

CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA

AGENDA FOR SYNOD



1996

Christian Reformed Church in North America

AGENDA FOR SYNOD

June 11-21, 1996
Fine Arts Center Auditorium
Calvin College
Grand Rapids, Michigan

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PREFACE

The prayer service for Synod 1996 will be held Monday evening, June 10, 1996, at 8:00 p.m. in Seymour Christian Reformed Church, 840 Alger SE, Grand Rapids, Michigan. Rev. Gerald L. Zandstra, pastor of preaching and administration at Seymour CRC, will be in charge of the service.

Synod begins its sessions Tuesday morning, June 11, at 9:00 a.m. in the Fine Arts Center of Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Rev. L. Bryce Mensink, pastor of congregational life at Seymour CRC, will serve as president pro tem until Synod 1996 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 9. 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

Delegates who travel by automobile are urged to carpool if possible, to save on travel costs.

Plane travel is the most economical for delegates traveling long distances to synod because it eliminates lodging and meal expenses en route.

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.

Delegates should bring with them to synod their copies of the *Agenda for Synod 1996* 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 1996 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 1996

Classis	Delegates	Alternates
Alberta North		
Ministers.....	John A. Ooms Cornelius Vriend	Ministers.....Harry Vriend Stanley R. Schalk
Elders	Job Den Otter Lambert Tuininga	Elders
		William Hulsman Eelke Eilander
Alberta South		
Ministers.....	Cornelius Pool Alvin Beukema	Ministers.....Jake Corvers Henry Vander Beek
Elders	Hessel Kielstra Fred Bosma	Elders
		Hans Visser Durk De Jong
Arizona		
Ministers.....	Jeffrey A. Dykema Ray T. Yeo	Ministers.....John M. Matias Esteban Lugo
Elders	Kenneth W. Vanderlei John Van Egmond	Elders
		Harry Molling _____
Atlantic Northeast		
Ministers.....	Alvern Gelder William G. Vis	Ministers.....Robert D. Steen Brent A. Averill
Elders	Bruce Klanderma Cornelius Van De Weert	Elders
		_____ _____
B.C. North-West		
Ministers.....	Pieter L. Hendriks John Koster	Ministers.....John Van Hemert William C. Veenstra
Elders	John Vander Hoek Jan Lok	Elders
		_____ _____
B.C. South-East		
Ministers.....	John Boonstra James R. Berry	Ministers.....Edward Jager Rudy W. Ouwehand
Elders	Ken Elgersma Fred Gietema	Elders
		John Taekema _____
California South		
Ministers.....	Randal K. Young Bart van Eyk	Ministers.....Andrew A. Cammenga Bruce T. Ballast
Elders	John Koen Cecil Gosliga	Elders
		Elko Brouwer Dirk D. Jasperse
Central California		
Ministers.....	George G. Vink Case Admiraal	Ministers.....Peter Yang Harold Hiemstra
Elders	Harry H. Sonke Robert G. den Dulk	Elders
		Roger W. Dornbush Darwin Houtsma

Classis	Delegates	Alternates
Chatham		
Ministers.....	Jake Kuipers Kornelis de Koning	Ministers..... Kenneth F. Benjamins Kenneth R. Ritsema
Elders.....	Jack Geschiere Henry J. Mulder	Elders..... Harry J. Klomps Ben Vanderlugt
Chicago South		
Ministers.....	Henry B. Vanden Heuvel Cornelius J. De Boer	Ministers..... Anthony Van Zanten Paul A. Hansen
Elders.....	Herman R. Westerveld Roger C. Lefers	Elders..... Kelly O. Homan Jerry A. Dyke
Columbia		
Ministers.....	Jerald D. Lion Donald J. Wyenberg	Ministers..... Calvin J. Aardsma Perry J. Tinklenberg
Elders.....	Richard J. Anema Ivan R. Imig	Elders..... Harry Visser Paul G. Scharold
Eastern Canada		
Ministers.....	Allan C. Groen S. John Gerrits	Ministers..... Kenneth M. Gehrels David H. Kromminga
Elders.....	Hilbrent Vander Heide Henk Breimer	Elders..... Martin Vanden Berg Walter Neutel
Florida		
Ministers.....	Mark A. Davies Ronald G. Baker	Ministers..... Paul Ingeneri Douglas L. Aldrick
Elders.....	James A. Rozendal Ben Lambers	Elders..... Wayne De Young
Georgetown		
Ministers.....	Marvin W. Heyboer Robert C. Heerspink	Ministers..... Joel R. Boot Marvin J. Vander Vliet
Elders.....	Warren T. Faber Floyd Brouwer	Elders..... Lee Bakker John E. Kuiper
Grand Rapids East		
Ministers.....	Archie L. Vander Hart Scott E. Hoezee	Ministers..... Duane K. Kelderman Jack Roeda
Elders.....	Sidney J. Jansma, Jr. Kenneth L. Andree	Elders..... Edwin J. Van Kley Robert F. Topp
Grand Rapids North		
Ministers.....	Gerald A. Koning Henry Admiraal	Ministers..... Douglas A. Warners Matthew B. Heard
Elders.....	Benjamin J. Van Houten Cornelius J. Bykerk	Elders..... John W. Vis Fred J. Feikema
Grand Rapids South		
Ministers.....	John G. Van Ryn David J. Deters	Ministers..... John J. Steigenga Calvin D. Vander Meyden
Elders.....	Paul Ribbens Samuel C. Dykstra	Elders..... Albert W. Bytwork Martin Vanden Berg
Grandville		
Ministers.....	Curtis A. Walters Calvin D. Compagner	Ministers..... John P. Gorter Gerald D. Postema
Elders.....	Dick J. Palsrok Robert J. Alles	Elders..... Jacob Lucas John E. Morren

Classis	Delegates	Alternates
Greater Los Angeles		
Ministers.....	David R. Koll Andrew Vanden Akker	Ministers.....Seonghwan Park Daniel J. Brink
Elders	Dick Van Weerthuisen Maurice Slegers	Elders
		James L. Hooyenga Bernard Vande Weide
Hackensack		
Ministers.....	Jochem Vugteveen Ricardo E. Orellana	Ministers.....Stephen R. Steenstra Charles L. Geschiere
Elders	Thomas J. Henion Garry Dykstra	Elders
		Bernard A. Van Essendelft
Hamilton		
Ministers.....	John Postuma Barton P. Velthuisen	Ministers.....Peter Veltman Bernard H. De Jonge
Elders	Bruce Dykstra Frank Ritskes	Elders
		J. Hans Vander Stoep Albert Jagt
Heartland		
Ministers.....	Jack M. Gray John A. Vermeer	Ministers.....Randall R. Bergsma Richard R. De Vries
Elders	Loren J. Veldhuisen Harvey G. Obbink	Elders
		Henry Haarsma John T. Runia
Holland		
Ministers.....	Norman J. Thomasma John C. Hutt	Ministers.....Wayne A. Brouwer John S. Meyer
Elders	Randy C. Dokter John M. Zinkand	Elders
		Bernard Veldhouse Norman D. Nanninga
Hudson		
Ministers.....	LeRoy G. Christoffels John G. Keizer	Ministers.....Daniel L. Bratt John J. Hoogland
Elders	Donald D. Holwerda Joseph H. Meyer	Elders
		Jacob D. Klaassen Samuel L. Vandergoot
Huron		
Ministers.....	Jacob A. Quartel Harry J. Bierman	Ministers.....David J. Tigchelaar Ronald V. Luchies
Elders	Vic Vander Molen Hilbert Rumph	Elders
		Lenard Bakelaar Frank De Weerd
Iakota		
Ministers.....	Jelmer P. Groenewold Daniel W. De Groot	Ministers.....Roger W. Sparks Clifford D. Hoekstra
Elders	Arthur L. Attema Henry De Lange	Elders
		John R. Nydam
Illiana		
Ministers.....	Bernard J. Haan Laryn G. Zoerhof	Ministers.....Herman J. Schutt Thomas J. Kok
Elders	John G. Klompmaker Phillip L. Van Noord	Elders
		Edward Van Drunen
Kalamazoo		
Ministers.....	Leonard J. Vander Zee Mark A. Van Haitisma	Ministers.....Joseph A. Brinks Neal R. Rylaarsdam
Elders	Roger L. Klok William Veldkamp	Elders
		James Lemmer Loren J. Dykstra

Classis	Delegates	Alternates
Lake Erie		
Ministers.....	George F. Vander Weit Richard J. Hamstra	Ministers..... Clayton G. Libolt William Versluys II
Elders	Fred C. Visser Jack Kremers	Elders
Minnesota North		
Ministers.....	James T. Petersen Ronald R. Sprik	Ministers..... Anthony Schweitzer Kenneth D. Van De Griend
Elders	Donald L. Jabaay G. Hank Wesselink	Elders
Minnesota South		
Ministers.....	Willard H. De Vries Rodney D. Gorter	Ministers..... Norman J. Visser Alan L. Camarigg
Elders	Clarence Van Meekeren Jerry L. Blom	Elders
Muskegon		
Ministers.....	Larry D. Baar Leonard P. Troast	Ministers..... Leslie D. Van Dyke Alvin L. Hoksbergen
Elders	Edward D. Knoll Roger A. Westrate	Elders
Niagara		
Ministers.....	Harry A. Vander Windt Richard J. de Lange	Ministers..... Peter Slofstra Jack Van Marion
Elders	Cornelis Van Soelen John Shrimmer	Elders
Northcentral Iowa		
Ministers.....	David A. Zylstra David J. Dykstra	Ministers..... William G. Brouwers P. Wayne Townsend
Elders	Arlie P. Olsen Clarence R. Henze	Elders
Northern Illinois		
Ministers.....	Vernon G. Vander Zee John F. Schuurman	Ministers..... Daniel L. Jongsma Lee R. Smits
Elders	Martin LaMaire Hendrik Sliemers	Elders
Northern Michigan		
Ministers.....	Merlin N. Buwalda Duane J. Timmermans	Ministers..... Gerald L. Essenburg Kenneth J. Nydam
Elders	Donald L. Boes John Rozeveld	Elders
Pacific Northwest		
Ministers.....	Kenneth D. Koeman John A. Byker	Ministers..... James C. Wiersum Jerry Van Groningen
Elders	Calvin R. Bratt Harold E. Terpstra	Elders
Pella		
Ministers.....	J. Mark Beach Lawrence J. Howerzyl	Ministers..... Robert J. Timmer Wick Hubers
Elders	Marvin A. Van Haaften Arie Engbers, Jr.	Elders

Classis	Delegates	Alternates
Quinte		
Ministers.....	B. Bernard Bakker William T. Koopmans	Ministers.....Ed W. Visser Henry Wildeboer
Elders	George J. Vink Lawrence J. Lutgendorff	EldersHans J. Van Manen Jim Bandstra
Red Mesa		
Ministers.....	Donald E. Byker Michael J. Meekhof	Ministers.....Paul H. Redhouse W. Keith Bulthuis
Elders	Johnny Harvey Joe Smart	EldersJoel R. Jasperse Charles Johnson
Rocky Mountain		
Ministers.....	Michael S. Johnson Thomas D. Draayer	Ministers.....Dale L. Piers Robert L. Westenbroek
Elders	Robert S. Steen Marvin Colman	EldersNeal Afman David De Ridder
Thornapple Valley		
Ministers.....	Gerard L. Dykstra Benjamin J. Becksvoort	Ministers.....R. Scott Greenway Martin J. Vellekoop
Elders	Raymond J. Prins Cornelius D. Korhorn	EldersNed Nielsen Melvin J. Cooke
Toronto		
Ministers.....	Gordon H. Pols William Dykstra	Ministers.....John Tenyenhuis Hendrik P. Bruinsma
Elders	John Kamerman Dan C. Ligterink	EldersHenry Boehm Dirk Evans
Wisconsin		
Ministers.....	Wendell M. Gebben Clifford E. Bajema	Ministers.....Larry L. Meyer Larry Van Essen
Elders	Bernard R. Winter Randall D. Hendrikse	EldersDennis Ribbens Marvin De Vries
Yellowstone		
Ministers.....	J. William Van Der Heide Gary G. Hofland	Ministers.....Bernard J. Van Ee A. William Heersink
Elders	Karl J. Cunigan Todd M. Horner	EldersJay C. Vander Ark _____
Zeeland		
Ministers.....	Robert Walter, Jr. Harlan G. Vanden Einde	Ministers.....Gerry G. Heyboer William Renkema
Elders	Paul W. Wagenmaker Egbert H. Kuyers	EldersKevin A. Baar _____

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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 (the "Board") presents this report as a summary of the activities carried out on behalf of synod during the interim between Synod 1995 and Synod 1996.

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, approved provisionally by Synod 1993. The constitution and bylaws have been reviewed and revised during this year for presentation to Synod 1996 for final approval.

The Board has met three times since Synod 1995 (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, care and compassion, and missions at home and abroad has been blessed by God.

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. Aldon L. Kuiper, Mr. Harry G. Vermeer (Great Plains); Mr. Milton H. Kuyers, Mr. William Weidenaar (Central U.S., Subgroup I); Mr. Nelson Gritter (Central U.S., Subgroup II); Mr. Howard Johnson, Rev. Arthur J. Schoonveld (Central U.S., Subgroup III); Mrs. Kathleen Smith, Rev. Wilmer R. Witte (Central U.S., Subgroup IV); Rev. Vernon F. Geurkink (Eastern U.S.); Dr. Carol Rottman, Mrs. Jane Vander Ploeg (members-at-large).

The members of the Ontario Corporation are Rev. Jake Kuipers (Eastern Canada, Subgroup I); Rev. Gordon H. Pols, Mr. J. Hans Vander Stoep (Eastern Canada, Subgroup II); Rev. Peter Brouwer (Western Canada); 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, Rev. A.J. Schoonveld; vice president, Rev. J. Kuipers; secretary, Dr. D.H. Engelhard; treasurer, Mr. N. Gritter.
3. Corporation officers: president, Rev. A.J. Schoonveld; vice president, Rev. J. Kuipers; 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: Rev. P. Brouwer, Rev. V. Geurkink, Rev. A.L. Kuiper, Rev. G.H. Pols, Dr. C. Rottman, Rev. A.J. Schoonveld, Mrs. K. Smith, Dr. J. Van Schepen, Mr. W. Wildeboer, and Dr. D.H. Engelhard (adviser).
5. Program and Finance Committee: Mr. N. Gritter, Mr. H. Johnson, Rev. J. Kuipers, Mr. M.H. Kuyers, Mrs. J. Vander Ploeg, Mr. J.H. Vander Stoep, Dr. E. Vander Wall, Mr. H.G. Vermeer, Mr. W. Weidenaar, Rev. W.R. Witte, and Dr. P. Borgdorff (adviser).
6. Executive Committee: Rev. A.J. Schoonveld, Rev. J. Kuipers, Mr. N. Gritter, Mr. M.H. Kuyers, Mr. W. Wildeboer. Dr. D.H. Engelhard and Dr. P. Borgdorff serve ex officio.

B. *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 (includes housing allowance)
23	1	3rd quartile
22	1	3rd quartile
20	1	3rd quartile
18	1	3rd quartile
16	2	3rd quartile

Salary ranges within which the agencies will be reporting actual compensation for 1996 are as follows:

**THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA
1996 PROPOSED SALARY RANGES**

New Levels	Previous Levels	Proposed U.S. 1996 Range			Proposed Canadian 1996 Range		
		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

C. Interim appointments

1. Board appointments

Board	Classis	Member	Alternate	Term
Synodical Deputies	Arizona		Rev. F.J. Walhof	
	B.C. South-East		Rev. J. Boonstra	
	Grand Rapids East		Rev. R. Opperwall	
	Heartland		Rev. A.L. Kuiper	
	Illiana		Rev. H.J. Schutt	
	Minnesota South		Rev. N.J. Viser	
CRC Publications	Chatham		Mr. K. Knight	
	Grandville		Ms. M. Bantjes	
	Hudson		Mr. D. Holwerda	
Home Missions	Chatham		Rev. D.R. Tigchelaar	
	Columbia		Mrs. M. Geelhood	
	Minnesota South		Mr. W. Sankey	
	Pacific Northwest		Rev. Insung Kim	
	Red Mesa	Mr. J. De Groat		1998
World Missions	Alberta North		Mrs. S. Mobach	
	Alberta South		Rev. A.G. Vander Leek	
	Eastern Canada	Mrs. W. Runia	Mr. M. Van Wyk	1998
	Grandville		Mr. M. Geerlings	
	Hackensack		Rev. E.N. Romero	
	Heartland		Mr. J. Kooiker	
	Minnesota North		Rev. J.G. Busscher	
Northcentral Iowa		Mr. B. Drenth		
CRWRC	Arizona		Mr. G. Andringa	
	Georgetown		Mr. G. Hartger	
	Hudson		Mr. R. Comer	
	lakota		Mr. K. Van Engen	
	Minnesota North, U.S.		Rev. P. Sausser	

2. Calvin Theological Seminary

The Board approved the following persons as alternates on the Calvin Theological Seminary Board of Trustees to fill presently vacant positions:

Rev. David H. Kromminga, Eastern Canada, Subgroup II (appointed to replace Mr. William Ubbens, who resigned; alternate for Rev. Barton Velthuizen)

Rev. Roger D. Kramer, Great Plains (alternate for Dr. Dean Deppe)

3. Committee to Study Structure for Ministry in Canada—Phase 2

The Board approved the following appointments to the Committee to Study Structure for Ministry in Canada—Phase 2 (three persons appointed by synod resigned because of other commitments):

Rev. David J. Tigchelaar (to replace Rev. Robert De Moor)

Mr. John Cappon (to replace Rev. Ralph Koops)

Rev. Peter Brouwer (to replace Rev. Jake Kuipers)

Mr. William Wildeboer (appointed as an additional representative from Western Canada at the request of the study committee)

4. Committee to Study Ordination and "Official Acts of Ministry"

Dr. Derke Bergsma (theologian) and Mr. Elmer Yazzie (ethnic community) declined appointment to this study committee. The Board approved the appointment of the following persons:

Dr. Michael Williams (theologian)

Rev. Stanley Jim (ethnic community)

II. Activities of the Board

A. Polity matters

1. Convening church for Synod 1998

Immanuel CRC, Hamilton, Ontario, has offered to be the convening church for Synod 1998, which would meet on the campus of Redeemer College in Ancaster, Ontario. After assessing the suitability of the facilities and being assured by a cost estimate that expenses would be comparable to present arrangements, the Board is recommending that Synod 1996 accept Immanuel CRC's invitation to be the convening church and to meet at Redeemer College in 1998.

2. Ethnic advisers to synod

Synod 1995 approved the following recommendation that ethnic advisers be appointed for the next five years to serve synod with advice:

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 expressly stated their desire to include persons of other ethnic communities.
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.

(Acts of Synod 1995, pp. 694-95)

Synod 1995 referred this matter to the Board for implementation. The Board recommends that the following guidelines be adopted by Synod 1996 to regulate the new position of ethnic adviser for five years and that these guidelines be included in the Rules for Synodical Procedure:

Guidelines for Ethnic Advisers to Synod

A. General considerations

1. At each synod up to seven members from various ethnic communities in the CRC will serve as advisers to synod.
2. An attempt will be made to appoint some advisers (up to three) who are able to serve two-year terms. This means that there will be some experienced advisers and some new advisers at each synod.
3. Expenses for travel, lodging, and meals will be paid by synod.
4. In keeping with the practice of some classes, remuneration (not to exceed \$50 per day) will be available for an ethnic adviser who is financially disadvantaged through service to synod.

B. Qualification

Ethnic advisers shall be members in good standing of the Christian Reformed Church with demonstrated leadership capabilities within their church communities.

C. Responsibilities

1. Ethnic advisers shall serve on the advisory committees of synod. They shall have the privilege of the floor but not the right to vote.
2. Ethnic advisers may appear before any advisory committee for the purpose of speaking to the committee about any matter referred to it.
3. Ethnic advisers shall be present at plenary sessions of synod, where they shall have the privilege of the floor for the purpose of advising synod on matters before it, subject to the accepted rules governing discussion. On important questions the chair or any other member of synod may request their advice.

D. Appointment

1. The Board of Trustees shall appoint the ethnic advisers each year at its March meeting. Nominations for the ethnic-adviser positions shall be gathered by the general secretary from suggestions offered by the churches, SCORR, the ethnic-ministry directors of Home Missions, and the Multiethnic Conference Planning Committee.

2. Ethnic advisers will be assigned their committee assignments by the Program Committee of synod.

(Board of Trustees' Minutes, September 7-8, 1995)

The above guidelines were used this year to enable the Board to provide ethnic advisers for Synod 1996. The Board assumes that, even if synod chooses to alter the guidelines, those advisers chosen according to the proposed guidelines will be seated for this year and accorded their proper place at 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 advance 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 1996 *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.

E-mail addresses and FAX numbers reported by ministers, churches, and agencies are listed in the 1996 *Yearbook*.

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 991 active ministries. The return rate for questionnaires was outstanding this year so that the *Yearbook* includes current statistics for 933 ministries.

Each year a few changes are made in the book, and this year is no exception. Five of the ministry agencies (Abuse Prevention, Chaplaincy Ministries, Disability Concerns, Race Relations, and Pastor-Church Relations) have been incorporated into one agency and are now found under the name Pastoral Ministries. The Directory of Evangelists and the Directory of Specialized Ministries are shaded this year for easier access and use.

Dr. Richard R. De Ridder, assisted by Mrs. Adrianna De Ridder, prepared the 1995 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 Product Services.

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. *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

1996 survey will be presented to Synod 1996 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. 57A)

- 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.

e. 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*.

As was reported last year, initial steps have been taken to prepare a new cumulative index of synodical decisions. 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 1997.

f. *Manual for Synodical Deputies*

This manual was prepared by Rev. Leonard J. Hofman and distributed to synodical deputies and stated clerks of classes in July 1995. All reports indicate that the manual has been well received. Anyone needing a copy of the manual may receive one from the office of the general secretary.

4. Electronic balloting system for synod

Synod 1995 mandated the exploration and creation of an electronic balloting system for synod, provided the cost was not prohibitive. A delegate to Synod 1995 offered to fund the project in the amount of \$10,000

to \$12,000. To facilitate the project, the Board appointed the following committee: Dr. David H. Engelhard (chair), Dr. Peter Borgdorff, Mr. Marvin De Vries, Mr. Edward (Ned) Nielsen, and Mr. Jay Timmer.

The committee has identified several values and factors which are necessary for the electronic balloting system: reliability, accuracy, security, storability, privacy, simplicity ("user friendly"), availability of spare parts, ease of connection (wireless if financially feasible), standard components, and transportability. The system must be usable for electing officers and board/committee members, for conducting roll-call votes when the voice vote is too close to call, and for providing the means for a delegate to request the privilege of speaking on an issue.

To keep the cost from being prohibitive, the committee requested the Engineering Department at Calvin College to assist in this project. Four senior engineering students have adopted this as their senior project. A feasibility study has been completed as well as a plan for the prototype. It is expected that the prototype will be completed in May and will be available in June for synodical delegates to observe and test. Synod 1997 is the target date for full use of the system.

5. Reformed Ecumenical Council's banquet

In June the Reformed Ecumenical Council (REC) will be celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of its founding in Grand Rapids, Michigan, in 1946. As part of its celebration, a special banquet has been planned for Wednesday evening, June 12, 1996, to which the delegates of the CRC Synod 1996 have been invited. The Board accepted the invitation on behalf of synod and through the general secretary will make appropriate scheduling changes as necessary.

6. Classes which have declared the word "male" inoperative in Church Order Article 3-a

Per the instructions of Synod 1995 the general secretary keeps a list of those classes which declare the word "male" inoperative in Church Order Article 3-a. Since Synod 1995, eleven classes have done so:

Alberta North	Lake Erie
Chicago South	Muskegon
Grand Rapids East	Northern Illinois
Hackensack	Pacific Northwest
Holland	Toronto
Huron	

Other classes have tabled motions and/or postponed action on this matter. It is possible that by the time synod meets this list will be altered.

7. Multiethnic Conference

Synod 1986 mandated the biennial meeting of what has come to be known as the Multiethnic Conference. In keeping with the original mandate, there will be a segment of educational training from Wednesday through Friday (June 12-14) for those leaders who have newly affiliated with the CRC. Friday afternoon through Sunday evening will be a time of learning (workshops), interaction with Synod 1996 (Friday evening and Saturday morning), and worship (Saturday and Sunday evenings).

Friday evening will be a joint meeting of the Multiethnic Conference, the Reformed Ecumenical Council delegates, and the CRC synodical delegates. Saturday morning synod will discuss the report submitted by the Committee to Articulate Biblical and Theological Principles for the Development of a Racially and Ethnically Diverse Family of God, to which the Multiethnic Conference attendees have been invited. On Sunday evening all synodical delegates are requested to attend the special worship service planned by Roosevelt Park Community CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan, on behalf of the Multiethnic Conference and Synod 1996.

8. Adoption of proposed changes in Church Order Article 51-a (*Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 766)

Synod 1995 proposed that Church Order Article 51-a be revised by the addition of the word *ordinarily* and that the article read as follows:

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.

Per the regulations of Church Order Supplement, Article 47, this proposed change must be adopted by a following synod before it is implemented.

9. Nominations for Board membership

Far West U.S., Subgroup I

Rev. Raymond Slim is pastor of Sanostee, Naschitti, Toadlena, and Newcomb Christian Reformed churches in Classis Red Mesa. He attended Reformed Bible College and is a graduate of Calvin Theological Seminary. His professional training also includes civil drafting. He presently serves on the classical interim committee, as church visitor, and on Classis Red Mesa Consortium. He was a delegate to Synod 1995.

Rev. Dale W. Vander Veen is pastor of Bethany CRC, Bellflower, California. He is a graduate of Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary. Rev. Vander Veen presently serves as an alternate to the Calvin College Board of Trustees, as regional pastor, and as a member of the interim committee for Classis Greater Los Angeles. He has served on the Board of Home Missions, as synodical deputy and church visitor for Classis Thornapple Valley, and as a delegate to synod three times.

Far West U.S., Subgroup II

Ms. Priscilla Medema is a member of Everett CRC, Everett, Washington. She is retired, having previously owned a small business operated from her home. She presently serves on the board of Cascade Family Bible Conference and has been involved in Coffee Break for nearly twenty years. She is active in church and Christian-school activities.

Dr. Tom Van Groningen (alternate incumbent) is a consultant with community colleges statewide and formerly served as a college administrator. He has a doctorate in education and has served as superintendent, president, and chancellor of several institutions. Dr. Van Groningen is a member of Modesto CRC, Modesto, California, where he has served two terms as deacon and three terms as elder. He has also served as a delegate to synod.

Great Plains

Mrs. Brenda Ackerman is a member of Unity CRC, Ames, Iowa, where she serves as a deacon and finance clerk and as Sunday-school superintendent. She is a homemaker and is self-employed as a seamstress. She was educated at Iowa State University. She has served on boards for Iowa State University and on various Ames community boards.

Mr. Harold Van Maanen (alternate incumbent) is serving his eighteenth year in the Iowa House of Representatives, currently as speaker pro tem and formerly as speaker. Prior to entering politics he was a self-employed farmer. He is a member of Tracy CRC, Tracy, Iowa, where he has served as both deacon and elder. He has been a delegate to synod three times.

Central U.S., Subgroup IV

Rev. Gerard L. Dykstra is pastor of Cascade Fellowship CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan. Before entering the ministry, he served as president and CEO of Brinderson DeLaval Sales and Service (1974-1986). He is a graduate of Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary. Rev. Dykstra serves on the classical home missions and interim committees for Classis Thornapple Valley and is a member of the CRC Loan Fund Committee. He previously served as deacon and as elder in California churches and as SWIM coordinator for Classis California South. He was a delegate to Synod 1993 and served as reporter for the Finance Committee.

Rev. Duane K. Kelderman is copastor of Neland Avenue CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan. He is a graduate of Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary. He serves on the synodical Committee to Study the Development of a Racially and Ethnically Diverse Family of God and on the CRC Worship Committee. Rev. Kelderman serves part-time as a preaching instructor at Calvin Theological Seminary. He was recently appointed to serve on a classical task force to address future ministry to homosexual persons.

Eastern U.S.

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

Eastern Canada, Subgroup I

Rev. Edward Den Haan (alternate incumbent), a member of First CRC, Guelph, Ontario, is campus pastor at the University of Guelph. He is a graduate of Calvin College and received his M.Div. from Calvin Theological Seminary. He has had CPE training at Interfaith Institute, Cambridge, Ontario. He serves as alternate on the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA, is board chairman of the Institute for Christian Studies, and is a member of the CR Campus Ministry task force. He has served on the boards of Calvin College and Seminary and World Missions, and he served on the denominational Committee to Study Youth Ministry.

Rev. Jake Kuipers (member incumbent) is pastor of First CRC, Sarnia, Ontario. He is a graduate of Calvin College and received his M.Div. from Calvin Theological Seminary. He was elected alternate on the Board of Trustees in 1993, and in 1994 he was appointed to fill the unexpired term of Rev. Jack Vos. He presently serves as a synodical deputy and on the classical

interim committee and is convener of the Abuse Response Team, Classis Chatham. He served two terms on the Board of Home Missions.

Member-at-large

Mr. Durk De Jong (alternate incumbent) is a member of Emmanuel CRC, Calgary, Alberta, where he serves as clerk of council. He is a semiretired accountant and president of De Jong's Holdings Ltd. He graduated from Calgary University with a C.M.A. degree in 1966. He is stated clerk of Classis Alberta South and previously served as treasurer and trustee of the CRC Canadian Ministers' Pension Trustees, on the Board of Governors of The King's University College, on the executive committee of The King's University College Foundation, on the Institute for Christian Studies board of trustees, as treasurer for the Calgary Christian School Society, and as vice president for the Calgary Philharmonic Chorus. He has served as elder, deacon, and chairman of the church finance and the worship committees and has been a delegate to synod four times.

Mr. William Wildeboer (member incumbent) is a member of Bethel CRC, Lacombe, Alberta, where he serves as clerk of council. He is self-employed as a farmer. He received his A.B. in classical languages at Calvin College and a teaching certificate from Alberta Teacher Training. He worked as a school teacher (1965-1966) and as school principal (1966-1976). He has served on the Board of Trustees of Calvin College and Seminary (1986-1991), on the Calvin College Board of Trustees (1991-1992), and on the Board of Governors of The King's College, as senate chairman in 1982 and 1984. He served as a member of the Research Project Evaluation Committee with the Farming for the Future program of the government of Alberta (1984-1987). He is in his fifth term as elder, including twelve years as clerk.

10. Review of Model Articles of Incorporation for CRC congregations

Synod 1995 adopted the following recommendations in response to Overture 81 from Classis Zeeland:

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.
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.

(Acts of Synod 1995, pp. 697-98)

In September 1995 the following persons were appointed to serve on the committee to address the mandate quoted above:

By the time synod convenes, this committee will have met three times. It is hoped that a report will be ready for the Board in December 1996 and then presented to Synod 1997.

B. Legal/corporate 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. The Christian Reformed Church in North America Foundation

Synod 1995 approved the Restated Articles of Incorporation of the Christian Reformed Church Trustee Corporation and also its bylaws. Subsequent to the meetings of synod, legal counsel discovered that this corporation could not be converted as intended and that a new corporate entity should be formed. The purposes of the new corporate entity will be the same, as will its governance structure and accountability. The change from what synod approved last year is minimal and technical. The Board recommends that synod approve the dissolution of the existing legal corporation (i.e., the Christian Reformed Church Trustee Corporation) and permit the Board to establish a new corporate entity (i.e., The Christian Reformed Church in North America Foundation).

3. Constitution and Bylaws of the Board of Trustees

Synod 1993 provisionally approved the constitution and bylaws for the Board of Trustees. The provisional approval was intended to allow for a period of testing and refinement. A committee of the Board of Trustees reviewed the constitution and bylaws and suggested some minor changes in wording, some of which were suggestions made by the agencies. All of the agencies were invited to respond to the proposed revisions, but, other than a communication from Calvin Theological Seminary, which was endorsed by Calvin College, the Board received no substantive suggestions for revision. The seminary's board of trustees requested language changes in both the constitution and bylaws that would grant greater independence to both Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary. The Board of Trustees believes that adequate provision has been made for protecting the educational institutions from undue "external" interference, as required by their respective accrediting organizations. At the same time, the Board of Trustees believes that Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary should be integrated into the denominational structure as much as possible to reflect that they are fully agencies of synod.

The Board of Trustees recommends to Synod 1996 that the constitution and bylaws for the Board of Trustees be approved as proposed and attached to this report as Appendices A and B.

In addition to the constitution and bylaws there are two other matters related to this subject:

a. Changing the name of the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA

Overture 30 (*Agenda for Synod 1995*, pp. 393-94) requested that synod change the name of the Board of Trustees. The advisory committee at synod proposed that the new name be the Synodical Administrative Board. Synod 1995 decided "to refer this recommendation to the Board of Trustees and to ask it to report on this matter to Synod 1996" (*Acts of Synod 1995*, Art. 111, I, C, 1). The Board discussed this matter and recommends that the present name be retained.

Grounds:

- 1) The name *Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church in North America* accurately describes the mandate given by synod to be the trustees of synod's corporate entities.
 - 2) While the Board of Trustees performs certain ecclesiastical functions for synod, it is not an ecclesiastical (assembly)-like organization.
 - 3) The suggested name of *Synodical Administrative Board* does not seem appropriate since the Board provides oversight of the ministries of synod but does not primarily administer them.
 - 4) Changing the name of the corporate entity now known as the Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church in North America, after it was provisionally approved by Synod 1993, would be quite expensive and legally complex.
- b. Revision of the Rules for Synodical Procedure

When Synod 1993 provisionally approved the constitution and bylaws of the Board of Trustees, it also approved the July 1-June 30 term of service for trustees and alternates who are elected to serve on the Board of Trustees. Technically these dates are in conflict with one of the synodical rules of procedure (IV, D, 8), which specifies that terms on synodical boards and committees begin September 1 and end August 31. This has resulted in confusion and lack of uniformity.

The Board recommends that synod revise the rule of synodical procedure to state that all terms on synodical boards and committees commence the first day of the month following a person's election by synod and expire on the first day of the month following the third annual meeting of synod after a person's election. This rule will take effect on July 1, 1996, for those presently serving a September-August term.

Grounds:

- 1) A uniform practice for all the agencies is desirable.
- 2) This calendar is consistent with the fiscal and programmatic year of most of the agencies and is the current practice of all.
- 3) This will bring the Rules for Synodical Procedure into conformity with the more recent synodical decision.

4. Lawsuits

The threat of legal action against the CRCNA is an increasingly common occurrence. Some lawsuits filed are settled before any formal court activity, and others are withdrawn for various reasons. Some seem to go on indefinitely. Since Synod 1995 the CRCNA was dropped from a suit involving our third-party insurance administrator. Another lawsuit was filed last summer over a wrongful dismissal claim by several former employees of a CRC congregation. The CRCNA was included in the suit because the individuals involved and the council of the congregation had consulted denominational personnel in the course of events. Helping and advising in conflict situations is risky, and denominational staff bear the personal pain of threats and legal action. These risks, and the related costs, are likely to increase as society becomes increasingly litigious.

C. *Program and finance matters*

1. Restructuring of agencies and support services

The process of reorganizing several ministry committees into a Pastoral Ministries agency has moved along during the year. It has proven to be more difficult than originally expected. Divisions such as the former Chaplains Committee and SCORR have a long-standing independent history. Pastor-Church Relations and Disability Concerns were initiated, though more recently, as standing committees of synod. The Abuse Prevention division's beginning nearly coincided with the formation of Pastoral Ministries. With such a diverse history among the divisions, it is not surprising that it will take some time to forge a fully integrated approach to ministry.

At the same time, significant progress has occurred. Increasingly the staff are discovering ways to enhance each other's ministries through mutual consultation and support. The Board of Pastoral Ministries has taken hold of governing the divisions and is committed to implementing this integration of ministries on behalf of synod. With some additional time it is expected that the initial adjustment period will bear fruit. To facilitate this adjustment, the Pastoral Ministries Board nominated Ms. Beth Swagman to be the executive director, a responsibility she will assume in addition to her role as the director of Abuse Prevention. The Board of Trustees approved Ms. Swagman's appointment and recommends that synod ratify this decision.

Ministry-integration activity can also be reported among other agencies. What is exciting is that many of these cooperative ventures were initiated by the agencies themselves. Some examples follow:

- Home Missions and CRWRC are addressing areas of domestic ministry together.
- World Missions and CRWRC continue to cooperate in many places around the world.
- Home Missions and CRC Publications are cooperating in the distribution of printed materials.
- A number of agencies (Calvin College, Calvin Theological Seminary, World Missions, CRC Publications, The Back to God Hour, as well as Dordt College and Worldwide Christian Schools, are cooperating in a ministry to the people of the Commonwealth of Independent States, especially in Russia and Ukraine.

- The Canadian Ministry Advancement Team (CMAT) has shown special visionary leadership in cooperative ministry by working with the Council of Christian Reformed Churches in Canada (CCRCC) and the Eastern Canada Diaconal Conferences (ECDC), as well as developing a resource center for volunteers which is known as ServiceLink.
- The agencies are cooperating in a quarterly publication known as *CRC Source* to inform the membership of the CRC about the worldwide ministries of the denomination.

In addition to the above, agencies also share in a variety of support services. The office of personnel, under the leadership of Norma Coleman, provides a variety of services for recruitment, training, standardizing of policies, benefit administration, and other personnel services for all the agencies except Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary. The office of finance and administration, under the leadership of Robert Van Stright, has brought significant change and improvement to the budgeting process, payroll services, cash management, pension-funds administration, and the consolidation of a variety of financial functions which can be done more effectively and at less cost on a centralized basis. Certainly much more remains to be done, and most of the economies to be achieved are still in the planning stages. It is the Board of Trustees' hope that continued improvement in these services, and their accompanying financial savings, can be realized within the foreseeable future.

2. Strategic planning

Synod 1995 referred to the churches "for reflection, study, and response" the present draft of the Mission and Vision Statement of the Christian Reformed Church. This statement has been sent, along with discussion materials, to every congregation. Responses from the churches are solicited until August 1, 1996, but a number of responses have already been received. It is expected that Synod 1997 will be asked to "endorse" a revision or possibly a new formulation of the Mission and Vision Statement.

In addition, the Board of Trustees, along with representatives from all the agencies, met to discuss strategic issues in March 1996, with a follow-up discussion scheduled for the fall of 1996. These conferences are designed to identify the integrating and underlying values and goals that should guide the ministries of the CRC generally (subject to synod's approval, of course) and also should guide the agencies in their respective ministries on behalf of the whole church.

3. Structure for ministry in Canada

Synod 1995 appointed a committee to prepare structural recommendations for consideration by the Council of Christian Reformed Churches in Canada (CCRCC) at its meeting in November 1995. The committee did excellent work under the able leadership of Ben Vandezande and prepared a fine report for CCRCC. The Council made some changes and recommended that a new committee complete the assignment for consideration by Synod 1997. The Board of Trustees appointed that committee at its December 1995 meeting as recommended by the Council. The committee is composed as follows: Rev. Gordon Pols, chairman; Rev. Gerrit Bomhof, reporter; Ben Vandezande, facilitator; Lee Hollaar; Ruth Krabbe; Ray Elgersma; Neal de

Koning; Ed Vander Veer; Jack Westerhof; Bill Terpstra; and Shirley Roels; with Peter Borgdorff as adviser.

In a communication from this study committee the Board of Trustees has been informed that the committee has reached the tentative conclusion that any structuring for ministry in Canada will also affect the U.S. agencies. The study committee is concerned that reorganizing agencies only on the Canadian side is impractical and very difficult. At the same time, reorganizing all of the agencies on both sides of the border exceeds the mandate of the present committee. The Board of Trustees addressed this concern at its meeting in March 1996 and now recommends to synod that the process of organizational reflection continue also on the U.S. side of our binational denomination. The study committee's interim report to synod is attached as Appendix C to the Board's report.

4. Agency representatives addressing synod

Synod 1995 adopted a three-year rotation cycle for agency presentations at synod. Synod also decided to recognize the presence of missionaries, chaplains, and all others engaged in ministries in specialized settings. Finally, synod made provision for retiring agency directors to address synod with a brief farewell address. The following roster for agency presentations is proposed for Synod 1996 on a schedule of synod's choosing:

- CRC Publications (new curriculum)
- Home Missions (100th anniversary)
- Pastoral Ministries (new agency)

It is recommended that synod recognize missionaries, chaplains, and others who are engaged in ministries in specialized settings on Friday, June 14, 1996, at 1:30 p.m.

It is also recommended that synod permit Mr. Raymond Elgersma (CRWRC-Canada) and Dr. Joel Nederhood (The Back to God Hour) to give farewell speeches at a time of synod's choosing.

5. Financial information

The detailed financial information governing each of the agencies will be presented to synod in the *Business and Financial Supplement*, which is distributed at the time synod convenes. All of the budgets will be submitted to the Board of Trustees for approval at the May 1996 meeting of the Board. These budgets will show only modest increases at best; some have actually been held flat or even decreased. None of the proposed budgets assumes a ministry-share increase for 1997. This decision was reached by the Board of Trustees and communicated to all the agencies and the Ministries Coordinating Council (MCC). The ministry-share amounts recommended for 1997 are as follows:

Ministry or Agency	Per Member	Per Family
The Back to God Hour	\$31.84	\$73.91
CRC Television	11.42	26.50
Calvin College	25.84	59.38
Calvin Theological Seminary	19.39	44.81
CRC Denominational Services	15.15	35.94
CRC Home Missions	52.47	120.64
CRC Pastoral Ministries	11.18	25.90
CRC Publications and World Literature	2.29	5.23
CRC World Missions	49.51	114.93
Fund for Smaller Churches	8.44	19.58
Ministers' Pension Funds	17.46	40.47

It is also recommended that synod approve the "one or more" offering schedule to be recommended to the churches as follows:

- The Back to God Hour—above-ministry-share needs
 - CRC Television—above-ministry-share needs
 - Calvin College—above-ministry-share needs
 - Calvin Theological Seminary
 - a. Above-ministry-share needs
 - b. Revolving Loan Fund
 - CRC Home Missions—above-ministry-share needs and Easter Sunday
 - CRC Pastoral Ministries—above-ministry-share needs for
 - a. Abuse Prevention
 - b. Chaplaincy Ministries
 - c. Disability Concerns
 - d. Pastor-Church Relations
 - e. Race Relations
 - Multiracial Student Scholarships
 - CRC Publications
 - a. World Literature Ministries—above-ministry-share needs
 - b. Friendship Ministries (United States)
 - c. Friendship Series Charities (Canada)
 - CRC World Missions—above-ministry-share needs and Pentecost Sunday
 - Christian Reformed World Relief—one offering per quarter because
 - CRWRC receives no ministry-share support
- 6. Social justice and world hunger

Synod 1993 adopted the world-hunger report, which at its core was a call for the CRC to recommit to the ministry of justice, righteousness, and compassion. The term "world hunger" was identified more as a symbol of the ministry issues the church faces in today's world than as the exclusive focus of a person or position. Mr. Peter Vander Meulen, who spent seventeen years with CRWRC on three continents, has been appointed to be the denominational coordinator for social-justice and world-hunger issues. Mr. Vander Meulen began his assignment part-time in July 1994 and full-time in June 1995. He has given vigorous leadership to the **Free to Serve** theme, which focuses the attention of the church on ministry globally and locally, as well as on specific issues that need to be addressed as the CRC bears witness to the Lord in a broken world.

In cooperation with the agencies of the church, seven (7) ministry-celebration rallies are being planned for the fall of 1996 at various locations around the denomination. It is our hope and prayer that through the talents of several fine artists and with the participation of local planning committees and many church members, the spirits of the CRC's members will be lifted up, encouraged, and challenged to greater works of service. More specific detail about dates and places will be provided for the delegates at the time of synod.

7. Ethnic-minority leadership development

In the report to Synod 1992 the Synodical Committee on Race Relations (SCORR) proposed a strategy for ethnic-minority leadership development. Synod "referred this strategy to the churches, agencies, boards, and executive director of ministries for their study and response" (*Acts of Synod 1992*, p. 624). In the transfer of responsibilities from the general secretary to the executive director of ministries, the mailing of this strategy was delayed and then forgotten. A contributing factor to its being forgotten was that no churches or agencies responded to the proposed strategy statement. Nevertheless, the executive director of ministries extends his apology to synod for this oversight. The strategy and synod's decision concerning it are quoted here as information for Synod 1996.

IV. A Strategy for Effective Ethnic-Minority Leadership Development

A. *Introduction (or preamble)*

The church of Jesus Christ is called to be a reflection of God's love for all people of all colors, races, tribes, and tongues. In the church, if nowhere else in our society, every person deserves to be seen as the image of God and to have her or his gifts used to the fullest extent.

The agencies of the Christian Reformed Church are not themselves the church, but they are a part of the church, called to carry out specific tasks. As part of the church of Jesus Christ, they should reflect God's kingdom as fully as possible and should use as many gifts as can be helpful to their task, regardless of the size, shape, age, or color of the persons in whom those gifts are embodied. To this end they should practice hiring policies which encourage diversity rather than homogeneity.

In addition to the desire to reflect the kingdom as fully as possible, it is essential for the church and its agencies to show diversity in their hiring practices because people of different cultures do genuinely bring different gifts and perspectives to the Lord's work. The excluded suffer when our hiring practices limit our employees to one or two groups. The church suffers likewise because it does not have the chance to grow and develop through using different gifts, seeing different perspectives, understanding different backgrounds and different cultural assumptions. Individual Christians suffer because they do not learn to see and understand the richness of the gifts God has given to his church.

Hiring practices that intentionally or unintentionally keep our work force homogenous or limit certain people to certain kinds of jobs weaken the church and impoverish us all. They are unacceptable for a Christian institution and must be addressed by a strategy that will consciously and intentionally make the Christian institution a reflection of God's kingdom, made up of people from every nation, tribe, and language.

In addition to our desire to help the church be as rich and gifted as it can be, diversity in hiring is essential in our society because the church needs to lead the way in overcoming the history of discrimination and sinful racism that have so distorted the lives of many of our fellow citizens and our brothers and sisters in Christ.

B. *Employment discrimination*

For many people in the area of employment, obstacles are far more common than opportunities. These obstacles can come from employers, managers, or personnel representatives who may consciously be reluctant to hire or promote certain individuals. Preconceived ideas about a particular ethnic group may cause employers to assume an applicant's inability regardless of the applicant's unique profile. Perhaps, in some instances, fears about how one's coworkers may respond to the hiring or promotion of an ethnic-minority person may mean that certain ethnic minorities are regularly overlooked.

Obstacles may appear within systems and practices which restrict access to opportunities. For example, revolving "glass doors" may allow minorities to apply for positions but prevent them from getting the jobs because managers ask for levels of education and experience beyond what is required to do the job successfully. "Glass ceilings" may prevent the promotion of certain individuals because they do not fit the physical stereotype of managers as we have been conditioned to envision and accept them.

As a result of these invisible barriers, both the potential employees and the businesses lose. Hopeful employees and those stratified into lower-level positions are not able to demonstrate their talents. Businesses lose the contributions that result from diversified ingenuity and leadership.

Employment discrimination is by no means gone in our society, though it currently takes more subtle forms than flat-out exclusion of ethnic-minority groups.

C. *Commitment to equity*

Out of consideration for the growing diversity of our society, the biblical vision of the church as being reflective of the kingdom, and the continuing very limited diversity among the employees of Christian Reformed agencies and offices, the denomination must consider a formal commitment to positive action. It must act by removing obstacles and by providing remedies to improve employment diversity within its organizations.

D. *Proposed employment-equity policy*

The Employment-Equity Policy of the Christian Reformed Church in North America must assure fair and equitable treatment for each individual regardless of race, cultural background, or age and, in so doing, intend to increase the representation of people of color at all levels of employment in the agencies and offices of the Christian Reformed Church.

E. *Advocacy for state and provincial legislation*

Many state and provincial legislative authorities have enacted legislation addressing social inequities in employment. Christian organizations and the Christian community need to be supportive of such government attempts and act as advocates in the implementation of such policies when consistent with biblical principles.

F. *Responsibility*

1. Each agency or office of the CRC

Each office or agency of the denomination is responsible for its own employment-equity plan. In preparing such a plan, each agency or office would analyze its work force and its recruitment and hiring practices, compare its results with the external labor force, and develop goals and measures that indicate, by results, its implementation of the denomination's commitment to employment equity.

Appropriate support measures should be built into these plans. The measures might include job rotation, job interchange, flexible work arrangements, job sharing, or identification of qualified target-group candidates.

2. Managers within the agencies and offices

Recruiters are responsible for using recruitment methods that allow job opportunities to be known beyond the boundaries of one racial or ethnic group. Managers are responsible for ensuring that the employment-equity plan is implemented and that it contains strategies and procedures that produce results.

Existing recruitment and employment policies and practices need to be scrutinized by those who are sensitive to ways in which those policies and practices adversely affect target-group members, and solutions need to be found to offset any adverse effects. For example, educational leave and assistance policies may need revision, or uniform benefits may need to be designed for two-parent, middle-class families who need more flexibility.

3. Synod

The synod of the CRC must be responsible for approving and monitoring the policy. The monitoring may, of course, be done by the executive director of ministries when that position is filled. The approved goals, measures, and strategies for achieving employment equity must be monitored for each agency and office. The office of the director of ministries is responsible to provide training, advice, and support to the offices and agencies as they prepare and implement their plans (possibly using SCORR's resources to carry out this responsibility).

G. *Models for success*

To assist the agencies and offices of the CRC in developing and implementing their employment-equity plans, the office of the director of ministries may wish to encourage development of models that can be emulated by other agencies or offices. Such models might include

- Career-development programs
- Employment counseling and support-service structures
- Training and awareness programs to facilitate adjustment to change
- Cross-cultural awareness training
- Recruitment methods for ethnic-minority groups
- Executive-development programs

(Agenda for Synod 1992, pp. 208-10, IV)

It should be noted that many of the suggestions contained in the proposed strategy have since been implemented through the development of interagency personnel procedures. The values that supported the proposed strategy are also contained in this year's synodical study-committee report on the racially and ethnically diverse family of God. It is recommended that synod receive as information the manner in which the strategy for ethnic-minority leadership has been dealt with and encourage all the agencies to follow the strategy's intent as well as they are able.

8. The size of agency boards

At various times during the years of discussion on denominational-agency reorganization, the subject of agency board size has been discussed. Synod 1993 granted an extension to the Board of Trustees for the resolution of this question. While the formal request for an extension in 1993 was related to the development of a denominational ministries plan, the question is surfacing now because Calvin Theological Seminary requested the Board's response to the possibility of returning to classical representation for the seminary's board of trustees.

The present situation varies from agency to agency. Agencies with regional-representative boards are The Back to God Hour, Calvin College,

Calvin Theological Seminary, and Pastoral Ministries. Classically delegated boards are in place for CRC Publications, CRWRC, Home Missions, and World Missions. The latter agencies have all expressed a preference, some more strongly than others, for retaining classically based boards.

The Board of Trustees has considered all of the issues to the best of its ability. Synod needs to give clear direction on this issue. To facilitate that discussion the Board of Trustees recommends the following:

That all denominational boards, with the exception of the Calvin College Board of Trustees, be uniformly constituted of sixteen (16) regional representatives and a limited number of at-large members not to exceed five (5) in total, determined by the size and complexity of each organization and as approved by the Board of Trustees, and that such representation be from the regions presently defining the Board of Trustees.

It is further recommended that the transition to smaller boards begin July 1, 1996, and be completed no later than July 1, 1998.

Grounds:

- a. This size best serves effective governance.
- b. This size is cost effective.
- c. Vital considerations such as denominational "ownership" of an agency, accountability, and good communication with the churches can be effected in other appropriate ways than through board representation.

D. Conclusion

The ministry of the Christian Reformed Church continues to be wonderfully diverse and challenging. The future also looks challenging as the denomination sorts through the priorities and issues facing the churches. The Board of Trustees is grateful for the trust that synod has placed in it to provide leadership to the ministry efforts of the agencies. The Board is also grateful for the cooperation of the agencies. The various parts of the church and its agencies work cooperatively to serve the Lord of the church. It is the desire of the Board to keep the focus of all it does on that most important leading principle. To that end the Board solicits synod's continued prayer and support.

III. Recommendations

- A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Rev. Arthur J. Schoonveld, 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 pertaining to the Board of Trustees are discussed.
- B. That synod approve the interim appointments made by the Board to the agency boards and committees (I, C, 1-4).
- C. That synod designate Immanuel CRC, Hamilton, Ontario, as the convening church for Synod 1998 (II, A, 1).

- D. That synod adopt the proposed guidelines regulating ethnic advisers (II, A, 2).
- E. That synod adopt the proposed change in Church Order Article 51-a (II, A, 7).
- F. That synod approve the formation of the Christian Reformed Church in North America Foundation to be incorporated in the State of Michigan and authorize the Board of Trustees to implement this decision also in Canada at the appropriate time (II, B, 2).
- G. That synod approve the constitution and bylaws of the Board of Trustees as proposed, as well as the resulting revision of the Rules for Synodical Procedure (II, B, 3).
- H. That synod ratify the appointment of Ms. Beth Swagman as the executive director of Pastoral Ministries (part-time) as approved by the Board of Trustees (II, C, 1).
- I. That synod approve the action taken by the Board of Trustees in reference to the Committee to Study Structure for Ministry in Canada—Phase 3 (II, C, 3).
- J. That synod schedule a time for recognizing missionaries, chaplains, and others engaged in specialized ministries and for the farewell speeches of Mr. Ray Elgersma and Dr. Joel Nederhood (II, C, 4).
- K. That synod approve the combined budget, the proposed ministry shares undergirding the proposed budget, and the offering schedule for one or more offerings per year as proposed for the agencies of the church, with the exception of CRWRC, which is being recommended for four offerings per year (II, C, 5).
- L. That synod adopt the recommendation of the Board of Trustees for the downsizing of those agency boards which are presently classically based (II, C, 8).

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

APPENDIX A

**CONSTITUTION
 of the
 BOARD OF TRUSTEES
 of the
 CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA**

PREAMBLE

Our Lord, Jesus Christ, upon his ascension into heaven, entrusted the proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom to his disciples and commanded them to be his witnesses, teaching all nations to obey everything he had commanded.

As followers of Jesus Christ, the church corporately and each of its members individually, led by the Holy Spirit, are called to share this gospel of the kingdom within the fellowship of the church and with people throughout the world by proclaiming God's Word and giving God the worship and honor that are his due, in the confidence that Christ is building up the church and is establishing the signs of the kingdom.

In fulfillment of this calling, the members of the Christian Reformed Church in North America unite their efforts in a worldwide mission of proclaiming and living the Lordship of Jesus Christ. To carry out this mission, the synod of the Christian Reformed Church in North America (hereinafter "synod") has created the Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church in North America and such agencies, committees, and institutions as are listed in its bylaws. These agencies, committees, and institutions function primarily within Canada and the United States, where the Christian Reformed Church is committed to being a binational denomination. Each organizational entity and each national expression of the Christian Reformed Church in North America makes its own unique contribution to God's mission in the world as the whole denomination strives to live the fullness of the gospel.

Article I Name

The name of this organization is the Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church in North America (hereinafter "the Board").

Article II Purposes

The purposes of the Board are to transact all matters assigned to it by synod; to supervise the management of the agencies and committees established by synod and designated in the bylaws of the Board, including the planning, coordinating, and integrating of their work; and to cooperate with the educational institutions affiliated with the denomination toward integrating the respective missions of those institutions into the denominational ministry program. To fulfill its purposes the Board will

- A. Lead in developing and implementing the denominational ministries plan for the agencies, committees, and educational institutions established by synod.
- B. Assure collaboration among agencies, committees, and educational institutions established by synod.
- C. Exercise general oversight and authority when necessary in the manner stated in the bylaws of the Board.

Nothing contained herein shall interfere with the authority of the Board of Trustees of Calvin College and the Board of Trustees of Calvin Theological Seminary to govern their respective institutions and to manage their personnel, facilities, educational programs, libraries, and finances according to their respective articles of incorporation and bylaws.

Article III Functions

The functions described in this article are carried out by the Board under the authority of the synod of the Christian Reformed Church in North America and by virtue of the Board's legal status in accordance with applicable laws in Canada and the United States.

To achieve the purposes described in Article II hereof, the Board shall carry out the following functions:

- A. Implementing all matters committed to it by the specific instruction of synod, carrying out all necessary interim functions on behalf of synod, and executing all synodical matters which cannot be postponed until the next synod.
- B. Leading in the development and implementation of a denominational ministries plan which reflects the biblical and Reformed mission commitment of the Christian Reformed Church and provides a basis for the Board's management of coordination and integration among the agencies and committees and for the integration of the respective missions of the denomination's educational institutions into the denominational ministry program.
- C. Presenting to synod a unified report of all the agencies, committees, and educational institutions, as well as a unified budget inclusive of all agencies, committees, and educational institutions.
- D. Serving synod with analyses, reviews, and recommendations with respect to the programs and resources of the denomination. In its discharge of this responsibility, the Board shall require reports from all the agencies, committees, and educational institutions.
- E. Adjudicating appeals placed before it by the agency boards and committees. Such appeals shall be processed in accordance with the bylaws of the Board and the provisions of the Church Order. Appeals which deal with an action of the Board may be submitted to synod for adjudication.
- F. Discharging all responsibilities incumbent upon directors of the Christian Reformed Church in North America, a Michigan not-for-profit corporation (CRCNA-Michigan), and the Christian Reformed Church in North America, a registered charity organized under the laws of the Province of Ontario (CRCNA-Ontario).
- G. Serving as the Joint-Ministries Management Committee (JMMC), which is responsible for any joint-venture agreements existing between CRCNA-Michigan and CRCNA-Ontario. Members of the Board also serving as trustees of CRCNA-Ontario are responsible for joint-venture agreements existing between CRCNA-Ontario and the agencies and committees of the denomination which are not registered as Canadian charities.
- H. Approving all joint-ministry agreements existing between or among agencies and committees.

Article IV Membership

A. Elected members

The elected regular membership of the Board shall consist of not more than nineteen (19) persons, each of whom shall be a member in good standing of a Christian Reformed church. Sixteen (16) members shall each represent a designated geographic area, and three (3) members shall be members-at-large. The membership shall be divided into two (2) classes of six (6) persons each, and one (1) class of seven (7) persons. At each annual meeting of synod, a class of members shall be elected by synod from nominees prepared in accordance with the provisions of Article V below for a term of office to expire on the first day of the month following the third annual meeting of synod after their election.

As far as is reasonably practical, members of the Board who are not members-at-large shall represent, in number, the regions designated from time to time by synod.

All the members appointed by synod to serve on the Board of Trustees from both the United States and Canada shall serve as the directors of CRCNA-Michigan. The members who are from Canada shall also serve as directors of CRCNA-Ontario.

B. Elected alternate members

For each elected regular member of the Board, an alternate member shall be elected in the same manner to represent the same area as the regular member. Alternate members shall take the places of regular members who move outside of their area of representation or who otherwise fail to serve. The terms of regular members and alternate members shall coincide.

C. Ex officio members

By virtue of their respective offices, the General Secretary and the Executive Director of Ministries shall be non-voting, ex officio members of the Board.

Article V Nominations

The Board shall, as needed, prepare and submit to synod nominations for regular and alternate members of the Board, from which synod shall elect a designated number to serve as Board members.

Promptly after each synod the General Secretary shall notify each classis within each affected synodical region of the regular members and alternate members whose terms as regional representatives and alternates expire at the following synod. Such notice shall alert each classis to nominate one or more persons to fill a vacancy on the Board and to submit such nominations to the Board for consideration at the Board's first regular meeting of the calendar year following the year in which the notice is given.

If the procedure described in this article does not produce a sufficient number of nominees who in the judgment of the Board are qualified to serve as either regular members or alternate members, the Board may then add other

names to the list of nominations submitted to synod. In preparing nominations, the Board shall

- A. Adhere to the synodical policy that no more than one-half the members of the Board shall be ministers of the Word.
- B. Take into account applicable synodical policies that may be adopted from time to time, including, but not limited to, policies with respect to diversity, age, gender, ethnic representation, and specific expertise.
- C. Develop and implement rotation cycles for the regions so that, as much as possible, fair representation is achieved.

Article VI

Term

Regular members and alternate members shall serve three-year (3-year) terms. Regular members who have served two (2) consecutive three-year terms shall not be eligible for reelection to a third consecutive term. No person shall serve as a regular member for more than six (6) consecutive years.

Article VII

Officers, Meetings, and Committees

A. Officers

The Board shall elect its own officers except that the General Secretary shall function as secretary of the Board and of the CRCNA-Michigan corporation.

B. Meetings

The Board shall meet as often as it deems necessary to fulfill its purpose but no fewer than three (3) times annually.

C. Committees

The Board shall designate its own subcommittees.

Article VIII

Amendments

This constitution may be amended by synod upon the recommendation of the Board or by way of an overture to synod. Proposed amendments to the constitution brought to synod by overture need not first be considered by the Board.

When a proposed amendment is to be considered by the Board, this procedure shall be followed: Any recommended amendment to any provision of this constitution, shall be considered for adoption by the Board only after written notice thereof and any reasonably required explanation thereof are forwarded to each regular and each alternate member within such time as is reasonably necessary for an understanding of the proposed amendment. No such amendment shall be effective unless ratified by the next synod following the adoption thereof by the Board.

APPENDIX B

BYLAWS of the BOARD OF TRUSTEES of the CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA

I. Introduction

The Bylaws of the Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church in North America (hereinafter "the Board" and "CRCNA") are designed to implement the provisions of the constitution. Should a conflict exist between the provisions of these bylaws and the provisions of the constitution, the provisions of the constitution shall prevail.

II. The Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church in North America

A. The Board shall carry out its work by organizing itself into the following committees:

1. Executive Committee.
2. Polity Committee.
3. Program and Finance Committee.
4. Such other committees as the Board deems necessary.

B. To fulfill the functions described in the constitution, the Board shall

1. Lead in the development and implementation of a denominational ministries plan, which will serve to guide the agencies, committees, and educational institutions in the fulfillment of their respective mandates and will serve the Board as a basis for managing the coordinating and integrating of the work of the agencies and committees¹ and for integrating the respective missions of Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary into the denominational ministries program. The Board will also amend the denominational ministries plan from time to time as need arises.
2. In developing and implementing this plan, secure the participation of the executive directors of the agencies, the presidents of the educational institutions, and the chairpersons or designated representatives of all agency boards, committees, and educational institutions affected by particular deliberations. Such designated representatives shall be members, preferably officers, of the boards or committees which designate them. On such occasions the executive directors, presidents, and chairpersons or designated representatives shall have the privilege of the floor but not the right to vote.

¹All references in these bylaws to agencies and committees specifically refer to those agencies and committees that generally participate in the coordinating work of the Ministries Coordinating Council. Such references generally exclude synodical study committees, the Judicial Code Committee, the Interchurch Relations Committee, and any other ad hoc committee synod appoints.

3. Serve synod with analyses, reviews, and recommendations with respect to the programs and resources of the denomination. To that end, the Board shall require reports from the boards of agencies, committees, and educational institutions.
4. Require coordination and unity from the agencies, committees, and institutions in the fulfillment of their respective mandates in order to achieve stewardly ministries as they carry out the mission of the CRCNA.
5. Require that all synodically commissioned and directed work be done in such a manner that scriptural standards are maintained and the constitution and bylaws of the Board are observed in all aspects of the work.
6. Approve all new ministry directions and major expansions of the agencies and committees in the light of the denominational ministries plan and other denominational priorities.
7. Approve policy and goals for the unified ministry of the Christian Reformed Church as expressed in the denominational ministries plan.
8. Approve interdependency agreements with other churches and ministry agencies, both domestically and internationally.
9. Periodically instruct all agencies, committees, and educational institutions with respect to reviewing their board size, composition, and structure. The Board may also require agencies or committees to combine their activities to achieve greater effectiveness and better stewardship of resources.
10. Adjudicate appeals placed before it by the agencies, committees, and educational institutions. Such appeals shall be processed in accordance with the rules stated in these bylaws and the provisions of the Church Order.
11. Nominate a qualified candidate for the position of General Secretary (GS) and a qualified candidate for the position of Executive Director of Ministries (EDM) and submit these nominations to synod for appointment.
12. Endorse in its report to synod the nominations for the following positions:
 - a. President of Calvin College.
 - b. President of Calvin Theological Seminary.
 - c. Editor in chief of *The Banner*.

In the event the Board does not endorse a nominee, such lack of endorsement and the reasons therefor shall first be communicated to the agency or educational institution involved and, if necessary, to synod.

13. Approve appointments to the following positions and submit them to synod for ratification:
 - a. The executive directors of the agencies (or their title equivalents).
 - b. Position(s) responsible for theological content of CRC Publications' Education, Worship, and Evangelism Department products.
 - c. Any other position as synod may direct.

The search for and nomination of an executive director for an agency shall be primarily the responsibility of that agency's board with assistance from the EDM.

14. Require that periodic standardized performance evaluations be conducted of all persons employed by the agencies. Performance evaluations of agency staff are the responsibility of the executive directors. Performance evaluations of agency executive directors shall be conducted jointly by the officer(s) of the particular agency and the Executive Director of Ministries.²
15. Ratify the appointments of agency staff members whose appointments are not subject to synodical ratification (directors, associate directors, assistant directors, senior administrative staff members, editors, associate editors, etc.).
16. Provide for the establishment of a Ministries Coordinating Council (MCC).
17. Attend to such church-polity issues as need to be addressed and render such advice to study committees as it deems necessary or as requested of it between the meetings of synod.
18. Prepare and distribute the *Agenda for Synod*, the *Acts of Synod*, the *Yearbook*, and such other official publications as synod shall authorize.
19. Make all arrangements related to the convening of synod.
20. Prepare an annually updated survey of ministers' compensation for distribution to all councils for their guidance as a supplement to the Guidelines for Ministers' Salaries, adopted by Synod 1970.
21. Administer the denominational address list.
22. Review the program, aims, and goals of any applicant nondenominational organization requesting synodical financial support and provide synod with a recommendation with respect thereto.
23. Enforce the provisions of the constitution, have the power to recommend to synod amendments to the constitution and the bylaws as it deems appropriate, and approve or disapprove amendments to the bylaws of each agency, committee, and educational institution that have been adopted by such agency, committee, or institution.
24. Present to synod a unified report of all the agencies, committees, and educational institutions, as well as a unified budget inclusive of all the agencies, committees, and educational institutions.

C. The Board staff

1. The chief staff officers of the Board shall be the General Secretary (GS) and the Executive Director of Ministries (EDM), both of whom shall be appointed to their respective positions by synod from single nominations provided by the Board.
2. The General Secretary shall be responsible for all ecclesiastical matters and relationships, including the Interchurch Relations Committee, and for advising congregations in matters of church polity and procedures. The

²Such performance evaluations are related to continuing improvement in performance and not to specific terms of service (reappointments). Synod 1995 acknowledged the termination of reappointments in favor of standardized performance evaluations (*Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 677).

qualifications and functions of the General Secretary are more fully described in the position description.

