev. Koster has been in Canada since 1994.

Rev. John Van Hemert is pastor of First CRC in Vancouver, British Columbia. A graduate of Calvin Theological Seminary, he has pastored two churches in Canada and four in the United States, during which time he was actively involved in counseling and diaconal ministries. He previously served as a delegate on the Board of Home Missions.

2. Alternate member-at-large

Ms. Greta De Groot is a member of Emmanuel Christian Reformed Church, Calgary, Alberta. She is a nurse and recently served CRWRC in Rwanda for six weeks with Food for the Hungry International. She has also visited CRWRC program activities in Sierra Leone. She is involved in ministry activities in the Calgary community.

Ms. Linda De Boer is a member of First Christian Reformed Church, Vancouver, British Columbia. She is self-employed in a home and office cleaning business. She has been involved in volunteer ministry to persons with disabilities and has always had a strong interest in international affairs and in the work of CRWRC.

XVI. Board of Trustees' response to the report of the Committee to Study Structure for Ministry in Canada

The Board of Trustees has taken note of the study committee's report concerning structure for ministry in Canada and informs synod that it endorses the committee's basic conclusion that the Christian Reformed Church needs a ministry structure in Canada that encourages and enhances the expression of the church's witness in the Canadian cultural and national context. Such a witness should appropriately be developed and expressed through the Canadian voice of the Christian Reformed Church, which, presumably, could be the Board of Trustees of the CRC for the Canadian Churches. The Board of Trustees leaves it to synod's judgment whether diaconal representation ought to be one of the "three legs" on which the report stands.

The Board of Trustees also wishes to inform synod that the Board has concerns about the structure recommendations contained in the report. The trustees of both the Canadian and U.S. boards believe that, if the national structures are too independent of each other, each reporting through a separate national board and each having its own national staff, the resultant problems could obscure the benefits. It is the Board of Trustees' judgment that such separation may have consequences for the unity of the CRC which are antithetical to the expressed desire in the report that the unity of one Canadian-U.S. denomination be maintained. The trustees believe that, instead of designing structures which are essentially national in character, synod should consider a more significant binational approach. Although the CRC has officially stated its binationality in the Constitution of the Board of Trustees, too often the church and her agencies still function as a U.S.A. church with branches extending into Canada.

The essence of the Board of Trustees' position is that binationality is the preferred approach and that structures need to be proposed which more adequately reflect that reality of denominational life. Even if it would take additional time to develop such a binational structure (e.g., Synod 1996 or 1997), it will be worth the wait.

It is the Board of Trustees' sincere hope that these comments will help synod in the consideration of this important matter.

XVII. Appointments and reappointments

- A. The Board of Trustees recommends ratification of the reappointment of Rev. John Rozeboom as executive director of Home Missions.
- B. The Board of Trustees informs synod that it has ratified the appointment of Dr. Calvin Bremer as director of ministries for The Back to God Hour.
- C. The Board of Trustees informs synod that it has ratified the appointment of Rev. Siebert A. Van Houten as the associate director of chaplaincy in Canada.
- D. The Board of Trustees informs synod that it has ratified the appointment of Rev. Alfred Luke as a director of Pastoral Ministries with specific responsibility for the SCORR ministry.

XVIII. Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary

The supplementary reports of Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary will be provided at synod due to the late dates of their respective spring board meetings.

XIX. Recommendations

- A. That synod approve the Board interim appointments (see Section I).
- B. That synod express its appreciation to retiring members of the Board for their services to the church (see Section II).
- C. That synod express its appreciation to retiring members of the Judicial Code Committee for their services (see Section III).
- D. That synod designate Pillar CRC, Holland, Michigan, as the convening church for Synod 1997 (see Section VII).
- E. That synod endorse the Mission and Vision Statement and refer it to the churches for information and response (see Section X).
- F. That synod approve the list of denominational and denominationally related agencies recommended for one or more offerings (see Section XI, B).
- G. That synod approve the list of nondenominational agencies recommended for financial support but not necessarily for one or more offerings (see Section XI, C).
- H. That synod approve the proposed salary ranges for 1996 (see Section XII).
- I. That synod not approve the request of the Youth-Ministry Committee for a three-year grant to the Early Teen Ministry of the United Calvinist Youth (see Section XIV).
- J. That synod take appropriate action relative to the appointment and reappointment of directors of agencies (see Section XVIII).

Board of Trustees of the
Christian Reformed Church in North America
David H. Engelhard, general secretary
Peter Borgdorff, executive director of ministries

AGENCIES OF THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH
PROPOSED BUDGET SUMMARY
FISCAL YEAR ENDED IN 1996
 Rev. 5/24/85

	MINISTRY SHARE INCOME	% of Total	OTHER INCOME	% of Total	TOTAL INCOME	PROGRAM SERVICES	% of Total	SUPPORT SERVICES	% of Total	TOTAL EXPENSES	PLANNED NET REVENUE (EXPENSE)
Back to God Hour (CRC-TV)	\$4,543,240	50.0%	4,548,850	50.0%	9,092,090	7,861,090	86.5%	1,231,000	13.5%	9,092,090	0
Calvin College	2,850,000	6.2%	43,437,900	93.8%	46,287,900	33,191,200	71.7%	13,096,700	28.3%	46,287,900	0
Calvin Seminary	1,917,200	59.8%	1,283,300	40.1%	3,200,500	2,041,900	63.8%	1,158,600	36.2%	3,200,500	0
CEACA	67,384	70.1%	28,773	29.9%	96,157	88,657	92.2%	7,500	7.8%	96,157	0
CRC Publications & World Literature	247,000	3.8%	5,288,000	96.2%	5,535,000	5,570,000	91.4%	562,000	8.6%	6,132,000	4,000
Home Missions	5,800,000	87.7%	2,765,000	32.3%	8,565,000	7,390,000	86.3%	1,175,000	13.7%	8,565,000	0
World Missions	5,028,000	40.0%	7,546,983	50.0%	12,574,983	11,350,534	88.7%	1,442,449	11.3%	12,792,983	(220,000)
World Relief	0	0.0%	9,467,899	100.0%	9,467,899	7,428,245	79.1%	1,961,477	20.9%	9,389,722	78,177
Fund for Smaller Churches	852,000	99.4%	5,000	0.6%	857,000	850,500	97.6%	21,000	2.4%	871,500	(14,800)
Denominational Services	1,639,842	88.8%	206,000	11.2%	1,845,842	528,250	28.5%	1,316,678	71.5%	1,842,128	3,714
Pastoral Ministries (Chaplaincy, SCORR Abuse, Disability, Pastor-Church Relations)	1,168,302	83.7%	227,750	16.3%	1,396,052	1,101,782	79.0%	292,290	21.0%	1,394,052	0
Ministers' Pension Funds Supplemental Funds *	2,225,844	68.7%	1,110,580	33.3%	3,336,234	3,214,434	89.2%	400,000	10.8%	3,714,434	N/A
TOTALS	\$26,334,612	25.5%	76,917,045	74.5%	103,251,657	81,113,572	78.2%	22,864,894	21.6%	103,778,466	(148,609)

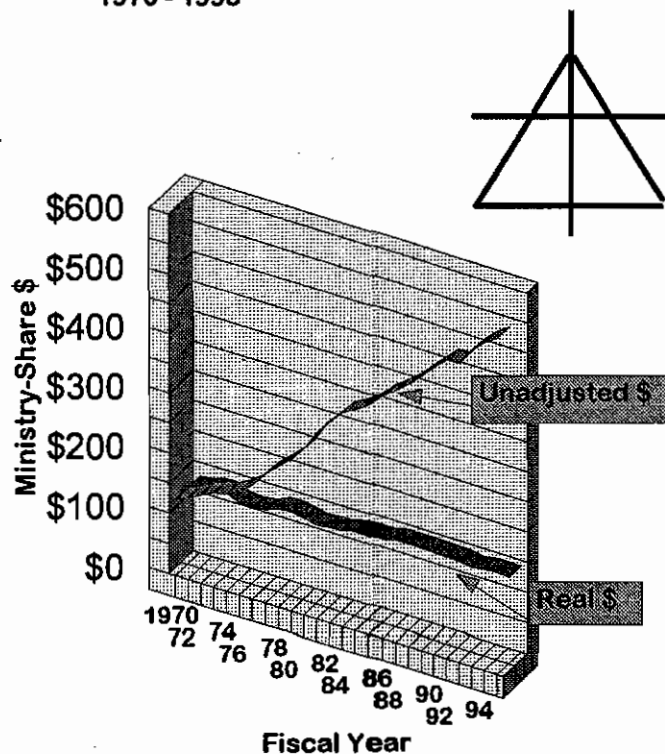
* Funding of pension liability is limited to quota amount.

**CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH
MINISTRY-SHARE HISTORY AND REQUESTS**

	—1994—		—1995—		—1996—		—1995 TO 1996—		—1995 TO 1996—	
	FAMILY	MEMBER	FAMILY	MEMBER	FAMILY	MEMBER	\$ INCREASE		% INCREASE	
							FAMILY	MEMBER	FAMILY	MEMBER
BACK TO GOD HOUR	\$71.29	29.70	72.96	31.40	73.91	31.84	0.95	0.44	1.3%	1.4%
CRC-TV	25.88	10.76	26.16	11.26	26.50	11.42	0.34	0.18	1.3%	1.4%
TOTAL BTGH	97.15	40.46	99.12	42.66	100.41	43.26	1.29	0.60	1.3%	1.4%
CALVIN COLLEGE	58.82	23.72	58.62	25.49	59.36	25.84	0.76	0.35	1.3%	1.4%
CALVIN SEMINARY	40.25	16.77	43.15	16.57	43.71	18.92	0.56	0.35	1.3%	1.9%
CEACA	1.37	0.59	1.37	0.59	1.37	0.59	0.00	0.00	0.0%	0.0%
CRC PUBLICATIONS	4.60	1.92	4.73	2.06	5.23	2.29	0.50	0.23	10.6%	11.2%
HOME MISSIONS	119.61	49.84	118.61	52.00	120.64	52.47	1.03	0.47	0.9%	0.9%
WORLD MISSIONS	110.97	46.24	113.19	48.71	114.66	49.39	1.47	0.68	1.3%	1.4%
WORLD RELIEF										
FUND FOR SMALLER CHURCHES	16.67	6.95	19.17	8.25	19.58	8.44	0.41	0.19	2.1%	2.3%
DENOMINATIONAL SERVICES	35.08	14.80	35.48	15.27	35.94	15.15	0.46	(0.12)	1.3%	-0.8%
CHAPLAIN COMMITTEE	10.12	4.22								
COMMITTEE ON ABUSE										
COMMITTEE FOR DISABILITY										
CONCERNS	2.07	0.86								
PASTOR-CHURCH RELATIONS	2.93	1.22								
SCORR	7.70	3.20								
TOTAL PASTORAL MINISTRIES	22.82	9.50	25.14	10.83	25.90	11.18	0.76	0.35	3.0%	3.2%
MINISTERS' PENSION FUNDS	37.94	15.81								
SPECIAL ASSISTANCE FUND	1.72	0.72								
TOTAL PENSION & S.A.F.	39.66	16.53	39.31	16.82	40.47	17.48	1.16	0.54	3.0%	3.2%
GRAND TOTAL	\$545.10	227.14	558.89	241.35	567.29	244.99	8.40	3.64	1.5%	1.5%

CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH
TOTAL MINISTRY SHARES - REAL (INFLATION-ADJUSTED) INCREASE
1970 - 1995

FISCAL YEAR	TOTAL MINISTRY SHARE (US\$)	U.S. CPI	MINISTRY SHARE IN 1970 US\$	CANADA CPI	MINISTRY SHARE IN 1970 CAN\$
1970	126.60	38.8	126.60	31.0	126.60
71	135.40	40.5	129.72	31.9	131.58
72	148.60	41.8	136.08	33.4	136.07
73	156.60	44.4	138.85	36.0	134.85
74	160.90	49.3	126.63	39.9	125.01
75	173.10	53.8	124.84	44.2	121.40
76	188.15	56.9	128.30	47.5	122.79
77	214.05	60.6	137.05	51.3	129.35
78	232.95	65.2	138.63	55.9	129.19
79	251.30	72.6	134.30	61.0	127.71
80	274.97	82.4	129.48	67.2	126.85
81	309.80	90.9	132.24	75.5	127.20
82	331.65	96.5	133.35	83.7	122.83
83	355.05	99.6	138.31	88.5	124.37
84	366.65	103.9	136.92	92.4	123.01
85	381.05	107.6	137.40	96.0	123.05
86	402.55	109.6	142.51	100.0	124.79
87	417.75	113.6	142.68	104.4	124.04
88	434.50	118.3	142.51	108.6	124.03
89	454.55	124.0	142.23	114.0	123.61
90	476.58	130.7	141.48	119.5	123.63
91	496.00	136.2	141.30	126.2	121.84
92	497.00	140.3	137.45	128.1	120.27
93	525.50	144.5	141.10	130.4	124.93
94	545.10	148.8	142.14	133.0	127.05
95	558.90	154.0	140.81	136.3	127.12



ADDENDUM TO THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES SUPPLEMENT

Note: These pages replace pages 41-43 in the printed Agenda for Synod 1995

708 EMPLOYMENT-TERMINATION APPEALS PROCEDURE

708.1 Introduction

The procedure for termination appeals is the sole and exclusive means for an eligible employee to appeal his or her employment termination by an agency or committee or other agent of the CRCNA. This procedure is intended to provide the means of enforcing the organization's philosophy of employment. This policy will apply to all employees of the CRCNA mission and service agencies except those specifically excluded by a decision of the Board of Trustees and/or the synod of the CRCNA.

708.2 Procedure Relating to Appeal

The relationship of this policy to appeals under Church Order Article 30 and its supplements is as follows: This procedure is intended to supplement, not add to, detract from, delete from, or otherwise change, *any right of appeal provided in Church Order Article 30 and Church Order Supplement, Articles 30-b and 30-c.* With respect to employment termination which is covered by this procedure, this procedure must be exhausted before an appeal may be made *under Church Order Article 30 and Church Order Supplement, Articles 30-b and 30-c.*

708.3 Grounds for Appeal of Employment Termination

This procedure applies to all forms of involuntary termination of employment, with the exception that the procedure does not apply to the conclusion of a period of employment that was agreed upon at the outset to be final or was specified by contract to have a concluding date.

Involuntary terminations fall into two categories:

- terminations for job-performance and/or misconduct-related reasons.
- terminations due to reduction, reorganization, or elimination of a position.

The grounds for appealing employment terminations that fall into these two categories are as follows (in Sections 708.3.1 through 708.3.3).

708.3.1 Employment Terminations for Job-Performance and/or Misconduct-Related Reasons

An employee of an agency, committee, or other entity of the CRCNA may appeal his or her termination for job-performance and/or misconduct-related reasons. In such a case the grounds for appeal are limited to the following:

- that the employee is not guilty of any, or a significant part, of the reasons given for termination.
- that although the employee is guilty of the reasons given for termination, the penalty is out of proportion to the misconduct or poor job performance.

- that the termination has violated one of the following:
 - an established policy of the agency, committee, or other entity that has terminated the employee.
 - an established policy of the CRCNA.
 - a specific provision of the Church Order.

708.3.2 Employment Termination Due to Reduction, Reorganization, or Elimination of a Position

An employee may experience termination of employment when an agency, committee, or entity of the CRCNA is reduced in size, is eliminated, is merged, or is reorganized. This may occur for a variety of reasons, such as redefining a mission, economic or budgetary considerations, or other factors. The grounds for appeal for such a termination are limited to the following:

- that the reason given for the termination (for example, reorganization, merger, etc.) is a pretext for removing the employee.
- that the selection of the employee or the employee's position for termination has violated one of the following:
 - an established policy of the agency, committee, or other entity that has terminated the employee or the employee's position.
 - an established policy of the CRCNA.
 - a specific provision of the Church Order.

(Note: The employee in such an appeal may not challenge the underlying decision to reorganize, cut back, merge, or effect some other action. The grounds for appeal are limited to the issue of whether some other employee, rather than the appealing employee, should have been terminated, based on a requirement of established agency, committee, denominational policy, or the Church Order.)

708.3.3 Appeal Procedure

A. Filing

An appeal must be filed in writing on a form provided by and obtained from the Office of Personnel of the CRCNA.

An appeal must be filed within thirty (30) calendar days after the employee is terminated or is notified in writing that he/she will be terminated, whichever date is earlier.

A written appeal must state the grounds for the appeal.

B. Steps of Appeal

- Step 1** The appeal shall first be filed with the senior administrative person of the agency, committee, or other entity in which the employee worked (for example, executive director, director, chair). That administrator—or his or her designee—shall meet with the employee and other appropriate persons within ten (10) calendar days after receiving the written appeal and shall answer the appeal in writing within ten (10) calendar days after the meeting.
- Step 2** If the employee is not satisfied with the response at Step 1, the employee may appeal to the EDM in writing within ten calendar days after receiving the Step 1 reply. The EDM or his designee shall meet with the employee and other appropriate persons within ten (10) calendar days

after receiving the written appeal and shall respond to it in writing within ten (10) calendar days after meeting with the employee.

Step 3 If the employee is not satisfied with the response of Step 2, the employee may appeal to the board of the agency or committee in writing within *fifteen (15) calendar days* after receiving the Step 2 response. The board or its designee (for example, a subcommittee of the board) shall conduct a hearing within fifteen (15) calendar days after receiving the written appeal. The hearing shall be conducted according to the procedure set forth below (in E. **Conduct of Hearing**).

Step 4 If the employee is not satisfied with the response at Step 3, the employee may appeal to the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA within *fifteen (15) calendar days* of receiving the Step 3 response. *The Board of Trustees or its designee (for example, a subcommittee of the board) shall conduct a review of the appeal within fifteen (15) calendar days after receiving the case. The Board shall issue its decision in writing within ten (10) calendar days after its review.*

Appeal beyond the Board

An appeal, if any, beyond Step 4 is governed by Church Order Article 30 and Church Order Supplement, Articles 30-b and 30-c both as to grounds and procedures.

C. Access to Information

An employee shall be given access, at reasonable times and places, to such non-confidential information as he or she may reasonably request to adequately pursue an appeal and prepare for meetings and the hearing.

D. Representation

At the meetings provided for in Steps 1 and 2, the employee may be accompanied by another person to provide support and assistance. However, the employee shall speak for himself or herself, and the accompanying person shall not function as an attorney or advocate.

At Step 3 (hearing) and Step 4 (review) the employee may be represented by an attorney or other advocate, provided the appellant gives written notice of such outside representation at the time notice is given as required in B, Step 3 and Step 4 above.

E. Conduct of Hearing

The Step 3 hearing shall be conducted in the following manner:

- The hearing body (board, committee, or subcommittee) shall appoint a hearing officer who may be a member of the hearing body or may be an outside party (for example, attorney).
- The employer shall proceed first with its proofs (documents, testimony, and other evidence). The employee may cross-examine witnesses and respond to any evidence presented.
- At the conclusion of the employer's presentation, the employee may present proofs (documents, testimony, and other evidence), and the employer may cross-examine and respond.
- Further rebuttal by the employer and /or the employee shall be at the discretion of the hearing body.

- At the conclusion of the proofs, the hearing body shall give each party an opportunity to make closing arguments, orally and/or in writing. If the hearing body requires additional evidence to render its decision, it shall so advise the parties before the conclusion of the hearing and before closing arguments are made. If written closing arguments are allowed, a reasonably prompt deadline shall be specified.
- The hearing body shall issue its decision in writing within thirty (30) calendar days after arguments have been received or the deadline for the receipt of written arguments has passed.

F. Other Procedural Matters

- At Steps 1 and 2 the employer may independently investigate the matters involved in the appeal. However, at Step 3 the hearing body shall limit its consideration to the evidence and arguments presented at the hearing.
- Time limits in this procedure may be waived only by written agreement. Absence of compelling circumstances or an employee's failure to file or process an appeal in a timely fashion shall constitute a waiver to the right of appeal.

G. Effect of Decision

This appeal procedure is an employee's sole and exclusive remedy in all cases of employment termination. The decision produced by this procedure in any particular case is final and binding on the employer and the employee, and, to the extent that a civil court has jurisdiction of the matter, such decision is fully enforceable in such a court.

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AGENCY AND COMMITTEE SUPPLEMENTS

Calvin College

I. Introduction

The Calvin College Board of Trustees met May 18 and 19, 1995. The board presents this supplemental report to guide delegates to synod in their decisions and to inform them of additional matters relating to the college.

On Thursday evening, May 18, 1995, the board honored Dr. Anthony and Mrs. Jeane Diekema at a farewell reception. Various trustees expressed their appreciation and gratitude to the Diekemas for their twenty years of outstanding and distinguished service to Calvin College.

The board appointed a committee to plan the events surrounding the inauguration of Dr. Gaylen Byker as the eighth president of Calvin College. The dates for this event are October 29 and 30, 1995. Events will include a Sunday-evening worship service, seminars following the Monday-morning inauguration ceremony, and a reception on Monday evening.

The board presented Dr. Peter Harkema with a resolution of thanks for his twenty-one years of work in the Admissions Office of Calvin College and more recently as vice president for Enrollment Services. Dr. Harkema has accepted a position at Fuller Theological Seminary as vice president for enrollment management.

The Campaign for Calvin has reached the \$47 million mark. The alumni portion and foundation efforts are very encouraging, and the newly established Anthony J. Diekema Endowment Fund has already generated a steady flow of donations.

President Diekema gave the college commencement address on May 20, 1995, to approximately 725 graduates and was named an honorary member of the Class of 1995 by the graduates.

II. Staff matters

A. *Dr. Gaylen J. Byker interview* (see Recommendation III, B and C)

B. *Appointments* (see Recommendation III, D)

C. *Retirees* (see Recommendation III, E)

D. *Twenty-five-year anniversaries*

The board acknowledged Professors Martin Bolt (Psychology), Gordon De Blaey (Sociology), Robert L. De Vries (Political Science), and James Timmer (Physical Education), who celebrated the twenty-fifth anniversary of their appointment to the faculty of Calvin College.

E. Bereavements

Dr. Louis A. Vos, Ph.D., Professor of Religion and Theology, and Dr. Kenneth J. Konyndyk, Ph.D., Professor of Philosophy, died during the past academic year. Both of these men had been on the faculty for more than twenty-five years. They contributed much to making Calvin College the institution that it is today. They will be sorely missed.

III. Election of college trustees

A. Regional trustees (see Recommendation III, F, 1)

B. Alumni trustee (see Recommendation III, F, 2)

The board appointed Mrs. Shirley Vogelzang Hoogstra for the one open position.

Shirley Vogelzang Hoogstra, a former teacher, is an attorney with the firm of Jacobs, Grudberg, Belt, and Dow, P.C., in New Haven, Connecticut. She graduated from Calvin College in 1978, and she and her husband were Calvin alumni volunteers when they lived in New Jersey. She is co-chair of the alumni section of the Campaign for Calvin. She has served as a deacon in Richfield Christian Reformed Church in New Jersey and presently is an elder in First Presbyterian Church, New Haven, Connecticut.

C. At-large trustees (see Recommendation III, F, 3)

The terms of four at-large trustees expire this year: Mrs. Barbara Clayton, Mr. Preston Kool, Mrs. Elsa Prince, and Dr. Bill Van Groningen.

Having established that concerns of ethnic diversity, gender balance, clergy/laity representation, geographical representation, and expertise and gifts be considered, the board proposes that the following persons be appointed as at-large trustees for three-year terms.

1. *Mr. Preston Kool* has served the college enthusiastically in diverse capacities. He served on the President's Council for Future Needs and the National Campaign Steering Committee and presently is the chairman of the Campaign for Calvin. A subsequent three-year term would provide the board with opportunity to further benefit from his leadership and expertise. He is a member of Battle Creek CRC, Battle Creek, Michigan.
2. *Mrs. Elsa Prince* has brought to the board extensive involvement in the world of philanthropy and parachurch organizations in her first three-year term. She offers much as an ambassador for Calvin in the public, private, and special-interest service and funding agencies—an increasingly strategic arena of college relationships. She is a member of Ridge Point Community Church, Holland, Michigan.
3. *Dr. Bill Van Groningen* has served Calvin College actively in diverse capacities, most recently as a member of the Presidential Search Committee. To further ensure a smooth transition of presidential leadership, Bill's articulate voice will be a valuable asset for an additional three years. He is a member of Westside CRC, Kingston, Ontario.

The fourth at-large position will be determined at the October 1995 board of trustees meeting.

IV. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to the chair of the board, Rev. John L. Witvliet, the vice chair of the board, Mrs. Sheri Haan, and the secretary of the board, Rev. James Cooper, when matters pertaining to the college are presented.

B. That synod interview Dr. Gaylen J. Byker for the position of president of Calvin College and ratify the board of trustees' appointment.

C. That synod grant Rev. John L. Witvliet, chair of the board, the privilege of introducing Dr. Byker to the synodical delegates before his interview.

D. That synod ratify the following regular appointments:

1. Donald E. Attebury, M.B.A., Assistant Professor of Economics and Business (effective September 1997)
2. Mark T. Gustafson, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Classical Languages
3. Nelson Griffis, M.A., Associate Professor of Sociology and Social Work
4. Susan Hasseler, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Education
5. James R. Jadrich, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Science Education and Physics
6. Steve L. Robbins, M.A., Ph.D. candidate, Assistant Professor of Communication Arts and Sciences
7. John L. Ubels, Ph.D., Professor of Biology
8. Margaret J. Wheeler, D.M.A., Associate Professor of Music

E. That synod give appropriate recognition to the following for their service to Calvin College and the Christian Reformed Church and confer on them the titles listed.

1. Robert Bolt, M.A., Ph.D., Professor of History, Emeritus
2. Herbert J. Brinks, M.A., Ph.D., Professor of History, Emeritus, and Curator, Colonial Origins Collection, Emeritus
3. Peter P. De Boer, M.A., Ph.D., Professor of Education, Emeritus
4. Anthony J. Diekema, M.A., Ph.D., President and Professor, Emeritus
5. George Harris, M.A., Ph.D., Professor of Classical Languages, Emeritus
6. Robert A. Jensen, M.F.A., Professor of Art, Emeritus
7. Kenneth W. Kuiper, M.A., Ed.D., Professor of English, Emeritus
8. Howard J. Slenk, M.A., Ph.D., Professor of Music, Emeritus
9. Edwin J. Van Kley, M.A., Ph.D., Professor of History, Emeritus
10. Paul J. Zwier, M.A., Ph.D., Professor of Mathematics, Emeritus

F. That synod ratify the following appointments to the board (terms to begin and end on the convening date of the first full board meeting following the meeting of synod):

1. Regional trustees

Region	Delegate	Alternate	Term
Far West U.S. I	Rev. G.A. Smith	Rev. J. Dykema	1998
Great Plains	Mr. R. Vander Laan	Mrs. C. Ackerman	1998
Central U.S. I	Mr. R. Bulkema	Dr. J. De Roos	1998
Central U.S. III	Mr. B. Wotjer	Dr. P. De Young	1998
Eastern U.S.	Dr. G. Gabrielse	Rev. D.B. Mouw	1998
Eastern Canada I	Dr. J. Vriend	Mr. R. Datema	1998

2. Alumni trustee

Mrs. Shirley Vogelzang Hoogstra	1998
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3. At-large trustees

Mr. Preston Kool	1998
Mrs. Elsa Prince	1998
Dr. Bill Van Groningen	1998

Calvin College Board of Trustees
James Cooper, Secretary

This report supplements the report submitted in February, which appears in the printed *Agenda*. It presents information and recommendations derived from the April executive committee meeting and from the full board meeting in May.

I. Information

A. *The board of trustees*

Through the general secretary's office the board was notified of regional trustee elections for terms beginning on July 1, 1995, and extending for three years. These elections need synodical approval (see Recommendation II, A).

Region	Delegate	Alternate	Term
Central U.S. I	Rev. C. Hoogendoorn	Rev. C.E. Bajema	1998
Central U.S. II	Rev. G.G. Heyboer	Rev. R.C. Heerspink	1998
Central U.S. IV	Dr. L. Bierma	Dr. W.P. De Boer	1998
Eastern Canada II	Rev. B.P. Velthuisen	Mr. W. Ubbens	1998
Western Canada I	Mr. J. Leder	Mr. P. Byl	1998

The board approved the hiring of a financial officer for the seminary. This person will serve on a part-time basis and have oversight of the seminary budget, endowments, accounts, properties, investments, and personnel policies. A position description was approved which requires two changes in terminology in the board's bylaws. The seminary's constitution requires that synod must approve all changes in the seminary's constitution and bylaws (see Recommendation II, B).

The board received an invitation to review and to suggest changes in the Constitution and Bylaws of the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA by the end of the summer. The seminary administration received a similar request. Because it judged that a unified report from the seminary was important on this significant matter, the board formed a joint committee of three seminary trustees and three seminary staff people to review these documents and to respond on behalf of the seminary.

B. *Programs and staffing*

The board has asked the faculty to review the matter of admission requirements, particularly for second-career people, and to report its findings to the board next February. The continuation of a one-year experimental program of Korean education by extension and of continuing education will be reviewed this summer and considered in September. The trustees requested that the administration continue its investigation of distance learning through fiber optics, satellite, and/or computer technologies and present a report to the board.

C. *Candidacy, licensure, and student matters*

Forty-three students graduated from six degree programs on May 27.

Successful interviews were conducted with twenty-three new candidacy applicants recommended by the faculty and with one candidate who applied for extension of candidacy (see Recommendation II, C).

The board did not sustain the appeal of one candidacy applicant who did not receive a faculty recommendation. He has chosen not to appeal the board's

decision to synod and is working with the field-education office to find placement where he can meet the expectations for candidacy next year.

Twenty-three students were granted regular licensure to exhort; thirteen were granted some form of temporary licensure or licensure extension.

D. Finances

The general operating budget for 1994-1995 is a source of concern. Ending on June 30, the fiscal year has not achieved the anticipated revenues. This is true for all categories (tuition, gifts, and ministry shares). The ministry-share revenues have been particularly low, and the financial officer predicts an operating-budget deficit of \$375,000. Efforts to correct this situation included mailings to every CRCNA council in November and March, mailings to prospective donors in December and May, advertisements and other printed requests, and solicitation by trustees and staff. In April the executive committee expressed its concern by asking the seminary administration to propose a plan for supplementing ministry-share receipts. That plan will be developed this summer.

On the other hand, the board gratefully reports that the four-and-one-half-year seminary capital campaign, which concluded on December 31, exceeded its \$7,950,000 goal; \$8,800,000 in gifts and pledges and continuing projects was received. The board emphasizes that none of this money is designated for the operating budget of the seminary except for the earnings from endowments designated to fund the Ph.D. programs. (These programs are also funded by tuition.) All other campaign projects (building addition and renovation, two student apartment complexes, a missions institute, named scholarships, the Faculty Heritage Fund, and the seminary Revolving Loan Fund) do not contribute to the operating budget. They do, however, enable the seminary to assist students to a greater degree than previously, and they have spared the churches the burden of funding building improvements via the ministry-share system of giving. It is important that synod and the churches clearly understand that the successful campaign does not relieve the yearly operating expenses of the seminary.

The board approved a 1995-1996 operating budget of \$3,323,700. This was \$123,000 less than provisionally approved in February and is in compliance with the limits imposed by the synodical board in March (limit ministry-share increases to 1.3 percent for families and 1.9 percent for individual members).

II. Recommendations

A. That synod approve the election of regional trustees for the seminary board for terms beginning on July 1, 1995, and running for three years.

B. That synod amend two bylaws of the seminary's constitution—3.2 under Article III (p. 15 of the *Board of Trustees' Handbook*, 6/93 edition) and 3.b under Article IV (p. 42)—by changing "director of business and finance" and "director of business" to read "chief financial officer."

C. Candidacy

1. That synod declare the following as candidates for the ministry in the Christian Reformed Church, subject to completion of academic requirements:

Blackmon, Timothy Daniel
Brix, Shawn Ronald
Cunningham, Craig Richard
Ebbers, Richard Jay
Fondse, Charles Herbert
Friend, Calvin Jay
Jeon, Charles Yoochul
Jim, Stanley Alfred
Kim, Moon Bae
Klok, Ronald Edward
McDonald, Michael Stewart
Medenblik, Julius Ted

Meyer, Jeffrey Mark
Pewee, Dongo
Powell, Jess E.
Ridder, Jr., Donald Ray
Roosma, Harvey Jay
Rop, Jr., John
Sheeres, Joel Jeffrey
Shin, Young Su
Turkstra, Andrew Peter
Van Smeerdyk, Gerald Peter
Verbruggen, Mark Neil

2. That synod grant extension of candidacy to the following:
Ekkelenkamp, Sidney R.

Calvin Theological Seminary
Board of Trustees
Elmer Walcott, secretary

Interchurch Relations Committee

The Interchurch Relations Committee (IRC) presents the following matters in supplement to its *Agenda* report.

I. Nominees for REC 1996 delegation (*Agenda for Synod 1995*, III, B, 4, p. 220)

Although the membership of the CRCNA has fallen below 300,000, the number specified by the REC constitution to entitle a church to four voting delegates, the IRC has prepared nominations for four voting delegates. After consulting with the general secretary of the REC and in view of our denominational statistics currently being somewhat uncertain, the IRC is presenting the same number of nominations as in the past. In the event the Assembly of the REC should decide that the CRCNA is entitled to only three voting delegates, the IRC proposes that the fourth elected delegate then serve as a nonvoting delegate.

In preparing nominations for voting delegates, the IRC is guided by two considerations: (1) to provide for some continuity with previous assemblies for more effective participation and (2) to follow the historical practice of including among the CRC delegates a professor of theology, a minister, and a present or past elder, although the REC constitution includes no regulations regarding categories of representatives. The IRC proposes that, after the delegate in each category is elected, synod select alternates from the remaining nominees.

From the following nominees synod should elect voting delegates and their alternates within the designated categories.

A. Theologian (synod to elect one and an alternate)

1. *Dr. Carl G. Kromminga*, a retired professor of homiletics at Calvin Theological Seminary, has served on the IRC for six years and currently is serving as president. He is a member of Calvin CRC of Grand Rapids, Michigan.
2. *Dr. Henry Zwaanstra*, professor of church history at Calvin Theological Seminary, has served on the IRC for two terms and has written a book on CRC ecumenicity, entitled *Catholicity and Secession*. He is a member of Woodlawn CRC in Grand Rapids, Michigan.
3. *Dr. Lyle Bierma* is a graduate of Calvin College and Seminary. He received his doctorate in historical theology from Duke University and currently is a professor of theology at Reformed Bible College. He is a member of Neland Avenue CRC in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

B. Minister (synod to elect one and an alternate)

1. *Rev. Alfred Luke* is a pastor of Boston Square CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan, has been a member and president of SCORR, and was recently nominated to be its director. He is currently a member of the IRC and was a delegate to REC ATHENS 1992.
2. *Rev. Jacob B. Vos* is pastor of First Barrie CRC in Ontario and was a delegate to RES HARARE 1988.
3. *Rev. Jason Chen* is campus minister at the University of Iowa and is pastor of the Chinese CRC in Iowa City, Iowa. He was a delegate to REC ATHENS 1992.

C. *Elder* (synod to elect one and an alternate)

1. *Dr. Harvey Bratt* is a retired physician/surgeon in Grand Rapids, Michigan, who serves as the volunteer medical consultant for CRWM and its missionaries on our mission fields. He has served several terms as elder in Mayfair CRC of Grand Rapids, of which he is a member.
2. *Dr. Nick V. Kroeze* attended Calvin College, received a doctor of education degree from Western Michigan University, served as vice president for student affairs at Dordt College, and recently was elected president of Reformed Bible College. He is a member of Covenant CRC of Sioux Center, Iowa, where he has served as an elder.
3. *Mr. John Vander Ploeg* attended Calvin College and owns the Ship-pak Company in Kalamazoo, Michigan. He has served fifteen years on the board of directors of CRWRC and has been an elder several times. He is a member of Grace CRC of Kalamazoo.

D. *Fourth delegate* (synod to elect one and an alternate)

1. *Mrs. Eunice Vander Laan*, a graduate of Calvin College, served on the synodical Committee to Study Conscientious Objection and Tax Resistance and was a member of the IRC for six years. She is a member of Pinegate Community CRC in Cutlerville, Michigan.
2. *Mrs. Claire Elgersma*, a graduate of Calvin College, is working toward a master's degree in public administration at Queen's University. She is the manager of the Kitchener Canadian Employment Center. Her membership is with First Kitchener (Ontario) CRC, where she has been active in various positions in the congregation.
3. *Mrs. Diane Klein* graduated from Concordia University, Montreal, Quebec, with a master's degree in business administration. She currently is engaged with Educom Consulting, which designed and executed the Listening Conference program, a six-month visioning project for the CRCNA. She is a member of Alliston (Ontario) CRC and serves as an executive member of Citizens for Public Justice.

The IRC recommends that synod authorize the IRC to select nonvoting delegates from among the nominees and other qualified persons who are available to serve. In addition it recommends that the IRC be authorized to appoint two advisers who are theological professors or other persons with special qualifications to give advice to the Assembly, as specified by the REC constitution.

II. Report on OPC/CRC meeting (*Agenda for Synod 1995*, pp. 221-22, VI, A)

The meeting scheduled between the Committee on Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and the CRC Interchurch Relations Committee (IRC) was held on Friday, March 24, 1995. All IRC members and the entire membership of the OPC committee were present. The meeting took place at the Denominational Building from 9:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

IRC President Kromminga welcomed the OPC representatives and then turned the session over to the OPC delegation. The president, Rev. Jack J.

Peterson, transferred the gavel to Rev. John P. Galbraith to take charge of the discussion. Rev. Galbraith proceeded with the order of the day as it had been submitted to the IRC by letter dated February 7, 1995. The letter stated,

The committee seeks to clarify to your committee the three points . . . which our General Assembly has identified as the source of our perception of sin as follows:

- a. For many years women have been ordained as elders within the CRCNA, contrary to Scripture and the CRCNA Church Order.
- b. In 1973 the Synod adopted pastoral advice on the homosexual question, which at certain points, is contrary to Scripture in that it obscures the sinfulness of homosexuality and minimizes the efficacy of the grace of God, and since that time subsequent Synods have failed to correct these doctrinal errors of that pastoral advice.
- c. Over the years the CRCNA has failed to institute or sustain appropriate disciplinary action against those who have willfully violated both the Scripture and the CRCNA Church Order by ordaining women elders.

The members of the IRC responded as each of the three items was discussed, explaining,

- a. That Synod 1994 did not ratify the decision of Synod 1993 to permit women elders and that CRC churches were not to ordain women elders (*Acts of Synod 1994*, pp. 513-18).
- b. That Synod 1994 had reaffirmed the pastoral advice of Synod 1973 regarding homosexuality, noting several specifics in reply to certain concerns expressed in overtures before synod (*Acts of Synod 1994*, pp. 447-48) that also troubled the OPC general assembly.
- c. That synod is in the process of dealing with churches which have ordained women elders, urging those churches to release them from office by June 1, 1995, and urging all councils not to ordain any additional women elders, evangelists, or ministers (*Acts of Synod 1994*, p. 520).

The IRC members presented clarification and explanation of the CRCNA position on the issues raised and attempted to correct the mistaken perceptions of the OPC general assembly in order to allay its deep concerns. The time was too limited to enter into a serious discussion of the issues or to give the IRC opportunity to raise CRC concerns about OPC activity in church planting. The IRC has not learned what the reaction of the OPC committee was nor what report it is submitting to the OPC general assembly. No joint proposals were made, and no decisions were taken at the combined meeting.

III. Hospitality Committee (*Agenda for Synod 1995*, p. 224, VIII)

The names of Rev. Alfred and Mrs. Judy Luke have been added to the Hospitality Committee.

IV. Representation at synod (*Agenda for Synod 1995*, p. 224, IX)

In view of the probability that President Carl G. Kromminga will not be available to represent the committee at synod, the name of Dr. John B. Hulst has been added.

V. Matters requiring synodical action

A. Nominations for REC 1996 Assembly (see Section I above and *Agenda for Synod 1995*, p. 220, Section III, B, 4).

B. Adding Dr. John B. Hulst to IRC representation at synod (see Section IV above and *Agenda for Synod 1995*, p. 224, Section IX).

Interchurch Relations Committee

Clarence Boomsma, administrative secretary

Carl G. Kromminga, president

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OVERTURES AND COMMUNICATIONS

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OVERTURES

Overture 81: Provide Legal Review of Process Used by Churches to Leave the Denomination; Recommend Changes in the Articles of Incorporation to Provide Clear Procedures in the Event of Separation from the Denomination

I. Background

Since 1992 a number of churches have chosen to leave the fellowship of the CRC. A significant number have followed a process distributed at meetings of the Alliance of Reformed Churches. This process effectively bypasses the stipulations in the denomination's present Articles of Incorporation, approved by Synod 1980. Article 7, relating to property and assets, makes provision for the distribution of assets in the event of a schism in the congregation. This article indicates that there will be a division of the assets of the congregation if the newly formed group is of a minimum size and remains in existence for one year. When churches have left the denomination to form independent Reformed churches or similar congregations, some continuing CRC congregations have successfully appealed to this provision for distribution of assets, and others have been unsuccessful.

The process for leaving the CRC used by several churches is a process of corporate law. The separating faction bypasses the Articles of Incorporation by forming a new corporate identity, transferring all assets to it, and then terminating the existing CRC corporate identity. By this process issues of church order and the requirements of the existing Articles of Incorporation can be ignored and often are.

However, this process creates several questions. The legality of the process has not been challenged. Questions of ownership of the assets of the previous CRC have not been answered. By ignoring the Articles of Incorporation, does the new congregation, formed of a majority of the members of the former congregation, have the right to transfer ownership of the assets? By whom is this transfer effected: the new organization or the existing CRC? Does the council of the new organization have the right to sell the assets of the old organization?

Another question concerns the records of the original congregation. Do the minutes of the council and consistory and other historical material belong to the CRC? Or does the new, non-CRC congregation own them? What ecclesiastical body is guardian of them?

A third area of concern is the matter of membership. Some of the withdrawing churches have assumed that all who did not clearly state their desire to remain with the Christian Reformed Church are members of the new corporate identity. Some congregations even continue to work church discipline with such members. Is this a proper assumption? What is the relationship of a member to

a congregation and to the denomination? Do memberships transfer without the agreement of the members?

There are also more technical legal questions. When a council votes to withdraw from the denomination, does it still, legally, have a right to schedule a congregational meeting to request the congregation to vote on leaving? Or has it, by such a decision, resigned from office, thereby nullifying the entire process of congregational withdrawal?

Classes and individual members have been reluctant to challenge such matters in a court of law (I Cor. 6), and, indeed, it may not be necessary for the process to be brought into the judicial system. However, there are sufficient legal concerns to make clarification worthwhile. It is of course possible that such legal matters be handled on a case-by-case basis by individual classes, but the denominational scope of the situation makes it appropriate for denominational review. We judge these matters to fall under the responsibility of the Board of Trustees. Since the denomination already has legal experts on retainer, these matters could be pursued through them to whatever level is necessary.

In the past, recommendations regarding the Articles of Incorporation came from synod rather than classes. On this precedent, any new clarifications and recommendations would be appropriately handled by synod.

II. Overture

Classis Zeeland overtures synod

A. To provide, through the Board of Trustees, a legal review of the process being used by churches leaving the denomination.

Grounds:

1. Significant legal questions remain unanswered regarding the process being used by churches leaving the CRC.
2. The situation is appropriately addressed by synod because the process is used denomination wide.

B. To recommend changes in the Articles of Incorporation that will provide the churches clear procedures to follow in the event of a schism from the denomination.

Grounds:

1. Specific procedures for separation would clarify the legal issues for the congregations.
2. Synod has made similar recommendations in the past.

Classis Zeeland

James Cooper, stated clerk

Overture 82: Adopt Plan to Integrate the Present CCRCC Standing Committees into Existing CRC Ministries

Classis Niagara overtures synod to adopt a plan to integrate the present CCRCC standing committees into existing CRC ministries and to provide for increased Canadian regional representation on a (single) Board of Trustees and on all other governing boards/committees of agencies which presently do not

have classical representation (e.g., The Back to God Hour and Pastoral Ministries).

Grounds:

1. The denominational agencies have sufficient expertise to effectively carry out their mandates in a Canadian context and to administer the financial support of the churches within the requirements of Canadian law.
2. Specifically Canadian matters of mutual concern can be dealt with on a classical or regional-classical level (see Art. 44-b of the Church Order).
3. A single Canadian denominational office will enhance the Canadian churches' awareness of and strengthen their identification with efforts to address the government and other denominations in Canada.
4. Budgets for two levels of Canadian administration will be blended into one, and the resulting savings can be applied directly to ministry.
5. One executive director of ministries who is sensitive to cross-border social and cultural differences will be able to direct the ministries of the entire denomination effectively.

Classis Niagara

C. Nick Overduin, stated clerk

Overture 83: Appoint a Study Committee to Integrate Deacons into the Structure of the Broader Assemblies of the Church

Classis Niagara overtures synod to appoint a study committee to prepare a plan to integrate deacons and/or diaconal ministries into the structure of the broader assemblies of the church.

Grounds:

1. Deacons effectively work together on major projects of mutual concern to churches.
2. Article 76-b of the Church Order encourages councils and classes to be active in word and deed ministry.
3. Exegetical questions regarding the exclusion of deacons in matters of doctrine and church policy remain unresolved.

Classis Niagara

C. Nick Overduin, stated clerk

Overture 84: Return Reports A and B on Clarification of Public Profession of Faith for Covenant Children to Committee

Classis Hamilton overtures synod to return Reports A and B on Clarification of Public Profession of Faith for Covenant Children to committee in order to obtain a majority report.

Grounds:

1. The current report does not provide direction to the churches.
2. The current recommendation of allowing individual congregations to decide the route they would take would be divisive and confusing for our

younger members, especially those who might move from one congregation to another.

3. The churches would benefit from definitive direction in pursuing these matters.

Classis Hamilton

Harry Veldstra, stated clerk

Overture 85: Declare as Null and Void the Declarations of Synod 1994 Regarding Women in Office and Declare That the Two Differing Interpretations Regarding Women in Office Are Acceptable

I. Introduction

The issue of women in office has been present in the Christian Reformed Church for over twenty years. Synod 1994 made decisions which many members throughout the denomination find disturbing.

Synod 1994 did something no synod before it had done. During nearly three decades of debate, the differing positions with regard to women in office were generally presented as acceptable positions within a Reformed tradition of interpreting Scripture. But Synod 1994, by only a bare majority, broke from this pattern by declaring that "the clear teaching of Scripture prohibits women from holding the offices of minister, elder, and evangelist" (*Acts of Synod 1994*, p. 514). Synod further added, "This decision will not bind Christian consciences in any inappropriate way. Christ is Lord of the conscience, and a Christian cannot claim freedom of conscience where the Scripture has spoken" (*Acts of Synod 1994*, p. 516).

We feel compelled to object to this decision. Please note the following:

A. Synod imposed upon the CRC a position which many of its members are convinced is unbiblical. In fact, many faithful members are convinced that according to the Bible the offices in the church should be open to all confessing members in good standing, be they male or female. In our view, declaring one particular view on an issue which is not central to salvation to be the only legitimate view produces unnecessary contention and strife among fellow believers.

B. Synod disallowed the right of CRC members who disagree with the decision to feel conscience bound to object. We believe the Bible is God's infallible Word. The interpretation of the Bible is, however, fallible human work. We fail to see that women in office is such a momentous issue that those who espouse it must be judged to violate holy Scripture. We are convinced that it is improper for synod to bind a person's conscience on this issue.

We wish to add that synod's conscience clause seems especially unfair in light of the panel discussion on the issue which preceded the discussion and decision at synod. The idea to conduct such an open forum came from synod itself. It was at synod's request that four men were requested to present the case for and against the ordination of women. Since synod gave the four men full freedom to present their viewpoints, it seems highly inappropriate later in effect to denounce one of the positions presented and prohibit it in the CRC. The four men graciously consented to serve synod with the benefits of their insights. By adopting a

conscience clause, synod in effect put the two men who argued for women in office in a position of having witnessed against themselves; they were, one might say, convicted out of their own mouths. That does not seem right.

C. Synod appears to have imposed upon the CRC a theological perspective which many believe runs counter to the traditional Reformed approach to Scripture. At issue here is Scripture's differing depictions and descriptions of women's roles. The heart of the issue is hermeneutical. If Scripture is viewed primarily as propositional in character, then one will be against women in office. But if it is seen as primarily the narrative of God's redemptive work, then the weight of Scripture clearly allows for women in office.

It is necessary for synod to reconsider the decision of Synod 1994 and to seek a basis for biblical unity that reflects the Reformed confessions and Reformed hermeneutical principles of biblical interpretation. A sense of direction in this matter can perhaps be provided by the testimony of the faculty of Westminster Theological Seminary in California in the document "A Testimony to Our Time," regarding the interpretation of Genesis 1. The testimony states, "Responsible Reformed theologians have differed as to whether Genesis 1 teaches a young earth or allows for an old earth. While one of these interpretations must be mistaken, we believe that either position can be held by faithful Reformed people." It is remarkable, however, that later the same testimony refuses to acknowledge that differing interpretations of Scripture concerning the permissibility of women officebearers can also be held by faithful Reformed people. The synodical study committees and the nearly fifty-fifty voting decisions by numerous synods on the matter of women officebearers are evidence that differing positions can be held by faithful Reformed people.

Numerous synodical study committees have pointed out that Scripture is not clear on the matter of women officebearers, and they have concluded that it is permissible for women to serve as elders, ministers, deacons, and evangelists. That women may serve in all roles open to men has also been implicit in one of the forms for public profession of faith, which states, "We thank our God for the grace . . . that made you desire to profess your faith publicly . . . and to obtain the privileges of full communion with the people of God." Later, in the charge, it states, "In the name of Christ Jesus, I now welcome you to full communion with the people of God. Rest assured that all the privileges of such communion are now yours." If we indeed accept the decision of Synod 1994, then the churches, classes, and synod should make efforts to revise the form for public profession of faith so that it is consistent with the interpretation of Scripture that does not welcome women to *full* communion and to *all* the privileges of such communion.

As we see it, synod should have authorized both views in the church by allowing local churches either option. In the past the CRC did this with women voting at congregational meetings and more recently with women serving as deacons.

D. As regards a Reformed approach to the issue, we wish to raise another point, which, to the best of our knowledge, has not been raised before.

The Protestant Reformation broke with the distinction between clergy and laity observed in the Roman Catholic Church. Rejecting the clergy-laity distinction, it defended the position of the priesthood of all believers. In our churches we have no priests as such, but ministers and elders. In the Reformed

system the offices of the church arise out of the office of all believers. Officebearers are simply spiritually gifted individuals set aside by the church to function as its official agents. "Spiritually gifted" is the requirement, and being male or female is entirely irrelevant.

Meanwhile, as a denomination we experience some strong differences. How should we deal with these differences without becoming divisive? The decision of Synod 1994 adds to our denominational frustrations and, in effect, invites ecclesiastical disobedience. As a denomination we have differences about allowing women to vote in congregational meetings. More recently we have allowed differences regarding the propriety of having women deacons. We have other differences as well. In all cases, giving congregations the freedom to rule their own house proved to be the key to denominational peace. We believe wisdom dictates that the same course be taken with the current issue.

Therefore, in the interest of denominational healing and wholeness, we respectfully urge synod to adopt the following overture concerning the matter of women officebearers.

II. Overture

Deeply concerned about the continuing unrest in the CRC and eager to bring about healing, Classis Thornapple Valley overtures synod

A. To declare null and void the declarations of Synod 1994 that

1. "The clear teaching of Scripture prohibits women holding the offices of minister, elder, and evangelist."
2. "This decision will not bind Christian consciences in any inappropriate way. Christ is Lord of the conscience, and a Christian cannot claim freedom of conscience where the Scripture has spoken."

Grounds:

- a. Though there are several scriptural passages that appear to support the exclusion of women from church office (for example, I Tim. 2:11-15), Scripture also appears to support the inclusion of women in church office. Exclusion of women from church office is far from being the clear teaching of Scripture. It can be argued according to the Protestant understanding of Scripture that the teaching of the Bible points in precisely the opposite direction. We note only the following:

The Bible was written and the gospel of salvation was first proclaimed in a male-dominated society. In different terms, the cultural matrix of the gospel was a patriarchal society. For example, no woman could be a leader in the synagogue; a woman could not be a priest or function as a legal witness in court (the two required witnesses specified in Deut. 19:15 could not be female).

Joel's pentecostal prophecy in the Old Testament included the prophecy that in the coming age of salvation God would pour out his Spirit on *all* flesh, including *daughters and female slaves*, and that they too would prophesy (Joel 2:28-29). According to the apostle Peter this prophecy was fulfilled when the ascended Christ poured out his Spirit on all who were gathered in the upper room in Jerusalem. Women are depicted in Acts 2 (quoting Joel) as proclaiming the Word of God—one of the prime functions of pastors and elders in Reformed ecclesiology. Not only are they declared to

be eligible to proclaim God's Word; they are celebrated in this function. In fact this is seen as evidence that the time of God's favor has come, the messianic era in which God is making all things new and establishing his just and glorious reign on the earth. This passage clearly indicates that the prophecy proclaimed from the mouths of women is the fruit of God's progressive renewal. Therefore, preventing women from mounting the pulpit to proclaim the Word of God can only be legitimate if such proclamation by women would hinder the reception of that Word. While this may have been true in the first century, the same can not be said of our society.

A profound shift concerning the place of women occurred in the New Testament, and it is especially evident in Luke's gospel. Luke not only mentions that women were the first witnesses of Jesus' resurrection (the other gospel writers also place women at the resurrection scene), but he mentions three of them by name (Luke 24:10). Luke also writes that the women's words seemed an idle tale to the disciples (Luke 24:11). Not surprising. These men lived by the rule of Deuteronomy 19:15. A woman was considered a deceptive creature whose testimony could not be trusted and therefore legally and character-wise unfit to testify. Luke elevates women by making them legally qualified witnesses of the foundational fact of the Christian faith: Christ's resurrection.

Women were surprisingly prominent in the early church. According to the apostle Paul, (married) women should be silent in the churches, were not permitted to speak, and, when they wanted to know something, should ask their husbands at home (I Cor. 14:34-35). Paul also refused to allow women to teach or to have authority over a man; they were to keep silent. The apostle backed up his strong statement by referring to Eve as the one who was deceived and became a transgressor. For women, salvation came through childbearing and leading a modest life (I Tim. 2:11-15). But these words of Paul, obviously addressing situations in those days and not to be taken as an absolute command for all times and places, are hardly the main thrust in the New Testament. The command to be silent in church, in the gatherings of believers, was in no way absolute. Women were allowed to pray and prophesy in public. Paul was not opposed to women praying and prophesying provided the women kept their heads covered, that is, provided they did not create offense through dress or demeanor (I Cor. 11).

The early church also had prophetesses, women qualified by the Spirit to know God's will and speak his Word (I Cor. 11:5). Luke mentions the four unmarried daughters of Philip as having the gift of prophecy (Acts 21:9). This appears to be another fulfillment of Joel's prophecy.

Women served as deacons as well. Romans 16:1 mentions Phoebe, a "deacon of the church at Cenchreae." Women deacons also seem to be mentioned in I Timothy 3:8-13, where Paul lays down qualifications for deacons. The women he refers to in verse 11 are not necessarily the wives of the male deacons. The Greek does not read "their wives" (as in the NIV). It speaks only of "women." In the preceding verses (3:1-7), where Paul speaks of the qualifications of bishops, he does not speak of women or wives. Therefore, it is not likely that the women in verse 11 were the wives of the deacons. It is more likely that these women in verse 11 were female deacons or perhaps "widows" or other women who played a special role.

- b. According to Protestant theology, the special offices arise out of the office of all believers. Since men and women equally hold that office (note Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 12, Q. and A. 32) and since church office is not sacramental in nature, as held by Roman Catholic theology, ideally all offices should be open equally to men and women.

B. To declare that both interpretations regarding women in office are acceptable in the CRC and to make the necessary changes in the Church Order so that local churches are free to elect women to all the offices, as they understand their local situation requires.

Grounds:

1. A strong case can be made that in light of Scripture all the offices should be open to women (see grounds under A above).
2. It removes the discrimination which numerous spiritually qualified women feel they are now subjected to. It will, at last, bring more honesty to the language in the forms for public profession of faith used in our churches. The two forms (*Psalter Hymnal*, p. 963ff.) recognize the gifts of all professing believers, assuring them that as professing members all the privileges of such communion are now theirs. These privileges for men have always included participation in the governance of the church through voting and holding office. By opening up all offices to women, the church can at last truthfully say to all its new confessing members, not just males but also females, "Rest assured that all the privileges of such communion are now yours."
3. Historically, a position of compromise like this, allowing both points of view to coexist and be practiced, has served the churches well.

C. To urge all churches and members to practice tolerance toward each other and to live in peace with and love each other despite profound disagreements on the issue.

Grounds:

1. Since the matter has been discussed without resolution for some twenty years and since, humanly speaking, no additional study and talk seem likely to bring about a consensus (in fact, more study and talk might drive the two groups even farther apart), a compromise like this, allowing both viewpoints, appears to be the Christian thing to do.
2. The issue of women in office is not a key issue that touches the heart of the gospel. Therefore, Bible-believing Christians should be free to hold and practice either position, and Christians who hold contrasting points of view should respect each other's standpoint.

In conclusion, we wish to say that the question of who may hold office in the church does not appear to be a major issue in the New Testament. Instead, the New Testament urges the full servant use of a person's gifts, regardless of whether one is male or female. If in our denomination we would try to live by that ideal, including giving each other freedom in the matter, we would preserve the precious unity we have in Christ.

Classis Thornapple Valley
Julius Vigh, stated clerk

COMMUNICATIONS

Communication 10: Classis Wisconsin

Whereas Synod 1994 of the Christian Reformed Church (*Acts of Synod 1994*, p. 513) ruled "that synod not ratify the change in Church Order Article 3 as adopted by the Synod of 1993 that 'All confessing members of the church who meet the biblical requirements are eligible for the offices of minister, elder, deacon, and evangelist' (*Agenda for Synod 1994*, p. 26; *Acts of Synod 1993*, p. 598) and that the present wording of Church Order Article 3 be retained,"

And whereas Ground f (*Acts of Synod 1994*, p. 515) declares "that the issue of women in office cannot be left to local option because (1) the Scripture does not allow women to serve in the offices of minister, elder, and evangelist, and the synod cannot allow what Scripture does not allow, and (2) the offices function not only in the local church but also in the broader assemblies,"

And whereas Classis Grand Rapids East in session on September 15, 1994, adopted the following motions (Minutes of Classis Grand Rapids East, Sept. 15, 1994), effectively breaking faith with our denominational covenant,

Classis Grand Rapids East, recognizing Synod's legal right to insist on the retention of the word "male" in Church Order Article 3-a, nevertheless acknowledges its congregations' moral right of conscientious objection (with any attendant consequences) to that insistence with respect to the office of elder.

Classis further resolves not to attempt to force its congregations to comply with the decision of Synod 1994 to "(a) urge all councils which have ordained women elders . . . to release them from office by June 1, 1995, and (b) urge all councils not to ordain any additional women elders. . . ."

Therefore we request that the Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church in North America rule that delegates from Classis Grand Rapids East be given the privilege of the floor but be denied the privilege of voting on all matters before synod until such time as Classis Grand Rapids East complies with the decisions of synod on this matter.

Classis Wisconsin

Adrian Dieleman, stated clerk

Communication 11: Classis Heartland

Classis of the Heartland has faced an unusual circumstance, for which it seeks clarification from synod. As we experience a more fluid relationship between denominations, a similar situation may arise again, and therefore a synodical guideline would be helpful both for us and other classes.

One of our emeritus pastors affiliated with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. He was examined by the OPC and received into the Presbytery of the Dakotas. However, he has made no effort to move his personal membership from the Christian Reformed church to which he had retired. As a minister of a church in ecclesiastical fellowship, he has right to CRC pulpits. Yet, since there is no Orthodox Presbyterian church in our classical region, there is essentially no method of supervising his doctrine and conduct either by the OPC or the CRC. He continues to consider himself a member of the CRC while now being a pastor in the OPC.

We would appreciate synod's advice on both membership rights and ministerial rights of such persons. Of particular concern is the supervision of his conduct and life: though he continues to serve as he did when he was a CRC pastor, he has only the quasi-supervision of the OPC.

Classis of the Heartland
Jack Gray, stated clerk



*First Christian Reformed Church
of Everett, Washington*

Pastor James C. Wiersum

1415 McDougall Avenue

Study 252 9 892
Pasadena 258 8893

May 15, 1995

Dr. David H. Englehard
General Secretary
Christian Reformed Church in North America
2850 Kalamazoo Ave. S.E.
Grand Rapids, MI 49560

Dear Christian Friends,

Reference is made to Reports A and B of the Committee to Study Clarification of Public Profession of Faith for Covenant Children.

The Council of the First Christian Reformed Church of Everett, Washington does not feel that any change from the present procedure relative to the Lord's Supper is appropriate. This is a solemn and serious undertaking. Those partaking of holy communion should be old enough to fully understand and appreciate what it is all about.

Further, it is the belief of this Council that the proposed changes, if adopted, would be very difficult to monitor and control. It would result in a further liberalization of our church order. In partaking of communion, if not done so meaningfully, harm would fall upon the individual taking such communion. Reference 1 Cor. 11:27-29. Would not he who allowed this to happen also be in a very dangerous position? To carry this rationale further, we believe that any church or denomination allowing this would be compromised in God's eyes.

Therefore, after much study and prayerful consideration, the Council of this church disagrees with the recommendations of the Committee as found in Reports A and B. We request that the reports be withdrawn and no further action be taken relative to Profession of Faith for Covenant Children.

Respectfully yours,

Jake Boersema
JAKE BOERSEMA
Clerk of Council

James C. Wiersum
JAMES C. WIERSUM
President of Council

COPIES TO:

Synodical Committee to Study Clarification
of Public Profession of Faith for
Covenant Children
Christian Reformed Church in North America
2850 Kalamazoo Ave. S.E.
Grand Rapids, MI 49560

**The Orthodox Presbyterian Church
Office of the General Assembly**

The Rev. Donald J. Duff, Stated Clerk

Phone 215/830-0900 • Fax 215/830-0350

June 7, 1995

Christian Reformed Church in North America
Dr. David H. Englehard, General Secretary
2850 Kalamazoo Ave. S.E.,
Grand Rapids, MI 49506

Dear Dr. Englehard,

The 62nd General Assembly of, the Orthodox Presbyterian Church meeting at Geneva College in Beaver Falls, PA on May 31 - June 6, 1995 passed the following motion with regard to the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

That the General Assembly communicate the following to the Synod of the CRCNA:

That In the light of the actions of the 61st (1994) General Assembly pertaining to the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA) (Minutes, 61st General Assembly, Art. 125, p. 35) and in the light of the joint meeting of the Interchurch relations committees of our two churches on March 24, 1995 this Assembly

1. Express its thanks to the CRCNA (a) for the willingness of its representatives to meet with the OPC's Committee on Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations to discuss these matters of great concern to the OPC; and (b) for their gracious hosting of the March 24th meeting of our respective committees in their denominational office building in Grand Rapids;
2. Affirm that the ordination and/or installation of women to the office of elder is contrary to the Scriptures (1 Timothy 2:11,12; 3:2; Titus 1:6);
3. Affirm that homosexuality is part of "the corruption of [man's] nature, whereby he is utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite unto all that is spiritually good, and wholly inclined to all evil" (Westminster Larger Catechism 25), and that "sodomy, and all unnatural lusts" and "all unclean imaginations, thoughts, purposes, and affections" are sin (Westminster Larger Catechism 139). Cf. Westminster Confessions of Faith VI:4,5.
4. Reaffirm that those who have erotic attractions for members of the same sex but "who are once effectually called, and regenerated, having a new heart, and a new spirit created in them, are further sanctified, really and personally: [that] the dominion of the whole body of sin is destroyed, and the several lusts thereof are more and more weakened and mortified, and that they are more and more quickened and strengthened in all saving graces to the practice of true holiness" (cf. Westminster Confession of Faith XIII:1);
5. Express its sincere regret to the CRCNA, and seek their forgiveness, for the error of the 61st (1994) General Assembly for mistakenly quoting from the pastoral advice proposed in Report 42 to Synod, 1973, namely the phrases, "Cannot be healed" and "permanent limitations", rather than correctly quoting from the adopted Acts of

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Synod 1973, namely the phrases, "are not healed" and "the limitations", respectively (Acts of Synod 1973, Art. 53.C.3.f, p. 52);

6. That the General Assembly declare to the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church in North America its regret that the terms of our relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship have not been followed by either of our churches in relation to each other in that neither has sought consultation with the other on matters affecting our relationship. This fact was brought home to us through the joint meeting held in Grand Rapids on March 24, 1995, where our divergence on the matters discussed was clear and painful. It is true that the issue of women in ecclesiastical office and homosexuality had been discussed in several meetings of the then Reformed Ecumenical Synod when the OPC was a member of that body and that our churches thereby knew much about our respective views on those matters. Yet the fact remains that we did not consult each other concerning them. The result is that our two churches have followed different routes and have come to very different conclusions on these issues, thereby allowing them to become sources of severe friction and alienation between us. These difficulties have been further exacerbated by apparently differing views of church discipline. The General Assembly believes that our churches ought to make serious endeavor to resolve these problems.

The OPC suggests that our churches should even now, though long overdue, make serious effort to restore a fellowship that was so close for many years. The General Assembly therefore offers to consult with the CRCNA on these three matters to examine their merits with regard to both Scripture and the creeds, and appeals to the Synod of the CRCNA to agree to such consultations and to take such steps as may be necessary to institute them with the OPC.

The *Minutes* will note "The motion was adopted without dissent."

May the Lord's blessing be on you and the Synod as you will be meeting soon.

Yours in Christ's service,



Donald J. Duff, Stated Clerk

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FINANCIAL REPORTS

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THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA

THE BACK TO GOD HOUR/CRC-TV

Operating Budget Fiscal Year 1995-96

	Fiscal 93-94 Actual	Fiscal 93-94 Budget	Fiscal 94-95 Budget	Fiscal 95-96 Proposed
INCOME:				
Ministry Share	\$3,654,169	\$3,708,334	\$4,544,500	\$4,543,240
% of Total Income	51.6%	50.6%	50.5%	50.0%
Other Gift Income:				
Ministry Support-General	\$2,903,735	\$3,005,000	\$3,680,500	\$3,793,850
Ministry Support-Television	54,384	138,333	175,000	130,000
Total Gift Income	\$2,958,119	\$3,143,333	\$3,855,500	\$3,923,850
% of Total Income	41.8%	42.9%	42.8%	43.2%
Other Income:				
Legacies	\$397,795	\$333,333	\$425,000	\$450,000
Other	71,181	145,833	175,000	175,000
Total Other Income	\$468,976	\$479,166	\$600,000	\$625,000
% of Total Income	6.6%	6.5%	6.7%	6.9%
TOTAL INCOME	\$7,081,264	\$7,330,833	\$9,000,000	\$9,092,090
EXPENDITURES:				
Program Services:				
English	\$2,204,548	\$2,184,583	\$2,683,500	\$2,632,240
International	2,278,794	2,255,626	2,824,500	2,830,350
Television	1,952,544	1,904,166	2,364,000	2,398,500
Total Program Services	\$6,435,886	\$6,344,375	\$7,872,000	\$7,861,090
% of Total	89.9%	86.7%	87.5%	86.5%
Support Services:				
Management and General	\$271,067	\$352,708	\$363,500	\$366,000
Fund - Raising	431,176	458,333	564,500	580,000
Capital & Other	24,350	162,500	200,000	285,000
Total Support Services	\$726,593	\$973,541	\$1,128,000	\$1,231,000
% of Total	10.1%	13.3%	12.5%	13.5%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$7,162,479	\$7,317,916	\$9,000,000	\$9,092,090
NET SURPLUS (DEFICIT)	\$(81,215)	\$12,917	\$0	\$0

THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA

CALVIN COLLEGE

**Operating Budget
Fiscal Year 1995-96**

	Fiscal 93-94 Actual	Fiscal 93-94 Budget	Fiscal 94-95 Budget	Fiscal 95-96 Proposed
<u>INCOME:</u>				
Ministry Share:	\$2,747,754	\$2,800,000	\$2,900,000	\$2,850,000
% of Total Income	7.2%	7.1%	6.7%	6.2%
Other Gift Income:				
Annual Fund Revenues	\$2,016,635	\$1,670,000	\$2,200,000	\$2,200,000
Other	461,523	926,600	586,300	586,300
Total Gift Income	\$2,478,158	\$2,596,600	\$2,786,300	\$2,786,300
% of Total Income	6.5%	6.6%	6.5%	6.0%
Other Income:				
Endowment, Sales, and Services	\$32,996,424	\$33,950,400	\$37,400,500	\$40,651,600
Total Other Income	\$32,996,424	\$33,950,400	\$37,400,500	\$40,651,600
% of Total Income	86.3%	86.3%	86.8%	87.8%
TOTAL INCOME	\$38,222,336	\$39,347,000	\$43,086,800	\$46,287,900
<u>EXPENDITURES:</u>				
Program Services:				
Instructional	\$12,578,530	\$12,684,400	\$13,837,500	\$14,691,500
Research	49,463	59,500	285,400	194,500
Public Service	86,153	94,700	100,000	120,700
Academic Support	3,182,185	3,444,100	3,668,900	4,066,000
Student Services	2,790,117	2,778,000	3,073,200	3,298,400
Student Aid	8,688,700	8,636,700	9,781,100	10,820,100
Total Program Services	\$27,375,148	\$27,697,400	\$30,746,100	\$33,191,200
% of Total	71.0%	70.4%	71.4%	71.7%
Support Services:				
Management and General	\$7,802,618	\$7,961,500	\$8,823,800	\$9,422,100
Fund - Raising	649,002	703,400	714,900	739,600
Annual Fund Needs	487,451	868,700	524,000	525,000
Plant Operations	2,240,676	2,116,000	2,278,000	2,410,000
Total Support Services	\$11,179,747	\$11,649,600	\$12,340,700	\$13,096,700
% of Total	29.0%	29.6%	28.6%	28.3%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$38,554,895	\$39,347,000	\$43,086,800	\$46,287,900
NET SURPLUS (DEFICIT)	(\$332,559)	\$0	\$0	\$0

THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA

CALVIN SEMINARY

Operating Budget Fiscal Year 1995-96

	Fiscal 93-94 Actual	Fiscal 93-94 Budget	Fiscal 94-95 Budget	Fiscal 95-96 Proposed
<u>INCOME:</u>				
Ministry Share	\$1,764,486	\$1,880,000	\$1,980,800	\$1,917,200
% of Total Income	66.2%	64.3%	63.1%	58.9%
Other Gift Income:				
Voluntary Contributions	\$30,217	\$54,500	\$55,000	\$55,000
Special Projects	134,946	210,000	315,300	369,000
Total Gift Income	\$165,163	\$264,500	\$370,300	\$424,000
% of Total Income	6.2%	9.0%	11.8%	13.2%
Other Income:				
Edowment, Sales, and Services	734,594	779,900	789,400	859,300
Total Other Income	\$734,594	\$779,900	\$789,400	\$859,300
% of Total Income	27.6%	26.7%	25.1%	26.8%
TOTAL INCOME	\$2,664,243	\$2,924,400	\$3,140,500	\$3,200,500
<u>EXPENDITURES:</u>				
Program Services:				
Instructional	\$1,168,720	\$1,251,300	\$1,243,000	\$1,261,400
Public Service	52,753	53,400	50,400	49,800
Academic Support	298,902	317,300	356,000	360,800
Student Services	165,262	184,000	258,800	219,600
Student Aid	67,243	97,000	107,600	150,300
Total Program Services	\$1,752,880	\$1,903,000	\$2,015,800	\$2,041,900
% of Total	65.8%	65.1%	64.2%	63.8%
Support Services:				
Management and General	\$636,211	\$737,400	\$811,100	\$843,300
Fund - Raising	114,436	121,100	130,100	125,700
Plant Operations	159,381	162,900	183,500	189,600
Total Support Services	\$910,028	\$1,021,400	\$1,124,700	\$1,158,600
% of Total	34.2%	34.9%	35.8%	36.2%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$2,662,908	\$2,924,400	\$3,140,500	\$3,200,500
NET SURPLUS (DEFICIT)	\$1,335	\$0	\$0	\$0

THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA

CRC PUBLICATIONS

Operating Budget Fiscal Year 1995-96

INCOME:

	Fiscal 93-94 Actual	Fiscal 93-94 Budget	Fiscal 94-95 Budget	Fiscal 95-96 Proposed
Ministry Share	\$227,000	\$218,000	\$238,000	\$247,000
% of Total Income	3.5%	3.1%	4.1%	3.8%
Other Gift Income:				
Donations/Offerings	\$17,000	\$65,000	\$75,000	\$139,000
Other	0	0	0	0
Total Gift Income	\$17,000	\$65,000	\$75,000	\$139,000
% of Total Income	0.3%	0.9%	1.3%	2.1%
Other Income:				
Sales	\$6,119,000	\$6,534,000	\$5,216,000	\$6,056,000
Miscellaneous	58,000	120,000	262,000	94,000
Total Other Income	\$6,177,000	\$6,654,000	\$5,478,000	\$6,150,000
% of Total Income	96.2%	95.9%	94.6%	94.1%
TOTAL INCOME	\$6,421,000	\$6,937,000	\$5,791,000	\$6,536,000

EXPENDITURES:

Program Services:				
Banner	\$1,489,000	\$1,567,000	\$1,571,000	\$1,591,000
Education	3,269,000	3,455,000	3,385,000	3,891,000
World Literature Min.	349,000	373,000	411,000	488,000
Outside Printing	1,305,000	1,481,000	0	0
Other	0	0	0	0
Total Program Services	\$6,412,000	\$6,876,000	\$5,367,000	\$5,970,000
% of Total	95.1%	93.3%	89.8%	91.4%
Support Services:				
Management and General	\$332,000	\$490,000	\$608,000	\$562,000
Other	0	0	0	0
Total Support Services	\$332,000	\$490,000	\$608,000	\$562,000
% of Total	4.9%	6.7%	10.2%	8.6%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$6,744,000	\$7,366,000	\$5,975,000	\$6,532,000
NET SURPLUS (DEFICIT)	(\$323,000)	(\$429,000)	(\$184,000)	\$4,000

THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA

CHRISTIAN REFORMED HOME MISSIONS

**Operating Budget
Fiscal Year 1995-96**

	Fiscal 93-94 Actual	Fiscal 93-94 Budget	Fiscal 94-95 Budget	Fiscal 95-96 Proposed
INCOME:				
Ministry Share	\$5,732,500	\$5,800,000	\$5,800,000	\$5,800,000
% of Total Income	62.9%	62.3%	62.7%	67.7%
Other Gift Income:				
Missionary Support	\$973,500	\$1,045,000	\$800,000	\$800,000
Churches and Individuals	709,000	940,000	1,050,000	882,000
Estates, Land Grants	86,800	75,000	201,800	325,000
Total Gift Income	\$1,769,300	\$2,060,000	\$2,051,800	\$2,007,000
% of Total Income	19.4%	22.1%	22.2%	23.4%
Other Income:				
Catalog, Consulting	\$765,700	\$728,000	\$765,800	\$170,000
Conferences	299,300	346,000	247,400	203,000
Notes Repay, Other	550,100	381,000	385,000	385,000
Total Other Income	\$1,615,100	\$1,455,000	\$1,398,200	\$758,000
% of Total Income	17.7%	15.6%	15.1%	8.8%
TOTAL INCOME	\$9,116,900	\$9,315,000	\$9,250,000	\$8,565,000
EXPENDITURES:				
Program Services:				
Est. Church Development	\$2,437,200	\$2,794,400	\$2,677,400	\$2,415,000
New Church Development	5,131,900	5,392,500	5,438,400	4,975,000
Total Program Services	\$7,569,100	\$8,186,900	\$8,115,800	\$7,390,000
% of Total	86.6%	87.9%	87.7%	86.3%
Support Services:				
Management and General	\$708,700	\$654,300	\$670,600	\$650,000
Resource Development	466,800	473,800	463,600	525,000
Total Support Services	\$1,175,500	\$1,128,100	\$1,134,200	\$1,175,000
% of Total	13.4%	12.1%	12.3%	13.7%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$8,744,600	\$9,315,000	\$9,250,000	\$8,565,000
NET SURPLUS (DEFICIT)	\$372,300	\$0	\$0	\$0

THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA
CHRISTIAN REFORMED WORLD MISSIONS

Operating Budget
Fiscal Year 1995-96

	Fiscal 93-94 Actual	Fiscal 93-94 Budget	Fiscal 94-95 Budget	Fiscal 95-96 Proposed
<u>INCOME:</u>				
Ministry Share	\$4,345,660	\$4,076,112	\$5,133,500	\$5,026,000
% of Total Income	41.4%	38.0%	39.1%	40.0%
Other Gift Income:				
Above Ministry Share	\$3,748,142	\$4,313,481	\$5,410,500	\$5,018,000
Other	0	0	0	0
Total Gift Income	\$3,748,142	\$4,313,481	\$5,410,500	\$5,018,000
% of Total Income	35.7%	40.2%	41.2%	39.6%
Other Income:				
Field Receipts	\$1,709,324	\$1,602,648	\$1,865,194	\$1,851,481
Legacies / Miscellaneous	684,432	729,848	728,129	677,502
Total Other Income	\$2,393,756	\$2,332,496	\$2,593,323	\$2,528,983
% of Total Income	22.8%	21.8%	19.7%	20.1%
TOTAL INCOME	\$10,487,558	\$10,722,089	\$13,137,323	\$12,572,983
<u>EXPENDITURES:</u>				
Program Services:				
Africa	\$2,197,494	\$2,669,860	\$3,567,778	\$2,900,016
Asia	3,336,470	3,421,593	4,371,261	4,392,549
Latin America	2,820,138	2,966,515	3,540,396	3,256,447
Europe/Russia	232,816	402,919	557,246	444,306
N.A. Education	314,217	310,680	354,638	357,216
Total Program Services	\$8,901,135	\$9,771,567	\$12,391,319	\$11,350,534
% of Total	89.1%	89.2%	89.8%	88.7%
Support Services:				
Management and General	\$588,083	\$643,138	\$783,559	\$815,544
Support Raising	505,659	543,869	620,831	626,905
	0	0	0	0
Total Support Services	\$1,093,742	\$1,187,007	\$1,404,390	\$1,442,449
% of Total	10.9%	10.8%	10.2%	11.3%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$9,994,877	\$10,958,574	\$13,795,709	\$12,792,983
NET SURPLUS (DEFICIT)	\$492,681	(\$236,485)	(\$658,386)	(\$220,000)

THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA
CHRISTIAN REFORMED WORLD RELIEF COMMITTEE

Operating Budget
Fiscal Year 1995-96

	Fiscal 93-94 Actual	Fiscal 93-94 Budget	Fiscal 94-95 Budget	Fiscal 95-96 Proposed
INCOME:				
Ministry Share	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
% of Total Income	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Other Gift Income:				
General	\$6,458,057	\$6,412,297	\$7,902,824	\$7,591,522
Disaster	999,311	943,265	892,319	608,696
Total Gift Income	\$7,457,368	\$7,355,562	\$8,795,143	\$8,200,218
% of Total Income	91.4%	89.3%	83.5%	86.6%
Other Income:				
Grant Revenue	\$617,182	\$824,804	\$1,658,964	\$1,219,565
Interest / Other	85,838	60,535	82,135	48,116
Total Other Income	\$703,020	\$885,339	\$1,741,099	\$1,267,681
% of Total Income	8.6%	10.7%	16.5%	13.4%
TOTAL INCOME	\$8,160,388	\$8,240,901	\$10,536,242	\$9,467,899
EXPENDITURES:				
Program Services:				
International	\$4,455,826	\$4,531,065	\$5,913,639	\$5,284,619
Domestic	1,025,709	1,130,588	1,336,021	1,269,929
Disaster	1,164,478	1,472,198	1,464,216	584,432
USAID OCI Project	0	0	0	289,265
	0	0	0	0
Total Program Services	\$6,646,013	\$7,133,851	\$8,713,876	\$7,428,245
% of Total	81.5%	81.5%	80.6%	79.1%
Support Services:				
Resource Development	742,519	\$774,364	\$1,003,729	\$1,061,825
Management and General	764,772	847,373	1,087,985	899,652
Total Support Services	\$1,507,291	\$1,621,737	\$2,091,714	\$1,961,477
% of Total	18.5%	18.5%	19.4%	20.9%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$8,153,304	\$8,755,588	\$10,805,590	\$9,389,722
NET SURPLUS (DEFICIT)	\$7,084	(\$514,687)	(\$269,348)	\$78,177

THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA

LOAN FUND, INC.

Statements of Operations and Changes in Fund Balance 12 Month Period Ending December 31

UNITED STATES FUND:

	Fiscal 1992	Fiscal 1993	Fiscal 1994
<u>INCOME:</u>			
Interest	\$438,749	\$516,995	\$581,676
Donations	\$251	\$5,062	\$0
TOTAL INCOME	\$439,000	\$522,057	\$581,676
<u>EXPENSES:</u>			
Administrative Expenses	\$24,291	\$33,358	\$26,421
Interest	312,480	339,700	370,199
Provision for Loan Losses	25,000	50,000	50,000
Payroll and Fringe Benefits	56,909	58,984	69,477
TOTAL EXPENSE	\$418,680	\$482,042	\$516,097
EXCESS OF REVENUES OVER EXPENSES	\$20,320	\$40,015	\$65,579
FUND BALANCE:			
Beginning of Year	\$2,377,115	\$2,397,435	\$2,437,450
End of Year	\$2,397,435	\$2,437,450	\$2,503,029

CANADIAN FUND:

<u>INCOME:</u>			
Interest	\$37,630	\$36,123	\$41,042
<u>EXPENSES:</u>			
Administrative Expenses	\$30	\$30	\$978
EXCESS OF REVENUES OVER EXPENSES	\$37,600	\$36,093	\$40,064
FUND BALANCE:			
Beginning of Year	\$419,840	\$457,440	\$493,533
End of Year	\$457,440	\$493,533	\$533,597

THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA
COMMITTEE FOR EDUCATION ASSISTANCE TO CHURCHES ABROAD

Operating Budget
Fiscal Year 1995-96

	Fiscal 93-94 Actual	Fiscal 93-94 Budget	Fiscal 94-95 Budget	Fiscal 95-96 Proposed
INCOME:				
Ministry Share	\$53,028	\$63,426	\$67,384	\$67,384
% of Total Income	59.7%	72.1%	70.1%	70.1%
Other Gift Income:				
Individuals	\$5,692	\$6,667	\$8,273	\$8,273
Churches	14,498	12,500	10,000	10,000
Total Gift Income	\$20,190	\$19,167	\$18,273	\$18,273
% of Total Income	22.7%	21.8%	19.0%	19.0%
Other Income:				
CTS Development	\$2,979	\$2,083	\$2,500	\$2,500
Interest and Other	12,587	3,334	8,000	8,000
Total Other Income	\$15,566	\$5,417	\$10,500	\$10,500
% of Total Income	17.5%	6.2%	10.9%	10.9%
TOTAL INCOME	\$88,784	\$88,010	\$96,157	\$96,157
EXPENDITURES:				
Program Services:				
Student Grants	\$82,880	\$76,326	\$81,657	\$81,657
Library Assistance	4,257	6,267	7,000	7,000
Total Program Services	\$87,137	\$82,593	\$88,657	\$88,657
% of Total	95.3%	93.8%	92.2%	92.2%
Support Services:				
Management and General	\$2,624	\$2,917	\$3,500	\$3,500
Fund - Raising	1,694	2,500	4,000	4,000
Total Support Services	\$4,318	\$5,417	\$7,500	\$7,500
% of Total	4.7%	6.2%	7.8%	7.8%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$91,455	\$88,010	\$96,157	\$96,157
NET SURPLUS (DEFICIT)	(\$2,671)	\$0	\$0	\$0

THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA

DENOMINATIONAL SERVICES

Operating Budget

Fiscal Year 1995-96

	Fiscal 93-94 Actual	Fiscal 93-94 Budget	Fiscal 94-95 Budget	Fiscal 95-96 Proposed
INCOME:				
Ministry Share	\$1,294,668	\$1,233,333	\$1,696,000	\$1,639,842
% of Total Income	88.0%	88.0%	91.2%	88.8%
Other Gift Income:				
Individual Contributions	\$8,750	\$2,000	\$3,000	\$5,000
Fellowship Fund	0	0	0	40,000
Total Gift Income	\$8,750	\$2,000	\$3,000	\$45,000
% of Total Income	0.6%	0.1%	0.2%	2.4%
Other Income:				
Interest	\$39,894	\$12,750	\$16,000	\$16,000
Miscellaneous	128,454	154,220	145,000	145,000
Total Other Income	\$168,348	\$166,970	\$161,000	\$161,000
% of Total Income	11.4%	11.9%	8.7%	8.7%
TOTAL INCOME	\$1,471,766	\$1,402,303	\$1,860,000	\$1,845,842
EXPENDITURES:				
Program Services:				
Synodical Assembly	\$198,039	\$198,874	\$263,500	\$237,000
Study Committees	24,864	25,645	25,000	25,000
Service Committees	79,531	72,500	93,500	142,950
Assistance and Grants	102,486	57,083	55,000	80,300
Fellowship Fund	0	0	40,000	40,000
Total Program Services	\$404,920	\$354,102	\$477,000	\$525,250
% of Total	26.2%	24.3%	27.7%	28.5%
Support Services:				
General Management	\$542,094	\$544,457	\$648,800	\$721,489
Building Services	598,705	557,852	662,200	771,294
Allocations	0	0	(63,400)	(175,905)
Total Support Services	\$1,140,799	\$1,102,309	\$1,247,600	\$1,316,878
% of Total	73.8%	75.7%	72.3%	71.5%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$1,545,719	\$1,456,411	\$1,724,600	\$1,842,128
NET SURPLUS (DEFICIT)	(\$73,953)	(\$54,108)	\$135,400	\$3,714

THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA
FUND FOR SMALLER CHURCHES

Operating Budget
Fiscal Year 1995-96

	Fiscal 93-94 Actual	Fiscal 93-94 Budget	Fiscal 94-95 Budget *	Fiscal 95-96 Proposed
INCOME:				
Ministry Share	\$652,642	\$704,000	\$776,667	\$852,000
% of Total Income	97.8%	98.9%	99.5%	99.4%
Other Gift Income	\$2,233	\$3,000	\$2,500	\$3,000
% of Total Income	0.3%	0.4%	0.3%	0.4%
Other Income	\$11,753	\$5,000	\$1,667	\$2,000
% of Total Income	1.8%	0.7%	0.2%	0.2%
TOTAL INCOME	\$666,628	\$712,000	\$780,834	\$857,000
EXPENDITURES:				
Program Services:				
Subsidy Payments	\$729,361	\$760,000	\$663,333	\$757,500
Moving Expenses	4,562	14,000	12,500	16,000
Educational Allowances	4,963	8,000	7,083	7,000
Auto Reimbursements	58,159	66,000	58,850	70,000
Total Program Services	\$797,045	\$848,000	\$741,766	\$850,500
% of Total	90.5%	93.4%	98.2%	97.6%
Support Services:				
Management and General	\$10,006	\$15,000	\$13,958	\$21,000
Canadian Exchange	73,805	45,000	0	0
Total Support Services	\$83,811	\$60,000	\$13,958	\$21,000
% of Total	9.5%	6.6%	1.8%	2.4%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$880,856	\$908,000	\$755,724	\$871,500
NET SURPLUS (DEFICIT)	(\$214,228)	(\$196,000)	\$25,110	(\$14,500)

* Fiscal year 1995 was originally budgeted as a twelve month year ending 8/31/95. To achieve consistency with other denominational agencies, the fiscal year is being changed to end 6/30/95. The fiscal year 1995 budget is adjusted to 10/12ths of the budget originally submitted and approved.

THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA

PASTORAL MINISTRIES

Operating Budget Fiscal Year 1995-96

INCOME:

	Fiscal 93-94 Actual	Fiscal 93-94 Budget	Fiscal 94-95 Budget	Fiscal 95-96 Proposed
Ministry Share	\$878,572	\$938,625	\$1,202,203	\$1,166,302
% of Total Income	85.3%	83.0%	88.3%	83.7%
Other Gift Income:				
Individual Contributions	\$51,279	\$65,500	\$75,850	\$71,500
Offerings	74,191	80,500	101,750	98,500
Total Gift Income	\$125,470	\$146,000	\$177,400	\$170,000
% of Total Income	12.2%	12.8%	12.7%	12.2%
Other Income:				
Grants	\$0	\$4,167	\$5,000	\$5,000
Miscellaneous Income	25,345	41,792	7,950	52,750
Total Other Income	\$25,345	\$45,959	\$12,950	\$57,750
% of Total Income	2.5%	4.1%	0.9%	4.1%
TOTAL INCOME	\$1,029,387	\$1,130,584	\$1,392,553	\$1,394,052

EXPENDITURES:

Program Services:				
Chaplain Ministry	\$333,364	\$409,516	\$455,000	\$478,880
Pastor-Church Relations	62,423	66,709	91,250	105,300
Disability Concerns	81,530	85,167	104,200	120,832
Abuse Prevention	0	0	52,000	68,800
SCORR	224,590	279,768	335,720	327,950
Total Program Services	\$701,907	\$841,160	\$1,038,170	\$1,101,762
% of Total	73.1%	74.5%	74.5%	78.0%
Support Services:				
Office Expense	\$233,699	\$260,548	\$314,983	\$262,340
Promotion	10,490	10,417	16,000	19,350
Board Expense	13,563	16,458	23,750	10,600
Total Support Services	\$257,752	\$287,423	\$354,733	\$292,290
% of Total	28.8%	25.5%	25.5%	21.0%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$959,659	\$1,128,583	\$1,392,903	\$1,394,052
NET SURPLUS (DEFICIT)	\$69,728	\$2,001	(\$350)	\$0

THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA
MINISTERS' PENSION FUND - UNITED STATES

Operating Budget
Fiscal Year 1996
 (Stated in U.S. \$)

	Fiscal 1994 Actual	Fiscal 1994 Budget	Fiscal 1995 Budget	Fiscal 1996 Proposed
INCOME:				
Ministry Share	\$1,652,134	\$1,763,677	\$1,533,000	\$1,575,824
% of Total Income	72.5%	69.1%	70.8%	63.9%
Participant Assessments:	\$628,025	\$788,465	\$633,400	\$889,870
% of Total Income	27.5%	30.8%	29.2%	36.1%
TOTAL INCOME	\$2,280,159	\$2,552,142	\$2,166,400	\$2,465,694
EXPENDITURES AND ACCRUED LIABILITIES:				
Program Services:				
Actuary-Determined Pension Cost (net of investment income anticipated over life of the obligation) *	\$2,615,694	\$2,615,694	\$2,615,694	\$2,615,694
% of Total	88.2%	88.7%	89.0%	89.7%
Support Services:				
Allocated Fees	\$38,561	\$40,471	\$35,332	\$75,000
Investment/Advisory Fees	216,067	243,270	237,675	200,000
Other Expenses	95,014	48,817	49,174	25,000
Total Support Services	\$349,642	\$332,558	\$322,181	\$300,000
% of Total	11.8%	11.3%	11.0%	10.3%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$2,965,336	\$2,948,252	\$2,937,875	\$2,915,694
NET SURPLUS (DEFICIT)	(\$685,177)	(\$396,110)	(\$771,475)	(\$450,000)

* Note: Actuarial calculation to determine this value is completed every three years.
 The most recent calculation was done by Deloit & Touche actuaries, January 1994.

THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA

MINISTERS' PENSION FUND - CANADA

Operating Budget

Fiscal Year 1996

(Stated in Canadian \$)

	Fiscal 1994 Actual	Fiscal 1994 Budget	Fiscal 1995 Budget	Fiscal 1996 Proposed
INCOME:				
Ministry Share	\$655,142	\$652,319	\$567,000	\$612,820
% of Total Income	78.6%	79.8%	75.0%	73.5%
Participant Assessments:	\$178,206	\$165,614	\$189,000	\$220,720
% of Total Income	21.4%	20.2%	25.0%	26.5%
TOTAL INCOME	\$833,348	\$817,933	\$756,000	\$833,540
EXPENDITURES AND ACCRUED LIABILITIES:				
Program Services:				
Actuary-Determined Pension Cost (net of investment income anticipated over life of the obligation) *	\$661,740	\$661,740	\$661,740	\$661,740
% of Total	85.6%	84.0%	85.1%	86.9%
Support Services:				
Allocated Fees	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$25,000
Investment/Advisory Fees	48,514	66,500	52,800	65,000
Other Expenses	62,371	59,329	63,041	10,000
Total Support Services	\$110,885	\$125,829	\$115,841	\$100,000
% of Total	14.4%	16.0%	14.9%	13.1%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$772,625	\$787,569	\$777,581	\$761,740
NET SURPLUS (DEFICIT)	\$60,723	\$30,364	(\$21,581)	\$71,800

* Note: Actuarial calculation to determine this value is completed every three years. The most recent calculation was done by MLH + A, Inc. actuaries, January 1994.

REPORT OF SYNOD 1995

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SYNODICAL PRAYER SERVICE

June 12, 1995

Twelfth Avenue Christian Reformed Church

Rev. Calvin Bolt

Prelude Patricia Brummel
"Now Thank We All Our God" P. Manz
(*Psalter Hymnal* 454)

Introit..... Twelfth Avenue Choirs
"Father, Make Us One" Ridings
Father, make us one. Father make us one.
That the world may know Thou hast sent Thy Son;
Father, make us one.

*Opening Hymn *Psalter Hymnal* 504
"Holy God, We Praise Your Name"

*Opening Prayer

PASTOR: *Your love, O Lord, reaches to the heavens,
Your faithfulness to the skies.*

PEOPLE: *Your righteousness is like the mighty mountains,
Your justice like the great deep.*

PASTOR: *How priceless is your unfailing love! Both high and low among men find
refuge in the shadow of your wings.*

PEOPLE: *They feast in the abundance of your house; you give them drink
from your river of delights.*

PASTOR: *For with you is the fountain of life;
in your light we see light.*

PEOPLE: *Continue your love to those who know you,
your righteousness to the upright in heart.*

Psalms 36:5-10

*The Lord's Greeting

*Mutual Greeting

Offertory: "Spirit Divine, Inspire Our Prayer" Cruger/Held
(*Psalter Hymnal* 420)

Offering for Christian Reformed World Missions, Christian Reformed
Home Missions, and Christian Reformed World Relief Committee

Scripture	Ephesians 3:14-21
Message	"Paul's Prayer for Us"
*Hymn of Preparation	<i>Psalter Hymnal</i> 420
<i>"Breathe on Me"</i>	

Spoken Prayers

PRAYER FOR THE CHURCH

Reader: *God of all glory,
Creator of the universe and Sustainer of life,
our Father who has chosen us to be his children
and gave us his Son, Jesus Christ, who redeemed us
and called us to be his disciples,
you have given us a name and a place in your
kingdom and endowed each of us with gifts to be
used in your church.
Hear us, Lord, as we lift this church before your
throne of grace.*

Prayer..... Mr. Warren Faber
Choral Response Twelfth Avenue Senior Choir
"One God" (Ephesians 4:1-6) Martin

*Live a life worthy of your calling,
the calling to which you have been called.
Be humble, be patient, bearing with each other in love.
Make every effort to keep the unity of the spirit
through the bond of peace.*

Refrain:

*There is one body, there is one Spirit
there is one hope, one Lord, one faith,
there is one baptism; one God and Father of us all.
There is one God.*

*Let every tongue proclaim
the King of Heaven reigns.
All praise to Christ the Lord,
one God forevermore!*

Refrain.

*There is one God. Praise the one God
who is above all and one God who is through all
and in us all. There is one God.
THERE IS ONE GOD!*

PRAYER FOR THE CHURCH'S MINISTRIES

Reader: *God of mercy and truth,
we preach Christ Jesus the Lord
and ourselves your servants
in our congregations, our colleges,
over the airwaves and around the world.
... since we have this ministry,
as we have received mercy, we do not lose heart,
but we give a cup of cold water, food to eat,
clothing for warmth, in his precious name.*
*"My little children,
let us not love in word or in tongue,
but in deed and in truth."
Do justly, love mercy; honor all people.
Fear God. Honor the King!*

Prayer..... Rev. Henry Van Wyk

Hymn of Response..... *Psalter Hymnal* 508
"Jesus with Your Church Abide"

PRAYER FOR SYNOD

Reader: *God, the author and finisher of our faith,
Jesus Christ, his Son, the head of the church,
the kingdom of God is righteousness, peace, and joy
in the Holy Spirit.
Let us do what leads to peace and mutual edification.
May the God of patience and comfort grant us to be like
minded toward one another.
And may the God of hope fill us with joy and peace
in believing*

Prayer..... Rev. Calvin Bolt

Choral Response..... Senior Choir and Congregation
"We Are the People of God"..... Beall/Carter

Choir: Refrain:
We are the people of God;
He has loved us and chosen us for his own.
We are the people of God;
He has chosen us to be His own.

Choir and
Congregation: Refrain.

Choir: Filled and clothed with his Spirit...
Forgiving as he forgave...
Bound and blessed by his perfect love,
His everlasting love.

Choir and
Congregation: Refrain.

Choir: The peace of Christ is in us,
For peace is our calling now.
Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs
We offer him with joy.

Choir and
Congregation: Refrain.

Choir: All we do in word and deed
We do in his holy Name.
Giving thanks to God above
With glad and joyful hearts.

Choir and
Congregation: Refrain.

Choir: He has chosen us to be his own.

*Apostles' Creed

*Closing Hymn *Psalter Hymnal* 517
"There's No God as Great"

*God's Blessing

*Departing Prayer Twelfth Avenue Junior Choir
"May the Light of God" Erickson
Now may the light of God be with you to guide you.
Now may the love of God be with you to strengthen you.
Now may the Son of God be with you to be a joy in all you do,
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

*Postlude Janet Ten Brink, pianist
"The Church's One Foundation" Wesley/Hayes

*If you are able, please stand.

Rev. Calvin Bolt, pastor
Rev. Henry Van Wyk, assistant pastor
Mr. Warren Faber, vice president of the council
Barbara Vredevoogd, reader
Patricia L. Brummel, organist, Junior Choir director
Janet Ten Brink, pianist, Promises Choir director
Idelle Wagner, Senior Choir director

- 1) All are invited to enjoy fellowship and refreshments in the lower level of the church.
- 2) The Prayer Room during synod is in the Fine Arts Center - Room 105.
Members of Twelfth Avenue Church will be present to convene prayers each day at 7:45 a.m., 12:45 p.m., and 6:45 p.m. Other groups and individuals are welcome to use the Prayer Room at any time.

MINUTES OF SYNOD 1995

TUESDAY MORNING, JUNE 13, 1995

First Session

ARTICLE 1

President pro tem Rev. Calvin Bolt, pastor of Twelfth Avenue Christian Reformed Church, Jenison, Michigan, the convening church, announces *Psalter Hymnal* 502, "The Church's One Foundation." He recognizes Mrs. Patricia Brummel, organist for the opening session.

The assembly is called to order. The president pro tem reads Ephesians 4:1-6 and briefly addresses synod, challenging the delegates to "live a life worthy of the calling you have received, be humble and gentle, and be patient, bearing with one another in love. In doing all of these you will live a life worthy of the high calling you have received." Rev. Bolt requests prayers for the family of Mrs. Kathy De Boer, member of First CRC, South Holland, Illinois, who died of cancer at age 31. Rev. Richard Blauw, her pastor and delegate from Classis Illiana, will conduct the funeral. The president pro tem leads in prayer and announces *Psalter Hymnal* 545, "Make Me a Channel of Your Peace." He informs the delegates that a prayer room will be staffed during synod and will be open for forty-five minutes before each session. Delegates are invited to participate.

ARTICLE 2

The president pro tem introduces Dr. Anthony J. Diekema, president of Calvin College, who welcomes the delegates to the Calvin College campus and briefly addresses synod.

ARTICLE 3

The president pro tem requests the general secretary, Dr. David H. Engelhard, to call the roll of delegates; the credentials of the forty-six classes indicate that the following delegates are present:

DELEGATES TO SYNOD 1995

Classis	Ministers	Elders
Alberta North	Cecil Van Niejenhuis John A. Ooms	Henk W.H. Van Andel Dirk W. Simmelink
Alberta South	Peter Nicolai John Kerssies	Hans Visser Herman Kielstra
Arizona	Jonathan D. Westra Bradd L. Nymeyer	Steven Van Hofwegen Lloyd R. Kredit
Atlantic Northeast	Wesley Timmer Karl H. Bratt	Gerald Gabrielse Bruce H. Klanderman

Classis	Ministers	Elders
B.C. North-West	Norman Prenger William Veenstra	Andy Beerda John A. Vander Hoek
B.C. South-East	Harry Salomons Loren J. Swier	John Snel Dick Bouwsema
California South	W. Robert Godfrey Randal S. Lankheet	Henry Docter James I. Park
Central California	Bruce A. Persenaire James R. Van Tholen	Robert G. den Dulk Bernard A. te Velde
Chatham	Kenneth F. Benjamins John H. Noordhof	Jan H.G. Vandergeest Simon L. Vreman
Chicago South	Gerald R. Erffmeyer Robert J. Price	Marvin H. De Vries Roger W. Van Dellen
Columbia	Carl J. Leep John Hofman, Jr.	Neil W. Gillenwater Herbert Roos
Eastern Canada	Allan C. Groen Henry P. Kranenburg	Dale H. Poel Kees Van Dieen
Florida	German Moreno Jonathan L. Huizenga	James H. Boldenow Charles H. Korringa
Georgetown	Calvin H. Bolt Howard D. Vanderwell	Donald Zwier Will G. Byker
Grand Rapids East	Roger E. Van Harn Morris N. Greidanus	George N. Monsma, Jr. Peter Buma
Grand Rapids North	Charles S. Steenstra C. James den Dulk	Lawrence J. Vander Ploeg Ben J. Van Houten
Grand Rapids South	Ecko De Vries David A. Struyk	W. David Luikaart Sidney Smit
Grandville	Carl W. Bergman Kenneth L. Havert	Terry J. Kimber Donald H. Langerak
Greater Los Angeles	John Van Schepen David W. Yang	Andy P. Voss Ray Mc Cormick
Hackensack	Paul R. De Vries Stanley J. Vander Klay	Edwin R. Arevalo Hubert Borduin
Hamilton	A. Carel Geleynse John Zantingh	Bert Schilthuis Mark Vandervliet
Heartland	Roger A. Bouwman Aldon L. Kuiper	Henry P. Haarsma Rick W. Vander Berg
Holland	Ronald D. De Young Michael De Vries	Kenneth R. Kuipers Neal Berghoef
Hudson	Donald P. Wisse Casey D. Freswick	Edwin Gorter Gordon Kuipers
Huron	Ralph Kooops William T. Koopmans	Hilbert Rumph R. Rob Datema
Iakota	Warren H. Lammers Roger W. Sparks	Harold Meyerink Arthur Vanden Bosch
Illiana	Lester W. Van Essen Richard J. Blauw	Sid Post Jacob Van Eck
Kalamazoo	Robert A. Arbogast Mark R. Van't Hof	Art Hoekstra George Marsden
Lake Erie	George F. Vander Weit William C. De Vries	Paul R. Bossenbroek Robert W. Ettema
Minnesota North	John Joldersma Paul O. Sausser	John H. Taatjes H. John Laninga
Minnesota South	Harold J. Westra Terry L. Genzink	Gerald Haak Ernest J. Dykema
Muskegon	John Terpstra Jack C. Vander Plate	David Wagner Lawrence R. Anderson
Niagara	Fred J. Koning Harry A. Vander Windt	Bert Van Soelen Andy Van Driel

Classis	Ministers	Elders
Northcentral Iowa	Daryl E. Kats Joel E. Kok	Nick L. Verbrugge Lauris R. Frerichs
Northern Illinois	Bert De Jong Lambert J. Sikkema	Arnold Hoving Ray H. Bouma
Northern Michigan	Joel W. Zuidema Ronald A. Klimp	Chet Van Haisma Bernard L. Mulder
Pacific Northwest	Harvey A. Brink Kenneth D. Koeman	Anthony Van Rooyen Douglas G. De Vries
Pella	Thomas R. Dykstra Kenneth L. Schepel	James C. Stroo Owen Sieperda
Quinte	Karl J. House Michael F. Abma	Hank A. Nieuwstraten Stuart Vander Meer
Red Mesa	Raymond Slim Robert L. Jipping	James T. Nahkai Philip L. Kamps
Rocky Mountain	Merle H. Bierma Paul R. Jorden	Richard W. De Vries Neal Afman
Thornapple Valley	Douglas R. Fauble Roger G. Timmerman	John C. Vander Wall Edward G. Nielsen
Toronto	Gordon H. Pols Jack B. Vos	Jan de Koning Wietse G. Posthumus
Wisconsin	Leslie J. Kuiper Adrian Dieleman	Seymour W. Kok Roland J. Dirkse
Yellowstone	A. William Heersink John M. Wanders	Henry D. Vander Stelt David J. Howerzyl
Zeeland	Bernard F. Tol James J. Stastny	Allen D. Walters Steven J. Vander Ploeg

The roll call indicates that Rev. Donald P. Wisse (Classis Hudson) is absent because of illness. Rev. Laryn G. Zoerhof temporarily replaces Rev. Richard J. Blauw (Illiana) (cf. Art. 1).