3. The Executive Director of Ministries shall be responsible for the implementation of synodical and Board policy in all of the agencies and administrative committees of synod as described in these bylaws. The qualifications and functions of the Executive Director of Ministries are more fully described in the position description.
 4. The Board shall establish guidelines for, supervise, and regularly evaluate the work of the General Secretary and the Executive Director of Ministries and advise them with respect to the discharge of their work.
 5. The executive directors of agencies and the presidents of educational institutions are the chief executive staff persons of the agencies or institutions that employ them. As agents of synod and the Board, especially in interagency matters, such executive staff persons also have a reporting relationship, through the EDM, to the Board.
- D. The accountability of the executive staff shall be exercised as follows:
1. The executive directors of the agencies and presidents of educational institutions are accountable to the boards of the agencies or institutions they serve for all matters which are intra-agency. In such intra-agency matters the EDM and the Board will function only as needed in consultation with the executive director in question and only in conjunction with the board of that agency or institution. (That is to say, a board and its executive staff have the freedom to fulfill the mandate of the agency or institution in compliance with its mandate and bylaws, but synod and the Board of Trustees, through the EDM, reserve the right to gain access to the administration and governance of any agency or institution.)
 2. The executive directors of the agencies and presidents of educational institutions are accountable for their performance through the EDM to the Board of Trustees and the synod for all matters that affect the overall mission of the Christian Reformed Church.
- E. The accountability of the Board shall be exercised as follows:
1. It shall present a full report of its actions to each synod.
 2. It shall make periodic evaluations of its own programs and goals and shall submit appropriate recommendations to synod.
 3. It shall report to synod according to standards and forms adopted for use by all the agencies, committees, and educational institutions.
 4. It shall, through its members or on their behalf, present regular reports to the constituent classes of the regions its members represent.

III. Agencies, Committees, and Educational Institutions of the Christian Reformed Church in North America and Their Respective Functions

A. Classification of agencies, committees, and institutions

1. Agencies

- a. The Back to God Hour/CRC-TV
- b. Christian Reformed Home Missions
- c. Christian Reformed World Missions
- d. Christian Reformed World Relief
- e. CRC Loan Fund, Inc., U.S.
- f. CRC Publications
- g. Pastoral Ministries
- h. Pensions and Insurance

Note: Some of the agencies are incorporated and registered as charities in both the United States and Canada. For the purposes of this document all are treated here only as synodical agencies.

2. Committees

- a. Fund for Smaller Churches
- b. Historical Committee
- c. Interchurch Relations Committee

The Interchurch Relations Committee will report directly to synod (instead of reporting through the Board) on matters essential to its mandate. That direct reporting relationship to synod will be facilitated by the General Secretary. For matters pertaining to budget and personnel this committee is like all other standing committees of the Board.

- d. Sermons for Reading Services Committee
- e. Youth-Ministry Committee
- f. Such additional committees as synod may appoint

3. Educational institutions

- a. Calvin College
- b. Calvin Theological Seminary

B. In order to fulfill the functions described in the constitution, the agencies' boards and the committees shall

1. Be accountable to the synod of the Christian Reformed Church, through the Board, to accomplish their ministries in keeping with the Holy Scriptures, the Reformed confessional standards, and the Church Order.
2. Be organized and function as follows:
 - a. Each agency and committee shall be constituted in a manner described in its bylaws as approved by the Board.
 - b. Each agency board or committee shall meet at least once a year.
 - c. Each agency board or committee shall elect annually from its membership such officers as are required to be elected by the bylaws of that agency or committee.

3. Provide oversight of the agency or committee according to approved synodical policy and budget and in keeping with a denominational ministries plan as approved by the Board. The day-to-day management functions shall be carried out through the appointed administration of the agency or committee.
 4. Propose revisions to the agency constitution and bylaws as are needed to establish appropriate agency or committee policy and submit such amendments to the Board for approval. An agency board may also propose amendments to the constitution and bylaws of the Board.
 5. Prepare, for the administration of the agency or committee, priorities, guidelines, and other directives according to the agency's or committee's mandate and in keeping with the denominational ministries plan.
 6. Initiate and/or review preliminary planning of new ministry projects appropriate to that agency or committee.
 7. Nominate candidate(s) for positions which require the Board's approval.
 8. Appoint personnel to positions named in the bylaws.
 9. Review and approve the annual budget prepared by the administration of the agency or committee and processed through the Ministries Coordinating Council for recommendation to the Board.
 10. Ensure appropriate fund-raising, communications, and promotional activities.
 11. Ensure activities which appropriately recruit, train, and support the staff.
 12. Supervise, through the agency executive director, the administrative staff of the agency .
 13. Approve intra-agency or intracommittee administrative policy in keeping with Board policy.
 14. Engage in such decision making as will achieve the responsibilities delegated to it by synod and the Board, promote the unity of the mission of the church, enlarge the vision for that mission among the membership of the CRCNA, and fulfill the mandate of that mission.
- C. In order to fulfill the functions described in the constitution, the boards of the educational institutions shall
1. Be responsible to the synod of the Christian Reformed Church, through the Board, to accomplish their educational ministries in keeping with the Holy Scriptures, the Reformed confessional standards, and the Church Order.
 2. Be governed according to the provisions of their respective articles of incorporation and bylaws.
 3. Participate, through collaboration, in interagency efforts.

IV. Ministries Coordinating Council (MCC)

A. Membership

The Ministries Coordinating Council shall be a formally constituted administrative entity comprised of the following persons:

1. The Executive Director of Ministries, who is its chairperson
2. The General Secretary (ex officio, without vote)
3. The president of Calvin College
4. The president of Calvin Theological Seminary
5. The executive director of CRC Publications
6. The executive director of Christian Reformed Home Missions
7. The executive director of Christian Reformed World Missions
8. One of the executive directors of the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee
9. The executive director of The Back to God Hour
10. The executive director of Pastoral Ministries
11. Two executive staff members, selected by the EDM, from among the staff at the Canadian denominational offices

B. Functions

1. Planning, coordinating, and providing information for the agencies, committees, and institutions.
2. Reconciling differences between agencies, committees, and institutions.
3. Giving direction to the concerns which are common to the agencies, committees, and institutions.
4. Making recommendations to the Board on matters of interagency, intercommittee, and interinstitutional interests.
5. Such further functions as directed by the Board.

C. Authority and accountability

1. MCC shall have the authority to make administrative decisions which are binding on the administration of the agencies and committees; these decisions are advisory to the educational institutions.
2. MCC shall have an advisory relationship to the EDM, whose accountability is to the Board.
3. If a decision of MCC is in conflict with a decision of an agency board or committee or with the position of the EDM, appeal may be made, through the EDM, to the Board.
4. MCC is accountable for all of its actions and decisions, through the EDM, to the Board.

5. Additional rules of procedure governing the functions of MCC shall be contained in *The Manual of Policy and Procedure*, as approved by the Board.

V. General appeals

- A. Appeals submitted by employees of the CRCNA or one of the agencies shall be directed first to the person or board whose decision is being appealed and then, if necessary, to successive levels of administration and authority. When the appeal is filed in the administrative line of authority, the successive levels go up to and include the office of the EDM. No appeal dealing with an administrative decision shall be submitted to an agency board until the administrative channel has been followed. In the event that an appeal is submitted to an agency board, the following regulations shall apply:
 1. The decision of an agency board concerning an intra-agency or intracommittee appeal is binding except under the following conditions:
 - a. The matter being appealed has ramifications beyond that agency.
 - b. The matter being appealed concerns the personal performance of directors appointed by the Board or concerns the personal performance of agency appointees whose appointments are ratified by the Board.
 - c. The matter being appealed falls within the provisions of the Grievance Appeal Procedure as approved by the Board.
 - d. The matter being appealed falls within the provisions of the Employment-Termination Appeals Procedure as approved by the Board and synod.
 2. In the event of an involuntary termination of employment, an appeal may be filed only according to the specific provisions of the Employment-Termination Appeals Procedure as identified in five (5) below.
 3. The Board's right to hear and adjudicate appeals notwithstanding, the appeal procedure outlined in one and two (1 and 2) above does not affect any right of appeal provided in Church Order Article 30 and Church Order Supplement, Articles 30-b and 30-c.
 4. The decision of the Board on an appeal dealing with an interagency administrative matter is binding. If the Board judges that an appeal regards a policy matter, the decision of the Board may be appealed to synod for adjudication.
 5. The Board's right to hear and adjudicate appeals notwithstanding, the appeal procedure outlined in four (4) above does not affect any right of appeal provided in Church Order Article 30 and Church Order Supplement, Articles 30-b and 30-c. Furthermore, appeals which deal with the termination of employment shall be dealt with according to the regulations of the Employment-Termination Appeals Procedure as approved by synod (*Acts of Synod 1995*, pp. 584-87) and as amended from time to time.
- B. An appeal submitted by a member of an agency board or by a member of a committee pertaining to actions of his or her own board or committee may be made in the following manner:
 1. An agency board member or committee member shall register a negative vote at the time the decision is made by the agency board or committee.

2. An agency board member or committee member, having registered a negative vote, may appeal in writing to the Board within sixty days on the matter on which the negative vote was recorded.
3. The Board shall hear the appeal at its next regularly scheduled meeting. If, in the judgment of the officers of the Board, an early adjudication is required, the officers may hear the appeal and render a decision subject to ratification by the Board.

VI. Amendments to the bylaws

These bylaws may be amended by synod upon the recommendation of the Board or by way of an overture to synod. If a proposed revision is to be considered by the Board, the following procedures shall be followed:

- A. Proposed amendments shall be presented to the General Secretary in writing at least sixty (60) days prior to the meeting date of the Board at which the amendments are to be considered. Copies of such proposed amendments shall be mailed to each member of the Board and each agency or committee at least thirty (30) days prior to the meeting.
- B. Representatives from each agency, each committee, and the MCC shall be given an opportunity to present written comments concerning a proposed amendment at the meeting of the Board prior to its vote on the proposed amendment.
- C. Any amendment to these bylaws must be adopted by the Board, which shall then submit such amendment to the next synod for ratification.

APPENDIX C: Interim Report of the Committee to Study Structure for Ministry in Canada—Phase 2

I. Introduction

We are grateful for the opportunity to serve the Christian Reformed Church as it seeks to live and minister in the Canadian context. Our conversation is about structure, yet our primary concern is the ministry of the church as it touches the lives of people. Since the Canadian context significantly influences the conduct of our ministries, we seek to develop structures that take advantage of opportunities and enhance our ministry in Canada. As we share this part of our journey, we invite you to see with us the exciting possibilities for enhancing ministry in the name of our Lord. Deo gloria!

The purpose of this report is (A) to provide some background information, (B) to introduce the values that guide our work, (C) to highlight the decisions of Synod 1995 and the Council of the Christian Reformed Churches in Canada, and (D) to underscore the implications for the binational church.

II. Background information

From small beginnings and with the strong support of sister congregations in the United States, the Canadian sector of the CRCNA has grown to become 25 percent of the denomination. Over the years the predominantly immigrant church has increasingly integrated into the sociocultural framework of our

nation. From Christian schools to relationships with other Christians, our significance as a Reformed witness in this nation has grown.

Over the years this fact has had ecclesiastical significance as well. For all the apparent similarities between Canada and the U.S.A., there are significant differences. Our opportunities to minister and the way we conduct ministry are influenced by our context. We believe it is important as part of our maturing process to design structures which allow Canadians to minister more effectively in the Canadian context.

The Council of the Christian Reformed Churches in Canada (CCRCC) and Eastern Canada Diaconal Ministries (ECDM) were responses to that need. Useful as they are, the ministry of the CRC in Canada needs further enhancement. Over the last decade requests to synod to form regional synod(s) were attempts to address these needs. Last year synod created an opportunity for the Canadian churches to build a structure that would enhance the ministry of the CRCNA in Canada.

III. Values that guide our work

One of our first tasks as a committee was to develop a consensus concerning the values we share for developing a structure for ministry in Canada. These values express our underlying concerns and have guided the committee's work to date. We present them for information. No ranking is intended by the order.

A. Structures should enhance ministry.

Leadership, governance, and structures are available to equip the saints (Eph. 4) and enable ministry. While looking at denominational structures, we need to keep a firm eye on the consequences for and ownership of ministry.

B. Canadian social/political/geographical/religious realities require that a Canadian structure be responsible for ministry in Canada.

We need a vision for ministry that fits within the denominational vision but has a uniquely Canadian focus. The following are some elements that need to be considered as we contextualize our vision in Canada:

1. The Kuyperian tradition of Reformed thinking is very strong in Canadian churches.
2. Canadian law and tradition give churches a different relationship to government structures than U.S. churches have (many CCRCC ministries are developed in this context).
3. Revenue Canada requires certain procedures with regard to funds raised in Canada.
4. The CRC in Canada needs to develop meaningful and effective relationships with other Canadian denominations.
5. The multicultural concerns in Canada differ substantially from those in the U.S.A.

In order to do ministry more effectively in Canada, Canadians must have significant responsibility and authority for planning and managing ministry in Canada. This includes a Canadian director of ministry accountable to the Board of Canadian Ministries.

C. The Christian Reformed Church is a binational church.

We treasure a shared history as a binational church. We share a common confessional heritage and church order. The sharing and testing of ideas and proposals across national borders is a healthy part of development for the church on both sides of the border. Sharing resources can be stewardly even as we maintain the integrity of ministry on both sides of the border. Any new structure for ministry in Canada should honor the gifts and blessings God has given us as a binational church and enable us to use them more effectively. As a denomination we are able to do more together than we could do separately.

D. Ministry needs to be localized/regionalized.

Ministry happens in and through local congregations, mission centers, and particular activities of individuals/groups. Whether in missions or in race relations, how the local churches do ministry and own ministry is vital to the well-being of all the work of the denomination. Structures which bring and keep ministry close to the people are preferred to more centralized structures. Structures which serve the development of the gifts of the local congregations are preferred. Structures which enhance the links between world ministries are desirable. Regional ministry centers closely linked to classes would be a move in this direction.

E. A collaborative approach to ministry provides for increased coordination and integration of ministry.

Any structure for ministry needs to encourage the development of teams. On teams, different members take leadership as different needs are identified and different gifts are required.

Further, the integration of existing resources and ministries into any new structures is important. A team approach can reduce confusion and duplication.

A leaner board and executive structure could strengthen the ministry of the church.

F. The ministry of deacons and the ministry of the CCRCC need to have a significant place in the formal structures of the denomination.

The work of deacons and the work of the CCRCC are important to the Canadian churches. Their present ministries need to be better integrated into the denominational structure in order to develop a more wholistic and unified approach to ministry.

Deacons have played a significant role in the CCRCC. Diaconal ministries such as those developed in eastern Canada and western Canada have enhanced our ministry. The meaningful involvement and integration of deacons in the governance of the church will enhance our wholistic ministry in Canada.

These values continue to guide us as we develop a model for ministry in Canada.

IV. Decisions of Synod 1995 and CCRCC 1995 re structure of ministry in Canada

Synod 1995, while affirming the binational character of the CRCNA, also affirmed that structures for ministry need to take into account the history, geography, and national character that are specific to the churches in Canada and in the U.S.A. To accomplish a better ministry structure for Canada, Synod 1995 proposed that the CCRCC at its November 1995 session reconstitute itself as a Board of Canadian Ministries (BCM) and that the BCM/CCRCC

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.

(Acts of Synod 1995, p. 739, Art. 85)

Synod 1995 also appointed the Committee to Study Structure for Ministry in Canada—Phase 2 to serve the CCRCC with advice for implementing the resolutions of synod at the November 1995 CCRCC meeting.

The Committee to Study Structure for Ministry in Canada—Phase 2 prepared a report which included an outline of a possible model for ministry. This model included the following proposals:

- A. That a conference of Canadian CR churches be established as a deliberative body to consider vision and policy for the ministry of the denomination in Canada. It would be accountable to synod.
- B. That a Board of Canadian Ministries (BCM) be established to be the trustees of the CRC in Canada and to establish policy for ministry.
- C. That ministries (agencies) be grouped together into four ministry clusters with appropriate boards (Missions-International, Missions-Domestic, Church Development, and Church in Community).
- D. That regional centers be established to bring ministry closer to the people of the church.

A committee of pre-advice recommended the following to the CCRCC meeting in November 1995:

- A. That it accept the model as a guide for discussing the structure for ministry in Canada.
- B. That it appoint a new committee to consult with congregations, classes, agencies, and others.
- C. That it reconvene in the fall of 1996 to approve and submit a final report to synod.

The CCRCC, after reflecting on this report, decided

- A. To accept the new model for the structure of ministry in Canada with some modifications (that the Board of Canadian Ministries and the conference of Canadian CR churches be amalgamated; that four divisions be reduced to three) as a guideline for further discussions.

Note: It is understood that such a structure would include all ministries of the CCRCC, all ministries of CRC agencies undertaken and based in Canada, and diaconal ministries which are at present not part of CCRCC or CRCNA.

- B. To appoint a new committee (task force) to
 1. Consult with the churches, classes, agencies, and others.
 2. Refine the proposed model for the structure of ministry in Canada.
 3. Prepare a mandate for the Board of Canadian Ministries/Conference.
 4. Identify the costs and benefits of the new structure.

C. To reconvene in the fall of 1996 to consider the report of the new committee.

The membership of the new (present) committee (Committee to Study Structure for Ministry in Canada—Phase 3) was recommended by the CCRCC and appointed by the Board of Trustees to continue the work begun and to report to a special CCRCC meeting in November 1996 as well as to Synod 1997.

V. Implications for the binational church

The consultation process has begun, and good progress is being made. Our dialogue to date leads us to the conclusion that our work to enhance ministry in Canada can have benefits for the entire binational church. Many of the values are equally appreciated on both sides of the Canada-United States border. Therefore, we adopted the following motion and sent it to the Board of Trustees:

As we considered the binational character of the denomination and the implications of the model(s) of Canadian structure, we believe the following:

- a) That interfacing a new Canadian structure with the present/future of the binational church would be easier if the U.S. denominational structure would undergo a corresponding transition (though such a U.S. restructuring is not an absolute requirement).
- b) That the goals for restructuring in Canada are equally valid for the U.S. side of our binational denomination, including the enhancement of ministry, the growth of local ownership, and the emphasis on lean administrative structures.
- c) That the Committee to Study Structure for Ministry in Canada—Phase 3 will continue to work out the responsibilities of a Canadian structure and the plans for fitting it into already existing structures.
- d) That the board may wish to propose to synod that a process of reflection about organization should also begin on the U.S. side of our binational denomination.

Perhaps the Board of Trustees will provide further comment on this matter.

Our committee continues its work and will report to the CCRCC in 1996 and to Synod 1997. We thank the many who are making meaningful contributions to our progress and to the work of the church. As we seek to develop a new consensus for the structure of ministry, it is our hope that ministry will be enhanced and encouraged by the endeavors of this committee.

Committee to Study Structure for Ministry
in Canada—Phase 3

Gerrit Bomhof, reporter

Gordon Pols, chairman

UNIFIED REPORT OF AGENCIES AND COMMITTEES

Overview

Synod 1993 adopted the motto "Freedom to Serve" as a compelling theme to guide the denomination's ministries. More recently, the term has been shortened to "Free to Serve." The meaning is the same, and that meaning is reflected in the reports that follow. These reports are accounts of what the Lord has been pleased to do through the membership of the Christian Reformed Church and its agencies. These reports tell the story of how we have been "Free to Serve."

The reports are also a form of accountability. Agencies were created by synod to carry out various parts of the whole church's ministry, and these reports tell the story of what happened. There are facts and figures, plans and completions, lists, paragraphs, and graphs. All of these are part of the story, but all of these parts do not tell the whole story.

The whole story has to do with what God has done, of which our part is but a small part. The mighty acts of God—that is the story we mean to tell. So, we tell it—to our children, to each other, to synod, to the world. We tell it because it is the richest of all stories: that God in Christ is reconciling the world to himself. He is doing it now. He is doing it among us. He is doing part of it through us. May that story inspire and encourage the members of the Christian Reformed Church and the delegates to Synod 1996.

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I. Introduction

"The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God stands forever." These words from Isaiah fittingly describe the present day in The Back to God Hour's history: The Back to God Hour's programs are ministries of permanence in the context of change. The *cultures* which the nine major language ministries of The Back to God Hour address are constantly changing. The political situations in many of the target countries change as frequently as the seasons. Multiple religious influences and the attraction of modernity alter the cultures. The *electronic media* which we employ to bring the gospel are changing rapidly. There are dramatic changes in the communications industry both in terms of the hardware used and in how messages and images are transmitted. God is opening up new ways to get out the message about his Son. The *personnel* of The Back to God Hour has changed over the past five years. Retirements have brought about position vacancies in four of the major language groups. This past year Dr. Joel Nederhood, whose name has been synonymous with The Back to God Hour, has retired. His place as director of ministries has been taken by Dr. Calvin L. Bremer. The *organizational structure* of The Back to God Hour has also changed. The administrative changes adopted by the board were made to provide a simpler structure, less susceptible to confusion. Mr. John Kuyers now serves as executive director.

But in the context of all these changes in culture, in media, in personnel, and in structure, there is permanence. The content of our message, the Word of God, remains the same. We continue to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ as this is reflected in the Reformed confessions.

II. The Back to God Hour Board

A. Function

The Back to God Hour is governed by a fourteen-member board which meets three times a year to set policy and evaluate the work of the staff.

B. Officers of the board

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

C. Nominations for board members

1. Michigan area (three-year term)

Dr. Edna Greenway (incumbent), a member of Burton Heights CRC in Grand Rapids, Michigan, is a professor of Spanish at Calvin College. She has served on the Committee for Educational Assistance to Churches Abroad and was a member of a Home Missions committee to develop an assimilation program. She is currently serving on the program and personnel committees of The Back to God Hour Board.

Mr. Julius Kuiper, a member and elder of Lakeside Community CRC in Alto, Michigan, is a retired teacher and Christian-school principal. He also served as manager of the Faith Bookstore on Guam for seven years.

2. Michigan area (three-year term)

Rev. Daniel B. Mouw is pastor at South Grandville CRC in Grandville, Michigan. Previously he served churches in New Jersey. He has served on classical interim committees, the Eastern Home Mission Board, the Association of Attending Clergy at Wayne General Hospital in New Jersey, and on the board of trustees of the Christian Health Care Center in Wyckoff, New Jersey.

Rev. Harlan Vanden Einde is pastor of Borculo CRC in Zeeland, Michigan. He previously served churches in Iowa, Wisconsin, and Michigan. He has been a delegate to several synods and has served on the boards of CRC Publications, Reformed Bible College, Appalachia Reach Out, and Reformed Fellowship, Inc. He has also served on various classical committees.

3. Rocky Mountain (three-year term)

Rev. Anthony Begay is pastor at Southwest Campus Christian Fellowship, which serves the University of New Mexico, Technical Vocational Institute, and Southwest Indian Polytechnic Institute. Previously he served a congregation in New Mexico and as an army chaplain through the CRC Chaplain Committee. His ministerial credentials are with Fellowship CRC in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Rev. John Van Regenmorter is pastor of First CRC in Denver, Colorado. Previously he served churches in New Jersey and South Dakota. He has been a board member of United Calvinist Youth, Calvin College and Seminary, and the Denver Diaconal Conference. He has also chaired several synodical committees.

4. California (three-year term)

Mr. David J. Buurma, a member of Napa CRC, is senior vice president of client services at IRM Corporation in Napa, California. He has served as deacon, elder, treasurer, and catechism teacher. Currently he is involved in friendship evangelism and one-on-one discipling.

Mr. Abe Marcus, a member of Hope CRC in San Marcos, California, is a retired lay missionary, having served in Mexico for many years, first with an independent mission and later as a CRC missionary.

5. Western Canada (two-year term)

Rev. John Kerssies is pastor of Covenant CRC in Calgary, Alberta. He has previously served three churches in Ontario. Currently he is the regional pastor for Classis Alberta South.

Rev. Cecil Van Niejenhuis is pastor of First CRC in Edmonton, Alberta. He has also served other churches in Ontario and Alberta.

6. Eastern Canada (three-year term)

Rev. Henry Kranenburg (incumbent) is pastor of Bethel CRC in Brockville, Ontario. He has served on the Regional Multi-Faith Council for Ontario and on the Youth for Christ board. He currently serves on the finance committee of The Back to God Hour Board.

Rev. George Rowaan is pastor of the Williamsburg, Ontario, CRC. He has served on various classical committees.

D. *Cooperative organizations*

The Back to God Hour works closely with AdMark, an advertising agency, and RACOM, its public-relations agency. The Back to God Hour also has an agreement with CRC Publications for joint publication of selected materials.

E. *Salary disclosure*

The following information is provided to synod as requested:

Job level	Number of positions	Compensation quartile (includes housing allowance)
20	2	4th
18	3	3rd

Note: Job levels will be reevaluated during calendar year 1996.

III. The Back to God Hour ministries

The Back to God Hour proclaims God's Word in nine languages, using radio, television, and telephone. Its commitment to presenting the gospel to those who do not know Jesus as Savior is reflected in its programming content and in its decision to use, whenever possible, secular stations to air the programs.

People respond to the presentation of the gospel. Sometimes they object to the claims of Jesus; at other times they want to know more about him and how to serve him. Trained volunteers and staff persons answer the telephone and read the mail which comes from listeners, responding appropriately to questions generated by the ministry. Back to God Hour representatives supply literature, help people find a church home, give answers to specific counseling questions, refer people to other Christian counselors, and pray with and for people. They distribute prayer requests to a network of prayer partners who covenant to pray regularly. The prayers of God's people are crucial for this ministry.

A. *English-language ministry*

"The Back to God Hour" radio program, heard weekly on every continent around the world, continues to be a strong voice for the historic Christian faith. Rev. David Feddes is the primary speaker on this half-hour program.

The "Faith 20" television program is heard daily. The Back to God Hour Board accepted Dr. Nederhood's offer to continue as host of this program for as long as the board desires in 1996. This arrangement will allow the board and staff to evaluate the television ministry and make some decisions for future directions of ministry in this medium.

"Insight," a radio commentary heard weekdays, has been hosted by Dr. Nederhood. The future of this program is being evaluated by the board in light of his retirement.

The Voice of Life radio station, located on Dominica, covers the eastern Caribbean islands, carrying all Back to God Hour English programs, including a radio version of "Faith 20."

The English-language literature ministry includes the publication of over 400,000 copies of each issue of *Today* (a bimonthly devotional) and printed copies of *The Radio Pulpit* or transcripts of "Insight" or "Faith 20."

B. Arabic-language ministry

The Back to God Hour is searching for a person to fill the vacancy in this ministry position. The prayers of the churches are solicited as we search for the person of the Lord's choosing. The ministry continues, using undated previously recorded messages. Miss Suesanne Abraham was led by God over a year ago to come to The Back to God Hour to coordinate follow-up and listener contact in this ministry. In 1995 the listener response from the Arabic-language ministry was up over 20 percent from 1994, evidence that the gospel is making inroads in many areas where Islam has much influence.

C. Chinese-language ministry

Through seven superpower stations located outside the country, Back to God Hour broadcasts in Cantonese and Mandarin cover all twenty-six provinces in China, home to over 1.1 billion people. Rev. Jimmy Lin directs this ministry, made difficult by the actions of the Chinese government with respect to Christians. But the Word of the Lord continues to be proclaimed. In China listener follow-up is difficult. Presently the Alliance Radio staff on Hong Kong works with The Back to God Hour in follow-up and listener contact. However, in 1997 Hong Kong reverts to rule by China. The implications of this move are not yet apparent. Please pray much for wisdom in assessment and planning relative to this action.

A significant part of our Chinese-language ministry takes place in major metropolitan areas such as Toronto, Chicago, New York, San Diego, and Panama City, where many Chinese-speaking persons live. In some of these areas the programming of The Back to God Hour is bilingual.

D. French-language ministry

The Back to God Hour is evaluating the best course for the French-language ministry, which presently touches Quebec and Ontario in Canada, French-speaking Europe, and large regions of French-speaking Africa. Since the retirement of Rev. Aaron Kayayan in mid-1995, the French-language ministry has used some undated previously recorded material for broadcast. Extensive literature distribution has also been undertaken to help listeners more fully understand the issues which confront Christians in today's world. Mrs. Carmen Kayayan coordinates listener contact for the French-language ministry.

E. Indonesian-language ministry

Indonesia, the populous island nation which has the largest Muslim population in the world, is home to Dr. Junus Atmarumeksa, whose media ministry covers that country. This ministry is conducted in the context of frequent and open hostility to the gospel by the Muslim majority. Those who respond to the gospel are often persecuted. Literature and personal counseling are important components of this ministry.

E. Japanese ministry

Rev. Shojiro Ishii of the Reformed Church in Japan directs the Japanese broadcast ministry. Radio has proved to be an excellent medium among this people who have been resistant to the gospel. The Back to God Hour receives over one thousand responses per month to the programming in Japan. Economic pressures and uncertainty in Japan contribute to making ministry both difficult and rewarding.

G. Portuguese-language ministry

Radio, television, and telephone are all important parts of the media ministry in Brazil directed by Rev. Celsino Gama. The Presbyterian Church in Brazil sustains a high level of interest in this ministry. Varied programming, arising out of a passion to proclaim the gospel, has been blessed by God and used in a powerful way in Brazil.

H. Russian-language ministry

The Back to God Hour ministry to the Commonwealth of Independent States is part of a coordinated effort of Christian Reformed agencies to minister to this area of the world where so much changes while at the same time so much stays the same.

The Russian-language ministry was affected this past year by the dissolution of Christian Bridge, the agency through which our programming was contracted. The Back to God Hour is looking at alternatives to continue broadcasting in this important region.

I. Spanish-language ministry

Rev. Guillermo Serrano directs our Spanish-language broadcasting, which touches both highly urbanized settings and isolated, undeveloped areas where radio is a link to the outside world. Over 350 radio stations carry Back to God Hour programs, and over 40,000 radio and television programs are used annually in our Spanish-language ministry. This ministry reaches to Central, North, and South America. This past year we began broadcasting in Spain. After evaluating our first year's efforts, we are experimenting with a new format for the program. We will watch response carefully as we consider the program's applicability in other locations.

IV. Recommendations

- A. The board requests that Rev. John Bylsma, president; Mr. John Kuyers, executive director; and Dr. Calvin L. Bremer, director of ministries, be given the privilege of the floor when Back to God Hour matters are discussed.
- B. The board requests that Dr. Joel Nederhood, emeritus director of ministries of the Back to God Hour, be permitted to address synod.
- C. The board requests synod to elect board members to serve from the nominations presented (see II, C).

The Back to God Hour
John Kuyers, executive director

Note: Recommendations on financial matters are included in the report of the denominational Board of Trustees.

I. Introduction

This report reflects information received and actions taken at the October 1995 and the February 1996 meetings of the Calvin College Board of Trustees.

The officers elected for the 1995-1996 year are Rev. John L. Witvliet, pastor of First CRC, Sioux Center, Iowa (chair); Mrs. Sheri Haan, executive director of Christian Schools International (vice chair); Rev. James Cooper, pastor of Third CRC, Zeeland, Michigan (secretary); Mrs. Carol Smith, assistant to the board of trustees (assistant secretary); and Mr. Dale Guikema, vice president for administration and finance (treasurer).

The highlight of the October 1995 meeting was the board's participation in the inauguration of Dr. Gaylen J. Byker as the eighth president of Calvin College. This was the culmination of a two-year search process for the board and was noted with gratitude and excitement.

II. General college matters

A. Staff

The board made two significant administrative appointments:

Mr. Thomas McWhertor was appointed as vice president of the newly created Enrollment and External Relations Division (see Section III, A). Mr. McWhertor had been serving as Calvin's director of admissions.

Dr. Joel Carpenter, a director of the Pew Charitable Trusts in Philadelphia, was appointed provost of Calvin College, beginning July 1, 1996 (see Section III, A). Dr. Carpenter, a 1974 Calvin graduate, replaces Dr. Gordon Van Harn, who will retire at the conclusion of the 1995-1996 academic year.

The board ratified the appointments of eleven new faculty and the reappointments of sixteen faculty and four administrators with faculty status. It endorsed sixteen sabbatical leaves and five Calvin Research Fellowships. Dr. Ronald Blankespoor, professor of chemistry, was presented the Presidential Award for Exemplary Teaching.

Tenure interviews were the highlight of the February meeting. The board approved five reappointments with tenure (see Section III, B).

B. Development

The goal of the Calvin Campaign when it was launched in the fall of 1991 was \$35 million. Because of superb response and support, the goal was raised to \$50 million in February 1994. As of January 1, 1996, total gifts and pledges to the campaign total nearly \$57 million, thanks to the dedicated alumni and friends of the college.

Strategic institutional development requires support from foundations and corporate donors. It is important to them that there be 100 percent board participation in the financial support of the college. The matter of financial expectations will be communicated to all potential trustees.

C. Trustee representation at classes meetings

The board approved a procedure for trustees to arrange for representation of the college at meetings of classes.

The goal of the Church Relations Office is to have a representative of the college visit each classis once per year. Regional representatives who have more

classes in their regions than they are able to visit will ask at-large members of the board to assist in making visits. If there are classes that both the regional representatives and the at-large members are not able to visit, a Calvin staff member will make these visits. The Church Relations Office will send to the representative information about Calvin College that can be used in making a presentation to classes. The representative will be given a report form to send to the Church Relations Office regarding the visit. The matter of reimbursement of trustees for expenses incurred in visits to classes is still to be addressed.

D. Enrollment

The enrollment projection for fall 1996 is 4,205, an increase of 242 over last year. The First Time In Any College (FTIAC) projection is up only 14 from last year, but since the 1996 graduating class is much smaller than the anticipated 1996 freshman class, a large increase in enrollment is expected for the 1996-1997 academic year.

E. Budget

In October the board approved the 1995-1996 educational and general budget of approximately \$46 million. In February the board approved the 1996-1997 tuition figure of \$11,655, an increase of \$660 over the 1995-1996 year. Room and board will be \$4,160, an increase of \$265 for 1996-1997. There will be no new fees for the 1996-1997 academic year and no increase in existing fees.

F. Scholarships

The scholarship and financial-aid program has been very successful again this year. Calvin continues to enable families with varying financial ability to afford a Calvin education. This year more than 50 percent of entering first-year students received an academic, merit-based award from Calvin—up more than 15 percent in five years.

G. Ministry shares

The board acquiesced with regret to the denominational Board of Trustees' mandate for a 0 percent increase in denominational ministry-share amounts for the calendar year 1997.

III. Recommendations

A. That synod ratify the following administrative appointments:

1. Joel Carpenter, Ph.D., as Provost of Calvin College for five years, beginning July 1, 1996, with a tenured appointment as Professor in the Department of History.
2. Thomas McWhertor, M.Div., as Vice President for Enrollment and External Relations for two years.

B. That synod ratify the following reappointments with tenure:

1. John Ferdinands, Ph.D., Professor of Mathematics.
2. Anna Greidanus-Probes, M.F.A., Associate Professor of Art.
3. Douglas Howard, Ph.D., Professor of History.
4. Luis Lugo, Ph.D., Professor of Political Science.
5. William Romanowski, Ph.D., Professor of Communication Arts and Sciences.

Calvin College Board of Trustees
James Cooper, secretary

I. Introduction

The board charged with the governance of Calvin Theological Seminary gratefully reports God's evident blessings on this denominational institution. Enrollment stands at a record 257. The faculty are united in their commitment to the Reformed faith and work together harmoniously. Thanks to increased ministry-share giving, more students, and careful management, the financial report was encouraging at our February meeting. The trustees are especially grateful to report that numbers in the Master of Divinity (M.Div.) program are up notably, due, we believe, to a healthier climate in our churches. The faculty and board are working closely on a number of important new initiatives. Indeed, we have cause for thanksgiving and praise to our Lord, on whose favor Calvin Theological Seminary depends.

After spending four months teaching a course, auditing two others, and interacting extensively with the faculty, Dr. Henk De Waard of our sister seminary in Geelong, Australia, said, "What I have witnessed in your faculty is a determination to keep the church on a Reformed track. I wish that your members would appreciate the work of the faculty in this regard." As trustees we noted in our oral reports to one another that in almost all areas of the denomination there is a high level of respect and appreciation for the work of our theological faculty. The seminary trustees share Professor De Waard's conviction about the seminary and its faculty.

II. The board of trustees

The board consists of nineteen members, ten of whom are ordained. Sixteen members are regional trustees; three are members at-large. Regrettably, only one of the board members is a woman, and we currently have no ethnic-minority representation, but the board is taking pro-active steps to develop a board that is more representative. The nine-member executive committee met in regular session in September, November, and January. The full board met on February 1 and 2, 1996.

The board officers are Rev. Joel Boot, chairman; Rev. Gerry Heyboer, vice chairman; Mr. Elmer Walcott, secretary; and Rev. Calvin Hoogendoorn, corresponding secretary. Mr. Philip Vanden Berge, who was appointed last summer as chief financial officer of the seminary, functions as treasurer of the corporation. Mr. Vanden Berge, who has had a successful career as a corporate executive, serves the seminary on a part-time basis.

The board's nominating committee again forwarded nominations, in most cases prepared from names submitted by classes, to the general secretary for distribution to the classes in the regions where elections are required. This year there are no at-large elections necessary. The board also asked the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA to appoint two candidates whom it suggested to fill unexpired terms as alternate trustees.

The board once again authorized its chairman and the seminary president to select retired area ministers, as needed, to assist with processing candidates. These retired ministers bring valuable experience to the task and expedite the board's work.

The board's secretary mailed reports of the May 1995 and the February 1996 board meetings to the clerks of all classes and of all congregations. Included with the February letter to the churches was a report on their contributions to the seminary.

III. Faculty and staff

The faculty continue to serve the church in numerous ways. Teaching in the six degree programs and setting seminary policy collegially are their core responsibilities. They also advise students, supervise theses, write for church papers and theological journals, produce curriculum materials for CRC Publications, speak at conferences, serve on denominational committees, advise synod, and produce four seminary publications. Under the editorship of Dr. John Bolt, *Calvin Theological Journal* has gained a wide and respected following beyond our circles. *Calvin Seminary Forum* engages issues of the day in a lively, Reformed manner. The seminary newsletter and the alumni news magazine keep the churches and our graduates informed on developments at the school. Additionally, our faculty members preach, lecture, conduct adult education, advise congregations and agencies, and serve in many other noteworthy capacities. Several faculty members published significant books and pamphlets in 1995. The hard, productive work of the seminary faculty is a blessing to our own denomination and to the church of Jesus Christ worldwide.

Dr. Gary Bekker began his tenure as academic dean last August and has assumed leadership of such projects as a study of distance learning, a special Master of Theology program called Korean Ministry in the North American Context, a feasibility study of a Doctor of Ministry program, installation of a computer classroom, and a review of candidacy requirements for graduates of other seminaries. Mr. Michael Williams, given a two-year lectureship last year, has assumed responsibility for Hebrew-language courses. Mr. Philip Vanden Berge is reviewing and reorganizing the financial-support services of the seminary. Dr. John T. Kim was granted a two-year reappointment as half-time adjunct professor in missions, contingent on the success of the specialized Th.M. for Korean pastors. The other half of Dr. Kim's time has been used in general denominational service to strengthen the ties between Korean congregations and the denomination.

The board granted a number of leaves for a variety of interesting and important projects. A number of part-time appointments were approved, as were four faculty reappointments and two staff reappointments. These need synodical ratification and therefore are specified below.

IV. Academic policies and programs

Several new courses have been approved, most notably, seminars in Old Testament and New Testament studies in which issues of current importance are treated with advanced students.

The Master of Theology (Th.M.) in the Korean Ministry in the North American Context program combines off-site courses as well as short-term courses on campus. It is designed for church leaders trained in Korea but doing ministry in North America. Courses will be taught in the Korean language, with Korean translation, or with Korean-language summaries. The seminary's accrediting association has approved the program. Applications are being received only until March 31, 1996. The program will be offered only once, and

students will be expected to keep pace. Christian Reformed Home Missions is cooperating by guaranteeing tuition subsidies for qualified students.

The December interim is being dropped because of low enrollments and in order to relieve pressures on the winter and spring quarters.

Requesting a clearer picture of governance, the board deferred action on a worship institute proposed as a joint venture with Calvin College and several denominational agencies. It hopes to take definite action in May 1996.

V. General institutional matters

The faculty and board are engaged in a comprehensive strategic-planning process, to which they devoted their board-faculty gathering in February 1996. The plan should be completed by the time synod convenes.

At its February meeting the board discussed extensively and endorsed an analysis of and proposed changes in the revised draft of the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA's constitution and bylaws. The document identified concerns that would affect seminary accreditation and urged that the safeguards built into the present constitution be consistently formulated and protected.

The seminary administration continues to participate on the denominational Ministries Coordinating Council, is active on interagency committees, and is supportive of coordinated projects that benefit the denomination and the agencies as a whole.

The seminary has incorporated its portion of the former Committee for Educational Assistance to Churches Abroad (CEACA) work into its International Student Subsidy Committee, added a staff member from Christian Reformed World Missions to the committee for purposes of coordination, received the CEACA endowment funds from the denominational offices, and formulated and strengthened policies for its work that are consistent with those that guided CEACA. Nine students are receiving full or partial support, for a total of \$91,810 in awards for 1995-1996. Library subsidies are given in addition to this amount. One student approved for funding did not receive a visa.

The board approved six new named scholarship programs in February, took note of an encouraging report of Barnabas Foundation activity on behalf of the seminary, and was heartened by an up-turn in annual-fund giving to the seminary.

The board approved a 1996-1997 operating budget of \$3,795,500, portions of which are funded by various restricted funds. The budget includes no ministry-share increase, a 5 percent tuition increase, and a 3 percent increase in the salary base. The budget will be reviewed, adjusted, and approved in May.

The unified financial report includes the seminary's ministry-share recommendation, international-student ministry-share recommendation (formerly CEACA), and the recommendations for special offerings for seminary operations and for the seminary Revolving Loan Fund.

VI. Conclusion

The board is grateful for the churches' interest in and support of the seminary. Our members are available to provide further information about the seminary or to hear the ideas and suggestions of the churches concerning it.

VII. Recommendations

A. That Rev. Joel Boot (chairman), Mr. Elmer Walcott (secretary), and Dr. James A. De Jong (president) be given the privilege of the floor when seminary matters are presented.

B. That the following faculty reappointments be approved:

Professor John Bolt, Professor of Systematic Theology with permanent tenure.
Professor Roger S. Greenway, Professor of World Missiology with permanent tenure.

Professor Sidney Greidanus, Professor of Preaching with permanent tenure.
Professor Calvin P. Van Reken, Associate Professor of Moral Theology for two years (1996-1998).

C. That the following staff reappointments be approved:

Rev. Daniel Devadatta, Director of Recruitment and Financial Aid for two years (1996-1998).

Rev. Keith Tanis, Coordinator of Field Education for three years (1996-1999), with faculty status.

Calvin Theological Seminary
Elmer Walcott, secretary

Note: Recommendations on financial matters are included in the report of the denominational Board of Trustees.

I. Introduction

CRC Publications continues to serve the Christian Reformed Church and the worldwide church of Jesus Christ by working at carrying out its mission as adopted by the board in 1990:

To provide, efficiently and effectively, publications and the resources to assist the Christian church in helping people (a) [to] 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.

The year 1995 was sandwiched between two mergers that will have a significant long-term impact on our ministry. On January 1, 1995, the merger with Home Missions' publishing efforts (Church Development Resources) became effective; on January 1, 1996, the merger with The Evangelical Literature League (TELL) went into effect. We believe these mergers will help us more effectively carry out our mission as stated above.

Other significant developments within our ministry have presented our board with both joys and challenges. We rejoice about the healthy sales of and reactions to the LiFE curriculum and *Songs for LiFE* songbook, the continuing positive responses to *The Banner*, and the receptivity of other publishers to our products. We are challenged by the continuing decline in *Banner* subscriptions, the difficulty of raising funds for World Literature Ministries, and the ongoing problem of high inventory/low cash.

The following report is a summary of our work in these and many other areas. We look to synod for reactions to and input about any and all the activities described here, with a view toward providing better service to our churches so that their ministries as part of God's kingdom can be enhanced.

II. Board organization, membership, and governance matters

A. Organization

CRC Publications is currently governed by a board of forty-nine delegates, one 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, or periodicals.

B. Officers

The officers of the CRC Publications Board through June 1996 are as follows: Ms. Sherry Ten Clay, president; Rev. Stanley Mast, vice president; Mr. James Lipscomb, secretary; and Mr. Cecil Jenkins, treasurer.

C. At-large board members

1. With legal expertise

The first term of one of our at-large board members, Robert L. De Jong, will be completed on July 1, 1996. According to synodical guidelines, we are submitting two nominees with legal expertise for this position:

Mr. Robert L. De Jong (incumbent), after studying political science at Calvin College, studied law at the University of Denver and the University of California, Davis. He has practiced law for twenty-five years in Grand Rapids, Michigan. During the past twelve years he has been a shareholder at the law firm of Clary, Nantz, Wood, Hoffius, and Cooper, where he has served as head of the litigation department. Mr. De Jong specializes exclusively in litigation. He has served on the Ada Christian School Board and both the Planning Commission and Zoning Board of Appeals of Cascade Township. He is a member of LaGrave Avenue CRC in Grand Rapids, where he has served as elder and deacon, including terms as clerk and president of council.

Mr. James Shade obtained his bachelor's degree in English from Calvin College in 1971. After working for a Grand Rapids typesetting company for several years, he enrolled at the University of Michigan Law School, from which he received his law degree in 1981. From 1982 through September 1993, he was a member of the law firm of Bergstrom, Quinn, and Oole, P.C., in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Since that time he has practiced law with Wheeler Upham, P.C., a twelve-attorney firm in Grand Rapids. He spends most of his time on business, estate-planning, and employee-benefits law. He and his family are members of Eastern Avenue CRC in Grand Rapids.

2. With financial expertise

Mr. James Meyer, board treasurer, resigned from the board late last year because he has left the Christian Reformed Church. Two nominees are also being submitted for this position, which should be filled by someone with financial expertise.

Mr. Gordon Brinks is a graduate of Western Michigan University with an accounting major. Mr. Brinks and his wife, Judy, served as missionaries in Nigeria for two years, where he served as treasurer for the missions. He also worked in the accounting department at Zondervan Corporation and for Spartan Stores in the area of food-store finance and taxation. For the past five years Mr. Brinks has been the director of finance for Daane's Food Markets, Inc. A CPA, he has twenty-two years of experience in accounting, finance, and taxation. He is a member of the Michigan Association of CPAs and the American Institute of CPAs. Mr. Brinks is a former member of the Cutlerville Christian School Board, where he served as president for one year. He currently is the chairman of the audit committee for South Christian High School. A member of First Cutlerville CRC, he has served as deacon, elder, treasurer, and clerk of the council. Currently Mr. Brinks is co-chair of the committee to relocate the church from its present site.

Ms. Julie Hamstra-Voskuil received a B.S. degree in accountancy from Calvin College. She is now attending Western Michigan University and pursuing an M.B.A. in finance. A CPA, Ms. Voskuil is a member of the Michigan Association of CPAs and the American Institute of CPAs. Ms. Voskuil worked for the accounting firm of Deloitte & Touche from 1985 to 1990. From 1990 to 1995, she was director of finance for D&W Food Centers. Currently she is director of finance at Pilgrim Manor, a nonprofit nursing home. Ms. Voskuil is a member of Seymour CRC, where she serves on the finance committee. She was also a member of the board and served on the finance committee for the United Way of Kent County.

D. Fraternal delegate

Several years ago synod approved two fraternal-delegate positions for the CRC Publications Board. The NAPARC (North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council) position was vacated last year, and the board decided to leave it vacant. The Reformed Church in America (RCA) position was also vacated when Rev. Kenneth Bradsell accepted a new position within the RCA. The RCA has recommended that Mr. Jeffrey Japinga be appointed to this position. Mr. Japinga is Rev. Bradsell's replacement as minister of education and faith development. Until very recently Mr. Japinga has been editor of *The Church Herald*.

The CRC Publications Board requests that synod appoint Mr. Jeffrey Japinga for a three-year term as fraternal delegate to the CRC Publications Board, representing the RCA.

Ground: As the RCA person responsible for church education and faith development, Mr. Japinga is uniquely well positioned to advise our board regarding matters being dealt with by the Education, Worship, and Education Department.

E. 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.

F. The new denominational structure

The new denominational structure adopted by synod continues to have an effect on CRC Publications. For example, it has been almost two years now since responsibility for the printing plant and the art and design services has been transferred to a centralized Product Services Department. This transition has for the most part gone smoothly.

CRC Publications has also supported and participated in the other activities resulting from the new structure. These include developing common personnel policies, coordinating agency communications, and, most important, working on the mission and vision statement and strategies for achieving mission and vision objectives.

The CRC Publications Board noted that the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA would be receiving a recommendation regarding regional boards. The board expressed its views on this matter and passed them on to the Board of Trustees.

G. Relationships with other organizations

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. We are gradually moving toward becoming *the* publisher of the denomination. The most significant development in that area in recent years was the merger with Home Missions' publishing efforts, which became effective in January 1995. That merger is working out very well.

CRC Publications also works with The Back to God Hour in publishing some materials in Russian, with Pastoral Ministries (Chaplaincy Ministries division) in publishing a book based on the writings of Rev. Jim Kok, and with CRWRC in programs on literacy and mentoring.

As mentioned in the introduction, CRC Publications merged with The Evangelical Literature League (TELL), effective January 1, 1996. The merger consisted of TELL's providing CRC Publications with all its assets, including inventory, building, and donor and customer lists, in return for CRC Publications' commitment to carry on this ministry. The rationale for this merger was that TELL and World Literature Ministries were substantially duplicating each other's ministry efforts. CRC Publications plans to set up a foundation, beginning with a principal derived from the sale of the TELL building, as the basis for ensuring wise use of the proceeds from the sale of the building and as a basis for some future fund-raising efforts for this ministry.

CRC Publications' staff has also initiated discussions with a number of publishers, both denominational and nondenominational, with the intent of using partnerships as a method of expanding CRC Publications' ministry. A sample of these discussions are listed below:

- with literacy organizations on the Open Door Books product line.
- with several denominations (American Baptist, Assemblies of God) regarding Men's Life materials.
- with Servant Publications regarding several books (based on successful co-publication of the book *In the Company of Angels* by Andrew Bandstra).
- with Zondervan Publishers on Open Door Books, Friendship materials, and other products.
- with Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company on several possible products.

These discussions prompted an extensive discussion at the February 1996 CRC Publications' Board meeting regarding the advantages and possible cautions of moving in this direction. The board was generally supportive of these attempts to expand CRC Publications' ministry.

H. 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 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 LiFE curriculum are printed on recycled paper. Staff will continue to monitor pricing changes in the future and make appropriate decisions based on these changes and on the guidelines adopted by the board.

I. 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. Currently, 7 percent of our employees are ethnic-minority persons. The goal for 1995 was 8 percent. The percent of ethnic-minority board members is 6 percent.

J. Total Quality Management

During the past several years, CRC Publications has been implementing the management concepts commonly referred to as Total Quality Management (TQM). Some of the key concepts embodied in TQM include the following: focus on serving the customer (both internal and external), focus on improving work processes, empowerment of employees, and use of measurement to

identify and solve problems. The TQM vision statement synthesizes these concepts: to be "a high-quality, continuously improving publishing team serving the church of Jesus Christ."

Besides trying to apply these principles in all staff activities, we made specific efforts this past year to study and to improve our order-processing system, our project-development system, and the size of our inventory.

K. *Salary disclosure*

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

Job level	Number of positions	Compensation quartile (includes housing allowance)
21	1	3rd
19	1	1st
18	2	2nd and 4th
17	1	2nd

III. CRC Publications' ministry

A. *Periodicals Department*

1. *The Banner*

The synodically adopted mandate for *The Banner* is to inform readers about what is happening in the CRC as well as in the church at large, to provide articles that edify and encourage Christian living, and to stimulate critical thinking about issues related to the Christian faith and the culture of which Christians and the CRC are a part.

The number of *Banner* subscribers continued to decline in 1995. As of January 1, 1996, the number of subscribers was 33,056, which is down from 35,306 in 1995 and 36,746 in 1994. We report more about this subscription decline later.

A number of changes were made in *The Banner* again during the past year. Starting in November 1995, the features section was concentrated in one area, partly to help allay the concerns of some that there is now less feature content in *The Banner* than there previously was. Also, the typeface was altered. In January the Letters to the Editor section was expanded, and the two columns that were formerly adjacent to these letters were moved. An effort was also made during the year to increase the amount of content devoted to biblical and theological issues.

Several of these changes were made in response to criticism from some readers that *The Banner* had become *Banner* "lite" in recent years. In that context, the following overview of the contents of *The Banner* during 1995 might be instructive:

News stories:

- 93 about happenings in CRC congregations; one-third of these were about special events in congregational life, one-third about a church's impact on the community via outreach, and one-third on special ministries to people within or outside the church.
- 20 stories dealing with classical or denominational activities.

- 43 stories about events in the lives of individuals.
- 24 stories about parachurch institutions, including Christian schools.

Feature Articles (80+ articles total):

- 22 articles on church and ecclesiastical matters.
- 21 articles on theological and religious topics.
- 27 articles dealing with social, moral, and practical issues.

The CRC Publications Board provided comments about the appropriateness and the balance of the content of these articles.

In an attempt to cover developments in the entire denomination adequately, *The Banner* has established a network of *Banner* news correspondents. These stringers play a critical function. Also, editor Rev. John Suk continues to make a number of trips throughout the denomination to help ensure that he is exposed to the various elements in the denomination.

CRC Publications staff has set up a Future of *The Banner* Task Force to assess the problem of declining subscriptions and other *Banner* issues. In addition, an outside consultant was brought in to review *The Banner* and offer advice, and several telephone surveys were undertaken during the past year to find out why certain subscribers did not renew subscriptions. The surveys targeted people who "tested" *The Banner* for a short time and failed to renew and long-time subscribers who recently failed to renew. In both cases the key reasons given were the following:

- People do not have enough time to read *The Banner*. It comes too often.
- The price is too high.
- The third most common reason given by the "testers" was that they "don't like [*The Banner's*] stand on issues" (17 percent) and by the long-time subscribers was that the "content [is] too liberal" (20 percent).

At its February meeting the board spent considerable time exploring the survey results and options for reversing the subscription decline. The board discussion will provide the basis for further analysis and perhaps for decisions during the coming year.

2. *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. During the past year this periodical has experienced a greater degree of stability than at any previous time in its four-year history. Rev. James Hyun has served as editor in chief most the year and has provided much of the basis for this stability.

The purpose of this publication is to provide a bridge between the Anglo and Korean CRC communities. Accordingly, the content of *Voice of the Reformed* often includes translations of articles and news stories from *The Banner*. In addition, the periodical contains many articles of special interest to the Korean community.

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

3. *CRC Source*

During the past year the CRC agencies decided to ask CRC Publications to publish a quarterly newsletter called *CRC Source* that would serve as one way to coordinate communications about the denominational ministries to the CRC constituency. This publication replaces *Mission Courier* and other newsletters used by the agencies to communicate their ministries.

The first issue of *CRC Source* came out in January 1996. It has been well received by CRC members. The editor of this publication is Rachel Boehm-Van Harmelen, who works out of the Canadian CRC office. During the coming months, the editorial committee will be fine-tuning this new publication to ensure that it effectively serves its purposes.

B. *Education, Worship, and Evangelism Department (EWE)*

For a number of years prior to last year this department was heavily involved in the development of the LiFE curriculum. Accordingly, many other projects were delayed because of lack of staff time. The year 1995 served, therefore, partially as a "catch-up" year. As a result, 142 new products were released last year, an all-time high.

The work of this department is carried out through five offices:

1. Curriculum Office

Developing and producing church-school curriculum materials (for Sunday school, catechism classes, youth groups, adult small groups, and so on) continue to absorb more of the dollar and staff resources of this department than any other activity does.

a. For younger students

Reactions to the LiFE curriculum, both in sales and in comments from the churches, continue to be heartwarming. It appears that sales for the second year will be up 18 percent over the first year. And the vast majority of evaluations we've received have been approving—some have been almost wildly enthusiastic. As expected, a few teachers have difficulty with the faith modeling and the wondering questions. However, the board continues to believe that the approach of this curriculum provides a solid basis for the spiritual nurture of the children of our denomination.

Sales of the related *Songs for LiFE* book have also gone surprisingly well. This book has been well received by the churches.

Staff is currently evaluating whether CRC Publications should develop a new curriculum for 2s and 3s. There have been many requests for these materials.

By the summer of 1996, the profession-of-faith materials for children, requested by Synod 1995, will be completed.

b. For junior high students

The *Crossroads* series continues to provide the basis for CRC Publications' curriculum offerings for the junior high level. A new course, titled *Connections: A Study of Relationships*, will be available by summer.

c. For senior high students

Due to market demand, materials for the senior high level cover a wide range of topics and approaches. Generally they can be categorized in three areas: Bible studies, doctrinal studies, and practical issues.

The most significant accomplishment this past year, after many false

starts, was publication of the first of the *LifeWise* series—short courses on practical issues such as materialism, sexuality, TV watching, and so on. We plan to publish at least two courses a year in this series.

The *Prime Time Bible Study* series has become our staple for youth Bible-studies courses. Because of the age of the *Voices* course and because several *Prime Time* courses cover the same material, we will be phasing out *Voices*. We will not add more courses until we analyze the churches' reception of this series.

The most significant issue we are facing in relation to this age group is what to do about the *Landmarks* program—the almost-twenty-year-old study of the Heidelberg Catechism. Several possibilities for this course have been proposed. The board spent some time at its meeting evaluating the proposed options.

d. For adults

The adult curriculum also falls into three general categories: Bible study, church and doctrine, and Christian living. Several products have been produced in each of these categories during the past year.

The most significant developments have probably been a greater emphasis on developing materials for small groups and materials on spirituality. A new series, called the *Acts 2* series, is designed for small groups that are starting out and that may include non-Christians. Examples of courses on spirituality are *Finding Our Way to God* (on the "psalms of ascent") and *Celebrating God's Presence* (on public worship). A course on training elders and other spiritual leaders is scheduled to be available by the time synod meets.

We also continue to publish courses on Christian living. Significant ones released during the past year include *When Hurts Go Deep*, on crisis intervention, and *What Really Matters*, about passing along "family values."

Many people will be happy to know that a new edition of *Happiness Is . . .* has been released. We are also pilot-testing a discipleship curriculum this year and beginning a second edition of a long-time favorite, *A Place to Stand*.

e. For people with mental impairments

The Friendship Ministries Board has committed to publishing at least two new courses each year to add to our curriculum offerings in this category.

f. For people with visual impairments

Much of the LiFE curriculum is now available in braille. *Space for God* is another recent braille addition.

g. For minority groups

This past September we published a new product intended for minority groups as well as for new members of the CRC: *We the Church: A Help to Understanding the Church Order*. A Khmer version of the Heidelberg Catechism was also published. These materials are possible because of a small ministry-share allocation to the EWE Department.

2. Music and Liturgy Office

a. *Reformed Worship*

In the fall of 1995 *Reformed Worship* began its tenth year of publication. A major marketing effort to a variety of other denominations resulted in a substantial increase in circulation so that the number of subscribers has now reached four thousand—the number needed to make this periodical self-supporting.

b. Other projects

Two major achievements this past year were the publication of the resource for worship committees (titled *Lift Up Your Hearts*) and the *Songs for LiFE* leader's edition. An even more significant publishing event is anticipated during this coming year: the publication of the *Psalter Hymnal Handbook*.

c. The CRC Worship Committee

The current (1996-1997) members of this committee are Dr. Thomas Dykstra, Ms. Fern E. Pruiksma, Rev. Jack Reiffer, Ms. Ruth Ann Schuringa, Rev. Peter Slofstra, Mr. John Witvliet, and Mrs. Geri Schelhaas. The two retiring members are Dr. Wayne Brouwer and Rev. LeRoy Christoffels.

The CRC Publications Board appointed Mrs. Geri Schelhaas to a second three-year term. It also appointed Rev. John Terpstra as a board representative to the committee (Mr. James Lipscomb, alternate). Finally, the board appointed Rev. Richard Williams as a new member of the committee.

1) Gender-sensitive language in the Belgic Confession and the Canons of Dort

Synod 1994 approved an overture from Classis Minnesota North requesting that synod "provide gender-sensitive language to name and describe persons in the translations of the Belgic Confession and Canons of Dort, provided the theological intent is not altered" (*Acts of Synod 1994*, p. 495). Synod referred this task to the CRC Worship Committee for implementation.

Recommendation: That synod approve the proposed changes made to provide gender-sensitive language to name and describe persons in the translations of the Belgic Confession and the Canons of Dort (see Appendix following this report).

2) Update of the 1968 Liturgical Report

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, the Reformed confessions, and the '1968 Liturgical Report'" (*Acts of Synod 1994*, p. 527).

The Worship Committee has appointed a committee to carry out this mandate. The CRC Publications Board reviewed a draft of the committee's report and provided advice to the committee. The report will be ready for Synod 1997.

3. Church Development Resources (CDR) Office

The resources of this office came to CRC Publications as a result of the

merger with Home Missions' publishing efforts. As a result they are primarily focused on assisting churches in their evangelism efforts.

a. *Discover Your Bible/Discover Life* series

These series provide the primary support for the Coffee Break and Men's Life programs. Two new products per year are normally added to each of these series. We were unable to add the new products to the *Discover Life* series this past year because of scheduling difficulties.

b. Other products

A variety of other CDR products either have been released this past year or are being planned. Among the most significant of these are the following:

- Several new resources are added each year to the *Inspirit* series, which is designed to support an evangelism strategy focused on entry-level Bible study for the unchurched, especially in the workplace.
- A substantial revision of *Discover Your Gifts* will be available by the fall of 1996.
- CRC Publications has also become the distributor of *LifeNet 21* materials, which use a network strategy for evangelism.

4. Training and Consultancies Office

The work of this office is closely related to our curriculum in that it provides the training and advice of a network of church-education consultants (CECs), which are essential for the use of our curriculum in the churches. The work of this department falls into several areas:

a. LiFE curriculum support

Our Christian Education Consultants (CECs) led eighty-two LiFE workshops during 1995. However, we reached only 7 percent of LiFE users through this approach. Therefore, the board is considering whether to develop video-based training modules to help support the LiFE curriculum.

b. Small-group support

At their annual training session last summer, the CECs also learned how to support churches wishing to begin a small-group ministry. A new workshop they now offer is particularly geared to the *Acts 2* small-group resources.

c. Children's worship

The training office also provides training and consulting support for churches with a children's worship program.

5. General Publications Office

This office serves as a catch-all. It is assigned everything that doesn't fit in any of the other offices. Two significant product categories are the following:

a. Open Door Books

These are materials for new readers. Several publishers (including one of the literacy councils) have agreed to promote these products. CRC Publications and the RCA are cooperating on holding training events for churches wishing to develop programs for new readers.

b. Devotionals

During the past few years CRC Publications has developed a number of devotionals for various age groups.

6. TRAVARCA

This is the designation for our joint effort with the RCA to provide a video/film library. It now serves 215 CRC congregations.

C. *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), Dr. Arie C. Leder (treasurer), Ms. Karen Ophoff, Rev. Guillermo Serrano, Dr. Harvey Smit (chair), Ms. Susan Van Lopik, Rev. Herman Van Niejenhuis, and Dr. Alvin Vander Griend (vice chair).

2. Merger with The Evangelical Literature League (TELL)

As mentioned earlier in this report, in the fall of 1995 the board of TELL approached CRC Publications and asked that its ministry be merged with that of World Literature Ministries. The key rationale for this proposal was that there was substantial overlap in the ministries of the two organizations. The CRC Publications Board agreed with this proposal, and the merger became effective in January 1996.

3. Language-committee overview

a. Arabic literature

Middle East Media continues to serve as the primary distributor of these materials. Herman Bavink's *Our Reasonable Faith* continues to be appreciated by readers. John Calvin's *The Golden Booklet of True Christian Life* will be released by late summer.

b. Chinese literature

The publisher of the *Revelation Series* materials in Chinese decided not to carry this series any longer because of lack of sales, so efforts to find a new publisher are under way. And although plans have been developed to publish *Happiness Is . . .* and *They Shall Be My People*, a lack of funding has put these projects on hold.

c. French literature

Several years ago a copublishing arrangement was developed with a publisher in Quebec—Editions La Clairiere—to copublish six titles per year. This arrangement was working very well. However, because of a funding shortfall, this arrangement had to be discontinued late last year. It is now on hold until further funds become available.

d. Korean literature

Sales of the *Discover Your Bible* courses declined last year. It is perceived that more training will serve to reverse that trend, so discussions are under way to attempt to schedule more training in the Korean churches.

e. Russian literature

In October 1995 John Calvin's book *The Golden Booklet of True Christian Life* was released in Moscow. This title, along with Rev. H. Henry Meeter's *The Basic Ideas of Calvinism*, provided the foundational material for teaching Reformed distinctives at a conference in St. Petersburg in October.

Translation of Calvin's *Institutes* is about half finished. However, further work on this project has been halted because of lack of funding.

f. Spanish literature

The Spanish Literature Ministries Committee (SLMC) continues to respond to specific agency requests for new products and to assess current literature needs in the Spanish-speaking churches.

Recent releases include the first two of a four-volume set of studies on the Westminster Shorter Catechism for young people, the second year of *Friendship* materials, and *Discover Your Gifts*. The addition of a full-time editor, Rev. Humberto Casanova, as a result of the TELL merger, will help speed up our development process.

As a result of recent increases in the price of photocopied materials, most of the materials that CRC Publications inherited as a result of a merger with CITE several years ago (sixty-three titles) can no longer be offered cost-effectively. We decided to print fourteen of the best-selling titles, identify an alternate distribution plan for twenty-two others (sell diskettes and allow customers to copy), and to drop the remaining titles.

g. Finances

Depressed economic conditions in most of the nations in which WLM publishes and distributes literature continue to hinder sales and to limit its ability to cover costs. The income of pastors and other church workers, one of WLM's primary audiences, is so low that books are considered an unaffordable luxury.

Accordingly, WLM staff has needed to devote increasing time and financial resources to fund-raising in recent years. In order to meet the literature needs and plans identified, it set aggressive fund-raising goals.

At the time of this writing, it appears that these goals are not being met. As a result, the staff prepared an extensive ministry analysis for board discussion at its February meeting. Several strategic alternatives for the future direction of this ministry were identified and discussed. Based on the board input, staff is now working with others to develop specific proposals for review by the executive committee.

D. Marketing Department

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

Sales of the new LiFE curriculum continue to be encouraging. Total unit sales are up about 18 percent over last year. Two-thirds of the CRC congregations have purchased this curriculum.

As can be seen from the chart below, the CRC's publishing ministry is much broader than our own denomination; more than half of CRC Publications' accounts and sales are to non-CRC churches. This fact, we believe, speaks highly of the quality of the products produced by the Christian Reformed Church.