ARTICLE 4

The president pro tem declares that synod is now constituted, and the assembly proceeds to elect officers by ballot.

The following are elected:

President: Rev. Calvin H. Bolt

Vice President: Rev. Jack B. Vos

First Clerk: Rev. Howard D. Vanderwell

Second Clerk: Rev. W. Robert Godfrey

ARTICLE 5

The general secretary calls the attention of delegates and visitors to the following matters:

I. Taping of synodical sessions

Synod 1979 authorized the making of an official audio recording of the entire proceedings of the general sessions of synod. It was also decided that the office of the general secretary would be responsible for the use and storage of these materials, according to the job description of the general secretary.

The general secretary and the Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church in North America take this opportunity to inform synod that, although

the general sessions of synod have been recorded since 1979, the rule has been followed that executive sessions are not taped.

The Board of Trustees, at the request of the general secretary, has also adopted the rule that all delegates to synod be advised at the opening session of synod that all the general sessions are being taped.

II. Confidentiality of the executive sessions of synod

Synod 1995 is urged to take all necessary precautions to prevent violations of confidentiality as directed by earlier synodical actions:

The very principle of executive sessions, or sessions that are not open to the public, involves the practical implication that reporters may not "report."

(*Acts of Synod 1954*, p. 15)

If reporters are not permitted to report on executive sessions of synod, it is certainly a breach of confidentiality also for delegates to the synodical assembly to report—publicly, orally, or in print—on the discussions held in an executive session of synod.

(*Acts of Synod 1982*, p. 16)

III. Audio and video recordings of synod

Synod 1995 is reminded of the following regulations approved by Synod 1989 (*Acts of Synod 1989*, p. 445) concerning audio and video recordings of synodical sessions:

A. The original and stated purpose of making an audio recording of synodical proceedings is to be honored, namely, that the recording serve to verify the written record of the synodical proceedings. The general secretary is responsible for the use and storage of audio recordings of synod.

B. Representatives of the media are permitted to make video recordings of synodical proceedings provided they observe the restrictions placed upon them by the synodical news office under the direction of the general secretary of synod.

C. Visitor privileges

1. Visitors are at liberty to make audio recordings of the public proceedings of synod provided they do so unobtrusively (i.e., in no way inhibiting or disturbing either the proceedings of synod, the synodical delegates, or other persons in the gallery).
2. Video recordings are permitted provided the following restrictions are observed:
 - a. Video cameras are permitted only at the mezzanine-level entrances, not backstage or in the wings.
 - b. Auxiliary lighting is not permitted.
 - c. Videotaping is to be done unobtrusively (i.e., in such a way that it in no way inhibits or disturbs either the proceedings of synod, the synodical delegates, or other persons in the gallery).

ARTICLE 6

The general secretary introduces and welcomes the following fraternal delegates: Rev. David G. Angye from the Christian Reformed Church of Nigeria, Rev. Paul den Butter and Rev. Jaap Westerink from the Christian Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, Rev. Alex Boshuizen and Rev. Henk Geertsema from the Netherlands Reformed Churches, Rev. Richard S.E. Vissinga and Rev. Evert Overeem from the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, and Rev. Glenn D. Jerrell from the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. Rev. Arie Van Eek,

executive secretary of the Council of the Christian Reformed Churches in Canada, is also introduced and welcomed.

ARTICLE 7

The vice president of synod, Rev. Jack B. Vos, expresses the appreciation of synod to Twelfth Avenue Christian Reformed Church for serving as convening church for Synod 1995 and to the president pro tem, Rev. Calvin H. Bolt, for his participation in the prayer service and in the opening of synod. Rev. Vos acknowledges the services of all who participated in the prayer service and in the opening session of Synod 1995. The president, on behalf of the officers, thanks the delegates for the confidence placed in the four officers elected. He asks the delegates to remember Psalm 90:17: "May the favor of the Lord our God rest upon us; establish the work of our hands for us—yes, establish the work of our hands."

ARTICLE 8

The president, having requested the delegates to rise, reads the Public Declaration of Agreement with the Forms of Unity, to which the delegates respond with their assent.

ARTICLE 9

The president of synod welcomes the denominational officers, the presidents of Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary, the seminary faculty advisers, the representatives of denominational boards, and the editor of *The Banner*.

ARTICLE 10

The general secretary introduces and welcomes Dr. John B. Hulst, president of Dordt College, Rev. Foston Sakala from the Reformed Church of Zambia, and Rev. Pieter Meiring from the Dutch Reformed Church of South Africa, who are in Grand Rapids for the interim meeting of the Reformed Ecumenical Council (REC); Rev. Henk and Mrs. De Waard from the Reformed Churches of Australia and Rev. Charles N. Jansz from the Dutch Reformed Church in Sri Lanka, who are attending the REC interim-committee meeting and are serving as fraternal delegates; and Dr. Richard van Houten, general secretary of the Reformed Ecumenical Council.

ARTICLE 11

The following schedule is adopted: morning session, 8:30-11:45; afternoon, 1:30-5:45; evening, 7:30-9:30; coffee breaks at 10:00 a.m. and 3:30 p.m.

ARTICLE 12

The general secretary presents the Agenda Directory for Synod 1995, which contains a complete listing of every matter on the agenda for synodical action. He indicates where the materials may be found and to which advisory committee each item has been assigned.

ARTICLE 13

The general secretary presents the report of the Program Committee, which recommends the following advisory committees for Synod 1995:

Committee 1—Synodical Services

Chairman: Roger E. Van Harn; **reporter:** Gordon H. Pols; **ministers:** Carl W. Bergman, Michael De Vries, Gerald R. Erffmeyer, A. William Heersink, Kenneth D. Koeman, Aldon L. Kuiper, Cecil Van Niejenhuis; **elders:** Edwin R. Arevalo, Ernest J. Dykema, Lauris R. Frerichs, Charles H. Korringa, James T. Nahkai, Bernard A. te Velde, Mark Vandervliet, Ben J. Van Houten, Hans Visser; **adviser:** John Bolt.

Committee 2—Missions

Chairman: Peter Nicolai; **reporter:** Stanley J. Vander Klay; **ministers:** Richard J. Blauw, William C. De Vries, Allan C. Groen, Ronald A. Klimp, Joel E. Kok, Norman Prenger, David A. Struyk, Roger G. Timmerman; **elders:** Neal Berghoef, Art Hoekstra, Herbert Roos, Bert Schilthuis, Dirk W. Simmelink, John Snel, Andy P. Voss, Allen D. Walters; **adviser:** Wilbert M. Van Dyk.

Committee 3—Education

Chairman: John Joldersma; **reporter:** Morris N. Greidanus; **ministers:** Robert A. Arbogast, Roger A. Bouwman, Paul R. De Vries, Douglas R. Fauble, Paul R. Jorden, Raymond Slim, Jack C. Vander Plate, William Veenstra, David W. Yang; **elders:** Paul R. Bossenbroek, Edwin Gorter, Terry J. Kimber, Seymour W. Kok, Kenneth R. Kuipers, W. David Luikaart, Wietse G. Posthumus, Nick L. Verbrugge; **faculty advisers:** James A. De Jong, Anthony J. Diekema.

Committee 4—Publications

Chairman: George Marsden; **reporter:** William T. Koopmans; **ministers:** Bert De Jong, Karl J. House, Robert L. Jipping, Daryl E. Kats, Randal S. Lankheet, Robert J. Price, James J. Stastny, Wesley Timmer, Jonathan D. Westra; **elders:** R. Rob Datema, Robert W. Ettema, Gerald Haak, Harold Meyerink, George N. Monsma, Jr., Kees Van Dieen; **faculty adviser:** David E. Holwerda.

Committee 5—Pastoral Ministries

Chairman: Carl J. Leep; **reporter:** John Terpstra; **ministers:** Karl H. Bratt, C. James den Dulk, Ecko De Vries, A. Carel Geleynse, Kenneth L. Schepel, Loren J. Swier, John M. Wanders; **elders:** Andy Beerda, James H. Boldenow, Ray H. Bouma, H. John Laninga, Hank A. Nieuwstraten, Steven J. Vander Ploeg, Andy Van Driel, Chet Van Haitsma, Steven Van Hofwegen; **faculty adviser:** Henry De Moor.

Committee 6—Financial Matters

Chairman: Robert G. den Dulk; **reporter:** Harry Salomons; **ministers:** Fred J. Koning, Paul O. Sausser; **elders:** Marvin H. De Vries, Richard W. De Vries, Roland J. Dirkse, Neil W. Gillenwater, Arnold Hoving, David J. Howerzyl, Lloyd R. Kredit, Gordon Kuipers, James I. Park, John A. Vander Hoek, Lawrence J. Vander Ploeg, Anthony Van Rooyen, Simon L. Vreman, Donald Zwier.

Committee 7—Interdenominational Matters

Chairman: Peter Buma; **reporter:** Henry P. Kranenburg; **ministers:** Michael F. Abma, Kenneth L. Havert, Jonathan Huizenga, John H. Noordhof, Roger W. Sparks, Bernard F. Tol, Mark R. Van't Hof; **elders:** Jan de Koning, Douglas G. De

Vries, Gerald Gabrielse, Philip Kamps, Bernard L. Mulder, John H. Taatjes, Rick W. Vander Berg, Bert Van Soelen; **faculty adviser:** Roger S. Greenway.

Committee 8—Church Order I

Chairman: John Hofman, Jr.; **reporter:** John A. Ooms; **ministers:** Harvey A. Brink, Thomas R. Dykstra, Terry L. Genzink, Leslie J. Kuiper, Warren H. Lammers, Harry A. Vander Windt, James R. Van Tholen; **elders:** Herman Kielstra, Bruce H. Klanderman, Ray Mc Cormick, Owen Sieperda, Sidney Smit, Roger W. Van Dellen, Stuart Vander Meer, John C. Vander Wall, David Wagner; **faculty adviser:** James A. De Jong.

Committee 9—Church Order II

Chairman: John Zantingh; **reporter:** Lambert J. Sikkema; **ministers:** Kenneth F. Benjamins, Merle H. Bierma, Ronald D. De Young, Casey D. Freswick, Bradd L. Nymeyer, George F. Vander Weit, Lester W. Van Essen; Harold J. Westra; **elders:** Lawrence R. Anderson, Hubert Borduin, Dick Bouwsema, Will G. Byker, Henry P. Haarsma, Dale H. Poel, Sid Post, Hilbert Rumph, Henry D. Vander Stelt; **faculty adviser:** Henry De Moor.

Committee 10—Women in Ecclesiastical Offices

Chairman: Charles S. Steenstra; **reporter:** John Van Schepen; **ministers:** Adrian Dieleman, John Kerssies, Ralph Koops, German Moreno, Bruce A. Persenaire, Donald P. Wisse, Joel W. Zuidema; **elders:** Neal Afman, Henry Docter, Donald H. Langerak, Edward G. Nielsen, James C. Stroo, Henk W.H. Van Andel, Arthur Vanden Bosch, Jan. H.G. Vandergeest, Jacob Van Eck; **faculty adviser:** Arie C. Leder.

—Adopted

ARTICLE 14

Synod adjourns at 12:15 p.m. Advisory committees will convene at 1:30 p.m. Synod will reconvene on Wednesday at 8:30 a.m.

WEDNESDAY MORNING, June 14, 1995

Second Session

ARTICLE 15

Rev. Howard D. Vanderwell, first clerk, reads from Revelation 7:9-17 and leads in opening prayer. He prays especially for the Classis Hamilton churches as they will gather for a prayer service this evening to intercede on behalf of all the parties and issues relating to Mount Hamilton Christian Reformed Church and the independent congregation, both of Hamilton, Ontario. He announces *Psalter Hymnal* 235, "Here from All Nations."

The roll call indicates that all members are present except Rev. Donald P. Wisse (Hudson).

The minutes of the session of June 13, 1995, are read and approved.

The officers have authorized the following materials to be placed before synod:

Overture 82: Advisory Committee 2
Overture 83: Advisory Committee 2
Overture 84: Advisory Committee 4
Overture 85: Advisory Committee 10

The officers have judged that the following materials are not legally before synod:

Overture from Jubilee Fellowship CRC, St. Catharines, ON
—Received after March 15 deadline for overtures.

Overture from Second CRC, Lynden, WA
—Received after March 15 deadline for overtures.

Overture from Fellowship CRC, Edmonton, AB
—Received after March 15 deadline.

Communication from Fellowship CRC, Edmonton, AB
—Received after March 15 deadline.

Communication from Christ Community Church, Victoria, BC
—Received after March 15 deadline.

Communication signed by fifteen senior pastors
—Not properly processed through the assemblies.

Communication from Mrs. Johanna Tigar, Littleton, Colorado
—Not properly processed through the assemblies.

The general secretary introduces and welcomes Dr. Jack B. Lowndes from the Lord's Day Alliance, Atlanta, Georgia.

Rev. Pieter Meiring, director of information and ecumenical affairs for the Dutch Reformed Church of South Africa, is introduced. He addresses synod briefly, expressing the desire of his denomination to become a church in ecclesiastical fellowship with the Christian Reformed Church. The president of synod responds.

ARTICLE 16

The officers of synod announce the following appointments:

Devotions Committee: Rev. Ronald D. De Young and Rev. John Kerssies

Reception Committee: Rev. Michael De Vries and Rev. William Veenstra

Banquet Committee: Rev. Morris N. Greidanus, Rev. Kenneth D. Koeman,
and Rev. Roger G. Timmerman

Sergeant at Arms: Elder Hank A. Nieuwstraten

ARTICLE 17

The morning session is adjourned at 9:00 a.m. so that delegates can continue to work in advisory committees. Synod will reconvene on Wednesday afternoon at 1:30 p.m. Rev. W. Robert Godfrey, second clerk, leads in closing prayer.

Third Session

ARTICLE 18

Rev. W. Robert Godfrey, second clerk, reads from Psalm 121 and announces *Psalter Hymnal* 116, "I Love the Lord, for He Has Heard My Voice." He leads in opening prayer.

ARTICLE 19

Advisory Committee 3, Education, Rev. Morris N. Greidanus reporting, presents the following:

I. Calvin College

A. Materials

1. Calvin College Report, pp. 95-110
2. Calvin College Supplement, pp. 589-91

B. Recommendations

1. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to the chair of the board, Rev. John L. Witvliet, the vice chair of the board, Mrs. Sheri Haan, and the secretary of the board, Rev. James Cooper, when matters pertaining to the college are presented.

—*Granted*

2. Appointment of president

- a. That, with a view to ratifying his appointment as president of Calvin College, synod interview Dr. Gaylen Byker on Thursday, June 15, during the evening session.
- b. That synod allow Rev. John L. Witvliet, chair of Calvin's board, to introduce Dr. Byker to the synodical delegates before the interview and that advisory-committee reporter Rev. Morris N. Greidanus initiate the interview.

—*Adopted*

3. That synod ratify the following:

- a. Faculty reappointments with tenure
 - 1) W. Dale Brown, Ph.D., Professor of English
 - 2) Mary Molewyk Doornbos, Ph.D., Professor of Nursing
 - 3) Glenn W. Fetzer, Ph.D., Professor of French
 - 4) Kurt C. Schaefer, Ph.D., Professor of Economics
 - 5) Mary C. Schutten, P.E.D., Professor of Physical Education
 - 6) Peter Vande Guchte, Ph.D., Professor of Business
 - 7) Dean A. Ward, Ph.D., Professor of English

—*Adopted*

b. Faculty appointments

- 1) Clarence W. Joldersma, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Education
- 2) Marilyn R. Bierling, Ph.D., Professor of Spanish

—Adopted

c. Administrative reappointments

- 1) Jeanette Bult De Jong, M.Ed., Vice President for Student Life, continuing appointment (with faculty status)
- 2) Dale J. Guikema, M.B.A., C.P.A., Vice President for Administration and Finance, for two years (with faculty status)

—Adopted

4. That synod ratify the following regular appointments:

- a. Donald E. Attebury, M.B.A., Assistant Professor of Economics and Business (effective September 1997)
- b. Mark T. Gustafson, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Classical Languages
- c. Nelson Griffis, M.A., Associate Professor of Sociology and Social Work
- d. Susan Hasseler, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Education
- e. James R. Jadrich, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Science Education and Physics
- f. Steve L. Robbins, M.A., Ph.D. candidate, Assistant Professor of Communication Arts and Sciences
- g. John L. Ubels, Ph.D., Professor of Biology
- h. Margaret J. Wheeler, D.M.A., Associate Professor of Music

—Adopted

5. That synod give appropriate recognition to the following for their service to Calvin College and the Christian Reformed Church and confer on them the titles listed.

- a. Robert Bolt, M.A., Ph.D, Professor of History, Emeritus
- b. Herbert J. Brinks, M.A., Ph.D., Professor of History, Emeritus, and Curator, Colonial Origins Collection, Emeritus
- c. Peter P. De Boer, M.A., Ph.D., Professor of Education, Emeritus
- d. Anthony J. Diekema, M.A., Ph.D., President and Professor, Emeritus
- e. George Harris, M.A., Ph.D., Professor of Classical Languages, Emeritus
- f. Robert A. Jensen, M.F.A., Professor of Art, Emeritus
- g. Kenneth W. Kuiper, M.A., Ed.D., Professor of English, Emeritus
- h. Howard J. Slenk, M.A., Ph.D., Professor of Music, Emeritus
- i. Edwin J. Van Kley, M.A., Ph.D., Professor of History, Emeritus
- j. Paul J. Zwier, M.A., Ph.D., Professor of Mathematics, Emeritus

—Adopted

6. That synod ratify the following appointments to the board (terms to begin and end on the convening date of the first full board meeting following the meeting of synod):

a. Regional trustees

Region	Delegate	Alternate	Term
Far West U.S. I	Rev. G.A. Smith	Rev. J. Dykema	1998
Great Plains	Mr. R. Vander Laan	Mrs. C. Ackerman	1998
Central U.S. I	Mr. R. Bulkema	Dr. J. De Roos	1998
Central U.S. III	Mr. B. Woltjer	Dr. P. De Young	1998
Eastern U.S.	Dr. G. Gabrielse	Rev. D.B. Mouw	1998
Eastern Canada I	Dr. J. Vriend	Mr. R. Datema	1998

b. Alumni trustee

Mrs. Shirley Vogelzang Hoogstra 1998

c. At-large trustees

Mr. Preston Kool 1998

Mrs. Elsa Prince 1998

Dr. Bill Van Groningen 1998

—Adopted

II. Calvin Theological Seminary

A. Materials

1. Calvin Theological Seminary Report, pp. 111-18
2. Calvin Theological Seminary Supplement, pp. 593-95

B. Recommendations

1. That Dr. Lyle Bierma, Calvin Seminary board chairman, and Mr. Elmer Walcott, secretary, be given privilege of the floor when seminary matters are presented.

—Granted

2. That the following faculty reappointments be approved (*italics indicate raise in rank*):

- a. Professor Carl J. Bosma, Associate Professor of Old Testament for two years (1995-1997)
- b. Professor Ronald J. Feenstra, *Professor of Systematic and Philosophical Theology* for two years (1995-1997)
- c. Professor Richard C. Gamble, Director of the H. Henry Meeter Center and Professor of Historical Theology for two years (1995-1997)
- d. Professor Arie C. Leder, Associate Professor of Old Testament for two years (1995-1997)
- e. Professor Richard A. Muller, Professor of Historical Theology with permanent tenure
- f. Professor Craig Van Gelder, *Professor of Domestic Missiology* for two years (1995-1997)
- g. Professor Jeffrey A.D. Weima, *Associate Professor of New Testament* for two years (1995-1997)

—Adopted

3. That the following new faculty appointments be approved:

a. Dr. Gary J. Bekker

- 1) That synod interview Dr. Gary J. Bekker with a view to approving his appointment as Academic Dean and Associate Professor of Church Education and Missiology for two years (1995-1997).
- 2) That this interview be set for Thursday, June 15, 1995, and be held according to regulations adopted by synod (*Acts of Synod 1979*, Art. 60, II, pp. 69-70) and implemented as follows:
 - a) That on behalf of synod William Veenstra shall serve as primary questioner for up to thirty minutes.
 - b) That further questions from delegates be allowed for up to thirty minutes.

—Adopted

b. Mr. Michael J. Williams, Lecturer in Old Testament for two years (1995-1997)

—Adopted

4. That the following staff reappointment be approved:

Dr. Richard J. Eppinga, Assistant to the President for Advancement with indefinite (continuing) tenure

—Adopted

5. That synod ratify the election of regional trustees for the seminary board for terms beginning on July 1, 1995, and running for three years (see Supplement I, A).

Region	Delegate	Alternate	Term
Central U.S. I	Rev. C. Hoogendoorn	Rev. C.E. Bajema	1998
Central U.S. II	Rev. G.G. Heyboer	Rev. R.C. Heerspink	1998
Central U.S. IV	Dr. L. Bierma	Dr. W.P. De Boer	1998
Eastern Canada II	Rev. B.P. Velthuisen	Mr. W. Ubbens	1998
Western Canada I	Mr. J. Leder	Mr. P. Byl	1998

—Adopted

6. That synod amend two bylaws of the seminary's constitution—3.2 under Article III (p. 15 of the *Board of Trustees' Handbook*, 6/93 edition) and 3.b. under Article IV (p. 42)—by changing "director of business and finance" and "director of business" to read "chief financial officer."

—Adopted

7. Candidacy

- a. That synod declare the following as candidates for the ministry in the Christian Reformed Church, subject to completion of academic requirements (* indicates that academic requirements remain to be met):

*Blackmon, Timothy Daniel
 Brix, Shawn Ronald
 *Cunningham, Craig Richard
 *Ebbers, Richard Jay
 *Fondse, Charles Herbert
 *Friend, Calvin Jay
 Jeon, Charles Yoochul
 Jim, Stanley Alfred
 Kim, Moon Bae
 Klok, Ronald Edward
 McDonald, Michael Stewart
 Medenblik, Julius Ted

Meyer, Jeffrey Mark
 Pewee, Dongo
 Powell, Jess E.
 Ridder, Donald Ray, Jr.
 Roosma, Harvey Jay
 *Rop, John, Jr.
 Sheeres, Joel Jeffrey
 *Shin, Young Su
 Turkstra, Andrew Peter
 *Van Smeedyk, Gerald Peter
 Verbruggen, Mark Neil

—Adopted

b. That synod grant extension of candidacy to the following:

Ekkelenkamp, Sidney R.
 Rubingh, Trevor

—Adopted

8. That synod confirm the action of the seminary board in granting retirement to Rev. Wilbert M. Van Dyk and conferring on him the title of Academic Dean and Associate Professor of Homiletics, Emeritus, and that the services of Rev. Van Dyk be recognized at the synodical banquet.

—Adopted

III. Committee for Educational Assistance to Churches Abroad

A. *Material*: Committee for Educational Assistance to Churches Abroad Report, pp. 169-72

B. *Recommendations*

1. That the secretary of CEACA, Dr. Henry De Moor, be given the privilege of the floor when CEACA matters are discussed.

—Granted

2. That synod assign CEACA's international-student scholarship program to Calvin Seminary and World Missions in the following manner:

- a. That synod assign to Calvin Seminary that part of CEACA's international-student scholarship program relating to those who study at Calvin Seminary.
- b. That synod encourage Calvin Seminary to continue the practice of using the services of volunteer counselors for international students.
- c. That synod encourage World Missions to maintain its current scholarship program for churches born of or assisted by its mission work.
- d. That synod assign to World Missions CEACA's program of scholarship assistance for leaders who desire to study at schools other than Calvin Seminary and who come from Reformed/Presbyterian churches that are not and have not been assisted by the work of World Missions.

—Adopted

3. That synod assign CEACA's library-support program to Calvin Theological Seminary.
—*Adopted*
4. That synod instruct the Board of Trustees to monitor these and related programs by way of the executive director of ministries and to recommend any appropriate adjustments in order to ensure that the historic vision associated with CEACA continues to be implemented by agencies of the CRC.
—*Adopted*
5. That synod release CEACA from its mandate and thank all those who have supported this work so generously and all those who have served so faithfully on the committee in the past twenty-six years.
—*Adopted*
6. That synod instruct the Board of Trustees to distribute CEACA's assets according to a formula whereby 20 percent of current ministry-share income is designated for World Missions and 80 percent of current ministry-share income is designated for Calvin Seminary. The endowment fund and its proceeds are to be designated for Calvin Seminary, in accordance with the implied trust.
—*Adopted*
7. That synod adopt the following as grounds for Recommendations 1-6 above:
Grounds:
 - a. Volunteer part-time staff find it difficult to contend with the administrative work load involved in the program.
 - b. Volunteer part-time staff find it difficult to contend with necessary promotional activities that increasingly require professional expertise.
 - c. The ministries of the CRC need streamlining to avoid duplication of efforts.
 - d. There should be avenues of more meaningful and permanent day-to-day accountability.
 - e. The name CEACA does not communicate and is a hindrance to promotional activity.
 - f. Transferring the mandate to Calvin Theological Seminary and Christian Reformed World Missions provides for the continued implementation of our denomination's vision of educational assistance to churches abroad.
 - g. The proposed formula for division of assets is consistent with the genesis of CEACA, with the support that Calvin Theological Seminary has provided the committee over the years, and with the distribution of mandate as indicated above.
—*Adopted*
8. That synod express its gratitude to all current board members and assistants of CEACA as well as to all those who have served CEACA's ministry in whatever capacity during its twenty-six years of independent existence and approve the work of ministry performed by the committee.
—*Adopted*

9. That synod especially recognize the services of Mr. Peter De Klerk. Mr. De Klerk has been involved in CEACA's ministry since 1971 and during that time has spent countless hours managing and administering its library-assistance program.

—Adopted

IV. Dordt College

A. *Material*: Dordt College Report, pp. 251-52

B. *Recommendation*

That synod note the sadness in the Dordt community at Rev. B.J. Haan's death, the blessings of Dordt's fortieth anniversary, and Dordt's search for a new president.

—Adopted

V. Institute for Christian Studies

A. *Material*: Institute for Christian Studies Report, pp. 253-54

B. *Recommendation*

That synod note ICS's increased enrollment and the its fine summer program cosponsored with Wycliffe College.

—Adopted

VI. Redeemer College

A. *Material*: Redeemer College Report, p. 255

B. *Recommendation*

That synod note the opening of the Dooyeweerd Centre at the college as another effort to contribute to Christian scholarship.

—Adopted

VII. Reformed Bible College

A. *Material*: Reformed Bible College Report, pp. 256-58

B. *Recommendation*

That synod note the transition of leadership from Dr. Edwin D. Roels to Dr. Nick Kroeze, expressing its appreciation and best wishes.

—Adopted

VIII. The King's University College

A. *Material*: The King's University College Report, p. 259

B. *Recommendation*

That synod congratulate The King's University College on the accreditation of its elementary-education program and on its enrollment growth.

—Adopted

IX. Trinity Christian College

A. *Material*: Trinity Christian College Report, pp. 260-62

B. *Recommendation*

That synod note Trinity's thirty-fifth anniversary and its extensive activities in Chicago and in Europe.

—*Adopted*

(The report of Advisory Committee 3 is continued in Article 23.)

ARTICLE 20

Advisory Committee 8, Church Order I, Rev. John A. Ooms reporting, presents the following:

Disenfranchise delegates of Classis Grand Rapids East

A. *Materials*

1. Overture 25, pp. 386-87
2. Communication 5, pp. 543-49
3. Communication 10, p. 611

B. *Recommendation*

That synod not accede to Overture 25.

Grounds:

1. It is not appropriate for Synod 1995 to take action against only one particular classis which has chosen to be open about its decisions regarding women in ecclesiastical office when other classes have made similar decisions.
2. Synod 1994 decided to "(a) urge all councils which have ordained women elders, evangelists, or ministers to release them from office by June 1, 1995, and (b) urge all councils not to ordain any additional women elders, evangelists, or ministers" (*Acts of Synod 1994*, p. 520). Synod specifically used the word "urge" in its decision rather than a word such as "instruct" or "mandate" and did not specify consequences in the event the urgings of synod were not followed.
3. The requested action to "disenfranchise the delegates of Classis Grand Rapids East at Synod 1995" is hasty and extreme.

—*Adopted*

It is moved that synod return the issue of ecclesiastical noncompliance to Advisory Committee 8 for advice on establishing a study committee to consider the development of guidelines and procedures for dealing with matters of ecclesiastical noncompliance.

Grounds:

1. Current instances of such noncompliance illustrate the need for the consideration of such guidelines.
2. No such guidelines currently exist.

—*Adopted*

(The report of Advisory Committee 8 is continued in Article 45.)

ARTICLE 21

The afternoon session is adjourned at 2:30 p.m. so that delegates can continue to work in advisory committees. Synod will reconvene on Thursday morning at 8:30 a.m. Rev. Ronald D. De Young leads in closing prayer.

THURSDAY MORNING, June 15, 1995

Fourth Session

ARTICLE 22

Rev. Cecil Van Niejenhuis announces *Psalter Hymnal* 433, "Earth and All Stars." He reads from Psalm 148 and leads in opening prayer, especially remembering Mrs. Alice De Haan (wife of Mr. J. De Haan, director of CRWRC-U.S.A.), who is undergoing surgery this morning for cancer.

The roll indicates that Rev. Donald P. Wisse (Hudson) is absent. Rev. Richard J. Blauw (Illiana) is present. He rises to express agreement with the forms of unity.

The minutes of the sessions of June 14, 1995, are read and approved.

ARTICLE 23

(The report of Advisory Committee 3 is continued from Article 19)

Seminary faculty appointment: Dr. Gary J. Bekker

A. *Material*: Calvin Theological Seminary Report, III, p. 113

Dr. Gary J. Bekker, nominee for the appointment as Academic Dean and Associate Professor of Church Education and Missiology for two years, commencing with the 1995-1996 academic year, is introduced to synod by Dr. Lyle Bierma, chairman of the seminary board of trustees. Rev. William Veenstra interviews Dr. Bekker, who also responds to questions from the floor.

B. *Recommendation*

That synod approve the appointment of Dr. Gary J. Bekker as Academic Dean and Associate Professor of Church Education and Missiology for two years, commencing with the 1995-1996 academic year.

—Adopted

The president of synod congratulates Dr. Bekker and assures him of prayers that God's blessing may be upon him and that God will prosper him. Dr. Bekker responds.

ARTICLE 24

Advisory Committee 3, Educational Matters, Rev. Morris N. Greidanus reporting, presents the following:

I. Calvin Theological Seminary

A. Material: Calvin Theological Seminary Report, p. 115, V, D

B. Recommendation

That synod adopt the following policy for calling candidates:

A church may decide to call or a CRC agency may offer to hire and place a person only after synod has approved the person for candidacy, and no letter of call shall be issued to a candidate prior to the synodically approved date.

Ground: Adherence to this policy will ensure that churches and agencies have equal access to candidates.

—*Adopted*

Note: This policy does not prevent churches or CRC agencies from interviewing prospective candidates, nor does it prevent prospective candidates from indicating a preference for a designated area of ministry (world or home missions, chaplaincy, congregational ministry, staff ministry, etc.).

II. Appoint persons to boards, committees, and synod who reflect the diversity of the church

A. Material: Overture 44, pp. 409-11

B. Background

Classis Lake Erie reminds synod of the need for diversity on committees and boards. The advisory committee shares these concerns. However, it finds the suggested committee and database cumbersome and too centralized, preferring local networking.

C. Recommendations

1. That synod encourage boards, agencies, and *itself and future synods* to include in their committees persons who reflect the ethnic, gender, and racial diversity of our denomination and, where applicable, the range of opinion that exists in our denomination on a particular matter to be studied.

Ground: While such diversity has been encouraged previously, synod has not always listened to itself on this matter; the reminder is useful for boards and agencies as well.

—*Adopted*

2. That synod not accede to Classis Lake Erie's request for a subcommittee to assist boards, agencies, and synods in appointing committees.

Grounds:

- a. This seems clumsy rather than helpful.
- b. Each board and committee has unique contacts with different groups which it can try to include in its work.

—*Adopted*

(The report of Advisory Committee 3 is continued in Article 36.)

ARTICLE 25

Advisory Committee 2, Missions, Rev. Stanley J. Vander Klay reporting, presents the following:

I. The Back to God Hour

A. *Material*: The Back to God Hour Report, pp. 87-94

B. *Recommendations*

1. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Rev. John Bylsma, president; Mr. John Kuyers, executive director; and Dr. Joel Nederhood, director of ministries, when Back to God Hour matters are discussed.

—*Granted*

2. That synod grant permission for Rev. Aaron R. Kayayan to address synod on behalf of The Back to God Hour (cf. Board of Trustees' recommendation concerning agency representatives addressing synod).

—*Adopted*

II. Home Missions

A. *Material*: Home Missions Report, pp. 134-44

B. *Recommendations*

1. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to the president of the Board of Home Missions, the executive director, and the director of finance when matters pertaining to Home Missions are discussed.

—*Granted*

2. That synod grant permission for Home Missions to give a progress report about *Gathering God's Growing Family* at one of the sessions of synod (cf. Board of Trustees' recommendation on agency representatives addressing synod).

—*Adopted*

3. That synod, with thanks to God, call to the denomination's attention that 1996 marks one hundred years of continued denominationally organized gospel outreach in North America by the CRC.

—*Adopted*

III. World Missions

A. *Material*: World Missions Report, pp. 145-54

B. *Recommendations*

1. That the president of CRWM Canada, Rev. John De Jong; the president of CRWM-U.S.A., Dr. Russell Palsrok; and the CRWM-International executive director, Rev. William Van Tol, or the person acting in his stead be given the privilege of meeting with appropriate advisory committees of synod and of

representing CRWM to synod when synod deals with matters related to this agency.

—*Granted*

2. That synod encourage all Christian Reformed churches to recognize Pentecost Sunday as a significant opportunity to take an offering for Christian Reformed World Missions.

—*Adopted*

3. That synod permit the CRWM-International executive director to address synod briefly on behalf of CRWM and to present missionary personnel who are on home service to synod on Friday, June 16, 1995 (cf. Board of Trustees' recommendation on agency representatives addressing synod).

—*Adopted*

IV. Christian Reformed World Relief Committee

A. *Material*: CRWRC Report, pp. 155-64 (except Section IV, C)

B. Recommendations

1. That synod authorize the agency directors and board presidents of CRWRC-U.S.A. and CRWRC-Canada to represent CRWRC at synod.

—*Granted*

2. That CRWRC missionaries who are presently in North America be presented to and acknowledged by synod.

—*Adopted*

3. That synod commend the work of mercy carried on by CRWRC and urge the churches to take one offering per quarter to provide the funds necessary for this ministry.

—*Adopted*

4. That synod ratify the reappointment of Mr. John De Haan as the director of CRWRC-U.S.A. for the term specified in the report (see II, D) or until such time as regulations for synodical appointments are changed.

—*Adopted*

The president of synod congratulates Mr. De Haan on his reappointment and expresses thanks for his services.

V. Appoint an issue-awareness committee

A. *Material*: Overture 48, pp. 416-19

B. Observation

Citing the adoption in 1978 of a series of recommendations of a study committee which suggested various measures to assist the church in fittingly addressing relevant social-justice issues and concluding that this has been inadequately done, Classis Pella overtures synod to appoint a small denomina-

tional standing committee to keep the churches abreast of social-justice issues and give guidance in appropriate response. The advisory committee commends such commitment.

C. Recommendation

That synod not accede to the request of Classis Pella.

Grounds:

- a. The mandate as proposed is too broad. The constancy of change and the complexity of issues in our society exceeds the expertise and availability of any one small committee.
- b. Synod has thoroughly studied and clearly spoken to such issues raised by our constituency. These rulings remain available to the churches.
- c. In addition to the pronouncements of our denomination, many other Christian organizations continue both to give guidance and to lead in addressing social-justice issues.
- d. Initiative might better continue to be taken by congregations and diaconates. Our deacons are charged in the form for their ordination to "be prophetic critics of the waste, injustice, and selfishness in our society. . . ."
- e. Therefore, rather than appoint a standing committee, synod might better simply remind our congregations and denominational agencies to bring their practices into conformity with the mandate given in 1978 (cf. *Acts of Synod 1978*, pp. 63-64).

—Adopted

VI. Designate a Sanctity of Human Life Sunday

A. Material: Overture 77, pp. 525-27

B. Recommendation

That synod not accede to Overture 77.

Grounds:

- a. Sanctity of life is already being successfully observed in various ways and times by our congregations by local initiative and national focus. There is no indication that a denominationally stipulated Sunday will increase or enhance such observance.
- b. Therefore there is no need in this case to disregard synod's statements against increasing the number of special Sundays (*Acts of Synod 1981*, p. 61).

—Adopted

(The report of Advisory Committee 2 is continued in Article 83.)

ARTICLE 26

The president introduces Rev. Arie Van Eek, executive secretary of the Council of the Christian Reformed Churches in Canada, who addresses synod. The president of synod responds.

ARTICLE 27

Advisory Committee 4, Publications, Rev. William T. Koopmans reporting, presents the following:

CRC Publications

A. *Material*: CRC Publications Report, pp. 119-33

B. *Recommendations*

1. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to the following people when matters of CRC Publications are discussed:

For the board

Ms. Winnie Klop, president

Mr. Gary Mulder, executive director

For *The Banner*

Rev. John Suk, editor in chief

For Education, Worship, and Evangelism

Dr. Harvey Smit, editor in chief

For the Worship Committee

Dr. Emily Brink

—*Granted*

2. That synod ratify the reappointment of Rev. John Suk as editor in chief of *The Banner*, beginning September 1, 1995, for a four-year term or until the regulations for appointments are changed.

Ground: During his initial two-year appointment the issues of *The Banner* published under John Suk's leadership have been well received by readers. Rev. Suk has demonstrated creativity, a very good grasp of the denomination, and a strong desire to build up the faith of CRC members.

—*Adopted*

The president of synod congratulates Rev. Suk on his reappointment and wishes him God's blessing on his work as editor in chief of *The Banner*.

(The report of Advisory Committee 4 is continued in Article 30.)

ARTICLE 28

The morning session is adjourned; Elder Hans Visser leads in closing prayer.

THURSDAY AFTERNOON, June 15, 1995

Fifth Session

ARTICLE 29

Rev. Bradd L. Nymeyer reads Psalm 8 and announces *Psalter Hymnal* 181, "Exalt the Lord, His Praise Proclaim." He leads in opening prayer, especially remembering Cardinal Bernardin of Chicago, who is seriously ill.

The president of synod acknowledges the presence of Rev. Leonard Verduin, who at age 98 is a faithful visitor to synod. He also acknowledges the presence of Rev. Menzo Dornbush. These two retired ministers were seminary classmates, and both were ordained to the ministry in 1929.

ARTICLE 30

(The report of Advisory Committee 4 is continued from Article 27)

Advisory Committee 4, Publications, Rev. William T. Koopmans reporting, presents the following:

I. Sermons for Reading Services

A. *Material*: Sermons for Reading Services Report, p. 247

B. *Recommendations*

1. That synod approve the publication of *The Living Word* for 1996 to provide sermons for reading services for the churches.

—Adopted

2. That synod commend this service for the benefit of individuals and churches.

—Adopted

II. Personal appeal of Rev. John Van Hemert from a decision of Classis Florida

A. *Material*: Personal Appeal 1

B. *Recommendation*

That synod refer the appeal of Rev. John Van Hemert to the Judicial Code Committee.

Grounds:

1. The Judicial Code Committee is better able to decide if the appeal is in order.
2. If it is in order, the Judicial Code Committee is the appropriate body to adjudicate the case.

—Adopted

III. Personal appeal of Mr. and Mrs. Glenn Baas from a decision of Classis Pacific Northwest

A. *Material*: Personal Appeal 2

B. *Recommendations*

1. That synod return the case to the local consistory with the request that it ask Classis Pacific Northwest to establish an advisory hearing panel to deal with the case according to the guidelines being presented to Synod 1995 for handling abuse allegations.

Grounds:

- a. There is warrant and some precedent to conclude that the five-year limitation for hearing charges (Church Order Supplement 30-c, Art. 8-b) should not be invoked in a case involving abuse allegations.
- b. Such action has the possibility of facilitating reconciliation and healing.

—Adopted

2. That synod request the Judicial Code Committee to clarify the applicability of the five-year statute of limitations (Church Order Supplement 30-c) in cases which involve allegations of abuse or other immoral behavior and are considered under Church Order Articles 81-84.

Grounds:

- a. There has been confusion regarding the applicability of this rule in a number of recent cases.
- b. Victims of abuse often repress the memory and are not able to make accusations before five years have elapsed.

—*Adopted*

(The report of Advisory Committee 4 is continued in Article 67)

ARTICLE 31

Advisory Committee 6, Financial Matters, Rev. Harry Salomons reporting, presents the following:

I. Board of Trustees

A. *Materials*

1. Board of Trustees Supplement (Sections XI, XII, XIII, and XIX, F-H)
2. *Agenda for Synod 1995—Financial and Business Supplement*

B. *Recommendations*

1. That synod approve the list of denominational and denominationally related agencies recommended for one or more offerings from our churches (BOT Supplement XI, B).

- a. Denominational agencies

Back to God Hour—above-ministry-share needs

CRC TV—above-ministry-share needs

Calvin College—above-ministry-share needs

Calvin Theological Seminary

1) Above-ministry-share needs

2) Revolving Loan Fund

Home Missions—above-ministry-share needs

Pastoral Ministries—above-ministry-share needs

1) Abuse Prevention

2) Chaplain Committee

3) Committee on Disability Concerns

4) Pastor-Church Relations Committee

5) Synodical Committee on Race Relations

a) Above-ministry-share needs

b) Multiracial Student Scholarship Fund

World Literature Ministries—above-ministry-share needs

World Missions—above-ministry-share needs

World Relief—one offering per quarter

—*Adopted*

b. Denominationally related agencies

United Calvinist Youth
Calvinettes
Calvinist Cadet Corps
Young Calvinist Federation/Youth Unlimited

—*Adopted*

2. That synod approve the list of nondenominational agencies approved for consideration for financial support but not necessarily for one or more offerings (BOT Supplement XI, C).

a. United States agencies

1) Benevolent agencies

Bethany Christian Services
Calvary Rehabilitation Center
Cary Christian Center, Inc.
Christian Health Care Center
Elim Christian School
International Aid, Inc.
The Luke Society, Inc.
Pine Rest Christian Hospital Association

2) Educational agencies

Center for Public Justice
Christian Schools International
Christian Schools International Foundation
Dordt College
Rehoboth Christian School
Reformed Bible College
Roseland Christian School
The King's University College (through the U.S. Foundation)
Trinity Christian College
Westminster Theological Seminary Ministries, Philadelphia, PA,
and Escondido, CA
Worldwide Christian Schools

3) Miscellaneous agencies

American Bible Society
Faith, Prayer and Tract League
Friendship Ministries
Gideons International
International Bible Society
Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship
Lord's Day Alliance of the United States
Metanoia Ministries
Mission 21 India
Portable Recording Ministries (PRM) International
Seminary Consortium for Urban Pastoral Education
The Bible League
The Evangelical Literature League (TELL)
Wycliffe Bible Translators

b. Canadian agencies

1) Benevolent agencies

Beginnings Counseling & Adoption Services of Ontario, Inc.

2) Educational agencies

Canadian Christian Education Foundation, Inc.

Dordt College

Institut Farel

Institute for Christian Studies

Redeemer Reformed Christian College

Reformed Bible College

The King's University College

Trinity Christian College

3) Miscellaneous agencies

Canadian Bible Society

Christian Labour Association of Canada

Evangelical Fellowship of Canada

Friendship Groups—Canada

Gideons International—Canada

Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship of Canada

The Bible League—Canada

Wycliffe Bible Translators of Canada, Inc.

—Adopted

3. That synod approve the recommendation of the Board of Trustees not to recommend Peace Arab-American Ministries for financial support.

Ground: It appears that Peace Arab-American Ministries has been an official 501(c)(3) organization for less than the three years which the guidelines for accreditation require.

—Adopted

4. That synod approve the proposed salary ranges for 1996 (BOT Supplement XII).

—Adopted

II. Recommendations regarding ministry share

A. Materials

1. Board of Trustees Supplement (Sections XI, XII, XIII, and XIX, F-H)
2. *Agenda for Synod 1995—Financial and Business Supplement*
3. *Agenda for Synod 1993—Financial and Business Supplement*
4. File notes: Committee to Study Denominational Funding, 1990

B. Background

In studying the ministry-share requests and budgets of the agencies for the coming year, the finance advisory committee acknowledges some significant difficulties that the agencies face in developing and implementing sound budgets and accurate forecasts. While recognizing the historical effectiveness of

the ministry-share system, the committee reviewed data that demonstrate that increasingly the system is faltering. Most recent collection data show ministry share to be 60 percent of potential, down from 80 to 90 percent in the 1980s and 78 percent in 1992. Significant reductions in ministry are being required because of declining and unreliable funding by the churches. Declining CRC membership, current economic conditions, and competing demands for contributions contribute to this decline in funding.

C. Recommendations

1. That synod adopt the per professing member ministry share of \$244.99 and the per family ministry share of \$567.29 for 1996. In accordance with action by Synod 1993, 40 percent of the ministry share is to be computed on the per family basis and 60 percent on the per professing member basis.

—Adopted

2. That synod reassert the essence of several recommendations of the Committee to Study Denominational Funding (*Agenda for Synod 1992*, pp. 385-407):
 - a. Church members need to be informed about the quota (ministry share) system and the ministries being funded thereby. Ministries need to be more closely tied to the church member. Members need to understand that giving is an act of thankfulness for blessings received and an empowerment for ministry to others. The quota [ministry share]-allocation formula needs attention since the sociological makeup of our congregations is changing. Synod, as the broadest assembly of the denomination, should more thoroughly own the funding plan of our denominational ministries.
 - b. That synod reassert the objectives of the FirstFruits Ministry and other educational efforts of the denomination which describe "the CRC not only as a faith community but also as an institution, including its vision, its history, its structures, its ministry programs, its funding practices, etc."
 - c. That synod direct denominational staff to continue to make improvements in the financial reporting and data management that will assist in decision making and will improve congregational participation in the covenanted denominational ministries.
 - d. That synod instruct denominational staff to continue to plan and implement actions aimed to "educate, inform, and promote the quota (ministry share) causes of the CRC."

—Adopted

3. That synod urge the development of budget guidelines by denominational staff, to be endorsed by the BOT and communicated before the initiation of the budget process in order to facilitate more effective planning. These guidelines should recognize such concrete measures as the increase or decrease of denominational membership, economic indicators in the United States and Canada, and changing demographics within the CRC. Budgeting for agency ministry should reflect a realistic assessment of the level of denominational funding that can be anticipated.

—Adopted

III. CRC Loan Fund, Inc., U.S.

A. *Material*: CRC Loan Fund, Inc., U.S. Report, pp. 166-68

B. *Recommendations*

1. That Mr. Harry J. Vander Meer, executive director, or any member of the board of directors of the Christian Reformed Church Loan Fund, Inc., U.S. be given the privilege of the floor when matters pertaining to the Loan Fund are discussed.

—*Granted*

2. That synod thank Mr. Donald Molewyk and Mr. Merle Prins for their many years of excellent service on the Loan Fund board of directors.

—*Adopted*

3. That synod acknowledge and thank Mr. Garrett C. Van de Riet for the years of service he has devoted to the CRC Loan Fund, Inc., U.S.

—*Adopted*

IV. Fund for Smaller Churches

A. *Material*: Fund for Smaller Churches Report, pp. 173-75

B. *Recommendations*

1. That Rev. Gary P. Hutt, secretary, and Mr. James A. Evenhouse, treasurer, be consulted on matters pertaining to FSC when considered either by synod or its advisory committee and that they be given the privilege of the floor. In the absence of either the secretary or treasurer, the same privilege is requested for other members of the committee.

—*Adopted*

2. That the minimum salary for ministers serving churches receiving assistance from FSC be set at \$26,900 for 1996 (\$26,150 in 1995; \$25,400 in 1994; \$24,700 in 1993; \$24,100 in 1992) and that Canadian minimum salary to be set at \$29,590 ($\$26,900 \times 110 \text{ percent} = \$29,590$) (see 11 below).

—*Adopted*

3. That a service increment of \$100 per year for up to thirty years of service continue to be granted.

—*Adopted*

4. That child allowance of \$600 continue to be granted for every unmarried child up to age 19 (age 23 if enrolled full-time at an educational institution in an undergraduate program).

—*Adopted*

5. That automobile expenses be reimbursed at the rate of \$.30 a mile (\$.30 per kilometer in Canada) times the percentage of ministry-share reduction granted.

—*Adopted*

6. That an allowance of up to 20 percent of the salary subsidy be granted each congregation which provides its minister with health/dental/life insurance offered by the Consolidated Group Insurance of the CRC or insurance comparable to it. Insurance coverage of the pastor and family is mandatory for congregations receiving FSC assistance.

—Adopted

7. That salary allowance for stated supply be set at \$330 per week for 1996 (\$320 per week for 1995; \$310 per week for 1994; \$300 for 1993; \$280 for 1992).

—Adopted

8. That the contribution toward the minister's salary in congregations receiving assistance from FSC be not less, and if possible more, than \$455 per family for 1996 (\$440 per family for 1995; \$425 per family for 1994; \$415 for 1993; \$405 for 1992).

—Adopted

9. That congregations in the U.S. receiving assistance from FSC pay a Social Security/Medicare offset to their pastor in the amount of at least \$2,540 for 1996 (\$2,425 for 1995; \$2,425 for 1994; \$2,425 for 1993; \$2,340 for 1992).

—Adopted

10. That FSC churches in the U.S. be assisted in the Social Security/Medicare offset according to the following formula: churches shall receive assistance in the amount of 10 percent of the approved salary subsidy for 1996.

—Adopted

11. That a cost-of-living differential allowance of 10 percent be added to the minimum salary and allowances paid to pastors serving Canadian congregations assisted by FSC. The Canadian churches shall also contribute at a rate of 110 percent of the per family contribution rate established for the U.S. churches for 1996 ($\$455 \times 110 \text{ percent} = \500).

Grounds:

- a. The disparity in the cost of living between the U.S. and Canada makes such an adjustment necessary.
- b. Other denominational agencies give a differential premium to those employed in Canada.

—Adopted

12. That synod declare the continuing-education allowance for pastors in smaller churches to continue at \$350 for 1996.

—Adopted

Note: All pastors of churches with fewer than fifty families are eligible to apply for these funds.

13. That synod approve a Christian-education allowance of \$600 per child for each child attending a Christian school, grades K-12, for 1996.

—Adopted

V. Pensions and Insurance

A. *Material*: Pensions and Insurance Report, pp. 201-04

B. Recommendations

1. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to members of the Canadian Pension Trustees and of the United States Ministers' Pension Committee or to Mr. Donald F. Oosterhouse and Mr. Robert Van Stright when insurance matters and matters pertaining to pension plans for ministers and employees are discussed.

—*Granted*

2. That synod designate up to 100 percent of a minister's early and normal retirement pension or disability pension for 1995 as housing allowance for United States income-tax purposes (IRS Ruling 1.107-1) but only to the extent that the pension is used to rent or provide a home.

—*Adopted*

3. That synod, noting the willingness of the U.S. Ministers' Pension Committee and the Canadian Pension Trustees to assume responsibility for the governance of the Consolidated Group Insurance program,

- a. Enlarge the mandate of the U.S. Ministers' Pension Committee and the Canadian Pension Trustees to accommodate that additional responsibility.
- b. Rename the entities the CRC U.S. Board of Pensions and Insurance and the CRC Canadian Board of Trustees of Pensions and Insurance.

Ground: The new names more appropriately describe the broadened responsibilities of the two governing bodies: ministers' pensions, unordained employees' pensions, and health, dental, and life insurance for ministers and unordained employees.

—*Adopted*

4. That synod express its appreciation to the following members for their services:

- a. U.S. Ministers' Pension Committee member Mr. David Vander Ploeg, who has served for three years and is eligible for reelection.
- b. Canadian Pension Trustee Mr. Simon Kouwenhoven, who has served for six years.
- c. Mr. Garrett C. Van de Riet, who served as acting director of Pensions and Insurance from July 1 to December 31, 1994.

—*Adopted*

VI. Allow Canadian churches to deduct ministry share for Home Missions

A. Materials

1. Overture 33, p. 398
2. Christian Reformed Board of Home Missions' audited financial statements for fiscal year ended August 31, 1994

B. Recommendation

That synod not accede to Overture 33.

Grounds:

1. Regional mission projects by other classes or groups of classes in the denomination are undertaken without denominational support.
2. Home Missions' funds have been fairly divided and distributed for ministry on both sides of the U.S./Canadian border.

—*Adopted*

Note: Canadian disbursements have exceeded receipts by \$597,283 over the last three years.

(The report of Advisory Committee 6 is continued in Article 51.)

ARTICLE 32

Rev. Michael De Vries of the Reception Committee introduces Rev. David G. Angye, fraternal delegate from the Christian Reformed Church of Nigeria, who addresses synod. The president of synod responds.

The general secretary introduces Rev. Foston Sakala from the Christian Reformed Church of Zambia, who is attending the Reformed Ecumenical Council interim-committee meetings. He addresses synod, and the president responds.

Vice president Rev. Jack B. Vos assumes the chair.

ARTICLE 33

Advisory Committee 5, Pastoral Ministries, Rev. John Terpstra reporting, presents the following:

I. Pastor-Church Relations Committee

A. Material: Pastor-Church Relations Committee Report, pp. 191-96

B. Recommendation

That PCRC chairman Rev. Edward Blankespoor, vice all Rev. Charles Terpstra, and director Rev. Louis Tamminga be permitted to speak on matters affecting the PCRC.

—*Granted*

II. Rev. Louis M. Tamminga addresses synod

Rev. Louis M. Tamminga addresses synod with regard to his work as director of Pastor-Church Relations Services. He plans to retire on October 1, and he thanks synod and the Lord for the opportunities given him to serve the Christian Reformed Church in various capacities. He acknowledges his wife, Jean, and staff members Mrs. Irene Wiersma and Mrs. Alice Apol.

III. Synodical Committee on Race Relations

A. Material: Synodical Committee on Race Relations Report, pp. 197-200

B. Recommendations

1. That executive-committee members Mrs. Cindy Doorn, Mrs. Jackie Venegas, or their appointed representative and director Rev. Al Luke be granted the privilege of the floor when matters pertaining to SCORR's ministry are discussed.
—*Granted*
2. That synod encourage the churches to celebrate All Nations Heritage Week from September 30 through October 6, 1996.
—*Adopted*
3. That synod dismiss with gratitude the members of the Synodical Committee on Race Relations, namely, Mr. Gerry Bosma, Mrs. Charlotte Bradley, Mrs. Cindy Doorn, Mr. Donald Edwards, Rev. Juan Flores, Mr. Hyung Kim, Mr. Peter Szto, Mr. Gerald Thaxton, Ms. Mamie Thomas, Mrs. Jackie Venegas, Mr. Eugene Westra, and Rev. Simon Wolfert.
—*Adopted*

IV. Chaplain Committee

A. Material: Chaplain Committee Report, pp. 182-86

B. Recommendations

1. That Rev. Jacob P. Heerema, Rev. Carl Tuyl, and Mr. Harold Postma be granted the privilege of the floor when Chaplain Committee matters are discussed.
—*Granted*
2. That time be allotted on Friday, June 16, 1995, for the presentation of chaplains in attendance at the annual Chaplain Conference, scheduled for June 15-17, 1995.
—*Adopted*
3. That synod take special note of the distinguished service of the Canadian director of chaplaincy, Rev. Carl Tuyl, for his outstanding leadership in this ministry.
—*Adopted*
4. That synod dismiss with gratitude the members of the Chaplain Committee, namely, Mrs. Nell de Boer, Dr. Daniel De Witt, Rev. Robert Heerspink, Rev. Peter Hogeterp, Mrs. Shirley Los, Mr. Harold Postma, Rev. Raymond Swierenga, and Mrs. Arlene Wassink.
—*Adopted*

V. Committee on Disability Concerns

A. Materials

1. Committee on Disability Concerns (CDC) Report, pp. 187-90
2. Recommendation omitted from *Agenda for Synod 1995*

The following recommendation was inadvertently omitted from the Disability Concerns Report, page 190. The advisory committee includes it here as material that the committee has been asked to process.

Recommendation C:

The CDC recommends that Article 41 of the Church Order be amended by the addition of another question to those put to each council. This added question should read as follows: "Is the church building barrier free, and are all church services and programs made accessible to all eligible people, including those with disabilities?"

Grounds:

1. Unnecessary barriers keep people with disabilities from joining others to hear the gospel of God's grace and to share the fellowship of his gifts. To tolerate such barriers is to disobey the Lord, who sent his church into the world with the commission to make disciples of all people.
2. To serve people with disabilities in a way which unnecessarily separates them from the main fellowship of other Christians is to discount the value of the Spirit's gifts in them and to demean them as unimportant to the rest of the congregation.
3. To ask this question of each council at the time of every classis meeting will serve to remind the churches in a nonthreatening way of their responsibility in this matter.

B. Recommendations

1. That the privilege of the floor be given to the chairman of CDC, Mr. Bert Zwiers, and to its director, Dr. James L. Vanderlaan, when disability concerns are discussed.

—*Granted*
2. That synod refer Recommendation C (above) to the Pastoral Ministries Board for further discussion.

Grounds:

- a. Since Recommendation C calls for a change in the Church Order, further discussion with the other Pastoral Ministries directors, the new Pastoral Ministries Board, and the Board of Trustees is warranted prior to this recommendation's being considered by a synod.
- b. Several avenues are already in place which are serving to keep disability concerns before the churches, i.e., Church Visitor Guidelines, disability concerns newsletter, *Yearbook* questionnaire, Disability Inventory Analysis.
- c. Adding questions to Article 41 may serve as a precedent for using Article 41 as a long checklist on numerous aspects of ministry sensitivities and involvements such as SCORR, ministry-share commitments, family visiting, evening worship services, etc.

—*Adopted*

3. That synod dismiss with gratitude the members of the Committee on Disability Concerns, namely, Dr. Gerben de Jong, Mrs. Barbara Heerspink, Mr. Bryan Jansen, Mr. Jake Kuiken, Mrs. Jane Manten, Ms. Mary Stamps, Rev. Roger G. Timmerman, Dr. Joe Wilson, and Mr. Bert Zwiers.

—*Adopted*

VI. Abuse-Prevention Committee

A. *Material*: Abuse-Prevention Committee Report, pp. 178-81, 555-65

B. *Recommendations*

1. That the director of abuse prevention, Ms. Beth S. Swagman, and members of the Abuse-Prevention Committee—Ms. Carol Topp, Rev. Nicholas Vander Kwaak, and Rev. Edward Tamminga—be granted the privilege of the floor when matters of abuse prevention are discussed.

—*Granted*

2. That synod approve the proposed procedures and guidelines contained in Sections IV and V of this report and present them to the churches as a model for their use and adoption.

Grounds:

- a. Synod 1994 requested that the proposed guidelines be reviewed by the churches so that their effectiveness might be assured.
- b. Uniform guidelines will be perceived as a mark of unity among the churches and a denominational determination to provide a just process for victims with abuse allegations.

—*Adopted*

Note: The Guidelines for Ministerial Personnel in Their Interpersonal Relationships and the Procedures and Guidelines for Handling Abuse Allegations Against a Church Leader appear as an Appendix on pages 779-88. (The report of Advisory Committee 5 is continued in Article 38.)

ARTICLE 34

The afternoon session is adjourned; Rev. Karl H. Bratt leads in closing prayer.

THURSDAY EVENING, June 15, 1995

Sixth Session

ARTICLE 35

President Calvin H. Bolt reassumes the chair.

Rev. Norman Prenger announces *Psalter Hymnal* 404, "Sing, Choirs of New Jerusalem." He reads from Exodus 24:3-11 and leads in opening prayer.

Rev. Walter Swets (Classis Grand Rapids South) has replaced delegate Rev. David A. Struyk. He rises to express agreement with the forms of unity.

ARTICLE 36

(The report of Advisory Committee 3 is continued from Article 24.)

President of Calvin College appointment: Dr. Gaylen J. Byker

A. *Material*: Calvin College Report, p. 95, I, B; Appendix B, pp. 99-103

Dr. Gaylen J. Byker, nominee for president of Calvin College, is introduced to synod by Rev. John L. Witvliet, chair of the Calvin College Board of Trustees. Rev. Morris N. Greidanus interviews Dr. Byker, who also responds to questions from the floor.

B. *Recommendation*

That synod ratify the appointment of Dr. Gaylen J. Byker as president of Calvin College.

—*Adopted*

The president of synod congratulates Dr. Byker, giving thanks to God that he has laid it on Dr. Byker's heart to come to Calvin College. He states, "We pledge to you our prayers, we pledge our support, we pledge that we will continue to support this school, and we pledge that you can continue to count on us." He wishes Dr. Byker God's blessing. Dr. Byker responds.

(The report of Advisory Committee 3 is continued in Article 65.)

ARTICLE 37

Rev. Michael De Vries of the Reception Committee introduces Rev. Mark Dalbey, fraternal delegate of the Presbyterian Church in America, who addresses synod. The president of synod responds.

Vice president Jack B. Vos assumes the chair.

ARTICLE 38

(The report of Advisory Committee 5 is continued from Article 33.)

Advisory Committee 5, Pastoral Ministries, Rev. John Terpstra reporting, presents the following:

Abuse-Prevention Committee

A. *Material*: Abuse-Prevention Committee Report, pp. 178-81, 555-65

B. *Recommendations* (continued from Article 33, VI)

3. That synod request each classis to appoint an abuse-response team with the assistance of the abuse-prevention director (Section VI).

Grounds:

- a. Under the leadership of the director there will be uniformity and consistency in the training of volunteers and in the operation of the advisory-panel process.
- b. Each classis ought to have its own advisory panel to ensure a swift process that reflects the laws of each community, to enhance accountability, and to ensure that every victim has the same course to follow in filing an allegation.

—*Adopted*

4. That synod declare the function of the proposed advisory panel to be non-judicial in nature, its purpose being only to consider "gravity and probable veracity," not to decide on the guilt or innocence of the accused.

—Adopted

5. That synod recognize that councils will need further guidance in judicial and disciplinary procedures to be followed after the advisory panel has presented its report, especially in the case of an accused person who continues to assert his or her innocence.

—Adopted

6. That the members of the Interim Committee on Abuse Prevention be recognized by synod and discharged with deep appreciation for their work.

—Adopted

(The report of Advisory Committee 5 is continued in Article 44.)

ARTICLE 39

President Calvin H. Bolt reassumes the chair.

The evening session is adjourned; Rev. Loren Swier leads in closing prayer.

FRIDAY MORNING, June 16, 1995

Seventh Session

ARTICLE 40

Elder Henry Docter announces *Psalter Hymnal* 48, "Great Is the Lord Our God." He reads from I Peter 1:13-25 and leads in opening prayer, especially remembering Rev. Gordon D. Mouw, who is undergoing tests at Mayo Clinic.

The roll call indicates that Rev. Dale L. Slings (Classis Grandville) has replaced Rev. Kenneth L. Havert. He rises to express agreement with the forms of unity. Rev. Donald P. Wisse (Classis Hudson) is absent.

The minutes of the sessions of June 15, 1995, are read and approved as revised.

The executive director of ministries introduces Dr. Calvin L. Bremer, who has been appointed director of ministries for The Back to God Hour. He addresses synod. The president of synod responds, wishing Dr. Bremer God's richest blessing in the ministry to which he has been called.

ARTICLE 41

Advisory Committee 1, Synodical Services, Rev. Gordon H. Pols reporting, presents the following:

Board of Trustees

A. Materials

1. Board of Trustees Report, pp. 23-74
2. Board of Trustees Supplement, pp. 569-87

B. Recommendations

1. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Rev. Arthur Schoonveld, president elect; Dr. David Engelhard, general secretary; Dr. Peter Borgdorff, executive director of ministries, and Mr. Robert Van Stright, director of finance and administration, when matters affecting the Board of Trustees are discussed.
—Granted
2. That synod approve the interim appointments made by the Board to the agency boards and committees (*Agenda for Synod 1995*, p. 25, Section I, D, 1, and Board of Trustees Supplement, Section I).
—Adopted
3. That synod designate Seymour CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan, to be the convening church for Synod 1996 (*Agenda for Synod 1995*, p. 26, Section II, A, 2).
—Adopted
4. That synod designate Pillar CRC, Holland, Michigan, as the convening church for Synod 1997 in commemoration of the 150th anniversary of Rev. Albertus VanRaalte's arrival (February 1847) in Holland, Michigan (Board of Trustees Supplement, Section VII).
—Adopted
5. That synod designate First CRC, Jenison, Michigan, to be the convening church for Synod 2000 in recognition of its 125th anniversary (request received by the general secretary on June 8).
—Adopted
6. That synod discontinue the practice of allowing nominations from the floor for membership on denominational boards and committees and remove this provision from the Rules for Synodical Procedure.

Ground: Random nominations from the floor of synod can defeat the process adopted by synod to prepare a slate of nominees that takes into consideration a variety of matters such as balance in membership (minister/nonminister), expertise, availability, eligibility, and gender and ethnic inclusiveness (*Agenda for Synod 1995*, pp. 29-30, Section II, A, 4).
—Adopted

7. Ratification of Church Order articles

- a. That synod ratify the revisions of Articles 23, 24, 25, 52-c, and 55 of the Church Order as decided by Synod 1994 (*Agenda for Synod 1995*, pp. 31-33, Section II, A, 7).

—Adopted

- b. That synod ratify an amended version of Article 14-b by deleting the words "to enter a ministry outside the denomination" so that the article now reads,

A minister of the Word who resigns from the ministry in the Christian Reformed Church shall be released from office by the classis with an appropriate declaration reflecting the resigned minister's status and with the concurring advice of the synodical deputies.

Ground: This broadens the scope of the article to include resignations for other reasons than to enter a ministry outside the denomination and thus gives a provision not currently in the Church Order.

—Recommitted

8. That synod approve the Restated Articles of Association and the Amended Bylaws of the Christian Reformed Church in North America with the following editorial changes (cf. Appendix A-1 and A-2, *Agenda for Synod 1995*, pp. 47-60):

- Article V, (c), page 48, change Mark 16:15 to Matthew 28:19.
- Article I, Section 2, (c), page 54, change Mark 16:15 to Matthew 28:19.
- Article V, page 56, change "consistory and classis" to "council and classis."
- Article VI, page 56, add "A trustee may be removed from office at any time by synod."
- Article VII, Section 1, page 56, add "The Board of Trustees may remove an officer of the Board except the secretary at any time."
- Article VII, Section 2, page 57, add "An officer of the corporation may be removed by synod at any time."
- Article VII, top of page 58, change "originally" to "provisionally."
- Article XI, page 60, change "These Bylaws may be amended by the majority vote of the members of the Board of Trustees" to "These Bylaws may be amended by synod upon recommendation of the Board of Trustees."

—Adopted

(Note: Art. XI was later revised by synod [cf. Art. 103, II, B].)

9. That synod approve the Restated Articles of Incorporation of the Christian Reformed Church Synod and the Bylaws of the Trustee Corporation of the Christian Reformed Church in North America with the following change (cf. Appendix B-1 and B-2, *Agenda for Synod 1995*, pp. 61-74):

- Article VII, page 74, change "These Bylaws may be amended by a vote of two-thirds (2/3) of the Trustees then holding office at any duly constituted meeting of the Board of Trustees" to "These Bylaws may be

amended upon recommendation of the trustees of this corporation by the Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church in North America provided that"

—Adopted

10. That synod appoint the nominees and their alternates for the Pastoral Ministries Board as proposed (*Agenda for Synod 1995*, p. 37, Section II, C, 1).

—Adopted

11. That synod instruct the Pastoral Ministries Board to provide for an equitable regional representation for its membership beginning in 1996.

Grounds:

- a. The present board draws half of its members from western Michigan.
- b. The new board structure which has been implemented in recent years envisions regional representation.

—Adopted

12. Multiethnic Conference 1996 matters

- a. That synod decide that the Friday-evening session of synod (June 14, 1996) be set aside as a time when the conferees of the Multiethnic Conference, the delegates of the Reformed Ecumenical Council, and the delegates of the CRC synod meet together. The plans for the evening will be made by the Multiethnic Conference planning committee in consultation with the REC planning committee.
- b. That the Saturday-morning session of synod (June 15, 1996) be designated as the session in which the report of the Committee to Study the Development of a Racially and Ethnically Diverse Family of God will be discussed and acted upon.

Grounds:

- 1) Both of these recommendations are in keeping with the requests from the Multiethnic Conference (*Acts of Synod 1994*, pp. 522-23) and are consistent with the advance planning of the REC.
- 2) This will help to ensure some "appropriate interaction between the conference/workshop and synod" (cf. *Agenda for Synod 1995*, p. 31, Section II, A, 3).

—Adopted

13. That synod approve the Employment-Termination Appeals Procedure for the Board of Trustees and the mission and service agencies of the Christian Reformed Church (cf. handout of replacement pages for pages 41-43 in the printed *Agenda*).

—Adopted

14. That synod take note that the implication of the revised employment policy (*Acts of Synod 1993*, pp. 633-34) is that while the Board of Trustees' bylaws require some first-time appointments to be ratified by synod, the practice of synod's approving reappointments will be discontinued. Continuing

employment by an agency is dependent on satisfactory performance as determined through regular performance evaluations.

—Adopted

15. That synod express its appreciation to retiring members of the Board for their services to the church (see Board of Trustees Supplement, Section II, A).

—Adopted

16. That synod express its appreciation to retiring members of the Judicial Code Committee for their services (Board of Trustees Supplement, Section III).

—Adopted

17. That synod express its appreciation to all those who have helped govern the ministries of Abuse Prevention, Chaplaincy, Disability Concerns, Pastor-Church Relations, and SCORR, now that these ministries are to be administered by one Pastoral Ministries Board.

—Adopted

18. That synod ratify the reappointment of Rev. John Rozeboom as executive director of Home Missions (Board of Trustees Supplement, Section XVII, A).

—Adopted

19. That synod take note of the ratification by the Board of Trustees of the appointments of Dr. Calvin Bremer as director of ministries for The Back to God Hour, of Rev. Siebert A. Van Houten as an associate director of Pastoral Ministries to serve as director of chaplaincy in Canada, and of Rev. Alfred S. Luke as a director of Pastoral Ministries with specific responsibility for the SCORR ministry (Board of Trustees Supplement, Section XVII, B, C, D). Further, that synod take note that the Board ratified the appointment of Rev. Robert De Moor as the associate theological editor for the Education, Worship, and Evangelism Department of CRC Publications; it endorsed the reappointment of Rev. John Suk as editor in chief of *The Banner*; it ratified the appointment of Rev. Duane Visser as a director of Pastoral Ministries with responsibility for Pastor-Church Relations; and it approved the appointment of Ms. Beth Swagman as a director of Pastoral Ministries with responsibility for Abuse Prevention (*Agenda for Synod 1995*, pp. 37-38).

—Adopted

20. Lawsuit information. Synod is hereby informed that a publicly announced lawsuit has been filed against the third-party health-insurance carrier of the CRC and against the CRC itself. The Board of Trustees and its legal counsel are dealing responsibly with the matter. More details or further discussion would be premature since the matter is still pending.

—Received as information

(The report of Advisory Committee 1 is continued in Article 43.)

ARTICLE 42

The general secretary presents the ballot, and delegates vote.

ARTICLE 43

(The report of Advisory Committee 1 is continued from Article 41.)

Advisory Committee 1, Synodical Services, Rev. Gordon H. Pols reporting, presents the following:

I. Ministerial retirements

A. Information

Synod has received notice of the following ministerial retirements:

Minister	Classis	Effective Date
Alan A. Arkema	Grand Rapids East	January 8, 1995
Jerome W. Batts	Northern Illinois	May 19, 1994
Ralph W. Bronkema	Iakota	June 30, 1995
Peter Brouwer	B.C. North-West	July 1, 1995
Theodore L. Brouwer	Wisconsin	January 1, 1995
W. Thomas De Vries	Grand Rapids East	September 1, 1995
Norman B. Haan	Central California	April 1, 1995
Robert J. Holwerda	Iakota	September 30, 1994
*Henry T. Karsten	Greater Los Angeles	January 1, 1995
*Henry Katerberg	Niagara	March 31, 1994
Aaron Kayayan	Chicago South	June 30, 1995
*John Klumpenhauer	Chatham	September 3, 1995
*John M.V. Koole	Chatham	September 16, 1995
John H. Looman	Kalamazoo	February 1, 1995
Earl C. Marlink	Central California	October 1, 1995
Ted Medema	Pacific Northwest	January 20, 1995
*Harry Mennega	Quinte	May 15, 1995
Alvin A. Mulder	Hackensack	January 1, 1995
Jelle Nutma	Chatham	May 1, 1995
Edwin D. Roels	Grand Rapids North	June 30, 1995
Domingo Romero	Grandville	September 1, 1995
Howard A. Sponholz	Hudson	June 1, 1995
Charles Steenstra	Grand Rapids North	December 31, 1995
Louis M. Tamminga	Grand Rapids East	October 1, 1995
Jacob W. Uitvlugt	Zeeland	October 1, 1994
Arie Vanden Berg	B.C. North-West	September 1, 1995
Douglas Vander Wall	Atlantic Northeast	December 15, 1994
Wilbert M. Van Dyk	Grand Rapids East	September 1, 1995
Gerald F. Van Oyen	Thornapple Valley	September 20, 1994
Andrew J. Van Schouwen	Northcentral Iowa	April 19, 1995
Dirk Velthuisen	Eastern Canada	May 15, 1995
Jay A. Wesseling	Heartland	September 30, 1994

*Medical disability

B. Recommendations

1. That synod acknowledge with profound gratitude the faithful labors of these ministers.

—Adopted

2. That the vice president of synod offer a prayer of thanksgiving for their many years of dedicated service.

—*Adopted*

Vice president Rev. Jack B. Vos leads the assembly in prayer, thanking God for the dedication and the many years of service of these ministers of the Word.

II. Work of synodical deputies

A. Classical examination of candidates

Synodical deputies report their concurrence with the decisions of classes to admit the following to the office of minister of the Word.

Candidate	Classis	Synodical Deputies and Classes
Donald W. Cowart	Niagara (1-18-95)	M.D. Geleynse, Huron M. Van Donselaar, Hamilton G. Ringnald, Toronto
David E. Den Haan	Minnesota South (9-15-94)	J.P. Groenewold, Iakota C.E. Zylstra, Heartland G.E. De Vries, Northcentral Iowa
Jack B. Dik	Kalamazoo (9-20-94)	D. Tinklenberg, Georgetown S.E. Hoezee, Grand Rapids East E.R. Tigchelaar, Grand Rapids South
Kevin L. Dwyer	Kalamazoo (11-15-94)	D. Tinklenberg, Georgetown S.E. Hoezee, Grand Rapids East E.R. Tigchelaar, Grand Rapids South
Bruce E. Gritter	B.C. South-East (9-21-94)	H. Jonker, B.C. North-West P. Nicolai, Alberta South
<i>Note:</i> The synodical deputy from Classis Pacific Northwest was scheduled to be present but did not come.		
Roger B. Groenboom	Grand Rapids North (10-4-94)	T. Minnema, Thornapple Valley R.D. Ritsema, Grandville E.R. Tigchelaar, Grand Rapids South
Frederick A.V. Harms	Iakota (9-20-94)	G.E. De Vries, Northcentral Iowa W.G. Van Hal, Heartland J.D. Buwalda, Minnesota South
James J. Heuving	B.C. South-East (3-7-95)	P.J. Kok, Pacific Northwest J. Corvers, Alberta South H. Jonker, B.C. North-West
John L. Hoekwater	Grand Rapids North (10-4-94)	R.D. Ritsema, Grandville E.R. Tigchelaar, Grand Rapids South T. Minnema, Thornapple Valley
Paul R. Ipema	Illiana (9-13-94)	J.H. Scholten, Holland H.B. Vanden Heuvel, Chicago South P. De Jong, Northern Illinois
Gregory S. Janke	Illiana (9-13-94)	J.H. Scholten, Holland H.B. Vanden Heuvel, Chicago South P. De Jong, Northern Illinois
Curtis D. Korver	B.C. South-East (3-7-95)	P.J. Kok, Pacific Northwest J. Corvers, Alberta South H. Jonker, B.C. North-West
Phillip S. Leo	Minnesota North (9-12-95)	J.P. Groenewold, Iakota J.D. Buwalda, Minnesota South C.E. Zylstra, Heartland
Robert A. Lyzenga	Rocky Mountain (9-27-94)	J. Howerzyl, California South D.A. Warners, Greater Los Angeles J.P. Groenewold, Iakota

Candidate	Classis	Synodical Deputies and Classes
Bradd L. Nymeyer	Arizona (9-14-94)	J. Howerzyl, California South J.R. Kok, Central California J. Van Schepen, Greater Los Angeles
Timothy L. Rietkerk	Northern Illinois (5-11-95)	J. Bylsma, Wisconsin H.B. Vanden Heuvel, Chicago South G.H. Stoutmeyer, Illiana
Ezequiel N. Romero	Hackensack (9-27-94)	W. Timmer, Atlantic Northeast D.L. Recker, Hudson W.J. Dykstra, Lake Erie
George J. Rowaan	Eastern Canada (10-18-94)	R. Kooops, Huron E. Gritter, Quinte G. Ringnalda, Toronto
Raymond Slim	Red Mesa (9-17-94)	W. Verhoef, Rocky Mountain R. Bultman, California South N.B. Haan, Central California
Carlos G. Tapanes	Grandville (10-6-94)	C. Steenstra, Grand Rapids North D. Tinklenberg, Georgetown K.E. Van Wyk, Zeeland
Viet H. Tran	Minnesota South (9-15-94)	J.P. Groenewold, Iakota C.E. Zylstra, Heartland G.E. De Vries, Northcentral Iowa
Gerry Glenn Van Dam	Rocky Mountain (3-7-95)	R. Bultman, California South C.E. Zylstra, Heartland B.J. Van Ee, Yellowstone
Ronald A. Vanden Brink	B.C. South-East (9-21-94)	H. Jonker, B.C. North-West P. Nicolai, Alberta South
<i>Note:</i> The synodical deputy from Classis Pacific Northwest was scheduled to be present but did not come.		
H. Raymond Vander Kooij	Hamilton (11-9-94)	M.D. Geleynse, Huron H. Eshuis, Niagara G. Ringnalda, Toronto
Ellot Vander Lugt	Pella (9-16-94)	C.E. Zylstra, Heartland A.J. Van Schouwen, Northcentral Iowa J.D. Buwalda, Minnesota South
Dirk van der Vorst, Jr.	Alberta South (11-21-94)	N. Cornelisse, Alberta North H. Jonker, B.C. North-West J. Weeda, Yellowstone
Timothy E. Van Zalen	Heartland (12-7-94)	J.D. Buwalda, Minnesota South D.W. De Groot, Iakota G.E. De Vries, Northcentral Iowa
Ralph Veenstra	Georgetown (5-18-95)	J. Gorter, Grandville T. Minnema, Thornapple Valley E.R. Tigchelaar, Grand Rapids South

Recommendation:

That synod approve the work of the synodical deputies.

—*Adopted*

B. Classical examinations via Church Order Article 7

1. Synodical deputies M.D. Geleynse (Huron), E. Gritter (Quinte), and G. Ringnalda (Toronto), having agreed with the decision of Classis Eastern Canada in session on October 18, 1994, that there is a need in the denomination to allow men to enter the ministry of the Word by way of Church Order Article 7 because there is presently a high number of vacancies and the

number of graduates from Calvin Theological Seminary is quite low, having ascertained that all proper procedures as outlined under Church Order Supplement, Article 7, A, 1 were strictly followed, and having heard the reports concerning the petitioner's "exceptional gifts" as demonstrated in his preaching, concur with the final decision of Classis Eastern Canada in session on March 7, 1995, to proceed with the preparatory examination of **Mr. Lloyd Burghart** according to Church Order Supplement, Article 7, A, 2.

2. Synodical deputies M.D. Geleynse (Huron), E. Gritter (Quinte), and G. Ringnalda (Toronto) concur with the decision of Classis Eastern Canada in session on March 7, 1995, that **Mr. Lloyd Burghart** sustained his examination for candidacy under the provisions of Church Order Article 7 and that he be declared eligible for call in the Christian Reformed Church.
3. Synodical deputies A.J. Van Schouwen (Northcentral Iowa), J.P. Groenewold (Iakota), and W.G. Van Hal (Heartland) concur with the decision of Classis Pella in session on August 15, 1994, in admitting **Mr. Carl A. Heuss** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church.
4. Synodical deputies J. Corvers (Alberta South), R. Vander Ley (Pacific Northwest), and C. Vriend (Alberta North) concur with the decision of Classis B.C. North-West in session on September 21, 1994, to admit **Mr. Vinh Le** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church according to Church Order Article 7.
5. Synodical deputies J. Hofman, Jr. (Columbia), J. Weeda (Yellowstone), and R. Vander Ley (Pacific Northwest), having heard the examination of **Mr. William Redondo**, concur with the decision of Classis Central California in session on March 7, 1995, to admit him to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church.
6. Synodical deputies J.C. Medendorp (Thornapple Valley), D.J. Van Beek (Grand Rapids North), and J.W. Uitvlugt (Zeeland), having heard the discussion of Classis Georgetown regarding need and also having witnessed the preliminary examination of **Dr. Jeffrey R. Stam** regarding the "required exceptional gifts" for ordination to the ministry according to Article 7 of the Church Order, concur with Classis Georgetown in session on September 14, 1994, to proceed "as circumstances may warrant and according to synodical regulations."
7. Synodical deputies C. Steenstra (Grand Rapids North), T. Minnema (Thornapple Valley), and K.E. Van Wyk (Zeeland) concur with the decision of Classis Georgetown in session February 16, 1995, in declaring **Dr. Jeffrey R. Stam** a candidate for the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church.
8. Synodical deputies E.R. Tigchelaar (Grand Rapids South), J. Gorter (Grandville), and T. Minnema (Thornapple Valley), having heard the classical examination of **Dr. Jeffrey R. Stam**, concur with the decision of Classis Georgetown in session May 18, 1995, to admit him to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in accordance with Church Order Article 7.

Recommendation:

That synod approve the work of the synodical deputies.

—*Adopted*

C. Ministers from other denominations, Church Order Article 8

1. Synodical deputies W.L. Vander Beek (B.C. South-East), N. Cornelisse (Alberta North), and P. Brouwer (B.C. North-West) concur with the decision of Classis Alberta South in session on March 6, 1995, to declare a special **need** for the Christian Reformed Church of Burdett, Alberta, to call a minister from the Presbyterian Church in America to serve as its minister.
2. Synodical deputies M. Van Donselaar (Hamilton), J. Kuipers (Chatham), and M.D. Geleynse (Huron) concur with the decision of Classis Toronto in session on September 29, 1994, to declare that there is a **need** in the denomination to call a minister from another denomination, according to Church Order Article 8.

Ground: "The number of recent graduates of Calvin Theological Seminary is not sufficient to supply the need created by the loss of active pastors due to (a) number of retirees and (b) number of pastors leaving and deposed. The *Acts of Synod* states that there are approximately 120 vacancies, 24 graduates in 1994, 28 retirees in 1994, and 31 ministers released for other reasons."

3. Synodical deputies G.L. Rutgers (Arizona), J. Van Schepen (Greater Los Angeles), and N.B. Haan (Central California), having heard the colloquium doctum of **Rev. Felipe Acuna**, concur with the decision of Classis California South in session on October 19, 1994, to declare him eligible for call to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
4. Synodical deputies G.H. Stoutmeyer (Illiana), T.H. Douma (Northern Illinois), and K.E. Van Wyk (Zeeland) concur with the decision of Classis Florida in session March 8, 1995, that a **need** has been established for calling **Rev. Gianni Gracia** according to Article 8-b of the Church Order. The deputies concur with the decision of Classis Florida to declare **Rev. Gianni Gracia** eligible for call under Article 8-b of the Church Order.
5. Synodical deputies P. Brouwer (B.C. North-West), J. Weeda (Yellowstone), and J. Hofman, Jr. (Columbia), having witnessed the colloquium doctum of **Rev. Kyung Soo Jho** by Classis Pacific Northwest in session on September 14, 1994, concur with classis' motion to declare him eligible for call to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
6. Synodical deputies C. Vriend (Alberta North), J. Weeda (Yellowstone), and P. Brouwer (B.C. North-West), having witnessed the colloquium doctum of **Rev. Andrew Joosse** by Classis Alberta South in session on June 20, 1994, concur with classis' decision to declare him eligible for call to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
7. Synodical deputies R. Bultman (California South), C.E. Zylstra (Heartland), and B.J. Van Ee (Yellowstone) concur with the decision of Classis Rocky Mountain in session March 7, 1995, that a **need** exists for **Rev. Youchan Kim**

to serve as church developer for a new church development in Boulder, Colorado, and that a colloquium doctum be scheduled for that purpose.

8. Synodical deputies J. Gorter (Grandville), S.E. Hoezee (Grand Rapids East), and E.R. Tigchelaar (Grand Rapids South) concur with the decision of Classis Grand Rapids North in session May 16, 1995, to hold a colloquium doctum for **Rev. Thomas Mayo** in accordance with Church Order Article 8 and its supplement.

Grounds:

- a. Unique demands and specialization are required in the position at Sunshine Community Church (e.g., small-groups ministry).
- b. Sunshine appears to have made a sustained and realistic effort to obtain a minister from within the Christian Reformed Church and yet did not find one sufficiently qualified and available for this position.

Note: As deputies, we did note, however, the lack of specific statistics as to how many Christian Reformed applicants were interviewed (this going to the determination of need), and we also asked for amplification as to how and why a "small-groups ministry" constituted a unique need. These issues were addressed on the floor of classis and were answered to our satisfaction.

9. Synodical deputies J.C. Medendorp (Thornapple Valley), C. Steenstra (Grand Rapids North), and K.E. Van Wyk (Zeeland) concur with the action of Classis Grand Rapids East in session May 18, 1995, in approving the request of Woodlawn CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan, to call **Dr. Richard A. Muller** for a ministerial position in the Christian Reformed Church and to serve at Calvin Theological Seminary. The **need** to call outside the denomination for this appointment was established by this classis and concurred in by synodical deputies at a previous classis meeting (May 19, 1994).
10. Synodical deputies W. Timmer (Atlantic Northeast), W.J. Dykstra (Lake Erie), D.L. Recker (Hudson), having heard the colloquium doctum of **Rev. Ricardo Orellana**, concur in the decision of Classis Hackensack in session on September 27, 1994, to admit him into the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
11. Synodical deputies J. Bylsma (Wisconsin), H.B. Vanden Heuvel (Chicago South), and G.H. Stoutmeyer (Illiana), having heard the request of Elmhurst CRC, Elmhurst, Illinois, concur with the decision of Classis Northern Illinois in session May 11, 1995, that a **need** exists to call **Rev. Eugene Yoonil Shin**, a Korean minister, to serve as pastor of Our Shepherd Korean CRC.
12. Synodical deputies N.B. Haan (Central California), R. Bultman (California South), and G.J. Kamps (Arizona), having heard the discussion concerning the **need** to admit **Rev. Ki Chun So** into the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church, concur with the decision of Classis Greater Los Angeles in session on October 5, 1994, that the **need** exists based upon the decision of Synod 1985 that "for multicultural or ethnic minority churches the need for indigenous leadership shall constitute the criterion for meeting the 'need' requirements of . . . Article 8 of the Church Order" (*Acts of Synod 1985*, p. 752).

13. Synodical deputies G.J. Kamps (Arizona), J. Howerzyl (California South), and N.B. Haan (Central California), having heard the colloquium doctum of **Rev. Ki Chun So**, concur with the decision of Classis Greater Los Angeles in session on March 8, 1995, to declare him eligible for call into the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church.
14. Synodical deputies H.B. Vanden Heuvel (Chicago South), J.H. Scholten (Holland), and K.E. Van Wyk (Zeeland) conferred by telephone and, having read the letter from Peace CRC, South Holland, Illinois, dated April 5, 1995, concur with the decision of Classis Illiana in session May 9, 1995, to recognize that the **need** exists for the gifts for ministry and service of **Rev. Ildefonso Torres** to work among Hispanic people and that a colloquium doctum be scheduled for the September meeting of Classis Illiana.
15. Synodical deputies M.D. Geleynse (Huron), J. Kuipers (Chatham), and M. Van Donselaar (Hamilton) concur with the decision of Classis Toronto in session September 29, 1994, to declare a **need** in the denomination for ministers from other denominations. A colloquium doctum for **Rev. Dick VanderVecht** is planned for the January classis meeting.

Grounds:

- a. There is a need for ministers due to many vacancies (approximately 120).
- b. D. VanderVecht's submissions indicate qualifications for the ministry.
- c. The number of recent graduates of Calvin Theological Seminary (24 in 1994) is not sufficient to supply the need created by the loss of active pastors in the CRC due to the number of retirements (28 in 1994) and the number of pastors leaving and deposed (31).

Note: The synodical deputies concur with the motion, noting that they accept only Ground c.

16. Synodical deputies G.J. Kamps (Arizona), J. Howerzyl (California South), and N.B. Haan (Central California), having heard the discussion concerning the **need** to admit **Rev. Gilbert Varela** into the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church, concur with the decision of Classis Greater Los Angeles in session on March 8, 1995, that the **need** exists based upon the decision of Synod 1985 that "for multicultural or ethnic minority churches the need for indigenous leadership shall constitute the criterion for meeting the 'need' requirements of . . . Article 8 of the Church Order" (*Acts of Synod 1985*, p. 752).
17. Synodical deputies J. Gorter (Grandville), E.R. Tigchelaar (Grand Rapids South), and T. Minnema (Thornapple Valley), having read the documents presented and having heard the discussion of classis, concur with Classis Georgetown in session May 18, 1995, that a **need** has been established for Ridgewood CRC, Jenison, Michigan, to call **Rev. Richard Verkaik** (RCA) as pastor of Friendship Chapel, Jenison, Michigan.
18. Synodical deputies G.J. Kamps (Arizona), R. Bultman (California South), and N.B. Haan (Central California), having heard the colloquium doctum of **Rev. William Yang**, concur with the decision of Classis Greater Los Angeles in session on October 5, 1994, to declare him eligible for call to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church.

Recommendation:

That synod approve the work of the synodical deputies.

—Adopted

D. Ministers in specialized services, Church Order Article 12-c

Minister	Work	Classis and Date	Synodical Deputies
G.A. De Vries	Chaplain, Mercy Medical Center, Cedar Rapids, IA	Pella (9-16-94)	C.E. Zylstra, Heartland P. De Jong, Northern Illinois J.P. Groenewold, Iakota
D.D. Ellens	Director/therapist, Bethesda Christian Counseling Midwest	Iakota (3-7-95)	G.E. De Vries, Northcentral Iowa W.G. Van Hal, Heartland J.D. Buwalda, Minnesota South
E.R. Hommes	Chaplain, Borgess Medical Center, Kalamazoo, MI	Kalamazoo (9-20-94)	D. Tinklenberg, Georgetown S.E. Hoezee, Grand Rapids East E.R. Tigchelaar, Grand Rapids South
C. Hoogendoorn	Chaplain, Trinity Christian College	Chicago South (5-18-95)	J. Bylsma, Wisconsin T.H. Douma, Northern Illinois G.H. Stoutmeyer, Illiana
C.E. Keegstra	Chaplain, Huron Valley Center, Ypsilanti, MI	Lake Erie (3-3-95)	S.E. Hoezee, Grand Rapids East E.R. Tigchelaar, Grand Rapids South T. Minnema, Thornapple Valley
A.S. Luke	Director of SCORR ministry, division of Pastoral Ministries	G. R. East (5-18-95)	J.C. Medendorp, Thornapple Valley C. Steenstra, Grand Rapids North K.E. Van Wyk, Zeeland
R.L. Peterson	Pastoral-counseling ministry	Hudson (9-7-94)	S.J. Vander Klay, Hackensack W. Timmer, Atlantic Northeast R.G. Baker, Florida

Recommendation:

That synod approve the work of the synodical deputies.

—Adopted

E. Temporarily loaning a minister outside of the Christian Reformed Church, Church Order Article 13-b

1. Synodical deputies G.L. Rutgers (Arizona), J. Van Schepen (Greater Los Angeles), and N.B. Haan (Central California) concur with the decision of Classis California South in session on October 19, 1994, to loan **Rev. Do Ryang Chung** to the Central Bible Church in Seoul, Korea, for two years.
2. Synodical deputies P. Brouwer (B.C. North-West), J. Weeda (Yellowstone), and J. Hofman, Jr. (Columbia), concur with the decision of Classis Pacific Northwest in session on September 14, 1994, to approve the request of the Mountain View Christian Reformed Church council to have **Rev. Gary D. Roosma** serve with the Overseas Mission Fellowship for church planting in Thailand.

Recommendation:

That synod approve the work of the synodical deputies.

—Adopted

F. Release from the ministry under Article 14-b (revised)

1. Synodical deputies C. Steenstra (Grand Rapids North), K.L. Havert (Grandville), and T. Minnema (Thornapple Valley) concur with the decision of Classis Grand Rapids South in session May 18, 1995, in the acknowledgment that **Herbert Bergsma** has resigned from the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church and concurs in the dismissal of **Herbert Bergsma** from the ministry because of conduct unbecoming a minister.
2. Synodical deputies J.H. Scholten (Holland), D. Tinklenberg (Georgetown), and E.R. Tigchelaar (Grand Rapids South) concur with the decision of Classis Muskegon in session March 2, 1995, to release **Peter E. Brink** from the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in accordance with Church Order Article 14-b.
3. Synodical deputies J. Hofman, Jr. (Columbia), R. Vander Ley (Pacific Northwest), and J. Weeda (Yellowstone), having been informed of the circumstances and having perused the relevant documents, concur with the decision of Classis Central California in session on September 20, 1994, to declare **In Choung Choo** released from the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church.
4. Synodical deputies J. Gorter (Grandville), S.E. Hoezee (Grand Rapids East), and E.R. Tigchelaar (Grand Rapids South) concur with the decision of Classis Grand Rapids North in session May 16, 1995, to grant honorable release of **Youn-Kyoo Chung** from the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church (pursuant to Church Order Article 14-b and its supplement).
5. Synodical deputies J. Hofman, Jr. (Columbia), A.C. Leegwater (B.C. South-East), and R. Vander Ley (Pacific Northwest) concur with the decision of Classis B.C. North-West in session on March 8, 1995, to release with honor **Charles H. Claus** from the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church effective December 31, 1994, under Church Order Article 14-b.
6. Synodical deputies J. Hofman, Jr. (Columbia), J. Weeda (Yellowstone), and R. Vander Ley (Pacific Northwest), having examined the relevant documents and being present at classis when the decision was made, concur with the decision of Classis Central California in session on March 7, 1995, that **Ho Kwan Hwang** is dismissed from the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church.
7. Synodical deputies G.L. Rutgers (Arizona), J. Van Schepen (Greater Los Angeles), and N.B. Haan (Central California) concur with the decision of Classis California South in session on January 25, 1995, to release **Young Ki Kim** from the office of minister of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church according to Church Order Article 14-b.
8. Synodical deputies G.E. De Vries (Northcentral Iowa), J.D. Buwalda (Minnesota South), and D.W. De Groot (Iakota) concur with the decision of Classis of the Heartland in session December 7, 1994, "that in the matter of **Nelson D. Kloosterman's** resignation from the Christian Reformed Church in order to affiliate with an independent congregation, Classis of the

Heartland expresses its regret and declares his status to be that of one dismissed from the office of minister of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church."

9. Synodical deputies K.E. Van Wyk (Zeeland), C. Steenstra (Grand Rapids North), and D. Tinklenberg (Georgetown) concur with the decision of Classis Holland in session on September 15, 1994, to dismiss **Wybren H. Oord** from the office of minister of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in light of his de facto resignation from ministry at South Olive CRC by virtue of his acceptance of a call to Faith Independent Reformed Church.
10. Synodical deputies G.E. De Vries (Northcentral Iowa), J.D. Buwalda (Minnesota South), and D.W. De Groot (Iakota) concur with the decision of Classis of the Heartland in session on December 7, 1994, "that in the matter of **Ralph A. Pontier**, who led a schism within First Christian Reformed Church, Orange City, Iowa, Classis of the Heartland expresses regret at his leaving and declares his status to be that of one deposed from the office of minister of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church."
11. Synodical deputies K.L. Havert (Grandville), T. Minnema (Thornapple Valley), and C. Steenstra (Grand Rapids North) concur with the decision of Classis Grand Rapids East in session on January 19, 1995, to dismiss **Philip R. Touw** from the office of minister in the Christian Reformed Church while under discipline.
12. Synodical deputies G.E. De Vries (Northcentral Iowa), J.D. Buwalda (Minnesota South), and D.W. De Groot (Iakota) concur with the decision of Classis of the Heartland in session on December 7, 1994, "in the matter of **Richard J. Venema**, who has left the ministry of the Christian Reformed Church to enter the ministry of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, that Classis of the Heartland expresses its regret at his departure and declares his status to be that of one dismissed from the office of minister of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church."
13. Synodical deputies K.E. Van Wyk (Zeeland), J.C. Medendorp (Thornapple Valley), and D. Tinklenberg (Georgetown) concur with the decision of Classis Holland in session on January 19, 1995, to honorably release **Allen Verhey** from the office of minister of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in order that he may affiliate with the Reformed Church in America, where he serves as chairman of the Religion Department at Hope College.
14. Synodical deputies H. Admiraal (Grand Rapids North), J.C. Medendorp (Thornapple Valley), and H. Minnema (Kalamazoo) concur with the decision of Classis Grand Rapids East in session on September 15, 1994, to release **Kurt K. Volbeda** from ministerial office in the Christian Reformed Church. He has accepted a call to Lakeshore Community Church in Holland, Michigan.

Recommendation:

That synod approve the work of the synodical deputies.

—Adopted

G. Release from the ministry under Article 14-c

Synodical deputies J.D. Buwalda (Minnesota South), C.E. Zylstra (Heartland), and J.P. Groenewold (Iakota) concur with the decision of Classis Minnesota North in session September 12, 1994, to release **Wendell Meyer** from the office of minister of the Word according to the provisions of Church Order Article 14-c.

Recommendation:

That synod approve the work of the synodical deputies.

—Adopted

H. Admission to the ministry under Article 14-d

Synodical deputies G.J. Kamps (Arizona), R. Bultman (California South), and N.B. Haan (Central California), having heard the discussion on the motion to reinstate **Dr. John Jin Tae Lee** as a minister of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America, concur with the decision of Classis Greater Los Angeles in session on October 5, 1994, to declare **Dr. Lee** eligible for call into the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church according to Article 14-d.

Recommendation:

That synod approve the work of the synodical deputies.

—Adopted

I. Extensions under Article 17-c

1. Synodical deputies Henry Admiraal (Grand Rapids North), J.C. Medendorp (Thornapple Valley), and H. Minnema (Kalamazoo) concur with the decision of Classis Grand Rapids East in session on September 15, 1994, to extend the eligibility for call of **Rev. James Lucas** for one year.

Grounds:

- a. Rev. Lucas attests to a continuing call from God to the ordained ministry.
 - b. Rev. Lucas continues to demonstrate his gifts for the ministry in preaching, teaching, and pastoral care.
 - c. Rev. Lucas is actively pursuing a call to ministry, and there is likelihood that within the next year a call will be forthcoming.
2. Synodical deputies T. Minnema (Thornapple Valley), R.D. Ritsema (Grandville), and E.R. Tigchelaar (Grand Rapids South), having heard the discussion of the motion before Classis Grand Rapids North in session on October 4, 1994, "to extend the eligibility for call of **Rev. Stephen J. Sietsema** for one year," concur with the motion.

Recommendation:

That synod approve the work of the synodical deputies.

—Adopted

J. Deposition under Articles 82 and 83

Synodical deputies J.C. Medendorp (Thornapple Valley), C. Steenstra (Grand Rapids North), and K.E. Van Wyk (Zeeland) concur with the decision of Classis Grand Rapids East in session May 18, 1995, to approve the following action of the council of Woodlawn CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan, on March 14, 1995:

That **Gordon Negen**, retired because of age as of September 7, 1991, be deprived of the honor and title officially accorded a retired minister (cf. Church Order Art. 18-b). This action is understood to be the equivalent of deposition (cf. Church Order Arts. 82-84).

Recommendation:

That synod approve the work of the synodical deputies.

—*Adopted*

III. Board of Trustees

A. *Material:* Board of Trustees Report, *Agenda for Synod 1995*, p. 44, and "m," p. 46

B. *Recommendations*

1. That the practice of introducing missionaries home on furlough and those who serve the church in specialized settings (e.g., chaplains) be continued. It is understood that such introductions will be done as a group at a time of each synod's choosing.

—*Adopted*

2. That each year, on an agency rotating basis, one of the persons introduced according to 1 (above) will address synod for a maximum of ten minutes. The rotation schedule to be used will be arranged through the executive director of ministries.

—*Adopted*

3. That each year, on a rotating basis, three agencies be permitted twenty minutes each for more extensive ministry presentations of their own choosing. The rotation schedule to be used will be arranged through the executive director of ministries.

—*Adopted*

4. That agency executive directors (or equivalent) upon retirement (or its equivalent) be given the opportunity for a ten-minute farewell address at a public session of synod.

—*Adopted*

(The report of Advisory Committee 1 is continued in Article 50.)

ARTICLE 44

(The report of Advisory Committee 5 is continued from Article 38.)

Advisory Committee 5, Pastoral Ministries, Rev. John Terpstra reporting, presents the following:

Appoint a new committee to study inclusive language for God

A. *Material:* Overture 45, p. 411

B. *Recommendation*

That synod not accede to Overture 45.

Grounds:

- a. Those responsible for appointing the current committee were well aware of synod's desire for a committee which represented a diversity of opinion.
- b. The overture suggests that the current committee may not represent a diversity of opinion but does not offer evidence to substantiate its claim.
- c. By adding members to or removing members from the current committee synod would be prejudging the work of the committee.

—Adopted

(The report of Advisory Committee 5 is continued in Article 96.)

ARTICLE 45

(The report of Advisory Committee 8 is continued from Article 20.)

Advisory Committee 8, Church Order I, Rev. John A. Ooms reporting, presents the following:

Clarifying the expression "expounding the Word"

A. *Materials*

1. Committee to Study Clarifying the Expression "Expounding the Word" Report, pp. 376-82
2. Overture 20, pp. 376-82
3. Overture 21, pp. 383-84

B. *Background*

Synod 1992 adopted the recommendation "to encourage the churches to use the gifts of women members to the fullest extent possible in their local churches, including allowing women to teach, expound the Word of God, and provide pastoral care, under the supervision of the elders" (*Acts of Synod 1992*, Art. 105, B, 5). Synod 1994 appointed a study committee "to clarify the expression 'expounding the Word' as used in the decision of 1992 and report to Synod 1995" (*Acts of Synod 1994*, p. 526).

C. *Recommendations*

1. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to the chairman and secretary of the study committee when this report is considered.
- Granted
2. That synod reject the study committee's recommendations to "declare the expression 'expounding the Word' as used in the decision of Synod 1992 to mean that women ought to be encouraged to use their gifts of interpreting, teaching, and applying the Word of God in a variety of ministry contexts but not for exhorting and preaching in official worship services."

Grounds:

- a. The committee has not fulfilled its mandate. Synod 1994 mandated the committee "to clarify the expression 'expounding the Word' as used in the decision of Synod 1992 . . ." (*Acts of Synod 1992*, Art. 105, B, 5). The committee itself admits that it has not done that: "But exactly what synod meant by the expression 'expounding the Word' would not be appropriate for our

committee to say, since this was not specified in writing by the synod" (*Agenda for Synod 1995*, p. 305).

- b. The committee makes no attempt to understand how Synod 1992 did/did not handle the Church Order. Instead, the committee explains various Church Order articles and then applies those articles to the 1992 decision, altering rather than understanding or clarifying the decision.

The study committee does not accede to the advisory committee.

According to Rules for Synodical Procedure, the recommendations of the study committee are placed before synod.