Denomination	Active Customers	%	Sales	%
CRC	905	19	1,247,145	41
Other	3,359	70	1,495,801	49
Bookstores/schools/ distributors	548	11	324,086	10
TOTAL	4,812	100	3,067,032	100

Because of the focus on developing the LiFE curriculum, sales of other products had declined in recent years. This decline has stabilized this past year because of the release of many new products that were "in process," waiting for the attention of our editors.

The one exception to the upward trend has been in CDR products. Sales of these products have declined in the past year. An analysis of this decline is being conducted. The most disappointing aspect of this trend is the decline in sales of Men's Life materials. Although over \$50,000 was spent promoting these materials in connection with the Promise Keepers movement, total sales actually declined. Anecdotal evidence seems to indicate that, in fact, many Men's Life users who became involved in Promise Keepers left the Men's Life materials and started using materials published by Promise Keepers. As of this writing, discussions are being held with the Promise Keepers organization and with other denominations to try to development arrangements with these organizations.

For most CRC Publications' products, the primary vehicles for marketing are the CRC Publications catalog, direct mail announcing new products to churches, minicatalogs based on categories of products, and advertising in *The Banner* or other periodicals.

During the past year a number of discussions have been held with a variety of other publishers to explore possible arrangements that might result in wider distribution of our products. Some of these discussions have resulted in agreements (for example, Servant Publications re *In the Company of Angels*, Literacy Volunteers of America re Open Door Books, Assemblies of God re *Friendship Series* and *The Praying Church Sourcebook*, and American Baptist Churches re Men's Life materials). Discussions are continuing with these organizations and others (for example, Zondervan, Eerdmans, Youth Unlimited) regarding other possible partnerships.

During the past year a half-time staff position was established to promote World Literature Ministries' products with the hope that this effort will increase sales of these products.

The Marketing Department also handles subscription promotion for *The Banner*. A number of additional approaches (for example, *Banner* representatives in churches, free subscriptions to new church members, telemarketing) will be tried this year.

E. Personnel matters

The CRC Publications staff team is made up of forty-five employees. Our staff is organized into five departments and an administrative office.

The staff council is a management group made up of the 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 Sales; and Mr. Michael Dykema, Finance Department.

Rev. Robert De Moor began his position as associate theological editor in the EWE Department in September of 1995. Because of difficulties in the immigration process, he worked from his home in Canada for the first four months of his employment.

F. Finance Department

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 that there may always be projects undertaken (either because our board believes they are necessary or because synod requests them) that cannot be financially self-supporting. This situation is particularly true for our World Literature Ministries Department, as mentioned earlier. However, our ministry-share request for 1996 constitutes only 3.2 percent of our annual budget.

Because of the extensive resources devoted to the development of the LiFE curriculum, CRC Publications' financial condition has been very tight for the past several years. Accordingly, we have been budgeting for and experiencing budget deficits. The 1995 budget showed a loss of \$184,000. However, the actual loss was \$292,000. Our cash position is also very tight; we have needed to borrow money during the past several years. A related problem is the size of our inventory; we are analyzing this long-range problem and developing plans to solve it.

CRC Publications submits for synod's information audited financial statements for the fiscal year that ended June 30, 1995, and budgets for the fiscal years 1996 and 1997. These reports have been submitted to the denominational financial coordinator for placement in the *Agenda for Synod 1995—Financial and Business Supplement*.

The CRC Publications Board formally requests synod to recommend Friendship Ministries (United States) and Friendship Series Charities (Canada) to the churches for financial support in 1996.

IV. Recommendations

A. The CRC Publications Board requests synod to grant the privilege of the floor to the following people when matters of CRC Publications are discussed:

For the board

Ms. Sherry Ten Clay, president
Rev. Stanley Mast, vice 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
Rev. Jack Reiffer

- B. That synod elect either Mr. Robert De Jong (incumbent) or Mr. James Shade as an at-large member of the CRC Publications Board for a three-year term.
- C. That synod elect either Mr. Gordon Brinks or Ms. Julie Hamstra-Voskuil as an at-large member of the CRC Publications Board for a three-year term.
- D. That synod appoint Mr. Jeffrey Japinga as the fraternal delegate to the CRC Publications Board representing the Reformed Church in America for a three-year term.
- E. That synod approve the work of the Worship Committee regarding gender-sensitive language in the Belgic Confession and the Canons of Dort.
- F. That synod recommend Friendship Ministries (United States) and Friendship Series Charities (Canada) to the churches for financial support in 1996.

CRC Publications

Gary Mulder, executive director

Note: Recommendations on financial matters are included in the report of the denominational Board of Trustees.

APPENDIX: Report of the CRC Worship Committee Regarding Gender-Sensitive Language in the Belgic Confession and the Canons of Dort

I. Mandate

Synod 1994 approved an overture from Classis Minnesota North requesting that synod "provide gender-sensitive language to name and describe persons in the translations of the Belgic Confession and Canons of Dort, provided the theological intent is not altered" (*Acts of Synod 1994*, p. 495). Synod referred this task to the CRC Worship Committee for implementation.

II. Procedure

A subcommittee of the CRC Worship Committee prepared a first draft of changes in line with the style used in the Heidelberg Catechism. This draft was then sent for review and comment to one member from each of the original translation committees of these confessions, persons with expertise in the original languages and knowledgeable about translation concerns.

Dr. Philip Holtrop reviewed the Belgic Confession, and Dr. Donald Sinnema, the Canons of Dort. Their comments were very helpful. In each case they confirmed a large number of our proposed revisions as being appropriate to the original meanings and languages and to contemporary English style. In a few cases they raised concerns or made alternative suggestions based on concerns for original intent and/or the history of theological usage. Both of them pointed out additional constructions in the complete text that also needed revision.

Next the committee reviewed these responses, consolidated the proposals, and did a third check of the complete English texts. Additional cases were resubmitted for proposed changes, and hard cases were debated. The entire Worship Committee reviewed this work and made additional suggestions,

completing its work in September. The document was then sent to the CRC Publications Board, which approved it for submission to Synod 1996.

III. Observations

Bringing the language about human beings into contemporary standard form without male bias affects these creeds on several levels.

A. In many cases, it is simple to change to gender-sensitive language. Incidental references to "man" with resultant uses of "he/his/him" are easily changed. For instance, Article 13 of the Belgic Confession says that God "arranges and does his work very well and justly even though the devils and wicked men act unjustly." This becomes "the devils and wicked people act unjustly."

B. In some cases, notably in the paragraphs in both creeds about the creation and fall of "man" and the redemption of "man" through the work of Christ, entire sections are affected. In these sections we have chosen to make an opening reference to our common humanity and then to use plurals throughout.

C. Scripture quotations were a special case. If only the NIV were used, there would be passages that do not follow the same inclusive principles being used elsewhere in the documents. For both documents, the committee followed the procedure used by the Belgic Confession translation committee; it turned to individual translation of the passages rather than following consistently any one current English version. For instance, Article 8 of the Belgic Confession quotes II John 10: "If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house." This becomes "Do not receive into your house or welcome anyone who comes to you and does not bring this teaching."

The Belgic Confession

Article 2: The Means by Which We Know God

We know him by two means:

First, by the creation, preservation, and government
of the universe,

since that universe is before our eyes

like a beautiful book

in which all creatures,

great and small,

are as letters

to make us ponder

the invisible things of God:

his eternal power

and his divinity,

as the apostle Paul says in Romans 1:20.

All these things are enough to convict ~~men~~ **human beings**
and to leave them without excuse.

Second, he makes himself known to us more openly
by his holy and divine Word,
as much as we need in this life,
for his glory
and for the salvation of his own.

Article 3: The Written Word of God

We confess that this Word of God
was not sent nor delivered by ~~the will of men,~~ **human will,**
but that holy ~~men~~ **servants** of God spoke,
being moved by the Holy Spirit,
as Peter says.^{^1}

[No further changes in Article 3]

Article 7: The Sufficiency of Scripture

We believe
that this Holy Scripture contains
the will of God completely
and that everything one must believe
to be saved
is sufficiently taught in it.

For since the entire manner of service
which God requires of us
is described in it at great length,
no one—

not even an apostle
or an angel from heaven,
as Paul says—^{^2}

ought to teach other than
what the Holy Scriptures have
already taught us.

For since it is forbidden
to add to or subtract from the Word of God,^{^3}
this plainly demonstrates
that the teaching is perfect
and complete in all respects.

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.

For all human beings are liars by nature
and more vain than vanity itself.

Therefore we reject with all our hearts
everything that does not agree
with this infallible rule,
as we are taught to do by the apostles
when they say,
"Test the spirits
to see if they are of God,"⁴
and also,

~~"If anyone comes to you
and does not bring this teaching,
do not receive him
into your house."~~⁵

**"Do not receive into your
house anyone who comes to
you and does not bring this
teaching."**

⁴ Gal. 1:8

³ Deut. 12:32; Rev. 22:18-19

⁴ 1 John 4:1

⁵ 2 John 10

Article 9: The Scriptural Witness on the Trinity

All these things we know
from the testimonies of Holy Scripture
as well as from the effects of the persons,
especially from those we feel within ourselves.
The testimonies of the Holy Scriptures,
which teach us to believe in this Holy Trinity,
are written in many places of the Old Testament,
which need not be enumerated
but only chosen with discretion.

In the book of Genesis God says,

"Let us make ~~man~~ **humankind** in our image,
according to our likeness."

So "God created ~~man~~ **humankind** in his own image"—
indeed, "male and female he created them."⁶

"Behold, ~~man~~ **humanity** has become like one of us."⁷

It appears from this
that there is a plurality of persons
within the Deity,
when he says,

"Let us make ~~man~~ **humankind** in our image"—
and afterwards he indicates the unity
when he says,
"God created."

[No further changes in Article 9]

Article 12: The Creation of All Things

We believe that the Father
created heaven and earth and all other creatures
from nothing,
when it seemed good to him,
by his Word—
that is to say,
by his Son.

He has given all creatures
their being, form, and appearance,
and their various functions
for serving their Creator.

Even now
he also sustains and governs them all,
according to his eternal providence,
and by his infinite power,
that they may serve ~~man~~ human beings,
in order that ~~man~~ human beings may serve God.

[No further changes in Article 12.]

Article 13: The Doctrine of God's Providence

We believe that this good God,
after he created all things,
did not abandon them to chance or fortune
but leads and governs them
according to his holy will,
in such a way that nothing happens in this world
without his orderly arrangement.

Yet God is not the author of,
nor can he be charged with,
the sin that occurs.
For his power and goodness
are so great and incomprehensible
that he arranges and does his work very well and justly
even when the devils and wicked ~~men~~ people act unjustly.

[No further changes in Article 13.]

Article 14: The Creation and Fall of ~~Man~~ Humanity

We believe
that God created ~~man~~ human beings from the dust of the earth
and made and formed ~~him~~ them in his image and likeness—
good, just, and holy;
able by ~~his~~ their own wills to conform
in all things
to the will of God.

But when ~~he was~~ they were in honor,
~~he~~ they did not understand it^{^21}
and did not recognize ~~his~~ their excellence.
But ~~he~~ they subjected ~~himself~~ themselves willingly to sin
and consequently to death and the curse,
lending ~~his~~ their ears to the word of the devil.
For ~~he~~ they transgressed the commandment of life,
which ~~he~~ they had received,
and by ~~his~~ their sin ~~he~~ they separated ~~himself~~ themselves from God,
who was ~~his~~ their true life,
having corrupted ~~his~~ their entire nature.

So ~~he~~ they made ~~himself~~ themselves guilty
and subject to physical and spiritual death,
having become wicked,
perverse,
and corrupt in all ~~his~~ their ways.

~~He~~ They lost all ~~his~~ their excellent gifts
which ~~he~~ they had received from God,
and ~~he~~ they retained none of them
except for small traces
which are enough to make ~~him~~ them
inexcusable.

Moreover, all the light in us is turned to darkness,
as the Scripture teaches us:

“The light shone in the darkness,
and the darkness did not receive it.”^{^22}

Here John calls ~~men~~ human beings “darkness.”

Therefore we reject everything taught to the contrary
concerning ~~man's~~ free will,
since ~~man is~~ human beings are nothing but the ~~slave~~ slaves of sin
and cannot do a thing
unless it is “given ~~him~~ from heaven.”^{^23}

For who can boast of being able
to do anything good ~~by himself~~,
since Christ says,
“No one can come to me
unless drawn by my Father who sent me
~~draws him~~.”^{^24}

Who can glory in ~~his~~ their own will,
~~when he understands~~ understanding that “the mind of the flesh
is enmity against God”^{^25}

Who can speak of ~~his~~ their own knowledge
in view of the fact that “the natural ~~man~~ person
does not understand the things of the Spirit of God”^{^26}

In short,
who can produce a single thought,
~~since he knows~~ **knowing** that we are "not able to think a thing"
about ourselves,
by ourselves,
but that "our ability is from God"?^{^27}

And therefore,
what the apostle says
ought rightly to stand fixed and firm:
"God works within us both to will and to do
according to his good pleasure."^{^28}

For there is no understanding nor will
conforming to God's understanding and will
apart from Christ's involvement,
as he teaches us when he says,
"Without me you can do nothing."^{^29}

^{^21} Ps. 49:20

^{^22} John 1:5

^{^23} John 3:27

^{^24} John 6:44

^{^25} Rom. 8:7

^{^26} 1 Cor. 2:14

^{^27} 2 Cor. 3:5

^{^28} Phil. 2:13

^{^29} John 15:5

Article 15: The Doctrine of Original Sin

We believe
that by the disobedience of Adam **and Eve**
original sin has been spread
through the whole human race.

It is a corruption of all nature—
an inherited depravity which even infects small infants
in their ~~mothers~~ **mothers'** wombs,
and the root which produces in ~~man~~ **them**
every sort of sin.

[No further changes in Article 15.]

Article 16: The Doctrine of Election

We believe that—
all Adams **and Eve's** descendants having thus fallen
into perdition and ruin
by the sin of the first ~~man~~ **human beings**—
God showed himself to be as he is:
merciful and just.

He is merciful
in withdrawing and saving from this perdition those whom he,
in his eternal and unchangeable counsel,
has elected and chosen in Jesus Christ our Lord
by his pure goodness,
without any consideration of their works.

He is just
in leaving the others in their ruin and fall,
into which they plunged themselves.

Article 17: The Recovery of Fallen ~~Man~~ Humanity

We believe that our good God,
by his marvelous wisdom and goodness,
seeing that ~~man~~ human beings had plunged ~~himself~~ themselves in this manner
into both physical and spiritual death
and made ~~himself~~ themselves completely miserable,
set out to find ~~him~~ them,
though ~~man~~ they,
trembling all over,
~~was~~ were fleeing from him.

And he comforted ~~him~~ them,
promising to give ~~him~~ them his Son,
"born of a woman,"^{^31}
to crush the head of the serpent,^{^32}
and to make ~~him~~ them blessed.

^{^31} Gal. 4:4

^{^32} Gen. 3:15

Article 18: The Incarnation

So then we confess
that God fulfilled the promise
which he had made to ~~the early fathers~~ Israel
by the mouth of his holy prophets
when he sent his only and eternal Son
into the world
at the time set by him.

The Son took the "form of a servant"
and was made in ~~the "likeness of man,"~~ "human likeness,"^{^33}
truly assuming a real human nature,
with all its weaknesses,
except for sin;
being conceived in the womb of the blessed virgin Mary
by the power of the Holy Spirit,
without male participation.

And he not only assumed human nature
as far as the body is concerned
but also a real human soul,
in order that he might be a real human being.
For since the soul had been lost as well as the body,
he had to assume them both
to save them both together.

Therefore we confess,
against the heresy of the Anabaptists
who deny that Christ assumed human flesh from his mother,
that he "shared the very flesh and blood of children";³⁴
that he is "fruit of the loins of David" according to the flesh;³⁵
"born of the seed of David" according to the flesh;³⁶
"fruit of the womb of the virgin Mary";³⁷
"born of a woman";³⁸
"the seed of David";³⁹
"a shoot from the root of Jesse";⁴⁰
"the offspring of Judah,"⁴¹
having descended from the Jews according to the flesh;
"from the seed of Abraham"—
for he "assumed Abraham's seed"
and was ~~"made like his brothers
except for sin."~~⁴² **made like us
except for sin.**

In this way he is truly our Immanuel—
that is: "God with us."⁴³

³³ Phil. 2:7

³⁴ Heb. 2:14

³⁵ Acts 2:30

³⁶ Rom. 1:3

³⁷ Luke 1:42

³⁸ Gal. 4:4

³⁹ 2 Tim. 2:8

⁴⁰ Rom. 15:12

⁴¹ Heb. 7:14

⁴² Heb. 2:17; 4:15

⁴³ Matt. 1:23

Article 19: The Two Natures of Christ

We believe that by being thus conceived
the person of the Son has been inseparably united
and joined together
with human nature,
in such a way that there are not two Sons of God,
nor two persons,
but two natures united in a single person,
with each nature retaining its own distinct properties.

Thus his divine nature has always remained uncreated,
without beginning of days or end of life,⁴⁴
filling heaven and earth.

His human nature has not lost its properties
but continues to have those of a creature—
it has a beginning of days;
it is of a finite nature
and retains all that belongs to a real body.
And even though he,
by his resurrection,
gave it immortality,
that nonetheless did not change
the reality of his human nature;
for our salvation and resurrection
depend also on the reality of his body.

But these two natures
are so united together in one person
that they are not even separated by his death.

So then,
what he committed to his Father when he died
was a real human spirit, which left his body.
But meanwhile his divine nature remained
united with his human nature
even when he was lying in the grave;
and his deity never ceased to be in him,
just as it was in him when he was a little child,
though for a while it did not show itself as such.

These are the reasons why we confess him
to be ~~true truly~~ God and ~~true man truly human~~—
~~true truly~~ God in order to conquer death
by his power,
and ~~true man truly human~~ that he might die for us
in the weakness of his flesh.

⁴⁴ Heb. 7:3

Article 22: The Righteousness of Faith

We believe that
for us to acquire the true knowledge of this great mystery
the Holy Spirit kindles in our hearts a true faith
that embraces Jesus Christ,
with all his merits,
and makes him its own,
and no longer looks for anything
apart from him.

For it must necessarily follow
that either all that is required for our salvation
is not in Christ or,
if all is in him,
then ~~he~~ those who ~~has~~ have Christ by faith
~~has~~ have his salvation entirely.

[No further changes in Article 22.]

Article 23: The Justification of Sinners

We believe
that our blessedness lies in the forgiveness of our sins
because of Jesus Christ,
and that in it our righteousness before God is contained,
as David and Paul teach us
when they declare ~~that man blessed~~ **blest the one**
to whom God grants righteousness
apart from works.^{^54}

And the same apostle says
that we are justified "freely" or "by grace"
through redemption in Jesus Christ.^{^55}
And therefore we cling to this foundation,
which is firm forever,
giving all glory to God,
humbling ourselves,
and recognizing ourselves as we are;
not claiming a thing for ourselves or our merits
and leaning and resting on the sole obedience of Christ crucified,
which is ours when we believe in him.

That is enough to cover all our sins
and to make us confident,
freeing the conscience from the fear, dread, and terror
of God's approach,
without doing what our first ~~father~~ **parents Adam** did,
who trembled as ~~he~~ **they** tried to cover ~~himself~~ **themselves**
with fig leaves.

In fact,
if we had to appear before God relying—
no matter how little—
on ourselves or some other creature,
then, alas, we would be swallowed up.

Therefore everyone must say with David:
"Lord, do not enter into judgment with your servants,
for before you no living person shall be justified."^{^56}

^{^54} Ps. 32:1; Rom. 4:6

^{^55} Rom. 3:24

^{^56} Ps. 143:2

Article 24: The Sanctification of Sinners

We believe that this true faith,
produced in ~~man~~ **human beings** by the hearing of God's Word
and by the work of the Holy Spirit,
regenerates ~~him~~ **them** and makes ~~him~~ **them** a "new ~~man~~ **creation**,"^{^57}
causing ~~him~~ **them** to live the "new life"^{^58}
and freeing ~~him~~ **them** from the slavery of sin.

Therefore,
far from making people cold
toward living in a pious and holy way,
this justifying faith,
quite to the contrary,
so works within them that
apart from it
they will never do a thing out of love for God
but only out of love for themselves
and fear of being condemned.

So then, it is impossible
for this holy faith to be unfruitful in a human being,
seeing that we do not speak of an empty faith
but of what Scripture calls
"faith working through love,"^{^59}
which leads ~~a man~~ **human beings** to do by ~~himself~~ **themselves**
the works that God has commanded
in his Word.

[No further changes in Article 24.]

Article 26: The Intercession of Christ

We believe that we have no access to God
except through the one and only Mediator and Intercessor:
Jesus Christ the Righteous.^{^62}

He therefore was made ~~man~~ **a human being**,
uniting together the divine and human natures,
so that we human beings might have access to the divine Majesty.
Otherwise we would have no access.

But this Mediator,
whom the Father has appointed between himself and us,
ought not terrify us by his greatness,
so that we have to look for another one,
according to our fancy.

For neither in heaven nor among the creatures on earth
is there anyone who loves us
more than Jesus Christ does.

Although he was "in the form of God,"
he nevertheless "emptied himself,"
taking the form of "a ~~man~~ human being" and "a servant" for us;^63
and he made himself "completely like his brothers;" us.^64

Suppose we had to find another intercessor.

Who would love us more than he who gave his life for us,
even though "we were his enemies"?^65

And suppose we had to find one who has prestige and power.

Who has as much of these as he who is seated

"at the right hand of the Father,"^66

and who has all power

"in heaven and on earth"?^67

And who will be heard more readily
than God's own dearly beloved Son?

So then, sheer unbelief has led to the practice
of dishonoring the saints,
instead of honoring them.

That was something **which** the saints never did nor asked for,
but which, in keeping with their duty,
as appears from their writings,
they consistently refused.

We should not plead here
that we are unworthy—

for it is not a question of offering our prayers
on the basis of our own dignity
but only on the basis of the excellence and dignity
of Jesus Christ,
whose righteousness is ours

by faith.

Since the apostle for good reason
wants us to get rid of this foolish fear—
or, rather, this unbelief—

he says to us that Jesus Christ
was "made like his brothers us in all things,"
that he might be a high priest
who is merciful and faithful
to purify the sins of the people.^68

[No further changes in Article 26.]

Article 27: The Holy Catholic Church

We believe and confess

one single catholic or universal church—
a holy congregation and gathering
of true Christian believers,
awaiting their entire salvation in Jesus Christ,
being washed by his blood,
and sanctified and sealed by the Holy Spirit.

This church has existed from the beginning of the world
and will last until the end,
as appears from the fact
that Christ is eternal King,
who cannot be without subjects.

And this holy church is preserved by God
against the rage of the whole world,
even though for a time
it may appear very small
~~in the eyes of men~~ **to human eyes**—
as though it were snuffed out.

For example,
during the very dangerous time of Ahab
the Lord preserved for himself seven thousand ~~men~~
who did not bend their knees to Baal.^{^74}

And so this holy church
is not confined,
bound,
or limited to a certain place or certain persons.
But it is spread and dispersed
throughout the entire world,
though still joined and united
in heart and will,
in one and the same Spirit,
by the power of faith.

^{^74} 1 Kings 19:18

Article 28: The Obligations of Church Members

We believe that
since this holy assembly and congregation
is the gathering of those who are saved
and there is no salvation apart from it,
no one ought to withdraw from it,
content to be ~~by himself~~ **alone**,
regardless of ~~his~~ status or condition.

[No further changes in Article 28.]

Article 29: The Marks of the True Church

We believe that we ought to discern
diligently and very carefully,
by the Word of God,
what is the true church—
for all sects in the world today
claim for themselves the name of "the church."

We are not speaking here of the company of hypocrites
who are mixed among the good in the church
and who nonetheless are not part of it,
even though they are physically there.
But we are speaking of distinguishing
the body and fellowship of the true church
from all sects that call themselves "the church."

The true church can be recognized
if it has the following marks:

The church engages in the pure preaching
of the gospel;
it makes use of the pure administration of the sacraments
as Christ instituted them;
it practices church discipline
for correcting faults.

In short, it governs itself
according to the pure Word of God,
rejecting all things contrary to it
and holding Jesus Christ as the only Head.

By these marks one can be assured
of recognizing the true church—
and no one ought to be separated from it.

As for those who can belong to the church,
we can recognize them by the distinguishing marks of Christians:
namely by faith,

and by their fleeing from sin and pursuing righteousness,
once they have received the one and only Savior,
Jesus Christ.

They love the true God and their neighbors,
without turning to the right or left,
and they crucify the flesh and its works.

Though great weakness remains in them,
they fight against it
by the Spirit
all the days of their lives,
appealing constantly
to the blood, suffering, death, and obedience of the Lord Jesus,
in whom they have forgiveness of their sins,
through faith in him.

As for the false church,
it assigns more authority to itself and its ordinances
than to the Word of God;
it does not want to subject itself
to the yoke of Christ;
it does not administer the sacraments
as Christ commanded in his Word;
it rather adds to them or subtracts from them
as it pleases;
it bases itself on ~~men~~ human beings,
more than on Jesus Christ;
it persecutes those
who live holy lives according to the Word of God
and who rebuke it for its faults, greed, and idolatry.

These two churches
are easy to recognize
and thus to distinguish
from each other.

Article 30: The Government of the Church

We believe that this true church
ought to be governed according to the spiritual order
that our Lord has taught us in his Word.

There should be ministers or pastors
to preach the Word of God
and administer the sacraments.

There should also be elders and deacons,
along with the pastors,
to make up the council of the church.

By this means
true religion is preserved ;,
true doctrine is able to take its course ;,
and evil ~~men~~ persons are corrected spiritually and held in check,
so that also the poor
and all the afflicted
may be helped and comforted
according to their need.

By this means
everything will be done well
and in good order
in the church,
when such persons are elected
who are faithful
and are chosen according to the rule
that Paul gave to Timothy.^75

^75 1 Tim. 3

Article 31: The Officers of the Church

We believe that
ministers of the Word of God, elders, and deacons
ought to be chosen to their offices
by a legitimate election of the church,
with prayer in the name of the Lord,
and in good order,
as the Word of God teaches.

So ~~everyone~~ **members of the church** must be careful
not to push ~~himself~~ **themselves** forward improperly,
but ~~he~~ **all** must wait for ~~God's call~~ **until called by God**,
so that ~~he~~ **they** may be assured of ~~his~~ **their** calling
and be certain that ~~he is~~ **they are**
chosen by the Lord.

[No further changes in Article 31.]

Article 34: The Sacrament of Baptism

We believe and confess that Jesus Christ,
in whom the law is fulfilled,
has by his shed blood
put an end to every other shedding of blood,
which anyone might do or wish to do
in order to atone or satisfy for sins.

Having abolished circumcision,
which was done with blood,
he established in its place
the sacrament of baptism.

By it we are received into God's church
and set apart from all other people and alien religions,
that we may be dedicated entirely to him,
bearing his mark and sign.

It also witnesses to us
that he will be our God forever,
since he is our gracious Father.

Therefore he has commanded
that all those who belong to him
be baptized with pure water
in the name of the Father,
and the Son,
and the Holy Spirit. ^76

In this way he signifies to us
that just as water washes away the dirt of the body
when it is poured on us
and also is seen on the ~~body~~ **bodies** of the baptized
when it is sprinkled on ~~him~~ **them**,
so too the blood of Christ does the same thing internally,
in the soul,
by the Holy Spirit.

It washes and cleanses it from its sins
and transforms us from being the children of wrath
into the children of God.

This does not happen by the physical water
but by the sprinkling of the precious blood of the Son of God,
who is our Red Sea,
through which we must pass
to escape the tyranny of Pharaoh,
who is the devil,
and to enter the spiritual land
of Canaan.

So ministers,
as far as their work is concerned,
give us the sacrament and what is visible,
but our Lord gives what the sacrament signifies—
namely, the invisible gifts and graces;
washing, purifying, and cleansing our souls
of all filth and unrighteousness;
renewing our hearts and filling them
with all comfort;
giving us true assurance
of his fatherly goodness;
clothing us with the “~~new man~~” **self** and stripping off the “~~old,~~”
with all its works.

[No further changes in Article 34.]

Article 35: The Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper

We believe and confess
that our Savior Jesus Christ
has ordained and instituted the sacrament of the Holy Supper
to nourish and sustain those
who are already born again and ingrafted
into his family:
his church.

Now those who are born again have two lives in them.

The one is physical and temporal—

they have it from the moment of their first birth,
and it is common to all.

The other is spiritual and heavenly,

and is given them in their second birth;
it comes through the Word of the gospel
in the communion of the body of Christ;
and this life is common to God's elect only.

Thus, to support the physical and earthly life,

God has prescribed for us
an appropriate earthly and material bread,
which is as common to all
as life itself also is.

But to maintain the spiritual and heavenly life

that belongs to believers,
he has sent a living bread
that came down from heaven:

namely, Jesus Christ,

who nourishes and maintains
the spiritual life of believers
when eaten—
that is, when appropriated
and received spiritually
by faith.

To represent to us

this spiritual and heavenly bread,

Christ has instituted

an earthly and visible bread as the sacrament of his body
and wine as the sacrament of his blood.

He did this to testify to us that

just as truly as we take and hold the sacraments in our hands
and eat and drink ~~it~~ **them** in our mouths,

by which our life is then sustained,
so truly we receive into our souls,
for our spiritual life,
the true body and true blood of Christ,
our only Savior.

We receive these by faith,

which is the hand and mouth of our souls.

Now it is certain

that Jesus Christ did not prescribe

his sacraments for us in vain,

since he works in us all he represents

by these holy signs,

although the manner in which he does it
goes beyond our understanding
and is incomprehensible to us,

just as the operation of God's Spirit
is hidden and incomprehensible.

Yet we do not go wrong when we say
that what is eaten is Christ's own natural body
and what is drunk is his own blood—
but the manner in which we eat it
is not by the mouth but by the Spirit,
through faith.

In that way Jesus Christ remains always seated
at the right hand of God the Father
in heaven—
but he never refrains on that account
to communicate himself to us
through faith.

This banquet is a spiritual table
at which Christ communicates himself to us
with all his benefits.

At that table he makes us enjoy himself
as much as the merits of his suffering and death,
as he nourishes, strengthens, and comforts
our poor, desolate souls
by the eating of his flesh,
and relieves and renews them
by the drinking of his blood.

Moreover,
though the sacraments and thing signified are joined together,
not all receive both of them.

The wicked ~~person~~ certainly takes the sacrament,
to ~~his~~ their condemnation,
but does not receive the truth of the sacrament,
just as Judas and Simon the Sorcerer both indeed
received the sacrament,
but not Christ,
who was signified by it.
He is communicated only to believers.

Finally,
with humility and reverence
we receive the holy sacrament
in the gathering of God's people,
as we engage together,
with thanksgiving,
in a holy remembrance
of the death of Christ our Savior,
and as we thus confess
our faith and Christian religion.

Therefore ~~no one none~~ should come to this table
without ~~examining himself carefully~~ careful self-examination,

lest "by eating this bread
and drinking this cup
he they eat and drink to his their own judgment." ^78

In short,
by the use of this holy sacrament
we are moved to a fervent love
of God and our neighbors.

Therefore we reject
as desecrations of the sacraments
all the muddled ideas and damnable inventions
that ~~men~~ people have added and mixed in with them.
And we say that we should be content with the procedure
that Christ and the apostles have taught us
and speak of these things
as they have spoken of them.

^78 1 Cor. II:27

Article 36: The Civil Government

We believe that
because of the depravity of the human race
our good God has ordained ~~kings, princes,~~ rulers, governors, and civil officers.
He wants the world to be governed by laws and policies
so that human lawlessness may be restrained
and that everything may be conducted in good order
among human beings.

[No further changes in Article 36.]

Article 37: The Last Judgment

Finally we believe,
according to God's Word,
that when the time appointed by the Lord is come
(which is unknown to all creatures)
and the number of the elect is complete,
our Lord Jesus Christ will come from heaven,
bodily and visibly,
as he ascended,
with great glory and majesty,
to declare himself the judge
of the living and the dead.
He will burn this old world,
in fire and flame,
in order to cleanse it.

Then all human creatures will appear in person
before the great judge—
men, women, and children,
who have lived from the beginning until the end
of the world.

They will be summoned there
by the voice of the archangel
and by the sound of the divine trumpet.^79

For all those who died before that time
will be raised from the earth,
their spirits being joined and united
with their own bodies
in which they lived.

And as for those who are still alive,
they will not die like the others
but will be changed "in the twinkling of an eye"
from "corruptible to incorruptible."^80

Then "the books" (that is, the consciences) will be opened,
and the dead will be judged
according to the things they did in the world,^81
whether good or evil.

Indeed, all people will give account
of all the idle words they have spoken,^82
which the world regards
as only playing games.

And then ~~the human~~ secrets and hypocrisies ~~of men~~
will be publicly uncovered
in the sight of all.

Therefore,
with good reason
the thought of this judgment
is horrible and dreadful
to wicked and evil people.
But it is very pleasant
and a great comfort
to the righteous and elect,
since their total redemption
will then be accomplished.

They will then receive the fruits of their labor
and of the trouble they have suffered;
their innocence will be openly recognized by all;
and they will see the terrible vengeance
that God will bring on the evil ones
who tyrannized, oppressed, and tormented them
in this world.

The evil ones will be convicted
by the witness of their own consciences;
and shall be made immortal—
but only to be tormented
in the everlasting fire
prepared for the devil and his angels.^83

In contrast,
the faithful and elect will be crowned
with glory and honor.
The Son of God will "confess their names"^{^84}
before God his Father and the holy and elect angels;
all tears will be "wiped from their eyes";^{^85}
and their cause—
at present condemned as heretical and evil
by many judges and civil officers—
will be acknowledged as the "cause of the Son of God."

And as a gracious reward
the Lord will make them possess a glory
such as the human heart ~~of man~~
could never imagine.

So we look forward to that great day with longing
in order to enjoy fully
the promises of God in Christ Jesus,
our Lord.

^{^79} 1 Thess. 4:16

^{^80} 1 Cor. 15:51-53

^{^81} Rev. 20:12

^{^82} Matt. 12:36

^{^83} Matt. 25:14

^{^84} Matt. 10:32

^{^85} Rev. 7:17

The Canons of Dort

Formally Titled

The Decision of the Synod of Dort on the Five Main Points of Doctrine in Dispute in the Netherlands

The First Main Point of Doctrine

Divine Election and Reprobation

The Judgment Concerning Divine Predestination Which the Synod Declares to Be in Agreement with the Word of God and Accepted Till Now in the Reformed Churches,

Set Forth in Several Articles

Article 5: The Sources of Unbelief and of Faith

The cause or blame for this unbelief, as well as for all other sins, is not at all in God, but in ~~man~~ **humanity**. Faith in Jesus Christ, however, and salvation through him is a free gift of God. As Scripture says, "It is by grace you have been saved, through faith, and this not from yourselves; it is a gift of God" (Eph. 2:8). Likewise: "It has been freely given to you to believe in Christ" (Phil. 1:29).

Article 18: The Proper Attitude Toward Election and Reprobation

To those who complain about this grace of an undeserved election and about the severity of a just reprobation, we reply with the words of the apostle, "Who are you, ~~man~~ **a human being**, to talk back to God?" (Rom. 9:20), and with the words of our Savior, "Have I no right to do what I want with my own?" (Matt. 20:15). We, however, with reverent adoration of these secret things, cry out with the

apostle: "Oh, the depths of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways beyond tracing out! For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor? Or who has first given to God, that God should repay him? For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen" (Rom. 11:33-36).

Rejection of the Errors by Which the Dutch Churches Have for Some Time Been Disturbed

Having set forth the orthodox teaching concerning election and reprobation, the Synod rejects the errors of those

IV

Who teach that in election to faith a prerequisite condition is that ~~man~~ **human beings** should rightly use the light of nature, be upright, unassuming, humble, and disposed to eternal life, as though election depended to some extent on these factors.

For this smacks of Pelagius, and it clearly calls into question the words of the apostle: "We lived at one time in the passions of our flesh, following the will of our flesh and thoughts, and we were by nature children of wrath, like everyone else. But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in transgressions, made us alive with Christ, by whose grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with him and seated us with him in heaven in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages we might show the surpassing riches of

his grace, according to his kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith (and this not from yourselves; it is the gift of God) not by works, so that no one can boast" (Eph. 2:3-9).

The Second Main Point of Doctrine

Christ's Death and Human Redemption Through It

Article 6: Unbelief ~~Man's~~ Humanity's Responsibility

However, that many who have been called through the gospel do not repent or believe in Christ but perish in unbelief is not because the sacrifice of Christ offered on the cross is deficient or insufficient, but because they themselves are at fault.

Rejection of the Errors

Having set forth the orthodox teaching, the Synod rejects the errors of those

II

Who teach that the purpose of Christ's death was not to establish in actual fact a new covenant of grace by his blood, but only to acquire for the Father the mere right to enter once more into a covenant with ~~men~~ humankind, whether of grace or of works.

For this conflicts with Scripture, which teaches that Christ *has become the guarantee and mediator of a better—that is, a new—covenant* (Heb. 7:22; 9:15), and that *a will is in force only when someone has died* (Heb. 9:17).

III

Who teach that Christ, by the satisfaction which he gave, did not certainly merit for anyone salvation itself and the faith by which this satisfaction of Christ is effectively

applied to salvation, but only acquired for the Father the authority or plenary will to relate in a new way with ~~men~~ people and to impose such new conditions as he chose, and that the satisfying of these conditions depends on ~~the~~ human free choice of ~~man~~; consequently, that it was possible that either all or none would fulfill them.

For they have too low an opinion of the death of Christ, do not at all acknowledge the foremost fruit or benefit which it brings forth, and summon back from hell the Pelagian error.

IV

Who teach that what is involved in the new covenant of grace which God the Father made with ~~men~~ us through the intervening of Christ's death is not that we are justified before God and saved through faith, insofar as it accepts Christ's merit, but rather that God, having withdrawn his demand for perfect obedience to the law, counts faith itself, and the imperfect obedience of faith, as perfect obedience to the law, and graciously looks upon this as worthy of the reward of eternal life.

For they contradict Scripture: "They are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Jesus Christ, whom God presented as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood" (Rom. 3:24-25). And along with the ungodly Socinus, they introduce a new and foreign justification of ~~man~~ human beings before God, against the consensus of the whole church.

The Third and Fourth Main Points of Doctrine

Human Corruption, Conversion to God, and the Way It Occurs

Article 1: The Effect of the Fall on Human Nature

Man was We humans were originally created in the image of God and **was** were furnished in **his our** minds with a true and salutary knowledge of **his our** Creator and things spiritual, in **his our** wills and hearts with righteousness, and in all **his our** emotions with purity; indeed, the whole **man** person was holy. However, rebelling against God at the devil's instigation and by **his our** own free will, **he we** deprived **himself ourselves** of these outstanding gifts. Rather, in their place **he we** brought upon **himself ourselves** blindness, terrible darkness, futility, and distortion of judgment in **his our** minds; perversity, defiance, and hardness in **his our** hearts and wills; and finally impurity in all **his our** emotions.

Article 2: The Spread of Corruption

Man We humans brought forth children of the same nature as **himself ourselves** after the fall. That is to say, being corrupt, **he we** brought forth corrupt children. The corruption spread, by God's just judgment, from Adam to all his descendants—except for Christ alone—not by way of imitation (as in former times the Pelagians would have it) but by way of the propagation of his perverted nature.

Article 4: The Inadequacy of the Light of Nature

There is, to be sure, a certain light of nature remaining in **man** human beings after the fall, by virtue of

which **he they** retains some notions about God, natural things, and the difference between what is moral and immoral, and demonstrates a certain eagerness for virtue and for good outward behavior. But this light of nature is far from enabling **man** people to come to a saving knowledge of God and conversion to him—so far, in fact, that **man** they does not use it rightly even in matters of nature and society. Instead, in various ways **he they** completely distorts this light, whatever its precise character, and suppresses it in unrighteousness. In doing so **he they** renders **himself themselves** without excuse before God.

Article 5: The Inadequacy of the Law

In this respect, what is true of the light of nature is true also of the Ten Commandments given by God through Moses specifically to the Jews. For **man** people cannot obtain saving grace through the Decalogue, because, although it does expose the magnitude of **his their** sin and increasingly convict **him them** of **his their** guilt, yet it does not offer a remedy or enable **him them** to escape from **his their** misery, and, indeed, weakened as it is by the flesh, leaves the offender under the curse.

Article 10: Conversion as the Work of God

The fact that others who are called through the ministry of the gospel do come and are brought to conversion must not be credited to **man** humanity, as though **one we** distinguishes **himself ourselves** by free choice from others who are furnished with equal or sufficient grace for faith and conversion (as the proud heresy of Pelagius

maintains). No, it must be credited to God: just as from eternity he chose his own in Christ, so within time he effectively calls them, grants them faith and repentance, and, having rescued them from the dominion of darkness, brings them into the kingdom of his Son, in order that they may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called them out of darkness into this marvelous light, and may boast not in themselves, but in the Lord, as apostolic words frequently testify in Scripture.

Article 11: The Holy Spirit's Work in Conversion

Moreover, when God carries out this good pleasure in his chosen ones, or works true conversion in them, he not only sees to it that the gospel is proclaimed to them outwardly, and enlightens their minds powerfully by the Holy Spirit so that they may rightly understand and discern the things of the Spirit of God, but, by the effective operation of the same regenerating Spirit, he also penetrates into ~~the~~ **their** inmost being ~~of man~~, opens the closed heart, softens the hard heart, and circumcises the heart that is uncircumcised. He infuses new qualities into the will, making the dead will alive, the evil one good, the unwilling one willing, and the stubborn one compliant; he activates and strengthens the will so that, like a good tree, it may be enabled to produce the fruits of good deeds.

Article 12: Regeneration a Supernatural Work

And this is the regeneration, the new creation, the raising from the dead, and the making alive so clearly proclaimed in the Scriptures, which God works in us without our

help. But this certainly does not happen only by outward teaching, by moral persuasion, or by such a way of working that, after God has done his work, it remains in ~~man's~~ **our human** power whether or not to be reborn or converted. Rather, it is an entirely supernatural work, one that is at the same time most powerful and most pleasing, a marvelous, hidden, and inexpressible work, which is not lesser than or inferior in power to that of creation or of raising the dead, as Scripture (inspired by the author of this work) teaches. As a result, all those in whose hearts God works in this marvelous way are certainly, unfaillingly, and effectively reborn and do actually believe. And then the will, now renewed, is not only activated and motivated by God but in being activated by God is also itself active. For this reason, ~~man~~ **himself human beings themselves**, by that grace which ~~he has~~ **they have** received, ~~is~~ **are** also rightly said to believe and to repent.

Article 14: The Way God Gives Faith

In this way, therefore, faith is a gift of God, not in the sense that it is offered by God for ~~man's~~ **human beings** to choose, but that it is in actual fact bestowed on ~~man~~ **them**, breathed and infused into ~~him~~ **them**. Nor is it a gift in the sense that God bestows only the potential to believe, but then awaits assent—the act of believing—from ~~man's~~ **our human** choice; rather, it is a gift in the sense that ~~he~~ **God**, who works both willing and acting and, indeed, works all things in all people, produces in ~~man~~ **us** both the will to believe and the belief itself.

Article 15: Responses to God's Grace

God does not owe this grace to anyone. For what could God owe to one who has nothing to give that can be paid back? Indeed, what could God owe to ~~one~~ those who ~~has~~ have nothing of ~~his~~ their own to give but sin and falsehood?

Therefore ~~the person~~ those who receives this grace owes and gives eternal thanks to God alone; ~~the person~~ those who does not receive it either does not care at all about these spiritual things and ~~is~~ are satisfied with ~~himself~~ themselves in ~~his~~ their condition, or else in self-assurance foolishly boasts about having something which ~~he~~ they lacks. Furthermore, following the example of the apostles, we are to think and to speak in the most favorable way about those who outwardly profess their faith and better their lives, for the inner chambers of the heart are unknown to us. But for others who have not yet been called, we are to pray to the God who calls things that do not exist as though they did. In no way, however, are we to pride ourselves as better than they, as though we had distinguished ourselves from them.

Article 16: Regeneration's Effect

However, just as by the fall ~~man~~ humankind did not cease to be ~~man~~ human, endowed with intellect and will, and just as sin, which has spread through the whole human race, did not abolish the nature of the human race but distorted and spiritually killed it, so also this divine grace of regeneration does not act in people as if they were blocks and stones; nor does it abolish the will and its properties or coerce a reluctant will by force, but spiritually revives, heals, reforms, and—in a manner at once pleasing

and powerful—bends it back. As a result, a ready and sincere obedience of the Spirit now begins to prevail where before the rebellion and resistance of the flesh were completely dominant. It is in this that the true and spiritual restoration and freedom of our will consists. Thus, if the marvelous Maker of every good thing were not dealing with us, ~~man~~ we would have no hope of getting up from ~~his~~ our fall by ~~his~~ our free choice, by which ~~he~~ we plunged ~~himself~~ ourselves into ruin when still standing upright.

Rejection of the Errors

Having set forth the orthodox teaching, the Synod rejects the errors of those

I

Who teach that, properly speaking, it cannot be said that original sin in itself is enough to condemn the whole human race or to warrant temporal and eternal punishments.

For they contradict the apostle when he says: "Sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death passed on to all ~~men~~ because all sinned" (Rom. 5:12); also: "The guilt followed one sin and brought condemnation" (Rom. 5:16); likewise: "The wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23).

II

Who teach that the spiritual gifts or the good dispositions and virtues such as goodness, holiness, and righteousness could not have resided in ~~man's~~ the human will ~~when he was first created~~ right after creation, and therefore could not have been separated from the will at the fall.

For this conflicts with the apostle's description of the image of God in Ephesians 4:24, where he portrays the image in terms of righteousness and holiness, which definitely reside in the will.

III

Who teach that in spiritual death the spiritual gifts have not been separated from ~~man's~~ **the human** will, since the will in itself has never been corrupted but only hindered by the darkness of the mind and the unruliness of the emotions, and since the will is able to exercise its innate free capacity once these hindrances are removed, which is to say, it is able of itself to will or choose whatever good is set before it—or else not to will or choose it.

This is a novel idea and an error and has the effect of elevating the power of free choice, contrary to the words of Jeremiah the prophet: "The heart itself is deceitful above all things and wicked" (Jer. 17:9); and of the words of the apostle: "All of us also lived among them" (the ~~sons~~ **children** of disobedience) "at one time in the passions of our flesh, following the will of our flesh and thoughts" (Eph. 2:3).

IV

Who teach that unregenerate ~~man is~~ **people are** not strictly or totally dead in ~~his~~ **their** sins or deprived of all capacity for spiritual good but ~~is~~ **are** able to hunger and thirst for righteousness or life and to offer the sacrifice of a broken and contrite spirit which is pleasing to God.

For these views are opposed to the plain testimonies of Scripture: "You were dead in your transgressions and sins" (Eph. 2:1, 5); "The imagination of the thoughts of ~~man's~~ **the human** heart is only evil all the

time" (Gen. 6:5; 8:21). Besides, to hunger and thirst for deliverance from misery and for life, and to offer God the sacrifice of a broken spirit is characteristic only of the regenerate and of those called blessed (Ps. 51:17; Matt. 5:6).

V

Who teach that corrupt and natural ~~man~~ **people** can make such good use of common grace (by which ~~they mean~~ **is meant** the light of nature) or of the gifts remaining after the fall that ~~he is~~ **they are** able thereby gradually to obtain a greater grace—evangelical or saving grace—as well as salvation itself; and that in this way God, for his part, shows himself ready to reveal Christ to all people, since he provides to all, to a sufficient extent and in an effective manner, the means necessary for the revealing of Christ, for faith, and for repentance.

For Scripture, not to mention the experience of all ages, testifies that this is false: "He makes known his words to Jacob, his statutes and his laws to Israel; he has done this for no other nation, and they do not know his laws" (Ps. 147:19-20); "In the past God let all nations go their own way" (Acts 14:16); "They" (Paul and his companions) "were kept by the Holy Spirit from speaking God's word in Asia"; and "When they had come to Mysia, they tried to go to Bithynia, but the Spirit would not allow them to" (Acts 16:6-7).

VI

Who teach that in ~~the~~ **the** true conversion of ~~man~~ **new** qualities, dispositions, or gifts cannot be infused or poured into ~~his~~ **our** human will by God, and indeed that the faith [or believing] by which we first come to conversion

and from which we receive the name "believers" is not a quality or gift infused by God, but only ~~as~~ a **human act of man**, and that it cannot be called a gift except in respect to the power of attaining faith.

For these views contradict the Holy Scriptures, which testify that God does infuse or pour into our hearts the new qualities of faith, obedience, and the experiencing of his love: "I will put my law in their minds, and write it on their hearts" (Jer. 31:33); "I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring" (Isa. 44:3); "The love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us" (Rom. 5:5). They also conflict with the continuous practice of the Church, which prays with the prophet: "Convert me, Lord, and I shall be converted" (Jer. 31:18).

VII

Who teach that the grace by which we are converted to God is nothing but a gentle persuasion, or (as others explain it) that the way of God's acting in ~~man's~~ conversion that is most noble and suited to human nature is that which happens by persuasion, and that nothing prevents this grace of moral suasion even by itself from making natural ~~men~~ **human beings** spiritual; indeed, that God does not produce the assent of the will except in this manner of moral suasion, and that the effectiveness of God's work by which it surpasses the work of Satan consists in the fact that God promises eternal benefits while Satan promises temporal ones.

For this teaching is entirely Pelagian and contrary to the whole

of Scripture, which recognizes besides this persuasion also another, far more effective and divine way in which the Holy Spirit acts in ~~man's~~ **human** conversion. As Ezekiel 36:26 puts it: "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; and I will remove your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. . . ."

VIII

Who teach that God in regenerating ~~man~~ **us** does not bring to bear that power of his omnipotence whereby he may powerfully and unfailingly bend ~~man's~~ **our** will to faith and conversion, but that even when God has accomplished all the works of grace which he uses for ~~man's~~ **our** conversion, ~~man~~ **we** nevertheless can, and in actual fact often does, so resist God and the Spirit in their intent and will to regenerate ~~him~~ **us**, that ~~man~~ **we** completely thwarts ~~his~~ **our** own rebirth; and, indeed, that it remains in ~~his~~ **our** own power whether or not to be reborn.

For this does away with all effective functioning of God's grace in our conversion and subjects the activity of Almighty God to the **human will of man**; it is contrary to the apostles, who teach that "we believe by virtue of the effective working of God's mighty strength" (Eph. 1:19), and that "God fulfills the undeserved good will of his kindness and the work of faith in us with power" (2 Thess. 1:11), and likewise that "his divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness" (2 Pet. 1:3).

IX

Who teach that grace and free choice are concurrent partial causes which cooperate to initiate conversion, and that grace does not

precede—in the order of causality—the effective influence of the will; that is to say, that God does not effectively help ~~man's~~ our will to come to conversion before ~~man's~~ our will itself motivates and determines itself.

For the early church already condemned this doctrine long ago in the Pelagians, on the basis of the words of the apostle: "It does not depend on ~~man's~~ human willing or running but on God's mercy" (Rom. 9:16); also: "Who makes you different from anyone else?" and "What do you have that you did not receive?" (1 Cor. 4:7); likewise: "It is God who works in you to will and act according to his good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13).

The Fifth Main Point of Doctrine

The Perseverance of the Saints

Rejection of the Errors Concerning the Teaching of the Perseverance of the Saints

Having set forth the orthodox teaching, the Synod rejects the errors of those

I

Who teach that the perseverance of true believers is not an effect of election or a gift of God produced by Christ's death, but a condition of the new covenant which ~~man~~ we, before what they call ~~his~~ our "peremptory" election and justification, must fulfill by ~~his~~ our free will.

For Holy Scripture testifies that perseverance follows from election and is granted to the chosen by virtue of Christ's death, resurrection, and intercession: "The chosen obtained it; the others were hardened" (Rom. 11:7); likewise, "He who did not spare his own son, but

gave him up for us all—how will he not, along with him, grant us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is ~~he~~ it that condemns? It is Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised—who also sits at the right hand of God, and is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" (Rom. 8:32-35).

II

Who teach that God does provide ~~the believer~~ believers with sufficient strength to persevere and is ready to preserve this strength in ~~him~~ them if ~~he~~ they perform ~~his~~ their duty, but that even with all those things in place which are necessary to persevere in faith and which God is pleased to use to preserve faith, it still always depends on the choice of ~~man's~~ their will whether or not ~~he~~ they persevere.

For this view is obviously Pelagian; and though it intends to make ~~man~~ human beings free, it makes them sacrilegious. It is against the enduring consensus of evangelical teaching, which takes from ~~man~~ humanity all cause for boasting and ascribes the praise for this benefit only to God's grace. It is also against the testimony of the apostle: "It is God who keeps us strong to the end, so that we will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 1:8).

III

Who teach that those who truly believe and have been born again not only can forfeit justifying faith as well as grace and salvation totally and to the end, but also in actual fact do often forfeit them and are lost forever.

For this opinion nullifies the very grace of justification and regeneration as well as the continual preservation by Christ, contrary to the plain words of the apostle Paul: "If Christ died for us while we were still sinners, we will therefore much more be saved from God's wrath through him, since we have now been justified by his blood" (Rom. 5:8-9); and contrary to the apostle John: "~~No one~~ **None** who ~~is~~ **are** born of God ~~is~~ **are** intent on sin, because God's seed remains in ~~him~~ **them**, nor can ~~he~~ **they** sin, because ~~he~~ **has they** have been born of God" (1 John 3:9); also contrary to the words of Jesus Christ: "I give eternal life to my sheep, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand" (John 10: 28-29).

IV

Who teach that those who truly believe and have been born again can commit the sin that leads to death (the sin against the Holy Spirit).

For the same apostle John, after making mention of those who commit the sin that leads to death and forbidding prayer for them (1 John 5: 16-17), immediately adds: "We know that anyone born of God does not commit sin" (that is, that kind of sin), "~~but the one~~ **those** who ~~was~~ **were** born of God keeps ~~himself~~ **themselves** safe, and the evil one does not touch ~~him~~ **them**" (v. 18).

VI

Who teach that the teaching of the assurance of perseverance and of salvation is by its very nature and character an opiate of the flesh and

is harmful to godliness, good morals, prayer, and other holy exercises, but that, on the contrary, to have doubt about this is praiseworthy.

For these people show that they do not know the effective operation of God's grace and the work of the indwelling Holy Spirit, and they contradict the apostle John, who asserts the opposite in plain words: "Dear friends, now we are children of God, but what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he is made known, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. ~~Everyone~~ **All** who ~~has~~ **have** this hope in him ~~purifies~~ **himself purify themselves**, just as he is pure" (1 John 3:2-3). Moreover, they are refuted by the examples of the saints in both the Old and the New Testament, who though assured of their perseverance and salvation yet were constant in prayer and other exercises of godliness.

VIII

Who teach that it is not absurd that ~~a person~~ **persons**, after losing ~~his~~ **their** former regeneration, should once again, indeed quite often, be reborn.

For by this teaching they deny the imperishable nature of God's seed by which we are born again, contrary to the testimony of the apostle Peter: "Born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable" (1 Pet. 1:23).

Conclusion

Rejection of False Accusations

And so this is the clear, simple, and straightforward explanation of the orthodox teaching on the five articles in dispute in the Netherlands, as well as the rejection

of the errors by which the Dutch churches have for some time been disturbed. This explanation and rejection the Synod declares to be derived from God's Word and in agreement with the confessions of the Reformed churches. Hence it clearly appears that those of whom one could hardly expect it have shown no truth, equity, and charity at all in wishing to make the public believe:

- that the teaching of the Reformed churches on predestination and on the points associated with it by its very nature and tendency draws the minds of people away from all godliness and religion, is an opiate of the flesh and the devil, and is a stronghold of Satan where he lies in wait for all people, wounds most of them, and fatally pierces many of them with the arrows of both despair and self-assurance;
- that this teaching makes God the author of sin, unjust, a tyrant, and a hypocrite; and is nothing but a refurbished Stoicism, Manicheism, Libertinism, and Mohammedanism;
- that this teaching makes people carnally self-assured, since it persuades them that nothing endangers the salvation of the chosen, no matter how they live, so that they may commit the most outrageous crimes with self-assurance; and that on the other hand nothing is of use to the reprobate for salvation even if they have truly performed all the works of the saints;
- that this teaching means that God predestined and created,

by the bare and unqualified choice of his will, without the least regard or consideration of any sin, the greatest part of the world to eternal condemnation; that in the same manner in which election is the source and cause of faith and good works, reprobation is the cause of unbelief and ungodliness; that many infant children of believers are snatched in their innocence from their mothers' breasts and cruelly cast into hell so that neither the blood of Christ nor their baptism nor the prayers of the church at their baptism can be of any use to them;

and very many other slanderous accusations of this kind which the Reformed churches not only disavow but even denounce with their whole heart.

Therefore this Synod of Dort in the name of the Lord pleads with all who devoutly call on the name of our Savior Jesus Christ to form their judgment about the faith of the Reformed churches, not on the basis of false accusations gathered from here or there, or even on the basis of the personal statements of a number of ancient and modern authorities—statements which are also often either quoted out of context or misquoted and twisted to convey a different meaning—but on the basis of the churches' own official confessions and of the present explanation of the orthodox teaching which has been endorsed by the unanimous consent of the members of the whole Synod, one and all.

Moreover, the Synod earnestly warns the false accusers themselves to consider how heavy a judgment of God awaits those who give false testimony against so many churches

and their confessions, trouble the consciences of the weak, and seek to prejudice the minds of many against the fellowship of true believers.

Finally, this Synod urges all fellow ministers in the gospel of Christ to deal with this teaching in a godly and reverent manner, in the academic institutions as well as in the churches; to do so, both in their speaking and writing, with a view to the glory of God's name, holiness of life, and the comfort of anxious souls; to think and also speak with Scripture according to the analogy of faith; and, finally, to refrain from all those ways of speaking which go beyond the bounds set for us by the genuine sense of the Holy Scriptures and which could give impertinent sophists a just occasion to scoff at the teaching of the Reformed churches or even to bring false accusations against it.

May God's Son, Jesus Christ, who sits at the right hand of God and gives gifts to ~~men~~ **people**, sanctify us in the truth, lead to the truth those who err, silence the mouths of those who lay false accusations against sound teaching, and equip faithful ministers of his Word with a spirit of wisdom and discretion, that all they say may be to the glory of God and the building up of their hearers. Amen.

I. Introduction

During 1996 the Christian Reformed Church, with thanks to God, celebrates one hundred years of continuing outreach in North America, focusing on the theme "100-Year Journey Toward Tomorrow." Several commemorative events will take place throughout this year. One of the highlights is the publication by Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company of the book *Flourishing in the Land: The 100-Year Journey Toward Tomorrow*, which outlines the history of CRC missions in North America over the last century.

Churches and classes in some regions of North America will be holding *Gathering* festivals where the centennial will be a major theme. A centennial video is being produced to tell of some of the ways God has blessed evangelism in the denomination and to encourage the Christian Reformed Church in its continuing efforts toward *Gathering God's Growing Family*.

A. *The vision for Gathering*

Because God "reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation" (II Cor. 5:18), the CRC mandated the Board of Home Missions to

lead the church in its task
of bringing the gospel
to the people of Canada and the United States
and drawing them into fellowship
with Christ and his church.

(Home Missions Order, Synod 1992)

The CRC confesses in the words of the Canons of Dort,

It is the promise of the gospel that whoever believes in Christ crucified shall not perish, but have eternal life. This promise, together with the command to repent and believe, ought to be announced and declared without differentiation or discrimination to all nations and people, to whom God in his good pleasure sends the gospel.

(Canons of Dort, II, 5)

Building on this scriptural and confessional foundation, Home Missions leads the church in *Gathering God's Growing Family*—*seeking the lost and discipling the found . . . all for God's glory*. Connecting the CRC tradition with today's mission field at home, *Gathering* also grows out of a growing sense of urgency for our friends, neighbors, and family members who are among millions of lost, wandering, and searching persons in Canada and the United States.

B. *The goals of Gathering*

Since 1988 *Gathering God's Growing Family* has focused 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. These *Gathering* goals give expression to the core *Gathering* values adopted by Christian Reformed Home Missions in 1993 (see *Agenda for Synod 1995*, pp. 134-35).

D. The vision is manifested in the Guiding Principles for New /Emerging-Church Development:

Home Missions' two main development thrusts involve new and established churches. While referring directly to *new* and *emerging* churches, these Guiding Principles* exemplify the principles and standards which apply to all the work of *Gathering*.

1. Accountability

- a. Each new church, as a unique expression of the body of Christ, prayerfully plans and orders its life and ministry under the Lordship of Christ as the Head of the church and in obedience to the Word of God as the only rule for faith and practice.
- b. New and emerging churches are committed to maintaining the integrity of the confessions and mission vision of the CRC denomination in their identity, proclamation, witness, and service.

2. Relevance

- a. Just as the apostle Paul made himself "a slave to everyone to win as many as possible" (I Cor. 9:19), so new-church ministry is to be incarnational, indigenous, and contextual to the community and people served.
- b. New and emerging churches are to carry out their ministry in comprehensive ways that meet the needs of the whole person—physically, socially, intellectually, and spiritually.

3. Reproducibility

- a. Missionary pastors gather and multiply disciple-making leaders, groups, and communities.
- b. Healthy *Gathering* churches parent and assist new churches by way of foster, adoptive, or natural parenting in ways that grow and reproduce more new churches.
- c. Home Missions develops and provides resources for key reproducible support systems in strategic locations throughout the CRC.

4. Partnership

- a. Home Missions, in collaboration with other agencies and resources, serves classes, parenting churches, and new and emerging churches with vision, guidance, and support.
- b. New and emerging churches develop interdependent partnerships with other churches across cultural, economic, and geographical lines.

* These principles have been in use for some time but were first drawn up by Home Missions in the above form in 1995.

- c. Emerging churches participate as full partners in denominational life appropriate to their stage of development.

5. Reconciliation

- a. New and emerging churches, even when reaching out intentionally to identifiable people groups, lovingly accept all whom the Lord brings to their fellowship and care without regard for ability, age, gender, race, or status.
- b. Home Missions works strategically with diverse *Gathering* churches and groups of churches in ways that contribute to ethnic diversity and racial reconciliation within the CRC.
- c. The training and support of indigenous leadership are key to the development of ethnic-minority churches and to racial reconciliation and kingdom culture.

6. Stewardship

- a. New and emerging churches assume responsibility for their own ministry development as soon and as fully as possible, including their own vision, staffing, training, and financial support.
- b. New and emerging churches are encouraged to enhance their spiritual and physical resources by developing mutually supportive partnerships with other churches.
- c. Home Missions, classes, and parenting and supporting churches provide guidance and assistance in ways that increase local capacity for ministry and avoid the fostering of dependency.

7. Effectiveness

- a. Local and denominational resources are allocated in relation to where need is most evident and new-church effectiveness has been demonstrated or can be expected.
- b. The effectiveness of new and emerging churches is evaluated in relation to wholistic growth and development, including (1) numerical and spiritual growth, (2) financial stewardship, (3) organizational development, and (4) outreach at home and abroad to people in physical and spiritual need.

E. *Gathering (evangelizing) progress in 1995*

By God's grace, in the last eight years, growth through evangelism in the CRC has totaled 22,654 persons. We are grateful to God to be able to report that in 1995 3,170 persons (compared to 2,489 persons in 1994) were added through evangelism, the largest annual number in the history of our denomination. As of September 1, 1995, total CRC membership stood at 291,796.

Since 1988, new congregations accounted for 5,409 persons added through evangelism. In 1995 alone, 1,238 people were added through evangelism in new churches.

Membership data for 1995 show that the CRC added 10,101 new members (evangelism accounting for 3,170 persons). In that same period deaths, reversions, those leaving for other denominations, and congregations withdrawing from the denomination reflect a loss of 9,866 persons.

II. The board and executive committee

A. Composition of the board

The Board of Home Missions is the agent of synod charged with guiding and carrying out the denominational home-missions program. The board has forty-nine members. Forty-six members are chosen by their respective classes; three are board members-at-large with expertise in real estate, architecture, finance, and advancement. Eleven members are from Canada, and thirty-eight from the United States.

Since 1994, the Board of Home Missions has met in late spring in order to better serve the church by responding more quickly to proposals for new ministries and requests for assistance from congregations and classes.

B. Board officers

The officers of the Board of Home Missions 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; Rev. Kenneth Ritsema, recording secretary; and Rev. Peter Hoytema, assistant treasurer.

C. The executive committee of Home Missions

The executive committee of the Board of Home Missions, made up of elected delegates from each of the designated regions, 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, Iakota, Minnesota South, Heartland
Central U.S.	Minnesota North, Northcentral Iowa, Pella
Chicago	Northern Illinois, Chicago South, Illiana, Wisconsin
Eastern U.S.	Atlantic Northeast, Hudson, Hackensack, Florida
Out-state Michigan	Northern Michigan, 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 persons are being paid within the salary ranges approved by synod (*Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 577) as follows:

Job level	Number of positions	Compensation quartile (includes housing allowance)
21	1	2nd
19	2	3rd
18	2	1st, 4th

III. Home Missions' ministries

A. *Established-church development*

1. Home Missions' ministry with established churches is, at heart, helping them reach out more effectively to the lost. At the same time the goal is to effectively nurture and disciple those evangelized to become a part of Christ's new community.
2. This ministry is accomplished through
 - a. Consultation provided by Home Missions' regional directors, ethnic-ministry directors, and others. Home Missions encourages and equips churches to become (better) praying, outreaching, and discipling churches.
 - b. Ministry-planning assistance given in a wide variety of formal and informal ways for both local churches and classes.
 - c. Small-group evangelism strategies. Home Missions enables and assists churches with effective programs (such as Story Hour, Little Lambs, Coffee Break, Men's Life, Inspirit, etc.) to integrate these programs into their overall ministry plan and efforts.
 - d. *Gathering* conferences, training, and educational courses. Home Missions, in cooperation with Calvin Theological Seminary and church-development conferences, encourages and equips church leaders to use and develop the skills needed for *Gathering*.
 - e. Financial grants. Home Missions enables churches to increase their effectiveness in outreach and disciple-making through strategic, seed-like financial grants.
 - f. Church-development materials. Home Missions offers assistance for various church outreach concerns, strategies, and programs in partnership with CRC Publications.
3. The following results are prayerfully envisioned and worked for:
 - a. Healthy established churches which are growing in all ways—including size—and which are effectively ministering where God has placed them.
 - b. People who are part of a growing, evangelistic CRC; who are encouraged and enabled to find and be fulfilled in their part of a *Gathering* ministry, both within and outside their local churches' organizational boundaries; and who are using their spiritual gifts in keeping with their own God-given personal temperaments and passions.
4. The strategies used move from the more general to the more specific.
 - a. Ministry priorities and activities in these general areas include activities and processes that contribute to the ability of the CRCNA to gather. Some deal with the whole CRC, others with individual local churches, and still others are designed to help individuals become better witnesses for Jesus:
 - 1) Mobilizing prayers for the lost: Home Missions developed and implemented a comprehensive plan to encourage churches, classes, and denominational agencies to pray for effective *Gathering*.

- 2) Enabling classical strategic ministry planning: Assisted classes through the classical Home Missions committees in doing strategic planning for ministry (through the CRWRC/CRHM Task Force on the Role of Classes in the Twenty-First Century), which resulted in a conference to support classis-sponsored ministry held on October 27-29, 1995, in Glen Eyrie, Colorado, attended by representatives of forty-three of the forty-six classes.
 - 3) Promoting ethnic (non-Anglo) ministries: Worked with the new-church-development department and CRHM's five ethnic-ministry directors to help the CRCNA grow in its multicultural character and ministry.
 - 4) *Gathering* through campus ministries: Continued to work with the Christian Reformed Campus Ministry Association (CR/CMA) to help each campus ministry become an integral part of local outreaching and discipling churches and to flourish as an integral part of the CRC's outreaching and discipling ministry.
 - 5) Participated in teaching two Calvin Theological Seminary Mission Institute courses: (a) New Church Development and (b) Vision Leadership: Developing Missionary Pastors in the Established Church.
 - 6) Resourcing churches with evangelistic materials (with CRC Publications): Published eight new resources:
 - *Linking to the Lost* (Core Values Series)
 - *Discover Psalms*
 - *Discover 1 Corinthians*
 - *The Whole Truth and Nothing but the Truth* (Inspirit series)
 - *Up Close and Personal*
 - *Patterns for Prayer*
 - *Developing Dynamic Worship*
 - *Disciple Making*
 - 7) Providing youth volunteers, Summer Workshop in Ministries (SWIM): Cooperated with Youth Unlimited to provide 176 SWIMers for forty new and established churches in the summer of 1995.
- b. Ministry priorities and activities in the more specific areas include strategies and programs to motivate and enable local established churches to more effectively gather:
- 1) Focusing Networks and Congregational MasterPlanning: Developed a three-phase pilot for a *Gathering* Church Network strategy and are currently reproducing these in seventeen additional areas. Twenty-five Congregational MasterPlanning contracts are currently in process under the guidance of seventeen consultants.
 - 2) Small-group evangelism strategies/ministries: Designed and are now piloting strategies to help local churches more effectively use a variety of small-group outreach ministries (including ones for which Home Missions has provided leadership—Coffee Break, Men's Life, etc.).
 - 3) Schools of Prayer: Seven (7) have been held/are scheduled in the following locations:

Bellflower, CA	November 3-4, 1995
Abbotsford, BC	January 26-27, 1996
Palmerston, ON	March 8-9, 1996
Houston, TX	March 29-30, 1996
Grand Rapids, MI	May 17-18, 1996
Chicago, IL	May 20-21, 1996
Denver, CO	May 22-23, 1996

- 4) *Gathering Leadership Conferences*: Sponsored a fifth *Gathering* conference in November 1995 in connection with the Church Leadership Conference at Willow Creek Community Church. The 231 persons in attendance represented forty-two Christian Reformed congregations and denominational leaders from Calvin Theological Seminary, CRC Publications, and Reformed Bible College. Plans are being made to hold a sixth conference on October 22-27, 1996.
 - 5) Assisting churches to parent new churches: Worked with the new-church-development department to develop a network that would encourage and assist established and emerging churches to successfully give birth to healthy new churches.
 - 6) Making Partnership Assistance Grants: Provided grants for forty-eight churches/ministries (including campus) for a total of \$582,000.
5. In summary

All the work Home Missions does with established churches is carried out for two main purposes: (a) to further empower the local established church in partnership with other churches in its classes and area; and (b) to empower all individuals in the CRC to be more effective *Gatherers, seeking the lost and discipling the found . . . all for God's glory!*

In all these efforts there is the prayerful anticipation and expectation that God will continue to bring into his church those whom the Spirit is bringing—or already has brought—to a living faith in Christ.

B. *New-church development*

Beginning with The Acts of the Apostles, starting new churches has been God's primary method for spreading the gospel and "gathering people into fellowship with Christ and his church" (Home Missions Order). With a certain number of churches closing or leaving the denomination each year, new-church development also is a vital element in maintaining a spiritually healthy and vigorous denomination. The goal for new-church development (NCD), therefore, is to encourage and equip churches and classes to prayerfully plan and develop new churches that "go and make disciples" for God's glory and the upbuilding of his church and kingdom.

As of January 1996 Home Missions was partnering with 145 new-church ministries and approximately fifteen potential church planters serving in apprenticeships, internships, and residencies. In addition, eleven proposed starts are approved for funding, depending upon the recruiting of missionary-pastor leadership. Our prayer is that with God's blessing new churches will grow by at least 3,000 members a year and that Home Missions, in partnership with classes and sponsoring churches, will start twenty to twenty-five new churches during the next year.

1. General resourcing of new churches

Home Missions personnel—regional directors, ethnic-ministry directors, and central-office personnel—provide overall vision, guidance, and support for new-church ministry in the CRCNA. This is carried out primarily through planning and consultation assistance, financial support, and the development of reproducible support systems throughout the classes and regions. These support systems and related activities include

- a. Prayer for harvest. Missionary pastors, their supporting churches, and other ministry partners are challenged to pray fervently that God will gather people with his life-changing power. Home Missions covets the prayers of the churches that the Lord of harvest will send forth workers into our great North American harvest field.
- b. New-church parenting. In the conviction that churches plant churches, Home Missions no longer serves as the sponsor or employer of any new-church ministry. Each start requires a local neighboring congregation that is willing and able to serve as the parent church. The parenting role varies greatly, ranging from prayer support and employment arrangements to contributing members to the daughter church and providing substantial financial support. Home Missions' assistance also varies greatly. In some settings Home Missions' financial support is primary and/or long-term; in other settings support is minimal and/or short-term. Guidance and consultation are provided to all ministry partners, always with the prayer that the young plants will mature into self-expressing, self-governing, self-supporting, and self-reproducing churches. Parenting materials and training are available through local parenting-church networks.
- c. Recruiting and training. There is an ongoing, urgent need for recruiting disciple-making leaders who will become new-church pastors. In addition to seminary-trained persons gifted and called for this work, Home Missions also helps to prepare other gifted individuals as evangelists and staff members. Leadership-development programs are operating or being developed in various U.S. and Canadian locations. Home Missions provides additional support for these programs through apprenticeships, internships, and residencies.
- d. Assessing of leaders. Guiding and assisting new churches and their sponsors in the selection of missionary pastors is a key service of the new-church-development department. One of the primary means to assist would-be church planters in discerning God's guidance is a two-day Assessment Center, now offered periodically throughout the year. Assessment Center was offered for the first time in the Spanish language in March 1996.
- e. Coaching and empowering leaders. In recent years many of the new-church pastors have received intensive orientation and training at a four-day Bootcamp. In addition, wherever possible, they are expected to participate with fellow church planters in a local New-Church Incubator or New-Church Network, which includes general study of the *Church Planter's Toolkit* as well as individualized coaching. Overall guidance and consultation provided by Home Missions regional directors and ethnic-

ministry directors are supplemented by resource manuals, in-service training events, retreats, and conferences.

2. New-church ministry highlights

- a. Ministry in Red Mesa. Continuous ministry among the Navajo and Zuni people in Arizona and New Mexico began one hundred years ago. Today there are twenty-one churches with nearly 2,000 members. In addition to partnering with Classis Red Mesa and many of its churches, Home Missions supports the Crownpoint, Rehoboth, and Zuni Christian schools as they seek to educate and disciple some 450 students annually. Although Home Missions still provides substantial financial support (a total of \$610,000 for the 1995-1996 school year), the schools continue to make progress toward financial independence. This past year saw the launching of The People's Crafts project and initial steps toward forming a Red Mesa Foundation.
- b. Contextualized partnering strategies. Approximately one-half of all new churches receiving Home Missions' funding are located in ethnic-minority or racially diverse communities. The key elements in partnering strategies include a leadership council or committee indigenous to the group, affirmed goals and plans for partnering in *Gathering* ministry, and the allocation of a certain level of funding annually for new or expanded work. African American, Chinese, Hispanic, Korean, and Native American ethnic-ministry directors, working with Home Missions, provide a key resource to many of these ministries.
- c. Relocation of NCD specialist. Convinced that new-church-development specialist Rev. Allen Likkel, who is currently based in Home Missions' central office, could resource new-church ministry more effectively outside the central office, Home Missions will relocate Rev. Likkel to the Seattle, Washington, area in the fall of 1996. His primary responsibilities will be the development and support of recruiting and training concerns on an agency-wide basis. He will also have limited involvement as consultant and strategic planner for a proposed new church in the Seattle area and as coach for its leadership team.

3. Listing of new churches/ministries started 1994-1996

a. September 1994 to August 1995:

Location/Name	Personnel	Began
Ajax, ON/Crossroads Community	Adrian Van Giessen	9/94
Allen, TX/All Nations Grace Fellowship	NeeOdoi Thompson	9/94
Austin, TX/Chapel of the Hills	James Koopman	3/95
Bellflower, CA/Grace Filipino	Elmer Tandayu	9/94
Beverly Hills, CA/Chowon Korean	Dae Sun Shin	9/94
Buena Park, CA/Glory CRC	Sung Hwan Park	9/94
Cerritos, CA/Heaven Bound	Andrew Choh	9/94
*Chicago, IL/Grace & Peace Fellowship	Pedro Aviles	9/94
Cloverdale, BC/Redwood Community	Michael Dadson	9/94
Cumberland, ON/NCD	William Kuurstra	5/95
El Paso, TX/Paso Del Norte	John Matias	11/94

Location/Name	Personnel	Began
Eugene, OR/Oregon Community	Henry Reyenga	9/94
Franklin Lakes, NJ/New Life Min.	Howard Vugteveen	6/95
Fresno, CA/Hmong NCD	Daniel Moua	3/95
Garden Grove, CA/Korean Presbyterian	Young Ook Kim	9/94
Grand Rapids, MI/Madison Square	Glandion Carney	8/95
Honolulu, HI/Pyung Kang	William Yang	9/94
Hudsonville, MI/Evergreen	Larry Doornbos	9/94
Indianapolis, IN/Discovery Community	Robert Sizemore	8/94
Los Angeles, CA/Chosen People	In-Chul Kim	9/94
Northridge, CA/Valley Evang. Mission	Soo Do Hong	9/94
Orlando, FL/Hispanic	Guillermo Ortiz	2/95
Philadelphia, PA/Ayuda Comm. Center	Randy Baker/Debra Vasquez	9/94
Salt Lake City/Draper, UT/NCD	Joel De Boer	9/94
San Diego, CA/El Arca	Philippe Acuna	9/94
Sardis, BC/Heartland Fellowship	Kenneth Byl	8/94
Sioux Falls, SD/NCD	James Hoogveen	8/95
Southern CA/Leadership Training	Alan Breems (part-time)	7/95
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

b. September 1995 to February 1996:

Location/Name	Personnel	Began
Allendale, MI/Friendship Chapel	Steven Wunderink	9/95
Anchorage, AK/Korean	Kyung Soo Jho	9/95
Arcadia, CA/Kyung Myung	Peter Lee	9/95
Atlanta, GA/Shalom Korean	Charles Jeon	9/95
Bay Area, CA/Filipino	Fernando Del Rosario	9/95
Boulder, CO/Korean	Youchan Kim	9/95
Calgary, AB/Residency & NCD	John Van Sloten	9/95
Forest Hills (GR), MI/Keystone Comm.	Gene De Jong	9/95
Garden Grove, CA/Orange Han Min	Seung Won Yoon	9/95
Mission, BC/NCD Residency	Andrew Turkstra	11/95
New Lenox, IL/Residency and NCD	Julius Medenblik	9/95
Pella, IA/Grace Fellowship	Peter Kelder	9/95
South Holland, IL/Mission Hispana Paz	Ildefonso Torres	9/95

4. Churches becoming self-supporting from September 1994 - February 1996

The usual funding pattern for new churches is for Home Missions to approve funding in three-year cycles, at annually decreasing amounts, subject to renewal for a second three-year cycle. For churches located in communities of extraordinary need and limited resources, funding may be of longer duration. From time to time funding is discontinued or interrupted if a new-church ministry is not developing as needed and expected. The majority of new churches do reach the goal of self-support by the end of their funding cycle(s).

a. Funding conclusions from September 1994 to August 1995:

Location/Name	Personnel	Began
Arlington, TX/Trinity Oaks	Douglas Vrieland	9/85
Arlington Heights, IL/Our Shepherd	Jeong Gho	6/88
Artesia/Cypress, CA/Rivershore Korean	Ki Chun So	9/92
Austin, TX/Sunrise Community	Thomas Dykman	9/87
Austin, TX/NCD Resident	Gerry Van Dam	9/94
Buena Park, CA/Messiah Korean	Woon Se Yeo	9/92
Chicago, IL/Christ's Vineyard	Juan Flores	10/86
Columbia, MO/Immanuel Community	Douglas Einfeld	9/77
El Paso, TX/Sunshine Community	Jeffrey Dykema	9/60
Fort McMurray, AB/Evergreen	Harry Valstar	9/76
Garden Grove, CA/Elim Korean	Boo Young Jang	9/90
Grand Haven, MI/Covenant Life	Andrew De Young	9/92
*Honolulu, HI/Pacific Community	Albert Helder	9/67
Houston, TX/Hope CRC	Roger De Young	9/85
Los Angeles, CA/Monterey Park	John Tong	9/78
Los Angeles, CA/Church of Love	Chang Kyung Kim	9/92
Los Angeles, CA/Tyrannus	James Soo Il Hyun	9/90
Lynden, WA/Mt. View Cambodian	Savan Ratahnahk	9/92
Lynnwood, WA/Korean	In Sung Kim	9/90
**Miami, FL/South Kendall Community	Michael Van Hofwegen	9/91
Mill Creek, WA/Community	Kenneth Rip	9/88
Minneapolis, MN/Great Love Mission	Sun M. Kim	9/91
Monrovia, CA/Eternal Covenant		2/91
Sacramento, CA/Korean	Samuel Sonki Ahn	9/90
Salt Lake City/Draper, UT/NCD	Joel De Boer	9/94
St. Vital, MB/Good News Fellowship	Ray Samaroo	8/87
Winnipeg, MB/West Winnipeg Comm.	James Broekema	9/93
*Restart anticipated under special funding arrangement.		
**This was a four-year funding cycle for a church restart.		

b. Funding conclusions from September 1995 to February 1996:

Location/Name	Personnel	Began
Dearborn, MI/Peace Arab American	Stephen Kelley	9/89
Missouri City, TX/NCD & Residency	Richard De Ruitter	12/94
Oceanside, CA/First Union Korean	Jonathan Kim	9/93
Sheboygan, WI/Hmong Coordinator	Houa Yang	9/93

C. Finance and advancement

One of Home Missions' core *Gathering* values states, "Wherever and whenever God's people exercise vision and faith, God provides resources of money and spiritual gifts for his work." Home Missions is grateful for generous and faithful continued support of its ministries.

1. Resources

- a. Financial resources. Through strong giving from churches, individuals, and businesses, God provided abundantly in fiscal 1995. Although total gift income declined by 4.5 percent compared to fiscal 1994, the ministry was still able to fund all programs as planned. Ministry-share receipts declined 4.3 percent from the previous years, and total above-ministry-

share gifts from churches and individuals declined 5.3 percent from 1994. Total expenses were managed below budget without curtailing ministry programs and with a balanced budget for the year. In light of denominational finances, the 1996 request for ministry share increased only 0.9 percent compared to 1995.

- b. Personnel. Home Missions also gratefully notes that volunteers donating their time and various talents in both the central office and field ministries continue to provide numerous benefits to Home Missions and affiliated ministries.
- c. Missionary partnerships. God is blessing the Christian Reformed Church with gifted leaders from various ethnic groups. Our denomination is honoring God in partnering with ethnic groups across Canada and the United States. But gaining prayer and financial support for these ministries is an increasing challenge because these missionary pastors are less well-known in the CRC. Churches are encouraged to establish a support partnership with an ethnic missionary pastor. Fifty-three congregations are currently partnering with an ethnic ministry through Home Missions' support, enjoying the enriching blessings of such a partnership.
- d. Information resources. This year for the first time Home Missions offered Reformation Day bulletins, which were used by 446 churches. Nearly half of these churches took special offerings for the cause of Home Missions. We again offered Easter bulletins and devotional materials, which were ordered by 532 churches. Approximately 175 churches scheduled an Easter offering for Home Missions.

Home Missions participated with other CRC agencies in several cooperative projects, such as the development of *CRC Source*, a new publication to provide church members with news about the ministries they support. We continue to work cooperatively in projects such as *Prayer Guide*, *Intermission*, Barnabas Foundation, and Women's Missionary Union speaking tours.

2. Capital-expenditures assistance

- a. Home Missions provides advice and financial assistance in site selection and purchase and in building design and construction for new churches that start with Home Missions' partnership. During 1995, Home Missions assisted New Life Fellowship Christian Reformed Church of Red Deer, Alberta, in the purchase of a 13,256-square-foot building and 75 acres from the Province of Alberta. Home Missions investment notes provide a way for CRC members to invest in new-church building programs. Proceeds from the sale of these notes provide loan funds for new-church building programs that would have difficulty obtaining funds from commercial lenders. At the end of fiscal 1995 Home Missions had over \$5.7 million of outstanding loans to sixty-seven churches.
- b. The Advancement Department provided stewardship advice and promotional and fund-raising assistance to new churches embarking on a building project.

3. Fiscal 1995 financial report

A detailed audited financial report for the ten-month fiscal year ended June 30, 1995, the 1996 budget, and the proposed 1997 budget will be presented to synod in *Agenda for Synod 1996—Financial and Business Supplement*. A summary report for the fiscal year ended June 30, 1995, is shown below:

Source of income	Income (\$000s)	% of total
Ministry share	\$4,802	59.0
Missionary support	728	8.9
Above-ministry-share gifts	761	9.4
Catalog, conferences, consulting	1,001	12.3
Interest and other	851	10.4
Total income	\$8,143	100.0

Use of funds	Disbursements (\$000s)	% of total
New-church development	\$5,032	62.1
Established-church development	1,723	21.3
Land, capital, currency	196	2.4
Administration	765	9.4
Resource development	387	4.8
Total disbursements	\$8,103	100.0

IV. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Dr. Bruce Ballast, president of the Board of Home Missions; Rev. John Rozeboom, executive director; and Mr. Jack Heinen, director of finance, when matters pertaining to Home Missions are discussed.

B. That synod, with thanks to God, call to the denomination's attention that 1996 marks one hundred years of continuing gospel outreach in North America by our denomination and that synod take note of a special publication and special observances for the centennial being planned by Christian Reformed Home Missions.

Christian Reformed Board of
Home Missions

John A. Rozeboom, executive director

Note: Recommendations on financial matters are included in the report of the denominational Board of Trustees.

I. Introduction

Empowered by 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, we report to synod on opportunities, efforts, and results during the past year.

During 1995 CRWM gave support to twenty-five Reformed and Presbyterian churches which are attended by over two million people. CRWM also gave support to twenty other agencies and leadership-training institutions. In ten countries CRWM is developing churches which are in various stages of formal organization. We do not have complete statistics but estimate that these churches added at least sixty thousand adherents in 1995. Our missionaries returned to Sierra Leone and Haiti after political problems forced withdrawal. A gradual return of peace to Liberia may reopen opportunities for CRWM to strengthen its presence there. Nigeria and Mali continue to experience political unrest, but no missionaries were withdrawn from these countries.

Missionary activity was carried out in thirty countries by 107 long-term missionaries, 86 missionary spouses, 84 associate missionaries (most of whom were teachers in various places), 2 seminary interns, 36 summer mission volunteers of college age, and other short-term volunteers. Thus, we had a total of 315 active missionaries during 1995, accompanied by 185 missionary children.

II. Matters related to governance and administration

A. Meetings

CRWM held its annual meetings in Grand Rapids, Michigan, on February 19-21, 1996, 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 our overseas mission fields and projects through CRWM-International. The executive committees of each group met jointly and separately in May, August, and November.

B. *CRWM-International executive director*

Rev. William Van Tol has announced his intention to conclude his service as executive director of CRWM and transfer back to missionary service overseas. A search for his successor during 1995 brought one nominee to the annual meeting for an interview, but he decided to withdraw his name from consideration at the last moment. The board of CRWM requested Rev. Van Tol to serve for another year while it conducts a second search for his replacement, which he has now agreed to do.

C. *Size of the board*

The CRWM Committee considered the Ministries Coordinating Council's proposal that boards be reduced in size to sixteen regionally selected members and a few members-at-large. The committee decided to request the Board of Trustees and synod to allow denominational boards and committees to retain classical representation of one delegate per classis and not to force regionalization of boards.

D. Changes in meeting schedule and administrative rules

Changes to the administrative rules that govern CRWM are being recommended to the Board of Trustees. CRWM is also proposing that its annual meeting be held in May rather than in February to streamline the process and compact the time used for preparation of the annual plan and budget.

E. Constitution and Bylaws of the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA

The CRWM Committee reviewed the proposed changes in the constitution and bylaws of the Board of Trustees and decided to suggest no changes at this time.

III. The program and ministry of World Missions

A. Fields and projects report

(Mission fields and projects are listed alphabetically with a brief report on each.)

1. *Argentina*. The Reformed Church of Argentina is growing slowly. CRWM will continue to provide matching financial grants through 1996. No CRWM missionaries are present.
2. *Central America*. CRWM supports small but growing CRC churches in Costa Rica, El Salvador, Honduras, and Nicaragua with thirty 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 Honduran CRC is growing, though it has also experienced some internal problems. It formed a national synod in 1992 and now has thirty-five churches and over two thousand communicant members. The churches in the other countries are small and without synodical organization.
3. *China (including Taiwan)*. In 1995 the CRC marked its seventy-fifth anniversary of the beginning of its mission to China. On the mainland CRWM supported twenty-three teachers in 1995. Some of them have completed multiple years of teaching and are involved in long-term ministry in China. Over 225 CRC teachers have gone to China during the past ten years, at least twenty being in China at any given time. There are at least 63 million Christians in China. Estimates run as high as 100 million. Christian literature is being distributed in China, and CRWM is beginning to assist the Chinese church with leadership development. On Taiwan six missionaries continue to support the slowly growing Reformed Presbyterian Church, to train leaders, and to produce literature for use on Taiwan and on the mainland.
4. *C.I.T.E.* One missionary administers a project called Cooperative International Theological Education (C.I.T.E.), which provides leadership seminars in Spanish-speaking countries.
5. *Cuba*. There are twelve Christian Reformed churches and twenty-four preaching centers in Cuba, ministering to over seven thousand worshipers. CRWM gives this church financial grants and provides short-term missionaries for leadership workshops. Because there are only five pastors, the leadership demands are great.

6. *Dominican Republic.* Eighteen long-term missionaries and ten associate and volunteer missionaries facilitate the development of a Christian Reformed church and Christian-school system. The growth occurs both among the Haitian and Dominican peoples. The CRC of the Dominican Republic has grown to over eleven thousand attenders in the last fifteen years, with 95 organized churches and 150 preaching centers. Twenty-nine Christian day schools with nearly four thousand students are operating under the auspices of our mission.
7. *Ecuador.* CRWM has an agreement with the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students, through which it provides two associate missionaries for work at its Latin America headquarters in Ecuador.
8. *France.* Two long-term missionaries work in France, on loan to the Reformed Seminary in Aix-en-Provence. They also provide support and teaching ministries to congregations of the Reformed Church of France and the Evangelical Reformed Church.
9. *Guam.* Two long-term missionaries, two associate missionaries, and two volunteers give support to Faith Presbyterian Reformed Church, Faith Bookstore, and the Pacific Islands Bible College.
10. *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. The church has a small nucleus of recent converts.
11. *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. Six long-term missionaries and two associate missionaries returned to Haiti after the U.S. occupation and 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 Haiti and the Dominican Republic.
12. *Hungarian ministries.* In Hungary, Romania, Slovakia, and Ukraine, CRWM gives support to Hungarian Reformed churches. CRWM has placed two long-term and eight short-term teachers at the Reformed Academy and Seminary in Sarospatak, at Reformed schools in the Ukraine, and in Reformed churches in Romania. A summer music/evangelism team of eight young people witnessed in youth camps and churches for eight weeks.
13. *Japan.* On May 3-4, 1996, the Reformed Church of Japan celebrates its fiftieth anniversary in a special General Assembly and Believers Rally in Nagoya. Our mission is celebrating its forty-fifth year of partnership with this church. This mission has developed over 40 of the 127 organized congregations of the Reformed Church of Japan, which now has over nine thousand members. The mission is developing another eleven churches. Sixteen long-term missionaries and eight associate missionaries worked in Japan during the past year. Most of the associate missionaries teach in Christian schools.

14. *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 the medical personnel for Christian witness.
15. *Korean ministries*. In 1994 CRWM began two mission ventures with the Korean Christian Reformed churches. One venture led us to the formation of a partnership with the Asian Center for Theological Studies and Mission (ACTS) in Seoul, where CRWM seeks to assist in the cross-cultural training of Korean missionaries. In Manchuria, China, CRWM is assisting with church-leadership development among one million Koreans who are citizens of China.
16. *Liberia*. Peace is returning to this war-torn country. Two long-term missionaries continued to support the translation of the Bassa Bible from outside of 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.
17. *Mali*. Our mission in this west-African country began among the Fulbe people in 1984. Eight long-term missionaries are planting a church among the one million Muslim Fulbe. The number of Bible-study groups and conversions is growing slowly.
18. *Mexico*. Thirteen long-term missionaries provide evangelism and leadership training support to the Reformed Presbyterian Church and the National Presbyterian Church in Tijuana, Yucatan, and Mexico City. The strongest partnership is with the Reformed Presbyterian Church, which has 37 organized churches, about 100 unorganized churches, and average Sunday attendance of over twenty thousand.
19. *Nigeria*. Johanna Veenstra arrived in Nigeria seventy-five years ago. The Kuteb people among whom she worked left the Christian Reformed Church of Nigeria in 1973 and formed a separate church called the Reformed Church of Christ in Nigeria. The Christian Reformed Church of Nigeria, a multitribal church located primarily among the Jukun, Icen, Ngoro, Tigum, Jibu, and Daka peoples (4 million population), was formally organized in 1957 and now has 165,000 attenders. A church has begun among the 150,000 Kambari people in northwestern Nigeria with more than one hundred baptisms. The NKST (Tiv) Church in Nigeria, which was formally organized in 1954, has over 500,000 attenders among the 2.5 million Tiv people in central Nigeria. Last year thirty-eight long-term missionaries and seven volunteers supported this mission effort in Nigeria. CRWM provided financial grants to some of the ministries of the churches.
20. *Puerto Rico*. We are concluding ministries which 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.
21. *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.

22. *Philippines*. The Philippine CRC, with the support of CRWM, has sixty congregations and twenty-eight emerging churches with membership of nearly nine thousand. Over four hundred baptisms and professions of faith were celebrated in 1995. Twenty-eight long-term missionaries and two volunteers supported church development and leadership training on five major islands.
23. *Russia and Ukraine*. The agencies of the CRC have a joint strategy for mission in Russia. Short-term projects have been completed, and CRWM has appointed a leader to coordinate the missions of the agencies from Moscow. CRWM loans two long-term missionaries to the Odessa church-planting team of Mission to the World, the mission agency of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA), and is exploring a partnership with the Union of Evangelical Reformed Churches of Russia, based in the city of Tver.
24. *Sierra Leone*. Four long-term missionaries returned to work among the Kuranko people in northern Sierra Leone after political disruption. Twelve hundred people who formerly identified with Islam are now forming a Kuranko Church after eleven years of mission.
25. *Zambia*. CRWM concluded its teaching support to the Justo Mwale Theological College of the Reformed Church of Zambia in 1995.

B. *Personnel matters*

On its current 1995-1996 budget, CRWM is carrying out a plan that places 108 long-term missionaries, 89 long-term missionary spouses, and 116 short-term missionaries, including 36 summer mission participants. Short-term missionaries fall into the categories of volunteers, associate missionaries, seminary interns, and summer mission participants, who 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 (tentmakers), are supported by a job in the country to which they go.

CRWM now has eighty-six of its missionaries, serving in twenty-two countries, connected to the Internet. This has made communication between them and the administrative staff much more efficient. Over sixty churches contact their missionaries via the Internet for the price of a local phone call.

The CRC now has a home page on the Internet. It includes, among other things, the e-mail addresses of both missionaries and churches. It can be visited at <http://www.grfn.religion/religion/crc>.

The names and addresses of missionaries and administrative personnel may be found in two places—in the Directory of Agencies and Committees of the CRC *Yearbook* and in the back of the World Missions calendar.

Each year we give tribute to missionaries who are celebrating significant anniversaries of service. During 1995-1996 we honor the following for twenty or more years of service with the Christian Reformed World Missions:

- Dr. John and Mrs. Fran Boer, 30 years in Nigeria
- Rev. Harold and Mrs. Joanne de Jong, 20 years in Nigeria and Zambia
- Mr. John and Mrs. Jerre De Young, 25 years in Mexico
- Rev. Gerrit and Mrs. Ruth Koedoot, 30 years in Japan and the Philippines
- Rev. Paul and Mrs. Mary Kortenhoven, 20 years in Nigeria and Sierra Leone

- Mr. Dick and Mrs. Margaret Seinen, 25 years in Nigeria
- Mr. Paul and Laurie Theule, 20 years in Nigeria, Liberia, Japan, and Central America
- Mr. Larry and Mrs. Ann Vanderaa, 20 years in Liberia and Mali

C. Cooperation with other agencies

Each year CRWM and CRWRC provide their committees and the Board of Trustees with a Joint Fields Assessment Report, which identifies levels of cooperation on joint fields. Copies of this report are available from our 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 Mission 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.

D. 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 positive working relationship continues 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.

During the 1994-1995 fiscal year, which ended June 30, 1995, CRWM expended \$12,826,000 and received \$12,362,000, a net deficit of \$464,000. In fiscal year 1995-1996 we anticipate an additional deficit of \$190,000, based on the giving and spending patterns of the first six months. These deficits will cause a significant reduction in our reserves. CRWM had already experienced slippage in its ministry shares during fiscal 1994-1995. We anticipate that continuing reductions in the size of our missionary force will be necessary as churches choose to divert dollars that were formerly given for the support of CRWM ministries to local causes or missionaries of other agencies.

However, we also note with gratitude that God's people were generous with their offerings and gifts to World Missions. Our obligations were met—the mission moved forward. We are particularly pleased that during the last six months of 1995 giving was up substantially over the same period the previous year. There are indications of renewed interest and dedication in the church toward World Missions. Many missionaries appreciated a substantial increase in designated support from churches and individuals.

E. Long-range plan and fiscal 1996-1997 plan

World Missions' Long-Range Plan is available on request. It describes our mission purpose, principles, values, mission task, design of fields and projects, strategic issues for effective mission, 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 our three-year plans as well as to our annual plans and budgets.

With its proposed budget for 1996-1997 CRWM will support 107 missionaries (with 90 spouses, who volunteer much time to ministry) and 116 short-term missionaries (with 24 spouses), for a total of 337 active missionaries, accompanied by at least 180 children. These missionaries and their families will be supported by a North American administration of twenty-three persons, based in Grand Rapids and Burlington. The budget from July 1, 1996, to June 30, 1997, will be \$12,694,000. North American administrative and promotion expenses will be 11.4 percent of budget. Budget details will be provided in *Agenda for Synod 1996—Financial and Business Supplement*.

The amount of income received from ministry shares, as a percentage of the total budget, will be 42.4 percent. We are not seeking an increase in ministry shares for CRWM. The 1997 ministry-share request remains at its 1996 level: \$114.93 per family and \$49.51 per member.

E. Salary information

CRWM provides the following information about missionary salaries. In fiscal 1995-1996 the base salary for single missionaries is \$19,400 (U.S.), and the base for married couples is \$25,030 (U.S.). An adjustment is made to Canadian currency for those missionaries who are employed by CRWM-Canada. Each missionary also 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. Additional compensation is given for education: 2.3 percent of single base salary for an M.A., 3.4 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 provides assistance for educational costs of children. CRWM also provides U.S. Social Security payment or allowance and a Canada pension payment, payments to denominational pension plans with disability insurance, worker's compensation insurance, medical and hospitalization costs, housing, an automobile or mileage reimbursement for overseas ministry, and a cost-of-living differential.

The director-level salary-disclosure information as required by synod follows below:

Job level	Number of positions	Compensation quartile (includes housing allowance)
20	2	3rd
19	2	2nd
18	2	2nd and 4th
17	1	3rd

IV. Recommendations

A. That the president of CRWM-Canada (Rev. Jack Quartel), 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 permit the CRWM-International executive director, on behalf of CRWM and as part of the agency presentation schedule, to present missionary personnel who are on home service to synod on Friday, June 16, 1995.

Christian Reformed World Missions
William Van Tol, CRWM-International
director
Al Karsten, CRWM-Canada director
David Radius, CRWM-U.S.A. director

Note: Recommendations on financial matters are included in the report of the denominational Board of Trustees.

I. Introduction

CRWRC is the Christian Reformed Church's development, relief, and education agency, showing God's love to people in need. It has been involved in this ministry for thirty-four years (since 1962), primarily by working with people in their own communities to create positive, permanent change. This ministry is being carried on by dedicated workers in more than thirty countries around the world, supported by the prayers and voluntary contributions of the CRC membership. CRWRC receives no ministry shares. In development, CRWRC works with families and communities to improve food production, income earning, health education, literacy learning, leadership skills, and spiritual growth. In relief, CRWRC works with disaster survivors by providing food, medicine, crisis counseling, reconstruction of homes, and other volunteer assistance. In education, CRWRC works toward developing a Christian perspective on poverty, hunger, and justice and encourages people to act upon this perspective.

With 123 nationals and 51 expatriates in overseas assignments and 57 staff persons in North America, CRWRC has 231 mission workers. Being a partner with 136 Christian organizations of many denominations (45 in North America, 37 in Latin America, 35 in Africa, and 19 in Asia) helps multiply CRWRC's ministry in effective and efficient ways.

CRWRC is a member of the Canadian Council of Christian Charities and the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability. CRWRC's budget for 1995-1996 is \$8,964,899 (Can. \$12,012,965).

II. Board and executive-committee matters

The primary function of the board is to provide oversight of the ministries on behalf of synod, to provide direction for the wholistic ministry program of the agency, and to encourage the vision for the organization as a whole.

The board of CRWRC is comprised of representatives from each of the classes of the Christian Reformed Church and several members-at-large. The board is organized into two divisions, one for Canada and one for the United States. The officers for the respective boards are listed below:

A. Officers of CRWRC-Canada

Mr. Marvin De Vries, president
Mr. Peter Bulthuis, vice president
Mr. Gerrit Apperloo, secretary
Mr. Nick Van Dyk, treasurer

B. Officers of CRWRC-U.S.A.

Mr. Calvin Hulst, president
Mr. Duane Bajema, vice president
Ms. Thea Leunk, secretary
Mr. Barry Haven, treasurer

C. *At-large nomination for pastoral adviser—CRWRC-Canada*

Rev. Roy Berkenbosch, an associate pastor of Inglewood CRC, Edmonton, Alberta, is currently the dean of students for The King's University College, Edmonton, Alberta. He has served as CRWRC field director in Bangladesh (1990-1993), as pastor of Eastern Avenue CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan (1992-1995), and as pastoral adviser to the CRWRC-U.S.A. board (1993-1995).

Rev. John Posthuma is pastor of Maranatha CRC, York, Ontario (1989 to present). Rev. Posthuma has long been known for his love of the diaconate. He was pastoral adviser to the All-Ontario Deacons Conference for six years (1977-1983). During his twenty-four years as a CRC pastor he has also served on the boards of Salem Christian Mental Health Association and Classis Hamilton Youth Council.

(*Note: The position of pastoral adviser alternate for the board of CRWRC-Canada will continue to be filled by Rev. John Koster.*)

D. *Vision*

CRWRC's vision is to enable and empower people to interdependent responses—in such a way that the poor, the community, and the body of believers flourish.

Achieving this vision of wholistic ministry is possible because of the strengths with which God has blessed the CRC. A vision built on the strengths of God's people draws people together in a common ministry directed by God's Spirit. But people also need to be given opportunity to bring their best efforts to this ministry, to see the larger vision of what God is doing in the world, and to be invited into this wholistic ministry vision.

CRWRC is exploring ways to bring people together, to help people work together, to build on their strengths . . . to flourish.

E. *Long-range plan*

CRWRC set as its goal by the year 2000, with God's blessing, to empower 100,000 families overseas* and 18,000 families in North America to experience wholeness in Christ.

It employs two strategies for realizing this goal. One is to enable Christian partner agencies to identify and resolve their own community needs. The other is to develop partnerships with deacon conferences, diaconates, and church networks to help needy families toward sustainable change.

To support these strategies CRWRC has committed itself to five specific kinds of activities:

1. To develop a constituency that is informed and committed to ministry to the poor.
2. To develop a planned growth strategy that allows for a 5 percent to 10 percent annual growth rate in outreach ministry.
3. To provide opportunities for CRWRC supporters to have a more joyful and rewarding experience as they express their gratitude to God by demonstrating his love to the world.

*Goal achieved in 1994-1995 with 101,760 families.

4. To ensure the vision for CRWRC by developing strategies to generate funds and strengthen communication links.
5. To work with local deacon groups and other church networks to help those in need increase their income and achieve family sustainability.

III. CRWRC's programs and ministries

A. *North America*

1. Development

a. Canada

Local diaconates and classical/regional conferences carry out most ministry activity in Canada. CRWRC collaborates with local conferences and offers consultation for ministry where CRWRC has the expertise or there is need for its insight and support.

CRWRC-Canada is involved in ServiceLink, a pilot project which coordinates CRC efforts to use congregational volunteer resources. Regional ServiceLink representatives are being recruited to set up a responsive network throughout Canada.

Since September 1995, a new government/church initiative in the co-sponsorship of refugees from Bosnia/Herzegovina has been well received by a number of churches, reviving the refugee-sponsorship program. Negotiations for the renewal of the agreement with the Canadian government and the various sponsoring agencies are near completion. Several non-CRC churches and agencies participate in refugee sponsorship through CRWRC's agreement with the Canadian government.

In the Christian community, CRWRC-Canada continues to exercise a leading role among agencies in confronting international poverty issues. The CRWRC-Canada director chairs the Canadian Council of Christian Charities' relief-and-development group, which speaks out on issues of public policy pertinent to the mission of Christian agencies.

b. United States

During 1994-1995, CRWRC-U.S.A. responded with God's love to needs of more than 24,441 households—helping 4,021 of them develop toward self-sufficiency.

The goal for 1996-1997 is to see the lives of thirty thousand people touched through the work of U.S. partner groups—almost five thousand achieving sustainable change and more than five hundred enfolded into Christ's church.

As of January 1996, CRWRC-U.S.A. is a partner with twenty-seven diaconal conferences and fourteen community-development agencies.

Strategy for CRWRC-U.S.A. regional ministry continues to focus on three major areas: developing diaconal leadership; planning with other CRC agencies, such as Home Missions and various classes; and developing partner groups in high-need areas.

In addition, more volunteers in local community-service programs need opportunity to experience community development. With better orientation and training, CRWRC will enable and empower volunteers to

apply development principles in their own homes, churches, and communities as well as on their assignments.

2. Relief

Numbers tell the story of CRWRC's North American disaster relief at seven sites during 1994-1995:

- Volunteers who served: 789 of 1,500 registered.
- Hours donated: 78,590.
- Value of volunteer labor at \$10/hour: \$785,900 U.S.
- Households helped with repair, rebuilding, or advocacy: 126.
- Need assessments: 2,004.

CRWRC has shown God's love to hundreds of suffering survivors.

Volunteer area-disaster-response managers in thirty-eight classes recruit other volunteers, coordinate activities with deacons, and lead response in the event of a local disaster.

Goals for 1995-1996 include using the skills and gifts of at least nine hundred volunteers, including five with disabilities and twenty-five from racial- and ethnic-minority CRC congregations.

In cooperation with the government of British Columbia, CRWRC hopes to show God's love to more people in need by offering its expertise in "child care during disasters."

3. Education

FASTforward, CRWRC's new twenty-four-hour fast for world hunger, helps young people get a taste of hunger. Walk for Water is a new way groups can learn about and help provide clean water for needy communities. Peter Fish educational materials and banks, now in their third year, continue to help church members show God's love during World Hunger Week and beyond.

Integrated into CRWRC communications are development concepts and poverty and justice issues so that Christians can become aware of them, understand what they are, and act on this new understanding—thus raising the consciousness of the CRC to effective ministry.

Planning continues with the denominational coordinator for hunger and justice. The resulting effort, called "Free to Serve," will involve all CRC churches and agencies in 1996.

B. *International*

1. Development

In its 1995-1996 overseas development programs, CRWRC has plans to work with one in every two thousand of the world's poorest people. By involving 118,536 families, or about 500,000 individuals, CRWRC will help one in two thousand of the world's billion people who don't have enough food, clean water, basic education, adequate shelter, or steady income.

CRWRC's 1996-1997 plans are to show God's love to 107,948 families: 16,218 in Asia; 54,419 in east Africa; 11,608 in west Africa; and 25,703 in Latin America. These plans include working with four new partners in Central America and pilot projects in the Arid Lands, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, India, Indonesia, Sierra Leone, and Tanzania.

Staff member James Boldenow offers perspective on how CRWRC's financial investment with needy families and communities shows God's love:

Someone asked how much of the money given to CRWRC gets into needy people's hands.

I replied, "As little as possible."

There was shocked silence. So I used the analogy that evaluation of a school's efforts wouldn't include how much tuition money got into students' hands, but how much students learned to successfully transform life's challenges.

If CRWRC gave families a steady money supply, they'd use fewer of their own resources and be more dependent. Money given to CRWRC helps people learn how to provide for their own family needs and be leaders who transform their communities through permanent, positive change.

Traditionally, CRWRC has gone to out-of-the-way places in out-of-the-way countries. However, as the world's poor shift from rural to urban locations, CRWRC has made a quiet transition to achieve a balance in number between rural and urban programs.

CRWRC emphasizes wholistic ministry which leads to positive, permanent change. Integral to that are cultural appreciation, capacity building, gender equity, Christian discipling, and environmental stewardship.

CRWRC works toward environmental stewardship, necessary for sustainable improvement in the lives of the poor. The physical environment cannot be separated from economic, social, and justice issues.

CRWRC-International has downsized because of budget cuts. In addition, it continued to flatten the organization to be less hierarchical. In 1986 there were ten field directors; plans are to have only four by the end of 1996-1997.

2. Relief

During 1994-1995 there were opportunities to show God's love after disaster in fourteen countries overseas.

CRWRC-U.S.A. resources provided generous and welcome help to the Reformed Church of Japan's relief efforts after the devastating earthquake there.

CRWRC used Canadian Foodgrains Bank (CFGB) resources to respond to the needs of refugees and displaced people, mainly children and elderly women, in Chechnya and of children in Romanian orphanages. CFGB resources also contributed to the following responses:

In Burundi, high-protein food fed thousands of Rwandan refugees living in camps. In Zaire, CRWRC assisted uprooted Rwandan families of mixed Hutu-Tutsi marriages who were unable to live safely in camps. Local churches in Tanzania used CRWRC resources to assist local Tanzanians who responded to the hundreds of thousands of Rwandan refugees moving into their area and using their resources.

Notably, CRWRC was one of Rwanda's largest employers for a time with its Food for Work project. By improving roads and building latrines, thousands of hungry families displaced by civil war earned food essential for their survival. Many widows benefited from CRWRC's goat-and-pig grants by learning to raise the animals and selling the offspring. Through CRWRC's efforts, an estimated 300,000 people in Rwanda received food and other assistance.

In Ethiopia CRWRC continued its support for Food for Work programs that concentrated on building micro dams and other watershed-management works to help the local population prepare for future droughts.

CRWRC's involvement in a Canadian Foodgrains Bank (CFGB) monetization pilot project showed the potential of this new way to empower program

participants in their community-development activities. In monetization projects, Canadian food resources are marketed through or on behalf of long-term development programs. CRWRC expects these resources to increase the involvement of existing development partners in projects using CFGB resources.

3. Education

Recognizing the need for the exchange of learning, CRWRC continues to develop an overseas volunteer program which includes a variety of opportunities.

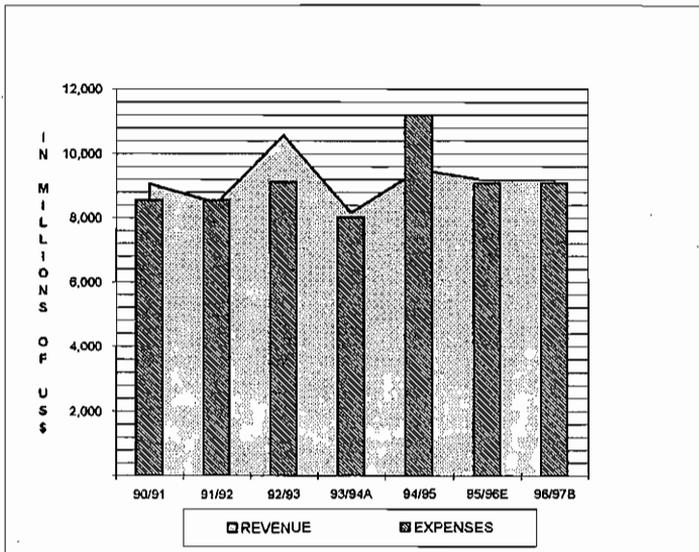
C. Finances

1. Financial history

CRWRC - CONSOLIDATED REVENUE AND EXPENSE HISTORY / BUDGETS (Including Disasters)

(A = 10 months, E = Estimated, B = Budget)

	90/91	91/92	92/93	93/94A	94/95	95/96E	96/97B
REVENUE	9,056	8,463	10,577	8,162	9,513	9,154	9,203
INT'L	5,498	5,354	5,432	4,312	5,977	5,325	5,303
DIAC	708	594	611	817	1,317	1,066	1,058
DRS	1,055	954	1,457	1,288	1,849	695	708
RES DEV	552	813	762	743	1,086	1,009	1,018
ADMIN	719	820	840	751	987	977	996
EXPENSES	8,532	8,535	9,102	8,011	11,216	9,072	9,083
NET REV/(EXP)	524	(72)	1,475	151	(1,703)	82	120



2. Salary disclosure

In accordance with synod's mandate to report the executive levels and the percentage of midpoint, CRWRC reports the following:

Job level	Compensation quartile Number of positions	(includes housing allowance)
20	2	2nd through 4th
19	2	3rd through 4th
18	3	1st through 4th

3. Canada

a. Canadian Foodgrains Bank

As one of twelve church-based partner members of the Canadian Foodgrains Bank (CFGB), CRWRC annually commits \$250,000 (Can.) to its account at the CFGB.

Projects initiated by CRWRC-Canada in the 1994-1995 budget year had a total value of \$2,284,087 (Can.) with a total CRWRC contribution of \$285,150 (Can.). Because CRWRC was the lead implementing partner in Rwanda, its financial commitment was matched at a ratio of 1:8, much higher than the more usual 1:4 match from the Canadian government.

CRWRC's involvement in the CFGB enjoys strong support from CRC members, other Reformed churches, and individuals in Canada. This support is usually in the form of cash and/or grain donations. The number of churches supporting this program through locally organized growing projects is increasing.

b. Government funding

During 1995-1996, CRWRC continues to receive substantial dollars, over \$1.2 million (Can.), from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). In addition, CRWRC accesses various decentralized CIDA funds amounting to approximately \$160,000 (Can.). Cuts in government spending have influenced CRWRC's ability to expand its international programming. However, CRWRC's credibility as a development organization has allowed for sustained levels of Canadian government support. Many Canadian church-based development organizations experienced CIDA cuts during 1995-1996, but CRWRC did not.

4. United States

a. Resource development

Gift income was strong from October through December, placing CRWRC-U.S.A. at 110 percent of expected income goal (reduced budget) for the first six months of fiscal year 1995-1996. It is significant that U.S. program income (giving to development) was above goal by 7 percent during that time. This contrasts with previous strong revenue years, when giving to disaster relief led the way.

Most of the above-goal monies came from new major-gift donors and from increased giving by established major-gift donors. This increase is a result of direct personal contact through a managed-account program.

CRWRC-U.S.A. continues to refine its direct-mail and advertising programs to give appropriate opportunities for individual response.

For donor convenience, CRWRC-U.S.A. now offers electronic fund transfer. This is especially helpful for monthly pledgers.

U.S. church offerings continue to be soft. Reasons cited previously for this trend hold true: increasing priority on local ministries, dissatisfaction with controversial issues in the denomination, and decline in church membership.

However, seven U.S. churches and two deacons conferences are involved in long-term CRWRC special projects, focusing on particular countries. More than two hundred U.S. churches support CRWRC staff with prayer, communication, and funds.

To enhance participation in the Free A Family pledge opportunity, CRWRC-U.S.A. may feature it during Thanksgiving in CRC churches (where it successfully began in 1991-1992).

National staff tours featured Ricardo Cosico of the Philippines, Alba Lopez of El Salvador, and Odenor St. Cyr of Haiti. Various North American groups toured east and west Africa, the Philippines and Indonesia, and three countries in Latin America. These visits increased awareness of and response to CRWRC's work.

b. U.S. budget reductions

Several learning events and opportunities for ministry were cut and several staff positions were phased out or left unfilled in efforts to reduce the budget.

c. Government funding

For the 1995-1996 year CRWRC is receiving grant funds of \$591,293 (U.S.) from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). This amount includes three items: (1) funding for "organizational strengthening" that will enable CRWRC to revise and upgrade the indicators it uses with partner groups to determine progress toward sustainability, (2) funding for CRWRC's program in Senegal aimed at behavioral change to help prevent AIDS, and (3) a grant to assist CRWRC in its consultation with partner groups in Kenya for establishing community-level development committees. In addition, CRWRC has submitted three grant proposals to USAID for child-survival programs in Bangladesh, Tanzania, and Zambia.

d. 1996-1997 budgets

The annual meeting of CRWRC in February approved an agency budget of \$6,250,000 (U.S.)/\$8,625,000 (Can.) for the U.S. portion of the budget and \$2,953,000(U.S.)/\$4,075,000 (Can.) for the Canada portion of the total agency budget. The total CRWRC budget, then, as proposed to the denominational Board of Trustees, is \$9,253,000 (U.S.)/\$12,769,100 (Can.).

VI. Recommendations

A. That synod authorize the CRWRC directors and board presidents to represent CRWRC at synod.

B That CRWRC expatriate staff who are currently in North America be presented to and acknowledged by synod.

Christian Reformed World Relief
Committee

John De Haan, CRWRC-U.S.A. director
Ray Elgersma, CRWRC-Canada director

Note: Recommendations on financial matters are included in the report of the denominational Board of Trustees.

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; Canadian churches have their own similar fund. The board of directors, responsible to synod, oversees the loan-approval process and the determination of interest rates. The board also establishes interest rates for securities sold primarily within the Christian Reformed constituency.

II. Board of directors

The terms of board members Gerard J. Borst and Henry Washington expire on September 1, 1996. Mr. Borst is eligible to serve a second three-year term. The board requests synod to appoint two board members from the following nominees, for terms as stated:

A. Position #1 - select one for a three-year term through August 31, 1999

Mr. Gerard J. Borst (incumbent) is a past director of finance for the Christian Reformed Board of Home Missions. He is a member of Plymouth Heights CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan, where he has served as elder.

Mr. Warren Faber is a former bank manager for Old Kent Bank and Trust Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan. He is a member of Twelfth Avenue CRC, Jenison, Michigan, where he has served the council as elder and vice president.

B. Position #2 - select one for a three-year term through August 31, 1999

Ms. Arlissa Joseph is budget manager for La Salle National Bank, Chicago, Illinois. A member of Pullman CRC, Chicago, Illinois, she has served as deacon and as church board secretary.

Mr. W. Brian Seo, formerly with Arthur Anderson & Co., is sole practitioner of W. B. Seo & Co. C.P.A. A member of the Korean CRC, Chicago, Illinois, he has served as elder.

The remaining members of the board of directors are Mr. Jon Feikens (1997), Mr. Gerald Van Wyke (1997), Ms. Jany Admiraal (1998), and Rev. Gerard Dykstra (1998).

III. Growth of operations

A. The Loan Fund is now qualified to sell notes to investors in twenty-three states and the District of Columbia: Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Colorado, Connecticut, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Iowa, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Mississippi, Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, Ohio, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Texas, Vermont, and Washington. Efforts continue to add other states with CRC populations if cost of registration is reasonable.

B. As of December 31, 1995, a total of \$6,742,877 of interest-bearing notes held by investors was outstanding. Maturities range from one year to nine years, and interest rates vary from 4.75 percent to 9.00 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 70 loan applications have been approved. As of December 31, 1995, a total of \$9,253,819 U.S. and \$341,904 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):

	1993	1994	1995
Loans receivable	\$7,842,291	\$8,502,209	\$9,340,295
Loans payable	\$5,215,655	\$5,994,238	\$7,151,333
Fund balance	\$2,781,496	\$2,865,402	\$3,013,356

E. A financial report as of December 31, 1995, appears in the *Agenda for Synod 1996—Financial and Business Supplement*. The Loan Fund is now on a June 30 fiscal year; the next audit is scheduled for June 30, 1996.

IV. 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, 1995, were \$69,891 U.S. and \$21,837 Canadian.
- Gifts and bequests made to the corporation.
- Bank loans and interagency borrowing so long as these are consistent with the corporation's articles of incorporation and bylaws.

V. 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 that it 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. Gerard Borst and Mr. Henry Washington for their years of excellent service on the board of directors.

Christian Reformed Church Loan Fund,
Inc., U.S.

Harry J. Vander Meer, executive director

I. Organization

The Fund for Smaller Churches Committee is comprised of three lay people and two ministers, in keeping with previous synodical decisions. The present membership is as follows: Mr. James Hofman (1998), president; Rev. Lambert J. Sikkema (1998), secretary; Mr. James Evenhouse (1997), treasurer; and Mr. Arthur Ruiter (1996).

After five years of faithful service to the Fund for Smaller Churches (FSC), Rev. Gary Hutt has left the Chicago area, from where the members of the committee are selected. Rev. Hutt has taken a call to serve Sunrise CRC in McMinnville, Oregon. The FSC thanks Rev. Hutt for the tremendous amount of careful work he has done for the church in his capacity as secretary of FSC.

II. Work of the committee

Statistics for calendar year 1995:

Applications processed	105 (100 in 1994)
Assistance granted	105 (some provisionally)
Average size of congregation	32.01 families (31.44 in 1994)
Educational allowances granted	21 (26 in 1994)

III. Recommendations

A. That the secretary and treasurer of FSC be consulted on matters pertaining to FSC when considered either by synod or its advisory committee and that the secretary and treasurer be given the privilege of the floor. In the absence of either, the same privilege is requested for other members of the committee.

B. That synod adopt the following financial arrangements:

1. That the minimum salary for ministers serving U.S. churches receiving assistance from FSC be set at \$27,700 for 1997 (\$26,900 for 1996; \$26,150 for 1995; \$25,400 in 1994; \$24,700 for 1993) and that the Canadian minimum salary be set at \$30,470 ($\$27,700 \times 110\%$) (cf.10 below).
2. That a service increment of \$100 per year for up to thirty (30) years of service continue to be granted.
3. That a 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 31 cents a mile (.30 per kilometer in Canada) multiplied by the percentage of ministry-share reduction granted to a particular congregation.
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 for pastor and family is mandatory for congregations receiving FSC assistance.

6. That salary allowance for stated supply be set at \$350 per week for 1997 (\$330 per week for 1996, \$320 per week for 1995, \$310 for 1994, \$300 for 1993).
7. That the contribution toward the minister's salary in congregations receiving assistance from FSC be not less, and if possible more, than \$470 per family for 1997 (\$455 per family for 1996, \$440 per family for 1995, \$425 for 1994, \$415 for 1993).
8. That congregations in the U.S. receiving assistance from FSC shall pay a Social Security/Medicare offset to their pastor in the amount of at least \$2630 (\$2540 for 1996, \$2425 for 1995, \$2425 for 1994, \$2425 for 1993, \$2340 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 1996.
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 ($\$470 \times 110\% = \517).

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 remain at \$350 for 1997. We note that all pastors of churches with fewer than fifty (50) families are eligible to apply for these funds. This educational allowance is not limited to those pastors serving churches receiving FSC grants.
 12. That synod approve a Christian-education allowance for pastors of FSC churches in the amount of \$600 per child for each child attending a Christian school, grades K-12, for 1996.
 13. That the 1997 ministry share for the Fund for Smaller Churches be set at \$19.58 per family (20%) and \$844 (80%) per communicant member, based on 73,812 families and 181,295 communicant members.

C. Recommendations re committee membership

1. That synod, waiving normal procedure for the sake of continuity, appoint Mr. Arthur Ruiter to a second term as a member of the FSC Committee. Mr. Ruiter has served one term on FSC and is eligible for a second term. He is a member of Bethel CRC in Lansing, Illinois. He is the general manager for the Resthaven, Village Woods Retirement Center in Crete, Illinois. Mr. Ruiter has served this committee well, and we heartily recommend him for a second term of office.

2. *Rev. Gary Hutt* has taken a call to serve elsewhere. Hence there is now a vacancy for a pastor's position on the FSC. We are recommending the following two pastors as nominees to fill the vacancy:
 - a. *Rev. Lester Van Essen* is the pastor of First CRC in Lansing, Illinois. He has served the denomination as a dedicated and effective missionary in Nigeria for many years. He has also served the CRC in Burbank, Illinois.
 - b. *Rev. Duane Van Loo* is the pastor of Kedvale CRC in Oak Lawn, Illinois. He has served churches in Munster, Indiana, and Saginaw and Hudsonville, Michigan, as well as on various boards and committees of classis and the denomination.

Fund for Smaller Churches Committee
Lambert J. Sikkema, secretary

I. Introduction

The staff members of Christian Reformed Pastoral Ministries (CRPM) began their joint work in July 1995. This work includes addressing abuse and its impact on the church community, creating awareness of the gifts and needs of disabled persons, supporting the role of chaplains in specialized settings, addressing racism while promoting diversity and multiculturalism, and equipping pastors and congregations for mutual accountability and edifying relationships.

To accomplish the work, two approaches are used. One approach is specifically focused: staff respond to a specific individual or situation where consultation and/or advocacy is requested. Such a request is answered as propriety, time, and resources allow; the staff's role in such a case is almost always one of encouragement and advice. The second approach is broad in scope: staff initiate education and consciousness raising by training, conducting seminars, designing written materials, and recommending policies and procedures for a wider audience.

II. The Pastoral Ministries Board

A. *Members, meetings, nominations*

The board, composed of fifteen members, has met three times since Synod 1995. An inaugural organizational meeting was held in July, followed by two additional meetings, in September 1995 and February 1996. The officers of the board are Rev. Charles Terpstra, chairman; Rev. Robert Heerspink, vice chairman; and Rev. Edward Tamminga, secretary. The board organizes its work into several committees—an executive committee, a program committee, and a finance committee. The executive committee functions as a personnel committee.

Five persons are finishing their first terms on the board: Dr. Daniel J. De Witt, Rev. Edward Tamminga, Rev. Charles Terpstra, Mrs. Mamie Thomas, and Mr. Bert Zwiers.

The alternates whose terms are expiring are Rev. Rolf Bouma, Mr. Ralph Bus, Rev. Evert Gritter, Mr. Gerald Thaxton, and Rev. Nicholas Vander Kwaak. Of the retiring members, Mrs. Thomas and Mr. Zwiers choose not to be nominated for a second term as board members, though Mr. Zwiers is willing to serve as an alternate member.

Five positions need to be filled on the Pastoral Ministries Board. Three nominations are presented for each position with the understanding that synodical delegates will elect one of two on a first ballot for regular member and then elect an alternate from the remaining two names on a later ballot.

1. *Dr. Daniel J. De Witt* is a psychologist from Grand Rapids, Michigan, where he attends Seymour CRC. Dr. De Witt served the Chaplain Committee from 1992 through 1995.

Rev. Evert Gritter presently serves Grace CRC in Cobourg, Ontario. He is also a member of the Chaplain Committee of Canada.

Mr. Hank Bosma, a therapist, is head of Pine Rest Southwest Clinic in Grand Rapids. He is a member of Jamestown CRC, Jamestown, Michigan.

2. *Rev. Edward Tamminga* is senior pastor of Second CRC, Grand Haven, Michigan. He is presently the secretary of the Pastoral Ministries Board and previously served on the interim Abuse Prevention Committee.

Rev. Nick Vander Kwaak, a chaplain at Pine Rest Christian Hospital in Grand Rapids, served on the Synodical Committee on Abuse (1989-1994) and on the interim Abuse Prevention Committee (1995). He is a member of Hillside Community CRC in Cutlerville, Michigan.

Ms. Sue Ritter, a member of First CRC in Denver, Colorado, has been active professionally and as a volunteer in the promotion of ministries and services for women living in low socioeconomic circumstances.

3. *Rev. Charles Terpstra* is completing his first term as chairman of the CRPM Board. *Rev. Terpstra* has served on the Pastor-Church Relations Committee since 1990 and was a member of its executive committee. He presently serves on the staff of Westend CRC in Grand Rapids, where he is a member.

Rev. Rolf Bouma has served Eastern Avenue CRC in Grand Rapids since 1987. He was a member of the Pastor-Church Relations Committee prior to the creation of the CRPM Board.

Rev. Vernon Vander Zee has served as pastor of Lombard CRC in Lombard, Illinois, since 1989.

4. *Mr. Gerald Thaxton* has worked as a rehabilitation specialist and is presently serving on the board of Habitat for Humanity. He is a member of Northside Community Chapel CRC, Paterson, New Jersey.

Rev. Stan Ver Heul has served the Community CRC of Los Angeles, California, since 1980. *Rev. VerHeul* has been an active member of the Southern California Race Relations Committee and has a strong commitment to a multiethnic ministry in Los Angeles.

Mr. Norman Suhu is a graduate student in nutritional sciences. He is a deacon at Queens CRC, New York.

5. *Mr. Ralph Bus* is both an accountant and a computer consultant. *Mr. Bus* serves as an elder in Orangeville (Ontario) CRC.

Mr. John te Linde works as a psychologist for the city of Calgary, Alberta. His profession involves him in social issues, including Aboriginal needs and family abuse. *Mr. te Linde* has served on council in First CRC, Calgary, Alberta.

Mr. Bert Zwiwers has completed two three-year terms with Disability Concerns and has served very effectively as its chairman. *Mr. Zwiwers* worked for several years as chief estimator for large construction firms. He is willing to serve only as an alternate (see II, A, par. 3).

The CRPM board has approved these nominations and presents them to synod for election.

B. Executive director of CRPM

At its organizational meeting in July the Pastoral Ministries Board appointed *Ms. Beth Swagman* as administrative director of Pastoral Ministries, a responsi-

bility she assumed in addition to her primary responsibility as director of Abuse Prevention. The position was changed to executive director of Pastoral Ministries at the February 1996 meeting of the board. Ms. Swagman will continue to function as director of Abuse Prevention and to act as executive director of CRPM.

The board is challenged, as is the staff, by the task of molding five formerly independent ministries into a single agency. The board expects the Pastoral Ministries agency to become increasingly efficient as the five ministry divisions become an integral ministry of the church.

C. Salary disclosure

In compliance with the requirements of synod the following salary information is here provided:

Job level	Number of positions	Compensation quartile (includes housing allowance)
19	2	2nd quartile
18	3	2nd quartile

III. The programs of Pastoral Ministries

A. Abuse Prevention (Ms. Beth Swagman, director)

1. Work accomplished during the first year

The division of Abuse Prevention has completed one full year of operation. The activities of that year include the following:

- Developing of a comprehensive child-abuse-prevention booklet.
- Conducting seminars, training, and conferences in Abbotsford, British Columbia; Toronto, Ontario (twice); Edmonton, Alberta; Calgary, Alberta; and the Grand Rapids, Michigan, area (for Calvinettes, Calvin College, Calvin Theological Seminary, and several churches).
- Developing guidelines for handling abuse allegations against church leaders.
- Distributing guidelines for ministerial conduct in interpersonal relationships with parishioners.
- Training of advisory panels in two classes.
- Consulting with pastors, council members, classis representatives, and denominational/agency officials when allegations of abuse surfaced within a church, organization, agency, or institution.
- Supporting and advising numerous survivors of abuse, family members of survivors, and family members of abusers.

2. Challenges to the ministry

The strongest component of an effective abuse-prevention program is awareness and education. Presently Abuse Prevention's major obstacle to being successful in this regard is lack of financial resources. Written materials have been developed, but they cannot be printed or distributed for lack of funds. No additional materials may be developed for the same reason. As a result, the denomination as a whole has not been reached by abuse-awareness materials to the degree we had hoped.

Another significant issue is the seeming unwillingness of churches and individuals to make use of resources that have been developed: information about the availability of advisory panels for responding to abuse allegations has not been widely distributed among the general membership of the CRC, several people have tried to access the advisory-panel process only to be informed that the process will not be used, and the process has been rejected when the alleged offender objected to it.

A further issue facing the staff of Abuse Prevention is the ongoing threat of legal action. The threats are not coming from victims as much as they are from alleged offenders.

A fact of great significance is the ongoing denial of the existence of abuse among church members and the resistance to changing the behavior that encourages it. Response to the consequences that abuse brings upon the Christian community is within the grasp of congregations. Attention to the root cause of abuse—misuse of power in interpersonal relationships—is largely neglected. Attention to the root cause falls within the mission of Abuse Prevention and necessarily involves the commitment of the leadership of the church to changing the behaviors and attitudes that perpetuate abuse.

3. Revision of abuse guidelines

The abuse guidelines which were approved by Synod 1995 are currently under review by legal counsel. It is likely that some modification of the guidelines will be requested by way of the supplementary report to synod. These modifications will not be major and are exclusively focused on providing greater due process rights to those accused of abuse.

B. Chaplaincy Ministries (Rev. Jacob P. Heerema, director; Rev. Siebert Van Houten, Canadian director)

Since 1942, when the Chaplain Committee was established by synod, it has been active in the promotion of chaplaincy and in the support of CRC chaplains in their service for Christ. Chaplains are the ministers of the church who serve in specialized settings around the world. There are now eighty-five full-time chaplains and sixteen part-time chaplains, who serve with courage in spite of threats to their safety and job security.

The chaplain's role is threatened not only by institutional and corporate downsizing, but also by a secular mentality which considers spiritual care irrelevant to healing. Chaplains bring words of hope, mercy, and reconciliation to those burdened by fear and despair; they serve as agents of the church in the coming of God's kingdom.

1. The activities of Chaplaincy Ministries

- Endorsing eligible candidates for chaplaincy.
- Providing pastoral support and encouragement for chaplains and their families through phone calls, correspondence, and site visits.
- Publishing *INTERNOS*, the chaplains' newsletter.
- Encouraging professional growth through the annual Chaplains' Conference and by recommending books, conferences, and other specialized training.
- Consulting with chaplains about their work and supervising their performance in partnership with their calling church and their employing agency.