1. That synod declare the expression "expounding the Word" as used in the decision of Synod 1992 to mean that women ought to be encouraged to use their gifts of interpreting, teaching, and applying the Word of God in a variety of ministry contexts but not for exhorting and preaching in official worship services.

It is moved that this recommendation be tabled until the report of Advisory Committee 10 is placed before the delegates.

—*Adopted*

(The report of Advisory Committee 8 is continued in Article 107)

ARTICLE 46

The executive director of ministries introduces the following agency representatives:

I. For the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee

Mr. John De Haan, director of CRWRC-U.S., briefly addresses synod. He acknowledges Debra Schneider and elder delegate Mr. James Boldenow, Latin America coordinator.

II. For World Missions

Rev. William Van Tol, international director for Christian Reformed World Missions, briefly addresses synod and introduces the following missionaries and staff:

New missionaries

Rev. Ralph and Mrs. Beth Veenstra—Dominican Republic

Mr. James and Mrs. Mary Lou Deters—Dominican Republic

Ms. Janna Brasser—China

Ms. Ardell Persenaire—Nigeria

Mr. George De Vuyst—Ukraine

Mr. Henry Hogeterp—Nigeria

Missionaries on home service

Mr. Allan and Mrs. Jacie Persenaire—Nigeria

Rev. Kent Van Til—Costa Rica

Mr. Paul and Mrs. Laurie Theule—Central America

Ms. Cecelia Drenth—Costa Rica

Dr. John and Mrs. Fran Boer—Nigeria

Ms. Alice Laarman—China

Rev. Van Tol also pays tribute to the late Dr. Henry Evenhouse, former director of World Missions, who was taken to glory four months ago.

The president of synod expresses gratitude to the missionaries for their dedicated service and assures them that the delegates of synod stand by them.

ARTICLE 47

The morning session is adjourned; Elder Robert G. den Dulk leads in closing prayer, especially remembering the daughter of Rev. Donald Lagerwey who was involved in an automobile accident which claimed the life of one friend.

FRIDAY AFTERNOON, June 16, 1995

Eighth Session

ARTICLE 48

Rev. Kenneth F. Benjamins announces *Psalter Hymnal* 256, "Out of the Depths, I Cry." He reads from Psalm 130 and leads in opening prayer.

ARTICLE 49

The president of synod introduces Rev. Jacob P. Heerema, director of the Christian Reformed Chaplain Committee. The film *The Chaplain Will Come* is shown. Rev. Heerema briefly addresses synod and presents the chaplains (and spouses) who are present. He acknowledges the services of Rev. Carl Tuyl, Canadian director of chaplaincy, who addresses synod. The president responds, thanking the chaplains for their dedication and leadership.

ARTICLE 50

(The report of Advisory Committee 1 is continued from Article 43.)

Advisory Committee 1, Synodical Services, Rev. Gordon H. Pols reporting, presents the following:

I. Advisory committees

A. *Material*: Overture 1, pp. 321-22

B. *Recommendation*

That synod not accede to Overture 1, pertaining to the composition of advisory committees of synod.

Grounds:

1. The Program Committee report comes to the delegates as a recommendation and is subject to revision before being adopted by synod (Rules for Synodical Procedure, VI, 5, b).
2. It is the very nature of a deliberative assembly such as synod that the delegates deliberate—something which they cannot do without convictions or opinions about the matter under discussion.

—Adopted

II. Balloting process

A. *Material*: Overture 28, pp. 389-90

B. *Recommendation*

That synod not accede to Overture 28, requesting a modification of the balloting process.

Grounds:

1. The overture concedes that the *Agenda for Synod* provides sufficient information for the delegates to vote responsibly.
2. The general secretary should be trusted to explore the best way possible to help delegates connect *Agenda for Synod* information and their balloting work without synod's binding him to one specific procedure.
3. To restrict balloting for regional representatives only to certain delegates fails to recognize the fact that church appointees represent Christ and the whole church and not a local constituency.

—*Adopted*

III. Postpone final approval of Mission and Vision Statement

A. *Material*: Overture 32, pp. 396-98

B. *Recommendations*

1. That synod set aside fifteen minutes for a presentation of the Mission and Vision Statement by the executive director of ministries, Dr. Peter Borgdorff.

—*Adopted*

Note: This presentation should be scheduled before the discussion on Recommendation 2 below.

2. That synod refer the Mission and Vision Statement to the churches for study, discussion, and response.

Ground: The statement can serve as a powerful stimulant for communal reflection on who we are and what we perceive to be our task and mission as Reformed Christians in the modern world.

—*Tabled*

3. That this be synod's answer to Overture 32.

—*Tabled*

IV. Include ethnic advisers at synod

A. *Material*: Overture 31, pp. 395-96

B. *Recommendation*

That synod accede to Overture 31 by including up to seven members from the various ethnic communities in the CRC to serve as advisers to synod and that the Board of Trustees be asked to implement this practice for a period of five years.

Grounds:

1. The CRC is a multiethnic church but has had minimal multiethnic representation among its synodical delegates.
2. Several of the ethnic communities of the CRC have repeatedly stated that they yearn to be at the table of polity and decision making at the synodical level.
3. Several of the boards of the CRC have expressly stated their desire to include persons of other ethnic communities.
4. The presence of ethnic advisers would be affirming for delegates to synod from the various ethnic communities.
5. Attendance and participation at synod and on synodical advisory committees will be an effective training ground for persons from various ethnic communities in our church.
6. This practice affirms a sense of CRC "ownership" by various ethnic communities.
7. Should the practice prove counterproductive to the intended aims, it can be discontinued.

—*Adopted*

V. Appointing study committees is the work of synod

A. *Material:* Overture 43, pp. 407-09

B. *Recommendation*

That synod not accede to Overture 43.

Ground: *Acts of Synod 1993* (p. 340, Section XIII) records the notification to synod of the FSC study by the SIC (now Board of Trustees). This same *Acts of Synod* also records that synod took note of this study review (pp. 559-614) without objection.

—*Defeated*

The matter of Overture 43 is recommitted to the advisory committee.

VI. Improve opening session of synod

A. *Material:* Overture 29, pp. 390-92

B. *Recommendations*

1. That synod accede to part A of Overture 29, which asks synod to amend the last part of Rule I, D, 3 (cf. Rules for Synodical Procedure, p. 65) from

In conducting the election of officers of synod, the results of the balloting (names and number of votes) shall be revealed at every step in the election procedures.

to

At each step in the election process the numbers of votes shall be read, and synod shall decide which numbers shall be included on the next ballot. After that decision has been made, the names corresponding to the numbers shall be read in alphabetical order.

Ground: The balloting procedure needs to be streamlined.

—*Adopted*

2. That synod instruct the Board of Trustees to provide an electronic means of balloting provided the cost is not prohibitive.

Ground: A stewardly use of synod's time requires this.

—Adopted

3. That this be synod's answer to parts B, C, and D of the overture.

—Adopted

VII. Index of synodical decisions

A. *Material:* Overture 41, p. 406

B. *Recommendation*

That synod accede to Overture 41 to provide an annually updated index of synodical decisions on computer disk.

Ground: Most pastors and churches have a fairly good collection of *Agenda for Synod* and *Acts of Synod* from past years for reference. The synodical studies contained therein have taken up much time and thought. If they were more readily available, pastors and churches would likely use them more. Printed indexes seem to come out only sporadically and are outdated in one year. Computer diskettes would cost less to produce than printed materials and would be easier to use and to update.

—Adopted

VIII. Biennial synods, one-week synods

A. *Materials*

1. Board of Trustees Report (*Agenda for Synod 1995*, p. 30, and Recommendation E, p. 45)
2. Overture 42, p. 406

B. *Recommendations*

1. That synod appoint a planning committee to design a one-calendar-week meeting plan for synod (i.e., Sunday through Saturday) to be considered by Synod 1996.

Grounds:

- a. An assembly of only one week's duration would make it possible for a greater number of elders to be available as nominees to attend synod.
- b. Most North American denominations are able to conduct their business in one week.
- c. To move from our current schedule to a one-week synod will require some careful planning.

—Adopted

2. That this be synod's answer to the Board of Trustees' recommendation (*Agenda for Synod 1995*, pp. 30, 45).

—Adopted

3. That synod not accede to Overture 42.

Ground: The recommendation in 1 above is an alternative to the action proposed in Overture 42.

—*Adopted*

IX. Evaluate provisional constitution

A. *Material:* Overture 46, p. 412

B. *Recommendation*

That synod not accede to Overture 46.

Grounds:

1. A competent review committee is already in place, and the matter will come back to synod in 1996 (cf. Board of Trustees Supplement, Section IV).
2. Two committees dealing with the same matter seem redundant.
3. Any person or assembly may review the provisional constitution and serve the review committee or synod with advice.

—*Adopted*

(The report of Advisory Committee 1 is continued in Article 103.)

ARTICLE 51

(The report of Advisory Committee 6 is continued from Article 31.)

Advisory Committee 6, Financial Matters, Rev. Harry Salomons reporting, presents the following:

Overture 81

A. *Material:* Overture 81, pp. 603-04

B. *Recommendations*

1. That synod instruct the Board of Trustees to provide a legal review of the process being used by churches leaving the denomination, such a review to include at least the concerns expressed by Classis Zeeland in its background material to Overture 81.

Grounds:

- a. Significant legal questions remain unanswered regarding the process being used by churches leaving the CRC.
- b. This situation is appropriately addressed by synod because the process is used denomination wide.

—*Adopted*

2. That synod instruct the Board of Trustees to review the model Articles of Incorporation so that churches may be provided with clear procedures to follow in the event of a separation from the denomination.

Ground: Specific procedures for separation would clarify the legal issues for the congregations.

—*Adopted*

3. That synod instruct the Board of Trustees to consider the implications of I Corinthians 6 and seek the Christian counsel of organizations such as Christian Conciliation Services.

Ground: The Word of God demands of us, if at all possible, that we keep matters of dispute from being heard in the nations' courtrooms.

—*Tabled*

(The report of Advisory Committee 6 is continued in Article 64.)

ARTICLE 52

Dr. Joel H. Nederhood, director of ministries for The Back to God Hour, introduces Rev. Aaron Kayayan, minister of French broadcasting, who addresses synod. Rev. Kayayan will retire from his position on June 30, 1995. The president of synod responds, wishing God's blessing on Rev. Kayayan in his retirement and on the ministry of French broadcasting.

ARTICLE 53

Dr. James A. De Jong, president of Calvin Theological Seminary, addresses synod. He introduces the men (together with their families) who were declared candidates for the ministry of the Word on Wednesday afternoon, June 14, 1995.

President Bolt congratulates the candidates and their wives and families. He addresses the candidates from II Timothy 4:1-2: "In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: Preach the Word." He challenges the candidates to preach the Word—to be faithful to God and faithful to his Word.

The first clerk, Rev. Howard D. Vanderwell, leads in a litany and announces *Psalter Hymnal* 523, "Lord, You Give the Great Commission." The second clerk, Rev. W. Robert Godfrey, leads in a prayer of thanksgiving.

ARTICLE 54

The vice president assumes the chair.

Rev. Michael De Vries of the Reception Committee introduces Rev. Richard S.E. Vissinga, fraternal delegate from the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, who addresses synod. The vice president of synod responds.

ARTICLE 55

Advisory Committee 7, Rev. Henry P. Kranenburg reporting, presents the following:

I. Interchurch Relations Committee

A. Materials

1. Interchurch Relations Committee Report, pp. 216-24, 245-46
2. Interchurch Relations Committee Supplement, pp. 596-99
3. Communication 7, p. 551
4. Communication 13, pp. 614-15

B. Recommendations

1. That Dr. Carl G. Kromminga (president), Rev. Edward A. Van Baak (vice president), Dr. John B. Hulst, and Rev. Clarence Boomsma (administrative secretary) be given the privilege of the floor when matters pertaining to the IRC are discussed.

—Granted

2. That synod approve the admission of the Reformed Church of the United States into NAPARC membership.

Grounds:

- a. The Reformed Church (U.S.) earnestly desires to become a member denomination of NAPARC.
- b. The denomination and its application meet the formal requirements of the NAPARC constitution.

—Adopted

3. That synod endorse the recommended constitutional change, mandated by the Reformed Ecumenical Council (REC) Athens Assembly of 1992, in Article IV.2 re the procedure for admitting members into the council, as follows:

Admission to membership shall be by decision of the Interim Committee subject to ratification of the Assembly by a two-thirds majority of the ballots cast. A new member shall not vote on the ratification of its own membership. Application for membership shall be made to the Council through the office of the General Secretary six months before a Council meeting. Member churches shall be informed of any application at least three months before a Council meeting.

Grounds:

- a. This places the primary decision on the evaluation of the Interim Committee, where it in practice actually is made today.
- b. The applying churches are received as members earlier than under the former procedure. They can begin to function as full members immediately, although ratification will not take place until the following assembly.

—Adopted

4. That synod not accede at this time to the recommended constitution change, mandated by the REC Athens Assembly of 1992, to include the proposed provision for suspension of membership in Article IV.3.

Ground: The Interim Committee of the REC (which formulated this change) has recently decided to recommend to the REC Assembly in 1996 that no action be taken on this matter.

—*Adopted*

5. That synod approve a financial grant to the REC Assembly 1996 for \$7,500 to offset the costs of the 1996 assembly.

Grounds:

- a. The CRCNA will not incur major overseas travel costs for its delegation as the Assembly will convene in Grand Rapids.
- b. The CRCNA has always made contributions to help meet the expenses of smaller churches attending the Assembly.

—*Adopted*

6. That synod authorize the IRC to select nonvoting delegates from among the nominees and other qualified persons who are available to serve.

—*Adopted*

7. That synod authorize the IRC to appoint two advisers who are theological professors or other persons with special qualifications to give advice to the Assembly, as specified by the REC constitution.

—*Adopted*

8. That synod extend the suspension of CRCNA ecclesiastical relations with the RCSA until 1997.

Grounds:

- a. The opportunity is available to continue the dialogue with the RCSA regarding the issues that resulted in the suspension of ecclesiastical relations. The principles of ecumenicity require that every effort be made to restore full fellowship between our two churches. This is especially true in view of our long history of ecclesiastical fellowship.
- b. The extension to Synod 1997 will give the IRC time to continue the exchange of correspondence and possibly to arrange for an IRC delegation to meet with the deputies of the RCSA.
- c. By June 1997 the IRC will have been informed of the position of the RCSA on the issues that occasioned the suspension, since the next meeting of the RCSA triennial synod is in January 1997.

—*Adopted*

II. Condemn use of statue exercise at listening conferences

A. *Material:* Overture 78, pp. 527-28

B. *Recommendation*

That synod not accede to Overture 78.

Grounds:

1. The council of Champlain Valley CRC has not attempted to resolve this matter with the leaders of the Listening Conferences—Phase 1.
2. The assertions of Overture 78 as to what the statue exercise taught differ greatly from the perception of other participants and the leaders of the Listening Conferences.
3. Delegates to Synod 1993 participated in the statue exercise and gave an 80 percent approval rating when asked if they found this exercise helpful.

—Adopted

III. Replace former decisions of synod regarding homosexuality

A. *Material:* Overture 79, pp. 528-29

B. *Recommendation*

That synod not accede to Overture 79.

Grounds:

1. In seeking to revise previous synodical decisions, the council of Champlain Valley CRC gives no grounds, new or compelling, for consideration of these previous decisions, as required by Article 31 of the Church Order.
2. The actions of synod in 1973 and 1994 have already addressed the concerns raised in Overture 79.

—Adopted

IV. Transfer Morning Star CRC to Classis Greater Los Angeles

A. *Material:* Overture 80, p. 529

B. *Recommendation*

That synod accede to Overture 80.

Ground: This is the request of the congregation, which has relocated within the boundaries of Classis Greater Los Angeles.

—Adopted

V. OPC letter of affirmation and apology

A. *Material:* Communication 13, pp. 614-15

B. *Background*

The letter from the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, Office of the General Assembly, dated June 7, 1995, was referred to the Interchurch Relations Committee. An immediate synodical response, however, is appropriate.

C. *Recommendation*

That synod take note of the unanimous decision of the OPC General assembly to offer the apology expressed in its communication of June 7, 1995, and graciously receive its apology.

—Adopted

(The report of Advisory Committee 7 is continued in Article 59)

ARTICLE 56

Rev. Michael De Vries of the Reception Committee introduces Rev. Charles N. Jansz, fraternal delegate of the Dutch Reformed Church of Sri Lanka, who addresses synod. The vice president of synod responds.

ARTICLE 57

The afternoon session is adjourned; Elder Marvin H. De Vries leads in closing prayer.

FRIDAY EVENING, June 16, 1995

Ninth Session

ARTICLE 58

Rev. John Hofman, Jr., reads from Revelation 5:11-14. He announces *Psalter Hymnal* 253, "Praise to the Lord, the Almighty," and leads in opening prayer.

Rev. Curtis A. Walters (Classis Grandville) has replaced Rev. Carl Bergman, and Elder Kenneth G. Laninga (Classis Holland) has replaced Elder Kenneth R. Kuipers. The alternates rise to express agreement with the forms of unity.

Rev. Michael De Vries of the Reception Committee introduces and welcomes Dr. Darrell Anderson, vice president of ministry relations for the National Association of Evangelicals, who addresses synod. The vice president of synod responds.

The president reassumes the chair.

ARTICLE 59

(The report of Advisory Committee 7 is continued from Article 55.)

Advisory Committee 7, Interdenominational Matters, Rev. Henry P. Kranenburg reporting, presents the following:

Interchurch Relations Committee

A. *Material*: Interchurch Relations Committee Report, pp. 225-44

B. *Background*

In years prior to Synod 1983, our synod, through its fraternal delegates and Interchurch Relations Committee, had expressed our church's grave concern to the GKN not only concerning certain directions in its theological development but also specifically concerning the admission to table and pulpit of church members who live in homosexual relationships.

For this reason Synod 1981 instructed the IRC to advise Synod 1983 whether current provisions for table and pulpit fellowship between the CRC and GKN should be continued as elements in ecclesiastical fellowship between our two churches (*Acts of Synod 1981*, p. 66). In response to the recommendations of the

IRC, Synod 1981 redefined the terms of ecclesiastical fellowship with the GKN by declaring

that the elements referring to pulpit and table fellowship no longer apply, except at the discretion of the local consistories, based on the Holy Scriptures, the confessions, and decisions of synod (such as those of 1973 concerning the issue of homosexuality).

Grounds:

- a. The recent decisions of the synods of the GKN allow ministers and members to engage in a lifestyle that in our judgment is contrary to the Scriptures and in conflict with the decisions of our Synod of 1973; nor have our concerns and protests regarding these decisions moved the synod of the GKN to modify its position.
- b. The laxity within the GKN in dealing with ministers and other leaders who openly promote views conflicting with the Reformed confessions.

(*Acts of Synod 1983*, p. 679)

Note: Full ecclesiastical fellowship with another church, where possible and desirable, includes six provisions:

1. Exchange of fraternal delegates at major assemblies.
2. Occasional pulpit fellowship.
3. Intercommunion (i.e., fellowship at the table of the Lord).
4. Joint action in areas of common responsibility.
5. Communication on major issues of joint concern.
6. The exercise of mutual concern and admonition with a view to promoting the fundamentals of Christian unity.

(*Agenda for Synod 1995*, p. 225)

This restriction is significant. As Classis Orange City wrote in its 1983 overture and Synod 1983 essentially adopted in the above restrictions, the advisory committee believes that

The heart of ecclesiastical fellowship is rooted in areas 2 and 3—occasional pulpit fellowship and fellowship at the table of the Lord. In the pulpit and at the table we become bound together in the *presence* and the *Spirit* of the Lord.

(*Acts of Synod 1983*, p. 480)

It is also important to note not only that Synod 1983 did not accede to an overture asking that synod terminate ecclesiastical fellowship with the GKN but also why it did so. The question then becomes whether there are new and compelling grounds that warrant termination in 1995. The advisory committee notes that there are no such grounds presented that Synod 1983 did not already address in its discussion and respond to in its decision to restrict fellowship.

Synod 1992 received an overture asking synod to terminate the ecclesiastical relationship restricted by Synod 1983 between the Christian Reformed Church and GKN (*Acts of Synod 1992*, pp. 566-67). Synod referred the overture to the Interchurch Relations Committee for its consideration and instructed the IRC to recommend in its report to Synod 1993 whether or not to terminate the CRC's relationship with the GKN (*Acts of Synod 1992*, p. 617).

As indicated in the report on GKN/CRC relations in the *Agenda for Synod 1995* (pp. 225-44), the IRC saw its task as involving primarily two aspects:

1. An evaluation of the GKN positions on the pertinent issues. This required two stages:
 - a. Determining as accurately as possible what the GKN positions on the issues of concern are.

- b. Forming a judgment of their significance for CRC /GKN ecclesiastical relations.
2. An evaluation of any IRC recommendation(s) in the light of the principles of CRC ecumenical responsibility (*Agenda for Synod 1995*, p. 227).

As the IRC was not ready to present its recommendation in 1993, synod extended its mandate until 1995 (*Acts of Synod 1993*, pp. 411-13).

C. *Observations*

A careful reading of the report is essential to understanding what leads to the recommendations of the IRC. The history of ecclesiastical relations with the GKN over the last number of years has involved numerous reports, critiques, responses, sequels, discussions, and clarifications. The present advisory committee affirms, as synod did in 1983 (*Acts of Synod 1983*, p. 679, D, 1, c.), that the past decade has not been unfruitful: meaningful and mutually helpful contacts between our two churches have taken place and have been invited by the GKN.

Based on the investigations of the IRC and an examination of its report, the advisory committee recommends that synod adopt the following recommendations.

D. *Recommendations*

1. That synod not terminate its ecclesiastical fellowship with the GKN as defined by the Ecumenical Charter with the restrictions by Synod 1983 on table and pulpit fellowship.

Grounds:

- a. The GKN confess the Bible to be the authoritative, infallible Word of God in conformity with the Reformed confessions, even though their affirmations about the nature, extent, and character of the Scriptures as the Word of God seem questionable and some interpretations appear unsatisfactory to the CRC.
- b. The principles of ecumenicity demand that we relate faithfully to the whole church of Jesus Christ in whatever ways are prudent; it follows that the CRC should certainly not surrender its opportunities for interchurch fellowship with the GKN when such exchange is readily available.
- c. The CRC has an ongoing ecumenical responsibility to the GKN particularly as they struggle to be a Reformed church in a radically secular European environment. This responsibility may not be abandoned as long as the CRC has opportunity to fulfill its ecumenical task with the GKN.
- d. The GKN consistently express their desire to remain in ecclesiastical fellowship with the CRC and would be distressed by our termination of fellowship. They continue to express appreciation for the way in which the CRC seeks to exercise its ecclesiastical fellowship and responsibility.
- e. The GKN tolerance of homosexual practice is in the judgment of the CRC contrary to the Scriptures and in conflict with the decisions of our Synod of 1973, and therefore the restrictions on table and pulpit fellowship should be maintained.

2. That synod mandate the Interchurch Relations Committee to discuss with the official representative of the GKN the issues and trends in the life and practice of the GKN that are of deep concern to the CRC and trouble our ecclesiastical relations.

Grounds:

- a. The GKN and the CRC have common historical roots of faith and practice which are a basis for ecclesiastical discussion. As long as this basis functions in a viable manner in our common commitments to the Reformed faith, it should continue to be acknowledged, encouraged, and used to maintain serious dialogue and substantive exchange.
 - b. The issues between our churches are of such gravity as to require ongoing discussion to seek mutual understanding for a common confession.
 - c. The GKN have always been open to hearing and considering our concerns, even when disagreeing with our criticism.
 - d. The Ecumenical Charter requires that we seek our unity in truth and strive to overcome major differences in the perception of biblical truth not only by sharing our perceptions with others but also by being open to theirs. Through such ecumenical dialogue we must trust God to teach us all and thereby to unite us through a deeper common grasp of the truth (cf. *Agenda for Synod 1987*, p. 171; *Acts of Synod 1987*, p. 588).
3. That synod instruct the IRC to report regularly to synod on its dialogue with the GKN.
 4. That synod declare this to be its answer to Overture 79, *Acts of Synod 1992*, pp. 566-67.

According to the Rules for Synodical Procedure, the minority report is read as information by Rev. Roger Sparks.

Interchurch Relations Committee

A. *Material:* Interchurch Relations Committee Report, pp. 225-44

B. *Recommendation*

That Synod 1995 terminate its ecclesiastical fellowship with the GKN.

Grounds:

1. Although the GKN continue to confess that the Bible is the authoritative, infallible Word of God, "... several historical-critical hypotheses and conclusions have found general acceptance among GKN biblical scholars and theologians that would generally be thought among us to involve Scripture criticism and would undoubtedly be judged incompatible with the CRC report on 'The Nature and Extent of Biblical Authority'" (IRC Report, *Agenda for Synod 1995*, p. 232).
2. "The GKN tolerance of homosexual practice is in the judgment of the CRC contrary to the Scriptures and in conflict with the decisions of our Synod of 1973 . . ." (IRC Report, V, A, 5, *Agenda for Synod 1995*, p. 243). This tolerance of homosexual practice means that practicing homosexuals are permitted to preach the Word and participate in the sacraments, with no church discipline.

3. Continued ecclesiastical fellowship with the GKN may jeopardize our ecclesiastical fellowship with other Reformed and Presbyterian denominations.
4. Dialogue with the GKN so far has proven to be unfruitful with respect to the issues raised in Grounds 1 and 2.
5. Termination of ecclesiastical fellowship with the GKN is consistent with the Ecumenical Charter, which mandates the IRC to assure that continued fellowship with other denominations is warranted, based not only on their formal standards but also on their actual practice (see Ecumenical Charter, III, A, 2).

Note: The Interchurch Relations Committee will still be able to have contact with the GKN through the Reformed Ecumenical Council. The IRC may monitor developments in the GKN and inform future synods if positive changes warrant renewed ecclesiastical fellowship.

Synod returns to its consideration of the recommendations of the advisory-committee majority report.

Recommendation 1 of the majority report is tabled to move to the single recommendation of the minority report.

Dr. James A. De Jong, president of Calvin Theological Seminary, leads the assembly in prayer before the vote is taken.

The recommendation of the minority report is

—*Defeated*

(The report of Advisory Committee 7 is continued in Article 63.)

ARTICLE 60

The evening session is adjourned; Rev. Allan C. Groen leads in closing prayer.

SATURDAY MORNING, June 17, 1995

Tenth Session

ARTICLE 61

Elder Charles H. Korringa leads the assembly in opening prayer and reads from II Timothy 1:8-12. He announces *Psalter Hymnal* 495, "I Know Not Why God's Wondrous Grace."

The roll call indicates that Rev. Robert J. Price (Classis Chicago South); Rev. German Moreno (Classis Florida); Rev. Donald P. Wisse (Classis Hudson); Rev. John Joldersma (Classis Minnesota North); Rev. Bert De Jong, Rev. Lambert J. Sikkema, Elder Ray H. Bouma (Classis Northern Illinois); and Elder Neal Afman (Classis Rocky Mountain) are absent. Rev. Curtis A. Walters (Classis Grandville) is present for Rev. Carl W. Bergman.

The minutes of the sessions of June 16, 1995, are read and approved.

It is moved that synod suspend the rules and appoint a committee to review the minutes each day.

—*Adopted*

ARTICLE 62

The general secretary reports the results of the ballot.

ARTICLE 63

(The report of Advisory Committee 7 is continued from Article 59)

Advisory Committee 7, Interdenominational Matters, Rev. Henry P. Kranenburg reporting, presents the following:

I. Interchurch Relations Committee

A. *Material*: Interchurch Relations Committee Report, pp. 225-44

B. *Recommendations*

1. That synod not terminate its ecclesiastical fellowship with the GKN as defined by the Ecumenical Charter with the restrictions by Synod 1983 on table and pulpit fellowship.

Grounds:

- a. The GKN confess the Bible to be the authoritative, infallible Word of God in conformity with the Reformed confessions, even though their affirmations about the nature, extent, and character of the Scriptures as the Word of God seem questionable and some interpretations appear unsatisfactory to the CRC.
- b. The principles of ecumenicity demand that we relate faithfully to the whole church of Jesus Christ in whatever ways are prudent; it follows that the CRC should certainly not surrender its opportunities for interchurch fellowship with the GKN when such exchange is readily available.
- c. The CRC has an ongoing ecumenical responsibility to the GKN particularly as they struggle to be a Reformed denomination in a radically secular European environment. This responsibility may not be abandoned as long as the CRC has opportunity to fulfill its ecumenical task with the GKN.
- d. The GKN consistently express their desire to remain in ecclesiastical fellowship with the CRC and would be distressed by our termination of fellowship. They continue to express appreciation for the way in which the CRC seeks to exercise its ecclesiastical fellowship and responsibility.
- e. The GKN tolerance of homosexual practice is in the judgment of the CRC contrary to the Scriptures and in conflict with the decisions of our Synod of 1973, and therefore the restrictions on table and pulpit fellowship should be maintained.

—Adopted

2. That synod mandate the Interchurch Relations Committee to discuss with the official representative of the GKN the issues and trends in the life and practice of the GKN that are of deep concern to the CRC and trouble our ecclesiastical relations.

Grounds:

- a. The GKN and the CRC have common historical roots of faith and practice which are a basis for ecclesiastical discussion. As long as this basis

functions in a viable manner in our common commitments to the Reformed faith, it should continue to be acknowledged, encouraged, and used to maintain serious dialogue and substantive exchange.

- b. The issues between our churches are of such gravity as to require ongoing discussion to seek mutual understanding for a common confession.
- c. The GKN have always been open to hearing and considering our concerns, even when disagreeing with our criticism.
- d. The Ecumenical Charter requires that we seek our unity in truth and strive to overcome major differences in the perception of biblical truth not only by sharing our perceptions with others but also by being open to theirs. Through such ecumenical dialogue we must trust God to teach us all and thereby to unite us through a deeper common grasp of the truth (cf. *Agenda for Synod 1987*, p. 171; *Acts of Synod 1987*, p. 588).

—Adopted

- 3. That synod instruct the IRC to report regularly to synod on its dialogue with the GKN.

—Adopted

- 4. That synod declare this to be its answer to Overture 79, *Acts of Synod 1992*, pp. 566-67.

—Adopted

II. Retirement of Rev. C. Boomsma

Recommendation:

That synod note the September 1995 retirement of Rev. Clarence Boomsma as administrative secretary of the IRC and acknowledge with thanks the years of service Rev. Boomsma has given this committee and, through it, the CRC.

—Adopted

The president of synod thanks Rev. Boomsma for his many years of service and wishes him God's continued blessing.

III. Request to form a Korean-speaking classis in California

A. *Material:* Overture 47, pp. 412-16

B. *Background*

Classes California South and Greater Los Angeles and their Korean Classis Study Committee spent several years studying the matter of creating a separate Korean-speaking classis. Based on this study, the study committee recommended to both classes that they ask synod to create a Korean-speaking classis. Classis California South did not adopt the recommendation; Classis Greater Los Angeles adopted the recommendation unanimously and sent it to synod in the form of Overture 47.

C. *Observations*

Discussions with Korean delegates and delegates of the two classes involved indicate that there is not full agreement among Korean-speaking churches on the merits of this overture.

The concerns that led these two classes to study this matter are real and experienced elsewhere in the denomination by churches in which English is not the primary language. The formation of Classis Red Mesa was synod's response to similar concerns among Native American congregations.

However, in the process of forming Classis Red Mesa, a number of issues pertaining to such matters as English language use, leadership, leadership training, integration, and ministry shares were addressed which have not been fully addressed in Overture 47. These matters should be considered before the viability of this recommendation and the possibility of its success can be evaluated.

In light of the above observations, the advisory committee expresses strong encouragement to Classes California South and Greater Los Angeles to form a task force that includes the participation of Home Missions to study these issues in greater detail and prepare a more in-depth report for synod's consideration in the future. The committee anticipates that such a report from these two classes will serve the denomination by giving suggestions for integrating the many other churches which do not have English as a primary language into the life and ministry of the broader CRC.

D. Recommendation

That synod not accede to Overture 47.

Grounds:

1. The two classes involved in the study did not reach agreement on the recommendations of their study committee as to the need for a Korean-speaking classis.
2. Overture 47 does not provide a clear strategy for fully integrating Korean-speaking churches into the life and ministry of the broader CRC.
 - a. It lacks a clear strategy regarding what will happen at the end of the term to incorporate the individual churches into other classes.
 - b. It lacks a clear strategy regarding what will happen during the life of the classis to build relationships with the broader church. For example, questions and answers 7 and 11 in the Appendix (*Acts of Synod 1995*, pp. 414-16) move in a helpful direction but are very vague.

—*Tabled*

(The report of Advisory Committee 7 is continued in Article 110.)

ARTICLE 64

(The report of Advisory Committee 6 is continued from Article 51.)

Advisory Committee 6, Financial Matters, Rev. Harry Salomons reporting, presents the following:

Overture 81 (recommitted)

A. Material: Overture 81

B. Recommendations

3. That synod remind the Board of Trustees in its legal review to consider the implications of I Corinthians 6 with a view to encouraging the churches to

seek the help and counsel of Christian mediation services (such as Christian Conciliation Services) and with a view to encouraging the churches to seek fair and just settlements in property disputes in accordance with the principles set forth in Article 153 of the *Acts of Synod 1970* and Article VII of the Articles of Association, found on page 402 of the *Acts of Synod 1980*.

Ground: The Word of God demands of us that, if at all possible, we keep matters of dispute from being heard in the nations' courtrooms.

—*Adopted*

ARTICLE 65

(The report of Advisory Committee 3 is continued from Article 36.)

Advisory Committee 3, Rev. Morris N. Greidanus reporting, presents the following:

I. Historical Committee

A. *Material:* Historical Committee Report, pp. 214-15

B. *Recommendation*

That synod acknowledge with thanks and appreciation the faithful work of this committee and the archives staff, noting particularly the emeritation of Dr. Herbert J. Brinks and his recently published book.

—*Adopted*

II. Youth-Ministry Committee

A. *Material:* Youth-Ministry Report, pp. 209, 211-12

B. *Recommendation*

That synod acknowledge Mrs. Joanne Ilbrink, former executive director of Calvinettes, for her nineteen years of outstanding service ministering to girls. Mrs. Ilbrink retired in February 1995.

—*Adopted*

(The report of Advisory Committee 3 is continued in Article 90.)

ARTICLE 66

Advisory Committee 9, Church Order II, Rev. John Zantingh, chairman, reporting, presents the following:

I. Appoint a study committee to address Church Order issues

A. *Material:* Overture 4, pp. 325-26

B. *Analysis*

Though some Church Order articles seem to be more principal than others, all articles have the same authority. No Church Order article is more enforceable or weighty than any other. Synod 1991 recognized that, though all Church Order articles are based on principle, the emphasis of some seems to be more focused on a principle and others seem to be more weighted in the area of specific

practices. In response to a study committee, Synod 1991 revised Section IV of the Church Order, retaining articles that seemed to be more "principal" in the actual Church Order and placing articles that seemed to deal with various "practices" in corresponding supplements. Any council or classis can overture synod to do the same with any Church Order article it deems in need of a change.

This overture also asks a general question about conscience. However, it does not present a concrete case, nor does it establish a compelling need for such a study.

C. Recommendation

That Synod not accede to Overture 4.

Ground: The need for such a study committee has not been sufficiently established.

—Adopted

II. Revise Church Order Articles 36-a and 40-c

A. Material: Overture 5, pp. 325-26

B. Background

This overture asks synod to "standardize the election of officers for church councils, consistories, and classes to be consistent with that for the election of officers for synod so that all officers are chosen by the delegates to these bodies from their own number, by ballot, without restriction." Article 36-a already allows that ("a minister shall ordinarily preside . . ."). Article 40-c also allows that ("the ministers shall preside in rotation, or a president may be elected from among the delegates . . .").

C. Recommendation

That synod not accede to this overture.

Grounds:

1. The action called for is already possible under the current reading of the Church Order.
2. Sufficient need to warrant standardization of election practices has not been satisfactorily demonstrated.

—Adopted

III. Appeal from a decision of Classis Chatham

A. Material: Appeal 1, p. 531

B. Background

The Maranatha CRC council appeals from a January 31, 1995, decision of classis "to table the motion to deal with a communication from Good News CRC . . ."

C. Recommendation

That synod not sustain the appeal.

Ground: A classis has the right to table a motion.

—*Adopted*

(The report of Advisory Committee 9 is continued in Article 70.)

ARTICLE 67

The Saturday-morning session is adjourned; Elder Donald Zwier leads in closing prayer.

MONDAY MORNING, June 19, 1995

Eleventh Session

ARTICLE 68

Elder George N. Monsma, Jr., reads from Philippians 2:1-11. He announces *Psalter Hymnal* 424, "Spirit of the Living God," and leads in opening prayer.

The roll call indicates that Rev. Donald Wisse (Classis Hudson) is present for the first time and that Elder Ted S. Rozeboom (Classis Lake Erie) is replacing Elder Paul R. Bossenbroek. They rise to express agreement with the forms of unity. Rev. Robert J. Price (Classis Chicago South), Rev. German Moreno (Classis Florida), Rev. John Joldersma (Classis Minnesota North), Rev. Bert De Jong, Rev. Lambert J. Sikkema, Elder Ray H. Bouma (Classis Northern Illinois), and Elder Neal Afman (Classis Rocky Mountain) have returned to synod.

The general secretary introduces and welcomes Rev. Sam Buti and Rev. James Buys, fraternal delegates from the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa.

ARTICLE 69

(The report of Advisory Committee 4 is continued from Article 30.)

Advisory Committee 4, Publications, Rev. William T. Koopmans reporting, presents the following:

Clarification of public profession of faith for covenant children

A. *Materials*

1. Clarification of Public Profession of Faith for Covenant Children Report A, pp. 265-74
2. Clarification of Public Profession of Faith for Covenant Children Report B, pp. 275-303
3. Overture 17, pp. 371-73
4. Overture 18, pp. 373-75
5. Overture 19, pp. 375-76
6. Overture 84, pp. 605-06
7. Communication 12, p. 613

B. Background

The issue of children participating in the Lord's Supper has been under study in the Christian Reformed Church for over a decade. In 1984 Classis Rocky Mountain asked synod to appoint a study committee on this subject. The committee reported in 1986. The majority report encouraged the participation of covenant children in the Lord's Supper after they have made public profession of their faith. The minority report held that the covenant status is the only requirement for admission to the Lord's table and that children of believing parents should be present at the table. Synod did not accept either report but asked for additional study.

The discussion focused on the prerequisites for admission to the Lord's table: personal faith or covenant status.

In 1988 the study committee came to synod with a majority report arguing that covenant children should be welcome at the table on the basis of their covenant status and their "desire to remember and proclaim the Lord's death until he comes." The committee did not envision a public profession of faith as part of the requirement. A minority report retained the requirement of a more formal public profession of faith.

3. [Synod 1988 declared that]:
 - a. The church is warranted in admitting to the Lord's Supper covenant children who give evidence of faith and are able to discern the body and remember and proclaim the death of Jesus in celebrating the Lord's Supper.
.....
 - b. The church is to assure itself of such faith through public profession of faith on the part of covenant children.
.....
 - c. Covenant children should be encouraged to make profession of faith as soon as they exhibit faith and are able to discern the body and remember and proclaim the death of Jesus in celebrating the Lord's Supper.
.....
 - d. The profession of faith of covenant children required for admission to the Lord's Supper is not necessarily an acceptance of adult responsibilities within a congregation; therefore:
 - 1) the church shall continue to instruct these children in the Word and in the Reformed confessions;
 - 2) adult responsibilities of membership are to be granted by the church council and assumed by professing individuals at age eighteen or as granted by the Articles of Incorporation of the congregation.
4. That synod request the CRC Worship Committee to review the forms for public profession of faith in the light of these declarations concerning the public profession of covenant children.

(*Acts of Synod 1988*, pp. 558-60)

Synod 1991 appointed a committee "to clarify the requirement of public profession of faith for admission to the Lord's Supper on the part of younger covenant children" (*Acts of Synod 1991*, p. 785). The two grounds were that (1) "the implementation of the 1988 decision . . . has confronted the churches with numerous practical difficulties" and (2) "the clarification of the requirement for public profession of faith by younger members raises significant theological issues concerning the basis of participation in the Lord's Supper (the covenant or personal profession, for instance), which neither this committee nor synod is able to address properly at this time" (*Acts of Synod 1991*, p. 785).

In its 1993 report the clarification committee could not reach a consensus with regard to Ground 2 (above) and so concerned itself only with the practical

difficulties. Synod 1993 sent the report back to the committee. The study committee now presents two reports to Synod 1995. Report A argues for an expression of personal faith as a prerequisite for participation in the Lord's Supper, and Report B argues for covenant status as the prerequisite for participation.

C. *The advisory committee's deliberations*

The advisory committee believes it will best serve synod and the denomination by presenting a unified recommendation. Though some committee members agreed with Report A and some with Report B and others wished to reject both A and B, in time a consensus position was built that brings together elements which were polarized by the two reports. Though "the Bible makes clear that participation in the Lord's Supper is a result of status in the covenant (Matt. 26:28; Luke 22:20; cf. Exodus 12; 13; 24:4-11; I Cor. 10:1-4; Eph. 2:11-13)," the majority was also convinced that "an act of faith on the part of those participating" is also required (I Cor. 11:23-29; John 6:35; Luke 22:19) (*Acts of Synod 1988*, p. 558). The consensus is built on the following key factors:

1. Most of the committee members did not find Report B's interpretation of I Corinthians 11 compelling enough to eliminate the need for an individual response of faith as a prerequisite to communion.
2. The committee judged that the recommendations of Report B diverged from the decisions of Synod 1988 instead of clarifying them.
3. Those within the advisory committee who are most appreciative of the B position can live with the A position. Some churches already have received professions of faith of rather young children, in effect making the practical differences between the two positions smaller than the underlying theological differences.
4. Some of the opposition to A stemmed from a desire to include a commitment to the creeds and confessions as part of the basis for profession of faith. The advisory committee strengthened Step 3 of the four-step process outlined in Report A by adding instruction in the basic meaning of the Ten Commandments and the Lord's Prayer along with the Apostles' Creed. Thus, the core of the Heidelberg Catechism would be used for preparation in profession of faith as has been the custom in most of our churches. If young children are allowed to profess a simple faith in Jesus as their Savior, assent to the creeds and confessions needs to be expressed later.
5. Some of the opposition to Report A stemmed from the proposed three categories of membership. The advisory committee is recommending only two categories of membership.

D. *Recommendations*

1. That Rev. Dean Deppe and Dr. Robert C. De Vries (Report A) and Dr. Wayne A. Brouwer (Report B) be given the privilege of the floor when this report is being discussed.
2. That churches be encouraged to implement the decision of Synod 1988 (Art. 72, C, 3, a, b, c and Art. 76, B, 3, d) by use of the four-step procedure outlined in Report A and reproduced here with a modification in Step 3:

—*Granted*

Step 1: The child expresses interest in participating in the Lord's Supper to his/her parent(s) or perhaps to a church-school teacher or another faith mentor within the church.

Step 2: The parent(s) discusses with the child the meaning of the sacrament and assesses the motivation of the child for participating. Convinced that this inquiry arises from a genuine stirring of the Spirit in the heart of the child, the parent(s) contacts an elder and/or pastor.

Step 3: The elder and/or pastor meets with the child and parent(s) to hear the testimony of the child with respect to his/her faith and desire to participate in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. It is recommended that the child then participate in a short process of preparation for profession of faith taught by a pastor, elder, church-school teacher, or potential faith mentor. This training will focus on the nature and meaning of the sacrament and on a basic explication of the Apostles' Creed, Ten Commandments, and the Lord's Prayer. It will be carried out at the cognitive level appropriate to the child. When satisfied with the faith commitment of the child, the elder and/or pastor will recommend to the council that this child be admitted to the table of the Lord. If the elder or pastor is unable to make such a recommendation, he will provide clear counsel and advice to the child and parent(s) on how to address the area(s) of concern. It may also be helpful to assign an adult faith mentor to nurture a child toward full adult responsibilities in the church after he/she is recommended for profession.

Step 4: The child makes a public profession of faith in a simple and appropriate manner during a regular worship service. Since baptism is commemorated during a worship service, the appropriation of the baptismal promises should also be celebrated during a public worship service. Furthermore, a regular worship setting offers an opportunity for the people of God to celebrate a child's first communion and to make public promises of support.

3. That the modified trial form of 1989 printed below be accepted as a form for public profession of faith by children.

Brothers and sisters in the Lord:

Today we are happy to celebrate God's grace in the lives of (names). When they were baptized, they were welcomed into the covenant family of God. Now they want to join that family at the Lord's table. So today they will respond in faith to God's promises in baptism, tell us of their faith in the Lord Jesus, and commit themselves to grow in that faith.

The Questions

- Q Whom do you trust as the Savior from your sin and the Lord of your life?
A. I believe in Jesus Christ as my Savior and Lord.
Q Do you know that you belong to the family of God through your baptism?
A. I do.

(Alternate Questions)

- Q Do you believe in Jesus as your Savior and Lord?
A. Yes, I believe that God sent him to die for all my sin and that he lives as the Lord of my life.
Q What does your baptism mean to you?
A. That I am a member of God's family.

Q Will you continue to learn more about God and his Word, and will you continue to serve him with us in your life and worship?

A. I will.

Q Will you allow us, your church family, to encourage you in your faith and hold you responsible to your commitment to Jesus and his church?

A. I will.

Q Congregation of Jesus Christ, will you welcome (names) the table of the Lord and continue to support him/her/them with your prayers and help him/her/them grow by the example of your discipleship?

A. I/we will, God helping me/us.

Q Do you desire to grow in your faith in God and service to him?

A. Yes, by learning more about God's Word, worshiping God with his people, and serving God with my life.

Q If you begin to weaken in faith and commitment, will you allow us as your church family to call you back to a strong relationship with Jesus and his church?

A. Yes, I will always need your help and prayers.

The questions may also be stated in such a way that the child gives a memorized answer or gives the answer in his/her own words.

Examples:

I love Jesus, who has paid for my sins on the cross.

I want Jesus to lead me and guide me.

I know that I belong to God's family through baptism.

I want to learn more about God and his Word and serve God with my life and worship.

Welcome

(names), because you have responded to your baptism by telling us of your personal faith in Jesus Christ, we now welcome you to join the family of God at the table of the Lord. Strengthened by this heavenly food and drink, we will travel together on the journey of faith that brings us to the promised land of God's kingdom.

Prayer

Our covenant God, we thank you for leading (names), your children, to the faith they expressed today. May the fellowship of the Lord's table strengthen them in faith and service to you. Help them to continue to learn more about you through your Word and to grow in faith and love with all your people. Bring us all, one day, to that great wedding feast, where, clothed in the white robes of Christ's righteousness, we will eat and drink with him in the heavenly kingdom forever. Amen.

Hymn

4. That each congregation devise an appropriate means for securing a commitment to the creeds of the Christian Reformed Church and to the responsibilities of adult membership in the local congregation from confessing members who, having attained the age of 18, have not yet made such a commitment.
5. That membership in the Christian Reformed Church be counted in two categories:
 - a. Baptized members—persons who have been baptized but not admitted to the Lord's Supper.

- b. Confessing members—persons who have been admitted to the Lord's Supper on the basis of a personal expression of their faith ("profession of faith"). Confessing members who have reached the age of 18 and who have made a commitment to the creeds of the Christian Reformed Church and the responsibilities of adult membership in the church shall be accorded the full rights and privileges of such membership.
6. That Church Order Article 59-a be divided into two parts to reflect these membership categories:

Article 59-a

Members by baptism shall be admitted to the Lord's Supper upon a public profession of their faith in Christ with the use of the prescribed form(s). Their membership shall be designated as "confessing member." The names of those who are to be admitted to the Lord's Supper shall be announced to the congregation for approval at least one Sunday before the public profession of faith.

Article 59-b

Confessing members who have reached the age of 18 and who have made a commitment to the creeds of the Christian Reformed Church and the responsibilities of adult membership in the church shall be accorded the full rights and privileges of such membership.

(Note: The current 59-b and 59-c would become 59-c and 59-d.)

7. That when a church council transfers memberships, it would note for the receiving church whether the confessing members have assented to the creeds and confessions and accepted the responsibilities of adult membership. (This should become Church Order Supplement, Art. 66-a.) The forms for transfer of membership may have to be modified to facilitate this.

Grounds for Recommendations 2-7:

- a. These actions will "clarify the requirement of public profession of faith for admission to the Lord's Supper on the part of younger covenant children" in a manner consistent with the decisions of Synod 1988.
- b. These actions serve the churches by giving some flexibility within a common structure.
8. That CRC Publications be encouraged to produce for the churches study materials containing the history, decisions, sample forms produced by the Worship Committee, and any other materials for children and adults which may provide congregations with guidance for implementing these decisions.
9. That the work of the study committee be declared completed and the committee be discharged with thanks for its services.
10. That synod declare this to be its answer to Overtures 17, 18, 19, and 84 and Communication 12.

The advisory committee recommendations are in agreement with Report A of the study committee.

According to the Rules for Synodical Procedure, the recommendations of Report B are read as information by Dr. Wayne Brouwer.

2. That synod recognize that there are two clearly distinct perspectives on the grounds for participating in the Lord's Supper—individual faith and communal faith—and that both perspectives have support in the tradition, theology, and practice of the church of Jesus Christ.
3. That synod allow room within our denomination for the differing practices which each perspective requires.

Grounds:

- a. There is probably no argument that is persuasive enough to cause advocates on either side to change their perspective.
 - b. This avoids the necessity of having to say that one perspective is right and the other wrong.
 - c. If a decision is made for one of the perspectives, a certain segment of the church will be alienated.
4. That the children of covenant families would follow the policy regarding participation in the Lord's Supper that is in effect in the local congregation.
 5. That our categories of membership be two: "baptized" members to describe our total church membership count and "corporate" members to describe those who are baptized, have reached the age of majority, have publicly professed their faith in Christ, and have committed themselves to the confessions, practices, and ministries of the church. Each local congregation would be free to decide how it wants to track the children who do or do not participate in the Lord's Supper.
 6. That when a church council transfers memberships, it would note for the receiving church whether the children involved have been participating in communion or not so that any pastoral problems arising from that issue can be addressed. Some modifications may need to be made in the forms for transfer of membership.
 7. That the following changes be made in the Church Order if the above recommendations are adopted by synod (the proposed changes are underlined; the brackets indicate present wording):
 - a. Article 3-a
[Confessing] Corporate male members of the church who meet the biblical requirements are eligible for the offices of minister, elder, and evangelist.
 - b. Article 3-b
All [confessing] corporate members of the church who meet the biblical requirements are eligible for the office of deacon.
 - c. Article 59-a
Members by baptism shall be [admitted to the Lord's Supper] received into corporate membership in the Christian Reformed Church upon a public profession of Christ according to the Reformed creeds, with the use of the prescribed form. Before the profession of faith the consistory shall examine them concerning their motives, doctrine, and conduct. The

names of those [who are to be admitted to the Lord's Supper] involved shall be announced to the congregation for approval at least one Sunday before the public profession of faith.

d. Article 59-b

[Confessing] Corporate members coming from other Christian Reformed congregations shall be [admitted to communicant] received into corporate membership upon the presentation of certificates of membership attesting their soundness in doctrine and life.

e. Article 59-c

[Confessing] Corporate members coming from churches in ecclesiastical fellowship shall be [admitted to communicant] received into corporate membership upon presentation of certificates or statements of membership after the consistory has satisfied itself concerning the doctrine and conduct of the members. Persons coming from other denominations shall be admitted to [communicant] corporate membership only after the consistory has examined them concerning doctrine and conduct. The consistory shall determine in each case whether to admit them directly or by public reaffirmation or profession of faith. Their names shall be announced to the congregation for approval.

f. Article 66-a

[Confessing] Corporate members who remove to another Christian Reformed church are entitled to a certificate, issued by the council, concerning their doctrine and life. When such certificates of membership are requested, they shall ordinarily be mailed to the church of their new residence.

g. Article 81-c

[Confessing] Corporate members who have been excluded from membership in the church shall be received again into its fellowship upon repentance of their sin.

8. That the work of this committee be declared completed and the committee be discharged.

Synod returns to its consideration of the recommendations of the advisory committee.

2. That churches be encouraged to implement the decision of Synod 1988 (Art. 72, C, 3, a, b, c and Art. 76, B, 3, d) by use of the four-step procedure outlined in Report A, with a modification in Step 3.

Step 1: The child expresses interest in participating in the Lord's Supper to his/her parent(s) or perhaps to a church-school teacher or another faith mentor within the church.