- Serving as the employing agency of all ordained Christian Reformed chaplains in terms of pension arrangements.
- Serving as the denomination's agent to offer salary subsidies for chaplains whose employers cannot meet the minimum wage set for Christian Reformed clergy.
- Performing all administrative functions on behalf of chaplains as required by governmental entities.
- Informing congregations about chaplaincy in general and the challenges of Chaplaincy Ministries in particular.
- Searching for and approving of potential chaplaincy positions worthy of an ordained Christian Reformed chaplain.
- Pursuing relationships with civil, military, and institutional boards and agencies related to chaplaincy, including active membership in these groups, and functioning as the official agent of the CRC in dealing with governmental units.

2. Challenges to Chaplaincy Ministries

As the need for chaplains grows, the financial resources to support their ministry shrink. Staff struggles to discern new ways to expand chaplain ministries in a time of fiscal restraint. Along with other Pastoral Ministries divisions, the struggle to establish a meaningful presence on classical and binational levels continues.

In light of the graying of chaplaincy personnel, more effective recruitment of chaplains is needed as are more strategies to support them in the early stages of their ministry.

Chaplaincy Ministries is studying the appropriateness of an annual review of chaplains in the light of synod's request to clarify the office's role in the supervision of chaplains. The office is also weighing the implications of endorsing part-time, contract, volunteer-clergy, and layperson chaplains.

3. New Canadian director

During the past year Rev. Carl Tuyl retired as the part-time director of Canadian chaplaincy. Rev. Siebert Van Houten was hired as the first full-time director of Canadian chaplaincy. We are grateful to God and to these brothers for services rendered and for commitments made.

C. *Disability Concerns* (Dr. James L. Vanderlaan, director; Mr. Jerry Van Spronsen, program assistant)

1. Progress regarding the Americans with Disabilities Act

Disability Concerns, pursuant to the decision of Synod 1993 regarding the Americans with Disabilities Act, is monitoring denominational progress in implementing ADA provisions. The CRC *Yearbook* questionnaire on disability access, sent annually by the general secretary to all councils, has been adapted to provide this data. The results of the questionnaire this year compared to those of last year are as follows:

Churches that are	1995	1996
Providing barrier-free access	516	517
Providing partial access	294	307
Signing for deaf	31	30
Providing aids for hearing-impaired	402	428
Providing aids for visually impaired	154	210
Providing special programs	226	218
Providing transportation	104	139

These figures indicate a modest gain in access for people with disabilities. The gain in partially accessible churches is particularly noteworthy, indicating a drop in churches that are entirely inaccessible. The loss in special programs may indicate that people with disabilities are more successfully being integrated into regular church activities.

The *Yearbook* questionnaire also asks whether people with disabilities serve in church positions. The answer to this question is indicated by the following:

Number of churches	1995	1996
Yes	93	83
No	394	426

Since all the congregations did not respond to this question, Disability Concerns cannot make a confident judgment about a trend in the use of gifts of people with disabilities in the CRC.

2. Activities of Disability Concerns

a. Providing information on services available to people with disabilities and their families by printing and distributing

- Biennially, a directory of service providers which describes agencies related to the CRCNA and the services they provide to people with developmental disabilities.
- To every CRC council, a disability resource guide, "Opening Doors to All God's People," which is part of *Your Church in Action*, the CRC Handbook.
- Semiannually to deacons, a list of the resources and services Disability Concerns offers.
- Annually in *Breaking Barriers*, a list of books on disability issues recommended for church libraries.
- Periodically, mailings of material useful to people in the CRC Mental Illness Network.
- Semiannually, the newsletter *Breaking Barriers . . . Across Classes* for classical and diaconal-conference disability committees.

b. Increasing constituency awareness of needs people with disabilities have by

- Publishing the newsletter *Breaking Barriers*, which carries life stories of Christian Reformed people with disabilities (free for the asking).
- Writing articles for *The Banner*, *Mission Courier*, and *CRC Source*.

- Preaching and teaching in churches, schools, and other gatherings.
 - Preparing a Bible-study booklet on the meaning of disabilities for the kingdom of God.
- c. Assisting churches in identifying and eliminating disability barriers through the following activities:
- Distributing educational materials such as self-evaluation checklists, disability-committee kits, special ministry guidelines, and book and video lists.
 - Providing to councils and congregations the on-site services of the program developer.
 - Conducting workshops at diaconal and church conferences and for councils and congregations.
 - Sponsoring conferences for service providers, church personnel, and people and families with disabilities.
 - Encouraging and assisting in the development of support groups and respite services.
 - Supporting, advising, and advocating for people with disabilities and their families.
 - Participating in networks with other individuals and organizations experienced in various aspects of disabilities.

3. Recommendation re change in Church Order Article 41

Though the *Yearbook* questionnaire provides information about disability access in the CRC, it probably does little to effect improvement. Another way is needed to remind the churches to make themselves accessible to and accepting of people with disabilities. Pastoral Ministries, therefore, proposes that synod add to the questions in Church Order Article 41 a question about whether the council has made the church building and activities fully accessible to people with disabilities. This question, put to each council two or three times a year by the officers of its classis, will help to remind churches that the gospel of God's grace and the fellowship of his gifts must be made accessible to all people.

The recommendation Pastoral Ministries presents to synod to effect the addition of another question reads as follows: That Article 41 of the Church Order be amended by the addition of another question to those already on the classical credentials and regularly asked of each council: "Is the church building barrier free, and are all church services and activities made accessible to all eligible people, including those with disabilities?"

Grounds:

- a. 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.
- b. To serve people with disabilities in a way which unnecessarily separates them from the full 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.
- c. 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.

4. Increasing needs of persons with disabilities

People with developmental and mental impairments no longer typically live in large institutions but in community homes and apartments. Consequently, they are not served by chaplains and depend more than ever on local churches for spiritual nurture and communion. This situation calls for local Christian Reformed churches to reach out to such people in surrounding areas with the gospel message and with Christian compassion. Disability Concerns is evaluating ways to impress the churches with their responsibility for meeting these needs.

There are two other issues which especially threaten people with disabilities. One is their high unemployment rate—despite their eagerness to work and their developed level of skill. The other is the impending reduction in the government assistance many of them receive, including many elderly, for such basic needs as housing, medical services, and personal-care attendants. Even though the churches are not directly responsible for the solutions to these problems, they must nevertheless be active in forming just government policy on these matters and in giving diaconal ministry to those with disabilities who are in distress. Disability Concerns will be consulting with CRWRC on ways to approach these challenges.

D. *Pastor-Church Relations* (Rev. Duane A. Visser, director)

There are transitions in our world, where so much is being challenged, and change is a certainty. The church and culture are invited to respond in new and creative ways. Pastor-Church Relations has been part of this changing landscape and is itself undergoing transition.

1. Changes in Pastor-Church Relations

The first director of Pastor-Church Relations, Rev. Louis Tamminga, retired after ably guiding this ministry through its formative years. Rev. Tamminga's long-time administrative assistant, Mrs. Irene Wiersma, also retired in the fall of 1995. Both of them served Pastor-Church Relations with distinction. Rev. Duane Visser began as the new director in September 1995. The director and the regional pastors are being challenged to respond to the ongoing changes in the church and the resulting challenges to pastors and congregations.

Through challenge and opportunity, Pastor-Church Relations responds with these activities:

- Regional pastors have been chosen in each classis to support the pastors and congregations. They are the "front line" of response, and, in the demanding atmosphere of the church and ministry, are increasingly called on for their services. Their work is done in regular consultation with the division director, who assists in more severe situations.
- Unordained church professionals (UCP) are also the responsibility of the office of Pastor-Church Relations. Two classes have now assigned unordained church professionals to be regional pastors to other UCPs, each UCP teaming with another regional pastor.
- Mentors are selected by Pastor-Church Relations, in consultation with a particular classis, to assist newly ordained pastors, persons entering the CRC ministry from another denomination, and pastors who have been in other areas of ministry and want a resource to help them adapt to congregational service.

- The Ministerial Information Service continues to be an active part of the Pastor-Church Relations task. With vacant churches consistently numbering approximately 135 (13 to 14 percent), there are many requests for pastor and church profiles. During 1995, 2,602 ministerial profiles were processed at the request of congregations and pastors. (The following PCR statistics may also be of some interest: 105 pastors accepted calls in 1995; the median age of pastors who accepted calls was 41—2.5 years older than in 1994.)

3. Challenges for Pastor-Church Relations

In a time of transition, leadership is a challenge in both the church and the broader community. There are many unfortunate conflicts and struggles in the church—between members, between pastors and members, and within the leadership. Helping congregations and leaders to weather their differences and to focus on communicating the gospel of Jesus Christ becomes tantamount.

Pastor-Church Relations recognizes that laypersons are eager to be part of the life and leadership in the church. More than ever the need exists to communicate and join efforts in ministry. Pastor-Church Relations seeks to devise creative means to support such cooperative efforts between pastors and congregations.

Pastor-Church Relations also recognizes the urgent need to provide trained pastors to assist congregations during their vacancies. Such specialized interim pastors are trained to lead congregations through the transition between pastors and to help them make this a time of preparation, reconciliation, and growth.

E. Race Relations (Rev. Alfred S. Luke, director; Rev. Noberto Wolf, regional director [Los Angeles]; Mrs. Yvonne Rayburn-Beckley, regional director [Chicago])

In the history of Race Relations, 1996 is a significant year. Twenty-five (25) years ago synod accepted the recommendation of Home Missions to organize an agency directly accountable to synod to address racism in the church and in society. Despite apparent advances and even significant changes in the last quarter of a century, the reality of racism remains. The aftermath of the Million Man March (in the United States) and the Native rights and the Quebec sovereignty referendum (in Canada) underscores this reality.

1. Programs toward eliminating racism

With the vision of designing and implementing programs which the church can use to eliminate racism, the office of Race Relations offers the following activities:

- Developing multiethnic leaders and encouraging multicultural ministries which celebrate the unity and diversity of the body of Christ.
- Working closely with the Committee on Racial Reconciliation in Canada.
- Awarding Leadership Development Scholarships in the amount of \$21,000 to twenty-one students representing various ethnicities: Korean, Cambodian, Chinese, Hispanic, Hmong, and African American.

	African American	Asian	Native Hispanic	American	Biracial
Calvin College	0			1	
Calvin Seminary	0	5	2	0	0
Dordt College	0	1	0	0	1
RBC	1	1	4	0	0
Trinity Christian College	2	0	1	0	0
Miscellaneous	0	0	1	0	0

- Awarding Multicultural Ministry Grants in the amount of \$45,000 to eleven ministries in the United States and two in Canada:

- Bethel Chinese CRC - Mississauga, ON
- Calvin Seminary - SEAMS - Alejandro Pimentel, Grand Rapids, MI
- Coit Community Church CRC - Grand Rapids, MI
- Friendship Community Church - Downsview, ON
- Grace and Peace Fellowship - Chicago, IL
- Kalamazoo Deacons' Conference - Kalamazoo, MI
- Lao Community CRC - Holland, MI
- Loop Christian Ministries - Chicago, IL
- Providence CRC - Holland, MI
- Sunshine Community Church - El Paso, TX
- Sun Valley Community CRC - Denver, CO
- Vietnamese New Hope CRC - Winfield, IL
- Zuni Christian Reformed Church - Zuni, NM

2. Our thanks

Race Relations expresses its gratitude to the administration of Trinity Christian College in Palos Heights, Illinois, for providing rent-free office space to Mrs. Rayburn-Beckley for the past eight years.

3. The world or the Word on matters of race

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., speaking of the tendency of the church in North America to conform to popular culture said,

... the church ... has often served to crystallize, conserve, and even bless the patterns of majority opinion. The erstwhile sanction by the church of slavery, racial segregation, war and economic exploitation is testimony to the fact that the church has hearkened more to the authority of the world than to the authority of God. Called to be the moral guardian of the community, the church at times has preserved that which is immoral and unethical. Called to combat social evils, it has remained silent behind stained-glass windows. Called to lead men on the highway of brotherhood and to summon them to rise above the narrow confines of race and class, it has enunciated and practiced racial exclusiveness.

Rejecting the authority of the world and heeding instead the authority of God's Word, the CRC, through the office of Race Relations, takes on the challenge of racial reconciliation. The Race Relations staff searches for new ways 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." John's glorious vision of God's reconciled people—"a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb" (Rev.7:9)—helps us stay focused on our broad mandate.

IV. Conclusion

Several issues continue to challenge the staff and proper use of resources of Pastoral Ministries. Disparity in financial resources and staffing in the divisions of the agency, resulting from existing differences before the merger into Pastoral Ministries, continues to need administrative attention. Redistribution and reallocation are painful and difficult at best and may actually even interfere with previously established programs. In some cases members have been hired for a specific division of ministry, with an expertise that realistically cannot be broadened to include the work of a different division. The current restraint on increasing ministry shares means that divisions with too-limited financial resources have no opportunity to increase resources, and, as a result, in some divisions programming is virtually nonexistent.

The limited resources of Pastoral Ministries prevent allocation of funding and staff to public relations and fund-raising. Without these development advantages, Pastoral Ministries cannot effectively raise gift monies, and that hampers Pastoral Ministries' attempts to raise awareness of its mission and service to the churches.

The ministry divisions, each having its own mandate and target population, continue their struggle to blend and to offer a unified mission and effective program for the matters they are mandated to respond to. Having made the observations above, Pastoral Ministries' staff remain committed to performing their ministries to the glory of God, the welfare of those they seek to reach, and the benefit of the churches and individual members of the Christian Reformed Church.

V. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Rev. Charles Terpstra, chairman of Pastoral Ministries; Ms. Beth A. Swagman, executive director of Pastoral Ministries; and the following division directors: Rev. Jacob P. Heerema (Chaplaincy Ministries), Rev. Alfred S. Luke (Race Relations), Dr. James L. Vanderlaan (Disability Concerns), and Rev. Duane A. Visser (Pastor-Church Relations).

B. That synod approve the additional question to Article 41 as proposed (see III, C, 3).

C. That synod encourage churches to celebrate All Nations Heritage Week from September 29 through October 5, 1997.

Grounds:

1. The task of eliminating racism is formidable; it is a matter that needs to be put boldly before the congregations at all times and particularly as they celebrate Worldwide Communion Sunday in October.

2. The financial support that is received when congregations celebrate All Nations Heritage Week dramatically increases Race Relations' ability to award grants and scholarships for multicultural leadership and ministry.

Pastoral Ministries

Beth A. Swagman, executive director

Note: Recommendations on financial matters are included in the report of the denominational Board of Trustees.

I. Introduction

The Christian Reformed Church maintains employee benefit programs that provide retirement benefits, and health, life, and disability insurance for employees of denominational agencies, local churches, and other CRC organizations. These programs, including communication, enrollment, and record keeping, are administered by the denomination's personnel office. Accounting, control, and investment management are handled by the denominational finance office.

II. Board matters

The ministers' pension plans and the employees' retirement plans are governed by the U.S. Board of Pensions and Insurance and the Canadian Board of Trustees of Pensions and Insurance. These boards meet individually two to four times per year and annually in joint session. The responsibility of the boards includes long-term planning, benefit-related decision making, policy definition, and oversight of fund assets and investment return. The U.S. board monitors the investment activities of the funds through a subcommittee made up of trustees and additional members recruited because of their expertise in investment. The Canadian board performs the investment oversight within the context of its full committee.

During the past year the role of the U.S. board was expanded to include governance of the U.S. consolidated Group Insurance (CGI) Program. The Canadian CGI plan is administratively managed by staff under the governance of the Board of Trustees-Ontario Corporation.

The U.S. Board of Pensions and Insurance is a five-member board currently chaired by Mr. David Vander Ploeg. The Canadian Board of Trustees of Pensions and Insurance is a board of five members chaired by Mr. Harry Schep.

III. Benefit-program activities

A. Ministers' Pension Plans

The Ministers' Pension Plans are defined-benefit pension plans (U.S. and Canada) designed to provide retirement income and disability benefits to ordained ministers within the Christian Reformed Church. As of December 31, 1995, there were 1,489 participants in the ministers' pension plans, categorized as follows:

	U.S.	Canada	Total
Total participants	1,200	289	1,489
Active ministers	744	205	949
Retired ministers	340	63	403
Widows and dependents	127	20	147

Every three years, independent actuaries are employed to do a complete assessment of the assumptions, valuations, and liabilities of the plans. These calculations were most recently made in January 1994.

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. The most significant of these assumptions is the one regarding investment yield. An interest rate is assumed at 7.5 percent for the Canadian plan and 8.0 percent for the U.S. plan.

The formula for pension determination is 1.1 percent of the final average salary (average of past three years of CRC ministers' cash salaries) multiplied by pensionable years of service. Therefore, the expectations about increases in ministers' salaries play a significant role. The 1995 average salary used for pension determination was U.S. \$28,762 and Canada \$31,506.

2. Asset balances

Market values of fund assets were as follows (in thousands of dollars):

	December 31, 1994	December 31, 1995
United States	\$52,204	\$63,285
Canada	13,590	15,742

Both the U.S. Board of Pensions and Insurance and the Canadian Board of Trustees of Pensions and Insurance 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 Company, 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. Board of Pensions and Insurance and the Canadian Board of Trustees of Pensions and Insurance. For 1995, total portfolio performance is as follows:

	1995	3 years	5 years
Canadian Plan	18.2%	12.0%	11.8%
U.S. Plan	25.6%	12.1%	13.2%

4. Funding strategy

Currently, funding for ministers' pensions is provided in two ways. The pension for the first minister of an organized Christian Reformed church is funded through ministry share. Pensions for additional ordained staff persons and ordained ministers working for organizations other than organized Christian Reformed churches are funded by a direct assessment of the employing organization.

Over the past years the full payment of the ministry share, which is needed to fund the pension plans, has become less reliable. Each year the amount of ministry share collected falls significantly short of the actuarially

computed requirement. This underfunding is an increasing concern to the pension trustees. Therefore, the committee has begun to consider alternative methods for funding the benefit.

At the joint meeting of the pension committees in September 1995, a decision was made to recommend that all funding of ministers' pensions be done through direct assessment to the employer. This is currently the method for second pastors in the ministers' pension plans and for all nonordained employees in the employee retirement plan. The proposed funding of ministers' pensions would also parallel the system already in place for the health-insurance benefit.

The joint committees recommend that synod approve this change at Synod 1996 but delay implementation until January 1, 1998. Time is needed in which to communicate this change to the churches so they can budget properly. It is recommended that an assessment determined by the actuary as the cost of fully funding the plan be charged for all participants, beginning January 1, 1998. Simultaneously, the ministry share, currently at \$4047 per family and \$1746 per professing member, will be dropped from the total denominational-ministry-share requirement.

B. Employees' Retirement Plans

The Employees' Retirement Plans are defined-contribution plans covering unordained employees of denominational agencies, committees, and churches. Contributions are paid to the plan 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 plan. 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-Cana Investment Counseling, Ltd.

C. Consolidated Group Insurance

Consolidated Group Insurance (CGI) is a denominational plan which offers life, health, and dental coverage in the United States and Canada to ministers and employees of congregations. Currently there are 1,255 participants in the program, 397 employees of denominational agencies and 858 pastors and employees of local churches. The Canadian plan is a fully insured plan purchased through a major health-insurance provider. The coverage in Canada is supplemental to health benefits available through government health programs. In the U.S. a trust has been established to fund benefits and expenses of the plan. Premiums are assessed based on overall expectations of claims and administrative expenses. Medical and dental expenses paid in 1995 were \$5,404,000, an increase of 13.7 percent over 1994. As of December 31, 1995, the CGI trust which is used as a reserve for claims was at \$1,243,239.

Of significance during 1995 was the very difficult change in third-party administrators for the CGI program. The third-party administrator is hired as an agent of the plan to process claims for participants. In July 1995 a new administrator took over responsibility for processing claims. Unfortunately, the

prior administrator refused to cooperate with the transition. A significant disruption resulted because all participant records needed to be rebuilt from original data. As of year's end, some problems persisted, but most of the transition difficulties had been resolved.

IV. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to members of the Canadian Board of Trustees of Pensions and Insurance and of the U. S. Board of Pensions and Insurance or to 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 1996 and 1997 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 for 1997 synod designate the assessment rate for participants in the ministers' pension plans who are not covered by ministry-share funding as the amount determined by the independent actuary to be the "average annual cost per active minister."

D. That synod approve the change in funding for the Ministers' Pension Plans to a direct-assessment basis, beginning January 1, 1998. This assessment will apply to every participant in the plan and will be determined by the independent actuary as the "average annual cost per active minister."

E. That synod elect two members to the U.S. Board of Pensions and Insurance from the following nominations for three-year terms beginning September 1, 1996.

1. One member for a three-year term from the following nominees:
 - a. *Rev. John Van Ryn* is a retired pastor living in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Rev. Van Ryn was a delegate to synod several times and besides serving as Home Missions' executive secretary for twelve years has served the church on a variety of other committees and boards.
 - b. *Rev. Leonard Van Drunen* is a retired pastor living in Jenison, Michigan. Rev. Van Drunen has been a delegate to synod on several occasions and has served on various boards and committees.
2. One member for a three-year term from the following nominees:
 - a. *Mr. Melvin Vander Brug*, from Bloomfield Village, Michigan, is currently president of Vancraft Manufacturing, Inc. in Detroit, a supplier of metal fabrications to the automotive industry. He is also president and executive director of Record Masters Network Corp, a nationwide franchise providing records-management services to the health-care field. Mr. Vander Brug has served on council of North Hills CRC, Troy, Michigan, and as a member of the board of the Grosse Pointe Christian Day School. He currently serves on the investment subcommittee of the U.S. ministers' pension fund.

- b. *Mr. Alden Walters* is a member of Second CRC, Grand Haven, Michigan. Mr. Walters retired from Michigan National Bank, where he was chairman of outstate banks. He previously served nine years on the Ministers' Pension Committee and has had other involvement with various boards and committees, including service to the Barnabas Foundation.

F. That synod elect three members to the Canadian Board of Trustees of Pensions and Insurance for terms beginning September 1, 1996.

1. Two members for three-year terms from the following nominees:
 - a. *Mr. Ary de Jong* (incumbent), from Calgary, Alberta, is currently an adviser in pension and trust administration with Shell Canada. He is a member of Emmanuel CRC of Calgary, where he has served on council for several terms. He has served on various CRC boards and committees and on Christian-school boards in the past.
 - b. *Mr. Harry Schep* (incumbent), from Ottawa, Ontario, is currently working with the federal government of Canada and has served his employer in various capacities. He is a member of Calvin CRC and has served as elder, on the administration board, and on various committees.
 - c. *Mr. John Knibbe*, from Calgary, Alberta, is a self-employed lawyer in general practice with emphasis on business law. Mr. Knibbe is a deacon at First CRC of Calgary. He serves as an executive board member on the Board of Governors of The King's University College and has served on several other local boards and committees.
2. One member for a two-year term from the following nominees:
 - a. *Mr. Alan Van Weelden* (incumbent), from Mississauga, Ontario, is currently a partner in Peat, Marwick, Thorne, an international certified-public-accounting firm. He is a member of Clarkson CRC, where he has served on council for seven years. He previously served in various capacities at London CRC.
 - b. *Mr. Andy Fluit*, from Ottawa, Ontario, is a member of Calvin CRC, where he has served as treasurer and clerk. Mr. Fluit works for the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company of Ottawa and New York in financial services. He is a member of several local and provincial boards and committees.

Pensions and Insurance

Robert Van Stright, director of finance
and administration

I. Introduction

The year 1995 has been a year of progress in the denomination's ministry to youth. Much new activity has taken place in United Calvinist Youth's four divisions, and the Youth-Ministry Committee's important video on the relational model of youth ministry is now available for distribution.

II. Committee members and meetings

The Youth-Ministry Committee's membership of twelve (12) is drawn from various regions of the denomination and selected according to specified classifications. Three advisers meet with the committee, as do representatives of the divisions within United Calvinist Youth. The committee meets twice a year.

Several committee positions need to be filled, for which the committee is pleased to present the following nominations:

A. *Western Canada*

Mrs. Karen Wilk (incumbent) has been the director of evangelism and youth at West End CRC, Edmonton, Alberta, since 1986. She has served one three-year term on the Youth-Ministry Committee.

Mr. William Nieuwenhuis has been the director of education, evangelism, and youth at First CRC of Red Deer, Alberta, since 1990. He has also served First CRC, Regina, Saskatchewan.

B. *Midwest U.S.A.*

Mr. David De Ridder has been the director of education and evangelism at Third CRC, Denver, Colorado, since 1992. He also served First CRC, Munster, Indiana; First CRC, Visalia, California; First CRC, Bellflower, California; and Youth Evangelism Services in Toronto, Ontario.

Ms. Mary De Groote has been involved in local-church youth ministry for over twenty years. She has served on the Hawkeye League board and has been a regional training coordinator for UCY. She attends Covenant CRC in Sioux Center, Iowa.

C. *Central U.S.A.*

Dr. Robert Keeley (incumbent) is a teacher at Holland Christian School and youth director at Fourteenth Street CRC, Holland, Michigan. He also directs a gifted-student program at Holland Christian. He has served one three-year term on the Youth-Ministry Committee.

Ms. Tricia Borgdorff has been director of children's ministries at Sunshine Community Church (CRC), Grand Rapids, Michigan, since 1991.

D. *Unordained member*

Mr. Robert Grussing (incumbent) has been the director of education and youth at LaGrave CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan, since 1979. He has also served Brookside CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan, and First CRC, Zeeland, Michigan. He has served one three-year term on the Youth-Ministry Committee.

Mr. Robert Pohler has been the director of education and youth at Faith CRC, Holland, Michigan, since 1986. He has also served Plymouth Heights CRC in Grand Rapids and Bethany CRC, Muskegon, Michigan.

E. Youth Unlimited representative

Mrs. Jolene De Heer (incumbent) is a leadership trainer for Youth Unlimited, a member of the Young Calvinist Federation board, and a popular speaker at youth retreats. She is a member of and youth leader for LaGrave CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan. She has served one three-year term on the Youth-Ministry Committee.

Mr. Brad Laringa is a youth pastor at Palos Heights CRC, Palos Heights, Illinois. He has also worked at Trinity College.

F. Cadets representative

Mr. Gerry Bysma is a member of Clarkson CRC in Mississauga, Ontario. He has served for thirty years as a Cadet counselor and six years as president of the Cadet Corps. He also is a past president of United Calvinist Youth.

Rev. Marvin Vander Vliet is pastor of First CRC, Jenison, Michigan. He has served as a CRC minister for twenty-three years, as an employee of the Cadet Corps in the early 1970s, and as Cadet chaplain from 1977 through 1985.

G. Early Teen Ministry representative

Ms. Glenda Tamming is presently youth director at Baldwin CRC, Jenison, Michigan.

Mr. Rick Kiekintveld is the youth pastor at Millbrook CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

III. Youth-Ministry Committee program

A. Relational model for youth ministry video and booklet

By this time it is likely that the churches have received the video and booklet designed to educate and inform church leaders about relational youth ministry. This project is funded by a grant from Synod 1995.

B. Early Teen Ministry division

The new Early Teen Ministry division has been formed, and Mr. Nate Vander Stelt has been hired as director. Vander Stelt has begun encouraging the churches to form coed relational ministry programs for early teens. Early Teen Ministry has also sponsored several large-scale events with Christian contemporary bands and youth speakers.

Two years ago early teen ministry was judged by the Youth-Ministry Committee to be an area of great need in the churches. The Youth-Ministry Committee challenged United Calvinist Youth to accept the task of ministering to this target group via coed ministry. In response United Calvinist Youth launched the new division.

Early Teen Ministry currently is experiencing financial shortage. The churches are encouraged to relieve the situation by special offerings for this new ministry.

C. Classical youth-ministry committees update

Synod 1991 mandated classes to form classical youth-ministry committees. The response has been disappointing. Twenty-four classes out of forty-six responded to the inquiry whether a youth-ministry committee had been formed. Two classes were considering a classical youth-ministry committee. Five classes reported that formation of a classical youth-ministry committee is in process. Eleven classes have no intention of forming a classical youth-ministry

committee. Five classes have a functioning youth-ministry committee. Some of the "no intention" responses were due to an actively functioning youth-ministry league within a classis.

The denomination's Youth-Ministry Committee will continue to investigate progress in the classes that did not reply to the inquiry. The committee will also identify successful models of such committees and pass this information along to classes.

D. *Calvinettes' new name*

Calvinettes has a new name: GEMS Girls' Clubs. The acronym means "Girls Everywhere Meeting the Savior." The new name will remove barriers and help the program to reach girls everywhere.

E. *Appreciation to Synod 1995*

The Youth-Ministry Committee expresses its appreciation to Synod 1995 for appointing a study committee that will consider YMC's recommendation regarding the ordination of youth pastors. Many youth and adult-education pastors who trained in Reformed schools but not as master of divinity students wait hopefully upon the outcome of this committee's work.

IV. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Youth-Ministry Committee chairperson, Rev. Jacob P. Heerema, and secretary, Rev. Joel W. Zuidema.

B. That synod recognize and be introduced to the new United Calvinist Youth division directors, Mrs. Jan Boone and Mr. Nate Vander Stelt.

C. That synod elect one nominee per category as proposed in Section II for three-year terms on the Youth-Ministry Committee.

Youth-Ministry Committee
Jacob Heerema, chairman
Joel Zuidema, secretary

UNITED CALVINIST YOUTH: Calvinettes

What a great God we serve! And how abundantly he has blessed us throughout the past year! It was a year filled with new visions, new curriculum, and even a new name. Feeling a strong sense of urgency to reach an ever-growing number of girls, the Calvinette executive board adopted new policies and plans for the ministry.

Realizing that children today live in a world of technicolor, the board decided to print *Touch* magazine in full color to increase interest and readership. To attract and capture the interest of our youngest girls, three exciting new curricula were developed and printed for *Awareness*-level girls. And to make the study of our annual theme ever more stimulating and enjoyable, the theme-badge materials appeared in a new, updated format.

The board also made a decision to respond to the hundreds of requests that had been received over the years from counselors, parents, pastors, and the CRC synod to select a different name for our program. Following months of prayer, consideration, and a "You Name It" contest, the board agreed to adopt a new

name for the Calvinette program. That name is GEMS Girls' Clubs, an acronym for Girls Everywhere Meeting the Savior. By adopting the new name, the board hopes to remove barriers and to reach girls that live anywhere and everywhere. We are excited to see how God will use this new name for his glory.

In the past year much emphasis was placed on developing leadership skills in counselors. Twenty-two leadership trainers came to Grand Rapids for an intense three-day leadership-training seminar. These women serve as regional trainers for counselors living within their geographic areas. The annual Calvinette counselors' convention was held in San Jose, California, with five hundred counselors receiving training, motivation, encouragement, and spiritual nourishment throughout a busy three days. Two weekend regional conferences were conducted in areas where a majority of counselors were unable to attend the convention, and hundreds of local workshops took place, all in an effort to equip our counselors in their important roles.

The year ahead promises continued efforts to make our program vital and strong. Two new curricula are being developed for *Awareness*-level girls, and all new curricula are being written and designed for older girls in the *Advanced* level. Early plans are being formulated for developing a coed program for 4- and 5-year-olds.

We are indeed thankful that God has chosen to continue to bless and guide the ministry of Calvinettes.

Calvinettes

Jan Boone, executive director

UNITED CALVINIST YOUTH: Calvinist Cadet Corps

Cadeting took some significant steps in 1995 and has even more in store for 1996. The Cadet Corps made a decision to include 6-year-olds in its programming and is now investigating opening cadeting up to 5-year-olds as well. It was also decided that the number of merit badges available for a Junior Cadet to earn will increase by 60 percent. That doesn't mean that the older ages are being ignored. The program is expanding there, too, with new materials being developed for the 12-14 age group.

Another significant step is being taken in leadership training. A task force is examining the best methods for training counselors, primarily by setting up a network of training coordinators and holding each responsible for training in his area. The results of the ideas and decisions from that task force will be determined by the Cadet board in January 1997 and will go into effect after that.

In the meantime, the training that takes place is effective. At the counselors' convention in Niagara Falls, the counselors and their families were trained in the important task of reflecting God within them. Introduced at the convention, "Living Reflections" (based on Prov. 27:19) was the Cadet theme this past year. Approximately twenty thousand men and boys in 660 churches across North America participated in honoring that theme on Cadet Sunday this year. The Cadet Corps praises God for what he has done and for the way he continues to use the Cadet program to grow his kingdom.

Calvinist Cadet Corps

G. Richard Broene, executive director

UNITED CALVINIST YOUTH: Early Teen Ministry

This has been an exciting, ground-breaking year for Early Teen Ministry (ETM). ETM has over sixty churches as members, and we estimate that by June 1996 over one hundred churches will have joined this ministry.

At the present time ETM offers Starter Packets, Booster Packets, a quarterly newsletter which is sent to all members, the ETM Prayer Team, on-line discussion exchange, and technical support for churches desiring to sponsor large group events in their cities or regions. Planning has also begun in the development of service opportunities through Reach-Out projects.

Over the past year ETM helped sponsor several large group events in various regions. At one of ETM's Main Events (like a miniconvention), 13 junior highers gave their lives to Christ as they stood among 591 of their peers. At an ETM True Love Waits Rally, held in February, 2,400 junior highers listened intently as Gianna Jessen, a survivor of an attempted saline abortion, challenged them to stay sexually pure and remain positive in their outlook on life. ETM has also sponsored thirteen regional leadership-training seminars, which strengthen local leadership and help us stay in touch with the needs of local churches.

Behind the scenes the ETM staff and board have spent a great deal of time identifying how we can best meet the needs of the church in the future. By sending out surveys to over nine hundred churches, listening to people in local congregations, and dialoguing with Cadets, Calvinettes (GEMS Girls' Clubs), and Youth Unlimited/YCF, we are beginning to meet the needs of churches. We strongly encourage member churches to *complement* their existing ministries with the resources of ETM. We do not want to be viewed as a *competing* ministry. The response from many churches is that they have begun to see firsthand how a coed junior high (grades 7 and 8) ministry helps bridge the ministry gap between early adolescence and high school.

We also realize that we have a long way to go. We estimate that fewer than 10 percent of Christian Reformed congregations have some form of coed early teen ministry in place. In cases where churches do not have a coed early teen ministry, we have discovered that a lack of qualified adult leaders and the lack of adequate training are two of the greatest obstacles in getting a ministry started. As a result, ETM has begun to strategize on how to reach effectively those CRCs with these most basic needs.

As ETM continues to grow, we ask for your continuing feedback, encouragement, and support. Thank you for your prayers and active participation in ETM. Your financial gifts are also appreciated. May God bless all of us as we seek to bring this vital part of today's church—the early teens—into an ever-deepening walk with Jesus Christ.

Early Teen Ministry

Nate Vander Stelt, executive director

UNITED CALVINIST YOUTH: Youth Unlimited/YCF

Youth Unlimited is grateful to the Lord for a fruitful year of ministry in 1995. The largest number ever attended our annual convention, with 4,005 participants coming to the World Shakers Convention in Fort Collins, Colorado. At this

event over six hundred teens made a public dedication of their lives to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. These youth have been encouraged to keep growing in their faith and to become active members in their local churches.

The 585 member churches that comprise Youth Unlimited/YCF sent over 2,400 adults and teens for leadership training at the many regional seminars offered annually throughout North America. Through a growing regional-training and league-training program, there is an increasing availability of local help for professional and volunteer youth leaders.

The focus of this ministry over the years has been on putting faith into action. That emphasis continued in 1995 as record numbers of teens participated in three service programs of Youth Unlimited. SWIM sponsored 168 teens at forty-two different sites. SERVE Projects sent 973 teens and adults to eighteen different locations. Youth Unlimited's most recent cross-cultural service program, Project Bridge, sponsored 24 teens at three different sites. Through these hands-on service programs many learned how to live out their faith and dedicated themselves to lifelong service.

Through the generosity of Gospel Communications Network, Youth Unlimited/YCF is on-line with the Internet. The GCN Web site is devoted to a select number of Christian ministries and is considered one of the top 5 percent of all Web sites. Through this new technology Youth Unlimited hopes to increase both its services and the amount of participation in its youth-ministry resources. The Internet address for Youth Unlimited/YCF is <http://www.gospelcom.net/yu>. Check it out.

An active prayer-support ministry called Prayer Force is also being used by a few hundred individuals and families. It is open to anyone who desires to be a regular prayer partner for our ministries.

In addition to serving a larger number of Christian Reformed churches, Youth Unlimited has been embraced by an increasing number of churches from various other denominations that share our perspective on youth ministry.

As we continue to commit this ministry to the Lord, we thank the churches for their financial support and prayers.

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. Hendrina Van Spronsen, secretary; and several student assistants.

II. Archival work during 1995

During the past year the archivists

A. Maintained at forty-one the number of classes with designated regional representatives (contact persons). Five classes (Alberta South, British Columbia Northwest, Georgetown, Quinte, and Red Mesa) do not currently have such representatives.

B. Published its fifteenth annual newsletter in January 1996, which was sent to all regional representatives, classical stated clerks, and other denominational leaders. This newsletter is the chief means by which the committee communicates procedures, information, suggestions, and solicitations to the churches and should be consulted by interested parties.

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. The committee notes that a good number of congregational minutes from the last ten years have not been submitted for microfilming and encourages clerks to attend to this means of preserving a vital historical record.

D. Acquired historical records from sixty-six Christian Reformed congregations and two Christian schools and received anniversary booklets or historical sketches from fifteen churches, as well as newsletters and bulletins from various churches and classes.

E. Microfilmed the minutes of various classes as received and processed materials from fifty-five individuals or agencies associated with CRC ministries, Calvin College, or Calvin Theological Seminary.

III. Publications

Under its expanded mandate to take initiative and to aid in publishing materials relevant to the historical life of the denomination, the committee assisted in planning the historical series currently running on the children's page in *The Banner* and hopes to commission the writing of a popular denominational history under the auspices of CRC Publications. We anticipate producing

a well-illustrated 250-page book, accessible to the general reader and attractively priced, that will give an honest account of the main tracks of the denomination's development and will provide the membership with a solid and encouraging sense of historical identity.

IV. Reminders

A. Some fifty-eight Christian Reformed congregations will celebrate a significant anniversary within the next three years. They are reminded to send the archives a copy of materials produced for the occasion. Archival copies are just as important for (the twenty-three) churches founded twenty-five years ago as for those marking full, semi-, or sesquicentennials.

B. The year 1997 will mark the sesquicentennial of the founding of Dutch settlements in Iowa, Michigan, and Wisconsin, where the CRC would eventually be born. The archives will publish some of A.C. van Raalte's correspondence and an article about H.P. Scholte pertinent to these settlements. The committee urges local congregations and classes to take part in observing this occasion as appropriate, both by themselves and in cooperation with other ecclesiastical and civic organizations.

C. The CRC will mark its own sesquicentennial in just eleven years. The committee welcomes suggestions regarding ways to celebrate this event.

V. Recommendation

That Rev. William Buursma represent the committee when Historical Committee matters come before synod.

Historical Committee

James D. Bratt, secretary

William D. Buursma

Swenna Harger

Henry Zwaanstra, chair

I. Membership

The members of the Interchurch Relations Committee (IRC) (with the years in which their terms expire) are Rev. Peter W. Brouwer (1997); Ms. Claire Elgersma (1998); Rev. Robert J. Haven (1998); Rev. Leonard J. Hofman (1997); Dr. John B. Hulst, vice president (1996); Rev. Alfred S. Luke (1996); Ms. Cynthia Roelofs (1997); Rev. Edward A. Van Baak, president (1996); Dr. Henry Zwaanstra (1998); and the general secretary, Dr. David H. Engelhard (ex officio). Rev. Leonard J. Hofman serves as the administrative secretary of the committee. Nominations for members to replace those whose terms expire this year are submitted below.

II. Information regarding ecumenical relations

A. Fraternal delegates

In 1995 the IRC made the following appointments of fraternal delegates to the assemblies of churches with which the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA) is in ecclesiastical fellowship:

1. To the general assembly of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, meeting in Charlotte, North Carolina, June 22-24, 1995, Rev. Christopher J. De Vos.
2. To the general assembly of the Korean American Presbyterian Church, meeting in New York, New York, June 20-23, 1995, Rev. John T. Kim.
3. To the general assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, meeting at Geneva College in Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania, June 17-23, 1995, Dr. Richard D. Gamble.
4. To the general assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America, meeting in Dallas-Fort Worth, Texas, June 20-23, 1995, Rev. John R. Sittema.
5. To the general synod of the Reformed Church in America, meeting at Ramapo College in Mahwah, New Jersey, June 10-16, 1995, Rev. John J. Hoogland.
6. To the general synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America, meeting at Geneva College in Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania, June 16-22, 1995, Rev. Paul E. Bakker.
7. To the synod of the Christian Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (CRCN) meeting at Zierikzee, October 17-20, 1995, Revs. Jacob Kuntz and Gerard Ringnalda.

B. Representatives and observers to ecumenical organizations

Fulfilling the mandate of the Ecumenical Charter of the CRCNA, the IRC appoints representatives and observers to various ecumenical organizations. These appointees report to the IRC.

1. Rev. Leonard J. Hofman is a member of the executive committee of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) and currently is first vice chairman of the NAE board of directors. He is scheduled to become chairman of the board in March 1996. The IRC has appointed Rev. Leonard J.

Hofman and Dr. David H. Engelhard as voting members to the NAE convention in Minneapolis in March 1996.

2. Dr. George Vandervelde was given a continuing appointment of two years as the IRC observer on the Faith and Order Commission of the National Council of Churches.
3. Dr. John Bolt's resignation as observer on the Theological Commission of the Caribbean and North American Area Council (CANAAC) of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) was accepted with appreciation for his five years of service. The IRC appointed Dr. Henry Zwaanstra to replace Dr. Bolt as observer on the Theological Commission of CANAAC.

C. *Churches in corresponding fellowship*

In keeping with the establishment of the category "churches in corresponding fellowship" (*Acts of Synod 1993*, pp. 407-10), the IRC is continuing to cultivate such relationships with churches. No new names have been added to the list that was reported to Synod 1995. That list includes the Christian Reformed Church of Myanmar; the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian, Nkhoma Synod; and the Philippine Christian Reformed Church.

III. Ecumenical organizations

A. *North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC)*

The twenty-first annual meeting of NAPARC was held in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, November 28-29, 1995, and was hosted by the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. All member churches were represented, including the newest member denomination, the Reformed Church in the United States. Our delegates were Dr. David H. Engelhard, Rev. Leonard J. Hofman, and Rev. Edward A. Van Baak. Dr. Engelhard serves as chairman of the Interim Committee of NAPARC.

The following items of interest emerged from the NAPARC meetings:

1. Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC)

Having met with representatives of the EPC, the Interim Committee placed on the NAPARC docket the matter of receiving the EPC into membership. Representatives of the EPC have been observers at NAPARC for the past eleven years. In 1988 the EPC brought a request to NAPARC to be received into membership. However, action on the motion to receive the EPC into membership was postponed until NAPARC's 1996 meetings. The secretary was requested to send to the interchurch-relations committees of the member churches a summary of past NAPARC actions concerning the EPC. This is to include EPC's response to the Interim Committee on November 28, 1995, concerning matters that NAPARC asked the EPC to "reconsider" in 1988. The CRCNA delegates expressed keen disappointment to NAPARC relative to its postponement of favorable action on the EPC's application for membership.

2. Constitutional change

The following constitutional change was adopted for referral to the member denominations for approval:

That Article V, section 3 of the Constitution of NAPARC be amended as follows:

Admission to, *suspension from, restoration to (after suspension)*, and termination of membership shall be *proposed by recommendation* of the Council to the member churches by two thirds of the ballots cast; and this proposal recommendation must then be approved adopted within three years by the approval of two-thirds of the major assemblies of the member churches. A proposal to suspend or terminate the membership of a member church may be initiated only by a major assembly of a member church. A suspended church may send delegates to meetings of the Council, but they shall not vote, nor may that church be represented on the Interim Committee.

Note: Wording in italics is new. Underscored material is to be deleted.

The IRC recommends that synod approve the proposed change in the NAPARC constitution.

3. Golden Rule Comity Agreement

The following recommendation was adopted:

That NAPARC request the major assemblies of the member churches to remind their congregations and regional assemblies of the terms of the Golden Rule Comity Agreement, which, by virtue of their denominational commitment, they have promised to observe.

Golden Rule Comity Agreement

Out of a concern to build a Church of Jesus Christ rather than our own denominations and to avoid the appearance of competition, we affirm the following courteous code of behavior to guide our church-planting ministries in North America:

1. We will be sensitive to the presence of existing churches and mission ministries of other NAPARC churches and will refrain from enlisting members and take great care in receiving members of those existing ministries.
2. We will communicate with the equivalent or appropriate agency (denominational missions committee or board, presbytery missions or church extension committee, or session) before initiating church planting activities in a community where NAPARC churches or missions exist.
3. We will provide information on at least an annual basis describing progress in our ministries and future plans.
4. We will encourage our regional home-missions leadership to develop good working relationships.

The IRC recommends that synod remind our congregations and classes of the Golden Rule Comity Agreement.

4. NAPARC consultations

NAPARC encouraged the respective denominational agencies having responsibility for the ministries of church education and North American missions to participate actively in the 1996 annual NAPARC consultations at the senior leadership level.

5. Proposals and concerns

The IRC submitted to NAPARC proposals and concerns relating to various NAPARC policies and procedures involving the Interim Committee, agenda deadlines, financial matters, the agenda for the plenary session, and observers. A committee was constituted to draft standing rules for NAPARC and its Interim Committee. Because of the press of time, the recommenda-

tions of our IRC were referred to that committee. The committee is requested to report to NAPARC 1996.

6. Officers

The officers of NAPARC for 1995-1996 are David H. Engelhard, chairman (CRCNA); Jack C. Whytock, vice chairman (ARPC); Donald J. Duff, secretary (OPC); Robert A. Henning, treasurer (RPCNA).

7. NAPARC 1996

The next meeting of NAPARC will be hosted by the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, on November 19 and 20, 1996.

B. *Reformed Ecumenical Council (REC)*

The next assembly of the REC will meet in Grand Rapids, Michigan, in 1996 and will observe the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the REC (then, the Reformed Ecumenical Synod) 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 following were elected by Synod 1995 to serve as voting delegates to REC GRAND RAPIDS 1996:

1. Theologian: Dr. Carl G. Kromminga, delegate
Dr. Henry Zwaanstra, alternate
2. Minister: Rev. Jack B. Vos, delegate
Rev. Alfred S. Luke, alternate
3. Elder: Dr. Harvey J. Bratt, delegate
Dr. Nick V. Kroeze, alternate
4. Fourth: Ms. Claire Elgersma, delegate
Ms. Eunice Vanderlaan, alternate

The IRC asked Dr. Carl Kromminga to serve as convener of the REC delegation with a view to the preparation of a report on the REC to the IRC. Synod 1995 authorized the IRC to select nonvoting delegates from among the alternates and IRC nominees as well as from other qualified persons who will be available to serve. In addition, it authorized the IRC to appoint two advisers who are theologians or other persons with special qualifications as specified by the REC constitution.

The IRC appointed the elected alternates to serve as nonvoting delegates to REC GRAND RAPIDS 1996.

The IRC also named Rev. Arie G. Van Eek, executive secretary of the Council of Christian Reformed Churches in Canada, and Rev. Jason Chen, campus minister at the University of Iowa and pastor of the Chinese CRC in Iowa City, Iowa, as advisers to REC GRAND RAPIDS 1996. Rev. Chen served as voting delegate to REC ATHENS 1992.

C. *National Association of Evangelicals (NAE)*

The fifty-fourth annual convention of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) is scheduled to meet in Minneapolis, Minnesota, on March 3 through 5, 1996. The theme of the convention is "Reaching America: One Voice

in Unity." Rev. Leonard J. Hofman and Dr. David H. Engelhard will represent the CRCNA at this convention. Dr. Donald Argue, former president of North Central Bible College, Minneapolis, Minnesota, serves as *president* of the NAE following the retirement in 1995 of Dr. Billy Melvin as *executive director*. With restructuring of the NAE, the name of the office has been changed.

Rev. Leonard J. Hofman is scheduled to become the chairman of the Board of Directors of NAE at the Minneapolis convention. He has served for the past several years as a member of the executive committee and as chairman of the Bylaws Committee and the Awards Committee.

IV. Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (RCN) (Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland) (GKN)

Following an extensive IRC report and intensive discussion, Synod 1995 adopted the following recommendations, with their grounds, of the IRC and synod's advisory committee on interdenominational matters:

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.
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.
3. That synod instruct the IRC to report regularly to synod on its dialogue with the GKN.

(Acts of Synod 1995 pp. 707-08)

The IRC has taken note of the synodical decisions as well as the consternation caused by the fraternal address to synod by Rev. R.S.E. Vissinga.

At its July 1995 meeting the IRC asked the administrative secretary to contact the ecumenical offices of the GKN to ascertain when suitable arrangements could be made to carry out IRC's synodical mandate.

At its September 1995 meeting the IRC adopted the following motions:

1. That a delegation be appointed to go to the Netherlands at the time of the GKN General Synod, April 22-24, 1996, to
 - a. Present fraternal greetings on behalf of the CRCNA and to
 - b. Discuss with GKN representatives the issues of concern to the CRCNA.
2. That in the interim, in consultation with the entire IRC, the delegation prepare for the discussion by
 - a. Informing itself concerning the GKN position(s) re the issues of concern.
 - b. Identifying the points at issue that are the most troublesome.
 - c. Formulating a statement that reflects the reasons for and the nature of the CRCNA concerns.
3. That the delegation report to the IRC in sufficient time for the IRC to present a report and make recommendations to the CRCNA Synod 1996.

The IRC selected the following to serve as a delegation to the GKN: Dr. John B. Hulst, convener; Dr. David H. Engelhard; and Dr. Henry Zwaanstra.

At the request of the IRC, this action was reported to the churches via *The Banner* and the *Christian Courier*.

V. Christian Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (CRCN) (Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland) (CGKN)

After Synod 1995 the fraternal delegates from the CRCN, Revs. J. Westerink and P. den Butter, prepared an eleven-page report to the CRCN Committee on Ecumenicity along with recommendations pertaining to the ecclesiastical relationship of the CRCN to the CRCNA. A copy of the report was received by the IRC at its September 1995 meeting.

Noting that the CRCN had extended an invitation to the CRCNA to send a fraternal delegate to the CRCN general synod, October 17-20, 1995, and the serious nature of the report, the IRC took immediate action to respond to the invitation. Revs. Jacob Kuntz of Brampton, Ontario, and Gerard Ringnalda of Orillia, Ontario, were sent as fraternal delegates to the CRCN. Their availability, their personal familiarity with the CRCN, and their facility with the Dutch language factored into their being selected. A written report was received from these delegates by the IRC at its December 1995 meeting.

On December 4, 1995, the following decision of the general synod of the CRCN was received:

Synod, considering

1. that in the past the Christian Reformed Church in many ways sounded a clear Reformed note, as a result of which this church was respected by many;
2. that recently, during a number of years, synods of the Christian Reformed Church have made decisions that give evidence to the fact that this church is departing from the Reformed path;
3. that recently during a number of years and at various occasions, our churches have seriously endeavored to communicate their concerns with respect to certain developments within the Christian Reformed Church, to which the Christian Reformed Church, however, appears to have given little or no attention;

declares

1. that it is saddened to see the Christian Reformed Church deviate more and more from the authentic, Reformed path and follow a new direction;
2. that under the present circumstances it is not useful to continue our ecclesiastical fellowship with the Christian Reformed Church or to maintain another form of correspondence;

and declares

1. to no longer maintain the ecclesiastical fellowship with the Christian Reformed Church but to appeal to this church to return from the chosen path;
2. to communicate this decision to the Interchurch Relations Committee of the Christian Reformed Church.

The IRC decided to send a letter of response immediately to the CRCN, acknowledging the action taken at the October 17, 1995, meeting of its general synod and expressing the fact that, because we value and cherish our relationship with the CRCN, we are grieved and saddened by its decision to terminate ecclesiastical fellowship with the CRCNA. The CRCN was informed that the IRC of the CRCNA will give further consideration to the matter and will provide the CRCN with a more substantive reply at a later date.

The IRC further decided that the delegation scheduled to meet with the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands should also be commissioned to meet with representatives of the Christian Reformed Churches in the Netherlands in April 1996, when it is in the Netherlands.

On February 16, 1996, Revs. Kuntz and Ringnalda met with the IRC. They shared their observations relative to the attitude and action of the CRCN and suggested various subjects for discussion with the CRCN.

In a letter dated January 23, 1996, the general secretary of the CRCN expressed a willingness on behalf of the CRCN ecumenical committee to meet with representatives of the CRCNA.

VI. Reformed Churches in South Africa (RCSA)

In keeping with the request of the IRC, Synod 1995 extended the suspension of CRCNA ecclesiastical relations with the RCSA until 1997. As stated in the grounds, "The extension to Synod 1997 will give the IRC time to continue the exchange of correspondence and possibly arrange for an IRC delegation to meet with the deputies of the RCSA" (*Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 700).

A response to letters received from the RCSA and its deputies for correspondence with churches in foreign countries (*Agenda for Synod 1992*, pp. 162-69) was sent on July 5, 1995.

On February 12, 1996, a reply to the July 5, 1995, letter was received from the RCSA deputies for correspondence with churches in foreign countries, in which they express appreciation for the July 5 letter as a "token of the earnestness of [our] approach." They acknowledge that more discussion will be necessary with respect to "the issue of apartheid" as well as "disturbances in [our] churches and [our] hermeneutical stance on certain issues."

The IRC will carefully review this correspondence with a view to continuing the dialogue with the RCSA regarding the issues that resulted in the suspension of ecclesiastical fellowship.

VII. Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa (DRC)

Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid Afrika (NGK)

A letter was received from the office of Dr. W.J. Botha, director of ecumenical affairs and information of the DRC expressing "high regard for the CRCNA, for its ministry and witness in North America as well as in many parts of the world." On behalf of the DRC Dr. Botha makes formal request that fraternal relations be established between the CRCNA and the DRC.

The request was acknowledged, and a letter is being sent inviting the DRC delegates to REC GRAND RAPIDS in June 1996 to meet with members of the IRC to discuss issues pertaining to an ecclesiastical relationship between our denominations.

VIII. Reformed Church in Japan

The IRC appointed its president, Rev. Edward Van Baak, to serve as fraternal delegate to the Reformed Church of Japan on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of its organization. A Celebrative Assembly and Believers' Rally is scheduled for May 1996. Papers on predestination and on missions and evangelism will be published by the RCJ in connection with this celebration.

IX. Reformed Churches of New Zealand (RCNZ)

A letter of invitation to send a fraternal delegate to the synod of the RCNZ arrived too late to provide that church with a timely reply. The IRC noted that a number of concerns based on erroneous information or opinion were listed in

the Interchurch Relations Committee report of the RCNZ *Agenda*. At its December 1995 meeting the IRC instructed its administrative secretary to send a letter of explanation relative to the late arrival of the RCNZ letter and the errors in portions of its Interchurch Relations Committee report.

On December 29, 1995, the IRC received a letter from the secretary of the RCNZ Interchurch Relations Committee with the following information:

It falls to our committee to convey to you that our recent synod has decided, with sadness, to suspend ties with the CRCNA.

As you know, for some years now, we have been concerned about your decisions regarding women serving in the ruling offices, the creation/evolution debate, as well as other matters including your relation with churches that hold unscriptural teachings and the publication of some materials whose content we regard as unorthodox. We refer to our correspondence dated 21 June 1990, your reply of 15 February 1991, and our letter of 16 February 1993.

We have expressed our earnest desire that the CRC would not continue further on a path which for us is a departure from a faithful, biblical and confessional position and can only convey our deep disappointment at some of the decisions of your recent synod. We know that there are many congregations and ministers still within the CRC that are concerned and we wish to add our voice to theirs.

Brothers, we realize that over the years the CRC has been of great assistance to our small federation of churches here in New Zealand. We do not minimize that and we remain appreciative of these contacts. Our prayer is that the CRC would return to its foundations and that our relationship might be reestablished.

The IRC will review the decision recorded in the RCNZ *Acts of Synod 1995* upon receipt of the same and will prepare a response to the RCNZ.

X. Churches in ecclesiastical fellowship in North America

A. Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC)

A meeting between the Committee on Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and the IRC of the CRCNA held on March 24, 1995, was reported in the *Acts of Synod 1995*, pages 597-98. A letter dated June 7, 1995, was received from the general assembly of the OPC, meeting in Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania, on May 31-June 6, 1995.

In the letter the OPC expressed an apology for mistakenly quoting from pastoral advice proposed to Synod 1973 rather than correctly quoting from the *Acts of Synod 1973*. The apology was graciously received (*Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 701).

Although there is some question regarding whether the remainder of the letter was referred to the synodical advisory committee on interdenominational matters or to the IRC, the IRC is preparing a response for recommendation to synod.

B. Presbyterian Church in America (PCA)

The IRC received a letter dated September 15, 1995, communicating the following decision of the general assembly of the PCA adopted in June 1995:

We value the relationship we have with the CRC through NAPARC. It is our desire to continue in full fellowship with you. However, we are grieved and distressed over the action of the 1995 Synod of the Christian Reformed Church to permit women to hold the offices of minister and elder. The action of the Christian Reformed Church is in contradiction to the clear teaching of Scripture and the historic presbyterian and reformed confessions of faith. Furthermore, we have

instructed our Interchurch Relations Committee to use all due process afforded them in NAPARC to remove the Christian Reformed Church from membership in NAPARC, if the Christian Reformed Church does not repent of and rescind the action at the Synod. We commend the sizable number in your midst who are working hard to see the CRC remain faithful to Scripture on this issue and pray for God to use this group to prevail at the 1996 Synod.

May the Lord Jesus Christ, King and Head of the Church, be glorified as we pray with and for one another in these days of distress.

The IRC is seeking to assist Synod 1996 by proposing a response to this communication. The response will be submitted to synod by way of a supplementary report.

XI. Nominations for committee members

The three-year terms of Dr. John B. Hulst, Rev. Alfred S. Luke, and Rev. Edward A. Van Baak expire in September 1996. Only Rev. Van Baak is eligible for reelection. The IRC presents the following nominations:

A. To replace Dr. John B. Hulst

Dr. Lyle Bierma is professor of theology at Reformed Bible College. He is a graduate of Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary, and he received his Ph.D. in church history from Duke University. He is a member of Neland Avenue CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Dr. James A. De Jong is president of Calvin Theological Seminary and a member of Plymouth Heights CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan. He is a graduate of Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary, and he received his Th.D. from the Free University of Amsterdam.

B. To replace Rev. Alfred S. Luke

Rev. Jason Chen is a graduate of Calvin Theological Seminary. He has served as campus minister at the University of Iowa, Iowa City, since 1971 and as the pastor of Chinese Christian Reformed Church, Iowa City, Iowa, since 1973. He served as delegate to REC ATHENS 1992 and has been appointed as adviser to REC GRAND RAPIDS 1996. He serves as chair of the synodical Committee to Study the Development of a Racially and Ethnically Diverse Family of God.

Rev. John Taek Kim is a graduate of Calvin Theological Seminary and a member of the Hahn-In CRC, Wyoming, Michigan. He received a master's degree in missiology from both Calvin Theological Seminary and Fuller Theological Seminary and a Th.D. in missiology from the Free University of Amsterdam. He is currently an adjunct faculty member at Calvin Theological Seminary, serving as director of the Master of Theology (Th.M.) program entitled Korean Ministries in the North American Context.

C. For the position presently held by Rev. Edward A. Van Baak

Rev. Charles Steenstra recently retired as pastor of Westview CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan. He is a graduate of Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary. He has served on the boards of CRC Publications and Home Missions and as regional pastor for Classis Grand Rapids North.

Rev. Edward A. Van Baak (incumbent) is a graduate of Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary. He served for many years as a missionary to Japan, on the staff of CRWM, and as director of Chinese ministries for CRWM.

He currently is the president of IRC and is a member of Fuller Avenue CRC in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

XII. Representation at synod

Rev. Edward A. Van Baak (president), Dr. John B. Hulst (vice president), and Rev. Leonard J. Hofman (administrative secretary) have been appointed to represent the IRC at Synod 1996, along with other IRC members as necessary.

XII. Matters requiring synodical action

- A. IRC representation at synod (see Section XII).
- B. Change in NAPARC constitution Article V, Section 3, re suspension of membership (see Section III, A, 2).
- C. Reminder to congregations and classes of NAPARC Golden Rule Comity Agreement (see Section III, A, 3).
- D. Election of committee members (see Section XI).

Interchurch Relations Committee

Peter W. Brouwer

Claire Elgersma

David H. Engelhard (ex officio)

Robert J. Haven

Leonard J. Hofman, administrative secretary

John B. Hulst, vice president

Alfred S. Luke

Cynthia Roelofs

Edward A. Van Baak, president

Henry Zwaanstra

I. Mandate

A. Synod 1995 requested the Judicial Code Committee (JCC) "to clarify the applicability of the five-year statute of limitations" (*Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 662, Art. 30). The following grounds were given:

- 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.

B. The general secretary asked the Judicial Code Committee to consider whether Article 1-a-2)-a) of the code, which allows only members of the CRC and its assemblies to bring charges, should be continued as it is or whether non-members should also be given the privilege of bringing charges.

C. The Judicial Code Committee, on its own initiative, reviewed some provisions of the code in the light of its experience and recommends changes.

II. Discussion

A. *Statute of limitations*

As the grounds for Synod 1995's action indicate, there are two facets to the question which the JCC is to address:

1. Does the five-year statute of limitations in the code (see Art. 8-b) limit the exercise of general discipline covered by Church Order Article 81 and special discipline covered by Church Order Articles 82 through 84? The answer is no if the Judicial Code is not brought into play. The answer is yes if the Judicial Code is brought into play. Article 1-a-1) of the Judicial Code answers the question:

These provisions of the Judicial Code apply to judicial hearings before a council, classis, or synod occasioned by the bringing of written charges as described in Article 1-a. Such admonition and discipline of the church as do not involve the hearing of written charges requiring formal adjudication are not governed by these provisions. . .

Therefore, if written charges are filed and either a judicial hearing is requested by one party or the assembly decides to proceed under the Judicial Code, the statute of limitations in the code applies.

2. Is a statute of limitations appropriate when abuse is alleged? In the event of abuse, particularly in the case of sexual abuse by an authority figure, it may be extremely difficult for a victim to confront the abuser or bring charges against the abuser until the authority relationship has ended. Such a difficulty is particularly likely if the victim is a minor or even a very young adult.

The Guidelines for Ministerial Personnel in Their Interpersonal Relationships and the Procedures and Guidelines for Handling Abuse Allegations Against a Church Leader set out in the appendix to the *Acts of*

Synod 1995 (p. 779ff.) and approved by *Synod 1995 (Acts of Synod 1995, p. 672)* include definitions of four types of abuse: physical, neglect, sexual, and spiritual.

The Judicial Code Committee believes that the probable psychological impact of sexual abuse may well preclude effective action by the victim for an extended period of time. Therefore, the committee believes that any statute of limitations for charges of sexual abuse is inappropriate. The other three types of abuse are not as likely to render the victim psychologically unable to act effectively. Also, standards change over a period of time. For example, what may be considered spiritual abuse today may well not have been so considered twenty years ago. A statute of limitations is a legitimate protection against an anachronistic evaluation of conduct. The committee will recommend elimination of any statute of limitations for allegations of sexual abuse. The committee will recommend that any abuse to a victim who is a minor may be the subject of charges brought at any time until the minor is age 22 or within five years of the alleged abuse. For abuse other than sexual abuse and other than abuse of a minor, the five-year statute of limitations rule should be retained (see Recommendation A below).

B. *Non-member bringing charges*

The letter from the general secretary states the issue well:

This is not an easy matter, since refusing to hear charges from a non-CRC person means that some serious wrongdoing might go on undetected or uncharged just because we will not hear charges from non-CRC members.

For example, a person abused in her teens by a CRC minister leaves the CRC and maybe even the Christian faith because of the experience. Then, as a non-member this person gains the courage to confront her abuser to bring charges against him. Should we not hear those charges?

On the other hand, if a non-CRC member is not under the "jurisdiction" or authority of the decision-making body, such an accuser need not live by the decision and/or any mediation required by the assembly making the decision. This is not a good situation either.

The committee judges that the Judicial Code should be amended to allow a non-member to bring charges limited to allegations of conduct which directly affected that person. We should not open the door to charges by a non-member concerning doctrinal or policy matters. The fact that we may not be able to bind the non-member to "accept" the results of the Judicial Code process should not preclude the church from receiving reliable information useful in disciplining church leaders (see Recommendation B below).

C. The Judicial Code Committee believes it should recommend to synod changes in the Judicial Code based on experience with it during the past few years. Recommendations A and C through L cover such changes. Recommendation M deals with Church Order Supplement, Article 30-b, not with the Judicial Code.

Recommendation A proposes changes to Article 6 of the Judicial Code to incorporate the time limit changes discussed above, to simplify the requirements for a charge, and to require the complainant to provide a copy of the charge to the respondent.

Recommendation B deals with the matter of allowing a non-member to file charges under limited circumstances.

Recommendations C and D represent an attempt to make the Preamble more understandable and easier to follow.

Recommendation E is a simplification with no substantive change.

Recommendation F, along with part of Recommendation I, clarifies the process by which the assembly determines whether the charges are substantial. The Judicial Code Committee believes that occasionally charges are filed which can be disposed of without Judicial Code proceedings because it is clear from the initial documents that the matter is not appropriate for a Judicial Code proceeding. For example, sometimes the matter is really an overture, not charges or an appeal falling under the Judicial Code.

Recommendation G is a substantial change requiring the respondent to file a written answer to the charges. The committee believes it will add to the efficiency of any hearing to have the issues in writing some time before the hearing.

Recommendation H is an attempt to improve the efficiency of the hearing process. Occasionally there have been hearings where a significant amount of the time is spent getting the proposed exhibits organized. It is appropriate that these items be submitted in advance.

Recommendation I revises the hearing process to reflect some changes naturally resulting from the fact that there is a written answer in advance of the hearing.

Recommendations J and L clarify the matter of who conducts the original hearing.

Recommendations K and M lengthen the time for appeal to ninety (90) days.

III. Recommendations

A. That Article 6 of the Judicial Code be revised to read as follows:

- a. Every charge, in order to receive a judicial hearing, must be filed in writing with the assembly, must set forth the alleged offense, and must specify the facts relied upon to sustain the charge, including, as far as possible, the time and place of the offense. The complainant shall mail or otherwise deliver a copy of the charge to the respondent at the same time as it is filed with the assembly.
- b. The charge shall not allege more than one offense. However, several charges against the same respondent, whether brought by one or more complainants, may be presented at the same time and may, at the discretion of the assembly, be heard together. When several charges are heard at the same time, a decision on each charge must be made separately.
- c. Time limits
 - 1) There is no time limit for filing a charge of sexual abuse.
 - 2) An allegation of abuse to a minor other than an allegation of sexual abuse may be filed at any time within five years after the date of the alleged offense or at any time before the person who was allegedly abused reaches age 22, whichever allows the longer time.
 - 3) Except for the provisions in 1) and 2) immediately above, no charge may be filed for an alleged offense which occurred more than five years prior to the date on which the charge is filed.