Step 2: The parent(s) discusses with the child the meaning of the sacrament and assesses the motivation of the child for participating. Convinced that this inquiry arises from a genuine stirring of the Spirit in the heart of the child, the parent(s) contacts an elder and/or pastor.

Step 3: The elder and/or pastor meets with the child and parent(s) to hear the testimony of the child with respect to his/her faith and desire to

participate in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. It is recommended that the child then participate in a short process of preparation for profession of faith taught by a pastor, elder, church-school teacher, or potential faith mentor. This training will focus on the nature and meaning of the sacrament and on a basic explication of the Apostles' Creed, Ten Commandments, and the Lord's Prayer. It will be carried out at the cognitive level appropriate to the child. When satisfied with the faith commitment of the child, the elder and/or pastor will recommend to the council that this child be admitted to the table of the Lord. If the elder or pastor is unable to make such a recommendation, he will provide clear counsel and advice to the child and parent(s) on how to address the area(s) of concern. It may also be helpful to assign an adult faith mentor to nurture a child toward full adult responsibilities in the church after he/she is recommended for profession.

Step 4: The child makes a public profession of faith in a simple and appropriate manner during a regular worship service. Since baptism is commemorated during a worship service, the appropriation of the baptismal promises should also be celebrated during a public worship service. Furthermore, a regular worship setting offers an opportunity for the people of God to celebrate a child's first communion and to make public promises of support.

—Adopted

3. That the modified trial form of 1989 (printed above) be accepted as a suggested form for public profession of faith by children.

—Adopted

4. That each congregation devise an appropriate means for securing a commitment to the creeds of the Christian Reformed Church and to the responsibilities of adult membership in the local congregation from confessing members who, having attained the age of 18, have not yet made such a commitment.

—Adopted

5. That membership in the Christian Reformed Church be counted in two categories:

- a. Baptized members—persons who have been baptized but not admitted to the Lord's Supper.
- b. Confessing members—persons who have been admitted to the Lord's Supper on the basis of a personal expression of their faith ("profession of faith"). Confessing members who have reached the age of 18 and who have made a commitment to the creeds of the Christian Reformed Church and the responsibilities of adult membership in the church shall be accorded the full rights and privileges of such membership.

—Adopted

6. That Church Order Article 59-a be divided into two parts to reflect these membership categories:

Article 59-a

Members by baptism shall be admitted to the Lord's Supper upon a public profession of their faith in Christ with the use of the prescribed form(s). Their membership shall be designated as "confessing member." The names of those who are to be admitted to the Lord's Supper shall be announced to the congregation for approval at least one Sunday before the public profession of faith.

Article 59-b

Confessing members who have reached the age of 18 and who have made a commitment to the creeds of the Christian Reformed Church and the responsibilities of adult membership in the church shall be accorded the full rights and privileges of such membership.

(Note: The current 59-b and 59-c would become 59-c and 59-d.)

—*Recommitted*

7. That when a church council transfers memberships, it would note for the receiving church whether the confessing members have assented to the creeds of the Christian Reformed Church and accepted the responsibilities of adult membership. (This should become Church Order Supplement, Art. 66-a.) The forms for transfer of membership may have to be modified to facilitate this change.

—*Adopted*

8. That CRC Publications be encouraged to produce for the churches study materials containing the history, decisions, sample forms produced by the Worship Committee, and any other materials for children and adults which may provide congregations with guidance for implementing these decisions.

—*Adopted*

9. That the work of the study committee be declared completed and the committee be discharged with thanks for its services.

—*Adopted*

10. That synod declare this to be its answer to Overtures 17, 18, 19, and 84 and Communication 12.

—*Adopted*

(The report of Advisory Committee 4 is continued in Article 109.)

ARTICLE 70

(The report of Advisory Committee 9 is continued from Article 66.)

Advisory Committee 9, Rev. Lambert Sikkema reporting for the majority, presents the following:

Identify "official acts of ministry" (majority report)

A. Materials

1. Overture 3, p. 324
2. Overture 7, p. 330

B. Background

For many years questions have been raised in the Christian Reformed Church about the meaning of the words "official acts of ministry." Neither the Bible nor our confessions identify what these are for the church of Jesus Christ. The denomination itself has never officially declared what these acts are. As the *Manual of Christian Reformed Church Government* states, "The phrase 'official acts of ministry' is nowhere defined in the Church Order or in synodical regulations" (p. 289). Overture 4 asks synod to do that.

Our general understanding of these words results from comments made by Monsma and Van Dellen in their commentary on the Church Order. They said,

Generally and by common consent the following matters are classified as activities which are reserved for ordained ministers of the Gospel only: The administration of the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper; the pronouncement of the salutation at the beginning of the service, and the pronouncement of the benediction at the conclusion of the service. Furthermore, the following three matters: the installation of officebearers, the receival into full membership by public profession of faith, and excommunication from the fellowship of God's Church.

(Monsma and Van Dellen, *The Revised Church Order Commentary*, Zondervan 1967, p. 208)

This list has become accepted practice and tradition within our congregations.

Increasingly, churches are asking if these commonly accepted acts are of such a nature that only ordained clergy may perform them. As the availability of ordained ministers has decreased and as the number of persons licensed to lead God's people in worship has increased, churches have asked that other persons be permitted to perform such acts. For example, in 1992 Classis Toronto asked Synod to

- A. Change Church Order Article 53-b to allow for the extension of the acts of ministry to persons who are called into a specialized ministry by a church but who are not formally ordained as clergy.
- B. Reaffirm that ordination is the "setting apart" of a certain member for a particular ministry strategic for the accomplishment of the church's total ministry.
- C. Permit all classes to endorse specific requests of local congregations to allow specific persons the privilege of engaging in all the acts of ministry as they are commonly understood.

(*Agenda for Synod 1992*, p. 499)

Synod urged Classis Toronto to study this matter further for clearer recommendation (*Acts of Synod 1992*, p. 669).

Classis Red Mesa is specifically concerned about one of the "official acts," the administration of the sacraments, and requests that all "who have been properly authorized to bring the Word" be permitted to administer the sacraments.

One way of answering these overtures is to officially adopt Monsma and Van Dellen's list. We believe this is not wise. It is the consistory that receives into full membership, that exercises discipline, and that installs people into office. It is entirely appropriate for an elder to read the forms connected with these events. When a person is authorized to exhort, he acts as an intermediary between God and his people. If he is authorized to bring the Word, he may certainly greet and bless the congregation in God's name. Concerning the sacraments, synod has already declared that "there is no valid biblical or doctrinal reason why a person whom the church has appointed to bring the Word may not also be appointed to administer the sacraments" (*Acts of Synod 1973*, p. 63).

Another way of answering these overtures is to delete from Article 53 the reference to "official acts of ministry" and to permit those authorized to exhort to administer the sacraments.

C. Recommendations

1. That synod amend Church Order Article 53-b by deleting the second sentence, "They shall, however, refrain from all official acts of ministry."

(The article will then read, "Persons licensed to exhort and anyone appointed by the consistory to read a sermon may conduct worship services.")

Grounds:

- a. The term "official acts of ministry" is not defined in Scripture, our Reformed confessions, our Church Order, or in synodical regulations.
 - b. The good order of the church is maintained because the council is accountable for everything that happens in the worship service (the sacraments shall be administered upon the authority of the consistory—Church Order Art. 55).
2. That synod amend Church Order Article 55 by replacing "by the minister of the Word" with *by those who have been authorized to preach or exhort*.

(The article will then read, "The sacraments shall be administered upon the authority of the consistory in the public worship service, *by those who have been authorized to preach or exhort*, with the use of the prescribed forms or adaptations of them which conform to synodical guidelines.")

Grounds:

- a. Synod has already acknowledged that there is "no biblical or doctrinal reason why a person whom the church has appointed to bring the Word may not also be appointed to administer the sacraments."
 - b. The growing need in our congregations for persons authorized to perform all aspects of the worship service has been sufficiently established.
3. That synod declare this to be its answer to Overtures 3 and 7.

According to Rules for Synodical Procedure, the minority report of the advisory committee is read as information by Rev. Harold J. Westra.

Identify "official acts of ministry" (minority report)

A. Materials

1. Overture 3, p. 324
2. Overture 7, p. 330

B. Background

We work with a biblical concept of the "official acts of the ministry." It is true that this phrase is "nowhere defined in the Church Order or in synodical regulations" (*Manual of Christian Reformed Church Government*, 1994 revision, p. 289). However, that does not mean that these official acts do not exist. The official acts of ministry within the context of the worship service are discussed in *The Revised Church Order Commentary* by Van Dellen and Monsma:

Generally and by common consent the following matters are classified as activities which are reserved for ordained ministers of the Gospel only: The administration of the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper; the pronouncement of the salutation at the beginning of the service, and the pronouncement of the benediction at the conclusion of the service. Furthermore, the following three matters: the installation of officebearers, the reception into full membership by public profession of faith, and excommunication from the fellowship of God's Church.

These matters all stand related—some more, others less—to the official proclamation of the Word. And the ordained minister only is authorized in God's providence to herald and proclaim His Word with authority as His representative.

C. Observations

Overture 3 asks that synod identify the "official acts of the ministry." All activity related to ministry performed by an ordained minister of the Word or evangelist is an "official act of the ministry." It is inappropriate for any gifted persons with an MCE (Master of Christian Education) or similar degree to perform an official act of the ministry because they are not in office. Likewise, a candidate for the ministry of the Word may not give the salutation or benediction but may offer prayers. Not until he is ordained does he proclaim the blessing from God to his people.

We wish to formally recognize what to this point has been understood by common consent. This recognition obviously limits the administration of the sacraments (along with the other acts listed) to those ordained to preach the Word. We affirm the unity of the preaching of the Word and the administration of the sacraments. In response to Overture 7, we believe that it does not make a proper distinction between those ordained to preach the Word, licensed to exhort, or appointed to read a sermon.

We appreciate the difficulties of a classis like Red Mesa to have enough regularly credentialed ministers to meet its needs. However, we presently have alternatives for filling these positions in the absence of ordained ministers of the Word, for example, the use of ordained evangelists.

D. Recommendations

1. That synod declare that the "official acts of the ministry" include
 - a. The preaching of the Word
 - b. The salutation
 - c. The benediction
 - d. The administration of the sacraments

- e. The installation of officebearers
- f. The receipt into full membership by public profession of faith
- g. The excommunication from the fellowship of God's church

Grounds:

- a. This upholds the uniqueness, integrity, and authority of the office of those ordained to perform the official acts of the ministry, namely, the ministers of the Word and evangelists.
 - b. This retains the appropriate connection between the preaching of the Word and the administration of the sacraments.
 - c. This recognizes that the authority to use the keys of the kingdom resides with the church officers and that the declaration of that authority is performed by those ordained to preach.
2. That synod include this declaration in the supplement to Church Order Article 53.
 3. That synod declare this to be its response to Overtures 3 and 7.

Synod returns to its consideration of Recommendation 1 of the advisory-committee majority report.

Note: Synod sets this recommendation aside to go to the order of the day.
(The report of Advisory Committee 9 is continued in Article 91.)

ARTICLE 71

The executive director of ministries introduces Rev. John Rozeboom, executive director of Christian Reformed Home Missions, who briefly addresses synod, giving a progress report on *Gathering God's Growing Family*.

He introduces the following leaders of new Home Missions ministries:

- Mr. Ray Benton, who is working at Oakdale Park CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan (Grand Rapids East), and plans to become a minister in the CRC.
- Candidate Timothy and Mrs. Elizabeth Blackmon, who will be working in Moreno Valley, California.

ARTICLE 72

The morning session is adjourned; Rev. C. James den Dulk leads in closing prayer.

MONDAY AFTERNOON, June 19, 1995

Twelfth Session

ARTICLE 73

Rev. David A. Struyk reads from II Chronicles 1:7-12. He announces *Psalter Hymnal* 427, "Dwell in Me, O Blessed Spirit," and leads in opening prayer.

ARTICLE 74

Rev. Michael De Vries of the Reception Committee introduces Rev. Henk Geertsema, fraternal delegate from the Netherlands Reformed Churches, who addresses synod. The president of synod responds.

Rev. De Vries also introduces Dr. Henk De Waard, fraternal delegate from the Reformed Churches of Australia, who addresses synod. The president of synod responds.

ARTICLE 75

Advisory Committee 10, Rev. John Van Schepen reporting, presents the following:

Women in ecclesiastical offices (majority report)

A Materials

1. Overtures 49-76, 85, pp. 419-524, 606-10
2. Communications 1-4, 6, pp. 533-42, 549-50

B Introduction

The members of the committee, both majority and minority, approached their work with a spirit of cooperation in order to resolve the differences on women in ecclesiastical offices that have increasingly divided us over the past twenty-plus years.

We as a committee have spent many hours carefully listening to each other and have searched—and searched hard—for common ground. Many different people have urged synod to get the issue of women in ecclesiastical offices behind us, to bring about unity and peace, and to get on with the Lord's work. We (both majority and minority) have tried to do this to the best of our ability.

As we listened to one another, it quickly became obvious that the same differences exist in the committee that exist in the denomination. Yet, in spite of two separate reports, we as a committee have agreed and disagreed as brothers in Christ.

We want to express appreciation for the manner in which members of the advisory committee on both sides of the issue dealt with each other. In spite of our differences, there was a constant appreciation for the faith of each member and for the conscientious approach toward the problem on the part of every member. Perhaps if this attitude had been more widely practiced on both sides in the denomination, this issue would not have caused as much pain and disunity as it has.

C Observations

In dealing with the multitude of overtures and communications that were submitted in response to the 1994 decision of synod, we note a number of points.

1. It is apparent from the overtures, as well as from the long history of debate on the possibility of opening the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist to women, that our denomination is divided on the interpretation of the Bible's directives on this issue. We as a committee are persuaded, in light of all the arguments made, that our interpretations cannot lead to an unequivocally clear conclusion on the matter, which is the cause of our division and current dilemma.

2. Since the issue is not a confessional one but rather one of Church Order, a review of both positions and their grounds would suggest that it should be possible to consider both positions (i.e., leaving the offices closed to women or opening them to women) acceptable within our denomination.
3. Our history of dealing with this issue has been one of a number of reversals, which is regrettable.
4. The committee wants to make room for both interpretations of Scripture on this issue in our denomination, recognizing that both can be considered legitimate in the context of two defensible positions and recognizing that the continued exclusion of women from the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist under all circumstances is the cause of much pain, as well as the cause of difficulties of conscience for those who feel they must be inclusive in this regard.
5. In light of the facts that our denomination has reversed itself on the matter of Church Order Article 3-a a number of times and that another reversal this year could engender further reversals in the future, the committee does not wish to continue this process and instead proposes a different mechanism, one which would provide for the possibility of women serving in the office of elder, minister, and evangelist under certain conditions. This position is a compromise for the vast majority of the members of the committee, but it is offered in the hope that it will be positively received by a sizable majority of synod, thus providing a solution to our current dilemma.
6. Our approach to this is inspired by Overture 62, with some modifications.

B. Recommendations

1. That synod recognize that there are two different perspectives and convictions, both of which honor the Scriptures as the infallible Word of God, on the issue of whether women are allowed to serve in the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist.

Grounds:

- a. The numerous overtures to this synod on this issue, as well as decisions and reports of previous synods, adduce good biblical grounds for both positions.
- b. The Scriptures (e.g., Rom. 14) and previous synodical decisions advocate a position of tolerance on nonconfessional issues.

2. That synod decide the following:

A classis may, in response to local needs and circumstances, declare that the word *male* in Article 3-a of the Church Order is inoperative and may authorize the churches under its jurisdiction to ordain and install women in the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist.

Grounds:

- a. Previous synodical assemblies have failed to provide satisfactory leadership on the matter of women in ecclesiastical office. Placing the responsibility for decisions on this matter at the classical level will allow local circumstances and differing views to be dealt with more effectively.

- b. The current compromise of giving women the function but not the office, used in a number of local situations, though expedient in some ways, is theologically problematic, inconsistent with a Reformed view of office and ordination, and insufficiently regulated.
 - c. This declaration provides in effect a "regional" option, which requires classical approval. While providing an opportunity to respond to local needs and circumstances, it avoids the danger of congregationalism, which could accompany the adoption of "congregational" option.
 - d. There is precedent for declaring parts of the Church Order inoperative. From 1914 to 1965 the articles on particular and regional synods (47-49) were placed in parentheses. The churches were agreed that these would be inoperative, i.e., not implemented until such time as it might be appropriate to implement them.
3. That synod adopt the following regulations associated with this declaration:
 - a. A classis which has decided that the word *male* in Article 3-a is inoperative for its constituent churches shall not have the right to delegate women officebearers to synod.
 - b. A classis which has decided that the word *male* in Article 3-a is inoperative for its constituent churches shall not have the right to appoint a woman minister to serve as synodical deputy.
 - c. A classis which has decided that the word *male* in Article 3-a will remain operative for its constituent churches shall nevertheless acknowledge a church's right, in response to local needs and circumstances, to take exception to the decision of classis as it applies to the office of elder. In such a case the classis shall not exercise its disciplinary authority to enforce compliance provided that the role of women elders is restricted to the local church in which they hold office.
 - d. In the consideration of applications for candidacy for the office of minister of the Word submitted by qualified women, both the Board of Trustees of Calvin Theological Seminary and synod shall ensure that trustees and delegates will not be forced to participate against the dictates of their consciences. In the declaration of candidacy, delegates may, without pressure or reprisal, exercise their right to abstain from voting.
 - e. The general secretary shall maintain a list of classes which have decided that the word *male* in Article 3-a of the Church Order is inoperative for their constituent churches and will publish that list annually, along with the presentation of candidates for the ministry, in *The Banner*.
 - f. Synodical agencies shall not appoint women as ministers of the Word to any field of labor within their jurisdiction nor seek to have them installed by a local church.
 - g. Synodical deputies shall not be asked to participate against the dictates of their consciences in any matter relating to ministers of the Word as provided in Articles 6-18 and 82-84 of the Church Order.
4. That synod declare that this arrangement be in effect until the year 2000, at which time it will be reviewed.

Grounds:

- a. This course of action will effectively remove the debate from the floor of synod for a number of years and will allow the denomination and its churches to concentrate on their ministries.
 - b. It will also allow the denomination to determine the effects of this decision in some regions before further considering this issue.
 - c. A period during which the issue is not hotly and bitterly debated will allow the denomination prayerfully to reflect on the issue without the pressure of an imminent decision.
5. That synod designate Recommendations 2 and 3 as Supplement, Article 3 of the Church Order.

Grounds:

- a. Placing this decision, together with its regulations, in the Supplement, as opposed to changing Article 3-a of the Church Order itself, will reflect its temporary nature and allow Article 3 to remain as it is.
 - b. A decision to add a supplement to an article of the Church Order does not need to be ratified at a following synod. Since all appear agreed that the denomination should put an end to our lengthy discussions of this issue, this decision will allow Synod 1995 to make a decision which will accomplish that goal at least for a number of years. In addition, a decision without the need for future ratification will allow some classes to deal expeditiously with a number of irregular situations which are currently present.
6. That synod urge the churches to recognize that this issue is not one of salvation and that even in our differences we remain sisters and brothers in Christ.

Ground: Unity in the church will come only when we focus on him who unites us, Christ Jesus our Lord, instead of on those issues on which we differ.

7. That synod declare this to be its answer to Overtures 49-76 and 85 and to Communications 1-4 and 6.

According to the Rules for Synodical Procedure, the minority report is read as information by Rev. Charles Steenstra.

Women in ecclesiastical offices (minority report)

A. Materials

1. Overtures 49-76, 85, pp. 419-524, 606-10
2. Communications 1-4, 6, pp. 533-42, 549-50

B. Observations

The observations of the minority report are identical to those of the majority report.

C. Recommendations

1. That no change be made in Church Order Article 3.

Grounds:

- a. The biblical texts cited by Synod 1993 and the various overtures before Synod 1995 to support a change in Church Order Article 3 are not persuasive.
 - Genesis 1:26-28 does teach that men and women equally bear the image of God but does not prove that one may hold ecclesiastical office simply because one bears the image of God.
 - Acts 2:17-18 describes the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon all God's people but does not prove that all who have the Spirit may hold ecclesiastical office.
 - Galatians 3:28 declares that men and women are one in Christ, but that fact does not mean that women may hold ecclesiastical office any more than it means that the Christian husband is not the head of his wife (Eph. 5:23).
- b. The most evident teaching on this subject in Scripture is that women should not hold the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist.
 - I Timothy 2:11-3:15: I Timothy 2:11-12 clearly states that women are not to teach or have authority over men, and I Timothy 3:1-13 continues with an immediate application of this teaching to the offices of the church. Paul's teaching is clearly grounded in creation (2:13), and he further states that his instructions are to guide not just the church in Ephesus but "God's household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth" (3:15).
 - Genesis 2: Paul in I Timothy 2:11-13 shows that Genesis 2 teaches that before the fall there was male leadership in the original created state. This teaching is clear not only in that Adam was created first and then Eve, but also in that
 - 1) Adam named Eve.
 - 2) Man was to take the initiative in leaving father and mother to form a new family.
 - 3) Adam was appointed the federal head and representative of humanity as Christ, the second Adam, is the head of the new, redeemed humanity (Rom. 5:15; I Cor. 15:22; Belgic Confession, Art. 15).
 - I Corinthians 11:2-16 and 14:33-35: Both of these passages teach that men are to have authoritative leadership in the church. Paul's teaching in these passages is rooted in creation (11:8-9) and in the law of God (14:34). These teachings are not limited to the Corinthian church but apply to all churches: "We have no other practice—nor do the churches of God" (11:16) and "as in all the congregations of the saints" (14:34).
- c. The general analogy of Scripture supports the exclusion of women from the offices of minister and elder. The general analogy is defined by Louis Berkhof in *Principles of Biblical Interpretation*, pages 164-65, as biblical teaching which "does not rest on the explicit statements of the Bible, but on the obvious scope and import of its teachings as a whole." Scripture in its general thrust certainly teaches that men and women are equally created in the image of God (Gen. 1:26-28) and equally redeemed by Christ (Gal. 3:28). It also teaches that men and women both in the original

created state and in the present redeemed state have diverse roles and responsibilities. This diversity is seen in creation, as shown in the discussion of Genesis 2 above. This diversity is also seen in redemption:

- In general, man is called the head of woman (I Cor. 11:3, 7-9).
 - In the family, the husband is the head of the wife (Eph. 5:22-24; I Pet. 3:1, 5-6).
 - In the church, male leadership is seen in the New Testament:
 - 1) Jesus chose only male apostles.
 - 2) All pastors and elders in the New Testament are male.
 - 3) Paul teaches male leadership in the church in the teaching and ruling offices (II Tim. 2:11-15; I Tim. 3:2, 4-5; Titus 1:6; I Cor. 14:34-35).
 - d. A variety of evidence shows that the church historically has believed that the Scripture opposes women in the offices of minister and elder:
 - 1) The Catholic and Reformed churches for over nineteen hundred years read the Scriptures in this way.
 - 2) The Reformed Ecumenical Synod in 1968 adopted the following statement: "That synod declare that it is the plain and obvious teaching of Scripture that women are excluded from the office of ruling and preaching elders."
 - 3) The North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council, to which the Christian Reformed Church belongs, has reminded the Christian Reformed Church that the Bible does not permit the ordination of women to the offices of minister and elder.
 - e. No sufficient and new grounds have been presented by the overtures and communications to Synod 1995 (Church Order Art. 31).
2. That synod declare that Synod 1994, in stating that "Scripture was clear," failed to recognize that both sides had faithfully sought to interpret Scripture on this issue.

Ground: For the last twenty-five years both sides have honestly struggled with the question of women in church office in the light of Scripture.

3. That synod declare this to be its answer to Overtures 49-76 and 85 and to Communications 1-4 and 6.
4. That synod urge the churches to recognize that this issue is not one of salvation and that even in our differences we remain sisters and brothers in Christ.

Ground: Unity in the church will come only when we focus on him who unites us, Christ Jesus our Lord, instead of on those issues on which we differ.

Synod returns to its consideration of the recommendations of the advisory-committee majority report.

1. That synod recognize that there are two different perspectives and convictions, both of which honor the Scriptures as the infallible Word of God, on the issue of whether women are allowed to serve in the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist.

Grounds:

- a. The numerous overtures to this synod on this issue, as well as decisions and reports of previous synods, adduce good biblical grounds for both positions.
- b. The Scriptures (e.g., Rom. 14) and previous synodical decisions advocate a position of tolerance on nonconfessional issues.

—Adopted

The following negative votes are registered:

Lloyd R. Kredit (Arizona), Bradd L. Nymeyer (Arizona), W. Robert Godfrey (California South), Donald Zwier (Georgetown), Arthur Vanden Bosch (Iakota), Bernard Mulder (Northern Michigan), David J. Howerzyl (Yellowstone), Henry D. Vander Stelt (Yellowstone), James J. Stastny (Zeeland).

The following negative votes with statements are registered:

I do not believe that those favoring opening the offices of elder and minister have demonstrated sound, biblical, and Reformed interpretation and have now left the church vulnerable to further unbiblical issues and without exegetical strength to resist them.

C. James den Dulk (Grand Rapids North)

I oppose this decision because, while I accept that people on both sides have "sought" to honor the Scriptures as the infallible Word of God, I don't concur with synod's judgment that "two different perspectives and convictions" exist which both "honor the Scriptures as the infallible Word of God."

Roger A. Bouwman (Heartland)

I remain convinced that the different interpretations are a result of different hermeneutical approaches. We now have two approaches to Scripture. Therefore, I must vote no.

Casey D. Freswick (Hudson)

How can the Bible teach two equally valid, contradictory things? Impossible!

Roger W. Sparks (Iakota)

I wish to record my negative vote on the grounds that both positions cannot honor the Scriptures.

Daryl E. Kats (Northcentral Iowa)

There can only be one Word of God and one correct interpretation of that. For God has given us his Word as divine revelation, not divine confusion (II Tim. 3:16-17).

Warren H. Lammers (Iakota)

(The report of Advisory Committee 10 is continued in Article 79)

ARTICLE 76

The general secretary presents Ballot 2, and delegates vote.

ARTICLE 77

The afternoon session is adjourned; Elder Terry J. Kimber leads in closing prayer.

MONDAY EVENING, June 19, 1995
Thirteenth Session

ARTICLE 78

Elder Andy P. Voss reads from Psalm 33 and announces *Psalter Hymnal* 499, "My God, How Wonderful You Are." He leads in opening prayer.

ARTICLE 79

(The report of Advisory Committee 10 is continued from Article 75.)

Advisory Committee 10, Women in Ecclesiastical Offices, Rev. John Van Schepen reporting, presents the following:

I. Women in ecclesiastical offices

A. Materials

1. Overtures 49-76, 85, pp. 419-524, 606-10
2. Communications 1-4, 6, pp. 533-42, 549-50

B. Recommendations (continued)

It is moved that speeches on Recommendation 2 of the majority report on women in ecclesiastical offices be limited to four minutes each.

—*Adopted*

2. That synod decide the following:

A classis may, in response to local needs and circumstances, declare that the word *male* in Article 3-a of the Church Order is inoperative and may authorize the churches under its jurisdiction to ordain and install women in the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist.

Grounds:

- a. Previous synodical assemblies have failed to provide satisfactory leadership on the matter of women in ecclesiastical office. Placing the responsibility for decisions on this matter at the classical level will allow local circumstances and differing views to be dealt with more effectively.
- b. The current compromise of giving women the function but not the office, used in a number of local situations, though expedient in some ways, is theologically problematic, inconsistent with a Reformed view of office and ordination, and insufficiently regulated.
- c. This declaration provides in effect a "regional" option, which requires classical approval. While providing an opportunity to respond to local needs and circumstances, it avoids the danger of congregationalism, which could accompany the adoption of "congregational" option.
- d. There is precedent for declaring parts of the Church Order inoperative. From 1914 to 1965 the articles on particular and regional synods (47-49) were placed in parentheses. The churches were agreed that these would be inoperative, i.e., not implemented until such time as it might be appropriate to implement them.

—*Adopted*

The following negative votes are registered:

Bradd L. Nymeyer (Arizona), Robert G. den Dulk (Central California), Henry Docter (California South), W. Robert Godfrey (California South), James I. Park (California South), Donald Zwier (Georgetown), Harold Meyerink (Iakota), Arthur Vanden Bosch (Iakota), Bernard L. Mulder (Northern Michigan), David J. Howerzyl (Yellowstone), Henry D. Vander Stelt (Yellowstone), James J. Stastny (Zeeland).

The following negative votes with statements are registered:

I register my negative vote against synod's decision allowing classes to permit women's ordination to the office of elder (and minister) for the following reasons:

- 1) The Bible allows for only qualified men to hold the offices of minister and elder (I Cor. 11:2-16; 14:33-35; I Tim. 2:11-13).
- 2) Putting some restrictions on the ordination of women elders (and ministers) is only temporary—these restrictions will soon be dropped, putting those of us against women's ordination in a very difficult position in our denomination at the time these restrictions will be dropped.
- 3) Rather than assisting our church's outreach, I fear this decision will *hurt* our outreach by associating our denomination more with the mainline American-Canadian churches than with the more conservative evangelical churches. I especially believe this decision will negatively impact our particular outreach in southern California to the Korean and Latino communities.

Randal S. Lankheet (California South)

I declare my dismay that we have opened the offices to women without providing any biblical grounds. (See Article 31 of the Church Order) No attempt has been made to provide any biblical guidance on how we must understand the women-in-office issue.

Kenneth F. Benjamins (Chatham)

I believe this decision is contrary to Scripture and injurious to churches of the Christian Reformed Church.

Aldon L. Kuiper (Heartland)

This decision allows for the ordination of women. The Scripture prohibits women to authoritative office.

Casey D. Freswick (Hudson)

I believe the local or classical option is in violation of I Corinthians 14:34 and in flagrant disregard for the Lord's instructions to his seven representative churches (Rev. 2, 3).

Warren H. Lammers (Iakota)

How can the Church Order (Art. 86) be "faithfully observed" when synod gives classes the right to declare a part of it inoperative? Impossible! I also note that this decision is contrary to the decision of Synod 1994 that the clear teaching of the Bible forbids the ordination of women as ministers and elders.

Roger W. Sparks (Iakota)

I wish to register my negative vote on Recommendation 2. It violates the clear teaching of Scripture as to how the church should conduct itself as the "pillar and ground of the truth" (I Tim. 3:15) and circumvents Church Order Article 3.

Richard J. Blauw (Illiana)

I wish to record my negative vote on the grounds that Recommendation 2 does not do justice to the purpose of the Church Order, which is to see that all things are done "decently and in good order." And it clearly contradicts Church Order Article 86.

Daryl E. Kats (Northcentral Iowa)

3. That synod adopt the following regulations associated with this declaration:
- a. A classis which has decided that the word *male* in Article 3-a is inoperative for its constituent churches shall not have the right to delegate women officebearers to synod.
 - b. A classis which has decided that the word *male* in Article 3-a is inoperative for its constituent churches shall not have the right to appoint a woman minister to serve as synodical deputy.
 - c. A classis which has decided that the word *male* in Article 3-a will remain operative for its constituent churches shall nevertheless acknowledge a church's right, in response to local needs and circumstances, to take exception to the decision of classis as it applies to the office of elder. In such a case the classis shall not exercise its disciplinary authority to enforce compliance provided that the role of women elders is restricted to the local church in which they hold office.
 - d. In the consideration of applications for candidacy for the office of minister of the Word submitted by qualified women, both the Board of Trustees of Calvin Theological Seminary and synod shall ensure that trustees and delegates may not be forced to participate against the dictates of their consciences. In the declaration of candidacy, delegates will exercise their right to abstain from voting without pressure or reprisal.
 - e. The general secretary shall maintain a list of classes which have decided that the word *male* in Article 3-a of the Church Order is inoperative for their constituent churches and will publish that list annually, along with the presentation of candidates for the ministry, in *The Banner*.
 - f. Synodical agencies shall not appoint women as ministers of the Word to any field of labor within their jurisdiction nor seek to have them installed by a local church.
 - g. Synodical deputies shall not be asked to participate against the dictates of their consciences in any matter relating to ministers of the Word as provided in Articles 6-18 and 82-84 of the Church Order.

—Adopted

The following negative votes are registered:

Bradd L. Nymeyer (Arizona), W. Robert Godfrey (California South), Robert G. den Dulk (Central California), Donald Zwier (Georgetown), Warren H. Lammers (Iakota), James J. Stastny (Zeeland).

4. That synod declare that this arrangement be in effect until the year 2000, at which time it will be reviewed.

Grounds:

- a. This course of action will effectively remove the debate from the floor of synod for a number of years and will allow the denomination and its churches to concentrate on their ministries.
- b. It will also allow the denomination to determine the effects of this decision in some regions before further considering this issue.

- c. A period during which the issue is not hotly and bitterly debated will allow the denomination to prayerfully reflect on the issue without the pressure of an imminent decision.

—*Adopted*

The following negative votes are registered:

Donald Zwier (Georgetown), James J. Stastny (Zeeland).

5. That synod designate Recommendations 2 and 3 as Supplement, Article 3 of the Church Order.

Grounds:

- a. Placing this decision, together with its regulations, in the Supplement, as opposed to changing Article 3-a of the Church Order itself, will reflect its temporary nature and allow Article 3 to remain as it is.
- b. A decision to add a supplement to an article of the Church Order does not need to be ratified at a following synod. Since all appear agreed that the denomination should put an end to our lengthy discussions of this issue, this decision will allow Synod 1995 to make a decision which will accomplish that goal at least for a number of years. In addition, a decision without the need for future ratification will allow some classes to deal expeditiously with a number of irregular situations which are currently present.

—*Adopted*

The following negative vote is registered: Donald Zwier (Georgetown).

The following negative vote with statement is registered:

I oppose this decision out of concern for the precedent being set in our handling of the Church Order, to wit: we have been putting principles in our articles and application or implementation guidelines in our supplements. Never before have we adopted a supplement to an article which negates or sets aside the principle stated in the article.

Roger A. Bouwman (Heartland)

6. That synod urge the churches to recognize that this issue is not one of salvation and that even in our differences we remain sisters and brothers in Christ.

Ground: Unity in the church will come only when we focus on him who unites us, Christ Jesus our Lord, instead of on those issues on which we differ.

—*Adopted*

7. That synod declare this to be its answer to Overtures 49-76 and 85 and to Communications 1-4 and 6.

—*Adopted*

II. Appeal from Dr. Florence Kuipers

Material: Personal Appeal 3

With respect to Personal Appeal 3, the committee was informed that the appellant has resigned as a member of the Christian Reformed Church. Consequently, the committee did not consider the appeal.

—*Received as information*

ARTICLE 80

Rev. William Veenstra of the Reception Committee introduces Rev. James Buys, fraternal delegate of the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa, who addresses synod. The president of synod responds.

ARTICLE 81

The evening session is adjourned. The assembly joins in singing *Psalter Hymnal* 424, "Spirit of the Living God." Elder Hubert Borduin leads in closing prayer.

TUESDAY MORNING, June 20, 1995

Fourteenth Session

ARTICLE 82

Elder Bert Schilthuis announces *Psalter Hymnal* 555, "Lead On, O King Eternal." He reads from Romans 12:1-21 and leads in opening prayer.

The roll call indicates that all members are present.

The clerks report that the minutes of the Monday morning and afternoon sessions, June 19, 1995, are in order.

ARTICLE 83

(The report of Advisory Committee 2 is continued from Article 25.)

Advisory Committee 2, Missions, Rev. Stanley J. Vander Klay reporting, presents the following:

Structure for ministry in Canada

A. Materials

1. Structure for Ministry in Canada Report, pp. 309-17
2. Overtures 34-40, pp. 399-406
3. Overtures 82-83, pp. 604-05
4. Committee to Study Structure for Ministry in Canada: Impact of Recommendations on Home Missions Programs and Budgets (from Home Missions)
5. Communication 8, p. 552

B. Background

Synod 1990 responded to seven overtures from Canadian classes asking for a regional-synod structure in the CRC by appointing a committee to "review and study the issues related to regional synods." Synod 1993 declared, in the light of the committee's recommendations, that regional synods were inadvisable at present and approved a change in Article 44-b of the Church Order to strengthen the present ministry structure in Canada. It also appointed the committee whose proposal to develop a more effective structure for ministry in Canada provided the material for this advisory committee's discussion.

Affirming the deeply committed service and uniquely effective witness to Canada of the Council of the Christian Reformed Churches in Canada (CCRCC), while recognizing the limitations imposed by its mandate, profile, and lack of ecclesiastical connection to the major assemblies; citing the ecclesiastical-cultural and governmental-stipulational distinctions between the two nations; and illustrating the need for more efficient ministry cooperation between the Christian Reformed churches on both sides of the border, the study committee recommended three basic structural changes: "integrating existing CCRCC ministries into denominational structures, strengthening our denominational vision for an implementation of ministry in Canada," and "integrating deacons and diaconal ministries into the governance of the denomination." Sketching some particulars for how this might be accomplished, it stated that, although details of implementation are negotiable, the three basics are interdependent. "Like three legs of a stool, they stand together."

Foundational to all the above is the awareness that the Christian Reformed Church in North America is binational. The study committee, and everybody we talked with, wants to keep it that way. We belong together, have been mutually blessed by our union, and need to mature to a new level of sophistication and mutuality in our interdependence. But doing so with institutional and spiritual integrity calls for a clarity of definition which is far from focused in the collective vision even of Canadian members of the CRC who live with its reality every day. The lack of unanimity on suggested organizational details, the plethora of concerns that have been raised, and the variety of slants on each leg of the stool made it impossible to find a place to sit. We do not think it will be leveled by more scrutiny alone (not another study committee) but will become sit-able "in situation." With a lot of appreciation for the study committee's careful address to a difficult and complex mandate and with far more questions than answers, we propose something less defined, the continuation of a process, a build-as-you-go structure which may or may not finally become a three-legged stool.

C. Recommendations

1. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to those members of the committee who are present when these matters are under consideration.

—Granted

2. That synod affirm

- a. That the Christian Reformed Church in North America is dedicated to being a truly binational denomination engaged in ministries in Canada and the United States and throughout the world.
- b. That the Christian Reformed Church in North America commits itself to developing ways to structure the ministries of the denomination that will retain its binational character and at the same time will take into account the history, geography, and national character that are specific to the churches in Canada and to the churches in the United States.

—Adopted

(The report of Advisory Committee 2 is continued in Article 85.)

ARTICLE 84

Rev. William Veenstra of the Reception Committee introduces Rev. Paul den Butter of the Christian Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, who addresses synod. The president of synod responds.

ARTICLE 85

(The report of Advisory Committee 2 is continued from Article 83)

Advisory Committee 2, Structure for Ministry in Canada, Rev. Stanley J. Vander Klay reporting, presents the following:

Structure for ministry in Canada

C. *Recommendations* (continued)

3. That synod remind its agencies and boards to consciously take our binational character into account.

—*Adopted*

4. That synod propose to the CCRCC that at its November 1995 session it reconstitute itself as a Board of Canadian Ministries (BCM). Synod further requests that this board
 - a. Be comprised of members drawn from all Canadian classes.
 - b. Be mandated to submit for approval to Synod 1997 a mandate for the BCM to coordinate and hold accountable all Canadian ministries of the CRC, plans to involve the Canadian churches, projected costs, and plans for the integration of Canadian ministries.
 - c. Be directly accountable to synod.

Grounds:

- a. This will provide the CRC in Canada and the United States with the opportunity to discover the answers to the complex questions by an ongoing process of action and reflection.
- b. This will give Canadian churches the freedom they need to develop a ministry appropriate to their national situation while retaining the accountability and integrity of our binational communion.
- c. This will provide the ecclesiastical support and connectedness necessary for solid development of Canadian ministries.

—*Adopted*

(The report of Advisory Committee 2 is continued in Article 89)

ARTICLE 86

The morning session is adjourned; Elder Henry P. Haarsma leads in closing prayer.

TUESDAY AFTERNOON, June 20, 1995
Fifteenth Session

ARTICLE 87

Elder Kenneth R. Kuipers reads from John 17:20-23 and announces *Psalter Hymnal* 513, "Christian Hearts in Love United. He leads in opening prayer.

Rev. Gerald A. Koning (Grand Rapids North) temporarily replaces Rev. Charles Steenstra. He rises to express agreement with the forms of unity.

ARTICLE 88

Rev. William Veenstra of the Reception Committee introduces Rev. Jonathan Iorkighir, fraternal delegate from the Church of Christ in the Sudan among the Tiv, who addresses synod. The president of synod responds.

ARTICLE 89

(The report of Advisory Committee 2 is continued from Article 85)

Advisory Committee 2, Missions, Rev. Stanley Vander Klay reporting, presents the following:

Structure for ministry in Canada

A. Materials

1. Structure for Ministry in Canada Report, pp. 309-17
2. Overtures 34-40, pp. 399-406
3. Overtures 82-83, pp. 604-05
4. Committee to Study Structure for Ministry in Canada: Impact of Recommendations on Home Missions Programs and Budgets (from Home Missions)
5. Communication 8, p. 552

C. Recommendations (continued)

5. That synod appoint a committee to serve the CCRCC meeting in November 1995 with a draft of possible ways and means to implement the above resolutions. Such a draft would detail possible structures to coordinate and supervise the ministries of the CRC in Canada.

—*Adopted*

6. That this committee be made up of one member of the study committee, one member of the advisory committee, two members of the interim committee of the Canada Council, two Canadian members of the Board of Trustees, and two members-at-large.

—*Adopted*

7. That synod appoint a director of Canadian ministries, who will
 - a. Report to the Board of Canadian Ministries.
 - b. Administer Canadian ministries in the CRC.
 - c. Cooperate with the EDM in coordinating ministries in Canada and the United States.

d. Be in place prior to the retirement of Rev. Arie Van Eek.

—Action withheld

8. That synod instruct its agencies and boards to provide appropriate representation to the Board of Canadian Ministries.

—Action withheld

9. That synod appoint a committee to study the matter of delegating deacons to major assemblies, taking cognizance of both the biblical/theological issues adduced in past studies and the real-life experiences of deacons in the present, and to report to Synod 1997.

Grounds:

- a. Canadian diaconal development is instructive for this issue.
- b. This new information will give opportunity to the churches to weigh the issue of diaconal delegation to major assemblies in the light of the Canadian experience.

—Defeated

It is moved that synod adopt the recommendation of the study committee to appoint a study committee mandated to work out a plan with diaconal conferences and organizations to integrate their work where desirable into classical and synodical structures. This committee will report to Synod 1997.

—Defeated

10. That synod declare this its answer to Overtures 34-40, 82-83 and Communication 8.

—Adopted

11. That synod dismiss the study committee with thanks.

—Adopted

ARTICLE 90

(The report of Advisory Committee 3 is continued from Article 65.)

Advisory Committee 3, Education, Rev. Morris N. Greidanus reporting, presents the following:

Youth-Ministry Committee

A. *Material:* Youth-Ministry Committee Report, pp. 205-13 (except Section IV, H)

B. *Recommendations*

1. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to the Youth-Ministry Committee chairperson, Rev. Jacob P. Heerema; its secretary, Rev. Joel W. Zuidema; and YMC member Dr. Robert C. De Vries.

—Granted

2. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to the United Calvinist Youth division directors—Ms. Jan Boone, Mr. Richard Broene, and Rev. Brian Bosscher.

—Granted

3. That synod appoint a study committee to consider the matters of ordination and "official acts of ministry" (Church Order Art. 53-b) as these apply to youth pastors and persons in other specialized ministries who attain their positions by pathways other than the M.Div. degree.

Grounds:

- a. Synod 1973 adopted a report on office and ordination, the conclusions of which invite a consideration of this matter. In that report ordination is seen as a "setting apart" of a certain person for a particular ministry within the church (*Acts of Synod 1973*, p. 63).
- b. Increasingly, congregations are calling and/or employing persons who are gifted and trained for a particular ministry in the church. This development ought to be considered by the denomination in light of biblical and confessional material and synodical decisions (see *Agenda for Synod 1995*, p. 324; Overture 3 shows that this is not an isolated concern).
- c. If the proposed study would lead to the ordination of youth pastors, appropriate guidelines should be developed to increase the effectiveness of those whose career is to serve the churches in this capacity.
- d. This proposed study extends beyond the scope and capacity of the Youth-Ministry Committee as mandated by Synod 1991. The YMC does not have available the time and expertise needed for this study.

(The above recommendation is changed from the YMC's recommendation [*Agenda for Synod 1995*, p. 209, IV, D].)

—Tabled

4. That synod accept as information YMC's plan to publish, market, and distribute the Relational Model for Youth Ministry in booklet, poster, and video form and to conduct a follow-up mailing to assess effectiveness.

Grounds:

- a. This request is motivated by Synod 1991's mandate to develop a model for youth ministry and the endorsement of such a model by Synod 1994. Such actions of synod imply taking the necessary steps to get such a model into the hands of those doing youth ministry.
- b. The Relational Model for Youth Ministry fills a ministry gap. The Christian Reformed Church offers no other tool to help local congregations gain an overall, unified vision for ministry to youth.
- c. The Relational Model for Youth Ministry can raise an awareness in the local congregations of their need to develop such an overall, unified vision for youth ministry.
- d. The UCY agencies—Youth Unlimited, Cadets, and Calvinettes—in spite of their effective ministry to youth, are not designed to offer this "overall, unified vision" for congregations within the denomination because
 - 1) They are parachurch organizations and as such do not speak for the denomination.

- 2) They are separate, independent agencies with a narrow focus on a specific area of youth ministry and as such do not offer a broad ministry perspective.
- e. A video would be one of the most effective forms of communicating the Relational Model for Youth Ministry to a visually oriented society. The booklet alone could too easily be lost in the overload of printed material and be ineffective if not reinforced by the visual medium.
- f. It is urgent that youth workers, some of whom may be doing relational ministry intuitively, come to understand relational ministry and its importance so that the needs of the denomination's youth can be met more intentionally.

—Adopted

5. That synod accept as information that funds have been approved for YMC's plan to publish, market, distribute, and assess the Relational Model for Youth Ministry as described in *Agenda for Synod 1994*, Appendix D, pp. 198-208.

—Adopted

6. That synod receive as information YMC's approval of a director of early teen ministry position for UCY to stimulate the denomination in early teen ministry.

Grounds:

- a. Promotion of early teen ministry is necessitated by the lack of early teen ministry in the denomination.
- b. The early teen stage is a unique developmental stage different from elementary or high-school stages. Early teens need ministry targeted to their unique developmental stage.
- c. UCY is the most appropriate organization for undertaking the role of developing early teen ministry.

—Adopted

7. That synod, contrary to the YMC's request, decide that support for a director of early teen ministry be raised by means other than a denominational grant.

Ground: Even though the advisory committee endorses active youth participation within our congregations and an aggressive youth program within the CRC, the YMC's request for a grant would distort the carefully crafted relationship between the denomination and a related but not directly accountable agency.

—Adopted

ARTICLE 91

(The report of Advisory Committee 9 is continued from Article 70.)

Advisory Committee 9, Church Order II, Rev. Lambert J. Sikkema reporting, presents the following:

Identify "official acts of ministry"

A. Materials

1. Overture 3, p. 324
2. Overture 7, p. 330

B. Recommendations

Recommendation 1 is taken from the table.

1. That synod amend Church Order Article 53-b by deleting the second sentence, "They shall, however, refrain from all official acts of ministry."

(The article will then read, "Persons licensed to exhort and anyone appointed by the consistory to read a sermon may conduct worship services.")

Grounds:

- a. The term "official acts of ministry" is not defined in Scripture, our Reformed confessions, our Church Order, or in synodical regulations.
- b. The good order of the church is maintained because the consistory is accountable for everything that happens in the worship service.

It is moved to table Recommendation 1 of the advisory-committee majority report to consider Recommendation 4 of Advisory Committee 3.

—*Adopted*

Advisory Committee 3, Education, Rev. Morris N. Greidanus reporting, presents the following:

B. Recommendations

4. That synod appoint a study committee to consider the matters of ordination and "official acts of ministry" (Church Order Art. 53-b), including but not limited to how these apply to youth pastors and to persons in other specialized ministries who attain their positions by pathways other than the M.Div. degree and to those authorized to bring the Word in a worship service.

Grounds:

- a. Synod 1973 adopted a report on office and ordination, the conclusions of which invite a consideration of this matter. In that report ordination is seen as a "setting apart" of a certain person for a particular ministry within the church (*Acts of Synod 1973*, p. 63).
- b. Increasingly, congregations are calling and/or employing persons who are gifted and trained for a particular ministry in the church. This development ought to be considered by the denomination in light of biblical and confessional material and synodical decisions (see *Agenda for Synod 1995*, p. 324; Overture 3 shows that this is not an isolated concern).
- c. If the proposed study would lead to the ordination of such youth pastors, appropriate guidelines should be developed to increase the effectiveness of those whose career is to serve the churches in this capacity.
- d. This proposed study extends beyond the scope and capacity of the Youth-Ministry Committee as mandated by Synod 1991. The YMC does not have available the time and expertise needed for this study.
- e. This study responds to Overtures 3 and 7 and to Advisory Committee Report 9-C (majority and minority reports).

(Note: The above recommendation is changed from the YMC's recommendation [Agenda for Synod 1995, p. 209, IV, D].)

—Adopted

Recommendation 1 of the majority report of Advisory Committee 9 is taken from the table (cf. Art. 91, I, B, 1).

It is moved to withhold action on Recommendation 1.

—Adopted

Recommendation 2 of the advisory-committee majority report is taken from the table.

2. That synod amend Church Order Article 55 by replacing "by the minister of the Word" with *by those who have been authorized to preach or exhort*.

(The article will then read, "The sacraments shall be administered upon the authority of the consistory in the public worship service, *by those who have been authorized to preach or exhort*, with the use of the prescribed forms or adaptations of them which conform to synodical guidelines.")

Grounds:

- a. Synod has already acknowledged that there is "no biblical or doctrinal reason why a person whom the church has appointed to bring the Word may not also be appointed to administer the sacraments."
- b. The growing need in our congregations for persons authorized to perform all aspects of the worship service has been sufficiently established.

—Action withheld

It is moved that synod declare, due to present circumstances in Classis Red Mesa, that that classis be permitted a three-year exception to Church Order Article 55, thereby allowing those who have been authorized to preach or exhort also to administer the sacraments.

—Adopted

(The report of Advisory Committee 9 is continued in Article 100.)

ARTICLE 92

The general secretary reports the results of Ballot 2.

The general secretary reads letters of greetings from the following churches in ecclesiastical fellowship:

Reformed Church in Argentina, Rev. O. Alberto Oro, secretary
Reformed Church in Japan, Rev. Yukio Kanata, stated clerk

ARTICLE 93

The afternoon session is adjourned; Elder Gordon Kuipers leads in closing prayer.

The synodical banquet is to be held Tuesday evening at 7:00 p.m.

ARTICLE 94

Elder Jacob Van Eck announces *Psalter Hymnal* 288, "Take My Life and Let It Be." He reads from Psalm 145:1-7 and leads in opening prayer.

The roll call indicates that Elder Gerald W. Frens (Northern Illinois) replaces Elder Arnold Hoving. He rises to express agreement with the forms of unity. Rev. Kenneth L. Havert has returned to synod.

The clerks report that the minutes of Monday evening, Tuesday morning, and Tuesday afternoon are accurate and in order.

ARTICLE 95

Rev. William Veenstra of the Reception Committee introduces Rev. Taylor W. Holbrook, fraternal delegate from the Reformed Church in America, who addresses synod. The president of synod responds.

ARTICLE 96

(The report of Advisory Committee 5 is continued from Article 44.)

Advisory Committee 5, Pastoral Ministries, Rev. John Terpstra reporting, presents the following:

Subcommittee for Ministry to Smaller Churches

A. Materials

1. Board of Trustees Report, Appendix C, pp. 75-83
2. Overture 11, pp. 346-51
3. Overture 12, pp. 351-52
4. Overture 13, pp. 353-62
5. Overture 14, pp. 363-65
6. Overture 15, pp. 366-68
7. Overture 16, pp. 368-71

B. Recommendations

1. That, when the report is being discussed, synod grant the privilege of the floor to Dr. Peter Borgdorff, executive director of ministries; Dr. Kenneth Bootsma, president of the Board of Trustees; Rev. Louis Tamminga, member of the subcommittee; and other members of the subcommittee who worked on this report.

—Granted

2. That synod direct the Fund for Smaller Churches Committee, in conjunction with Pastoral Ministries and Home Missions, to hold biennial regional conferences for churches of up to 120 adult members in order to provide fellowship, peer encouragement, education, and skill development.