B. That Article 1-a-2) be revised to read as follows:

The provisions of this Article 1-a pertain to the bringing of written charges by

- a) a member of the Christian Reformed Church (the "church") against another member or against an assembly; or
- b) an assembly against another assembly or against a member; or
- c) a person who is not a member of the Christian Reformed Church against a member or assembly of the Christian Reformed Church, provided such person has been directly affected as an individual by the charged offense.

C. That the material in the Preamble under the title "About Article 1-a" be revised to read as follows:

Article 1-a deals with matters involving members and, in some limited instances, non-members and/or assemblies of the church. With respect to such matters, the provisions of the Judicial Code apply only

- a) when written charges are filed; and
- b) when either party to the dispute requests a judicial hearing or when the assembly first hearing the charges determines to constitute a judicial hearing.

If the above two conditions are met, the assembly must still make a determination as to whether or not informal means have or have not been exhausted. If such means have not been exhausted, the assembly should seriously consider postponing the judicial hearing while further informal efforts are undertaken. If the assembly determines that informal means have been exhausted or if further informal means do not resolve the matter, the assembly will proceed to conduct a judicial hearing.

It should be noted that matters of admonition and discipline do not require a judicial hearing unless there are written charges which either party or the assembly determines require a judicial hearing. The Judicial Code assumes the fundamental and primary role of informal means in all matters of admonition and discipline; it recognizes that these matters are best handled by informal counseling and entreaty; if sanctions are required, it leaves the determination of them to the church under the Church Order.

The assembly must also decide, under Article 10 of the Judicial Code, whether or not the charges are substantial.

D. That the material in the Preamble under the title "About Article 1-b" be revised to read as follows:

Article 1-b deals with disputes involving agencies, boards, or committees on one side and their employees or members or assemblies of the church on the other side. With respect to all such matters, the provisions of the Judicial Code apply only

- a. when a written appeal or written charges are filed; and

- b. when a judicial hearing is requested by one of the parties or when the assembly before whom the charges first are filed determines to constitute a judicial hearing.

Article 1-b is not to be treated as an alternative method whereby church members or assemblies can challenge or question the decisions or conduct of agencies, boards, or committees in matters which are properly the substance of an overture or a gravamen.

E. That Article 1-a-3) be revised to read as follows:

- 3) A person or an assembly filing a charge shall be called the complainant, and the person or assembly against whom the charge is filed shall be called the respondent.

F. That Article 1-a-4) of the Judicial Code be revised to read as follows:

- 4) Written charges brought by a complainant against a respondent alleging an offense in profession or practice against the Word of God, the doctrinal standards of the church, or the Church Order shall, upon the request of either the complainant or the respondent for a judicial hearing, be deemed to require formal adjudication unless the assembly, acting under Article 10, determines that the charges are not substantial. When neither the complainant nor the respondent requests a formal judicial hearing, the assembly before whom the charges are first filed shall determine whether or not to constitute a formal hearing.

G. Article 7 of the Judicial Code should be revised to read as follows:

A respondent shall file a written answer to the charge with the assembly and shall mail or otherwise deliver a copy to the complainant within thirty (30) days after the written charge is filed.

H. That Article 8 of the Judicial Code should be revised to read as follows:

- a. A hearing for an alleged offense shall begin no later than one year from the time the charge is filed.
- b. The assembly, after consulting with the complainant and the respondent, shall set the time and place for the hearing on the charge and shall notify the parties.
- c. The assembly shall set a time, not less than fifteen (15) days and not more than thirty (30) days, before the hearing by which the parties shall each furnish the other party with a list of witnesses to be called and a copy of each exhibit to be offered at the hearing. A party shall be limited to such witnesses and exhibits unless the party persuades the assembly of good cause for not having the information available by the deadline.
- d. Within the same time period set forth in c above, each party shall furnish the assembly with a list of witnesses that the party plans to call at the hearing and a copy of all documents to be offered at the hearing, in chronological order and indexed.

I. That Article 10 of the Judicial Code should be revised to read as follows:

The assembly shall determine whether the written charges are substantial. This may be done by the assembly on the basis of the written charge, the answer, the proposed exhibits, and, if the assembly so desires, an informal conference with the parties and their representatives. The assembly may delegate the review of information and the informal conference to a committee, but the assembly, after receiving a report from the committee, makes the determination. A decision by a council or a classis that a charge is not substantial may be appealed.

The hearing, if ordered, shall proceed as follows:

- a. Each party may make an opening statement summarizing what that party expects to prove.
- b. The complainant shall proceed first with proofs including witnesses and exhibits.
- c. The respondent shall then proceed with proofs including witnesses and exhibits.
- d. A witness must testify at the hearing, and all witnesses may be questioned by both parties unless the parties agree in writing at least fifteen (15) days before the hearing to use a written statement of a person not present at the hearing.
- e. The complainant and the respondent shall, in turn, summarize their cases either orally or in writing.
- f. If either party objects to irregularity in the proceedings, the objection must be entered in the record. The presiding officer may sustain or disallow the objection. If the chair's ruling is challenged, the assembly must vote on the question of sustaining the chair.

J. That Article 15 of the Judicial Code should be revised to read as follows:

If a council or an agency, board, or committee of classis is the respondent, the original hearing shall be before the classis and in accordance with the hearing procedures set forth in Articles 10-14 of the Judicial Code.

K. That in Articles 16 and 21 of the Judicial Code the time for appeal should be changed from thirty (30) to ninety (90) days.

L. That Article 22 of the Judicial Code should have the following inserted at the beginning:

If a classis or an agency, board, or committee of synod is the respondent, the original hearing shall be before the Judicial Code Committee in accordance with the procedures set forth in Articles 10-14.

M. That Church Order Supplement, Article 30-b be made consistent with the Judicial Code by the following change: In Article 30-b, Part B, subparagraph 9, sixty (60) days should be changed to ninety (90) days.

Judicial Code Committee
Donald F. Oosterhouse, chairman
John G. Van Ryn, reporter

I. Brief overview

In 1995 the Sermons for Reading Services Committee served some 175 churches in North America, Australia, and New Zealand as well as a small number of individuals. Twenty-seven sermons were published in three booklets of nine each.

The committee consists of Rev. William T. Koopmans (1996), chairman; Mr. Ray Vander Ploeg (1996), secretary-treasurer; Rev. Harry Vander Windt (1997); Rev. Fred Heslinga (1998); and Rev. Paul Stadt, alternate. Rev. Koopmans has completed his term. Alternate Rev. Paul Stadt has indicated his willingness to serve as a regular member. That opens the position of alternate. Mr. Ray Vander Ploeg has served three years as secretary-treasurer and is willing to serve a second term.

Because of increased costs for printing and mailing, the committee had no choice but to increase subscription prices. New rates for the twenty-seven sermons are \$75.00 (Can) or \$60.00 (US).

II. Recommendations

- A. That synod approve the publication of *The Living Word* for 1997 to provide sermons for reading services for the churches.
- B. That synod encourage churches and ministers to subscribe to this service for the benefit of churches and individuals.
- C. That synod elect one regular committee member from the following nominations:
 1. Rev. Hendrik Bruinsma, pastor of Maranatha CRC, Woodbridge, Ontario.
 2. Rev. Paul Stadt (incumbent alternate), pastor of Georgetown, Ontario, CRC.
- D. That synod elect one of the following to serve as alternate:
 1. Rev. Kenneth Benjamins, pastor of Wyoming, Ontario, CRC.
 2. Rev. A. Carel Geleynse, pastor of Calvary CRC, Flamborough, Ontario.
- E. That synod elect one of the following to serve as secretary-treasurer:
 1. Mr. Henry Bergsma, retired school administrator from Barrie, Ontario.
 2. Mr. Ray Vander Ploeg (incumbent), retired Christian-school principal from Woodstock, Ontario.

Sermons for Reading Services Committee
Fred Heslinga
William Koopmans, chairman
Paul Stadt, alternate
Ray Vander Ploeg, secretary-treasurer
Harry Vander Windt

DENOMINATIONALLY RELATED AGENCIES

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As reported in *Agenda for Synod 1995*, the Dordt College community used the 1995-1996 academic year to celebrate its fortieth anniversary.

We began the celebration at the 1995 commencement by reflecting on the *past*. Special note was taken of the biblical principles upon which the college was founded—the creation of all things by our sovereign God, the redemption of the cosmos by Jesus Christ, and the call to the redeemed to serve Christ everywhere and in all things.

Recognizing the importance of these principles, throughout the year we spent time discussing how Dordt can retain its biblical Reformational perspective. Central to that discussion was a convocation address by Dr. George Marsden, author of *The Soul of the American University*. It became clear that the college can retain its identity only if its entire academic program is formed and reformed according to foundational principles.

We also spent time considering *present* blessings. We continue to thank God for a loyal constituency, a growing student body (an enrollment of 1209 for 1995-1996), a dedicated and well-qualified faculty, a caring support staff, a strong academic program, an expanding campus, and a solid financial base. At the same time, we recognize that we must be careful lest we misuse these blessings or take them for granted.

As we face the *future*, we are aware of many challenges. For example, while preparing students for service in contemporary society, we must maintain a sense of and commitment to our Reformed heritage. As we reach out to the broader Reformed and evangelical community, we must stay close to the Christian Reformed Church. While we press for a program of high quality, we must see to it that a Dordt education remains affordable to the community we serve. And recruiting a growing number of students, we must, at the same time, make sure that facilities, faculty, and student services are sufficient to support a larger student body.

During its forty years of existence, Dordt has endeavored to maintain a close relationship with the Christian Reformed Church and to serve its youth with quality Christian higher education. For the most part the churches have responded by generously supporting the college, and the college appreciates that support. However, in recent years gifts from the churches have been decreasing. For example, in 1990 the college received \$608,000 in gift support and in 1995, \$557,077. We urgently request the churches to maintain and even increase their support—not only for the sake of Dordt College but primarily for the benefit of our covenant youth.

I am thankful for the opportunity to have served the college for these past twenty-eight years, fourteen of them as its president. I am also thankful that Dr. Carl E. Zylstra has accepted the appointment to assume the presidency when I retire on June 30, 1996. I trust that God will bless him and Dordt College as they move from this century into the next.

Dordt College
John B. Hulst, president

I. Introduction

The Institute for Christian Studies is a degree-granting Christian graduate school in Toronto, Ontario. Its aim is to allow the basic biblical insights of a Christian worldview to permeate academic study at every point. To that end, ICS offers programs of study at the master's level in worldview studies, biblical studies and hermeneutics, education, systematic philosophy, history of philosophy, philosophy of history, political theory, philosophical aesthetics, systematic theology, and philosophical theology and at the doctoral level in all of these areas except worldview studies.

"Making a Difference Together," the ICS theme for this year, reflects continuing efforts to emphasize the partnership that ICS and its supporters have formed to advance Christian graduate education. Women and men from across North America and the rest of the world have joined again this year to affirm the need and opportunities to witness to Christ as Renewer and Redeemer of learning.

II. Faculty changes

A. Dr. Vaden House is joining the faculty as senior member (professor) in philosophy of science and technology. We look forward to his starting in June 1996. He comes to us from The King's University College in Edmonton, Alberta.

B. Dr. Calvin Seerveld "graduated" to senior member (professor) emeritus, having served at ICS as senior member (professor) in philosophical aesthetics from 1972-1995. We thank God for the remarkable contribution Dr. Seerveld has made to the field of aesthetics through his teaching, writing, and speaking.

C. Dr. Brian Walsh has left ICS to become CRC chaplain at the University of Toronto. He has richly blessed the Institute through his work in the worldview program.

D. Dr. Ken Badley will also be leaving ICS this summer after four years of directing the philosophy of education program.

Faculty members are being recruited at the time of this writing to fill the three positions being vacated. We covet the prayers of the churches as ICS goes through this time of transition. Ask that God will provide gifted scholars/teachers in time for the 1996-1997 academic year.

III. Staff changes

The administrative structure has had some changes at ICS this year.

A. Ross Mortimer retired from the position of vice president of administration. We thank God for Ross and the diligent and stewardly management of resources that he carried out on behalf of ICS.

B. John Meiboom was promoted from director of development to vice president of administration and development.

C. Connie Kuipers joined ICS in December 1995 to become conference and communications coordinator. Her responsibilities include organizing the various academic and constituency conferences and workshops ICS offers.

D. Mike den Haan was hired as development officer. He brings a strong commitment to raise the resources needed to continue and expand the work of ICS.

E. Tia Spencer has taken over the bookkeeping duties at the Institute. In addition, she became the administrative assistant to the vice president of administration and development and to the president.

We are thankful for God's faithfulness embodied in the team of people mentioned above, as they seek to support and maintain the academic work of the Institute.

IV. New students

Junior members (students) continue to be drawn to ICS from around the world. This academic year at ICS our junior members come from countries such as Kenya, South Africa, the Philippines, Korea, Japan, England, and Indonesia, as well as the United States and Canada. This rich diversity makes for interesting and multifaceted classroom discussions.

V. New technology

ICS is soon to be on-line. Plans are under way for staff, faculty, and students to have access to the Internet. Look for an ICS home page on the World Wide Web in the near future.

VI. New challenges

Every year ICS looks to increase its financial viability. This year has been no different. Its supporters/partners have again been a blessing through their faithfulness. Like other not-for-profit organizations, ICS must work increasingly hard to find the funds to keep afloat. We would like to express appreciation to churches that have continued to support Christian scholarship at ICS through directed annual offerings. We would also like to encourage congregations to take another look at ICS as a recipient of their scheduled support.

ICS continues to increase its already considerable presence in Christian academia, as well as in the secular academy, through publishing relevant books and academic articles. ICS is also looking for new ways to link academic work and social response. Plans include offering a variety of workshops and conferences. Some of these will target undergraduate students, who can greatly benefit from resources available from ICS.

The faculty, staff, and students at ICS thank the CRC for its support. As we continue working in the light of the good news of God's forgiveness and redemption, we appreciate that your support allows us to be "Making a Difference Together."

Institute for Christian Studies
Harry Fernhout, president

The year 1995 was a year of continued growth and development for The King's University College in Edmonton, Alberta. Of special significance was the addition of a number of new programs and associated growth in enrollment to a high of 523 students.

Four new degree programs were launched in the fall of 1995. The most significant of these is a degree program in elementary education which leads to a Bachelor of Education and teacher certification in any school jurisdiction in the Province of Alberta. With this new program King's is the first privately operated college in Canada to be able to offer a completely independent accredited degree program in education. In addition, new programs were begun in environmental studies, sociology, and business, the latter in collaboration with Athabasca University. Students can now enroll in degree programs in twelve different areas of study, and both three-year and four-year degrees are offered.

Faculty at King's are active in scholarly research; their efforts have been rewarded with a number of external research grants. Of note was the selection of King's for two research programs funded by the Pew Foundation under the auspices of the Coalition of Christian Colleges and Universities. As of this year, all King's continuing faculty members possess an earned doctorate.

The college continues to develop its student-life program. An important event this year was the appointment of Rev. Roy Berkenbosch as the new dean of students. Under Rev. Berkenbosch's leadership renewed emphasis is being placed on providing students with opportunities for spiritual growth as part of their college experience.

The college is grateful for the ministry shares it receives from Christian Reformed congregations as the area college for western Canada. As a result of strong enrollment growth and excellent donor support, we were able to balance the budget in the past year and to reduce indebtedness by a modest amount. In addition, we were gladdened to receive designated gifts for a new practice pipe organ, a fifteen-passenger van, and bleachers for the new gymnasium. Though the college's debt on the new campus still represents a formidable financial challenge, we were pleased to be able to improve services to students and to operate without a deficit.

The year 1995 was a year in which The King's University College experienced continued blessings, especially in terms of new opportunities to serve students. We thank God for his provision and for the opportunity to be a significant witness to Christian higher education in western Canada.

The King's University College
Henk Van Anel, president

We are grateful to the Lord for his direction and sustenance and to our support community for serving with us as we embrace the challenge of providing Christian university education.

Our enrollment target of 472 full-time-equivalent students for the 1995-1996 academic year has been met. We are privileged to be serving over 500 full- and part-time students who come from a variety of backgrounds, including twenty-nine different denominations. This year's admissions plan calls for additional outreach into the evangelical community and increased recruiting in the United States. The college's five-year plan has set an FTE enrollment goal of 502 students for next year. Redeemer's retention figures are high; typically, 73 percent of first-year, 85 percent of second-year, and 90 percent of third-year students return for further study.

Redeemer students are well received by the academic community. An articulation agreement strengthening the college's science program has been reached with the University of Guelph, which now reserves placements in its Honors B.Sc. programs in chemistry and biochemistry for Redeemer students who wish to transfer. This arrangement allows students to complete a three-year general degree at Redeemer and an honors degree at Guelph.

The community continues to be served by the college through various avenues. Of particular interest is the fall theatrical production. This past year *Stranger in the Land*, an account of wartime occupation and postwar emigration, was performed before a sell-out crowd nightly for an entire week. The college is also increasing its service to the community by offering off-campus courses for adult students. During this academic year two credit courses were taught in Woodstock, Ontario, and two continuing-education courses were offered at the college.

By their participation in regular mission activities, both at home and abroad, Redeemer students are learning to demonstrate the love of Christ in very practical and necessary ways.

Redeemer College assists students in financing their Christian liberal-arts education. In fact, making this education financially accessible is a key effort of the college. This year 160 students shared \$173,000 of scholarship money. Assistance is now being offered to out-of-province students by way of travel grants and need-based bursaries. Our work-study program is very popular with students. This need-based program offers students part-time employment on campus and will provide 245 students with over \$237,000 in earnings this year.

Most of this financial aid comes from churches. Although church support is down slightly from last year, the college is grateful for the faithful supporters who share our vision for Christian university education. We hope that CRC churches and individual members will continue to remember Redeemer College in their prayers and in their financial contributions.

Redeemer College
Justin D. Cooper, president

We at Reformed Bible College (RBC) deeply appreciate the relationship we enjoy with the Christian Reformed Church and are grateful for this opportunity to share something of ourselves with you. The character and purpose of our institution reflect both ministry and education: we strive to practice what we teach. This synergism results in a dynamic and rewarding atmosphere as students see how faith is put into action and how learning is put into practice. The look into RBC which follows will give you some idea of the joy, purpose, and direction we have as a college preparing students for leadership and witness in full-time kingdom service.

During the 1995-1996 academic year, RBC has served about 300 students with various new and traditional programs. Most students were enrolled in the on-campus program; 110 students took extension courses by correspondence. Fourteen countries were represented in the student body, a mix which provided everyone the opportunity to develop in transcultural skills and understanding.

The college often enrolls students who are making mid-life career changes into full-time ministry. The experience and insight of these people does much to enhance the benefit of an RBC education both in and outside the classroom. Students freshly out of high school have responded very favorably and appreciatively to the presence of these "older" students.

One-third of the students who graduated this past May went on to study at Calvin Theological Seminary or at other graduate institutions. RBC alumni continue to serve the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee, Christian Reformed World Missions, and other organizations in a wide variety of specialized vocations. These graduates are now spread through fifty-nine countries on six continents. We are grateful for a student body which so clearly focuses on kingdom service.

RBC is accredited by both the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools (NCA) and the Accrediting Association of Bible Colleges (AABC). This accreditation means that RBC is held to high levels of quality, accountability, and curriculum development. With NCA and AABC guidance, RBC has been able to offer a variety of educational opportunities to a wide range of students.

One of these programs, EXCEL, seeks to meet the needs of those who wish to come back later in life to finish an uncompleted college degree. EXCEL results in a bachelor of religious education (B.R.E.) degree in eighteen months of classes which meet one night per week.

Trinity Evangelical Divinity School continues to work with RBC to offer graduate-level courses on campus. This degree program serves students from a broad evangelical background who come from throughout the west-Michigan area.

Students may also work toward a bachelor of arts (B.A.) degree (along with the B.R.E.) and a primary teaching certificate through a cooperative program with Cornerstone College in Grand Rapids.

Again this year RBC offered the Perspectives on the World Christian Movement course in cooperation with the U.S. Center for World Mission. This evening course drew fifty-three students into direct interaction with fifteen veteran missionaries and mission specialists.

Dr. Edwin D. Roels retired as president of the college and was succeeded by Dr. Nicholas V. Kroeze during the summer of 1995. Kroeze comes to RBC with many years of cross-cultural mission and administrative experience. His doctorate is in educational administration.

The college has filled the De Wit Chair of Cross-Cultural Missions and anticipates a renewed emphasis in this area. Administration and staff have had some change in personnel, and the college has used this opportunity to streamline the administrative presence and work load on campus. We are pleased with the supportive behavior and high morale evidenced during this time of transition and growth.

RBC believes very strongly in cooperative efforts which result in better stewardship of resources, better opportunities for students, and, most of all, in a united Christian witness in the world. We are seeking to build relationships with other institutions and to provide programs and assistance in our area of expertise. These efforts are leading us to more focused work with inner-city ministries, a closer association with church programs, and a renewed emphasis on world-evangelism training.

The desire to be sensitive and open to the Spirit's leading is essential for an institution whose primary task is to train people for ministry opportunities. The biggest challenge is not in finding additional opportunities but in focusing on the most appropriate course of action from the many opportunities open to the college. These are indeed exciting times!

The future of RBC lies in the call people hear from the Lord to dedicate themselves to full-time kingdom service. Our recruiting audience is very narrow: we want to find those people who sense the Lord calling them to service. We dedicate ourselves to helping students discern his Spirit in their lives and giving them a Bible-based education which keeps his Word as the foundation for learning and ministry. The role of church leaders in this work is extremely important: the leadership of the church needs to present the call to service, challenge parishioners with it, motivate them to respond, and support them in their training and ministry. Help us encourage many to become workers in the church.

Reformed Bible College
Nicholas V. Kroeze, president

I. Introduction

You've probably seen Trinity's ads—muscles in motion and the words *Worship, Think, Grow, Serve, and Play*. These are the verbs for a total workout at Trinity Christian College (TCC). In other words, you can not be a couch potato at TCC and get a total workout. This fact is as true in a spiritual sense as it is physically. God created each student to be a living soul who finds fulfillment in thinking, growing, serving, and playing. As Trinity's visit-day brochure advises, "Don't just sit there . . . Do something . . . Experience Trinity . . . Reach out and touch your future!" These are challenging words that must be taken seriously. But at the very center of all these activities is worship, which involves a total relationship with God. Life is worship, and Trinity students enter their personal and public lives with that principle embedded in their hearts.

Trinity's size, student diversity, location, and mission—"Shaping Lives, Transforming Culture"—combine to make Trinity a choice needed in the Christian community. For many students it has proven to be an excellent fit. Our vision is to see this institution develop into a college of 1,000 to 1,200 students within the next ten years. This number will generate the resources to serve our students with the environment, courses, professors, equipment, and facilities necessary to integrate a Christian perspective into their private and professional lives. "There is no task more urgent, no job more satisfying, no cause more exciting, no mandate more compelling, than to proclaim the truth that Jesus Christ is the hope of the world—for individuals, societal structures, and institutions. It is precisely this perspective that Trinity teaches and precisely this perspective that distinguishes Trinity as critical to the cause of Christ" (Dave Guerrin, 1979 TCC graduate, pastor in Holland, Michigan).

II. Enrollment

In the fall of 1995, 636 students registered at Trinity. Since 420 of them are residential students, our residence halls are near capacity. The majority of the students come from a Reformed background—55 percent from the CRC and another 15 percent from the RCA, PRC, OPC, and other denominations. More than two-thirds of Trinity's students qualify for church grants ranging from \$400 to \$1,000, depending on the travel distance from Chicago. These grants are funded through offerings and ministry shares of our supporting churches.

III. Academic matters

The National League for Nursing recently awarded Trinity's nursing program another "clean" eight-year accreditation. The program continues to grow not only in numbers but also in reputation, based on the quality of training and the number of clinical opportunities in the Chicagoland area. We owe deep appreciation to our nursing department chair, Dr. Cynthia Sander, and to our nursing faculty.

IV. College advancement

Dr. Sam Hamstra has assumed the leadership position for the development functions of the college, which include unrestricted giving (support of the

general fund), restricted giving (scholarships, programs, and buildings), publications, public relations, and alumni affairs.

The needs of the college continue to increase. Additional funds are always necessary to support student scholarships, to expand programs, to increase the number of faculty, to build additional buildings, to expand computer operations, or to improve student services, such as the freshman seminar program, a placement office, the academic-assistance program, and provision of health care.

A major-gifts effort is currently under way to find the support necessary to construct a new Science Center, a 46,000-square-foot facility that will house biology, chemistry, physics, computer science, animal lab, and environmental studies. Likewise, we are very excited about the dream of a 1,200-seat chapel/performing arts center that we hope will become the focal point of the Trinity campus. The new facility will provide space for a black-box theater, the communication-arts major, and expansion of our rapidly growing music program.

V. Campus life

After having served the Palos Heights CRC for seven years, Rev. Calvin Hoogendoorn was appointed Trinity's chaplain. Rev. Hoogendoorn teaches two theological courses and supervises campus ministries, including chapel services three times weekly, Bible studies, support groups, and a group of chaplain assistants.

Throughout the week students put their faith into action by participating in prison ministries, inner-city tutoring and housing rehab projects, the Pro-Life Task Force, and other ministries. Many students are also active in local churches, college choirs, ensembles, chapel band, and drama teams which are available to assist in Sunday worship in regional churches.

VI. Fiscal responsibility

The college ended the year in the black (+\$89,000). This year's surplus coupled with the \$300,000 included in the 1995-1996 budget should bring the college's short-term debt service to zero.

Tuition, room and board, and fees have been increased about 5 percent for the current year. This increase is above the cost-of-living index but below the national-average increase for higher education. We have also increased the amount budgeted for financial aid, which is designed to assist families who demonstrate need, students admitted with outstanding grade-point averages, and students who bring leadership qualities to Trinity that will enhance the various programs of the college.

The 1994-1995 audit was completed by Dryer, Ooms & Van Drunen and reviewed and approved by the board of trustees at its October 20, 1995 meeting.

VII. Goals for 1995-1996

The following goals have been developed by members of the Administrative Council, reviewed by the faculty, and presented to the board of trustees. They are critical to Trinity's future and are listed here to give you information relative to specific efforts and significant needs.

- Goal 1. To manage enrollment through effective recruitment and retention of students
- Goal 2. To launch a major-gifts program in 1995 to construct a science building and chapel/performing arts center
- Goal 3. To demonstrate responsible stewardship and budget control of funds while increasing unrestricted income
- Goal 4. To strengthen teaching effectiveness and academic-program quality
- Goal 5. To upgrade computing systems on campus
- Goal 6. To increase recruitment and support by improving public recognition and visibility

VIII. Presidential search

Dr. Kenneth Bootsma announced his intent to relinquish his position as president of TCC effective June 30, 1996. The past eleven years have been very good years for Trinity, thanks to our Lord and the blessings and support of his people on and off campus.

As Trinity's fifth president, Dr. Bootsma led this institution during a most productive decade: giving increased, enrollment grew by 50 percent, the endowment fund grew by 3000 percent, faculty and academic programs were expanded, four new buildings were constructed, and all other buildings and athletic facilities were upgraded. A student-exchange program was initiated with Windesheim University in Zwolle, the Netherlands; the Semester-In-Spain program in Seville became Trinity's; the music and athletic programs have grown and improved significantly; nursing, education, and business have grown; and our graduates continue to secure responsible positions after graduation at a satisfying rate.

IX. Gratitude

The board of trustees, administration, faculty, staff, and students are extremely grateful to God for the blessings Trinity has experienced through the faithfulness of his people. Prayer and financial support are critical to the future of this Reformed institution, and we pray that we will be faithful to him and he will continue to bless Trinity Christian College.

Trinity Christian College
Kenneth Bootsma, president

STUDY COMMITTEES

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I. Mandate

At the request of participants in the Multiethnic Conference of 1992, Synod 1992 adopted the following recommendation:

That Synod 1992 appoint a study committee to engage in a comprehensive review and articulation of the biblical and theological principles regarding the development of a racially and ethnically diverse family of God.

The study is to include, but not be limited to, the following:

- a. The biblical basis for the development and use of multiethnic leadership.
- b. An assessment of the present criteria for leadership in the life of the CRCNA.
- c. Biblical guidelines for church-planting principles to be used in the development of a racially and ethnically diverse family of God.

Grounds:

- a. The CRC does not have at the present time a clear biblical and theological basis for its multicultural vision.
- b. The CRC's past and present responses to multiculturalism have been based on sociological factors more than on a well-developed biblical articulation.
- c. Racism negates the redemptive intent of the cross, and the presently growing racial tension must be addressed through Jesus Christ and his Word.
- d. The Multiethnic Conference requests this action.

(Acts of Synod 1992, pp. 720-21)

II. Background

A. Brief overview of past synodical declarations on race

1. Synod 1959, in response to declarations of the Reformed Ecumenical Synod of 1958 (Potchefstroom, South Africa), adopted as its own the declarations of that synod (*Acts of Synod 1959*, pp. 82-84).
2. Synod 1968, in the context of unprecedented racial strife in America's cities, called for a day of prayer for racial reconciliation and adopted a declaration affirming the call of the gospel to racial reconciliation (*Acts of Synod 1968*, pp. 18-20).
3. Synods 1969 and 1977 affirmed Resolutions on Race Relations, which were originally adopted by the Reformed Ecumenical Synod of 1968 (Amsterdam) and were subsequently revised at the Reformed Ecumenical Synods of 1972 (Australia) and 1976 (Cape Town, South Africa) (*Acts of Synod 1969*, pp. 50-52; *Acts of Synod 1977*, p. 34).

B. Brief overview of racial and ethnic diversity in the CRCNA

From the time of its birth in western Michigan in 1857 and for nearly one hundred years to follow, the congregations and members of the Christian Reformed Church in North America remained almost exclusively ethnic Dutch American—except for the few German-American congregations. Although the CRC sent its sons and daughters as missionaries to people of other races and cultures in other lands, for the most part, the task of its "home missionaries"

was to gather the sheep of Dutch descent who had scattered beyond the reach of already-established congregations in Canada and the United States.

The earliest notable exception was the denomination's mission efforts to Native Americans, especially the CRC's sustained outreach to the Navajo and Zuni nations in Arizona and New Mexico, which began with two missionary couples in 1896. Efforts at urban outreach to non-Dutch neighbors in Grand Rapids and Chicago were initiated as early as the 1920s, although the "converted" generally were kept at a distance—worshiping in chapels, often pastored by unordained men and women, sometimes even steered toward membership in English-speaking congregations from other denominations.

It took an entire century for the church to grant equal status to non-Dutch groups of believers. Prompted by the organization of the believers' group in Gallup, New Mexico, in late 1956, Synod 1958 advised the classis that this all-Navajo congregation be upgraded from associate-church to full-church status. The 1950s also saw increasing debate over the separate, lesser status of the neighborhood chapels. At this same time, however, the CRC was crossing several other racial and ethnic boundaries as well. Jewish and Chinese ministries were started in Chicago and New York, and African-American pastors were credentialed in Grand Rapids and New York. In the 1960s and following, Hispanic ministry was launched in New Jersey and Florida, Korean churches affiliated in Chicago and Los Angeles, ministries were started among Southeast Asian immigrant groups, and breakthroughs were seen in the forming of multiethnic congregations.

Synod 1959 adopted the Reformed Ecumenical Synod's twelve-point Declarations on Race, which initially seemed to have little bearing on the life of the denomination. By the mid-1960s, however, as cities burned and national leaders were assassinated, the CRC was forced to deal with race relations head-on. When a group of Black children from Lawndale CRC were denied admission to Timothy Christian School on Chicago's west side, the matter was brought to synod. The result was the formation of the Race Commission under the auspices of Christian Reformed Home Missions.

Synod 1971 replaced the Race Commission with the Synodical Committee on Race Relations (SCORR). SCORR was provided full-time staff and was mandated to work toward the eradication of racism in the church and in society. Synod also affirmed equality of opportunity for persons from ethnic-minority groups (see note below) and urged the agencies and institutions of the denomination to promote social justice in their policies and practices. Through broad-based partnership with the churches and agencies, SCORR has consistently supported the development of ethnic-minority leadership in the CRCNA. SCORR also has been unequivocal in its advocacy of racial and ethnic diversity and equality within the CRCNA as a denomination and in relationship to its neighbors—whether in South Africa, south Chicago, or south Grand Rapids.

Note: Though it is recognized that all persons are ethnic, i.e., of a national origin and may be in minority in certain contexts or environments, in this report the term *ethnic minority* refers to non-Anglo or non-Caucasian persons and groups.

How racially and ethnically diverse is the Christian Reformed Church? At the writing of this report, the total number of ethnic-minority members is estimated at 15,000 persons, or 5 percent of the denomination's 300,000 members (compared to national averages between 20 percent and 25 percent) in approxi-

mately 150 ethnic-minority or multiethnic congregations. This 5 percent includes 7,000 members in the fifty or more Korean congregations and an estimated 8,000 members in predominantly African-American, Chinese, Hispanic, Native American, Southeast Asian, and multiethnic congregations.

Much of this growing diversity has been facilitated by Christian Reformed Home Missions—in partnership with growth-oriented churches, classes, and other agencies. By means of locally based *leadership training programs* and *apprenticeship positions* (formerly called Multiethnic Recruitment), scores of ethnic-minority persons are being further trained for ministry leadership in the CRC. Of all the 150 new and emerging churches receiving CRHM funding annually, more than half are predominantly ethnic-minority or multiethnic, most of which also are led by ethnic-minority pastors. Home Missions' *ethnic-ministry directors* are key resource persons for their respective churches, leaders, and planning groups as well as for their dominant-culture partners. The ethnic-ministry directors oversee the development of contextualized resource and training materials, have a voice in shaping church-development policy, and support the development of ethnic-minority leadership on the CRHM board and in other strategic positions.

The CRC's commitment to multiethnic leadership is reflected in other denominational contexts as well. The commitment of the CRCNA Board of Trustees to racial inclusiveness is demonstrated, among other ways, by its appointment of an African-American director of personnel. The Council of Christian Reformed Churches in Canada has committed itself to addressing the needs and concerns of Indians and Metis in Canada and in recent years also has explored and worked toward ameliorating the causes and impact of racism in Canada with the assistance of a nationwide conference. CRWRC has shown special concern for issues of race and ethnicity, as illustrated by its hiring of ethnic-minority persons on central and regional staff and by its community-development programming. CRC Publications has worked intentionally to recruit and retain ethnic-minority employees and board members, to improve curriculum sensitivity to multicultural readers, and to obtain ethnic-minority vendors and writers.

Among the denomination's educational institutions, Calvin College employs numerous strategies to encourage multicultural leadership development, including a Minority Concerns Task Force, the president's Multicultural Advisory Council, Minority Fellowship programs for potential new faculty, filling various specialized staff positions with ethnic-minority persons, mentoring services for ethnic-minority students, and a MOSAIC 2000 endowment program to provide special scholarship assistance to ten ethnic-minority students annually. Calvin Theological Seminary regrets that it has yet to recruit its first non-Caucasian faculty appointee. At the same time, it has instituted a number of ethnic-minority training programs, conducts an orientation program for ethnic-minority leaders, has a non-Caucasian student population of about 30 percent, and employs ethnic-minority support staff and special lecturers.

Notwithstanding laudatory goals and the long road the CRC has already traveled in race relations, the process and progress have been slow—and there still are many miles to go, on various fronts. For example:

- Ethnic-minority persons working within the agencies, although growing in number, serve primarily in support roles. The ethnic-minority community

also remains underrepresented in executive and faculty positions, on denominational boards and committees, and as delegates to synod.

- A disproportionate number of the ethnic-minority pastors receive their training in nontraditional ways, such as through Bible colleges, local training programs, and other seminaries. Credentialing also tends to follow nontraditional paths—admission to ministry on the basis of special need and gifts, or by way of doctrinal conversations, or by ordination as evangelists. (The point is not that nontraditional routes should be discouraged but rather that traditional routes should be reexamined in light of the changing needs of a changing church.)
- Generally speaking, ethnic-minority pastors are compensated at lower levels than Anglo pastors are. This fact can be explained in part by the smaller size of their congregations (100 members on average, compared to 315 denomination-wide), the comparatively high number of evangelists and bivocational leaders among them, and the economic realities of the communities they serve. At the same time, it is necessary to review extant CRC policies and practices regarding personnel benefits and related matters.
- At all levels of denominational life persons of color struggle with a sense of *belonging*. Ethnic-minority members from multiethnic or predominantly Anglo congregations often are expected to stretch their comfort zones far more than their ethnic-majority brothers and sisters are expected to do so. Leaders of ethnic-minority congregations wonder who made the rules, and they tend to occupy the back seats in many denominational settings. Too many persons from ethnic-minority groups have left the CRC—not because of its Reformed world and life view but because of the lack of full acceptance at the family table.

As the CRC nears the threshold of the third millennium, it is important for us to be increasingly aware of the rapid demographic shifts in North America and of the dramatic reality that in little more than one generation the present majority culture of Canada and the United States will cease to be the majority. This change in the ethnic balance will give us the wonderful opportunity to experience profound new understandings of becoming the new people of God—of becoming a more inclusive church that more faithfully reflects the racial and cultural diversity of the nations among which God has planted us. This is a truly exciting challenge for the CRCNA, which in God's sovereign grace already is becoming a diverse, multiracial, and multiethnic family of God. It is our prayer that what we slowly and painfully learned in our not-so-distant past will instruct us to go far beyond ourselves and that our struggle to be a sign of the city that is to come will bring much glory to our diversity-loving God.

III. Biblical and theological principles

A. Introduction

Inasmuch as our mandate calls for “a comprehensive review and articulation of the biblical and theological principles regarding the development of a racially and ethnically diverse family of God,” we set forth twelve principles below.

Three introductory comments:

1. We have chosen the framework of creation, fall, and new creation within which to articulate these biblical principles. *New creation* is an inclusive term referring to the one recreating, reconciling work of Christ, beginning with his earthly ministry, death, and resurrection and fully realized in the new heavens and the new earth.
2. A common thread in many of the principles articulated below is the reality of "the one and the many." There is "oneness," and there is "manyness" in God's world, or unity and diversity. We see this reality in God himself in his triunity. We see unity and diversity functioning in perfect harmony in the world as God created it. We see how Christ in his saving work creates a single new body, united in him but diverse and inclusive beyond our imagination. The two verses below capture both notes of this song that permeates the Scriptures:

... for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live. (1 Cor. 8:6)

After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. (Rev. 7:9)

Having studied Scripture and sought to hear its message anew, the committee judges the following to be a simple but foundational statement of the biblical message with respect to racial and ethnic diversity, a statement that rests centrally upon the unity / diversity theme in Scripture:

To be in Christ is to be reconciled with one another as a community of racially and ethnically diverse people of God.

We see this statement as both declaration and judgment, indicative and imperative. It is a statement of the way things are in God's program; it is also a prophetic call to "become who we already are" in Christ.

3. Below are working definitions of terms that arise in the subsequent discussion of these matters.

Race - a term used to describe men and women who share biologically transmitted traits that are defined as socially significant.

Ethnicity - a term used to describe men and women who usually share a common place of ancestral origin, a traditional language, and a historical religion, which together confer a distinctive social identity.

Culture - the values and beliefs that are institutionalized in a people's collective life; the outward discipline in which inherited meanings and morality, beliefs and ways of behaving are preserved.

Prejudice - a negative attitude or assumption about others on the basis of their identification with a certain group of people.

Racism - a prejudicial attitude and/or behavior directed against persons on the basis of their race. Racism may manifest itself interpersonally as well as institutionally.

Ethnocentrism - the tendency to assume that one's own ethnic and cultural values and preferences are everyone's or to believe that they should be.

Stereotype - an oversimplified opinion or uncritical judgment which unfairly categorizes persons or groups.

B. Biblical and theological principles for a racially and ethnically diverse family of God

CREATION

1. The world as God created it is rich and God glorifying in its diversity.

The creation account (Gen. 1) explodes with myriads of divisions—light from darkness, water below from the vapors above, land from water. The world God creates is marvelously varied, with thousands of different flowers and leaves, stars and planets, mountains and meadows, fish and fowl. God loves diversity. Variety and differences are not bad things but are enriching things in the world as God created it.

The crown of this varied creation is the human person, God's image-bearer. Human beings are diverse in that each human person is unique—no two people are alike. More profoundly, human beings exhibit this deep principle of unity and diversity in their maleness and femaleness. Human beings, in their maleness and femaleness, are a kind of model of the way diversity functions in the good creation. The differences between male and female are a cause for celebration and joy (Gen. 2:23). The differences between male and female make for attraction, complementarity, and deep communion. Diversity is enriching; it releases creative energies that in turn increase diversity. Again, variety and differences within the human family are not bad; they enrich the world as God created it.

2. The created world, with all its diversity, has its unity in the one God, who created it through Jesus Christ.

The fact that God created the world is clearly attested throughout Scripture. The New Testament elaborates upon the presence and role of Jesus Christ in the creation of the world. Three specific passages deserve mention in this regard:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. (John 1:1-3)

He [Christ] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things and in him all things hold together. (Col. 1: 15-17)

In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things and through whom he made the universe. (Heb. 1:1-2)

From these three passages, which come from three different New Testament writers at points in their writings where they are setting forth foundational truths, we learn that

- a. Jesus Christ was present with God the Father already at creation.

- b. Jesus Christ's role at creation involved "all things." The Greek word for "all things" (*panta*) is used in all the passages to define the scope of Christ's involvement in creation, a scope that is all-inclusive. John further underscores this by stating that without Christ "nothing was made that has been made."
- c. The Greek prepositions used in these passages underscore the rich, even mysterious, involvement of Christ in all things as they were created. All things were created *in* (*en*) him (translated "by" in the NIV), *through* (*dia*) him, and *for* (*eis*) him. Somehow Christ himself is the source (*en*) of creation, the mediator (*dia*) of creation, and the purpose (*eis*) of creation.
- d. Christ the creator holds all things together. Paul says that "in him all things hold together" (Col. 1:17). There is a coherence, a unity, in all things as they were created by Christ.

This teaching of Scripture is significant for the purposes of our study for at least three reasons.

First, when we seek unity among different peoples and different things, we are not seeking something alien to the nature of things, just as, when people put a puzzle together, they assume that all the pieces were cut in such a way that they do fit together. The puzzle was designed that way. Conversely, a puzzle that consists of pieces thrown together from ten different puzzles will never fit together. The former, not the latter, is the picture of our world as God created it. When we seek the unity of diverse peoples and things, we are not seeking something alien to the nature of things and to the goal of God for creation.

Second, applied more narrowly to the human race, this truth of the unity of all things in Christ implies a radical unity and equality of all people. In the biblical picture, all humanity has been created in God's image and has its source not only in Christ but in Adam and Eve, our first parents. Referring to Adam, Paul says, "From one ancestor he made all nations to inhabit the whole earth" (Acts 17:26, NRSV). And, according to Genesis 3, Eve is "the mother of all living" (v. 20). All human beings of all races are related to one another through their common origins in our first parents. The Christian faith allows no room for holding that other human beings are fundamentally different from "us" or somehow less truly made in God's image than "we" are.

Third, the unity that Jesus Christ died and rose again to bring into being is not a new unity created for the first time, unknown and untested; it is a primal unity restored, a unity recreated. When the world is reconciled through Jesus Christ, it is going back to being a world that has already been and to the one by whom and in whom and through whom all things were created and existed in unity. This gives Christians hope and direction in their work.

3. The unity and diversity of the human race and of created reality reflect the unity and diversity of the triune God (namely, his oneness and threeness).

In the classical formulation of the Trinity of God, the church has spoken of God as *one in being* and *three in person*. Students of the Trinity have developed this basic Trinity doctrine as a model for human society. "Social

Trinity” is a particular emphasis in trinitarian theology that asserts that the unity and diversity of the human family are rooted in the very nature of God.

God reveals himself in a community of triunity already in Genesis 1:26: “Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, in our likeness.’” In John’s gospel, the Father is in the Son, and the Son is in the Father (John 10:38; 14:11). The Father loves the Son and shows him all that he does (John 5:20). The Father knows the Son, and the Son knows the Father (John 10:15). When the Son returns to the Father, the Father will send another Counselor, the Spirit of truth (John 14:16-18). The Son prays that his followers will be one just “as we [the Father and the Son] are one” (John 17:11).

The triune God, in the mutual giving and receiving of intratrinitarian fellowship, is the first model for human society. In God’s oneness God calls us to unity. In God’s threeness God affirms our diversity. The communion in which God created us and to which God calls us is already displayed in the triune God.

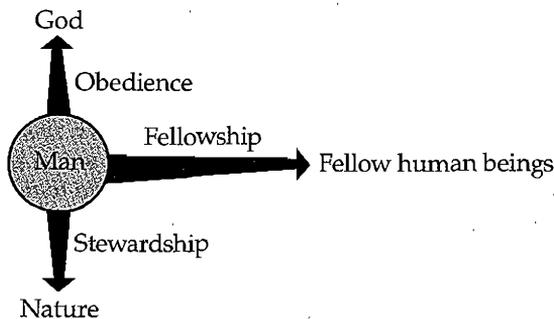
FALL

4. A fundamental effect of sin is the breakdown of community.

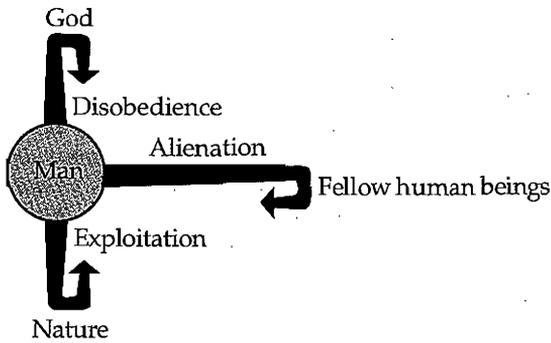
a. The image of God and relationships

Human beings were created in the image of God. To be an image-bearer of God means many things, but central to *any* description of what it means to be an imagebearer of God is *the capacity for relationship* with which God has endowed human beings. We are relational beings. Giving and receiving, loving and being loved, working with others in creative and upbuilding ways, building community—these are activities at the heart of being human and of human community.

The late Dr. Anthony Hoekema, professor of systematic theology at Calvin Theological Seminary, often spoke of the threefold relationship into which human beings were created—in relationship to God, to one another, and to nature. Before sin entered the world, these were relationships of obedience, fellowship, and stewardship.



Sin perverts these relationships. In our relationship with God we are now disobedient, in our relationships with one another we are now alienated, and in our relationships with nature we now tend to exploit nature instead of acting as its steward.



Although the effect of sin upon any one of these relationships cannot be separated from its effect upon all of them, our primary interest in this report is sin's effect upon our relationships with one another.

b. What sin does to human relationships

In our biblical study of the effect of sin upon human relationships, we discern the following biblical principle: *sin tends to be most insidious and destructive of human community at those precise points that God intended human community to be most enriching and expressive of his image in us.*

1) The principle applied to the male-female relationship

Genesis 3 is a kind of foundational case study for understanding what sin does to our relationships with one another. After Adam and Eve fell into sin, the Lord cursed the serpent and then announced the effects of Adam and Eve's sin upon their lives. Of particular interest to us here is the effect of sin upon their relationship with each other. Genesis 3:16 summarizes the effect of sin upon the relationship of Adam and Eve when God says to Eve, "Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you" (Gen. 3:16). The exact meaning of this verse is a matter of debate among students of the Bible. Whatever one's interpretation, this much is clear: sin takes a healthy relationship between male and female, husband and wife, and distorts it, resulting in alienation and harm to fellowship and community. Sin takes a relationship that was intended to be most expressive of the image of God in us and significantly damages and distorts it.

2) The principle applied to other relationships

Again, the principle under discussion is this: *sin tends to be most insidious and destructive of human community at those precise points that God intended human community to be most enriching and expressive of his image in us.* Marriage is that relationship within which we develop and express much of our "God-likeness": giving and receiving, making and keeping commitments, procreation, enjoyment. We have seen how deeply our fall into sin harms marriage.

This principle is illustrated further in the Cain and Abel story (Gen. 4). Brotherly love has much richness and beauty (David loved Jonathan like a brother [II Sam. 1:26]). But this very relationship becomes the setting within which the worst imaginable envy, hatred, and violence take place.

To illustrate this principle further, it can be argued that the tongue and our human sexuality are two aspects of humanity that most intensely give expression to the image of God in us. The tongue is a marvelous means for language, communication, the expression of ideas, and the articulation of truth—all activities at the heart of how we image God. But in the fall, the tongue became a key weapon of destruction of human community (James 3:1-12). Human sexuality is that marvelous means by which husband and wife most intensely give to and receive from one another and most deeply express God-giving and God-imaging love. But in the fall, human sexuality gets perverted in a host of ways (Lev. 18).

Extending this more general principle to the subject of this report, we observe that racial and ethnic diversity also can be the occasion for mutual appreciation, greater self-understanding through seeing how other people live and think and relate, and the glorification of God for the rich variety in human communities and cultures. All of these activities are centrally expressive of the image of God in us. But in the fall, sin turns the very diversity that God intended to be deeply humanizing and enriching into lines along which deep alienation takes form. The alienation of Jew and Gentile in the Bible is indicative of broader alienation along racial and ethnic lines. Regrettably, the primary story line of recorded human history is the alienation of peoples along racial and ethnic lines.

c. Two misunderstood texts

Two biblical texts deserve mention in this discussion of the effects of sin upon the racial and ethnic diversity of the human community. The point here is to indicate what they do *not* have to say about racial and ethnic diversity.

1) The curse of Ham

Genesis 9-10 gives us the account of Noah's sons in which Canaan is cursed because of the sin of his father, Ham, whereas Shem and Japheth are given blessings and promises of prosperity. Canaan will be the lowest of slaves to his brothers (Gen. 9:25). This verse has sometimes been used to justify the enslavement of Blacks, since the descendants of Ham eventually did settle, among other places, in northeast Africa. However, this argument fails to take into account the simple historical fact that those cursed here were Canaanites, who were Caucasian, and the important exegetical fact that the purpose of the Genesis 9-10 narrative (Gen. 10 goes on to list "The Table of Nations") is not to justify human oppression or even account for the proliferation of ethnic diversity, but to set up the redemptive line from the post-flood peoples to Abraham, a line established in Shem. Our primary reason for including these clarifications on this somewhat obscure passage in Genesis is not that the interpretation refuted above is so strong and plausible that it requires extensive refutation. Rather, we include it to observe how the Bible can be misused by one group seeking to justify the exploitation of another group and to observe that, regrettably, even erroneous biblical interpretations such

as this one have a way of persisting in the minds of some Christians long after their exegetical basis has been refuted.

2) The Tower of Babel

Another biblical narrative that has often been misunderstood is the Tower of Babel narrative in Genesis 11. The purpose of the Tower of Babel narrative is to demonstrate the futility of human attempts to build community without God. God's confusion of language at Babel is not meant to be an explanation for the origin of various languages and cultures. Neither is it meant to imply that the existence of different languages and cultures is the result of sin. Rather, the Babel narrative describes the fragmentation and alienation of human community which develops whenever human beings attempt to build community without God. It doesn't work. The positive significance of Babel for our subject will be further elucidated below when we look at the Pentecost event.

d. The root of alienation: fear

Behind alienation, whatever the lines along which that alienation takes place, lie fear, insecurity, and a loss of identity that are a result of our separation from God.

Instructive here (again) is the story of humanity's fall into sin as recorded in Genesis 3. When Adam and Even disobey God, they are immediately afraid. They sew fig leaves to hide from each other (Gen. 3:7), and they hide from God among the trees of the garden (Gen. 3:8). In our alienation from God, we lose our proper self-understanding. As John Calvin points out at the beginning of *The Institutes*, our knowledge of God and knowledge of self are interrelated. If we don't know God, we don't know ourselves. We lose our bearings as to who we are.

This loss of proper self-understanding creates fear and anxiety. In this crisis of self-understanding, we often turn to racial, ethnic, or cultural forms of self-confirmation and self-understanding. At the very least, these forms of self-confirmation are incomplete and distorting. They quickly become idolatrous. We re-create God in our own image. These forms of self-confirmation often become the means by which we harm others who are different from ourselves. As differences between individuals or groups increase, so does fear, and the cycle of fear and differentiation spirals in intensity. The effect upon the community is pain, misery, and brokenness.

John says, "There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear. . ." (I John 4:18). This statement follows John's declaration that "God is love" and "whoever lives in love lives in God and God in him" (I John 4:16). Only love, the perfect love of God, can give people a renewed identity that casts out fear and anxiety and gives them the courage to relinquish these incomplete and harmful ways of identifying themselves. Only love, the perfect love of God, can create new hearts in people which cause them to see the world and others in new ways. To that redemptive love of God we now turn.

NEW CREATION

Paul says, "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come" (II Cor. 5:17). In Christ, God comes to create a new world. In the

reflections below, we will see that reconciliation across racial and ethnic lines is not just some tangential goal that gets tacked onto the saving work of Christ; rather, it is at the heart of God's plan to create a new heaven and a new earth.

5. The uniting of all things in Jesus Christ is at the heart of God's eternal plan for the ages.

In the first three chapters of Ephesians, Paul seeks to place the work of Christ into the broader perspective of God's plan for the ages. One important Greek word that recurs in those chapters is *oikonomia*, variously translated "management, administration, or plan."

- a. In Ephesians 1:9-10, in the middle of Paul's opening doxology of praise to God for his great work of salvation, a work that is the unfolding of his eternal will, Paul says that

he [God] has made known to us in all wisdom and insight the mystery of his will, according to his purpose which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. (Eph. 1:9-10, RSV)

What is the plan of God set forth already in Christ? To unite all things in Christ. Notice how Paul grasps for the most inclusive language he can ("all things, things in heaven and things on earth") when he describes the scope of God's plan. And the purpose of God in his saving work is to unite all things in Christ, indeed, to bring all things back to that unity they had in Christ from the beginning.

- b. In Ephesians 3:2 Paul again refers to the *oikonomia* of God when he says, "Surely you have heard about the *administration* of God's grace that was given to me for you, that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation" In verse 6 Paul spells out the mystery:

This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.

The grand plan of God brings together Jew and Gentile. The Greek prefix *sun* ("with") occurs three times in verse 6 (literally "heirs with," "body with," and "sharers with"), underscoring the unifying thrust of God's work.

- c. Finally, in Ephesians 3:8-10, Paul says,

. . . this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make plain to everyone the *administration* of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things. His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Again, the plan of God is to proclaim the unsearchable riches of Christ to *everyone*—Jew and Gentile. And this has been God's plan from the beginning.

6. Reconciliation with God and reconciliation with one another are inseparable in God's saving work.

Although the New Testament term *reconciliation* (*katallassō*) is not a

frequently used term, it occurs at very strategic points in Paul's writings and is integral to the biblical vision of a racially and ethnically diverse family of God. For our purposes in this report, we look at four important passages.

a. Romans 5:10-11

For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved by his life! Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

It's important to notice, first, that reconciliation is God's program, not ours. In non-Christian religions, people attempt to be reconciled to God through their own actions. In the Christian religion, God is the initiator of reconciliation. Second, sin in this passage, as in all the reconciliation passages, is specifically described not so much as "guilt," though that may be involved, nor "pollution," but as our alienation from God. Sin manifests itself in the breakdown of relationship and community. Third, here in Romans 5, in distinction from the passages to be considered next, "believers" are the "object" of God's reconciliation.

b. II Corinthians 5:18-21 (NIV, with modification in v. 19)

All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, by not counting men's sins against them, and by having given to us the ministry of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that we might become the righteousness of God.

First, notice that in this passage the "object" of God's reconciliation program is "the world." The world is obviously thought of primarily as the world of human beings in contrast to the whole of God's created world (visible and invisible). The world here is not limited to those who have already believed but includes also those who must yet respond in faith to the message of reconciliation, thus giving God's program of reconciliation a strong missiological character—which leads to the second observation: Notice the strategic role God gives the church in this work of reconciliation. Two different times in this passage (vv. 18 and 19) Paul says that God has given us (the church) this ministry of reconciliation. Paul places his own ministry of reconciliation alongside God's work of reconciliation. The church's ministry of reconciliation is not just some human idea or political agenda but an integral part of God's program of reconciliation.

c. Colossians 1:19-22

For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood shed on the cross. Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight . . .

Interpretation of these verses is made difficult by the fact that the biblical genre changed within these verses: Verses 15-20 are almost

certainly an early Christian hymn; they are followed by Paul's application of the truth in that hymn to the Colossian situation (v. 21ff).

Nevertheless, it is clear that in this passage the "object" of God's reconciliation program is not "believers," as in Romans 5, nor even the "world of mankind," as in II Corinthians 5, but "all things" (*ta panta*), explicitly including "the things on earth" and "the things in heaven." God's program of reconciliation is thus as broad as creation. Just as the creation of the world was "in," "through," and "unto" Christ (*en, dia, eis*), so the work of reconciliation is "in" him, where all the fullness was pleased to dwell, and "through" him, and "unto" him.

(Note: The fact that verses 15-20 are a hymn is probably important in understanding the universalistic statements in verse 20. The statements of the hymn should not be made to provide grist for theological analysis. [It is believed by some that the universalism of church father Origen may be grounded in this verse.] It is probably better to see that the hymn is *not* trying to specify the extent of salvation but to acclaim who is the "mediator of creation and redemption." Thus the "reconciling to himself all things" in verse 20 is best understood to mean that "Christ is the Redeemer/Reconciler of everything in heaven and on earth that is to be reconciled." The point is that the Colossian Christians do not need to seek any means of reconciliation outside of Christ.)

d. Ephesians 2:14-16

For he is our peace, who has made the two [Gentile and Jew] one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in his one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility.

In this passage the single biggest new factor, not explicitly present in the other passages, is that God's program of reconciliation is not simply vertical (reconciling believers/the world/all things to himself) but also horizontal (reconciling Jew and Gentile, "uncircumcised" and "circumcised," v. 11). What has separated them is the dividing wall, identified as "the enmity," and thus, correctly, the NIV translation "the dividing wall of hostility." Christ "destroyed" that dividing wall of hostility by in his flesh "abolishing" (rendering ineffective) "the law with its commandments and regulations."

Paul does not say how Christ rendered ineffective (abolished) the law with its commandments and regulations. From what Paul says in other places, we may suggest that Christ did so by fulfilling the law, both by his active and passive obedience. That is, he fulfilled the law by actively obeying it and by passively taking on himself its curse against mankind's sins. Since the law has thus been completely fulfilled, it can never become a source of "enmity" between Jew and Gentile—especially in regard to what the Jews had quite specifically identified as their "identity markers," especially circumcision, clean and unclean foods, and feast days (preeminently the sabbath). God thus created in Christ out of the two, the "circumcised" and the "uncircumcised," "one new man." Here the "one new man" must be understood in its corporate sense and almost

identified with the church. Thus Christ “is our peace” (Eph. 2:14), “thus making peace” (Eph. 2:15), and he “preached peace to you who were far away [Gentiles] and to those who were near [Jews]” (Eph. 2:17).

Whereas humans often divide people according to race or nationality, God ever made only one division among human beings, namely, Israel and the nations, or Jew and Gentile. The breathtaking news of this passage is that God has now removed the only division he ever made in the human family. The point for us is clear: If God himself took away the only division that he had ever made within the human family, how much more have all other “man-made” divisions within the human family been taken away.

7. Already in the old covenant the scope of God’s mission is racially and ethnically inclusive.

A common misunderstanding of the mission of God is the belief that in the Old Testament, before Christ, the scope of God’s mission is only ethnic Israel and that only in the New Testament, with the coming of Christ, does that scope extend to all nations. In the old covenant, Israel is the redemptive focus of God’s mission. The movement is always toward Jerusalem and toward the king. In the new covenant, Pentecost turns the movement of God’s mission outward. Instead of people having to come to Jerusalem, the Spirit goes out to people everywhere. The “energy flow” of God’s mission changes from centripetal to centrifugal. However, it is important not to confuse these dramatic *developments within* the mission of God and the universal *scope* of God’s mission. The scope of God’s mission always was and remains racially and ethnically inclusive.

All nations are in view from the beginning of God’s saving work. Already with Abraham God promised, “Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation and all nations on earth will be blessed through him” (Gen. 18:18) and “I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and will give them all these lands, and through your offspring all the nations on earth will be blessed” (Gen. 26:4). Isaiah sees the day coming when all nations will stream to the temple of the Lord (Isa. 2:2), “for my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations” (Isa. 56:7). And when he cries, “Arise, shine, for your light has come and the glory of the Lord rises upon you” (Isa. 60:1), the vision that follows is a chapter-long vision of all peoples coming to the throne of God: “Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn” (Isa. 60:3).

The Old Testament prophets made it clear that ethnic identity was subordinate to spiritual identity. Ethnicity is always penultimate to the kingship of Yahweh. Jerusalem is significant because Yahweh is there. Physical circumcision is never enough for a person to be a part of God’s people. Moses and Jeremiah call the people to circumcise their hearts (Deut. 10:16; Jer. 4:4). Israel does not result from Israel’s own biological ability (Sarah is sterile). God even inverts the normal inheritance protocol (Esau, the older, will serve Jacob, the younger). The book of Jonah is a judgment against ethnocentrism and the mistaken identification of God’s mission with ethnic Israel alone. The psalms are filled with references to all people and all nations praising the name of the Lord. The family tree of Jesus (Matt. 1:1-17), with its mention of the likes of Rahab and Ruth, reveals the way the scope of God’s mission reaches beyond ethnic Israel already in the old covenant.

Again, the purpose in stating this principle is not to downplay the dramatic developments within the mission of God. It is rather to head off mistaken notions regarding changes in the scope of God's mission which can lead to mistaken notions regarding the unchanging purposes of God and the role of ethnicity in the mission of God.

- 8. In Pentecost, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the church, God gives new power to the church, power to break down walls of separation and create a community that transcends divisions of race, ethnicity, and culture.**

Just before Jesus ascended into heaven, he told his disciples, "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). This prediction of a worldwide mission follows Jesus' command in Matthew 28:19-20 to "go and make disciples of all nations." When God's Spirit is poured out upon the church on the day of Pentecost, people from every nation under heaven (Acts 2:5) hear the apostles (who were Galileans) speaking in their native language. This is the day of the Lord foretold by the prophet Joel (Acts 2:17-21). Now "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" (Acts 2:21).

In the biblical drama, the blessing of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost stands in bold contrast to the curse of Babel. In the confusion of language at Babel, God declares that his people cannot build human community without him. At Pentecost God creates a new community where, in the Spirit, people have a unity that transcends their own particular language. The significance of Pentecost is not that everyone who believes in Christ now speaks one language. People still speak in a multitude of languages. But in the Spirit, God creates a unity that transcends the barriers of language. Racial, ethnic, and cultural differences are not erased; they are subordinated to the new unity believers have in the Spirit.

In Acts 10, God shows Peter what the church looks like in this age of the Spirit. Through a vision, God reveals to Peter that the old divisions of clean and unclean, Jew and Gentile, have been demolished (Acts 10:15). Then Peter goes to the house of Cornelius to tell the people there of God's new ways. He announces that God no longer calls anyone impure or unclean (Acts 10:28). "God does not show favoritism but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right" (Acts 10:34-35).

Paul sees this new unity as transcending every human division, even the division between Abraham's seed and the rest of humanity: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Gal. 3:28-29).

- 9. The church, in its unity and diversity, is God's strategic vehicle for bringing into being his new creation.**

The church is strategic in God's plan to effect this new oneness. In Ephesians 3 Paul discloses God's plan to unite all things in Christ. In verses 8-10 he explains the role of the church in that plan:

His [God's] intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly

realms, according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The church, Christ's gathered body in the world, is the means by which God intends to reveal himself, to proclaim the good news, and to unite all things in Christ.

In John 17, Jesus is more precise as to how the church reveals God. Jesus prays that all the people who believe in him "may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you" (John 17:20-21). Why does he want them to be one? "May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me . . . May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me" (John 17:21, 23). When the church is one, people see God. The power of the church's witness lies precisely in her new oneness in Christ, a oneness of believers that transcends external differences.

The church will be effective in the mission God has given her only when she understands and lives out of a vision of the church that appreciates both its unity and diversity in Christ. The church is one in Christ (I Cor. 1:10-17; 12:12-13). Christ is the one foundation of the church (I Cor. 3:11) and the one head of the body (Eph. 1:22-23). "There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope when you were called—one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all" (Eph. 4:4-6). But the church is also marvelously diverse. Just as the body has feet and hands and eyes and ears and is incomplete without all those parts, so the body of Christ is made up of many parts. In I Corinthians 12 Paul teaches that each part of the body is necessary to make the body function with complete effectiveness and each part has equal dignity, regardless of its size or function. The gifts of the Spirit to the church are marvelously diverse (I Cor. 12:27-31; Eph. 4:11-13; Rom. 12:3-8).

This teaching on the unity and diversity of the church is extremely important as we think about matters of racial and ethnic diversity in the church. On the one hand, Scripture calls us to be one in Christ. This is not just some theoretical oneness. It is a visible, actual unity of people with one another because they share in the common source of life—Jesus Christ. This unity is so real that the world comes to know God through it (John 17:23). This scriptural call to unity judges the church in her lack of unity.

But unity does not obliterate differences. To be whole the body needs each part. In terms of racial and ethnic differences, the goal in the church is not to rub out those differences and try to make everyone the same. Each of us has a particular race, ethnicity, and culture. We do not cease to be Korean or Kenyan or American when we become part of the body. Rather, each particular person (and community) plays a part in making the body whole. Each person and community brings unique gifts and makes unique contributions. In the Spirit, diversity is no longer threatening, but enriching. And unity and diversity together confirm that indeed the church is the Lord's work, not our own.

In our work as a committee we have encountered the confusion that comes when the unity and diversity of the church are not clearly distinguished. On the one hand, we sometimes speak of leaving our culture behind when we come to Christ. On the other hand, we speak of affirming and respecting each person's culture. Often we say these two things in the

same breath. The fact is, we don't simply leave our culture behind when we become Christian. Such a statement betrays a superficial understanding of the profound senses in which we are cultural beings. The person who was Italian before she became a Christian is still Italian. When the Chinese brother becomes a Christian, his tastes in food do not suddenly get transformed into some universal diet. When the Native American becomes a Christian, her tastes in music do not suddenly get transformed into some universal musical style. Race, ethnicity, and culture are profoundly important for personal and communal self-identification. They are important before and after someone becomes a Christian.

But when we become Christian, our identity in Christ judges and transforms those old and incomplete ways of knowing ourselves. The Cuban who becomes a Christian is still Cuban. But now her being a Christian shapes her being a Cuban. We never cease to be of a certain race, ethnic group, and culture. But in Christ, those ways of identifying ourselves are no longer definitive of who we are. Christ is definitive for personal and communal self-understanding. Christ is ultimate; race, ethnicity, and culture are penultimate for self-identification and self-understanding.

Having said all of that, we still must acknowledge difficulties in this area. When we become Christians, God requires that we leave behind those aspects of our culture that are incompatible with his kingdom. The difficulty comes in that the new Christian invariably adopts new cultural patterns, and these are often not specifically Christian but simply patterns formed by other cultural groups.