Grounds:

- a. Congregations of this size are often hampered by insufficient local resources. A joint effort can offer resources which individual congregations cannot easily access by themselves.
- b. Previous conferences sponsored by these agencies have proved helpful to the smaller congregations involved, according to the majority of participants.

—Adopted

3. That synod not accede to Recommendation C of the Board of Trustees Report (*Agenda for Synod 1995*, p. 82).

Ground: Home Missions already makes these resources available to all churches.

—Adopted

4. That synod direct the Fund for Smaller Churches, in consultation with Pastoral Ministries, to contract with Home Missions to implement an assessment process which will help pastors identify skills, motivational factors, and commitments most suitable to the benefit of smaller-church ministries.

Grounds:

- a. Not all pastors possess the same skills. Particular skills are helpful for those leading smaller congregations. Identification of pastors with those skills will be helpful to vacant congregations.
- b. Pastors who identify the skills and gifts which work best in established congregations will be able to make well-informed career choices.
- c. Home Missions currently uses a similar assessment process to identify new-church developers.
- d. The Fund for Smaller Churches will benefit from identifying persons skilled in serving smaller churches.

—Adopted

(The report of Advisory Committee 5 is continued in Article 99)

ARTICLE 97

The general secretary presents Ballot 3, and delegates vote.

ARTICLE 98

Rev. William Veenstra of the Reception Committee introduces Rev. Lendall H. Smith, fraternal delegate from the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, who addresses synod. The president of synod responds.

ARTICLE 99

(The report of Advisory Committee 5 is continued from Article 96.)

Advisory Committee 5, Pastoral Ministries, Rev. John Terpstra reporting, presents the following:

Subcommittee for Ministry to Smaller Churches (continued from Article 96)

A. Materials (see Article 96)

B. Recommendations (continued)

5. That synod declare that all ministry-assistance grants from FSC are for a ten-year maximum.

Grounds:

- a. Grants which have a termination date encourage a more effective ministry and help to generate a church's full potential.
- b. The length and number of FSC grants are projected to exceed its ministry-share income.
- c. The period of up to ten years of FSC monies allows sufficient time for a congregation to make plans for the future shape of its ministry.

—*Adopted*

6. That synod declare that congregations receiving FSC support will be considered for continuing or additional assistance when both of the following conditions (a and b) are met:

- a. The classis in which the congregation is located judges the ministry to be of such a crucial nature or of such historical significance that classis normally contributes at a rate of one dollar for every two dollars contributed by FSC.

Ground: Financial involvement at the regional level ensures the significance of this ministry to the people of the classis. In the absence of this provision it becomes easy for an individual classis to endorse a ministry for denominational support.

- b. The ministry is recommended by the classical committee for oversight of FSC ministries and is approved by the denominational FSC Committee.

Note: Criteria for judging the nature of the ministry may include such things as distance from other Reformed churches, character and need of the community, extent of the congregation's ministry and witness within the community, level of congregational stewardship.

- c. A congregation applying for continuing assistance, upon receiving the approval under the conditions stated in 6, a and b (above), may negotiate terms other than those spoken of in 7, c (below). These terms shall have the approval of classis and the FSC denominational committee.

—*Adopted*

7. That synod implement 5 (above) in the following manner:

- a. That the ten years begin for all churches currently funded by FSC on January 1 of the year following the adoption of this motion by synod.
- b. That all ministries which apply to FSC after this date will negotiate with the FSC Committee at the time of initial application for length of the funding period, which will normally not exceed ten years.

- c. That normally assistance be granted at the following declining percentage rates of the FSC formula: 100, 90, 80, 70, 60, 50, 40, 30, 20, 10.

—Adopted

8. That synod declare the above decisions to be the framework within which previous decisions regarding eligibility and viability (e.g., church size and financial contribution) shall remain in force except where directly superseded by Synod 1995's decision.

—Adopted

9. That synod authorize the FSC Committee to negotiate specific terms with individual classes during the transitional time of the next ten years.

—Adopted

10. That synod declare its adoption of Recommendations 2 through 9 to be its response to Overtures 11 through 16.

—Adopted

ARTICLE 100

(The report of Advisory Committee 9 is continued from Article 91.)

Advisory Committee 9, Church Order II, Rev. Lambert J. Sikkema reporting, presents the following:

Clarify the meaning of "settled and binding" (majority report)

A. *Material*: Overture 2, pp. 323-24

B. *Background*

The denomination requires its leaders to follow a very specific procedure if they disagree with the confessions but historically has allowed much greater flexibility concerning disagreement with synodical decisions. Synodical decisions represent the official position of the denomination. In that sense they are "settled and binding." The denomination expects all members to treat synodical decisions with great respect, but it has not required every member to agree with those decisions and has not sought to force such obedience.

Overture 2 cites a decision of Synod 1975 and states that "we are not told what it means to 'abide' by synodical deliverance or even what 'binding' means" (*Agenda for Synod 1995*, p. 323). The report by which the 1975 decision was shaped, however, did indeed give some definition to those words. The report stated,

Full agreement with the *confessions* is expected from all members of the church and subscription to the confessions is required of all office-bearers signing the Form of Subscription. While *synodical decisions* are "settled and binding," subscription to synodical decisions is not required. Registering a negative vote with regard to a synodical decision is permissible, although this is not tolerated with respect to the confessions. In some instances synod has itself designated the degree of latitude which it permits (*Acts of Synod 1960*, p. 114), but such decisions should not be applied universally. Guidelines for study, pastoral advice and other decisions of this nature allow for varying measures of agreement. Office-bearers are expected to "abide by" certain specified deliverances of synod as well as to synodical decisions in general. The well-being of the church is fostered when there is substantial unity

with respect to all the decisions of synod. Yet the differences between the confessions and synodical pronouncements is evident in the measure of agreement that is expected.

(Acts of Synod 1975, pp. 601-02)

This overture indicates that a classis does not agree with the teaching of a certain professor at Calvin College. It indicates that it is not satisfied with the results of its appeal to the Calvin College Board of Trustees. The decision of the board, however, reflects the freedom this denomination has always granted to its members relative to synodical decisions. The church can expect a professor to present the "official denominational position" while explaining other positions that Christians hold.

C. Recommendations

1. That synod declare that the phrase "settled and binding" (see Church Order Art. 29) means that synodical decisions are the official positions of the Christian Reformed Church, not that full agreement with those decisions is required of all members of the church.

Ground: The 1975 report indicates that synod has always left room for an individual's right to disagree with synodical decisions, something which cannot be tolerated with respect to the ecumenical creeds and the Reformed confessions.

2. That synod declare this to be its answer to Overture 2.

According to the Rules for Synodical Procedure, the minority report is read as information by Rev. Ronald D. De Young.

Clarify the meaning of "settled and binding" (minority report)

A. Material: Overture 2, pp. 323-24

B. Observations

Classis Wisconsin overtures Synod 1995 "to clarify the meaning of the phrase 'settled and binding' in Church Order Article 29." This request was triggered by its concern that a professor at Calvin College allegedly held and publicly expressed a position at variance with an ethical pronouncement of synod. Classis Wisconsin was not satisfied with the response of the Calvin College Board of Trustees to its concern.

In the grounds to its overture, Classis Wisconsin raises many questions about the meaning of "settled and binding," about the relationship of synod's ethical and doctrinal pronouncements to Article 29, about whether non-CRC employees of a CRC agency are bound by synodical pronouncements, and about the role of academic freedom. The overture itself, however, involves only a request to clarify the meaning of "settled and binding" in Article 29. Synod should not attempt to answer all of Classis Wisconsin's questions listed in its grounds.

Although Synod 1975 made some very helpful distinctions about the types of synodical decisions and about their scope, authority, use, and function, there is still some value in responding to this overture with a concise statement of the meaning of the phrase "settled and binding." Our understanding of this phrase will contribute to our unity as all of us come to grips with our responsibility in response to synodical decisions.

C. Recommendations

1. That synod declare that when Article 29 of the Church Order states "the decisions of the assemblies shall be considered settled and binding, unless it is proved that they conflict with the Word of God or the Church Order," it means thereby that
 - a. Such decisions have set forth the official position of that assembly and will only be reconsidered if it is proven that they are in conflict with the Word of God or the Church Order or if new and sufficient grounds are adduced.
 - b. Such decisions are normative, and the assemblies, agencies, and/or members to whom they apply ought to feel duty bound to faithfully observe them in practice.

Ground: This interpretation reflects the usual linguistic and historic ecclesiastical understanding of this phrase in the Church Order.

2. That this be synod's answer to Overture 2.

Synod returns to its consideration of the recommendations of the majority report.

1. That synod declare that the phrase "settled and binding" (see Church Order Art. 29) means that synodical decisions are the official positions of the Christian Reformed Church, not that full agreement with those decisions is required of all members of the church.

Ground: The 1975 report indicates that synod has always left room for an individual's right to disagree with synodical decisions, something which cannot be tolerated with respect to the ecumenical creeds and the Reformed Confessions.

(The report of Advisory Committee 9 is continued in Article 104.)

ARTICLE 101

The morning session is adjourned; Elder Art Hoekstra leads in closing prayer.

WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON, June 21, 1995 Seventeenth Session

ARTICLE 102

Elder Robert W. Ettema reads from I Corinthians 15:51-58. He announces *Psalter Hymnal* 460, "Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise," and leads in opening prayer.

Rev. William Veenstra of the Reception Committee introduces Rev. Donald Galardi, fraternal delegate from the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, who addresses synod. The president of synod responds.

ARTICLE 103

A fifteen-minute presentation is made by Dr. Peter Borgdorff, executive director of ministries, on the Mission and Vision Statement.

(The report of Advisory Committee 1 is continued from Article 50.)

Advisory Committee 1, Synodical Services, Rev. Gordon H. Pols reporting, presents the following:

I. Mission and Vision Statement

A. *Material*: Overture 32, pp. 396-98

B. *Recommendations*

2. That synod refer the Mission and Vision Statement to the churches for study, discussion, and response.

Ground: The statement can serve as a powerful stimulus for communal reflection on who we are and what we perceive to be our task and mission as Reformed Christians in the modern world.

—*Adopted*

3. That this be synod's answer to Overture 32.

—*Adopted*

It is moved that synod reconsider Recommendation 8 of Synodical Services, Advisory Committee Report 1-A (cf. Art. 41, B, 8).

—*Adopted*

II. Board of Trustees

A. *Material*: Board of Trustees Report, Appendix A-2 (Amended Bylaws), Art. XI, p. 60

B. *Recommendations*

8. That synod approve the change from "These Bylaws may be amended by synod upon recommendation of the Board of Trustees" to "These Bylaws may be amended by synod."

Ground: The addition of the words "upon recommendation of the Board of Trustees" unduly limits suggested amendments which might originate from classes.

—*Adopted*

III. Appointing study committees is the work of synod (recommitted)

A. *Material*: Overture 43, pp. 407-09

B. *Recommendations*

1. That whenever the Board of Trustees proposes to synod policy changes which would directly affect the life and ministry of congregations and

classes, the Board will follow the schedule for distributing materials that is required of study committees.

Ground: This will allow churches and classes adequate time for response before synod acts on the recommendations.

—*Adopted*

2. That synod reaffirm that it alone has the authority to appoint study committees.

Ground: Denominational restructuring has resulted in some uncertainty in the church on this matter.

—*Adopted*

(The report of Advisory Committee 1 is continued in Article 108.)

ARTICLE 104

(The report of Advisory Committee 9 is continued from Article 100.)

Advisory Committee 9, Church Order II, Rev. Lambert J. Sikkema reporting, presents the following:

I. Clarify the meaning of “settled and binding”

A. *Material:* Overture 2, pp. 323-24

B. *Recommendations*

1. That synod declare that the phrase “settled and binding” (cf. Church Order Art. 29) means that synodical decisions are the official positions of the Christian Reformed Church, not that full agreement with those decisions is required of all members of the church.

Ground: The 1975 report indicates that synod has always left room for an individual's right to disagree with synodical decisions, something which cannot be tolerated with respect to the ecumenical creeds and the Reformed confessions.

—*Defeated*

2. That synod declare this to be its answer to Overture 2.

—*Action withheld*

II. Change Church Order Articles 51-a and 54-b re second service

A. *Material:* Overture 6, pp. 326-29

B. *Background*

This overture addresses the second worship service, a long-standing and well-respected practice that has undergone significant change in the past number of years. Part of the change results because of God's blessing on our efforts to become a multiethnic denomination. Some who have recently joined us worship on another evening of the week or gather for early morning prayer services. Part of the change results because some in our own tradition no longer

attend a second preaching service. Some attend a Bible study, a care group, or an educational program to further their spiritual growth. Others remain at home with their families. There is a wide diversity in our denomination, and in most classes there are churches that do not have a second preaching service.

This overture envisions the use of the second service time in a variety of ways and requests that synod make this possible by amending Church Order Article 51-a to read, "*Ordinarily*, the congregation shall assemble for worship twice on the Lord's Day . . ." When a second preaching service does not currently exist in a number of our congregations, it is hardly realistic or honest for synod to amend this article to require congregations to have a second preaching service *most of the time*. Synod can better address this concern by amending this article to require congregations to meet for a preaching service once instead of twice and by encouraging them to gather for a second opportunity to grow spiritually—a preaching service, a Bible study, a fellowship group, or a gathering of an educational nature. This will indicate synod's desire that Sunday be a special day for worship of God and for spiritual growth and will also give freedom to each congregation to do, during the second service time, whatever fits its situation best.

Currently, Church Order Article 54 calls ministers to preach the Word as summarized in the Heidelberg Catechism. The overture asks that the Belgic Confession and the Canons of Dort (our other two doctrinal standards) and the Contemporary Testimony be added to this article. Synod 1973 encouraged pastors to use the Belgic Confession and Canons of Dort as additional source material for doctrinal preaching. Synod 1983 encouraged the use of the Contemporary Testimony in worship, but no synod has encouraged ministers to use it as a basis for preaching.

The overture also asks that another question be added to Church Order Article 41. We note that the Committee on Disability Concerns is also proposing that a question be added to Article 41 (*Agenda for Synod 1995*, p. 189) and that many other questions could be added to this article. We believe that the church will not be well served by a proliferation of questions under this article.

C. Recommendations

1. That synod revise Church Order Article 51-a to read as follows:

The congregation shall assemble for worship on the Lord's Day to hear God's Word, to receive the sacraments, to engage in praise and prayer, and to present gifts of gratitude.

This reading would replace the present Article 51-a:

The congregation shall assemble for worship at least twice on the Lord's Day to hear God's Word, to receive the sacraments, to engage in praise and prayer, and to present gifts of gratitude.

Grounds:

- a. This revision maintains the denomination's desire that God's people attend a preaching service on the Lord's Day.
- b. This revision responds realistically to the increasing diversity within God's growing family.

—Defeated

It is moved to table the advisory-committee report to consider the recommendation of Overture 6.

Recommendation A is presented (cf. *Agenda for Synod 1995*, p. 328):

To change Church Order Article 51-a to read (change indicated by italics),

Ordinarily, the congregation shall assemble for worship twice on the Lord's Day to hear God's Word, to receive the sacraments, to engage in praise and prayer, and to present gifts of gratitude.

It is moved that synod recommit the entire matter to the advisory committee.

—*Adopted*

III. Revise the ratification process

A. Materials

1. Overture 8, pp. 330-32
2. Overture 9, p. 332
3. Overture 10, pp. 332-46

B. Background

In recent years there has been considerable debate about the nature of the "ratification" process by which Church Order changes are finally made. Three overtures ask synod to address this issue. One suggests ways in which the process can be revised. One requests the appointment of a study committee "to recommend ways of bringing the current misunderstandings about ratification of Church Order changes in line with Church Order Article 47." Another, after a detailed study of Church Order changes made since the adoption of Article 47, recommends specific regulations to replace the current regulations in the supplement to Article 47.

We commend Classis Lake Erie for its thorough study and encourage other classes to do the same instead of requesting synod to appoint study committees. We do not believe that a synodically appointed study committee will improve on the report before us. We are recommending its adoption with one change.

C. Recommendations

1. That synod replace the current material in Church Order Supplement, Article 47 with the following:

Regulations pertaining to Article 47 of the Church Order

- a. A substantial alteration is any alteration which changes the essential meaning of the creeds or the articles of the Church Order or which changes the church's regulation of its worship through the adopted liturgical forms, *Psalter Hymnal*, principles and elements of worship, or the designated Bible versions to be used in the worship services. A committee recommending any change in these matters shall specify what change is being recommended and shall state whether or not the change is a "substantial alteration."

(Note: This change incorporates 1 and 3 of the supplement to Article 47 as it currently exists. This note is only for explanation for Synod 1995. It is not to be included in the supplement.)

- b. *Prior opportunity* is understood as sufficient time for churches and classes to be able to respond to a substantial alteration with overtures or other communications to synod before the substantial alteration is adopted. Generally, churches and classes have prior opportunity in the case of study-committee reports because such reports are received by November 1 of the year before synod meets. Generally, churches and classes do not have prior opportunity in the case of standing-committee reports and overtures because the printed *Agenda for Synod* is received only two months before synod meets and one month after the majority of the classes have had their last meetings before synod.
- c. If the churches and classes have not had prior opportunity to consider a substantial alteration, it must be submitted to a following synod, which will consider its advisability. The first decision shall be understood as a decision to propose; the action of a following synod shall be understood as a decision to adopt.
- d. A proposed change may not be implemented until it is adopted by a following synod. It has no effect on any other synodical decisions until it is adopted.
- e. A proposed change has the same status as a recommendation of a study committee. The synod proposing the change may designate a person(s) to represent the change at the synod to which it is submitted for adoption. The proposed change and its representatives have all the rights and privileges of the recommendations and representatives of a synodical study committee.
- f. Changes to Church Order supplements are not subject to the above requirements.

Grounds:

- 1) These statements eliminate the confusion surrounding the concept of "ratification."
- 2) These statements preserve the language and simplicity of the Church Order.
- 3) These statements safeguard the church's desire that churches and classes are fully informed about major changes in denominational policy while preserving the authority of synod to act decisively.

—*Adopted*

- g. A proposed change not adopted by one synod remains available for three years for adoption by a following synod when two conditions are met:
 - 1) The available change is substantially the same as the change earlier proposed.
 - 2) The available change is adopted as a response to a matter legally on the agenda of that synod (cf. Church Order Art. 31).

—*Defeated*

- 2. That synod instruct the general secretary to incorporate a reference to Supplement, Article 47 in materials given to study committees, synodical advisory committees, and any other committees that may recommend changes in materials described in Article 47.

Grounds:

- a. These are the committees that will be proposing changes to synod.
- b. Supplement, Article 47 mandates these committees to notify synod if proposed changes are *substantial alterations*. Such notification will alleviate the confusion on the floor of synod that results when advisory committees give no guidance concerning this question.

—Adopted

3. That synod declare this to be its answer to Overtures 8, 9, and 10.

—Adopted

IV. Change the name of the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA

A. *Material*: Overture 30, pp. 393-94

B. *Background*

Church Order Article 33 requires synod to appoint a synodical interim committee to act for it in matters that must be addressed before the next synod. When the Christian Reformed Church became incorporated in 1974, the Synodical Interim Committee was designated as the "Board of Trustees of the corporation for all legal purposes" (*Acts of Synod 1974*, pp. 49, 410) even though it retained the name Synodical Interim Committee.

Because of the denomination's concern for the effective and efficient coordination of its work, Synod 1971 expanded the three-member Synodical Committee into a new Synodical Interim Committee with more than a dozen members representing various regions of the denomination. It gave the committee new rules that "made it clear that, for the first time, an agency was being brought into existence which would have as part of its mandate the responsibility to monitor the work of other denominational agencies . . ." (*Acts of Synod 1971*, p. 549). For the next two decades discussion continued about the most effective way to supervise the agencies, and in 1990 synod approved a plan to strengthen "the mandate of the Synodical Interim Committee by giving it the authority to manage the denomination's ministries and agencies" and to appoint "an executive director of denominational ministries, who will exercise ongoing management on behalf of synod and its interim committee" (*Acts of Synod 1990*, p. 675).

The Synodical Interim Committee submitted a constitution to Synod 1993 in which it changed its name to the Board of Trustees. That constitution was provisionally adopted and will be given final approval at Synod 1996.

Overture 30 acknowledges that the Synodical Interim Committee is not a suitable name for this board in light of the new functions given to it. It also requests that synod change the name to something that more clearly indicates that this board is "primarily an ecclesiastical entity and only secondarily a legal corporate entity."

The concern about the nature of this board and about a name that reflects its nature is not a new one. The "Vision 21" Committee (1983-1987) worked with the name "Executive Board." The Structure Review Committee (1987-1990) observed, "As some of the responses to the 'Vision 21' report indicated, the name 'Executive Board' may connote a superboard with independent authority" (*Agenda for Synod 1990*, p. 338). Overture 30 expresses the same concern in

Ground C: "The name Board of Trustees . . . gives the impression that the ecclesiastical structure of the CRC has become hierarchical. The name of the board should instead suggest that it is a servant of synod" (*Agenda for Synod 1995*, p. 394). The same concerns have been expressed on the floor of Synod 1995.

Various names could be suggested for this Board. The Structure Review Committee seriously addressed this in its study and said, "We are recommending the name 'Synodical Administrative Board' because it better describes the board's function and the source of its authority. . . . The task of the Synodical Administrative Board will not be to establish new policies or to govern the denomination or its work. It will rather have the authority that is mandated to it by synod to administer the work approved by synod" (*Agenda for Synod 1990*, p. 338). Though Synod 1990 revised the plan presented by the Structure Review Committee, it took no action on the name proposed.

C. Recommendation

1. That synod change the name of the Board of Trustees to Synodical Administrative Board.

Ground: This name better describes the Board's function and the source of its authority. The Board administers the affairs of synod between synods and administers the work approved by synod.

—*Tabled*

(The report of Advisory Committee 9 is continued in Article 111.)

ARTICLE 105

The afternoon session is adjourned. The evening session will convene at 7:00 p.m. Elder H. John Laninga leads in closing prayer.

WEDNESDAY EVENING, June 21, 1995 Eighteenth Session

ARTICLE 106

Elder Ernest J. Dykema reads Psalm 90. He announces *Psalter Hymnal* 462, "Amazing Grace—How Sweet the Sound," and leads in opening prayer.

ARTICLE 107

(The report of Advisory Committee 8 is continued from Article 45.)

Advisory Committee 8, Church Order I, Rev. John A. Ooms reporting, presents the following:

I. Clarifying the expression "expounding the Word"

A. Materials

1. Committee to Study Clarifying the Expression "Expounding the Word" Report, pp. 304-08
2. Overture 20, pp. 376-82
3. Overture 21, pp. 383-84
4. Overture 22, p. 384

B. Background

Synod 1992 adopted the recommendation "to encourage the churches to use the gifts of women members to the fullest extent possible in their local churches, including allowing women to teach, expound the Word of God, and provide pastoral care, under the supervision of the elders" (*Acts of Synod 1992*, Art. 105, B, 5). Synod 1994 appointed a study committee "to clarify the expression 'expounding the Word' as used in the decision of 1992 and report to Synod 1995" (*Acts of Synod 1994*, p. 526). The decision of Synod 1995 on June 19 regarding Church Order Article 3 and its supplement created new circumstances that needed to be taken into account by the advisory committee if it was to serve synod well.

C. Recommendations

1. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Dr. Henry De Moor of the study committee when this report is considered.
—Granted
2. That synod reject the study committee's recommendations to "declare the expression 'expounding the word' as used in the decision of Synod 1992 to mean that women ought to be encouraged to use their gifts of interpreting, teaching, and applying the Word of God in a variety of ministry contexts but not for exhorting and preaching in official worship services."

Grounds:

- a. Synod 1994 mandated the committee "to clarify the expression 'expounding the Word' as used in the decision of Synod 1992 . . ." (*Acts of Synod 1992*, Art. 105, B, 5). The committee in its report says it has not done that: "But exactly what synod meant by the expression 'expounding the Word' would not be appropriate for our committee to say, since this was not specified in writing by the synod" (*Agenda for Synod 1995*, p. 305).
 - b. The committee makes no attempt to understand how Synod 1992 did/did not handle the Church Order. Instead, the committee explains various Church Order articles and then applies those articles to the 1992 decision, altering rather than understanding or clarifying the decision.
—Action withheld
3. That synod declare that Synod 1992 adopted the expression "expound the Word" to give churches the option of having a woman bring her prepared message for official worship services.

Ground: The *Acts of Synod 1992* and the reports of synodical delegates and official media indicate that this was synod's intention, and the practice of the

church over the past three years indicates that the church has correctly understood this intention.

—*Adopted*

The following negative vote with statement is registered:

This decision does not answer 1994's study-committee mandate with the ground that "the term expounding" needs to be clarified in relationship to "preaching" and "exhorting" and the Church Order articles relating to each.

Roger W. Sparks (Iakota)

4. That synod declare

- a. That the decision of Synod 1992 regarding "expounding the Word of God" is no longer required and no longer in effect.

Grounds:

- 1) The desire of Synod 1992 to encourage greater use of women's gifts in conducting official worship services is addressed by Synod 1995's decision.
- 2) Providing a separate category for women to expound the Word of God is no longer necessary.

—*Defeated*

- b. That women who have already graduated with the M.Div. degree from Calvin Theological Seminary and who have met all the requirements may apply to the Board of Trustees of Calvin Theological Seminary for candidacy until synod reconsiders in the year 2000 the matter of Church Order Article 3 and its supplements.

Ground: This provides the avenue for women who have recently graduated to benefit from Synod 1995's decision since they are not covered by a policy which the seminary would develop for next year's students.

—*Adopted*

The following negative vote with statement is registered:

This recommendation is a clear violation of my conscience.

Daryl E. Kats (Northcentral Iowa)

5. That the supplement to Church Order Article 43 indicate that synod extends the 1995 decision regarding the term "male" in Church Order Article 3 to the term "men" in Church Order Article 43.

Grounds:

- a. This is consistent with the decision of Synod 1995 regarding Article 3 and its supplement.
- b. This would make it permissible for a classis which has so decided to license a woman to exhort.

—*Adopted*

The following register their negative votes:

Henry Docter (California South) and James I. Park (California South).

The following negative vote with statement is registered:

I register my negative vote on the basis that the Bible forbids women, however gifted they may be, from holding office of minister and elder (I Cor. 11:2-16; 14:33-35; I Tim. 2:11-12).

Randal S. Lankheet (California South)

6. That synod declare the above decisions to be its response to Overtures 20, 21, and 22.

—Adopted

7. That synod dismiss the study committee with thanks for its work.

—Adopted

II. Response to Overtures 23, 24, 26, and 27 (revised)

A. Materials

1. Overture 23, pp. 384-86
2. Overture 24, p. 386
3. Overture 26, p. 387
4. Overture 27, pp. 387-88
5. Communication 9, pp. 552-53
6. The decision of this synod to "return the issue of ecclesiastical noncompliance to Advisory Committee 8 for advice on establishing a study committee to consider the development of guidelines and procedures for dealing with matters of ecclesiastical noncompliance" (cf. *Acts of Synod 1995*, Art. 20).

B. Observations

Overtures 23, 24, 26, and 27 are variations on the theme of synod's being requested to discipline churches and/or classes for ecclesiastical noncompliance on the matter of women as elders, evangelists, and ministers. The item mentioned in number 6 under Materials was the result of a well-intended motion made by a delegate on the floor of synod.

C. Recommendations

1. That synod not accede to Overtures 23, 24, 26, and 27.

Ground: Synod's decision of June 19, 1995, regarding Church Order Article 3 and its supplement makes the actions contemplated by the overtures no longer warranted.

—Adopted

2. That synod not appoint a study committee regarding possible guidelines and procedures dealing with ecclesiastical noncompliance.

Grounds:

- a. The motion adopted by synod came from the floor in the context of a debate regarding ecclesiastical noncompliance on the matter of women in office. The decision of this synod relating to Article 3 and its supplement has removed this issue.
- b. If synod desires to pursue the matter of a study committee, it would be best served by doing so in response to an overture from one of our

churches documenting the scope and prevalence of ecclesiastical non-compliance.

—Adopted

ARTICLE 108

(The report of Advisory Committee 1 is continued from Article 103.)

Advisory Committee 1, Synodical Services, chairman Rev. Roger E. Van Harn reporting, presents the following:

Ratification of Church Order articles (recommitted)

A. *Material: Agenda for Synod 1995, pp. 31-33, Section II, A, 7*

B. Recommendation

That synod ratify the revision of Article 14-b of the Church Order as decided by Synod 1994.

—Adopted

ARTICLE 109

(The report of Advisory Committee 4 is continued from Article 69.)

Advisory Committee 4, Publications, Rev. William T. Koopmans reporting, presents the following:

Clarification of public profession of faith for covenant children (recommitted)

A. *Materials* (see Article 69)

B. Recommendations

1. That Church Order Article 59-a be divided into two parts to reflect these membership categories:

Article 59-a

Members by baptism shall be admitted to the Lord's Supper upon a public profession of their faith in Christ with the use of a prescribed form. Before the profession of faith the consistory shall ensure that there be an appropriate examination concerning their motives, faith, and life. Their membership shall be designated as "confessing member." The names of those who are to be admitted to the Lord's Supper shall be announced to the congregation for approval at least one Sunday before the public profession of faith.

Article 59-b

Confessing members who have reached the age of 18 and who have made a commitment to the creeds of the Christian Reformed Church and the responsibilities of adult membership in the church shall be accorded the full rights and privileges of such membership.

(Note: The current 59-b and 59-c would become 59-c and 59-d.)

—Adopted

2. That synod declare that this change in Church Order Article 59 is not a substantial alteration and thus need not be ratified by a following synod (Church Order Art. 47 and its supplement).

—Adopted

Grounds for recommendations re clarification of public profession of faith for covenant children:

- a. These actions will "clarify the requirement of public profession of faith for admission to the Lord's Supper on the part of younger covenant children" in a manner consistent with the decisions of Synod 1988.
- b. These actions will serve the churches by giving some flexibility within a common structure.

—Adopted

ARTICLE 110

(The report of Advisory Committee 7 is continued from Article 63.)

Advisory Committee 7, Interdenominational Matters, Rev. Henry P. Kranenburg reporting, presents the following:

Request to form a Korean-speaking classis in California

A. Material: Overture 47

B. Background

Classes California South and Greater Los Angeles and their Korean Classis Study Committee spent several years studying the matter of creating a separate Korean-speaking classis. Based on this study, the study committee recommended to both classes that they ask synod to create a Korean-speaking classis. Classis California South did not adopt the recommendation; Classis Greater Los Angeles adopted the recommendation unanimously and sent it to synod in the form of Overture 47.

C. Observations

There is no doubt in the mind of the advisory committee that the concerns that led these two classes to study this matter are real, need to be addressed and are, in fact, also experienced elsewhere in the denomination by churches in which English is not the primary language. We make the following observations with respect specifically to Overture 47, although it is our hope that addressing this matter will not provide help only for the needs specific to this geographical area:

Discussions with Korean delegates and delegates of the two classes involved indicate that there is not full agreement among Korean-speaking churches on the merits of this overture.

In the process of forming Classis Red Mesa, a number of issues pertaining to such matters as English-language use, leadership, leadership training, integration, and ministry shares were addressed which have not been fully addressed in Overture 47. These matters should be considered before the viability of this recommendation and the possibility of its success can be evaluated. It needs to be noted,

however, that the issue of a Korean-speaking classis is not an issue of geography but primarily of language and also culture and integration. Therefore the formation of a Korean-speaking classis is breaking new ground.

In the advisory committee's discussions with Rev. John Choi (Korean-ministry director) and others, the matter of the fifteen-year term length was brought up. It has been confirmed to the committee that the intention of the limit and its implementation are not clear and likely not workable, especially given the possibility of rapid growth within this new classis. This makes a five-year review by synod an advisable consideration.

Our discussions also recognized the possible need for "mentoring" this new classis, a position in which Classis Greater Los Angeles/Classis California South could be of great help. Through this mentoring, checkpoints along the way can be worked out by Classis Greater Los Angeles/Classis California South together with the Korean churches to encourage the formation and growth of this classis.

In light of the above observations, the advisory committee, in a positive spirit, makes the following recommendations.

D. Recommendations

1. That synod withhold action on Overture 47.

Grounds:

- a. The two classes involved in the study did not reach agreement on the recommendations of their study committee as to the need for a Korean-speaking classis.
- b. Overture 47 does not provide a clear strategy for fully integrating Korean-speaking churches into the life and ministry of the broader CRC.
 - 1) It lacks a clear strategy regarding what will happen at the end of the term to incorporate the individual churches into other classes.
 - 2) It lacks a clear strategy regarding what will happen during the life of the classis to build relationships with the broader church. For example, questions and answers 7 and 11 in the Appendix (*Acts of Synod 1995*, pp. 414-16) move in a helpful direction but are very vague.
- c. Questions on the matters raised in the observations, together with concerns over appropriate structuring and controls, should be addressed before synod makes a decision of this weight.

—Adopted

2. That synod request and encourage Classes Greater Los Angeles and California South, together with the Korean-speaking churches of Classes Greater Los Angeles and California South and in consultation with the Ministries Coordinating Council and the Korean Council, to present to Synod 1996 a recommendation for a Korean-speaking classis with details as to the monitoring and growth of a Korean-speaking classis, including addressing the questions and concerns raised in the above observations.

Grounds:

- a. There are strong reasons to consider the formation of a Korean-speaking classis, and synod should encourage this consideration.

- b. The formation of a Korean-speaking classis is precedent setting and should be more clearly worked out in detail prior to implementation.
- c. This will give opportunity to the Korean churches to take greater ownership in the formation of the classis prior to its implementation and to come to greater agreement on the merits it may hold for the individual Korean churches.

—Adopted

ARTICLE 111

(The report of Advisory Committee 9 is continued from Article 104.)

Advisory Committee 9, Church Order II, Rev. Lambert J. Sikkema reporting, presents the following:

I. Change the name of the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA (cf. Art. 104, IV)

A. *Material*: Overture 30, pp. 393-94

B. *Background* (see Article 104)

C. *Recommendations*

1. That synod change the name of the Board of Trustees to the Synodical Administrative Board.

Ground: This name better describes the Board's function and the source of its authority. The Board administers the affairs of synod between synods and administers the work approved by synod.

It is moved to refer this recommendation to the Board of Trustees and to ask it to report on this matter to Synod 1996.

—Adopted

2. That this be synod's answer to Overture 30.

—Adopted

II. Change Church Order Articles 51-a and 54-b re second service

A. *Material*: Overture 6, pp. 326-29

B. *Background*

This overture addresses the second worship service, a long-standing and well-respected practice that has undergone significant change in the past number of years. Part of the change results because of God's blessing on our efforts to become a multiethnic denomination. Some who have joined us recently worship on another evening of the week or gather for early morning prayer services. Part of the change results because some in our own tradition no longer attend a second preaching service. Some attend a Bible study, a care group, or an educational program to further their spiritual growth. Others remain at home with their families. There is a wide diversity in our denomination, and in most classes there are churches that do not have a second preaching service.

This overture envisions the use of the second-service time in a variety of ways and requests that synod make this possible by amending Church Order Article 51-a to read, "*Ordinarily*, the congregation shall assemble for worship twice on the Lord's Day" When a second preaching service does not currently exist in a number of our congregations, it is hardly realistic or honest for synod to amend this article to require congregations to have a second preaching service *most of the time*. Synod can better address this concern by amending this article to require congregations to meet for a preaching service once instead of twice and by encouraging them to gather for a second opportunity to grow spiritually—a preaching service, a Bible study, a fellowship group, or a gathering of an educational nature. This will indicate synod's desire that Sunday be a special day for worship of God and for spiritual growth and will also give freedom to each congregation to do, during the second-service time, whatever fits its situation best.

Currently, Church Order Article 54 calls ministers to preach the Word as summarized in the Heidelberg Catechism. The overture asks that the Belgic Confession and the Canons of Dort (our other two doctrinal standards) and the Contemporary Testimony be added to this article. Synod 1973 encouraged pastors to use the Belgic Confession and Canons of Dort as additional source material for doctrinal preaching. Synod 1983 encouraged the use of the Contemporary Testimony in worship, but no synod has encouraged ministers to use it as a basis for preaching.

The overture also asks that another question be added to Church Order Article 41. We note that the Committee on Disability Concerns is also proposing that a question be added to Article 41 (*Agenda for Synod 1995*, p. 189) and that many other questions could be added to this article. We believe that the church will not be well served by a proliferation of questions under this article.

C. Recommendations

1. That synod propose* the following change to Church Order Article 51-a, deleting the words *at least* and adding the word *ordinarily* so that the new reading would be,

The congregation shall assemble for worship, *ordinarily* twice on the Lord's Day, to hear God's Word, to receive the sacraments, to engage in praise and prayer, and to present gifts of gratitude.

Ground: Inserting the word *ordinarily* allows congregations some flexibility in responding to local need.

—Adopted

The following negative vote is registered: Kenneth F. Benjamins (Chatham).

2. That synod include the following as a supplement to Church Order Article 51:
 - a. Synod affirms the rich tradition of assembling for worship twice on the Lord's Day and encourages existing congregations to continue and new congregations to embrace this tradition for the building up of the body of Christ.

* This change needs to be adopted by Synod 1996.

- b. Where congregations are exploring alternatives to the second service, synod encourages those congregations to ensure that such alternatives are part of a strategic ministry plan with full accountability to their classes.

Ground: A supplement affirms the value of a second preaching service and indicates that a council is responsible to the broader assembly regarding the alternatives it provides for the members under its supervision.

—*Adopted*

3. That this be the answer to Overture 6.

—*Adopted*

ARTICLE 112

It is moved that synod authorize the Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church in North America to insert a section into the abuse guidelines concerning the requirements of specific Church Order and possibly judicial steps which need to be taken before discipline is formally applied. The result of the advisory panel cannot by itself constitute sufficient grounds for the council to administer discipline.

—*Adopted*

ARTICLE 113

It is moved that synod approve the following members for the Committee to Design a One-Calendar-Week Synod and recommend such a plan to Synod 1996:

Rev. Michael De Vries, Rev. Jake Kuipers, Elder Ken Kuipers, Elder Donald Langerak, Rev. Howard Vanderwell; advisers: Dr. David H. Engelhard, general secretary, and Dr. Peter Borgdorff, executive director of ministries.

—*Adopted*

It is moved that synod approve the following members to the Committee to Study Ordination and "Official Acts of Ministry":

Dr. Robert C. De Vries, Mr. Herb De Ruyter, Rev. Jack B. Vos, Ms. Ruth Hofman, Dr. David Holwerda, Dr. Derke Bergsma, Mr. Elmer Yazzie; adviser: Dr. David H. Engelhard.

—*Adopted*

It is moved that synod approve the following members for the Committee to Study Structure for Ministry in Canada—Phase 2:

Mr. Ben Vandezande, Mr. Jan Vander Woerd, Rev. Allan C. Groen, Rev. Robert De Moor, Rev. Gordon Pols, Rev. Jake Kuipers, Rev. Ralph Koops, and Rev. Neil de Koning; alternate: J. Hans Vander Stoep.

The following negative vote with statement is registered:

Synod 1995 encouraged boards, agencies, and *itself and future synods* to include in their committees persons who reflect the gender diversity of our denomination (cf. synod's response to Overture 44). The composition of this committee is a sad commentary on the seriousness with which synod takes this decision.

George F. Vander Weit (Lake Erie)

I. Officials, appointments, and functionaries are presented for review. This listing reflects the results of the synodical elections and appointments and includes study committees which are synodically approved.

A. Offices

1. General secretary: Dr. David Engelhard (1998)
2. Executive director of ministries: Dr. Peter Borgdorff (1996)
3. Director of finance and administration: Mr. Robert Van Stright

B. Functionaries

Arrangements for synod: Mr. Donald Boender/Mr. Jeff Stob

II. Synodical deputies

Classis	Deputy	Alternate	Term Expires
Alberta North	Rev. C. Vriend	Rev. N. Cornelisse	1997
Alberta South	Rev. P. Nicolai	Rev. J. Corvers	1997
Arizona	Rev. G.L. Rutgers	Rev. G.J. Kamps	1997
Atlantic Northeast	Rev. W. Timmer	Rev. R.D. Steen	1997
B.C. North-West	Rev. H. Jonker	Rev. J.S. Hielema	1998
B.C. South-East	Rev. W.L. Vander Beek		1998
California South	Rev. R.L. Scheuers	Rev. R. Bultman	1998
Central California	Rev. J.R. Kok	Rev. G.G. Vink	1998
Chatham	Rev. J. Kuipers	Rev. A. De Jager	1996
Chicago South	Rev. H.B. Vanden Heuvel	Rev. J. Reiffer	1996
Columbia	Rev. J. Hofman, Jr.	Rev. V.L. Michael	1997
Eastern Canada	Rev. H.G. Gunnink		1998
Florida	Rev. R.G. Baker	Rev. M.A. Davies	1996
Georgetown	Rev. D. Tinklenberg	Rev. C. Bolt	1997
Grand Rapids East	Rev. S.E. Hoezee	Rev. R.M. Berkenbosch	1997
Grand Rapids North	Rev. C. Steenstra	Rev. D.J. Van Beek	1997
Grand Rapids South	Rev. E.R. Tigchelaar	Rev. C.D. Vander Meyden	1997
Grandville	Rev. J. Gorter	Rev. K.L. Havert	1998
Greater Los Angeles	Dr. J. Van Schepen	Rev. D.R. Koll	1997
Hackensack	Rev. S.J. Vander Klay	Rev. J. Vugteveen	1996
Hamilton	Rev. H.R. De Bolster	Rev. M. Van Donselaar	1998
Heartland	Dr. C.E. Zylstra	Rev. W.G. Van Hal	1997
Holland	Rev. J.H. Scholten	Rev. J.S. Meyer	1996
Hudson	Rev. J.J. Hoogland	Rev. J.G. Keizer	1998
Huron	Rev. M.D. Geleynse	Rev. R. Koops	1998
Iakota	Rev. D.W. De Groot	Rev. C.E. Fennema	1997
Illiana	Rev. G.H. Stoutmeyer	Dr. C.L. Bremer	1997
Kalamazoo	Dr. H. Minnema	Rev. J.H. Looman	1996
Lake Erie	Rev. W.J. Dykstra	Rev. C. Libolt	1996
Minnesota North	Rev. J. Joldersma	Rev. J.G. Busscher	1997
Minnesota South	Rev. J.D. Buwalda	Rev. T. Genzink	1997
Muskegon	Rev. J. Terpstra	Rev. L.P. Troast	1996
Niagara	Dr. H. Vander Plaats	Rev. H. Eshuis	1996
Northcentral Iowa	Rev. D.A. Zylstra	Rev. G.E. De Vries	1998

Classis	Deputy	Alternate	Term Expires
Northern Illinois	Rev. P. De Jong	Rev. T.H. Douma	1997
Northern Michigan	Rev. G.L. Essenburg	Rev. R. Klimp	1998
Pacific Northwest	Rev. R. Vander Ley	Rev. P.J. Kok	1997
Pella	Rev. L.J. Howerzyl	Rev. R.L. Bouwkamp	1997
Quinte	Rev. E. Gritter	Dr. Bill Van Groningen	1997
Red Mesa	Rev. W.K. Bulthuis	Rev. A. Begay	1997
Rocky Mountain	Rev. W. Verhoef	Rev. J.P. Boonstra	1997
Thornapple Valley	Rev. G.W. Sheeres	Rev. J.C. Medendorp	1998
Toronto	Rev. G. Ringnalda	Rev. P. Meyer	1997
Wisconsin	Rev. J. Bylsma	Rev. L.J. Kuiper	1996
Yellowstone	Rev. J. Weeda	Rev. B.J. Van Ee	1996
Zeeland	Rev. K.E. Van Wyk	Rev. J.W. Uitvlugt	1997

III. Boards and committees

A. Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church in North America

District	Member	Alternate	Term Expires
Far West U.S.			
Subgroup I	Dr. J. Van Schepen	Rev. A. Lindemulder	1996
Subgroup II	Dr. E. Vander Wall	Dr. T. Van Groningen	1996
Great Plains	Rev. A.L. Kuiper	Rev. D.A. Kamper	1998
	Mr. H.G. Vermeer	Mr. H. Van Maanen	1996
Central U.S.			
Subgroup I	Mr. M.H. Kuyers	Mr. D. Hoebeke	1998
	Dr. C.L. Bremer	Mr. W. Weidenaar	1997
Subgroup II	Mr. N. Gritter	Dr. W.R. Dahms	1997
Subgroup III	Rev. A.J. Schoonveld	Rev. J.W. Uitvlugt	1998
	Mr. H. Johnson	Dr. J. Strikwerda	1997
Subgroup IV	Mrs. K. Smith	Mrs. M.J. De Jong	1998
	Rev. W.R. Witte	Rev. B. Becksvoot	1996
Eastern U.S.	Rev. V. Geurkink	Rev. S.J. Workman	1996
Western Canada	Rev. P. Brouwer	Rev. A. Beukema	1997
Eastern Canada			
Subgroup I	Rev. J. Kuipers	Rev. E. Den Haan	1996
Subgroup II	Rev. G.H. Pols	Rev. G. Ringnalda	1998
	Mr. J.H. Vander Stoep	Mr. A. Schaafsma	1998
At-large	Mr. W. Wildeboer	Mr. D. De Jong	1996
	Dr. C.J. Rottman	Mrs. M. Minnema	1997
	Mrs. J. Vander Ploeg	Mrs. S. Gronsmann	1998
Ex officio	Dr. David H. Engelhard, general secretary		
	Dr. Peter Borgdorff, executive director of ministries		

B. Back to God Hour

Member	Area	Term Expires
Mr. M. Bosch	Rocky Mountain/Red Mesa	1996
Rev. C.J. De Ridder	California	1996
Rev. H. Dykema	Michigan	1996
Mrs. E. Greenway	Michigan	1996
Rev. H.P. Kranenburg	Eastern Canada	1996
Rev. J. Bylsma	Wisconsin	1997
Mrs. E. Palmer	Eastern United States	1997
Mr. M. Ozinga III	Chicago	1997
Rev. D. Sarkipato	Iowa	1997
Mr. J. Fernandez	Florida	1997
Rev. D.V. Hays	Washington	1997
Rev. P. Nicolai	Western Canada	1998
Mr. C.K. Oosthoek	Eastern Canada	1998
Mr. G. Vande Werken	Chicagoland	1998

C. Board of Trustees - Calvin College

Region	Member	Alternate	Term Expires
Far West U.S.			
Subgroup I	Rev. G.A. Smith	Rev. J. Dykema	1998
	Mr. D. Van Andel	Rev. D. Vander Veen	1996
Subgroup II	Mr. R. Polinder	Mr. D. Mellema	1997
Great Plains U.S.	Mr. R. Vander Laan	Mrs. C. Ackerman	1998
Central U.S.			
Subgroup I	Dr. W. De Rose	Dr. W. Venema	1996
	Mr. R. Buikema	Dr. J. De Roos	1998
Subgroup II	Mrs. Miriam Schaafsma	Rev. Kenneth A. Baker	1997
Subgroup III	Rev. J. Cooper	Mr. J. Postma	1997
	Mr. B. Woltjer	Dr. P. De Young	1998
Subgroup IV	Rev. M.N. Greidanus	Rev. D.J. Van Beek	1997
	Mr. R. Vander Laan	Mr. H. Vander Bee	1996
Eastern U.S.	Mr. P. Kiemel	Rev. C.J. De Vos	1996
	Dr. G. Gabrielse	Rev. D.B. Mouw	1998
Eastern Canada			
Subgroup I	Dr. J. Vriend	Mr. R. Datema	1998
Subgroup II	Mr. N. van Duyvendyk	Dr. R. Vander Vennen	1997
Western Canada	Mr. F. de Walle	Dr. N. Terpstra	1996
Alumni	Dr. Frank Pettinga		1996
	Dr. Mary Kooy		1997
	Mrs. Shirley Vogelzang Hoogstra		1998
At-large	Mrs. Grace Achterhof		1997
	Rev. Jason Chen		1996
	Mrs. Sheri Haan		1998
	Mr. Preston Kool		1997
	Mr. Jay Morren		1996
	Mr. Thomas Page		1998
	Mrs. Elsa Prince		1996
	Dr. John Van Engen		1998
	Dr. Bill Van Groningen		1997
	Mrs. Jann Van Stedum Van Vugt		1997
	Rev. John L. Witvliet		1997

D. Board of Trustees - Calvin Theological Seminary

Region	Member	Alternate	Term Expires
Far West U.S.			
Subgroup I	Rev. D.J. Klompeen	Rev. A. Lindemulder	1997
Subgroup II	Rev. J.R. Kok	Rev. K.D. Koeman	1997
Great Plains U.S.	Dr. C.E. Zylstra	Dr. E. Rubingh	1997
	Rev. D.J. Roeda	Dr. D. Deppe	1997
Central U.S.			
Subgroup I	Rev. C.R. Hoogendoorn	Rev. C.E. Bajema	1998
Subgroup II	Mr. E. Walcott	Dr. R. Prins	1996
Subgroup III	Rev. J.R. Boot	Rev. R.D. Ritsema	1996
	Rev. G.G. Heyboer	Rev. R.C. Heerspink	1998
Subgroup IV	Dr. L. Bierma	Dr. W.P. De Boer	1998
	Ms. N. Vander Ark	Rev. D.R. Fauble	1997
Eastern U.S.	Mr. P. Steensma	Rev. C.D. Freswick	1996
Eastern Canada			
Subgroup I	Rev. J.J. Hoytema	Rev. J.W. Jongsma	1997
Subgroup II	Rev. B.P. Velthuisen	Mr. W. Ubbens	1998
	Rev. W. Dykstra	Mr. H. Hultink	1996
Western Canada	Mr. J. Leder	Mr. P. Byl	1998
	Mr. H. Kielstra	Mr. D. Danielson	1996
At-large	Mr. L. Dykstra	Mr. S. Jansma, Jr.	1998
	Mr. R. Vermeer	Mr. B. Knoppers	1998
	Mr. T. Greidanus	Mr. Mark Muller	1997

E. CRC Publications

Classis	Delegate	Alternate	Term Expires
Alberta North	Mrs. C. Mahaffy	Mrs. B. Tiemstra	1996
Alberta South	Ms. P. De Boer	Ms. G. Heinen	1996
Arizona	Mrs. J. Kamps	Ms. B. Vander Lei	1998
Atlantic Northeast	Dr. T. Dykstra	Ms. L. Bieze	1997
B.C. North-West	Mr. F. Herfst	Rev. W.C. Veenstra	1996
B.C. South-East	Rev. A. Westerhuis	Mr. N. Ringma	1998
California South	Mr. M. Renkema	Mrs. B. Breems	1998
Central California	Mrs. A. Meester		1998
Chatham		Rev. J.W. Jongsma	1996
Chicago South	Rev. W.R. Lenters	Mr. J. Hamilton	1996
Columbia	Mrs. S. Imig	Mrs. C. Bosch	1997
Eastern Canada	Mrs. W. Runia	Mr. E. Geertsema	1995
Florida	Rev. P. Ingeneri	Miss D. De Boer	1996
Georgetown	Mrs. K. Ophoff	Ms. P. Dornbush	1998
Grand Rapids East	Ms. G. Goris-Stronks	Ms. J. Timmer	1997
Grand Rapids North	Mr. G. Kamps	Dr. C.T. Mulder	1998
Grand Rapids South	Rev. S. Mast	Rev. C.D. Vander Meyden	1996
Grandville	Rev. D.L. Smit	Rev. G.D. Postema	1997
Greater Los Angeles	Mrs. N. Winters		1997
Hackensack	Rev. P.A. Apol	Rev. S.R. Steenstra	1997
Hamilton	Mrs. A. Vander Woerd	Rev. P. Veltman	1998
Heartland	Mr. R. Wiersma	Mr. D. De Jong	1998
Holland	Mrs. C. Brummel	Mr. B. Den Boer	1996
Hudson	Mrs. S. Jost		1998
Huron	Mrs. M. Herfst	Mrs. J. Van Der Velden	1997
Iakota	Mr. V. Bakker	Mrs. S. Mathais	1998
Illiana	Mr. J. De Vries	Rev. B.J. Haan, Jr.	1998