The point here is that, as Christians of different backgrounds work through these complex issues, it is crucial that, among other things, they keep the unity and diversity of the church in proper balance. Stressing the unity of the church at the expense of its diversity can lead to excesses in which we imagine that becoming a Christian erases all cultural differences among Christians. Stressing the diversity of the church at the expense of its unity can lead to excesses in which we give an importance, even an idolatrous autonomy, to race, ethnicity, and culture—an importance that Christ eliminated on the cross.

Our confessions articulate the unity and diversity of the church. Belgic Confession Article 27 speaks of "one single catholic or universal church," which, though it is "spread and dispersed throughout the entire world," is "still joined and united in heart and will in one and the same Spirit, by the power of faith." Concerning "the holy catholic church," Lord's Day 21 of the Heidelberg Catechism states,

I believe that the Son of God through his Spirit and Word, out of the entire human race, from the beginning of the world to its end, gathers, protects, and preserves for himself a community chosen for eternal life and united in true faith. And of this community I am and always will be a living member.

The church is as diverse as the human race and as singular as Christ.

10. God calls Christians to find their deepest identity in union with and in the service of Christ.

Unfortunately, it is possible to seize upon this acknowledgment of racial, ethnic, and cultural differences in the church (set forth in Principle 6) and seek to justify attitudes, practices, and behaviors that, in fact, are sinful in

that they unnecessarily create barriers and walls between people and add to the separation that Christ came to remove. Put another way, there is often a fine line between healthy ethnic and cultural self-identification, which enriches community, and ethnocentrism, which fractures community.

The call of the gospel is radical and clear: Love God above all and love your neighbor as yourself (Matt. 22:37-40). Jesus says that anyone who loves his father or mother or son or daughter more than him is not worthy of him (Matt. 10:37). We finally find our life when we lose it (Matt. 10:39). Jesus calls us to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us (Matt. 5:44). It's no remarkable achievement to love people who love you, Jesus says. (We could paraphrase that as "It's no big deal to love people who are like us.") Even pagans do that. The call of the gospel is to love those who do not love you. Paul says that we should look out not just for our own interests but also for the interests of others (Phil. 2:4) and that we should develop attitudes toward ourselves and others that model Christ's self-effacing, self-denying life (Phil. 2:6-11).

Jesus certainly modeled this kind of behavior in his commitment to minister to all types of people. Jesus actually enjoyed being with people the religious establishment considered "sinners" (Luke 15:2; Luke 7:36-50). He had good news for, of all people, a Samaritan woman (John 4:1-26). He responded to the Roman centurion's faith and healed this Gentile's son (Luke 7:1-10). In the parable of the good Samaritan, Jesus told of the love of Christ at work in a person (the Samaritan) whom others, through ethnocentric eyes, saw as inferior and unworthy of grace. Jesus' social world and world of ministry were not defined along lines of race, gender, ethnicity, culture, or social standing. He looked past those external characteristics of people and saw instead people as imagebearers of God.

As significant as race, ethnicity, and culture are for self-identification, Christians find their deepest identity in union with and in the service of Christ. The rhythm of the gospel is not one of self-justification and self-preservation. It is certainly not one that seeks to build up self by defining ourselves favorably over against others who are different from us. There is no room in the kingdom for attitudes that foster pride toward self or resentment toward others. Rather, in the security we have because we know ourselves to be children of our Father in heaven and to be loved by Christ, Christians become "self-forgetful." The love of Christ casts out our fear. In Christ we have the courage and commitment voluntarily to step across and seek to break down those barriers that have been erected by race, ethnicity, and culture and to repudiate the ways of self-identification and self-confirmation that have become unhealthy or even idolatrous.

11. Obedience in matters of racial reconciliation calls us individually and corporately to continual repentance.

We must be forthright in acknowledging that racism is sin. Racism is more than just bad manners; indeed, any attitudes, words, or deeds of omission or commission that inflict harm upon others and break down community constitute sin against God and sin against God's children. Racism is a disgrace to a civil society. But it is a much greater disgrace in the church, for racism sends exactly the opposite message from the message Christ sends in his reconciling work on the cross.

In its penetrating analysis of the sixth and ninth commandments, the Heidelberg Catechism shows how racism is diametrically opposed to the will of God. In its teaching on the sixth commandment, the catechism says that

I am not to belittle, insult, hate, or kill my neighbor—not by my thoughts, my words, my look or gesture, and certainly not by actual deeds—and I am not to be party to this in others . . .

(Q and A. 105)

And in its teaching on the ninth commandment, the catechism says,

God's will is that I never give false testimony against anyone, twist no one's words, not gossip or slander, nor join in condemning anyone without a hearing or without a just cause. Rather, in court and everywhere else, I should avoid lying and deceit of every kind; these are devices the devil himself uses, and they would call down on me God's intense anger. I should love the truth, speak it candidly, and openly acknowledge it. And I should do what I can to guard and advance my neighbor's good name.

(Q and A. 112)

When Paul analyzes our fallen nature, he sees "envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice" at the heart of our brokenness. People alienated from God are "gossips, slanderers, god-haters, insolent, arrogant, and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless" (Rom. 1:29-31).

Indeed, racism is a glaring manifestation of our sinful condition, which Christ died to eradicate and which, when it is not eradicated, opposes Christ's reconciling work on the cross.

Furthermore, repentance from this sin, as from all sin, must be radical. It begins at the foot of the cross in confession and self-denial. Indeed, to repent of sin, according to the catechism, is "to be genuinely sorry for sin, to hate it more and more, and to run away from it" (A. 89).

Such repentance calls for fervent prayer on the part of the Christian community. In as much as our prayers reveal our deepest concerns, the Christian community must engage in regular prayers of confession for sins of racism and regular intercessory prayer for racial reconciliation and healing.

Further still, those who have found their identity in Christ not only should have no part of behavior that causes alienation along racial and ethnic lines; they should be on the front lines of working for racial reconciliation. The deafening silence of the church in matters of racial reconciliation must be broken. A legitimate test of discipleship in this racially polarized world is whether our life and witness for Christ are building racial reconciliation and understanding and breaking down walls of alienation.

12. Christians live and work in the hope that one day the reconciliation of all things will be fully realized.

In the beginning of this biblical study we explained that in its major divisions of creation, fall, and new creation, *new creation* refers to the one recreating, reconciling work of Christ as that begins with his earthly ministry, death, and resurrection and is completed in the new heaven and the new earth.

There is certainly a difference between the present world and the new heaven and new earth Christ will usher in upon his return. But from the biblical perspective, the work of Christ at his first coming is the decisive moment in history. According to the writer of Hebrews (1:2), the "last days," of which the prophets spoke, are here. The promise of the Holy Spirit (Joel 2:28) has been fulfilled in the outpouring of Pentecost. "If anyone is in Christ," says Paul, "he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come" (II Cor. 5:17). The decisive turning point of history is the death and resurrection of Christ. All that lies ahead is simply the realization of what Christ has already accomplished.

Yet there is a tension in the New Testament between the "already" and the "not yet" of the kingdom. Christ's new creation is already being made manifest to us, but it is also not yet fully realized. Christians long for the full realization of Christ's rule. We know there is a difference between the brokenness of our world and the day when there will be "no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away" (Rev. 21:4). We live by faith, not by sight (II Cor. 5:7). We eagerly await the Savior (Phil. 3:20).

Central to the biblical vision of the new heaven and the new earth is the perfect unity in Christ of all the peoples of the earth. As John gazes at the people of God, he sees "a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people, and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb" (Rev. 7:9-10). The angels sing a new song: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth" (Rev. 5:9-10). The reconciliation of all nations and all things in Christ is our fervent hope.

This vision gives Christians encouragement, especially those who suffer because of the racial and ethnic divisions in our world. "Lord, come quickly" is the cry of those who see little of this new unity of all things and who suffer because of walls of separation Christ came to abolish. The fact that one day God will set things right is the deepest hope for many who have tasted little of the shalom and righteousness of the kingdom.

This vision also gives Christians confidence. It is possible to look around us and be dismayed. But we know that Christ rules. We know where things are going. We know and live with full confidence that one day

every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill made low; the rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain. And the glory of the Lord will be revealed, and all mankind together will see it (Isa. 40:4).

IV. Recommendations

A. That the privilege of the floor be granted to Rev. Jason Chen (chairman), Rev. Duane Kelderman (reporter), and other members of the committee who are present when this report is under consideration by synod.

B. That synod adopt the following biblical and theological principles regarding the development of a racially and ethnically diverse and united family of God:

*Biblical and Theological Principles for the Development of
a Racially and Ethnically Diverse and Unified Family of God*

Creation

1. *The world as God created it is rich and God glorifying in its diversity.*
2. *The created world with all its diversity has its unity in the one God, who created it through Jesus Christ.*
3. *The unity and diversity of the human race and of created reality reflect the unity and diversity of the triune God (namely, his oneness and threeness).*

Fall

4. *A fundamental effect of sin is the breakdown of community.*

New Creation

5. *The uniting of all things in Jesus Christ is at the heart of God's eternal plan for the ages*
6. *Reconciliation with God and reconciliation with one another are inseparable in God's saving work.*
7. *Already in the old covenant the scope of God's mission is racially and ethnically inclusive.*
8. *In Pentecost, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the church, God gives new power to the church, power to break down walls of separation and create a community that transcends divisions of race, ethnicity, and culture.*
9. *The church in its unity and diversity is God's strategic vehicle for bringing into being his new creation.*
10. *God calls Christians to find their deepest identity in union with and in the service of Jesus Christ.*
11. *Obedience in matters of racial reconciliation calls us, individually and corporately, to continual repentance.*
12. *Christians live and work in the hope that one day the reconciliation of all things will be fully realized.*

C. That synod call the congregations, assemblies, agencies, and other ministries of the CRCNA to respond to the biblical and theological principles regarding the development of a racially and ethnically diverse and united family of God by committing themselves

1. To pray and work for the increased enfolding of ethnic-minority persons into the CRCNA in ways that reflect more fully the racial and ethnic diversity of Canada and the United States.
2. To ensure the equitable representation and meaningful participation of ethnic-minority persons in leadership and other roles of influence at all levels of denominational life.

Note: The total estimated ethnic-minority membership of 5 percent in the CRCNA compares to an ethnic-minority population of approximately 20 percent in Canada and the United States.

D. That synod call the churches

1. To articulate the biblical vision for a racially and ethnically diverse and united family of God by means of the preaching, teaching, and study of the above biblical and theological principles.
2. To evaluate their life and ministry with regard to their racial and ethnic composition, the social factors contributing to their composition, the selecting and training of their leaders, their worship style, and their ministry to congregational members and to their community in light of their sense of God's vision and call for them as congregations.
3. To develop racially and ethnically diverse congregations by all appropriate models and strategies, such as
 - a. Established churches becoming more inclusive ethnically and culturally.
 - b. Planting and developing multiethnic congregations.
 - c. Sponsoring new congregations that are ethnically and culturally different from the parent congregation, in the same or separate facilities.
 - d. Developing relationships (e.g., joint worship, workshops, and work projects) with congregations from other ethnic and cultural backgrounds.
 - e. Supporting persons and programs at home or abroad that are committed to racial reconciliation.
4. To witness publicly *against* racism, prejudice, and related unemployment, poverty, and injustices and *in defense of* all people as imagebearers of God.

E. That synod request the classes, with the assistance of the CRCNA offices and agencies,

1. To arrange during the next twelve months for the careful classis-wide study of this report and its implications for the churches and their ministries.
2. To provide to the churches and ministries of classis guidance in support of racial and ethnic diversity (and unity), by means of public forums and learning events, multicongregational worship celebrations, and joint cross-cultural ministry ventures.
3. To assist the churches in developing and supporting new churches and other outreach ministries that are committed to ethnic diversity and racial reconciliation.
4. To recruit and assist persons from ethnic-minority groups to participate in the ministries of classis, including representation to synod, agency boards, and other ministries of the CRCNA.

F. That synod mandate the Board of Trustees, under the leadership of its CRCNA staff and with the assistance of SCORR and CRCNA agencies,

1. To serve Synod 1998 with advice and recommendations for ensuring the equitable representation and meaningful participation of ethnic-minority persons in leadership and other roles of influence with the classes and synod, the Board of Trustees, denominational agencies, and other ministries of the CRCNA. The recommendations should include transitional and long-

term strategies, training and support needs, financial implications, and periodic reporting to synod on efforts and progress.

2. To continue to explore ways whereby the biennial Multiethnic Conference can assist the churches, classes, and synod to respond more completely to God's call for ethnic diversity and racial reconciliation in the CRCNA.
3. To review CRCNA policies and practices in relation to the training, credentialing, and compensating of ethnic-minority pastors and to give recommendations and advice as indicated.

G. That synod respectfully urge future synods

1. To include in their worship times the articulation and celebration of the biblical vision for a racially and ethnically diverse and united family of God.
2. To encourage the development of specific recommendations and specific practical guidelines for supporting ethnic diversity in all aspects of denominational life, including interchurch relations in general and ministries of the Reformed Ecumenical Council in particular.

H. That denominational response to the above decisions be reviewed by Synod 2000 in the light of a progress report by the Board of Trustees, along with advice and recommendations to Synod 2000.

I. That synod discharge the study committee with recognition for its work.

Committee to Articulate Biblical and
Theological Principles for the Development
of a Racially and Ethnically Diverse Family
of God

Brad Breems

Jason Chen, chair

Norma Coleman

Jennie Huyser

Duane Kelderman, reporter

Manuel Ortiz

Thomas Thompson

Rick Williams

Bing Goei, adviser

Al Mulder, adviser

Note: The committee is also grateful to Franklin Freeland, who began as a committee member but was unable to continue on the committee.

I. Background

The Board of Trustees recommended to Synod 1995 that the possibility of a one-calendar-week synod be considered in order that a greater diversity of elders would be able to attend synod as delegates. The report from the Board suggested that the present two-week synod excludes elders in many occupations because they cannot be free from work for two weeks. As it stands, retired persons, teachers, and some independent businessmen are overly represented as elders in our synods because the time requirement of two weeks is too demanding for elders in most occupations. Of the ninety-four elder delegates to Synod 1994, for example, 24 percent were educators, 34 percent were self-employed businessmen, 13 percent worked in agriculture, and 31 percent were retired or semiretired. Fewer than 10 percent held professional jobs other than teaching, and fewer than 6 percent worked in skilled labor. These figures can hardly be said to represent the typical cross section of elders in the Christian Reformed Church in the United States and Canada.

II. Mandate

Synod 1995 appointed a planning committee, as recommended by the Board of Trustees, "to design a one-calendar-week meeting plan for synod (i.e., Sunday through Saturday) to be considered by Synod 1996" (*Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 696).

III. Observations

The committee worked hard not to weaken the quality or character of synods as we have come to know them. It was careful not to take away quality time from advisory committees and from deliberation on the floor of synod. It was also concerned with maintaining the spiritual tone which synod has come to expect, with honoring prior commitments to agencies and ministries for exposure to synod, and with the fact that delegates from the West and Northwest not only need extra travel time but also lose as much as three hours when they travel to Grand Rapids. Given these basic commitments and facts, the committee reviewed every possible aspect of synod with an eye toward saving time wherever possible. It is confident that the proposed scheduling provides enough time to complete all activities that synod traditionally completes.

IV. Schedule and guidelines for a one-calendar-week synod

A. Schedule

Synod will begin on Saturday and meet according to the following schedule:

1. First Saturday

- | | | |
|-------------------|---|---|
| 2:00 - 3:15 p.m. | - | New-delegate orientation |
| 4:00 - 6:00 p.m. | - | Convening of synod
Opening worship
Election of officers
Housekeeping details |
| 6:15 - 7:15 p.m. | - | Dinner |
| 7:30 - 10:00 p.m. | - | Advisory committees convene |

1. *Ground:* Even though Synod 1995 seemed to suggest that synod should begin on Sunday, the committee believes that beginning on Saturday is necessary to protect Sunday from becoming a day of travel and work for the delegates and to provide the extra time needed for organizing and beginning the work of synod.

2. Sunday

- Morning - Worship with local congregations
Afternoon - Prayer and Praise Festival (4:00 - 6:00 p.m.)
(formerly, Synodical Prayer Service)

This service would incorporate congregational singing, preaching of the Word, prayers, an offering of thanksgiving, greetings from two fraternal delegates (one from North America and one from overseas), and the introduction of missionaries, chaplains, candidates, and persons in ministries in special settings. This service will ordinarily be held in the Calvin College Chapel except in extraordinary circumstances, when it will be held in the sanctuary of the convening church. Regardless of the location, following the service a light supper will be served to delegates only.

Note: Details of this service will be planned jointly by the convening church and the Board of Trustees.

3. Monday

- 8:00 - 8:30 a.m. - Brief plenary session
8:30 - 11:45 a.m. - Committees in session
12:00 - 1:00 p.m. - Lunch
1:15 - 5:15 p.m. - Committees in session
5:30 - 6:45 p.m. - Dinner
7:00 - 10:00 p.m. - Plenary session (or advisory committees if necessary)

4. Tuesday through noon of second Saturday

- 8:00 - 11:45 a.m. - Morning session (break 9:45 - 10:05 a.m.)
1:15 - 5:15 p.m. - Afternoon session (break 3:00 - 3:20 p.m.)
7:00 - 10:00 p.m. - Evening session (no break)

B. Guidelines

1. The synodical delegates will submit their choice of **nominees for officers** of synod to the general secretary prior to the beginning of the assembly. Each delegate may submit one name for the officer category of president/vice president and one name for the officer category of first clerk/second clerk.

The general secretary will receive names of nominees until **May 15**, at which time the nominations will be closed. The twelve persons who receive the highest number of nominating votes will be the slate from which the officers are chosen at the first plenary session of synod. Ordinarily this list will not be made public prior to the convening of synod.

When synod convenes, the names of **alternate delegates** who actually attend synod may be added to the slate by motion and synodical vote without debate. This procedure is necessary to give the body opportunity to

nominate an alternate delegate for office once it knows the alternate will actually be in attendance.

2. The number of **advisory committees** will be increased by a third, and each committee's workload will be decreased by a third. The advisory committees will have no more than twelve persons and no fewer than ten. These numbers, being an optimum size for committees, will require less time for committee work than larger committees do and will allow sufficient time for plenary sessions.
3. Prior to synod each committee will be assigned a **chairperson**, an **alternate chairperson**, a **reporter**, and an **alternate reporter**. Availability of alternates will expedite matters should any chairperson or reporter be unable to assume the duties. The Program Committee will make these assignments prior to synod's convening.
4. The total time for **fraternal delegates'** greetings will be cut from the current two hours to one hour. The Interchurch Relations Committee will determine the best way to divide this time.
5. Although the **agencies and ministries** will already have presented their groups at the Prayer and Praise Festival, their regular rotation of **program presentations** will be continued as presently permitted.
6. The **minutes** will not be read at the beginning of each session of synod but will be proofread by a small committee appointed by the officers of synod. After being proofread, the minutes will be posted in a public place where they can be read by interested delegates.
7. The officers of synod will be permitted to assign a **time limit for debate** on issues they expect to take longer than one hour. This time limit will be announced prior to the presentation of the report. The delegates may vote to extend debate for half-hour intervals when the time limit has been reached.
8. Rules for Synodical Procedure VIII, J, 5, regarding **motions to cease debate**, will be amended as follows:

Any member of synod, when he deems a matter to have been debated sufficiently, may move to close the discussion. Those who call the question shall be recognized in the same manner as others who gain the floor of synod, i.e., by taking their turn on the list of those who have requested the privilege of the floor. The vote on the motion to cease debate shall be taken at once. Should a majority be in favor of ceasing debate, the vote on the matter before synod shall be taken only after those who had previously requested the floor have been recognized. *If a majority is in favor of ceasing debate, the discussion shall cease, and the vote shall be taken.*

Grounds:

- a. This change is in keeping with regulation VIII, J, 4 and the procedure followed when the president of synod ceases debate.
 - b. Allowing a long list of speakers to discuss an issue following a cease-debate vote has proven to be unproductive since no amendments or new motions may be made.
9. The evening **banquet** that has been used to honor retirees and recognize special achievements will be eliminated, and an expanded noon **luncheon**

will be initiated for this purpose on Wednesday or Thursday. The Board of Trustees will be responsible for planning this testimonial luncheon.

V. Recommendations

- A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to the chairman and reporter of the committee when this report is considered.
- B. That synod declare that the schedule and guidelines presented in this report demonstrate that it is feasible to conduct the business of synod in one week.
- C. That synod adopt the schedule and guidelines presented above (IV, A and B).
- D. That these arrangements be adopted and implemented for the synods of 1997 through 2000. Synod 1999 should appoint a committee to review these guidelines and recommend its findings to Synod 2000.
- E. That if this report is accepted as recommended, the Rules for Synodical Procedure be updated to accommodate the changes suggested herein.
- F. That the work of the committee be declared completed and the committee be discharged.

Committee to Design a

One-Calendar-Week Synod

Michael De Vries, chairman

Jake Kuipers

Kenneth Kuipers, reporter

Don Langerak

Howard D. Vanderwell

Peter Borgdorff, adviser

David H. Engelhard, adviser

OVERTURES, APPEALS, AND COMMUNICATIONS

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OVERTURES

Overture 1: Declare That Any Change Made by Synod in Matters Referred to in Church Order Article 47 Must Be Ratified by the Next Synod

Classis Wisconsin overtures synod to declare (1) that, if a proposed change falling under Church Order Article 47 is not ratified by the next synod, the matter is no longer before succeeding synods for ratification and (2) that this rule be added to Church Order Supplement, Article 47.

Ground: Synod has no rule regarding what happens when a synod fails to adopt what the previous synod has proposed.

Classis Wisconsin
Adrian Dieleman, stated clerk

Overture 2: Add a Regulation to the Regulations Pertaining to Article 47 of the Church Order (Church Order Supplement, Art. 47)

I. Background

In 1965 the Christian Reformed Church adopted a new church order. Whereas much of the new Church Order has roots in the Church Order of the Synod of Dort, Article 47 is 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.

Throughout the years there has been considerable debate regarding the provision that the churches have "prior opportunity to consider the advisability of the proposed changes." That debate has been colored by the discussion of women in office, a discussion that probably used Article 47 in a way never intended by its authors. Not surprisingly, the process to make changes has been interpreted in a variety of ways.

After a thorough study of synodical actions surrounding Article 47 and the process for change that has been developed through it, Classis Lake Erie submitted a proposal to Synod 1995. With the exception of one recommendation, the proposal was adopted. The failed recommendation stated,

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.

(*Agenda for Synod 1995*, p. 345)

Synod's advisory committee had difficulty with the wording of that recommendation, and synod itself had difficulty with the advisory committee's proposed amendment. Current regulations in the Supplement, Article 47 are now incomplete because Synod 1995 defeated the proposed recommendation and substituted nothing to address the matter in question.

The question addressed in the regulation proposed to Synod 1995 (*Agenda for Synod 1995*, p. 345) is this: "If a proposed change in matters governed by Church Order Article 47 is *rejected* by a following synod, may the next synod after the rejecting synod adopt that change, or must the change be proposed a second time before it can be adopted?" In other words, in such cases must the rejected "proposed change" be reintroduced by way of a new overture and become part of a two-year process once again? This was the interpretation given at Synod 1993. On the basis of this interpretation, it is now generally believed that once a proposed change is not adopted by a following synod (see Supplement, Art. 47-c-e), that same change may be considered only if it is proposed again to a new synod and then submitted for final adoption to a following synod.

That interpretation is incorrect. The 1993 interpretation is a *new* interpretation which contradicts the precedent already established by Synods 1987-1989.

In response to the recommendation of a study committee, Synod 1987 proposed a number of Church Order changes. Among them were three changes (Arts. 26 and 27 and the heading above Art. 35) that indicated that the denomination has three assemblies—"the council, the classis, and the synod." Synod 1988 did not adopt these changes. Instead, in response to an overture, it revised these articles to indicate that the denomination has five assemblies—"the consistory, diaconate, council, classis, and synod." Synod 1989 was informed by the Synodical Interim Committee that this understanding of the church's assemblies was erroneous (cf. *Agenda for Synod 1989*, pp. 228-30), and Synod 1989 did not adopt the changes proposed by Synod 1988. Instead, it *immediately* adopted the 1987 changes even though these changes had been *rejected* in 1988. In other words, Synod 1989 did not think that the proposal recommended in 1987 regarding the "three assemblies" needed to be resubmitted to a later synod in order to be adoptable.

Ironically, the assertion that an additional two-year process is necessary after a synod *rejects* a proposed change is an interpretation of the supplement to Article 47 that was adopted by Synod 1989, the synod that did not follow a two-year process in revising the Church Order. It could be interpreted that Synod 1989 violated a rule that Synod 1989 itself adopted or that Synod 1989 didn't know what it was doing or that another factor was operative in this situation. We believe the latter is true. When Synod 1989 recognized the "mistake" of Synod 1988, it immediately adopted the 1987 changes because those changes were still part of an ongoing discussion on this issue. Because the discussion was ongoing, the principle of "prior opportunity" was honored when Synod 1989 took action on a 1987 decision.

In the midst of an emotional debate, the requirement of another two-year wait after a proposed change has been rejected may be attractive because it makes a revision of the Church Order more difficult. But in the normal course of events, how attractive is it to tie the hands of synod and to rob it of its ability

to act decisively? The denomination's confidence in synod's ability to give decisive leadership has eroded significantly in the past few years. To interpret a regulation in a way that prohibits synod from taking immediate action even when it is obvious to everyone that it should take action will continue that erosion. The rule book is not the appropriate place to wage our theological debates.

The denomination needs guidance on this issue because confusion still exists. The following overture builds on the work of the Synod 1995 advisory committee which added several conditions to the proposed recommendation but allowed a rejected change to remain available for adoption for a period of *three* years. The proposal below retains the added conditions but shortens the time of availability for adoption to *one* year.

II. Overture

Classis Lake Erie overtures synod to add the following as Regulation f in the Regulations Pertaining to Article 47 of the Church Order (cf. Church Order Supplement, Art. 47; the present f will become g):

A proposed change rejected by one synod remains available for one year for adoption by the following synod when two conditions are met:

A. The available change is substantially the same as the change proposed earlier.

B. The available change is adopted as a response to a matter legally on the agenda of the adopting synod (cf. Church Order Art. 31).

Grounds:

1. This regulation clarifies a matter on which there has been confusion in the last few years.
2. Without such a statement synods may be prohibited from acting decisively in those cases where decisive action is required.

Classis Lake Erie

George Vander Weit, stated clerk

Overture 3: Revise Church Order Articles 47 and 86 and Their Supplements

The Council of Walker CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan, overtures synod to revise Church Order Articles 47 and 86 and, if needed, their supplements to stipulate that all proposed revisions of the Church Order, its supplements, the Form of Subscription, and the creeds and confessions, as well as any other proposals which effect changes in our standards and practices, having been duly considered and put forth by a synod, shall become operative only if approved within one year by a majority of consistories in the denomination.

Grounds:

1. The proposed changes are in order because the authority of Christ is exercised first and foremost by the ruling elders of local churches. Therefore, it is their responsibility to maintain good order and harmony.
2. The proposed changes would safeguard and strengthen the ratification process by broadening it to include local consistories.

3. The proposed changes to the ratification process would promote a wider and more positive dialogue and interaction among the churches, facilitating harmony and unity.

Council of Walker CRC, Grand Rapids, MI
David Remelts, clerk

Note: This overture was submitted to Classis Grand Rapids North but was not adopted.

Overture 4: Revise Article 39 of the Church Order

The Council of First CRC, Byron Center, Michigan, overtures synod to revise Article 39 of the Church Order by adding the word *ordinarily*, so that Article 39 will read, "A classis shall ordinarily consist of a group of neighboring churches."

Grounds:

1. This change will allow churches that wish to be part of classes which retain the word "male" in Article 3 of the Church Order to be organized not according to geographical proximity but according to theological affinity.
2. This change will allow churches grieved by the decision of Synod 1995 re women's ordination to remain in the Christian Reformed Church by organizing classes in which the word "male" will be operative.

Council of First CRC, Byron Center, MI
Donald H. Langerak, clerk

Note: This overture was submitted to Classis Grandville but was not adopted.

Overture 5: Approve New Classis Made Up of Churches Persuaded That Women Ministers, Elders, and Evangelists Are Contrary to Scripture

In order to promote harmony and to encourage churches to stay with the denomination, the Council of Escondido CRC, Escondido, California, overtures synod

- A. To approve now a new classis for churches that are persuaded that the ordination of women to the offices of minister, elder, and evangelist is contrary to the Scripture and believe in conscience that they should not be part of a classis in which women are ordained to church office.
- B. To authorize the general secretary to organize the new classis from all churches that request membership in the new classis in writing by January 1, 1997.
- C. To note that if churches wish to transfer to the new classis after January 1, 1997, or if the new classis becomes too large and needs to reorganize into two or more classes, such transfers or reorganizations will take place according to the provisions of the Church Order.

D. To declare that any church joining the new classis relinquishes all claim on the assets of its present classis.

Grounds:

1. The creation of such a classis has ample historical precedent in the Reformed tradition and under Church Order Article 39.
 - a. The Church Order specifies that a number of its provisions are "ordinarily," "normally," or "as a rule" to be followed, thereby establishing a general principle without making that general principle into a binding rule (cf. Arts. 4-a, 23-a, 23-b, 25-a, 51-a, 54-b, 66-a). Many of these articles with qualifiers represent changes in rules which were formerly binding upon all Christian Reformed congregations. Past synods have been hesitant to enforce Church Order regulations which are not being universally followed and have sometimes explicitly cited lack of universal adherence as a ground for changing the Church Order. For example, Synod 1995 proposed, subject to adoption in 1996, that churches shall assemble for worship "*ordinarily* [emphasis added] twice on the Lord's Day" rather than enforcing compliance to the twice-a-Sunday provision throughout the denomination. Past synods have also been willing to relax the Church Order regulations when such a realization was deemed to be in the best interest of the denomination as a whole or of a number of local churches.
 - b. Article 39 of the Church Order has been interpreted as a guideline (i.e., "ordinarily") rather than as a strictly binding rule for well over a hundred years. To cite only a few examples:
 - 1) For most of the last century and much of the early part of this century, the CRC had a classis united by German ethnicity rather than by geography. Classis Ostfriesland (now Classis Northcentral Iowa) had churches in Iowa, Illinois, and Minnesota.
 - 2) A recent *Banner* article reminds us that synod approved the transfer of Pease CRC out of Classis Ostfriesland not for reasons of geography but because the church objected to the fact that too much German was spoken in Classis Ostfriesland.
 - 3) Until the middle of this century, Classis Hackensack and Classis Hudson overlapped in the New Jersey area. Classis Hackensack, originally a group of English-speaking RCA congregations which left that denomination in the 1820s, was made up of churches which spoke English and used hymns when most CRC churches spoke Dutch and all outside of Classis Hackensack used psalms exclusively. After a number of churches left Classis Hackensack in 1905, synod transferred the English-speaking Monsey CRC into Classis Hackensack to bolster its membership.
 - 4) During the post-World War II immigration period, Classis Minnesota South included churches in Canada which geographically should have been included in Classis Minnesota North. These churches were placed in classis Minnesota South because the classis had a number of larger, established churches which could assist the immigrants.
 - 5) For most of a generation, Second CRC of Sioux Center, Iowa, was a member of Classis Orange City because of difficulties in First CRC

which led to the formation of the new church. Synod allowed First CRC and Second CRC to be members of different classes to make it possible for the two churches to live in peace within the same denomination.

- c. Unlike some recent cases in which an article in the Church Order that had once been strictly enforced came to be viewed as establishing an “ordinary” guideline, Article 39 and its earlier parallels have been viewed as “ordinary” guidelines since the earliest days of the Dort Church Order. The following are two examples (articles cited are those of the original 1619 Dort Church Order, not the Church Order currently used in the CRC):
 - 1) Article 51 specified that “whereas two languages are spoken in the Netherlands, it is deemed proper that the church of the German (i.e., Dutch) and the Welsh (i.e., Old French) languages each have their own Consistories, Classical Meetings, and Particular Synods.” Article 52 makes explicit that these assemblies were not geographically defined: “Notwithstanding, it is resolved that in the cities where before mentioned Welsh churches are found, some Ministers and Elders from both sides meet every month to maintain proper unity and correspondence with each other and, as much as possible, assist one another with advice as the need arises.” These French churches used Calvin’s Catechism instead of the Heidelberg Catechism despite Article 68’s requirement that pastors “ordinarily in the afternoon sermon” preach from “the catechism which at present is accepted in the Netherlands,” i.e., the Heidelberg.
 - 2) Article 51 was early on expanded in its meaning, though not formally amended, to permit the creation of a nongeographical “English synod”—a classis of English-speaking churches scattered throughout the Netherlands, mostly comprised of merchants and soldiers, which on account of great travel distances was granted a further dispensation from Article 41’s requirement that classes meet at least once every three months.
- d. Other denominations in the Reformed tradition have had and some still have nongeographical classes and sometimes even nongeographical particular synods. For example:
 - 1) The Presbyterian Church in America, a 260,000-member denomination in ecclesiastical fellowship with the CRC, attributes much of its dramatic growth in Korean membership to the existence of seven nongeographical Korean-language presbyteries which allow Korean PCA ministers to conduct the business of their churches and interchurch assemblies in the language in which they are most fluent. Korean churches are not required to belong to these presbyteries and may transfer to the English-language geographically determined presbyteries upon request.
 - 2) The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has two Korean-language presbyteries and one Native American presbytery.
 - 3) The United Church of Christ has a nongeographical Calvin Synod, composed of four classes of ethnic Hungarian Reformed churches. These were originally a nongeographical synod of the Evangelical and Reformed Church, an ethnic German denomination which

merged with the Congregationalists in 1961 to form the United Church of Christ.

- 4) In the last century, most of the larger Reformed and Presbyterian denominations in North America had sizeable nongeographical regional assemblies. While most of these were organized along ethnic lines, some were "affinity presbyteries" organized on explicit theological grounds to allow people of differing theological persuasions to coexist within the same denomination. For instance, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) had two nongeographical presbyteries in Philadelphia, the larger comprised of staunch theological conservatives and the smaller comprised of people willing to use evangelistic methods similar to those of the modern church-growth movement.
 - e. *The Manual of Christian Reformed Church Government* (1994 ed., p. 39) itself notes that "the boundaries of the classes constituting the denomination have never been clearly defined."
 - f. Nongeographical classes are not an innovation. On the contrary, they have strong precedent not only in the Christian Reformed Church but also in the broader Reformed community. They also have roots dating back to the very foundation of our own Church Order at the 1619 Synod of Dort. Clearly, they are an option which Reformed churches are free to use, which the Christian Reformed Church has used in the past, and which the CRC began to use again when synod created Classis Red Mesa—a group of churches which was split off from Classis Rocky Mountain specifically to allow more effective ministry in the local environment.
2. The creation of such a classis would show in a concrete way respect for the consciences of churches that cannot agree with the decision of Synod 1995 on women in office and would implement the decision of Synod 1995 that it is legitimate to read Scripture as prohibiting the ordination of women to office. (Synod 1995 voted to "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" [*Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 727]. For that reason, it voted to state that "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 office of elder, minister, and evangelist.")

Council of Escondido CRC, Escondido, CA
Elko Brouwer, clerk

Note: This overture was submitted to Classis California South but was not adopted.

Overture 6: Repent and Change Church Order Article 39

I, Donald Zwier, a member of Hillcrest CRC, Hudsonville, Michigan, overture synod

1. To issue a call for repentance to our denomination, classes, churches, and members.
2. To approve the formation of a Covenant Union of Christian Reformed Churches to bring together churches and individual members of like biblical and confessional mind. The purpose of the Covenant Union will be to return the Christian Reformed denomination to its historic biblical positions regarding important denominational issues.
3. To approve a revision to Article 39 of the Church Order by adding the word *ordinarily*, so that Article 39 will read,

A classis shall *ordinarily* consist of a group of neighboring churches. The organizing of a new classis and the redistricting of classes require the approval of synod.
4. To add the following supplement to Church Order Article 39:

Churches which feel compelled to participate only in classes which retain the word "male" in Article 3-a of the Church Order may, with synodical approval, form a new classis or join an existing classis in which the word "male" remains operative.
5. To recognize that changing Article 39 of the Church Order and adding a supplement to Article 39 are nonsubstantial and should, therefore, be effective immediately.
6. To be informed that, if the above proposals are not approved, a conference will be called to consider the possible formation of a new denomination.

Donald Zwier

Member, Hillcrest CRC, Hudsonville, MI

Note: This overture was submitted to the Council of Hillcrest CRC, Hudsonville, Michigan, and to Classis Georgetown but was not adopted.

Overture 7: Revise Article 39 of the Church Order

The Council of Terra Ceia CRC, Terra Ceia, North Carolina, overtures synod to revise Article 39 of the Church Order by adding the word *ordinarily*, so that Article 39 will read, "A classis shall *ordinarily* consist of a group of neighboring churches. The organizing of a new classis and the redistricting of classes requires the approval of synod."

Grounds:

1. This revision of Article 39 will allow churches that feel grieved by Synod 1995's decision regarding women's ordination to remain in the Christian Reformed denomination by organizing a new classis or joining an existing classis in which the word "male" will be operative.

2. This revision will allow churches that wish to be part of classes which keep the word "male" in Article 3 of the Church Order to be organized not by geographical regions but by theological affinity.

Council of Terra Ceia CRC, Terra Ceia, NC
Bernard Van Essendelft, clerk

Note: This overture was submitted to Classis Hackensack but was not adopted.

Overture 8: Revise Church Order Article 39 and Its Supplement

I. Observations

The Council of Calvary CRC, Loveland, Colorado, brings the following to the attention of synod:

- A. The inconsistent decisions of synod in recent years regarding women in office have led to a steady stream of congregations leaving our denomination.
- B. These departures are restricting the ministry programs of the denomination and of classes.
- C. The decision of Synod 1995 transferred to the individual classes and congregations the conflict of differing biblical interpretations concerning the women-in-office issue. This action places individual congregations within local classes at variance with one another. This divisiveness undermines our unity and our witness within local classes and communities.

II. Overture

In the hope that Synod 1996 can reduce or eliminate the continuing division we face by partially replacing the geographic system by which our classes are organized with a more flexible system that allows churches to affiliate with a classis comprised of churches that are in agreement on the divisive issues, the Council of Calvary CRC, Loveland, Colorado, overtures synod

- A. To revise Article 39 of the Church Order by adding the word *ordinarily*, so that Article 39 would read,

A classis shall *ordinarily* consist of a group of neighboring churches. The organizing of a new classis and the redistricting of classes require the approval of the synod. [Addition appears in italics.]

- B. To add a supplement to Church Order Article 39 as follows:

Churches which are biblically compelled to participate only in classes which retain the word "male" in Article 3 of the Church Order, may, with synodical approval, form a new classis or join an existing classis in which the word "male" remains operative.

Grounds:

1. Synod 1995 stated "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" (*Acts of Synod 1995*,

Article 75, p. 731), thereby declaring that both positions are validly held. These opposing positions are not conducive to unity in a classis with churches of both convictions.

2. This revision of Article 39 and its supplement will allow churches that are grieved by the decision of Synod 1995 regarding women's ordination to remain in the CRC by organizing new classes or by joining existing classes in which the word "male" will be operative.
3. Such classical affiliations are necessary for these churches to live according to the historic Reformed Church Order.
4. Precedent exists for classes created for reasons other than geographic proximity: for example, Classis Ostfriesland, Classis Red Mesa, and the proposed Korean classis.
5. Precedent also exists for churches to join nongeographic classes: for example Second CRC in Classis Sioux Center moved to Classis Orange City (Synod 1924).
6. Such classes would serve the unity and witness of the CRC.

Council of Calvary CRC, Loveland, CO
Arthur Nelson, clerk

Note: This overture was submitted to Classis Rocky Mountain but was not adopted.

Overture 9: Alter Decision of Synod 1995 That Gives Classes the Right to Declare Article 3-a of the Church Order Inoperative

The Council of First CRC, Mount Vernon, Washington, overtures synod to alter the decision of Synod 1995 that gives classes the right to declare Article 3-a of the Church Order inoperative.

Grounds:

1. Synod 1994 concluded 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). No new biblical information was brought forth in the discussion at Synod 1995 to provide a persuasive basis for allowing the suspension of Church Order Article 3-a at the classical level.
2. Synod 1994 concluded that "the clear teaching of Scripture prohibits women from holding the offices of minister, elder, and evangelist" (*Acts of Synod 1994*, p. 514). Synod 1995 ignored this conclusion of Synod 1994 in its compromise conclusion on the issue without offering biblical reasons for doing so.
3. Synod 1994 concluded that "the issue of women in office cannot be left to local option . . ." (*Acts of Synod 1994*, p. 515). The Church Order and its supplements indicate that the call to the office of minister is operative within the entire denomination, not just in a few classes. Synod 1995 has contradicted this conclusion of Synod 1994 and the implications of the Church Order.
4. Synod 1995 had the noble goal of bringing to an end the unrest surrounding this issue; however, the method used to do so set a dangerous precedent for future controversial issues within the denomination. Synod loses

some of its respect, and the Church Order loses some of its authority when exceptions are granted without following the normal procedure for changing the Church Order.

Council of First CRC, Mount Vernon, WA
Paul W. Westra, clerk

Note: This overture was submitted to Classis Pacific Northwest but was not adopted.

Overture 10: Revise the Decision of Synod 1995 re Women in Office

Classis Atlantic Northeast overtures synod to revise the decision rendered by Synod 1995 to open the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist to women in any given classis by declaring the word "male" to be inoperative for the churches within that classis in response to local needs.

Grounds:

1. Contrary to the declaration of Synod 1995 that this issue is "not a key issue that touches the heart of the gospel," the issue of women's ordination to an office of spiritual authority is extremely important and consequential. The authority that controls the preaching of the Word, that exercises discipline, and that guards the church against heresy is conferred upon men only, according to the Bible.
2. Synod 1995 contends that "a strong case can be made that in the light of Scripture all the offices should be open to women." In truth, the overwhelming, if not clear, proclamation of Holy Writ is that ecclesiastical office is reserved for men only (I Tim. 2:11-3:15; Titus 1:5; etc.).
3. Synod 1995 asserts that "historically, a position of compromise like this, allowing both points of view to coexist and be practiced, has served the churches well." This statement is bereft of examples, and compromise on issues of this magnitude has been disastrous for the church historically.
4. The Bible is God's infallible Word. Interpretation of the Bible is fallible human work. The Book warns against distorting, twisting, adding to, or subtracting from God's words (Belgic Confession Art. VII; II Pet. 3:15-16; Rev. 22:18-19).

Classis Atlantic Northeast
J. George Aupperlee, stated clerk

Overture 11: Revise 1995 Decision on Women in Office and Reinstate Decision of 1994

Classis Zeeland overtures synod to revise the decision of Synod 1995 which allows the word "male" in Article 3 of the Church Order to be declared "inoperative" and to reinstate the decision of Synod 1994 regarding women in ecclesiastical office (*Acts of Synod 1994*, pp. 515-17, Art. 80).

Grounds:

1. The action of Synod 1995 violated Church Order Article 29 by failing to provide proof that the decision of 1994 not to ratify changes in Article 3 was in any way "in conflict with the Word of God or the Church Order."
2. The action of Synod 1995 violated Church Order Article 31 by failing to provide any "new and sufficient grounds" to reconsider the decision of Synod 1994, a decision based on clear scriptural grounds (*Acts of Synod 1994*, p. 506).
3. By declaring one of the Church Order articles "inoperative," Synod 1995 violated Church Order Article 47, which states, "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."
4. Synod 1995 gave individual classes and congregations the right to declare part of the Church Order "inoperative," effectively discrediting the Church Order (I Cor. 14:40; Church Order Art. 1 and Art. 86) and creating disunity and disorder.
5. Synod 1995 erred by adopting a supplement to Church Order Article 3 which sets aside the principle stated in this article. Traditionally, supplements are meant to clarify and explain the meaning of an article; they are not meant to negate an article.

Classis Zeeland

James Cooper, stated clerk

Overture 12: Appoint a Committee to Provide Grounds for Only Males in Office and for Both Males and Females in Office

Classis Chicago South overtures synod to establish a committee to produce for clarification purposes two reports for presentation to Synod 1999: one report presenting the biblical grounds for only males being allowed to serve in the offices of minister, elder, and evangelist and another report presenting the biblical grounds for both males and females being allowed to serve in these three offices.

Grounds:

1. Synod 1995 adopted the following recommendation:

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.
(*Acts of Synod 1995*, pp. 731-32, emphasis added)

Synod 1995 offered no evidence for these claims nor cited any specific synodical "decisions and reports." The objective of Synod 1995's decision not to return to this issue until Synod 2000 (*Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 735) was,

among other things, to provide "a period during which the issue [of women in ecclesiastical office] is not hotly and bitterly debated . . ." thus allowing "the denomination to prayerfully reflect on the issue without the pressure of an imminent decision" (*Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 736). Such a two-part study will move toward these objectives by

- a. Providing synodically sponsored and supported reports which address all the biblical matters relevant to this issue. Presentation of these reports to Synod 1999 will allow more informed reflection on this issue in preparation for the review of Synod 1995's decisions at Synod 2000.
 - b. Providing specific documents to which advisory committees on these issues at future synods may refer.
2. Whatever decision the Christian Reformed Church ultimately makes on these matters, many local congregations—laypeople, deacons and elders, and pastors—need and desire synodical guidance on the issue of women in ecclesiastical office. Although the CRC has produced many reports on these issues over the past twenty-five years, the status of these reports is unclear; many are unsure whether these reports represent the official position of the CRC. Adoption of the above overture will result in needed clarification on the important matters related to women in ecclesiastical office, both for Synod 2000 and for members of the CRC in general.
3. Specifically asking for a study committee to produce two contrasting reports is somewhat irregular. However, Synod 1995's assertion that on this issue there are two different perspectives and convictions which honor the Word of God and adduce good biblical grounds is also somewhat irregular. Moreover, if Synod 1996 would establish a study committee to pull together all the previous reports and decisions of synod on women in ecclesiastical office for purposes of producing a report, there would almost certainly be majority and minority opinions. Therefore, common sense dictates that two contrasting reports be requested from such a study committee.

Classis Chicago South

Henry Vanden Heuvel, stated clerk

Overture 13: Revise Synod 1995's Decision re Article 3 of the Church Order

In order to return Article 3 to the meaning it had in 1994, the council of Calvin CRC, Dundas, Ontario, overtures synod to revise Synod 1995's actions which allow the word "male" in Article 3 of the Church Order to be declared "inoperative."

Grounds:

1. Synod 1995 violated Synod 1979's stipulations regarding Church Order Article 47 (cf. *Acts of Synod 1979*, p. 90, Art. 77, C, 2). Article 47 states that "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. Declaring an article "inoperative" undermines the Church Order's credibility as a set of organizational rules "so that all things in the church may be done 'in a fitting and orderly way' (I Cor. 14:40) under its only

- head, Jesus Christ" ("Introduction," *Manual of Christian Reformed Church Government*, 1994, p. 11, Richard R. De Ridder and Leonard J. Hofman).
3. Synod 1995's use of the word "inoperative" has the effect of allowing individual churches to do as they please and so creates disunity rather than unity.
 4. Synod 1995's decision is inherently contradictory. The decision that the word "male" may be declared inoperative undermines the intention of supplements to the Church Order: they are meant to illumine or explain the meaning or implementation of an article, not to set aside its specific purpose.
 5. Synod 1995 violated Church Order Article 29 by failing to produce any proof that the decision of Synod 1994 not to ratify Synod 1993's proposed amendment of Church Order Article 3 was in conflict with the Word of God or the Church Order.
 6. Synod 1995 violated Church Order Article 31 by failing to present any new and sufficient grounds to revise Synod 1994's decision not to ratify Synod 1993's proposed amendment of Church Order Article 3.
 7. Synod 1995 ignored the clear scriptural grounds set out by Synod 1994 demonstrating that women may not serve in the offices of minister and elder.

Council of Calvin CRC, Dundas, ON
Frans Burghgraef, clerk

Note: This overture was submitted to Classis Hamilton but was not adopted.

Overture 14: Revise Decision of Synod 1995 re Five-Year Moratorium on Women in Office

Synod 1995 decided to proscribe synodical debate concerning women's ordination for a period of five years by "declaring this arrangement in effect until the year 2000, at which time it will be reviewed" (*Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 735).

Classis Illiana overtures synod to revise the decision of Synod 1995 concerning the five-year moratorium on debate concerning the ordination of women.

Grounds:

1. The Form of Subscription guarantees that if persons feel themselves aggrieved, they have the right of appeal to classis or synod, and synod can not take that right away.
2. Synod may not take away the right of appeal, for doing so denies the office of believer.
3. Synod's suspension of the appeal process is a violation of the process itself, which makes the suspension illegal.
4. Synod's appeal to "settled and binding" begs the question.
5. Synod's moratorium violates the provisions of the Church Order (cf. Art. 31).

Classis Illiana
Laryn G. Zoerhof, stated clerk

Overture 15: Adopt a Resolution re Synod 1995's Decision to Permit the Ordination of Women

Classis Illiana overtures synod to adopt the following resolution:

The 1995 synodical decision to permit the ordination of women to the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist violates Christian Reformed polity.

Grounds:

1. Synod 1995 failed to provide a sufficient biblical, historical, or ecclesiastical basis for allowing individual classes to determine for themselves whether or not the word "male" in Article 3-a of the Church Order will remain operative. The decision to place in parentheses those Church Order articles dealing with particular or regional synods from 1914 through 1965 fails to establish a precedent for the 1995 synodical decision. We note the following explanation offered by Van Dellen and Monsma in *The Church Order Commentary* (1941 edition) regarding the alleged "precedent" established by placing parentheses around Articles 47-49 of the Church Order:

Article 47, as well as Article 48 and Article 49, is found between parentheses in the Church Order. *This was done because we do not yet have Particular Synods, and all of these articles refer, in the first place, to Particular Synods.* And yet, sooner or later, we may find that we should begin to meet as Particular Synods. Particular Synods will be held as soon as conditions warrant and require their institution. Consequently, these articles have been retained in our redaction of the Church Order of Dort, but we have placed them between parentheses for the time being. [Italics added for emphasis.]

2. The practice of individual classes declaring a specific article of the Church Order to be "inoperative" ultimately weakens our ecclesiastical unity and the "settled and binding" character of the Church Order. Furthermore, the basis for this synodical decision, though arbitrarily selected, has now established a precedent which will lead to a further weakening of the Church Order.
3. By restricting women ministers and elders from serving as classical delegates (in some classes), synodical delegates, and synodical deputies and in other functions normally permissible for elders and ministers, Synod 1995 has restricted the offices of elder and minister in a way which deprives some elders and ministers of their biblical right to serve at the broader ecclesiastical assemblies. In so doing, synod 1995 has created two distinct divisions among elders and ministers, divisions which have no basis in Scripture, the Reformed confessions, or Reformed church polity.
4. The 1995 synodical decision authorizing the ordination of women to the office of elder, minister, and evangelist openly violates Article 29 of the Christian Reformed Church Order, which states,

Decisions of ecclesiastical assemblies shall be reached only upon due consideration. 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.* [Italics added for emphasis.]

It should be noted, therefore, that Synod 1994 adopted the following statements which should be considered "settled and binding" upon all the churches of the Christian Reformed denomination:

- "The biblical texts cited by Synod 1993 to support the proposed change in Church Order Article 3 are not persuasive" (*Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 514).
- "The clear teaching of Scripture prohibits women from holding the offices of minister, elder, and evangelist" (*Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 514).

Synod 1995 acted contrary to Article 29 by failing to provide new or compelling biblical, confessional, or church-polity grounds for its decision regarding the ordination of women to ecclesiastical office. Furthermore, Synod 1995 clearly failed to prove from Scripture, the Reformed confessions, or the Church Order that the 1994 synodical decision conflicts with the Word of God or the Church Order.

Classis Illiana

Laryn G. Zoerhof, stated clerk

Overture 16: Revise Decision of Synod 1995 re Church Order Article 3-a

The Council of East Martin CRC, Martin, Michigan, overtures synod to revise and overturn the decision of Synod 1995 which stated that "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:

1. Synod has not produced biblical evidence to support the assertion that "good biblical grounds" for both perspectives and convictions exist.
 - a. Synod gave no biblical grounds for its decision (see *Acts of Synod 1995*, pp. 733-34, Art. 79).
 - b. Synod failed to answer the scriptural argument which was presented by the minority advisory committee (see *Acts of Synod 1995*, pp. 729-31, Art. 75).
2. The decision of Synod 1995 contradicts Church Order Articles 29 and 86.
 - a. If a classis is allowed to declare the word "male" in Article 3-a inoperative, the words "faithfully observed" in Article 86 have been stripped of meaning and significance.
 - b. The decision of Synod 1995 has created a new means to negate the meaning of Article 29 of the Church Order. Article 29 of the Church Order stipulates that a synod's decisions are "settled and binding, unless it is proved that they conflict with the Word of God or the Church Order." Now, however, *anyone* with a "conscientious objection" to the Church Order may bypass Article 29 and ignore the weight of synodical decisions. It is inherent congregationalism if churches may "decide the issue within the confines of their own domain and then consider it [a classical decision] not binding" (Henry De Moor, *The Banner*, January 7, 1991).
3. The decision of Synod 1995 promotes the very form of congregationalism it sought to avoid.

In a classis which retains the word "male" as operative for its constituent churches, the conscientious objector congregation may, neverthe-

less, exercise its right to women's ordination (see *Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 735, Art. 79, 3, a). Synod stipulated that a classis "shall not exercise its disciplinary authority to enforce compliance. . . ." Therefore, *any* action or decision of a classis regarding Article 3-a is rendered unnecessary and worthless simply by the exercise of "the church's right" not to comply. The *congregation* rules. In reality, the authority of a classis is not binding upon its constituent churches if a church may exercise the privilege of taking exception to decisions. Synod's decision has given churches "the right" to disobey a decision of classis.

Council of East Martin CRC, Martin, MI
Dennis De Young, clerk

Note: This overture was submitted to Classis Kalamazoo but was not adopted.

Overture 17: Revise 1995 Decision on Church Order Article 3-a; Reinstate Decision of 1994 re Women in Office

The Council of Walker CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan, overtures synod to revise the decision of Synod 1995 (*Acts of Synod 1995*, Art. 75) regarding the change made to Church Order Article 3 and to reinstate the decision of Synod 1994 as the official position of the Christian Reformed Church regarding women in ecclesiastical office.

Grounds:

1. Scripture clearly prohibits the ordination of women to the authoritative offices of elder, minister, and evangelist, as was set forth by the *Acts of Synod 1994*, Article 77 (1, C, 1, a-d).
2. Synod 1995 violated Church Order Article 31. No new or sufficient grounds for reconsideration or revision were ever brought forward.
3. Synod 1995 violated Church Order Article 47 by making a substantial (not supplemental) alteration to the Church Order without giving the churches "a prior opportunity to consider the advisability of the proposed changes."
4. Synod 1995 violated Church Order Article 3 by changing it offhand, bypassing proper procedure, thus creating two church orders in one book.
5. Obedience to Scripture and observance of the Church Order are essential to the unity and harmony of the Christian Reformed Church and the maintenance of its biblical and Reformed character.

Council of Walker CRC, Grand Rapids, MI
David Remelts, clerk

Note: This overture was submitted to Classis Grand Rapids North but was not adopted.

Overture 18: Revise Decision of Synod 1995 re Supplement Added to Church Order Article 3

I. Background

The issue of women in ecclesiastical office is one that the Christian Reformed Church in North America has wrestled with for over twenty years. Synod 1995 sought, by means of a compromise, to put this issue behind us and "get on with the Lord's work." Synod also sought to bring about unity and peace in the denomination. It is our belief that obedience to Scripture and to the Church Order is essential to the unity and harmony of the Christian Reformed churches and to preserving their biblical and Reformed character. On this basis, we cannot accept the decision of Synod 1995 and believe it acted improperly in dealing with the decision of Synod 1994 and with the Church Order.

We are very concerned about the manner in which Synod 1995 came to its decision. We judge that those who favor women in ecclesiastical office ought to be concerned about this as well. We are troubled that a dangerous precedent has been set in saying that the Bible can speak favorably on both sides of this issue.

II. Overture

Classis of the Heartland overtures synod to revise the decision of Synod 1995 (*Acts of Synod 1995*, Art. 75) regarding the supplement added to Church Order Article 3, which allows the word "male" in Article 3 to be declared "inoperative," and to reinstate the decision of Synod 1994 as the official position of the Christian Reformed Church regarding women in ecclesiastical office.

Grounds:

- A. Synod 1995 violated Church Order Article 29 by failing to produce any proof that the decision of Synod 1994 on Church Order Article 3, which states that the clear teaching of Scripture prohibits women from holding the offices of minister, elder, and evangelist (*Acts of Synod 1994*, Art. 77, I, C, 1, a-d, pp. 505-08), was "in conflict with the Word of God or the Church Order."
- B. Synod 1995 violated Church Order Article 31 by acting on Article 3 even when no new or sufficient grounds for reconsideration or revision of Article 3 were ever brought forward.
- C. Synod 1995 violated Church Order Article 47 by making a substantial (not supplemental) alteration to the Church Order without giving the churches prior opportunity to consider the advisability of the proposed changes. Article 47 states, "No substantial alteration shall be effected by synod in these matters unless the churches have had prior opportunity to consider the advisability of the proposed changes."
- D. Synod 1995's decision that the word "male" be declared inoperative undermines the intention of a supplement to the Church Order, which is to illumine or explain the meaning or implementation of an article. Supplementary material was never meant to negate or set aside an article's specific purpose.
- E. By neither accepting nor rejecting Synod 1994's statement on women in ecclesiastical office, Synod 1995 has left our church vulnerable to further

unbiblical positions by telling us that Scripture can teach two equally valid, contradictory things.

Classis of the Heartland
Jack M. Gray, stated clerk

**Overture 19: Revise Decision of Synod 1995 re Church Order Article 3;
Maintain and Enforce Unaltered Reading of Article 3**

The Council of Transcona CRC, Winnipeg, Manitoba, overtures synod

A. To revise, with an expression of repentance, the decision of Synod 1995 to subvert the Church Order of the CRC by allowing classes and churches to declare "inoperative" the word "male" in the articles of the Church Order which deal with ecclesiastical office.

B. To maintain and enforce the unaltered reading of Church Order Article 3 (limiting the offices of minister and elder to male members) throughout the entire CRC.

Grounds:

1. As Synod 1994 rightly declared, "The clear teaching of Scripture prohibits women from holding the office of minister, elder, and evangelist" (*Acts of Synod 1994*, Art. 77, C, 1, b). The decision of Synod 1995 is in direct conflict with the clear teaching of Scripture in I Timothy 2:11-3:15 and I Corinthians 11:2-16; 14:33-35.
2. The Belgic Confession instructs us that in a true church of Jesus Christ "All things are managed according to the pure Word of God, all things contrary thereto rejected" (Art. 29). As the Reformed Ecumenical Synod declared in 1968, "It is the plain and obvious teaching of Scripture that women are excluded from the office of ruling and preaching elders." The decision of Synod 1995, not being in harmony with Scripture, casts doubt upon the status of the CRC as a true church.
3. To declare inoperative a provision of the Church Order is an innovation and novelty unheard of in the whole history of the CRC, indeed, in the history of all the Reformed churches. It is a subversion of the due process of amending and ratifying amendments to the Church Order. Such sophism must be rejected by Christian consciences.
4. The decision of Synod 1995 has caused uproar in the churches, has caused the Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerk in Nederland to break ecclesiastical relations with the CRC, and threatens our relations with the churches of the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council, which has previously reminded the CRC synod that Scripture does not permit the ordination of women.

Council of Transcona CRC, Winnipeg, MB
Leonard Menheer, clerk

Note: This overture was submitted to Classis Minnesota North but was not adopted.

Overture 20: Revise the Decision of Synod 1995 re Church Order Article 3

Classis Arizona overtures synod to revise the decision of Synod 1995 which allowed the word "male" in Article 3 of the Church Order to be declared "inoperative."

Grounds:

1. Synod 1995 effected substantial alteration of the Church Order by allowing one of its articles to be declared inoperative. By this action Synod 1995 violated Church Order Article 47 because it did not give the churches prior opportunity to consider the advisability of this change.
2. Declaring an article inoperative undermines the Church Order's credibility as a set of organizational rules to ensure that all things in the church may be done "in a fitting and orderly way" (I Cor. 14:40).
3. Synod 1995's use of the word "inoperative" has the effect of allowing individual churches to do as they please in substantial matters and so creates disunity rather than unity.
4. Synod 1995's decision evidences an inherent contradiction since its decision that the word "male" may be declared inoperative undermines the intentions of a supplement to the Church Order, which is to illumine or explain the meaning or implementation of an article, not to set aside an article's specific purpose.
5. Synod 1995 violated Church Order Article 29 by failing to produce any proof that the decision of Synod 1994 not to ratify Synod 1993's proposed amendment of Church Order Article 3 was in conflict in any way with the Word of God or the Church Order.
6. Synod 1995 violated Church Order Article 31 by failing to present any new and sufficient grounds to revise Synod 1994's decision not to ratify Synod 1993's proposed amendment of Church Order Article 3.

Classis Arizona

Carl J. Toeset, stated clerk

Overture 21: Revise Decision of Synod 1995 Allowing the Word "Male" in Church Order Article 3-a to Be Declared Inoperative

I. Introduction

When Synod 1995 voted to allow classes and churches to declare that the word "male" in Article 3-a of the Church Order is inoperative, it made a decision that is in conflict with the Word of God and the Church Order. The four grounds synod adopted to support its action are not persuasive.

II. A decision in conflict with the Word of God

Writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the apostle Paul gives the following directive concerning the conduct of women in Christian assemblies:

A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner. (I Tim. 2:11-14)

Paul grounds his prohibition in the order of creation in verse 13 and shows the negative consequence of failing to follow the creation order in verse 14. Because Paul's prohibition is based on the creation order, it cannot be viewed as a temporary measure. The creation order has relevance for all time. Therefore, in Christian assemblies today women are not permitted to teach or have authority over men, functions which are inseparable from the offices of minister and elder.

In I Timothy 3, as he gives the qualifications for the office of overseer, Paul writes that "the overseer must be . . . the husband of but one wife. . . . He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect" (I Tim. 3:2, 4). These words clearly indicate that only men are qualified to hold the office of overseer. This office includes the functions of the offices of elder and minister today.

By allowing classes and churches to declare that the word "male" in Article 3-a of the Church Order is inoperative, Synod 1995 is allowing them to disregard the teaching Christ has given to his church through the apostle Paul.

III. A decision in conflict with the Church Order

Synod has not changed Article 3-a of the Church Order, which states that "confessing male members of the church who meet the biblical requirements are eligible for the offices of minister, elder, and evangelist." Yet synod has made use of a Church Order supplement to nullify the force of the word "male" in Article 3-a. This action has the effect of creating a "shadow" church order in the supplement which contradicts the Church Order and undermines the authority of the Church Order as a whole.

In addition, by adding the supplement to Article 3, Synod 1995 in effect made a substantial alteration in the Church Order. This action is in conflict with Article 47 of the Church Order. No "prior opportunity" was given to the churches "to consider the advisability of the proposed change," as required by Article 47.

IV. A decision based on inadequate grounds

Synod 1995 adopted four grounds to support its decision. We judge them to be inadequate for the following reasons:

A. Ground a states,

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.

Synod has provided satisfactory leadership on this matter by articulating a position on this issue that is solidly based on biblical grounds. This was done by Synod 1994. Now, instead of providing leadership by supporting the 1994 decision, Synod 1995 has abdicated its responsibility by "placing responsibility for decisions on this matter at the classical level."

B. Ground b states,

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.

This ground is true, but it supports doing away with the current compromise, which gives women functions they are biblically prohibited from exercising.

C. Ground c states,

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.

One of the regulations associated with synod's declaration is that

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.

So congregations are free to act as they choose, regardless of what decision is reached by their classes. What is this but congregationalism?

D. Ground d finds a precedent for declaring parts of the Church Order inoperative in the fact that

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 a time as it might be appropriate to implement them.

This example hardly provides a precedent for Synod 1995's action. Particular and regional synods were not understood by anyone as being biblically mandated. While some may have felt that regional synods would be useful or helpful, no one's conscience was violated by their not being established.

V. Overture

In light of the above, Classis Minnesota South overtures synod

- A. To revise the decision of Synod 1995 that allows classes and churches to declare that the word "male" in Article 3-a of the Church Order is inoperative.
- B. To delete the supplement to Church Order Article 3-a.

Grounds:

1. This decision is in conflict with the Word of God (I Tim. 2:11-14; 3:2).
2. This decision is in conflict with the Church Order. A supplement to a Church Order article is used to undermine the article itself, and Article 47 was not observed.
3. This decision is based on inadequate grounds: Synod 1994 provided adequate leadership on the issue of women in office; Synod 1995's decision promotes congregationalism rather than avoiding it; the case cited by Synod 1995 is not an appropriate precedent for synod's action.

Classis Minnesota South
Norman J. Visser, stated clerk

Overture 22: Modify Regulation f Associated with Synod 1995's Decision on Women in Office

In Overture 23 Classis Lake Erie is requesting that synod appoint a committee to which all overtures on women in office will be referred from now through Synod 1999. If synod acts favorably on that overture, we expect that this overture will be given to that committee. If that committee is not appointed, we ask Synod 1996 to consider this overture.

I. Background

Synod 1995 recognized 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." Thus, it voted to allow congregations to ordain women elders and allowed classes to declare the word "male" in Article 3-a of the Church Order inoperative so congregations in certain classes could ordain women in all the offices. Synod also placed a number of restrictions on that decision. Even though it allowed classes to use the gifts of women ministers, it did not allow them to use these gifts in the service of a denominational agency. If a woman in the CRC expresses her desire to serve God as a home or world missionary or as a chaplain, this restriction forces the church to advise her not to become a minister or to enter another denomination. This restriction is contrary to our prayer to the Lord of the harvest "to send out workers into his harvest field" (Matt. 9:38), contrary to the Spirit's answer to that prayer, contrary to our denomination's commitment to use the gifts of women, and extremely unwise in light of the severe shortage of pastors in our denomination. Currently, at least eight classes have declared the word "male" in Article 3-a inoperative. In essence, these classes have informed synod and its agencies that they do not object if women serve as ordained ambassadors of the Savior or if their ministry-share gifts are used to send female pastors into the harvest field.

We can understand that a classis would not wish a woman home missionary or an ordained female chaplain to serve within its boundaries and that a classis might not wish to support a female world missionary. We cannot find any defensible reason why such classes may prohibit a woman from serving as a missionary or a chaplain in a classis that welcomes such service and faithfully supports the agencies supervising such missionaries. We cannot find any defensible reasons why such classes may prohibit an agency from sending a female ordained missionary to another country to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ when many Christians are willing to support such a missionary with their prayers and gifts.