Classis	Delegate	Alternate	Term Expires
Kalamazoo	Dr. D. Hendriksen	Rev. L.J. Vander Zee	1997
Lake Erie	Dr. G. Mavrodes	Mrs. L. Miller	1998
Minnesota North	Mr. J. Lipscomb	Mrs. C. Rudie	1997
Minnesota South	Ms. L. Van Beek	Mr. P. De Kam	1998
Muskegon	Rev. J. Terpstra	Rev. L.D. Van Dyke	1997
Niagara	Mr. C. Van Soelen	Rev. E. Groot-Nibbelink	1997
Northcentral Iowa	Rev. B. Wassink	Ms. R. Verbrugge	1996
Northern Illinois	Ms. M. Sytsma	Dr. G. Lubben	1996
Northern Michigan	Mr. E. Meyerling	Mrs. B. Verbrugge	1997
Pacific Northwest	Mr. S. Van Mersbergen	Rev. G.A. Terpstra	1996
Pella	Ms. K. Evenhouse	Rev. J.A. Holwerda	1996
Quinte	Mrs. J. Wildeboer	Mr. H. Nieuwstraten	1997
Red Mesa	Mrs. T. Rottschaffer	Mr. R. Slim	1997
Rocky Mountain	Ms. S. Ten Clay	Mr. M. Newton	1996
Thornapple Valley	Mrs. P. Boonstra	Mrs. S. Poel	1996
Toronto	Rev. H. Van Niejenhuis	Mr. H. Kuntz	1998
Wisconsin	Rev. A. Dieleman	Mr. R. Burghgraef	1997
Yellowstone	Mrs. S. Kamp	Mrs. K. Eekhoff	1998
Zeeland	Rev. D.R. Zimmerman	Rev. W. Renkema	1997
At-large (with expertise in finance and law)	Mr. Robert De Jong		1996
	Mr. James Meyer		1997
	Mr. Cecil Jenkins		1998
Fraternal delegate	Rev. Kenneth Bradsell (RCA)		1996

E. Christian Reformed Board of Home Missions

Classis	Delegate	Alternate	Term Expires
Alberta North	Rev. P.J. Boodt	Rev. P. Stel	1996
Alberta South	Rev. M. Reitsma	Rev. J.R. Huizinga	1997
Arizona	Mr. R. Hugen	Mr. H. Jansen	1997
Atlantic Northeast	Rev. K.H. Bratt	Rev. V.G. Van Ee	1996
B.C. North-West	Rev. P.F. Reinders	Rev. W.C. Tuininga	1996
B.C. South-East	Rev. J. Poortenga	Rev. J.R. Berry	1997
California South	Rev. B.T. Ballast	Mr. J. De Young	1996
Central California	Rev. B.A. Persenaire	Mr. T. Bloemhof	1996
Chatham	Rev. K.R. Ritsema		1997
Chicago South	Rev. G.P. Hutt	Rev. K. Wong	1996
Columbia	Mr. T. Davis	Rev. C. Leep	1995
Eastern Canada	Ms. M. Buteyn	Rev. H.G. Gunnink	1997
Florida	Mr. D. Cooke	Rev. R.C. Borrego	1998
Georgetown	Rev. J.L. Sajdak	Ms. J. Sikkema	1998
Grand Rapids East	Rev. A.S. Luke	Rev. W. Vanden Bosch	1997
Grand Rapids North	Mr. T. de Vries	Ms. C. Vogel	1998
Grand Rapids South	Rev. M.L. De Young	Rev. R.J. Dieleman	1997
Grandville	Rev. D.L. Slings	Rev. A.L. Van Wyhe	1997
Greater Los Angeles	Rev. A. Vanden Akker		1997
Hackensack	Rev. J.A. Algera	Rev. P.R. De Vries	1997
Hamilton	Rev. P.A. Hoytema	Mrs. D. Proper	1996
Heartland	Rev. R.R. De Vries	Mr. J. Van Ballegooyen	1997
Holland	Rev. A.L. Louwerse	Rev. F.T. Wevers	1997
Hudson	Rev. D.P. Wisse	Rev. D.L. Recker	1997
Huron	Mr. W. De Ruijter	Mr. V. Vandermolen	1997
lakota	Rev. K.D. Koning	Rev. A.J. Van Dellen	1998

Classis	Delegate	Alternate	Term Expires
Illiana	Mr. E. Rudenga	Mr. A. Vanden Bosch	1996
Kalamazoo	Rev. P.R. Hoekstra	Mr. J. Schaap	1997
Lake Erie	Mrs. W. White	Rev. W.C. De Vries	1997
Minnesota North	Rev. K.D. Van De Griend	Rev. E.S.H. Busink	1996
Minnesota South	Rev. H.J. Westra	Rev. T. Genzink	1997
Muskegon	Rev. L.D. Van Dyke	Rev. C. Uken	1998
Niagara	Rev. P. Slofstra	Rev. E. Groot-Nibbelink	1997
Northcentral Iowa	Mr. J. Handorf	Mr. B. Ruter	1997
Northern Illinois	Rev. T.H. Douma	Rev. L.L. Schemper	1998
Northern Michigan	Rev. L.M. Korf	Rev. K.J. Nydam	1996
Pacific Northwest	Rev. J.A. Byker	Rev. P.J. Mans	1998
Pella	Dr. J. Drost	Mr. I. Mulder	1996
Quinte	Rev. K.J. House	Mr. C. Reitsma	1998
Red Mesa	Mrs. L. Teller	Rev. D. Byker	1995
Rocky Mountain	Rev. S. Sikkema	Rev. D. Weeda	1997
Thornapple Valley	Mr. G. Lewis	Rev. B.W. Mulder	1998
Toronto	Mr. J. Kamerman	Ms. R. Hofman	1998
Wisconsin	Mr. D. Westra	Mr. G. Jasperse	1998
Yellowstone	Mr. J. Westra	Mr. J. Gebben	1996
Zeeland	Rev. B.F. Tol	Rev. H. Vlaardingbroek	1997
At-large			
Real estate	Mr. C. Compagner	Mr. J. De Puyt	1996
Finance	Mr. L. De Lange	Mr. E. Berends, Jr.	1997
Resource development	Mr. H. Rozema		1997

G. World Missions Committee

Classis	Delegate	Alternate	Term Expires
Alberta North	Rev. D. J. Heinen		1996
Alberta South	Rev. J.R. Huizinga		1998
Arizona	Rev. F.E. Pott	Rev. R. Yeo	1998
Atlantic Northeast	Rev. R.D. Steen	Rev. W.G. Vis	1996
B.C. North-West	Rev. P.L. Hendriks	Rev. J. Koster	1998
B.C. South-East	Rev. C.H. Salomons	Rev. E. Jager	1998
California South	Rev. B. Van Eyk	Mr. A. Marcus	1998
Central California	Rev. J. Huttinga	Rev. C.J. Klompier	1998
Chatham	Mr. P. Kapteyn	Mrs. M. Yselstein	1997
Chicago South	Rev. A. Van Zanten	Rev. A.J. Machiela	1996
Columbia	Rev. S.A. Drenth	Rev. T. Vander Ziel	1998
Eastern Canada	Mr. B. Biesheuvel		1996
Florida	Rev. M.H. Van Hofwegen	Rev. S.J. Workman	1998
Georgetown	Dr. M.W. Heyboer	Mr. H. De Witt	1997
Grand Rapids East	Rev. R. Palsrok	Miss C. Scheurwater	1998
Grand Rapids North	Ms. M. Worst	Ms. N. Chapel	1997
Grand Rapids South	Rev. J.J. Steigenga	Rev. R.J. Dieleman	1997
Grandville	Rev. L. Van Drunen		1998
Greater Los Angeles	Rev. R.B. Harris	Rev. A. Helder	1997
Hackensack	Mrs. C. Ribbens	Dr. W. Scott	1996
Hamilton	Rev. A.C. Geleynse	Mr. T. Vande Putte	1998
Heartland	Mr. H. Haarsma		1997
Holland	Rev. J.C. Hutt	Dr. J.M. Zinkand	1998
Hudson	Rev. H.A. Stob		1997
Huron	Rev. J.A. Quartel	Rev. A.A. Van Geest	1998
lakota	Rev. D.J. Boogerd	Rev. L.A. Lobdell	1997

Classis	Delegate	Alternate	Term Expires
Illiana	Rev. B.M. Madany	Rev. L.W. Van Essen	1997
Kalamazoo	Rev. G.D. Nieuwsma	Mr. D. Selles	1996
Lake Erie	Dr. G. Hettinger	Mrs. C. Versluys	1998
Minnesota North	Rev. R. Sprik		1998
Minnesota South	Mr. G. Kuik	Rev. B. Den Herder	1997
Muskegon	Rev. L.P. Troast	Rev. D.H. Bratt	1996
Niagara	Rev. P.A. Heerema	Rev. F. Koning	1998
Northcentral Iowa	Mr. P. Eekhoff		1997
Northern Illinois	Mr. J. Boonstra	Rev. L.R. Smits	1998
Northern Michigan	Rev. G.L. Essenburg	Mr. C. De Kam	1998
Pacific Northwest	Rev. D.W. Lagerwey	Mr. G. Gonzales	1997
Pella	Rev. R.L. Bouwkamp	Rev. D.J. Roeda	1996
Quinte	Rev. H. Mennega	Rev. E.W. Visser	1997
Red Mesa	Mr. R. Van Dyken	Rev. R.L. Jipping	1997
Rocky Mountain	Dr. R. De Young	Mr. W. Lemke	1996
Thornapple Valley	Rev. W.J. Renkema	Mr. T. Van't Land	1998
Toronto	Rev. P.D. Stadt	Rev. H.D. Praamsma	1996
Wisconsin	Rev. L.L. Meyer	Rev. M.J. Jonkman	1997
Yellowstone	Mr. H. Faber	Rev. A.W. Heersink	1998
Zeeland	Rev. E.L. Shuart	Rev. R. Walter, Jr.	1998

H. World Relief Committee

Classis	Delegate	Alternate	Term Expires
Alberta North	Ms. P. Prins	Mr. P. Ages	1996
Alberta South	Mr. R. Winkelaar	Ms. D. Van Galen	1997
Arizona	Mr. J. Ten Elshof	Mr. K. Moss	1997
Atlantic Northeast	Mr. T. Woodnorth	Ms. R. Ruiter	1998
B.C. North-West	Mr. G. Appertoo	Mr. W. Potma	1997
B.C. South-East	Mr. M. Van Ellenberg	Mr. C. Tuin	1998
California South	Mr. H. Docter	Mr. D. Roberts	1996
Central California	Mr. L. De Ruiter	Mr. T. Greidanus, Jr.	1996
Chatham	Mr. M. De Vries	Mr. P. Sikkema	1997
Chicago South	Mr. C. Van Groningen	Dr. C. Schoenheer	1996
Columbia	Ms. K. Haley	Mr. H. Apol	1997
Eastern Canada	Mr. N. Van Dyk	Mr. T. Hogeterp	1996
Florida	Mr. E. Voss	Mr. J. Brouwer	1996
Georgetown	Mr. M. Dykema		1998
Grand Rapids East	Ms. K. Yoder	Ms. M. Dengerink	1998
Grand Rapids North	Mr. B. Haven	Mr. R. Ruiter	1996
Grand Rapids South	Mrs. M. Hooyer		1996
Grandville	Mr. J. Holsem	Mr. P. Wassink	1998
Greater Los Angeles	Rev. G. Varela		1997
	Mr. S. Cole		1997
Hackensack	Mr. J. Dirksen	Mrs. C. Van Ess-Dykema	1997
Hamilton	Mr. F. Bennink	Mr. J. De Groot	1997
Heartland	Mr. M. Noteboom	Mr. C. Eshuis	1996
Holland	Mr. C. Hulst	Mr. C. Prins	1997
Hudson	Mr. R. Wynja		1998
Huron	Mr. C. Zondag		1996
Iakota	Mr. D. Bajema	Mr. D. Postma	1996
Illiana	Mr. H. Bykerk	Mr. L. Johnson	1996
Kalamazoo	Ms. S. De Boer	Mr. W. Haak	1998
Lake Erie	Ms. T. Leunk	Mr. W. Osterhouse	1997
Minnesota North, Can.	Mr. H. Boven		1997

Classis	Delegate	Alternate	Term Expires
Minnesota North, U.S.	Ms. M. Buss	Dr. R. Mellema	1998
Minnesota South	Mr. D. Wieberdink	Mr. H. Van Essen	1996
Muskegon	Mr. J. Hoermann	Mr. D. Forbes	1998
Niagara	Mr. L. De Graaf	Ms. S. Vandenberg	1997
Northcentral Iowa	Mr. P. Christians	Mr. E. Olthof	1997
Northern Illinois	Ms. A. Vilaro	Ms. R. Strodtman	1996
Northern Michigan	Mr. A. Diemer	Mr. L. Stahl	1996
Pacific Northwest	Mr. E. Kok	Mr. C. Deelstra	1997
Pella	Mr. M. Blom	Mr. T. Franje	1997
Quinte	Mr. W. Bultsma	Mr. F. Verwoerd	1997
Red Mesa	Mr. B. Boyd	Ms. L. Smith	1995
Rocky Mountain	Mr. J. Kok, Jr.	Ms. S. Velzen	1997
Thornapple Valley	Mr. W. Scheringa	Mr. J. Zomerlei	1998
Toronto	Mr. H. Wieringa	Ms. M. Spoelstra	1996
Wisconsin	Mr. P. La Maire	Mr. J. Sterk	1998
Yellowstone	Mr. M. Feddes	Mr. C. Sinnema	1998
Zeeland	Mr. P. De Kleine	Mr. B. Geerlings	1997
At-large (U.S.)			
Pastoral adviser	Rev. D.R. Fauble	Rev. A.L. Van Wyhe	1998
Financial adviser	Mr. H.W. Washington	Mrs. B. Clayton	1996
Attorney	Ms. M.C. Szto	Mr. T. Geelhoed	1996
At-large (Canada)			
	Ms. A. Tensen	Ms. G. De Groot	1996
	Mr. P. Bultuis	Ms. B. Hoekstra	1996
Pastoral adviser	Rev. J. Kerkhof	Rev. J. Koster	1996

I. Pastoral Ministries

Member	Alternate	Term Expires
Mr. D.J. De Witt	Rev. E. Gritter	1996
Rev. E.J. Tamminga	Rev. N. Vander Kwaak	1996
Rev. C. Terpstra	Rev. R.T. Bouma	1996
Ms. M. Thomas	Mr. G. Thaxton	1996
Mr. B. Zwiers	Mr. R. Bus	1996
Mr. G. Bosma	Mr. E. Westra	1997
Ms. M. Bouwma	Ms. S. Hulst	1997
Ms. B. Heerspink	Ms. Ruth Oosterhof	1997
Rev. R.C. Heerspink	Mr. H. Postma	1997
Rev. P. Nicolai	Mr. H. Bosch	1997
Ms. N. de Boer	Ms. D. Algera	1998
Mr. P. Szto	Rev. J. Flores	1998
Ms. C. Topp	Ms. M. Vander Vennen	1998
Rev. R.E. Williams	Mr. W. Van Dyke	1998
Mr. J. Wilson	Ms. M. Van't Land	1998

IV. Service committees

A. Christian Reformed Church Loan Fund, Inc., U.S.

Mr. G. Borst (1996), Mr. H. Washington (1996), Mr. G. Van Wyke (1997), Mr. J. Feikens (1997), Rev. G.L. Dykstra (1998), Ms. J. Admiraal (1998). Ex officio members: Mr. J. Heinen, Mr. H.J. Vander Meer.

B. Fund for Smaller Churches

Rev. G.P. Hutt (1996), Mr. A. Ruiter (1996), Mr. J.A. Evenhouse (1997), Mr. J.W. Hofman (1998), Rev. L. Sikkema (1998).

C. Historical Committee

Dr. J. Bratt (1996), Rev. W.D. Buursma (1997), Dr. H. Zwaanstra (1997), Ms. S. Harger (1998).

D. Interchurch Relations Committee

Dr. J.B. Hulst (1996), Rev. A.S. Luke (1996), Rev. E.A. Van Baak (1996), Rev. P.W. Brouwer (1997), Rev. L.J. Hofman (1997), Ms. C. Roelofs (1997), Ms. C. Elgersma (1998), Rev. G.H. Pols (1998), Dr. H. Zwaanstra (1998); ex officio member: Dr. D.H. Engelhard; administrative secretary: Rev. L.J. Hofman.

E. Judicial Code Committee

Mr. R.J. Jonker (1996), Mr. W. Posthumus (1996), Rev. J.G. Van Ryn (1996), Dr. H. Bratt (1997), Mr. D.F. Oosterhouse (1997), Mrs. J. Vogelzang (1997), Rev. C. Admiraal (1998), Mr. R.J. Smeda (1998), Mrs. K. Vandergrift (1998).

F. Ministers' Pension Funds

Canadian Board of Trustees of Pensions and Insurance

Mr. A. de Jong (1996), Mr. H. Schep (1996), Mr. A. Van Weelden (1996), Rev. J. Kuntz (1997), Mr. J. Woudstra (1998).

U.S. Board of Pensions and Insurance

Rev. L.J. Dykstra (1996), Dr. J. Vanden Berg (1996), Mr. S. Geelhood (1997), Mr. T. Verhage (1997), Mr. D. Vander Ploeg (1998).

G. Sermons for Reading Services

Rev. W.T. Koopmans (1996), Rev. H.A. Vander Windt (1997), Rev. F. Heslinga (1998); Rev. P. Stadt (1998), alternate; Mr. R. Vander Ploeg (1996), treasurer.

H. Youth-Ministry Committee

Mrs. J. De Heer (1996), Mr. R. Grussing (CRASM) (1996), Rev. R.J. Noorman (1996), Mrs. K. Wilk (1996), Mr. R. Keeley (1997), Mr. R. Nanninga (1997), Rev. N.A. Negrete (1997), Mr. P. Duyt (1998), Mrs. J. Meyer (1998), Ms. W. Waller (1998); members-at-large: Rev. J.P. Heerema (1997), Rev. J.W. Zuidema (1997); advisers: Dr. R.C. De Vries (Calvin Theological Seminary), Dr. M.R. Doornbos (Established-Church Development Department of Home Missions), Mr. R. Rozema (CRC Publications).

V. Study committees (first named is convener)

A. Committee to Study the Development of a Racially and Ethnically Diverse Family of God

Rev. J. Chen, Dr. B. Breems, Ms. N. Coleman, Dr. F. Freeland, Rev. D. Kelderman, Rev. J.T. Kim, Ms. R. Negrete, Rev. M. Ortiz, Rev. R. Williams; Mr. B. Goei and Rev. A. Mulder, consultants.

B. Committee to Study Inclusive Language for God

Dr. J.W. Cooper and Dr. A. Wolters, theologians; Dr. L. Van Gilst and Dr. W. Vande Kopple, professors of English; Rev. J.S. Shim, pastor; Rev. L.G. Christoffels, overture representative; Mrs. M. Vos, counselor; Rev. H.A. Stob, alternate.

C. *Committee to Design a One-Calendar-Week Synod*

Rev. M. De Vries, Rev. J. Kuipers, Mr. K.R. Kuipers, Mr. D.H. Langerak, Rev. H.D. Vanderwell; advisers: Dr. D.H. Engelhard, general secretary; Dr. P. Borgdorff, executive director of ministries.

D. *Committee to Study Ordination and "Official Acts of Ministry"* (Church Order Art. 53-b)

Dr. R.C. De Vries, Mr. H. De Ruyter, Rev. J.B. Vos, Ms. R. Hofman, Dr. D.E. Holwerda, Dr. D.P. Bergsma, Mr. E. Yazzie; Dr. D.H. Engelhard, adviser.

E. *Committee to Study Structure for Ministry in Canada—Phase 2*

Mr. B. Vandezande, Mr. J. Vander Woerd, Rev. A.C. Groen, Rev. R. De Moor, Rev. G.H. Pols, Rev. J. Kuipers, Rev. R. Koops, Rev. N. de Koning.

DELEGATES TO THE REFORMED ECUMENICAL COUNCIL

Voting theologian delegate:

Dr. Carl G. Kromminga

Voting theologian alternate delegate:

Dr. Henry Zwaanstra

Voting minister delegate:

Rev. Jack B. Vos

Voting minister alternate delegate:

Rev. Alfred S. Luke

Voting elder delegate:

Dr. Harvey J. Bratt

Voting elder alternate delegate:

Dr. Nick V. Kroeze

Fourth voting delegate:

Ms. Claire Elgersma

Fourth voting alternate delegate:

Ms. Eunice Vanderlaan

It is moved that synod approve the membership list of boards and committees.

—Adopted

ARTICLE 115

The president expresses thanks to his fellow officers—Rev. Jack B. Vos, vice president; Rev. Howard D. Vanderwell, first clerk; Rev. W. Robert Godfrey, second clerk—for the fine cooperation and support they have given.

He expresses appreciation to the faculty advisers from Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary. He thanks Dr. David H. Engelhard, general secretary, and Dr. Peter Borgdorff, executive director of ministries, for the advice they have given Synod 1995.

He expresses appreciation to Mr. Donald Boender, Mr. Jeff Stob, and the staff of the Calvin Fine Arts Center for their services. He expresses thanks to the synod office staff for their excellent services—Mrs. Charlene Ezinga, Mrs.

Marlene Oosterhouse, and Mrs. Nelvina Ilbrink. He also expresses thanks to the synod newsroom persons—Ms. Bonny Wynia and Mr. Tim Penning.

ARTICLE 116

The vice president expresses deep appreciation to the president, Rev. Calvin H. Bolt, for his excellent leadership.

The president addresses the assembly, asking the assembly, "What have you seen at Synod 1995?" He refers to Ephesians 4:7ff.: "But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ has apportioned it." He relates how he has seen the gifts of the delegates at Synod 1995—leadership, maturity, and speaking truth in love. Each person is gifted, each in a different way. God has prepared each delegate at Synod 1995 to go back home to make disciples—to prepare people to serve Jesus Christ. He indicates that he has seen and gives thanks to God for gifted leadership. He thanks God for people who want to be disciples. He sees a church that is developing into maturity and wants to be like Jesus, a church where people want to speak the truth in love.

Rev. Bolt offers closing prayer and announces *Psalter Hymnal* 315, "Blest Be the Tie That Binds."

Synod 1995 adjourns at 10:45 p.m.

Calvin H. Bolt, president
Jack B. Vos, vice president
Howard D. Vanderwell, first clerk
W. Robert Godfrey, second clerk

Attested a true copy
David H. Engelhard, general secretary

Appendix

Guidelines for Ministerial Personnel in Their Interpersonal Relationships and Procedures and Guidelines for Handling Abuse Allegations Against a Church Leader

(These guidelines were numbered IV and V in the original report [see *Agenda for Synod 1995*, pp. 555-64], but for the purposes of this appendix they have been renumbered I and II. The changes which Synod 1995 authorized the Board of Trustees to insert into these guidelines [cf. Article 112] are found on page 785 in Section II, B, 2, i-l. Furthermore, the term "hearing panel" was changed throughout to "advisory panel.")

I. Guidelines for Ministerial Personnel in Their Interpersonal Relationships

A. Introduction

This section is intended to offer guidance to the churches regarding interpersonal behavior which is appropriate for all ministerial personnel in positions of leadership or pastoral care. Ministerial personnel are those persons ordained or unordained, appointed by the church or in specialized settings, to provide pastoral care, counseling, spiritual direction, or spiritual guidance.

The foundational principle to interpersonal relationships between parishioner and ministerial personnel is this: in the church, all power and authority comes from Christ and is entrusted to those who hold office or have leadership responsibility in the congregation. This principle equally applies to those ordained in the church but serving in the name of the Lord in other places. Leadership responsibility must be exercised in Christian love after the example of our Lord. This requires the dedicated self-discipline of the leader so that such authority is not abused. It also requires the guidance of the church which holds the leader's membership or to whom the leader is responsible.

Abuse committed by ministerial personnel is always abuse of the authority committed to them by the church, as well as a serious betrayal of trust essentially assigned to ministerial personnel by those who need pastoral care and spiritual direction. The office of ministerial personnel grants authority to individuals to lead, protect, and enhance the spiritual lives of those under their care. To abuse that authority and to violate that trust are a breach of ministerial responsibility that disregards a person's dignity in a setting of unequal power at a time of vulnerability.

Abuse may take the form of nonaccidental injury, exploitation of another for personal gain or sexual gratification, systematic diminishment of another, failure to provide proper supervision for those served by church programs, or coercion or control of another. The harmful effects of these types of abuses are (a) the increased personal power and gratification of the abuser and (b) the weakened spiritual life and personal power of the victim. Together, the resulting imbalance of personal power between victim and abuser casts shame, doubt, and fear upon the victim and provides an impenetrable facade for the abuser.

The sin of sexual abuse by ministerial personnel carries special gravity because human sexuality is a gift from God rooted in divine creation. The expression of human sexuality is physical, emotional, and spiritual in relation to another person. It assumes a loving commitment to and responsibility for the other person. Furthermore, sexual contact between parishioner and ministerial

personnel is always abuse because of the authority entrusted to leaders. The abuse of another's sexuality and the misuse of the commitment and the responsibility to another are never acceptable, permissible, or justifiable.

The responsibility to assure that no abusive behavior takes place always belongs to ministerial personnel. The consent of the other person is never a justification, nor is the provocation by another person a defense for abuse. The use of Bible verses to rationalize abusive behavior compounds the abuse of authority, and, as Christians, we denounce it.

B. Guidelines for ministerial personnel in their interpersonal relationships

1. Establish clearly defined boundaries you are committed to maintain in your interpersonal relationships. For example,
 - a. Conduct counseling appointments within normally scheduled daytime hours; have evening appointments only if others are present in the building or present at the appointment.
 - b. Acknowledge the risk of meeting alone in a congregant's or counselee's home. Ministerial personnel may choose to bring a spouse or another officebearer to such a meeting, or the counselee may request the presence of another person. Inform a secretary of your schedule.
 - c. Meet with a minor child or adolescent once or twice and thereafter only with the consent and knowledge of the minor's parent or guardian; avoid transporting a minor alone with you.
 - d. Consider limiting physical affection to a brief hug or a pat on the back or forearm; avoid misinterpretation of affection by choosing not to give gifts to counselees or parishioners.
2. Be accountable to a colleague, spouse, or peer to ensure that you are maintaining proper boundaries in your interpersonal relationships. Openly discuss the threats to those boundaries with a colleague, spouse, or peer.
3. Give adequate attention to your spiritual, emotional, and physical well-being. Maintain a healthy attitude toward your ministry. Be alert to the dangers of negative attitudes in ministry and the potential for temptation and self-destructive behavior. Listen earnestly to the feedback and counsel of others who supervise you or to whom you report when they express concern about your behaviors or attitudes.
4. Be sensitive to and honest about your sexuality and needs and about appropriate avenues for proper fulfillment and mastery of those needs so you conduct yourself in a responsible, moral way.
5. Use your office to promote the spiritual and interpersonal growth and healing of individuals, of the institution or congregation within which you work, and of the denomination you serve. This may take place through sermons, personal visitation, planning the organization's or church's activities, development of new programs, selection and hiring of new staff and officebearers, and training of volunteers or staff.
6. Agree to do your work according to the specified guidelines of your profession and according to the requirements of the organization's or church's malpractice and liability insurance. For example,

- a. Notify either local police authorities, child-protection authorities, or legal counsel when faced with allegations of abuse against a church member or church leader. Refrain from investigating into these matters on your own.
- b. Know the laws governing the reporting of child abuse within your community, organization, or church. The failure to report is a criminal act in many states and provinces.
- c. Keep accurate records of all allegations brought forward to you and any actions taken thereupon.
- d. Keep accurate records of any pastoral-care sessions and maintain them in utmost confidentiality.
- e. Conduct screening of all paid staff or volunteer staff who will have direct contact with children.

II. Procedures and Guidelines for Handling Abuse Allegations Against a Church Leader

This section is intended to offer guidelines for a church to follow when an allegation of abuse arises against a church leader. A church leader is someone with authority and responsibility entrusted to him/her by the church to preserve and enhance the spiritual and emotional well-being of the members. Some examples of church leaders are pastors, chaplains, ordained staff, unordained staff, professional staff, paid staff, unpaid staff, council members, directors, superintendents, teachers, counselors, supervisors, and appointed volunteers.

A. Why a procedure for handling abuse allegations is necessary

1. Many allegations of child abuse surface after a child reaches adulthood. This happens when an adult survivor of child abuse becomes separated from a familial abuser in adulthood. Sometimes in adulthood the adult survivor comes to recognize the behavior done to him/her as abusive.
2. Sadly, because some church leaders have been unaware of child-abuse reporting laws and procedures, some victims have been placed at risk, some abusers have gone unnoticed, and some have not been reported to local authorities.
3. Insurance companies that handle liability policies for churches may require reasonable policies and procedures that could reduce the risk of abuse and the costly civil litigation that can, and often does, result.
4. Costly civil litigation also results in an enormous toll on the emotional well-being of the litigants and the churches they attend. Church members are often divided in their support of litigants, and they may be uncertain how to respond with Christian concern toward litigants.
5. Because abuse committed by a church leader is always an abuse of authority, the church, as Christ's representative, must move swiftly to protect innocent and vulnerable persons from such unconscionable attacks.

In developing and implementing a procedure to handle abuse allegations, two great tensions exist. First, tension exists because the church wants to respond to the horror contained in the allegations and at the same time wants to

protect the character, office, and family of someone who may be accused of abuse, falsely or not. Second, tension exists when the church wants its members to stay out of civil court and to resolve disputes in an ecclesiastical manner. Because the church procedure is not perceived as essentially different from civil court procedure, nor as more sensitive to the survivors, and because it is perceived by some to be biased in favor of the accused, survivors continue to choose silence or the civil courts for redress.

The absence of a procedure for handling abuse allegations has discouraged abuse victims from coming forward. Some who did come forward were reminded that forgetting is good and forgiving is better. Some were told that proceedings would follow Matthew 18:15-17. The victim and another person would confront the alleged abuser. If the accused spoke of his need for forgiveness, then the victim should be reconciled to the accused, and each would go his/her own way. If the victim could not confront the alleged abuser face to face, usually out of fear of the abuser, then the accused person would be judged "not guilty" on the basis of the fact that the victim would not come forward to press his/her claim against the alleged abuser.

Dealing in such a way with the abused often exacerbated the problem rather than bringing justice. Requiring the abused to forget and forgive often revictimized them because now they struggled with the guilt of not easily being able to forgive such a heinous crime. Furthermore, sometimes they were required to forgive even though the perpetrator had not repented nor confessed the sin. The accused, on the other hand, were not always required to confess their sin or ask for forgiveness, and they were sometimes not even held accountable for their actions and the consequences of those actions. Often the accused went on to abuse again.

The threefold steps of action detailed in Matthew 18:15-17 have been foundational for Christian discipline since New Testament times. These steps, however, assume a parity of relationship between the accused and the accuser, which is seldom true in the case of abuse. Furthermore, Matthew 18 seems to suggest that witnesses will readily be able to acknowledge the accusation, probably on the basis of some public, observable data, even though there may be some disagreement about how to resolve the matter. Accusations of abuse, however, usually identify sins committed in secret, without witnesses and observable data, and often with direct threats of harm if the secret is revealed.

The procedures of Matthew 18 require the accuser and the accused to meet face to face. An abused person is seldom able to encounter an abuser in this way. When the abused is forced to face one who has dealt so cruelly with him/her, the abused person feels like a victim once again. Therefore, abused people have been unwilling to come forward with their stories even though their silence meant that an abusive spiritual leader would continue to serve in a position of authority.

Stories are told that some abusers who were dealt with according to Matthew 18 readily admitted their sins and were just as readily forgiven and restored to positions of responsibility and trust in the church. Even when it seemed wise to remove the abuser from office, it was argued by some that the failure to accept the confession and to forgive the sinner and restore to office would be contrary to the spirit of Scripture. The truthfulness of the confession of any sinner is difficult to discern, but this is especially true for the confessions of abusers. When forgiveness is granted in order to smooth things over in a congregation, it is an abomination to God, who holds forgiveness perfectly and the same for all.

In situations of easy repentance and forgiveness, victims often continue in brokenness, and so do abusers. Nowadays, it is the survivors who pursue the effort to bring healing and restoration to their lives, to the church, and to their abusers.

The guidelines below are intended to provide a process by which the church takes seriously the claims of abuse, evaluates specific allegations of misconduct, establishes a forum for meting out justice, aggressively seeks repentance from those who are guilty, and removes such persons from entrusted office or function within the church.

B. Guidelines

1. Definitions

For the purpose of these guidelines, the following definitions of abuse shall be in place:

- a. *Physical abuse* is any nonaccidental injury inflicted on another person. It is sometimes a single event but more often a chronic pattern of behavior. It may result from severe punishment.
- b. *Neglect* is chronic failure to meet the basic needs of someone dependent on another for care. It may describe the absence of supervision when it is needed. It may describe the chronic failure of performing the duties of one's position.
- c. *Sexual abuse* is exploitation of a person regardless of age or circumstance for the sexual gratification of another.
- d. *Spiritual abuse* is exploitation, coercion, or control of another person by a leader with spiritual authority which results in the weakening, undermining, or diminishment of the person's emotional or spiritual well-being.

There are two possible procedures to follow when allegations of abuse are made against a church leader. The age of the alleged victim determines which of the two procedures to follow.

2. Suggested procedures and guidelines when the abuse victim is an adult

The guidelines in this section describe the process to follow (a) when the alleged victim is an adult or (b) when the alleged victim comes forward with an allegation as an adult that abuse took place during the victim's childhood or adolescence.

The guidelines for handling abuse allegations against a church leader by an adult envision the use of an advisory panel. The role of the advisory panel is to evaluate the gravity of the allegations and the probable veracity of them. The guidelines are as follows:

- a. The alleged victim or his/her representative contacts the pastor, president, or vice president of the council of the church of which the alleged abuser is a member, presents an allegation of abuse, and identifies the alleged abuser. If any one of these three individuals is alleged to be the abuser, the alleged victim or representative contacts one of the remaining two not implicated by the alleged victim.
- b. The pastor and president or vice president, after consultation with one another (no one of those consulting may be implicated by the victim), notify the classical abuse-response team to convene an advisory panel

(comprised of members of the classical abuse-response team) regarding the allegation. The advisory panel is convened within fifteen days after the allegation is presented to the pastor, president, or vice president of council.

- c. A representative of the advisory panel contacts the accuser that a hearing will be conducted. The advisory panel chooses the location and the time for the hearing. The accuser and witnesses should be available for the hearing. No public mention of the hearing is made by the panel members, pastor, president, vice president, or accuser.
- d. When the advisory panel is convened, a chairperson is appointed who is responsible to bring all panel members under a pledge of confidentiality regarding the name(s) of the alleged victim(s), the name of the alleged abuser, and any details of the allegation brought forward. The summary of the advisory panel is also subject to confidentiality, as is any report of the advisory panel.
- e. The advisory panel receives all the information presented to it, examines the contents of all written materials, questions the presenters, and consults with identified experts as needed. The experts should be knowledgeable in abuse dynamics, legal matters, church polity, child welfare, etc. The pledge of confidentiality extends to them as well. For the advisory panel, supporting evidence may be in the form of written material, witnesses, depositions (taken under oath), or oral testimony, including hearsay testimony. When distance would make it difficult or costly for travel or cause an undesirable delay in convening the advisory panel, videotaping and telephone conferencing are allowable.
- f. A representative of the advisory panel contacts the accused person and notifies him/her that a hearing has taken place. The accused person is then invited to present his/her defense before the same advisory panel at a time and location chosen by the panel. Whenever possible, the hearing of the accused is conducted seven days after the hearing of the accuser. At the time the accused is notified, he/she is given information about the charges, including specific incidents when possible, dates of specific incidents when possible, and indication of witnesses or corroborating evidence. The charges are presented in writing if requested.
- g. The advisory panel receives all the information presented to it by the accused, examines the contents of all written materials, questions the accused and witnesses, and consults with experts as needed. For the advisory panel, supporting evidence for the accused may be in the form of written material, witnesses, depositions (taken under oath), or oral testimony. When distance makes it difficult or costly for travel or causes an undesirable delay in convening the advisory panel, videotaping and telephone conferencing are allowable.
- h. The advisory panel convenes to consider the gravity and the probable veracity of the allegations as quickly as possible. A summary of its findings is put in written form for all panel members to sign. The written report may contain specific recommendations for pastoral care and/or discipline.

- i. The chairperson of the advisory panel reports the panel's summary to the executive committee of the council of the alleged abuser's church. This meeting is convened within forty-eight hours of the advisory panel's formulation of its summary. Members of the advisory panel contact the accuser orally or in writing with their findings.
- j. The executive committee of the council should convene the consistory within forty-eight hours to bring the panel's summary and its recommendations for pastoral care and/or discipline. The advisory panel ends when the chairperson of the advisory panel reports the panel's summary to the consistory of the alleged abuser's church. If one of the consistory/council members is implicated by the alleged victim, he/she is excused from participation in the deliberative work of the consistory/council dealing with the allegations against that member.

Whether or not the advisory panel finds the allegations to be weighty and probable, the consistory is accountable to judge the matter. If the consistory judges the allegations not to be weighty or probable, then the matter is closed, and the anonymity of the accuser should be honored. All other authors of written materials or persons giving testimony are granted anonymity through the pledge of confidentiality. The consistory notifies the accused and the accuser that the matter is closed.

- k. If the consistory judges the allegations to be weighty and probable, then two members notify the accused person within twenty-four hours that allegations of abuse have been lodged against him/her. The designees also indicate to the accused the specific charges and the names of those making the charges. These charges are given in writing. Also, within twenty-four hours, the accuser(s) is notified by two members of the consistory that charges of abuse have been accepted against the accused person and that he/she is being notified of such charges. A summary of the consistory's deliberations is given in writing if requested. The accused person may acknowledge or deny his/her guilt at the notification meeting. Such acknowledgment or denial is confirmed by the two consistory members present. This acknowledgment or denial is brought to a full council meeting to be scheduled for seven days after the notification meeting.
- l. If the accused person denies the allegations made against him/her, the consistory has the responsibility to conduct a formal hearing to determine the accused's innocence or guilt. The formal hearing should be conducted prior to any recommended steps of discipline.

The formal hearing should be conducted within one week of the notification meeting in which the accused denies the allegations against him/her. Both the accused and the accuser should meet separately with the consistory. A tape recording of the testimony should be made.

The consistory convenes in executive session to deliberate the truthfulness of the allegation(s) and the accused person's guilt or innocence of it (them). If the accused is found innocent, the matter ends, and both the accused and the accuser are notified of the consistory's deliberations. If the accused is found guilty, the council shall be convened within seven days to initiate appropriate steps of discipline by following the Church Order, specifically Articles 81-83. Both the accused and the accuser are

notified in writing of the pastoral-care and church-discipline steps taken at this council meeting.

- m. The accused may appeal the decision of the council in matters of discipline. Such appeals are addressed to the classis, where standard appeal procedures are applied.
- n. When the council decides either to suspend or remove from office (including deposition), a designee of council informs the congregation at the next scheduled worship service, both orally and in writing, of the action taken at the council meeting.

3. Suggested procedures and guidelines when the abuse victim is a child

The guidelines in this section refer to the process to follow (a) when the alleged victim is presently a child or (b) when the alleged victim is now an adult but within the individual state's or province's statutes for reporting abuse as a child. Most state statutes will define a child as a person under 18 years of age, whereas in some provinces a child is defined as a person 16 years old or younger.

The guidelines for handling allegations of emotional, physical, and sexual abuse against a church leader by a minor child should include an investigation by an agency outside the church, such as Child Protection Services or the local police authorities. The appropriate authorities are those who have jurisdiction in the location where the alleged abuse took place, regardless of where the alleged victim or alleged abuser lives at the time the allegations are brought forward.

- a. The alleged victim or his/her representative contacts the pastor, president, or vice president of the council or an appointed designee in the church of which the alleged victim is a member or of which the alleged abuser is a member to convey the allegations of abuse and identify the alleged abuser.

If the alleged abuser(s) is among the four above-mentioned people, the alleged victim or representative contacts one of the four not implicated by the alleged victim.

- b. If presented with information which suggests a reasonable suspicion that abuse has occurred, the person contacted should normally notify the authorities within twenty-four hours of receiving the report of an allegation of abuse.

Note: The failure to report a suspected case of child abuse is against the law in many states and provinces. The person contacted should know which authorities to notify. In many instances, the relationship between the child and the alleged abuser will determine whether Child Protection Services or the local police officials are to be notified.

- c. At any point in the process, if the alleged abuser admits wrongdoing against the alleged victim, the admission of guilt is brought to the attention of the consistory, which deliberates and disposes of the matter according to Church Order Articles 81-83.

The matter of admission of wrongdoing against a child should be disclosed orally and in writing to the congregation by a designee of the consistory.

- d. The person contacted by the alleged victim requests information from the local police agency or child-protection agency on the progress of its investigation. If the permission of the child's parent or guardian is necessary for obtaining such information, then the person contacted should secure that permission in written form. If the alleged victim and alleged abuser are members of two different churches, the person contacted by the alleged victim notifies his/her counterpart (unless that person is implicated in the allegations) in the other church, and both become contact persons for the matter.
- e. Before formal charges are filed:
 - 1) When the person(s) contacted learn(s) from local police or child-protection authorities that the allegations merit serious investigation or that there is the possibility that formal charges may be filed, he/she notifies the executive committee of the council of the alleged abuser.
 - 2) Within twenty-four hours of the executive committee's being notified, the consistory is convened and presented a written document from the executive committee specifying the nature of the allegations and the information known at this point. (*Note:* The consistory at this point needs to balance the dual concerns of moving too slowly and thereby offering too little protection for the child[ren] and moving too swiftly and thereby acting precipitously against the accused). In the light of the information presented, the consistory recommends one of the following options to the full council:
 - a) Take no further action until more information becomes available.
 - b) Limit the contact between the accused and the accuser (if members of the same congregation) and/or limit the contact between the accused and any children in his/her congregation.
 - c) Suspend the accused from office, position, or duty pending the outcome of the investigation. Suspension is carried out with full pay (for paid staff) and without prejudice.
 - 3) Within one week of the consistory meeting, the full council considers the recommendations of the consistory and implements appropriate action. Suspension of an officebearer is carried out according to Church Order Articles 82-83. The suspension is carried out for the safety of the church leader, who may be subject to rumor, gossip, or prejudice if he/she remains in a position of leadership. A council member is appointed to disclose to the congregation only the facts as known at the time and may not convey any of the particulars relating to the alleged victim's allegations.
- f. After criminal charges have been filed:
 - 1) When the person(s) contacted learn(s) from the local police or the child-protection authorities that criminal charges have been filed against the accused, then he/she notifies the executive committee of the council of the alleged abuser.
 - 2) Within twenty-four hours of the executive committee's being notified, the consistory is convened and presented a written document from the executive committee specifying the nature of the allegations and the information known at this point. In the light of the information presented, the consistory recommends one of the following options to the full council:

- a) Limit the accused from contact with children, or limit the conditions under which this contact is to take place, pending further information.
- b) Suspend the accused from office, position, or duty. Suspension is carried out with full pay (for paid staff) and without prejudice.
- 3) Within one week of the consistory meeting, the full council considers the recommendations of the consistory and implements appropriate action. Suspension of officebearers is carried out according to Church Order Articles 82-83. The suspension is carried out for the safety of the church leader, who may be subject to rumor, gossip, or prejudice if he/she remains in a position of leadership. A council member is appointed to disclose to the congregation only the facts known at the time; this council member may not convey any of the particulars relating to the alleged victim's allegations.
- g. In the event the criminal charges are dropped or prosecution does not result in conviction, the council decides whether or not the church leader is restored to his/her previous position or duty. Conviction or lack of it is not the only criterion the church uses to discern ungodly conduct. An alleged abuser is not reinstated to a previous position of leadership until the council, in consultation with the police/child-protection authorities, legal counsel, and child-abuse experts, deems it safe and proper to do so.
- h. In the event of prosecution resulting in conviction, the abuser is not restored to the previous position or duty within the church. Pastors and officebearers are deposed by the council according to Church Order Articles 82 and 83.
- 4. Two important footnotes regarding both sets of guidelines
 - a. These guidelines are suggested guidelines. The circumstances of abuse may dictate that the church officials deviate from these guidelines. Bylaws that specify the time necessary to convene a meeting or the place of that meeting are to be observed. In addition, state and provincial laws vary somewhat in terms of the manner in which abuse is defined and how it should be reported. The presumption should be in favor of following the guidelines in the case of each allegation of abuse; however, the church is best served by retaining legal counsel to define the legal standards relevant to the particular jurisdiction. Furthermore, the director of Abuse Prevention can be consulted regarding the application of the guidelines.
 - b. The guidelines anticipate that the accuser's allegations will be disclosed to certain entities or individuals at certain times. At each stage of the proceedings outlined in the guidelines, those individuals who receive information relating to the allegations should use extensive precautions to ensure that the allegations and surrounding circumstances are not shared with any other entities or individuals other than expressly described under these guidelines or as may be required by law.
 Accuracy is of the utmost importance when disclosing allegations or surrounding circumstances to those individuals or entities anticipated under these guidelines. Wrongful or inaccurate dissemination can potentially lead to adverse legal consequences.

DENOMINATIONAL MINISTRY SHARES AND RECOMMENDED AGENCIES FOR 1996

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DENOMINATIONAL MINISTRY SHARES AND RECOMMENDED AGENCIES FOR 1996

I. Denominational ministry shares

	Per family	Per professing member
Back to God Hour	\$ 73.91	\$31.84
CRC-TV	26.50	11.42
Board of Home Missions.....	120.64	52.47
Calvin College*		
	Per family	Per professing member
Area 1—Grand Rapids East, Grand Rapids North, Grand Rapids South, Grandville, Thornapple Valley	\$115.60	\$49.40
Area 2—Cadillac, Georgetown, Holland, Kalamazoo, Lake Erie, Muskegon, Zeeland.....	87.20	37.80
Area 3—Chicago South, Florida, Illiana, Northern Illinois, Wisconsin	67.70	29.50
Area 4—Heartland, Iakota, Minnesota North, Minnesota South, Northcentral Iowa, Pella... ..	21.70	9.10
Area 5—Atlantic Northeast, Hackensack, Hudson.....	60.00	24.20
Area 6—Arizona, Columbia, California South, Central California, Greater Los Angeles, Pacific Northwest, Red Mesa, Rocky Mountain, Yellowstone.....	52.80	24.00
Area 7—Chatham, Eastern Canada, Hamilton, Huron, Niagara, Quinte, Toronto	30.00	13.10
Area 8—Alberta North, Alberta South, B.C. North-West, B.C. South-East.....	19.40	8.80
Calvin Theological Seminary	44.81	19.39
CRC Publications and World Literature Ministries	5.23	2.29
Denominational Services	35.94	15.15
Denominational Building funds and operations; synodical expenses; grants; funds for standing, service, and study committees		

*Areas which benefit from a ministry-share reduction should employ the following monies to finance their area colleges (*Acts of Synod 1962, 1984, 1993*):

Per family

Area 1, -0-; Area 2, \$8.27; Area 3, \$28.27; Area 4, \$74.27; Area 5, \$35.97; Area 6, \$43.17; Area 7, \$65.97; Area 8, \$76.57.

Per professing member

Area 1, -0-; Area 2, \$3.20; Area 3, \$11.50; Area 4, \$31.90; Area 5, \$16.80; Area 6, \$17.00; Area 7, \$27.90; Area 8, \$32.20.

Fund for Smaller Churches (includes quarterly subsidies and continuing-education fund)	19.58	844
Ministers' Pension Funds and Special Assistance and Moving Fund for Retired Ministers and Widows	40.47	1746
Pastoral Ministries	25.90	1118
World Missions Committee	114.93	4951

II. Agencies recommended for financial support in 1996

A. Denominational agencies recommended for one or more offerings

	Canadian registration #
1. Back to God Hour—above-ministry-share needs	0347708-39
CRC TV—above-ministry-share needs	
2. Calvin College—above-ministry-share needs	(per Schedule VIII)
3. Calvin Theological Seminary	(per Schedule VIII)
a. Above-ministry-share needs	
b. Revolving Loan Fund	
4. Home Missions—above-ministry-share needs	0549022-47
5. Pastoral Ministries—above-ministry-share needs	0590018-49
a. Abuse Prevention	
b. Chaplain Committee	
c. Committee on Disability Concerns	
d. Pastor-Church Relations Committee	
e. Synodical Committee on Race Relations	
1) Above-ministry-share needs	
2) Multiracial Student Scholarship Fund	
6. World Literature Ministries—above-ministry-share needs	0590018-49
7. World Missions—above-ministry-share needs	0435081-47
8. World Relief—one offering per quarter	0366443-09

B. Denominationally related youth agencies recommended for one or more offerings

1. United Calvinist Youth	0877563-49
2. Calvinettes	0877563-49
3. Calvinist Cadet Corps	0877563-49
4. Young Calvinist Federation / Youth Unlimited	0877563-49

C. Nondenominational agencies recommended for financial support but not necessarily for one or more offerings

Note should be made of the action of Synod 1992 related to the financial support provided by Christian Reformed Churches relative to these agencies:

In light of the growing number of agencies seeking recommendation for financial support, (synod) reminds the congregations of the synodical decision of 1970 wherein synod urged all the classes to request their churches to pay denominational causes before making gifts to nondenominational causes on the synod-approved accredited list.

Grounds: Our denominational cause should have priority in our giving. . . .

Thus, the accredited list of nondenominational agencies is meant to provide guidance to the churches in selecting organizations for support. However, this accreditation is not meant to be an obligation of the churches to designate one or more offerings.

Agencies giving United States tax receipts

A. Benevolent agencies

1. Bethany Christian Services
2. Calvary Rehabilitation Center
3. Cary Christian Center, Inc.
4. Christian Health Care Center
5. Elim Christian School
6. International Aid, Inc.
7. The Luke Society, Inc.
8. Pine Rest Christian Hospital Association

B. Educational agencies

1. Center for Public Justice
2. Christian Schools International
3. Christian Schools International Foundation
4. Dordt College
5. Reformed Bible College
6. Rehoboth Christian School
7. Roseland Christian School
8. The King's University College (through the U.S. Foundation)
9. Trinity Christian College
10. Westminster Theological Seminary Ministries, Philadelphia, PA, and Escondido, CA
11. Worldwide Christian Schools

C. Miscellaneous agencies

1. American Bible Society
2. Faith, Prayer and Tract League
3. Friendship Ministries
4. Gideons International
5. International Bible Society
6. Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship
7. Lord's Day Alliance of the United States
8. Metanoia Ministries
9. Mission 21 India
10. Portable Recording Ministries (PRM) International
11. Seminary Consortium for Urban Pastoral Education
12. The Bible League
13. The Evangelical Literature League (TELL)
14. Wycliffe Bible Translators

Agencies giving Canadian tax receipts

Canadian registration #

A. Benevolent agencies

1. Beginnings Counseling & Adoption Services of Ontario, Inc. 0679092-09

B. Educational agencies

1. Canadian Christian Education Foundation, Inc. 1455097-23
2. Dordt College (per Schedule VIII)
3. Institut Farel 0643304-20
4. Institute for Christian Studies 0283283-21
5. Redeemer Reformed Christian College 0506618-20
6. Reformed Bible College (per Schedule VIII)
7. The King's University College 0577890-20
8. Trinity Christian College (per Schedule VIII)

C. *Miscellaneous agencies*

- | | |
|---|-------------------|
| 1. Canadian Bible Society | 0021501-47 |
| 2. Christian Labour Association of Canada | (specific grants) |
| 3. Evangelical Fellowship of Canada | 0258715-39 |
| 4. Friendship Groups—Canada | 0751966-47 |
| 5. Gideons International—Canada | 0022475-47 |
| 6. Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship of Canada | 0209833-47 |
| 7. The Bible League—Canada | 0232751-47 |
| 8. Wycliffe Bible Translators of Canada, Inc. | 0317180-47 |

Note: Canadian registration numbers are shown along with organizations which are established as qualified donees with Revenue Canada

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(Page numbers in boldface type refer to the minutes of synod; page numbers in regular type refer to agenda reports and supplementary material.)

Acronyms in the index refer to the following:

BOT	Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church in North America
CRC	Christian Reformed Church
CCRCC	Council of the Christian Reformed Churches in Canada
CEACA	Committee for Education Assistance to Churches Abroad
CRCNA	Christian Reformed Church in North America
CRWRC	Christian Reformed World Relief Committee
EDM	executive director of ministries
GKN	Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland / Reformed Churches in the Netherlands
IRC	Interchurch Relations Committee
NAPARC	North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council
OPC	Orthodox Presbyterian Church
PCA	Presbyterian Church in America
RCN	Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (also GKN)
REC	Reformed Ecumenical Council
SCORR	Synodical Committee on Race Relations

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