We are convinced that the restriction placed on our missionary agencies will not serve the church well because it does not honor women members who testify to the call of God in their lives and does not honor members, churches, and classes who wish to affirm that call tangibly with their prayer and financial support. Synod is called to encourage, not discourage, the call to missions, through which the Lord Jesus is proclaimed. Therefore, we request that Synod 1996 modify Regulation f of Synod 1995's decision on women in office with wording similar to that adopted by Synod 1993 in Guideline a for synod and synodical agencies ("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"—cf. *Acts of Synod 1993*, p. 615).

II. Overture

Classis Lake Erie overtures synod to modify Regulation f associated with the 1995 declaration on women in office ("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"—*Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 735) by adopting the following:

Synodical agencies (e.g., Home Missions, World Missions, Chaplaincy Ministries, etc.) shall respect local views on women in office in the placement of ministerial personnel.

Grounds:

- A. This modification is consistent with synod's recognition "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."
- B. This modification allows ministry needs to be addressed at the local level and at the same time respects local sensitivities on the issue of women in ecclesiastical office.
- C. This modification demonstrates that synod encourages our members, male and female alike, to respond affirmatively to the call that the Lord of the harvest issues to his workers.

Classis Lake Erie

George F. Vander Weit, stated clerk

Overture 23: Appoint a Committee to Receive the Responses of the Churches to Synod 1995's Decision on Women in Office

I. Background

Synod 1995 gave each congregation the option of ordaining and installing women in the office of elder and gave each classis the option of authorizing its member churches to do the same in the offices of minister and evangelist. Synod also adopted a number of regulations, some putting restrictions on this decision and some giving guidance to the denomination in the implementation of this decision.

Many in Classis Lake Erie are very thankful for this decision even though we believe synod erred in some of the restrictions placed on it. We realize, however, that there are fellow Christians who do not share our joy and who believe synod erred in making this decision. In fact, Synod 1996 will undoubtedly receive numerous overtures asking it to *reverse* the 1995 decision.

In the past few years, synods have repeatedly reversed decisions on the issue of women in office. Synod 1990 voted to open all offices to women; Synod 1992 voted not to open them; Synod 1993 again voted to open all offices to women; Synod 1994 again voted not to open them; Synod 1995 adopted a supplement to the Church Order that allows classes to give their member churches the option

of ordaining women in all offices; Synod 1996 will be asked to reverse the 1995 decision. The vacillation of synod on this issue has not given solid leadership to the denomination and has significantly diminished synod's authority. Further reversals in the next five years will have even more serious consequences for the denomination and for synod itself.

We believe Synod 1995 gave wise leadership both to those who agree with the decision and to those who disagree or want changes when it stated that the 1995 arrangement will "be in effect until the year 2000, at which time it will be reviewed." Synod took this action to "remove the debate from the floor of synod for a number of years . . . to allow the denomination and its churches to concentrate on their ministries" (Ground a, *Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 735). Even though we are not pleased with every part of the 1995 decision and would even like some changes, we believe Synod 1996 and succeeding synods should honor this 1995 decision.

Precedent exists for not considering additional overtures on a much-debated subject. Synod 1990 voted to defer until Synod 1992 the ratification of its decision to open all offices to women so the churches would have "adequate opportunity to respond to the proposed change" (*Acts of Synod 1990*, p. 657). Synod 1991 did not accede to thirty-one overtures, one protest, and one communication on this matter, in large part because "Synod 1990 specifically mandated a period of two years for continued reflection before any further action should be taken on this matter" (*Acts of Synod 1991*, p. 728).

Though we believe succeeding synods ought to honor the 1995 decision that "this arrangement be in effect until the year 2000," we also believe more must be done. Synod made this decision to "allow the denomination to determine the effects of this decision in some regions before further considering this issue" (Ground b, *Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 735) and to ensure a period "during which the issue is not hotly and bitterly debated [to] allow the denomination prayerfully to reflect on the issue without the pressure of an imminent decision" (Ground c, *Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 736). Synod needs some kind of mechanism to assist it in this task. We encourage synod to appoint a committee to which all overtures on this matter are referred and to which individuals, churches, and classes may send communications concerning the blessings or difficulties they have experienced in response to the 1995 decision. If the committee deems it necessary, it could also solicit comments from churches and classes in the next five years. This committee would report each year via the synodical agenda and would send a final report to all churches by November 1, 1999, so all churches could be well-informed in anticipation of the review scheduled to take place at Synod 2000. The committee will make no recommendations. It will only summarize the responses it receives to assist synod and the entire denomination in better understanding the effects of this decision.

II. Overture

Classis Lake Erie overtures synod to appoint a committee to receive the responses of the church to the decision of Synod 1995 concerning women in office. This committee shall receive all overtures and communications on women in office referred to it by synods and all other communications sent to it by individuals, churches, and classes. It shall summarize and report to synod annually via the synodical agenda and shall submit a final report to the churches by November 1, 1999.

Ground: This committee will give synod and the denomination a way to receive the prayerful reflection of the denomination on the 1995 decision and a way to determine the "effects of this decision in some regions before further considering this issue."

Classis Lake Erie

George F. Vander Weit, stated clerk

Overture 24: Revise Decision of Synod 1995 re Church Order Supplement, Article 3-a

The Council of Atwood CRC, Atwood, Michigan, overtures synod to revise Synod 1995's actions which allow the word "male" in Article 3-a of the Church Order to be declared "inoperative."

Grounds:

1. Synod 1995 in effect changed the Church Order by declaring one of its articles (Art. 3) inoperative. This action was a violation of Article 47 of the Church Order, which declares, "No substantial alterations shall be effected by synod in . . . [the Church Order] unless the churches have had prior opportunity to consider the advisability of the proposed changes." "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" (cf. Church Order Supplement, Art. 47-a).
2. Declaring an article of the Church Order inoperative undermines the credibility of the Church Order as a set of organizational rules intended to establish and maintain good order in the church, under its only head, Jesus Christ.
3. Synod 1995's actions violated Church Order Article 29. This article states that the decisions of synod are "settled and binding unless they are proved to be in conflict with the Word of God." But Synod 1995 failed to produce any proof that the decision of Synod 1994 (that the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist are open to qualified men only) was in conflict in any way with the Word of God or the Church Order.
4. Synod 1995 ignored the compelling and persuasive biblical grounds set forth by Synod 1994, which demonstrated that women may not serve in the offices of minister, elder, and evangelist.

Council of Atwood CRC, Atwood, MI
Kevin Wynsma, clerk

Note: This overture was submitted to Classis Northern Michigan but was not adopted.

Overture 25: Revise Decision of Synod 1995 re Church Order Supplement, Article 3-a.

Classis Pella overtures synod to revise the decision of Synod 1995 to open the offices of elder and minister to women by way of a supplemental note to the Church Order. The 1995 synodical decision states,

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.

(Acts of Synod 1995, p. 733)

The revision of the 1995 decision would put the 1994 decision of synod on this matter into effect. We believe that it remains possible for the denomination to make a definitive statement prohibiting women in ecclesiastical office and to find harmony in such a decision if all members would humbly accept what God has said in his Word regarding male headship.

Grounds:

1. Synod, in effect, has amended the Church Order without following the required steps for the revision of a synodical decision. Article 86 of the Church Order "requires that any revision thereof shall be made only by synod." Synod 1979 decided that whenever "substantial changes in the Church Order are made by synod, the churches should be given adequate opportunity to consider the advisability of the changes before they are ratified by a following synod" (Acts of Synod 1979, p. 90). The purpose of a supplemental note is to explain and further elucidate the meaning of the Church Order. However, the supplemental note to Article 3-a substantially alters the meaning of that article. This supplemental note in fact amends, not explains, this article.

What would be the outcome if synod permitted the classes and councils the option of declaring the words "The covenant of God shall be sealed to children of believers by holy baptism" to be inoperative in Article 56?

2. One of the foundational truths of the Reformation is being compromised by synod's action. That truth is the principle of *sola scriptura* ("Scripture alone"). The 1994 decision of synod with respect to women in ecclesiastical office was supported with scriptural and confessional documentation (Acts of Synod 1994, pp. 513-16). The 1995 synodical decision is not supported by scriptural or confessional grounds. Instead this decision is based upon pragmatism, egalitarianism, and relativism. We therefore admonish synod to be certain that its actions are scripturally based and that the pertinent passages of Scripture are used to support its decisions.
3. Synod's decision gives official sanction to a dualistic hermeneutic. Acts of Synod 1995, Article 75, page 731, states "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." Synod has now gone on record as saying that two very different hermeneutical perspectives honor the Scriptures as the infallible Word of God.

- a. The grounds given on page 727 of the *Acts of Synod 1995* in support of the above statement lack specificity and are ambiguous. What decisions of previous synods "adduce good biblical grounds for both positions"? None are given.
 - b. Which scriptural passages teach that both positions honor the Word of God as being infallible? Other than a vague reference to Romans 14, none are given.
 - c. There is a segment within the Christian Reformed Church which insists that, since the issue of women in ecclesiastical office has been discussed and debated for more than twenty years, it is now time to stop any further inquiry into this matter and get on with the mission of the church. Concerning this perspective two observations are in order: (1) In terms of church history, twenty years is an exceedingly short period of time. The Trinitarian controversy was dealt with over the span of several centuries before there was a resolution. Are we now going to say that in twenty short years this matter has been thoroughly debated, discussed, and satisfactorily resolved? (2) How can the church proceed forward with its mission when it is doing so with a weakened and ambiguous view of the Word of God? If the church can no longer speak with certitude about what the Word of God teaches regarding women in ecclesiastical office, how can the church proceed with its mission with any degree of authority and conviction?
4. Ground c of the adopted motion, which claims that this decision will "avoid the danger of congregationalism," is negated by the subsequent decision in Article 79, 3, regarding regulations. Regulation c states,

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.

Synod's decision to declare an article of the Church Order inoperative and then to establish this regulation sets a dangerous precedent and gives the impression that no article is to be "considered settled and binding . . ." (Church Order Art. 29). This is congregationalism.

Classis Pella
Siebert Kramer, stated clerk

Overture 26: Revise Decision of Synod 1995 re Church Order Supplement, Article 3-a

I, Bruce Leiter, pastor of Luverne CRC, Luverne, Minnesota, overture synod

1. To decide that a classis, while generally upholding Church Order Article 3-a for its congregations, may, after due consideration, provide a Deborah exception for a church that has too few qualified, willing men to serve as elders or has had a difficult time finding a male pastor during a long vacancy.

2. To revise Church Order Supplement, Article 3-a, instituted by Synod 1995, as follows:

Church Order Supplement, Article 3-a

A. Elders

1. A local congregation that does not have enough qualified, willing men to serve as elders may overture its classis to allow it to nominate and elect women elders.
2. The classis shall then direct the church visitors to visit the council of that congregation before the next meeting of classis to determine the congregation's need for women elders and to suggest other possible ways of dealing with the situation if the congregation has enough qualified, willing men to be elders (for example, a council may have too many rules on who is eligible to serve).
3. After receiving a report from the church visitors demonstrating the congregation's need for women elders, the classis may permit the petitioning congregation to nominate and elect women elders.
4. Women elders' work shall be limited to the local congregation, and women elders may not be delegated to classis or synod. No minister or elder shall be required to participate in the installation of women elders against his conscience.

B. Ministers and evangelists

1. A local congregation that has been without an ordained minister or evangelist for at least two years and has issued at least six calls that have been declined may overture its classis to call a woman expounder of the Word to be its pastor or evangelist.
2. After receiving a report from the church counselor that the congregation has made a good-faith effort to find a male pastor or evangelist, the classis may permit the petitioning congregation to nominate and call a woman expounder of the Word to be its pastor or evangelist.
3. The work of such a woman pastor or evangelist shall be limited to the local congregation that she serves, and she shall not be delegated to classis or synod. No minister or elder shall be required to participate in the installation of a woman pastor or evangelist against his conscience.

Grounds against the present supplement:

1. The present supplement fails to protect the consciences of elder and minister delegates to a classis that allows women to be elders and ministers, since the presence of women as delegates at classis would be a stumbling block for elders and ministers who believe that such a practice is a sin (Rom. 14:13-16).
2. The present supplement was passed without biblical grounds (*Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 733). To modify a Church Order article, even on a temporary basis, with a supplement that substantially changes that article's meaning requires biblical grounds, since the Church Order is based on biblical principles and

since Synod 1994 gave biblical grounds for retaining the word "male" in Article 3-a.

3. The present supplement disrupts the unity of our denominational covenant by allowing a classis to declare that a Church Order article is inoperative for all of its churches. If an exception is to be allowed for an individual congregation, such an exception should affect only that congregation, not a whole classis, because the need for women elders and pastors would arise only in the local congregation.

Grounds for the proposed supplement:

1. Synod 1994 demonstrated biblically that women's roles in the church are different from those of men (Gen. 2:18-23; I Cor. 11:3, 7-8; 14:33b-35; I Tim. 2:11-14). Therefore, as a general rule the offices of minister, elder, and evangelist should be reserved for men because of their biblically assigned leadership role.

The proposed supplement preserves the general rule.

2. But the Bible allows for an exception to the rule of male leadership in Judges 4. The Lord commanded Barak through Deborah to lead Israel, but he refused (vv. 6-10). In the Book of Judges, the times were evil, and all of the judges were out of place (for example, Samson's immorality and Gideon's very weak faith). Deborah was a prophetess used of God when the men of Israel refused to lead in spite of the Lord's command for them to lead Israel.

In addition, God used other prophetesses to speak to his people (Ex. 15:20; II Kings 22:14; Neh. 6:14; Isa. 8:3; Luke 2:36), though it is unclear what their position among God's people was.

Thus, though the general principle of male leadership in the church is clear, the Bible allows an exception to that rule when there are not enough qualified, willing men for the positions of elder and pastor.

As a result, the proposed supplement is appropriate for congregations where the need for women leaders arises.

3. The proposed supplement keeps the Deborah exception from being a stumbling block to elders and ministers in other congregations (Rom. 14:13-16) by limiting the work of women elders and pastors to the local congregation.
4. The proposed supplement mandates classes to give their permission so that congregations will make a good-faith effort to follow Church Order Article 3-a.

Bruce Leiter

Pastor, Luverne CRC, Luverne, MN

Note: This overture was submitted to the Council of Luverne CRC and to Classis Minnesota South but was not adopted.)

Overture 27: Revise Decision of Synod 1995 re Church Order Article 3

The Council of Second CRC, Lynden, Washington, overtures synod to revise Synod 1995's action which allows the word "male" in Article 3 of the Church Order to be declared "inoperative."

Grounds:

1. Synod 1995 substantially changed the Church Order by declaring one of its articles inoperative. This action violates Synod 1979's stipulation regarding Church Order Article 47: "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. Declaring an article inoperative undermines the Church Order's credibility as a set of organizational rules "so that all things in church may be done 'in a fitting and orderly way' (I Cor. 14:40) under its only head, Jesus Christ."
3. Synod 1995's decision evidences an inherent contradiction: Its decision that the word "male" may be declared inoperative undermines the intention of a supplement to the Church Order, which is to illumine or explain the meaning or implementation of an article, not to set aside its specific purpose.
4. Synod 1995 appears to have violated Church Order Article 29 by failing to produce any proof that the decision of Synod 1994 refusing to ratify Synod 1993's proposed amendment of Church Order Article 3 was in conflict in any way with the Word of God or the Church Order.
5. Synod 1995 violated Church Order Article 31 by failing to present any new and sufficient grounds to revise the decision of Synod 1994 not to ratify Synod 1993's proposed amendment of Church Order Article 3.

Council of Second CRC, Lynden, WA
Scott Korthuis, clerk

Note: This overture was submitted to Classis Pacific Northwest but was not adopted.

Overture 28: Delete Church Order Supplement, Article 3-a

The Council of Newton CRC, Newton, New Jersey, protests Synod 1995's action which granted the possibility of declaring Article 3 of the Church Order to be "inoperative" and overtures synod to delete the supplement to Article 3 approved by Synod 1995.

Grounds:

1. Synod 1995 in effect changed the Church Order by declaring one of its articles inoperative. This violated Synod 1979's stipulations regarding Church Order Articles 47 and 86.
2. Declaring an article inoperative undermines the Church Order's credibility as a carefully crafted set of organizational rules.
3. Synod 1995's decision capitulated to churches violating the Church Order.
4. Synod 1995's decision evidences an inherent contradiction: Its decision that the word "male" may be declared inoperative undermines the

intention of a supplement to the Church Order, which is to illumine or explain the meaning or implementation of an article, not to set aside its specific purpose.

Council of Newton CRC, Newton, NJ
Peter Teune, clerk

Note: This overture was submitted to Classis Hudson but was not adopted.

Overture 29: Revise Decision of Synod 1995 re Declaring the Word "Male" Inoperative

The Council of Escalon CRC, Escalon, California, overtures synod to revise the decision of Synod 1995 which permitted classes and councils to declare the word "male" inoperative and to revise the Church Order supplement regulating that decision (see *Acts of Synod 1995*, pp. 733-35).

Grounds:

1. The most evident and clear understanding of Scripture still suggests that women may not hold positions of authority in the church (see I Tim. 2:11-14; I Cor. 14:33-35).
2. Synods (including Synod 1995) have never put forth compelling biblical grounds for changing, either by way of exception or by rule, the historic position that does not permit women to hold the offices of elder and minister.
3. The unity sought by last year's decision has not resulted, nor can it result on an issue such as this, which affects how the church is to be governed in its assemblies.

Council of Escalon CRC, Escalon, CA
Leo Van Vliet, clerk

Note: This overture was submitted to Classis Central California but was not adopted.

Overture 30: Revise Decisions of Synod 1995 Regarding Women in Office

I. Introduction

Synod 1995 decided 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.

(*Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 733, Art. 79, I, B, 2)

The Council of First CRC of Thunder Bay, Ontario, raises some questions about that decision:

A. Why is it that the church's decision to offer ordination to women (after almost two thousand years of agreement on the matter) comes at a time when the world proffers a feminist, egalitarian agenda? Can there be a connection? We think so.

B. Who bears the burden of proof on the matter of women in office? Doesn't the burden fall on those who wish to change a two-thousand-year understanding of the Bible? Has that burden been met? We do not think so. We think that proponents of women in office have given up on any attempts to demonstrate that the Bible teaches that women may hold office and that this is one reason why synod's recent decision lacks biblical grounds.

C. If Scripture allows for women in office, then why restrict them as the recent synod has? If the Lord of the church desires women in the ruling offices, then why create structures and strictures that place women in a second-class position? Or does the demand for women in office come from another direction? We think so.

D. Does the Church Order still have authority in the Christian Reformed Church? What happened to Article 29, which states, "The decisions of assemblies shall be considered settled and binding, unless it is proved that they conflict with the Word of God or the Church Order"? We find no evidence stated in the 1995 decision that the decision of 1994 conflicts with the Word of God and the Church Order. If the synod of the church can ignore the principles of the Church Order, may other ecclesiastical assemblies do the same?

E. What happened to the provisions of Article 31 of the Church Order? Article 31 states, "Such a request [for revision of a decision] shall be honored only if sufficient and new grounds for reconsideration are presented." Where, we ask, are the sufficient and new grounds? We don't find any.

F. Does anyone believe that the five-year experiment with the "inoperative" decision is anything other than a major change in the policy of the Christian Reformed Church? Is there anyone who believes that after five years the practice will be reversed and that all ordained women may suddenly be excluded from office? And since no one believes that, isn't the decision of Synod 1995 a de facto change of Article 3 of the Church Order? Shouldn't changes in the Church Order be ratified by a following synod? Was it a devious move to declare this a change in the Church Order supplement when the effect is a change in the position of the Christian Reformed Church? It appears that way to us and to many others.

G. Does anyone believe that the decision of 1995 will bring rest and peace to the Christian Reformed Church? Doesn't synod's use of the word "inoperative" allow congregations to do as they please and therefore hasten the trend toward disunity? Won't the result of this decision mean that the denomination will continue to see large numbers of its members flow to more biblically based groups and denominations? We think this decision brings less peace and stability than before.

H. Didn't synod ignore the clear scriptural grounds set out by Synod 1994 that demonstrate that women may not serve in the offices of minister and elder? When Synod 1995 offered no compelling reasons to open the offices of minister, elder, and evangelist to women of the churches, didn't it ignore both the previous synod's decision and the plain teaching of the Word of God? We are convinced that the answer is yes.

I. Since the decision of Synod 1995 tramples the plain teaching of the Word of God, isn't the real issue the authority of God's Word and our obedience to that

Word? And since the decision of 1995 is not based on God's Word and treats lightly the obligation to base decisions on Scripture, as demonstrated by synods' difficulty in obeying the Word of God on this issue, isn't this matter one that touches upon the salvation of God's people? If the plain teaching of Scripture can be ignored on this issue, why not on other issues? We think this decision jeopardizes the future of the Christian Reformed Church.

Therefore . . .

II. Overture

The Council of First CRC, Thunder Bay, Ontario, overtures synod to revise the decisions of Synod 1995 regarding women in office by

- A. Rescinding *Acts of Synod 1995*, Article 79, I, B, 2-7 (pp. 733-36).
- B. Declaring the word "male" operative in all ecclesiastical bodies of the church.
- C. Returning to the decision of Synod 1994 that states, "The clear teaching of Scripture prohibits women from holding the offices of minister, elder, and evangelist" (cf. *Acts of Synod 1994*, p. 514, Art. 80, 1, Ground b).

Grounds:

1. The plain teaching of the Bible demands that the word "male" be retained in the Church Order. See I Timothy 2:11-3:15, I Corinthians 11:2-16, and I Corinthians 14:33-35, passages which teach that the God-given authority of ruling offices in the church rests not upon women but upon men whom God has chosen.
2. Church Order Articles 29 and 31 contain principles that must govern the decisions of all ecclesiastical bodies within the Christian Reformed Church.

Council of First CRC, Thunder Bay, ON
Peter Wynalda, clerk

Note: This overture was submitted to Classis Minnesota North but was not adopted.

Overture 31: Recant and Repent for Synod 1995's Action re Church Order Article 3

The Council of Terra Ceia CRC, Terra Ceia, North Carolina, overtures synod to recant and repent for Synod 1995's action which allows the word "male" in Article 3 of the Church Order to be "inoperative."

Grounds:

1. Synod 1995 changed the Church Order by declaring one of its articles inoperative, a violation of Article 47, which states that "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. I Corinthians 14:40 states that "everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way," but declaring an article inoperative undermines the Church Order as a set of organizational rules.
3. Allowing individual churches to do as they please creates disunity rather than unity.
4. Synod 1995 violated Church Order Article 29 by failing to produce proof that the decision of 1994 which refused to ratify Synod 1993's proposed amendment of Church Order Article 3 was in conflict in any way with the Word of God and the Church Order.
5. Synod 1995 violated Church Order Article 31 by failing to present any new grounds to revise the decision of Synod 1994.
6. Synod 1995 ignored the clear scriptural grounds set out by Synod 1994 that demonstrated that women may not serve in the offices of minister and elder.

Council of Terra Ceia CRC, Terra Ceia, NC
Bernard Van Essendelft, clerk

Note: This overture was submitted to Classis Hackensack but was not adopted.

Overture 32: Address the Issue of Women in Office in 1996 and Not Wait Until the Year 2000

I. Background

The action of Synod 1995 is having a divisive effect on the denomination. Individual members and churches are considering leaving the CRCNA unless synod alters the decision of 1995 (see *Acts of Synod*, Arts. 75 and 79). Synod 1994 laid out the biblical grounds for the exclusion of women from the offices of minister, elder, and evangelist. Though there may be other passages that seem to allow these offices to be open to women, the weight of biblical teaching clearly is that only men should serve in these offices. This biblical teaching is cited in the *Acts of Synod 1994*, Article 80. Obedience to the Scriptures must account for these passages.

II. Overture

The Council of Calvary CRC, Lowell, Michigan, overtures synod

A. To state that, although there are two different perspectives held by Christians on the issue of women ministers, elders, and evangelists, the traditional position of the church holds the most biblical and historical weight and must therefore be obeyed.

Grounds:

1. I Timothy 2:11-13 shows that women are not to have spiritual authority over men. This imperative is grounded in the creation order and is not the result of a fallen world. It is supported by I Corinthians 11:8-9.
2. According to I Timothy 3:1-15, this teaching applies to the offices of the universal church.

3. This position, held by the church for over nineteen hundred years, since it is grounded in creation, should not be influenced by modern cultural factors.

B. To disallow the possibility that a classis declare the word "male" in Article 3-a of the Church Order to be inoperative within its jurisdiction.

Grounds:

1. The decision of Synod 1995 is a dangerous precedent for future decisions regarding obedience to the Church Order.
2. This decision represents a major change in the way the Church Order is regarded. It should have been given to the churches for their prior consideration.
3. The precedent cited in Article 79 of the *Acts of Synod 1995* is not comparable to the issue of women in office. The issue cited had to do with particular and regional synods, which are a matter on which the Scriptures are silent. The issue of women in office is specifically addressed by Scripture.
4. By declaring the word "male" to be inoperative, a classis would create a very difficult situation for members and churches who feel that the Bible requires the word "male" be active.

C. To deal with the issue of women in office at Synod 1996 rather than waiting until 2000 to review the issue, as was decided by Synod 1995 (*Acts of Synod 1995*, Art. 79).

Ground: The way the issue was dealt with by Synod 1995 has already divided the church and alienated many members (as witnessed at the November 1995 interclassical meeting in South Holland). Synod 1996 must deal with this issue in a sound biblical manner if true unity is to be restored.

Council of Calvary CRC, Lowell, Michigan
Willard De Kraker, clerk

Note: This overture was submitted to Classis Thornapple Valley but was not adopted.

Overture 33: Revise Decision of Synod 1995 re Church Order Article 3-a

Classis Iakota overtures synod to revise the decision of Synod 1995 regarding Church Order Article 3 and the option for classes or councils to declare the word "male" inoperative.

Grounds:

1. By placing the changes to Article 3 in the supplement to this article, Synod 1995 has undermined the consistent usage of the Church Order. Synod 1995 ruled against deleting the word "male" from Article 3, and the church continues to be officially bound by that decision. Yet this supplement allows for this rule to be set aside.
2. Synod 1995 did not follow the Church Order when it failed to give "new and sufficient grounds" for revising the decisions of Synod 1994 on this issue. In this regard synod violated the spirit of Article 29, which states, "[T]he 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.”

3. Because the effect of the supplement to Article 3 is nearly identical to earlier proposed changes to the Church Order, we believe Synod 1995 effected a substantial alteration by its decision. Synod 1995 did so without giving the churches the opportunity to consider the advisability of so doing, thus violating the spirit of Article 47, which says,

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.

4. Church Order Article 47 also includes “the adoption . . . of the Church Order” among the defined tasks of synod. Article 27 states that “each assembly exercises, in keeping with its own character and domain, the ecclesiastical authority entrusted to the church by Christ” By giving a classis or a council the power to decide whether a point of the Church Order should be operative in its context, Synod 1995 inappropriately gave classes and congregations the power to decide a matter normally settled in the context of synod alone. We believe Synod 1995 violated the principles of this Church Order article.

Classis Iakota

C. Eric Fennema, stated clerk

Overture 34: Revise Decision of Synod 1995 re Two Different Perspectives and Convictions Which Honor the Scriptures as the Infallible Word of God

The Council of First CRC, Rock Valley, Iowa, overtures synod to revise the decision of Synod 1995, Article 75, C, 1, which presently reads,

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.

to read,

That synod recognize that members of the Christian Reformed Church who have differing perspectives and convictions on the issue of whether the Bible allows women to serve in the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist both desire to honor the Scriptures as the infallible Word of God but that the Bible cannot teach two equally valid yet contradictory positions. Therefore, we must continue to declare that the decisions of Synod 1994 (Arts. 77, 80, and 89) continue to be the church’s position that honors the Word of God, since Synod 1995 did not give any new and sufficient biblical grounds for changing the historic Christian and Reformed interpretation.

Grounds:

1. Amos 3:3: “Can two walk together unless they are agreed?”
2. Titus 1:1-2: “. . . the acknowledgment of the truth which is according to godliness, in hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie. . . .”
3. 1 Timothy 3:15: “. . . how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.”

4. Belgic Confession Article 7:

Since it is forbidden to add unto or take away from the Word of God, it does thereby evidently appear that the doctrine thereof is most perfect and complete in all respects . . . since truth is above all; for all men are of themselves liars. . . . Therefore we reject with all our hearts whatsoever does not agree with this infallible rule

Council of First CRC, Rock Valley, IA
Roger Kempema, clerk

Note: This overture was submitted to Classis Iakota but was not adopted.

Overture 35: Revise Decision of Synod 1995 re Church Order Article 3-a

The Council of First CRC, Rock Valley, Iowa, overtures synod

A. To revise the decision of Synod 1995 (Art. 79, I)—

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

—to read,

A classis may not declare any part of Article 3-a of the Church Order inoperative and may not authorize churches to ordain and install women in the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist.

Grounds:

1. The decision of Synod 1995 and its grounds clearly circumvent the Church Order and flagrantly violate Article 1 of the Church Order both in letter and in spirit.
2. Synod 1995's decision allows churches and classes to disregard the Church Order and destroys the principle of doing things in the church of Christ "decently and in order" (I Cor. 14:40).
3. Synod 1995 failed to obey its own rules by failing to give "new and sufficient grounds" when it ignored and negated the decisions of Synod 1994, Articles 77, 80, and 89. This decision violates Article 29 of the Church Order.
4. This decision violates the decisions of Synod 1994 (Arts. 77, 80, 89) without any grounds or arguments from Scripture for disregarding Synod 1994's decisions.
5. Of the forty-six classes in the CRC, only a few classes have availed themselves of Synod 1995's decision. This small percentage certainly indicates that a large percentage of the church does not wish to violate the Church Order and the clear teaching of Scripture as decided by Synod 1994. To continue with this decision until the year 2000 is to allow unrest, division, and disregard of the Church Order that does not honor Christ, or his Word, or his prayer for the church that it may be one in the truth and in obedience to the truth, as revealed in John 17 and Ephesians 4.

B. To declare the regulations associated with this decision of Synod 1995 (Art. 79, 3, A-G) null and void and unnecessary.

C. To declare this arrangement and its planned review for the year 2000 null and void and unnecessary.

D. To declare the recommended supplements (Recommendations 2 and 3 of Art. 79) null and void and unnecessary.

Grounds:

1. Placing these recommendations in the supplement is an obvious, deceptive maneuver to circumvent the need for ratification, and it allows a self-willed disobedience to the Church Order.
2. These recommendations are not a supplement (addition) but a substantive change . . . a negation of Church Order Article 3-a. They promote "congregationalism" on a classical level . . . a "classicalism" that is un-Reformed as historically defined.

E. To declare that, though this issue is not one of salvation (we are saved only by Christ's one sacrifice on the cross), it is a vital matter that affects and can endanger one's salvation, for it deals with what constitutes obedience to God's Word with regard to God's revelation concerning offices in the church of Jesus Christ.

Grounds:

1. I Timothy 3:14-15: ". . . you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household."
2. I John 5:3: "This is love for God: to obey his commands."
3. Church Order Article 1:

The Christian Reformed Church, confessing its *complete* *subjection to the Word of God and the Reformed creeds as a true interpretation of this Word*, acknowledging Christ as the only head of his church, and desiring to honor the apostolic injunction that in the churches all things are to be done decently and in order (I Cor. 14:40), regulates its ecclesiastical organization and activities in the following articles [italics added for emphasis].

4. Heidelberg Catechism, Q and A. 94:

What does the Lord require in the first commandment? That I, *not wanting to endanger my very salvation*, avoid and shun all idolatry . . . sincerely acknowledge the only true God . . . love him, fear him, and honor him with all my heart. In short, that I give up anything rather than go against his will in any way [italics added].

5. Unity in the church comes when we are united in a common confession and a common obedience to God's Word.

Council of First CRC, Rock Valley, IA
Roger Kempema, clerk

Note: This overture was submitted to Classis Iakota but was not adopted.

Overture 36: Intensify Restrictions on Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (GKN)

Regarding our ecclesiastical fellowship with the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (GKN) Classis Zeeland overtures synod

1. To discontinue the practice of sending fraternal delegates to GKN major assemblies and receiving GKN fraternal delegates at our major assemblies.
2. To curtail completely all table and pulpit fellowship between the denominations.

These restrictions on ecclesiastical fellowship shall not be lifted until the Interchurch Relations Committee of the CRC can demonstrate to synod that GKN practices are consistent with confessional orthodoxy in the matters of biblical authority, homosexual practice, and evangelism to the Jews.

Grounds:

1. The CRC has an ongoing responsibility to the GKN to admonish in those areas which have recently concerned the CRC, namely, biblical authority, homosexual practice, and evangelism to the Jews.
2. The present limited restrictions on fellowship with the GKN have been ineffective in promoting positive change in those areas of concern. The time to intensify restrictions has come.

Classis Zeeland
James Cooper, stated clerk

Overture 37: Terminate Fellowship with the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland

Classis Grand Rapids North overtures synod to terminate ecclesiastical fellowship with the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (GKN).

Grounds:

1. The GKN permit beliefs and practice behaviors which are clearly unbiblical. These include the GKN's position on homosexual practice, which was dealt with by Synod 1973's statement that "homosexualism—as explicit homosexual practice—must be condemned as incompatible with obedience to the will of God as revealed in Holy Scripture" (*Acts of Synod 1973*, pp. 51-52 and 609-33).
2. Our continued affiliation with the GKN is symptomatic of a conviction that the official discipline of breaking ties does more to hinder than to help the cause of Christ and the purity of his church. The Bible, however, teaches that the very opposite is true: "Expel the wicked man from among you" (I Cor. 5:13).

Classis Grand Rapids North
Joseph Vanden Akker, stated clerk

Overture 38: Discontinue Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the GKN

Classis Grandville overtures synod to discontinue ecclesiastical fellowship with the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (GKN).

Grounds:

1. The testimony of Scripture

Scripture refers to homosexuality in several places. It addresses this matter in the levitical laws regarding unlawful sexual relations (Lev. 18:22): "Do not lie with a man as one lies with a woman; that is detestable." It sends a very strong message in Romans 1:24-32, which talks about the consequences of homosexuality: divine abandonment. In I Corinthians 6:9-11, Scripture declares that practicing male prostitutes and homosexual offenders will not inherit the kingdom of God.

2. GKN's failure to respond to admonition

After approximately thirteen years under restriction of pulpit and table fellowship, the GKN have not changed their theological views and continue to allow practicing homosexuals to be members and to serve as officebearers. Since these views and practices do not agree with CRC policy or with biblical teaching, it is time to send the GKN the strongest message possible: discontinuation of ecclesiastical fellowship. Such action does not mean that we should stop praying for them to change their ways or that we would not accept them back into the fold if they would confess and stop this sin.

Classis Grandville

Leonard Van Drunen, stated clerk

Overture 39: Terminate Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the GKN

The Classis of the Heartland overtures synod to terminate ecclesiastical fellowship with the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (GKN).

Grounds:

1. The GKN permit beliefs and behaviors which are clearly unbiblical. These include the GKN's position on homosexual practice, about which Synod 1973 stated, "Homosexuality—as explicit homosexual practice—must be condemned as incompatible with obedience to the will of God as revealed in Holy Scripture" (*Acts of Synod 1973*, pp. 51-52 and 609-33).
2. Our continued affiliation with the GKN does more to hinder than to help the cause of Christ and the purity of his church. The Bible teachers, "Expel the wicked man from among you" (I Cor. 5:13).

Classis of the Heartland

Jack M. Gray, stated clerk

Overture 40: Suspend Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the GKN

Classis Iakota overtures synod to suspend ecclesiastical fellowship with the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (GKN), effective immediately. This suspension of ecclesiastical fellowship with the GKN shall remain in place for three years, at which time it shall be lifted, or ecclesiastical fellowship with the GKN shall be terminated.

Grounds:

1. In spite of many years of fraternal admonition and rebuke on our part, the GKN continue to espouse beliefs and behavior which are judged to be unbiblical by the CRC. These include but are not limited to the GKN's tolerance of homosexual practice, which allows practicing homosexuals to preach the Word and participate in the sacraments apart from any church discipline.
2. Our continued (restricted) ecclesiastical fellowship with the GKN has jeopardized ecclesiastical fellowship with other Reformed denominations. In the fall of 1995, the Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (CGKN) terminated ecclesiastical fellowship with the CRCNA at least in part because of our ongoing relationship with the GKN.
3. Suspending ecclesiastical fellowship with the GKN is consistent with the manner in which the CRCNA dealt with the Reformed Churches of South Africa with respect to the sin of apartheid.

Classis Iakota

C. Eric Fennema, stated clerk

Overture 41: Terminate Relations with the GKN

Classis Minnesota South overtures synod to terminate the Christian Reformed Church's ecclesiastical fellowship with the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (GKN).

Grounds:

1. The GKN espouse beliefs and behavior which seriously deviate from the historic Reformed understanding of Scripture and which are judged by the CRC to be unfaithful to Scripture.
 - a. The GKN condone homosexuality as an appropriate alternative life-style for members of the church. God's Word, however, forbids homosexual practice as sinful (Lev. 18:22; 20:13; Rom. 1:24-27; I Cor. 6:9; I Tim. 1:10). Likewise, the CRC officially considers homosexuality a sin which needs to be admonished and repented of in the church (*Acts of Synod 1973*, pp. 50-53).
 - b. The GKN position on scriptural authority (cf. "God with Us" and its sequel) seriously erodes the objective authority of Scripture and conflicts with the official position of the CRC on scriptural authority (cf. *Acts of Synod 1972*, pp. 493-546).
 - c. The GKN have decided that the church's mission to the Jews is not comparable to its mission to other non-Christian peoples, a fact which calls into question the need to win Jews over to faith in Jesus. Scripture teaches, however, that salvation comes only through faith in Jesus (Acts 4:12; Rom. 3:29-30). Likewise, the New Testament consistently presents mission to the Jews as calling them to faith in Jesus (Rom. 10:1-17; Acts 13:38-39) and indicates that Jews who reject Jesus as the Messiah do so to their condemnation (Matt. 21:42-45; Rom. 9:30-33).
2. The serious attempts of the Christian Reformed Church over many years to encourage the GKN to change their position on the above matters

continue to be met with refusal and indifference. Ongoing dialogue appears to be increasingly unproductive.

3. Continuing fraternal and ecumenical relationships with the GKN present an ethical inconsistency: We admonish and discipline CRC church members for homosexuality and propagation of false doctrine, yet we tolerate such practices on an ecclesiastical-fellowship and ecumenical level with GKN delegates.
4. Our ongoing ecclesiastical fellowship with the GKN is causing greater and greater disunity for the Christian Reformed Church.
 - a. Denominationally, this matter of the relationship with the GKN is dividing us. We have more than enough other divisive issues to contend with.
 - b. Ecumenically, our ongoing relationship with the GKN is disrupting our relationships with other denominations.

Classis Minnesota South
Norman J. Visser, stated clerk

Overture 42: Sever Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the GKN

The Council of Escalon CRC, Escalon, California, overtures synod to sever its ecclesiastical fellowship with the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (GKN), effective immediately.

Grounds:

1. The GKN have shown no signs of repenting of their decisions on homosexuality and the authority of Scripture, which were taken over ten years ago. Instead, it has taken other positions incompatible with Scripture on the issues of euthanasia and evangelism to the Jews.
2. The matters that are before the GKN are matters of salvation. Not to call sin sin but to say that it is permissible allows an erring brother or sister to walk the path that leads to hell.
3. Even in discipline there is a time when a church must take that last loving step of excommunication. We must face this fact in our long but now troubled relationship with the GKN.

Council of Escalon CRC, Escalon, CA
Leo Van Vliet, clerk

Note: This overture was submitted to Classis Central California but was not adopted.

Overture 43: Terminate Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the GKN

The Council of Terra Ceia CRC, Terra Ceia, North Carolina, overtures synod to terminate ecclesiastical fellowship with the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (GKN) immediately.

Grounds:

1. The GKN permit and encourage beliefs and behavior judged to be unbiblical by the CRC.

2. Synod 1973 stated, "... homosexualism—as explicit homosexual practice—must be condemned as incompatible with obedience to the will of God as revealed in Holy Scripture."
3. The GKN have moved in the direction of accepting active euthanasia: The GKN approve of terminating and do not call it irresponsible to terminate the life of a newly born handicapped baby.

Council of Terra Ceia CRC, Terra Ceia, NC
Bernard Van Essendelft, clerk

Note: This overture was submitted to Classis Hackensack but was not adopted.

Overture 44: Declare Confessing Members Delinquent in Doctrine if They Deny That the Bible Condemns Homosexual Activity Without Exception

Classis Wisconsin overtures synod to declare that confessing members are delinquent in doctrine and are on that account subject to the admonition and discipline of the church if they deny that the Bible condemns, without exception, homosexual activity.

Grounds:

1. Some in the church today seriously propose the possibility that, when the Bible condemns homosexual activity, this condemnation does not include the homosexual activity of a couple that seek to live in a loving monogamous relationship.
2. Although the Christian Reformed Church officially teaches that "Homosexualism—as explicit homosexual practice—must be condemned as incompatible with obedience to the will of God as revealed in Holy Scripture" (*Acts of Synod 1973*, p. 52), there are currently no provisions in the Church Order or in any synodical decisions which clearly authorize official admonition and discipline of those who openly challenge this teaching.
3. Confessing members have promised to submit to the admonition and discipline of the church if they become delinquent either in doctrine or in life.
4. If church members are free to deny the biblical condemnation of all homosexual behavior, the result is likely to be that eventually the church will fail to exhibit the marks of a true church (cf. *Belgic Confession Art. 29*).
5. The history of the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (GKN) gives evidence that this particular heresy can be deadly in the life of the church.

Classis Wisconsin
Adrian Dieleman, stated clerk

Overture 45: Take Action re Homosexuals and Homosexuality

Our of a heartfelt love for the Lord Jesus Christ and a desire for a stronger sense of biblical unity among our brothers and sisters within the community of Christian Reformed believers, the consistory of Borculo CRC overtures synod

1. To declare that confessing members who condone homosexual orientation and/or activity themselves or in others are in conflict with the clear teachings of Scripture and therefore should be shown Christ's liberating love as he exercises it through admonition and discipline by the organized church.
2. To require that classes that currently have homosexual support groups begin acting immediately to examine whether these groups are functioning in a manner consistent with the aforementioned declaration. If it is determined that they are not, they need to refocus their goals in a reasonable amount of time or be officially dissociated from the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
3. To instruct the churches to demonstrate sensitivity, love, and compassion to homosexuals who gather with members of the covenant community of faith by taking the following actions:

- a. Teaching a proper view of sexual sins

Members of our churches need to be instructed that, although God's Word does not deal with sexual sins lightly, neither does it segregate them into a category which is classified as unforgivable. The nonhomosexual members of our churches need to be trained, encouraged, and disciplined (if necessary) to abandon any self-righteous attitudes which would single out the homosexual as an extraordinary sinner and thereby isolate him from receiving Christ's love through the covenant community of which he is a part.

- b. Exercising humble compassion

Members of our churches not caught in this sin need to be instructed in specific biblical principles which will enable them to exercise humble compassion toward the brother or sister who is deceived by the mindset of accepting and/or encouraging an orientation or life-style that God views as sinful.

- c. Issuing a call to repentance

The pastors within our churches need to be encouraged and held accountable as God's undershepherds to *show true love for the sheep* by confronting the homosexual with God's sentence on this sin. This sin cannot be ignored, excused, or condoned any more than any other.

To leave unrepentant homosexuals in a state of complacency about their sexual life-style is not love, but cowardice and cruelty—deliberately shirking our responsibility to restore a sinning brother (or sister), as a good shepherd seeks a lost sheep (Gal. 6:1-2; Matt. 18: 12-17).

Avowed and unrepentant homosexuals must not be admitted either to membership or office in Christ's church. Rather, through a bold and loving application of God's Word, homosexuals must be urged to repent of their sin and to trust in Jesus Christ alone for forgiveness and transformation.

(from an article published in 1978 by the Presbytery of Southern California of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church)

d. Presenting the hope of deliverance

The repentant homosexual saint needs to be counseled and instructed in Scripture passages that give him God's promise of hope for deliverance.

As redeemed sinners, we have seen in our own lives the realism of the Bible's description of sin as a cruel and unrelenting slave master (Rom. 6-7). But we have also received (and must pass on) the good news that sin's stranglehold is broken when a person comes to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death," writes Paul, and this freedom is not only a freedom from sin's guilt (forgiveness), but also liberation from its tyrannical power in daily living: "in order that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit" (Rom. 8:2, 4).

This liberation applies not only to sin in general, but also to particular individual sins. Paul writes to the Christians at Corinth: "Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God" (I Cor. 6:9-11) (NASB).

... There is hope in Jesus Christ for the homosexual—hope not only for forgiveness, but also for transformation and redirection of long-standing desires and drives by the power of God.

(from an article published in 1978 by the Presbytery of Southern California of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church)

e. Giving patient encouragement

Repentant homosexuals, like all sinners, may have great difficulty as they struggle to become conformed to Christ. Leaders and lay persons must resolve to submit themselves to the Holy Spirit and God's Word as they respond to a recovering homosexual brother or sister in order that the fruits of the Spirit—namely, love, patience, kindness, faithfulness, and gentleness—may be shown as God's precious, elect homosexual child is being restored to a correct view of human sexuality, a view designed by God himself and culminating in marriage, one of the most beautiful relationships our hearts will ever know, the earthly relationship symbolizing the relationship between Jesus Christ and his church.

4. To lead the churches of the CRC in repentance for being lukewarm in our love toward

- a. God. We, as his church, have tolerated a sin that he condemns with all other sins.
- b. Our unrepentant homosexual brothers and sisters by ignoring, excusing, and/or condoning their sin, thereby allowing them to become delinquent in their doctrine and life.

Grounds:

- a. Scripture, by principle, teaches that condoning a homosexual orientation is sinful because a person can sin in thought as well as in actual deed. Just as a heterosexual's desire for someone other than his or her spouse breaks God's command against adultery, so also does homosexual desire break God's law.

But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart (Matt. 5:28).

- b. A forum in which potential heterosexual marriage partners openly discuss their sexual desires could be interpreted by some as a program that might benefit the involved couples in the future. Such a program would, however, pose an increased temptation to engage in unchaste behavior prior to marriage. Scripture teaches that "each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death" (James 1:14-15).

A forum for homosexuals to express sexual desire is not only dangerous but also unnecessary and without benefit, for a homosexual marriage is not an option available for a child of God.

- c. Scripture clearly teaches that homosexual acts are contrary to God's will and are, therefore, sinful.

Romans 1:26-27: Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion.

Leviticus 18:22: Do not lie with a man as one lies with a woman; that is detestable.

Leviticus 20:13: If a man lies with a man as one lies with a woman, both of them have done what is detestable. They must be put to death; their blood will be on their own heads.

I Corinthians 6:9: Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders

- d. Confessing members have promised to submit to the admonition and discipline of the church if they should become delinquent either in doctrine or in life. In making this promise, they have entered into a covenant with the officers over them, trusting that those officers will be faithful in carrying out discipline as needed.

Council of Borculo CRC, Borculo, MI
Arlyn Holstege, clerk

Note: This overture was submitted to Classis Zeeland but was not adopted.

Overture 46: Retain Classical Representation on Denominational Boards

I. Background

Synod 1991 adopted the Strategic Plan for Organizational Restructuring of the Agencies of the CRCNA. Synod also instructed the Synodical Interim Committee (SIC) to "Instruct all agencies to review . . . in consultation with SIC

and the EDM . . . board size and composition (regional representation with preservation of the principle of classical representation. . .) (*Acts of Synod 1991*, p. 781).

Some committees and boards moved rather quickly toward the adoption of regional representation. Others, however, continue to this day in their firm desire to retain the representation of one delegate per classis.

When these committees and boards were being pressed toward uniformity and standardization in the past, Synod 1993 instructed SIC "to interpret its mandate as a mandate to review and recommend to synod, not as a mandate to implement" (*Acts of Synod 1993*, p. 584). This mandate has not been changed by a later synod.

II. Overture

Classis Columbia overtures synod to allow denominational boards and committees to retain classical representation of one delegate per classis and not be forced into regional representation.

Grounds:

- A. One delegate per classis provides more diverse representation than does regional representation.
- B. A move toward centralization and smaller boards and committees will be harmful at this time in our church's history when many members are already concerned about a growing bureaucracy and a distancing between the local church and the denominational agencies.
- C. The selection process in use by some regionalized agencies is difficult to administer and contributes to voting for people who are not personally known by those voting. The result is that the sense of ownership of the agencies is diminished throughout the denomination.
- D. Board representation of one delegate per classis, chosen by classis, has been at the heart of the church's structure for many years and has served most agencies very well.
- E. Any financial savings accrued by decreasing the size of the agency boards will be offset by the need to increase administrative channels of communication between classes/congregations and the agencies.

Classis Columbia

Howard B. Spaan, stated clerk

Overture 47: Retain Classical Representation on Denominational Boards

Classis Muskegon overtures synod to allow denominational boards and committees to retain classical representation of one delegate per classis instead of being forced to accept regionalization.

Grounds:

1. Synod 1991's use of the word "review" (*Acts of Synod 1991*, p. 781) should not necessarily be interpreted to mean forced regional representation. Synod 1993 (*Acts of Synod 1993*, p. 584) stated "that synod instruct the SIC to interpret its mandate as a mandate to review and recommend to synod, not as a mandate to implement."

2. Some insight into what regionalization means for the church has been gained from observation of the decreased contact regionalized agencies have with the churches. Regionalization is distancing agencies from them.
3. The board and committee representation of one delegate per classis (with classical selection of the representatives) has been at the heart of the church's structure for many years and has served most agencies very well.
4. One delegate per classis provides more diverse representation than regional representation does.
5. Some agencies already use an executive committee of the broader board, and therefore there would be little efficiency advantage to the smaller boards that result from regionalization.
6. Any savings realized from decreasing board size would be consumed by the increasingly necessary administrative channels of communication between the classes and/or congregations and the agencies.
7. The selection process being used by some agencies for their regionalized boards is difficult to administer, and it too often necessitates voting for people who are unknown by those voting. The result is that the churches feel they have lost ownership of the agencies.
8. A move toward centralization and smaller boards and committees is harmful at a time when many church members are already concerned about bureaucracy and distance between the local churches and denominational agencies. This is not a time to be moving away from the grass roots.
9. Some agencies have in place joint-ministry teams of governance that meet the approval of Revenue Canada. The current structure that has met this approval should not be discarded.
10. Some agencies have been the focus of much administrative and governance change in the last decade. These agencies need time to concentrate on their ministry.

Classis Muskegon

Douglas J. Van Essen, stated clerk

Overture 48: Retain Classical Representation on Denominational Boards

Classis Pella overtures synod to allow denominational boards and committees to retain classical representation of one delegate per classis instead of being forced to accept regionalization.

Grounds:

1. Synod 1991's use of the word "review" (*Acts of Synod 1991*, p. 781) should not necessarily be interpreted to mean forced regional representation. Synod 1993 (*Acts of Synod 1993*, p. 584) stated "that synod instruct the SIC to interpret its mandate as a mandate to review and recommend to synod, not as a mandate to implement."
2. Some insight into what regionalization means for the church has been gained from observation of the decreased contact regionalized agencies

- have with the churches. Regionalization is distancing agencies from them.
3. The board and committee representation of one delegate per classis (with classical selection of the representatives) has been at the heart of the church's structure for many years and has served most agencies very well.
 4. One delegate per classis provides more diverse representation than regional representation does.
 5. Some agencies already use an executive committee of the broader board, and therefore there would be little efficiency advantage to the smaller boards that result from regionalization.
 6. Any savings realized from decreasing board size would be consumed by the increasingly necessary administrative channels of communication between the classes and/or congregations and the agencies.
 7. The selection process being used by some agencies for their regionalized boards is difficult to administer, and it too often necessitates voting for people who are unknown to those voting. The result is that the churches feel they have lost ownership of the agencies.
 8. A move toward centralization and smaller boards and committees is harmful at a time when many church members are already concerned about bureaucracy and distance between the local churches and denominational agencies. This is not a time to be moving away from the grass roots.
 9. Some agencies have in place joint-ministry teams of governance that meet the approval of Revenue Canada. The current structure that has met this approval should not be discarded.
 10. Some agencies have been the focus of much administrative and governance change in the last decade. These agencies need time to concentrate on their ministry.

Classis Pella

Siebert Kramer, stated clerk

Overture 49: Accept Recommendation B in the Report of the Committee to Articulate Biblical and Theological Principles for the Development of a Racially and Ethnically Diverse Family of God and Reject Other Recommendations

Classis Rocky Mountain overtures synod relative to the report of the Committee to Articulate Biblical and Theological Principles for the Development of a Racially and Ethnically Diverse Family of God as follows:

1. That synod accept the twelve biblical and theological principles outlined in Recommendation B of the committee report.
2. That synod remove the standard "equitable representation" in Recommendations C, 2 and F 1.

Grounds:

- a. The precise meaning of "equitable" has not been identified, though the report appears to favor a figure of 20 percent (see note in Recommendation C).
 - b. The application of such a standard seems to contravene the example of Jesus as cited by the report in the positive observation that "Jesus' social world and world of ministry were not defined along lines of race, gender, ethnicity, culture, or social standing" but that he "looked past those external characteristics" and "instead [saw] people as imagebearers of God" (p. 233).
 - c. Any given congregation in the CRCNA and the denomination as a whole is a voluntary association and as such cannot be equated with the citizenry of a country in which one has membership by virtue of birth, and thus the application of a percent standard derived from the wider population cannot apply.
3. That synod refer item b) in the mandate back to committee for further study.

Grounds:

- a. This item is not addressed by the report, and no criteria for leadership are either identified or evaluated.
 - b. The committee could serve the denomination well by identifying the specific hindrances to the participation of minority persons in leadership roles within the churches, classes, synod, and its agencies that arise from criteria for leadership which are by nature discriminatory against minorities.
4. That synod refer item c) of the mandate back to the committee for further study.

Grounds:

- a. In the discussion of the development of a racially and ethnically diverse family of God, the committee in its report and recommendations limits itself to the consideration of the participation of minority persons in denominational leadership positions within the denomination and its agencies.
- b. The report does not adequately address the issue of "church-planting principles," ignoring, for example, the theories of church growth proposed by the Church Growth Movement begun by Donald McGavran and taught by the School of World Missions of Fuller Theological Seminary.
- c. The report acknowledges that much of the present diversity within the denomination is a result of racially and ethnically homogeneous congregations (p. 217) but appears to reflect an ideological assumption that racial and ethnic diversity within congregations is the ideal (Recommendation D, 3) and thus gives the impression that the committee has chosen to ignore a proven method of church planting that has increased ethnic diversity in the denomination by focusing on specific racial and ethnic groups.

Classis Rocky Mountain
Meindert Bosch, stated clerk

Overture 50: Amend the Mission and Vision Statement

Classis Chicago South overtures synod to amend the Mission and Vision Statement of the Christian Reformed Church to include specific references to sin, redemption, holiness, proclamation, grace, admonition, discipline, and righteousness. The amendments should read as follows:

1. Par. 1: In the second sentence, after "given us a message of" add "redemption and."
2. Par. 3: After "of our Father's kingdom to our" add "sinful and dying" and after "the cross and the victory" add "over sin and death."
3. Par. 4: In the first sentence, after "praise and thanksgiving" add "and with repentance and acceptance of his grace. We pray for a consistent and uncompromising proclamation of the Word of God."
4. Par. 5: In the heading "to grow in wisdom and knowledge" add "that lead to holiness."
5. Par. 5: After "our relationship with him" add "to recognize our sin and our need for his grace."
6. Par. 6: In the second sentence, after "offer each other encouragement" add "admonition, discipline."
7. Par. 7: In the second sentence, after "alienated from God" add "by their sin" and in the third sentence, after "as people who" add "in seeking after righteousness."

Ground: The current version of the Mission and Vision Statement is good as it stands but needs additional material. The terms *sin*, *redemption*, *holiness*, *proclamation*, *admonition*, and *discipline* do not appear in the current document, yet these are essential elements of biblical faith, as our creeds, confessions, and catechism make clear. Therefore, these key biblical and theological terms should be included if the Mission and Vision Statement is to represent fully who we are and what our mission and vision are.

Note: In the text of the Mission and Vision Statement that follows, the additions cited above appear in italics.

Mission and Vision Statement (amended)

Who We Are

Par. 1

The Christian Reformed Church, 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 *redemption and 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.

Par. 2

We have been blessed by a rich theological 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

Par. 3

Enabled and led by the Spirit, we will bring the transforming power of our Father's kingdom to our *sinful and dying* world, embodying the love Jesus revealed on the cross and the victory *over sin and death* assured by his resurrection.

Our Vision

We believe that God's vision for us and for our world calls us

Par. 4

*** 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, with praise and thanksgiving, *and with repentance and acceptance of his grace*. We pray for a consistent and uncompromising proclamation of the Word of God. 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.

Par. 5

*** to grow in wisdom and knowledge that lead to holiness.** God calls us to deepen our relationship to him, *to recognize our sin and our need of his grace*, and 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.

Par. 6

*** 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, *admonition, discipline*, 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.

Par. 7

*** 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 *by their sin*, 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 *in seeking after righteousness* love deeply, with the life-changing love of God.

Par. 8

* **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.

Classis Chicago South

Henry B. Vanden Heuvel, stated clerk

Overture 51: Revise the Decision of Synod 1995 Not to Accede to Part B of Overture 29 (cf. *Agenda for Synod 1995*, p. 392, and *Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 696)

I. Background

Classis Lake Erie asked Synod 1995 to improve the opening session of synod in a variety of ways (Overture 29, *Agenda for Synod 1995*, pp. 390-92). The advisory committee adopted Part a of the overture. It answered Parts b, c, and d by instructing "the Board of Trustees to provide an electronic means of balloting, provided the cost is not prohibitive." The ground given for this response was that "a stewardly use of synod's time" requires this.

It is apparent from its recommendations that the advisory committee saw the overture only in terms of "a stewardly use of synod's time." It missed the fact that Part b of the overture was concerned about a stewardly use of the gifts of qualified elders. After Synod 1995 had voted on these recommendations, one of the officers of the advisory committee encouraged the Classis Lake Erie delegation to resubmit this part of the overture to another synod because the committee had not adequately recognized that dimension of Part b. That is the reason for this request.

For many years the Christian Reformed Church has been clergy dominated. We are grateful to see the dynamics changing somewhat as more non-clergy take leadership roles in various capacities. In some areas, though, more change must take place, and all of us must become more intentional in making sure such change happens. The leadership of synod is one of those places.

Currently, the election of synodical officers is a popularity contest. That is neither a positive or a negative statement; it is simple reality. Even before Synod 1995 convened, anyone familiar with the denomination knew the three ministers who would be elected as president, vice president, and first clerk. The only unknown was the order in which those three would be elected.

No one knew for certain who the fourth officer would be. Experienced synod watchers knew that he would be a minister who had been assigned as a chairman or a reporter of an advisory committee and that the field was no larger than three. Everyone knew that the fourth officer would not be an elder.

The fact that the election of synodical officers is a popularity contest does not mean that popular ministers are not gifted enough to serve synod well. It does mean that elders will seldom or never serve, no matter how high the level of

their giftedness. If synod is ever going to incorporate elders into these leadership positions, it must create a procedure by which they can and will be elected. It must replace the current procedure with one that makes known to the delegates the interests and gifts of non-clergy as well as clergy. That was the intention of Part b of Overture 29, a part that did not receive consideration at Synod 1995.

II. Request for revision

Classis Lake Erie requests

A. That Synod 1996 revise the decision of Synod 1995 not to accede to Part b of Overture 29 (*Agenda for Synod 1995*, p. 392).

Ground: By its own admission, the 1995 advisory committee saw Overture 29 only in terms of "a stewardly use of synod's time." It did not address the overture's concern for a process to increase the possibility of using the gifts of qualified elders as officers of synod.

B. That, beginning with Synod 1997, the general secretary 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, which will subsequently present recommendations to Synod 2001. The following procedure will be used:

1. A nomination form shall be sent to each delegate along with 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 from the floor of synod.)
3. A list of nominees with brief descriptions of their interests, gifts, and experiences shall be made available to all delegates at the first session of synod.

Grounds:

1. This procedure will provide a way whereby interested and gifted nominees can be known to all delegates.
2. This procedure increases the possibility that the gifts of qualified elders will be used by synod.

Classis Lake Erie

George Vander Weit, stated clerk

Overture 52: Revise the Decision of Synod 1995 Not to Accede to Part B of Overture 44 (cf. *Agenda for Synod 1995*, pp. 410-11, and *Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 656)

I. Background

In Overture 44 Classis Lake Erie requested Synod 1995 to "ask the Board of Trustees to appoint a small subcommittee to maintain a database of gifted people who could serve in a variety of areas. In this database boards, agencies,

and synod 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 the denomination's diversity" (*Agenda for Synod 1995*, p. 410). Synod did not accede to this request. Classis Lake Erie requests Synod 1996 to revise this decision for the following reasons:

A. During the discussion of this motion one of the members of the advisory committee informed synod that the denomination already has a database. That erroneous information caused delegates to believe that the request presented would cause unnecessary duplication. As a matter of fact, the denomination has no database.

B. According to the second ground used to defeat this request, "each board and committee has unique contacts with different groups which it can try to include in its work." That ground is erroneous. In 1994 the Board of Home Missions informed synod that "sufficient urban/multiethnic experience and expertise have not become available to the board by way of the delegates elected by classes" and hoped that "the classical home-missions committees [would] be aware of qualified candidates" (*Acts of Synod 1994*, p. 453). Synod 1995, in response to an overture that lamented the denomination's inability to enlarge minority participation, voted to include ethnic advisers at synod. Though these advisers will have some input into synodical advisory committees, they will not be able to vote.

The most obvious demonstration that this ground is erroneous was given by synod itself in its final session when it appointed a seven-member male committee only a few days after it had encouraged itself to include "persons who reflect the . . . gender . . . diversity of our denomination" in its committees.

C. The first ground used to defeat this request says that the process "seems clumsy rather than helpful." This is a subjective ground, as the advisory committee itself intimates when it uses the word "seems." This ground is also erroneous, as history demonstrates. Synod 1975 appointed a Committee on Use of Talents and Abilities of Women in the Church to assist the churches in carrying out synod's urging to make use of the talents and abilities of women. Classis Lake Erie secured names from the database established by that committee with gratifying success. The denomination itself made this process clumsy rather than helpful by attempting to expand the database into one that sought to utilize the gifts of all members of the denomination: It replaced the Committee on Use of Talents and Abilities of Women in the Church with a Use of Members' Gifts Committee. With this broadened focus, the process became cumbersome, and the committee was dismissed by Synod 1985.

Classis Lake Erie's overture envisions a helpful, not clumsy, committee. It envisions two things:

1. A small subcommittee of the Board of Trustees that primarily will hold before the churches the need for people who represent the gender, ethnic, and racial diversity of our denomination. Periodically this committee will invite churches and classes to submit names of people who can be contacted when there are *specific* committee or board needs.

2. A small subcommittee that is specifically commissioned to advise boards, agencies, and synods on the matter of committee balance. The need for such a committee was clearly demonstrated when Synod 1995 appointed a seven-member male committee.

II. Overture requesting revision

Classis Lake Erie overtures synod

- A. To revise the decision of Synod 1995 not to accede to Part b of Overture 44 (*Agenda for Synod 1995*, pp. 410-11).

Grounds:

1. Erroneous information about the existence of a database was given to Synod 1995 when this matter was discussed.
2. The grounds used to defeat this request are inadequate, even erroneous.
3. The action of Synod 1995 in appointing a seven-member male committee illustrates the need for such a subcommittee.

B To instruct the Board of Trustees to appoint a small subcommittee from its membership to work with boards, agencies, and synod as they appoint committees. This subcommittee shall maintain a database of gifted people, concentrating primarily on those who reflect the gender, ethnic, and racial diversity of the denomination and are available to serve in a variety of areas. This committee shall be consulted before all committee appointments are approved.

Ground: This subcommittee 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 53: Instruct Denominational Personnel re Group Insurance Plan

Classis Chicago South overtures synod to instruct denominational personnel who administer the Consolidated Group Insurance (CGI) plan to change third-party administrators only after receiving approval for the new administration from 51 percent of the plan members.

Grounds:

1. This provision gives plan members some voice in the administration of their own group insurance.
2. It requires denominational CGI administrators to make a compelling case for changing third-party administrators.
3. It prevents the abuse of power on the part of denominational administrators.

Classis Chicago South

Henry Vanden Heuvel, stated clerk

Overture 54: Appoint Committee to Study Surrogate Parenting

Classis Northern Michigan overtures synod to appoint a study committee to provide a biblical framework for pastoral counseling on the subject of surrogate parenting.

Ground: Clear biblical guidelines are needed as we face various ethical issues such as this one.

Classis Northern Michigan
Paul J. Veenstra, stated clerk

Overture 55: Change Church Order Article 43 by Deleting the Clause re "Urgent Need"

Classis Grand Rapids North overtures synod to change Church Order Article 43 as follows: delete from the second sentence the words "when the urgent need for their services has been established." The second sentence will then read, "Classis shall examine such men and license them as exhorters for a limited period of time."

Ground: The "urgent need" clause should be eliminated because it prevents some persons from using the gifts for exhorting which God has given to them. I Corinthians 12:7-11 instructs us,

Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines.

Classis Grand Rapids North
Joseph Vanden Akker, stated clerk

Overture 56: Approve the 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-speaking classis, appointed a committee to study this matter. In January 1993, Classis Greater Los Angeles also appointed members to this committee. The Korean-Speaking 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-speaking 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 1996 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 their gifts at the classical level. There is among some of them a sense of disenfranchisement.

C. Greater sense of ownership

A Korean-speaking 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-speaking 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-speaking 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-speaking 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.

Appendix

Churches desiring affiliation

Church	Classis
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 (Mission of Love)	Greater Los Angeles

Questions and answers

The Korean-Speaking Classis Study Committee formulated practical questions that had to do with the proposed Korean-speaking classis. The congregations interested in the formation of that classis gave the responses that we record below and have committed to abiding by these answers.

1. Will the Korean-speaking classis be a "local" classis?
Yes, it will include congregations located only 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-speaking classis and the Korean Council?
There will be no special interaction. The Korean-speaking classis will be a local body. The Korean Council is a denominational advisory body.
4. Will the Korean-speaking 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-speaking classis will contribute to the ministry shares of the entire CRC denomination "gradually." How will this happen?

The Korean-speaking 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-speaking 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-speaking classis will raise its own funds to support its classical expenses, the student-aid fund, church-planting funds, etc. The Korean-speaking classis will not expect funds from other Christian Reformed Church congregations.

7. There is a stated interest in exchanging ministry concerns with other classes. How can this take place?

The Korean-speaking classis will seek to have joint workshops, seminars, or celebrations with neighboring classes.

8. Will the Korean-speaking classis seek any special cultural adaptations of the Church Order?

The Korean-speaking classis will follow the standard rules of Christian Reformed Church Order. The participating Korean congregations believe they will do better when they do so in their own language.

9. How will the leadership of the new classis be chosen?

The Korean-speaking 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-speaking 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-speaking classis anticipates participation in denominational boards and agencies and synod. The Korean-speaking classis will send bilingual leaders to all ecclesiastical bodies.

11. Is it clear to the Korean-speaking congregations and leaders who wish to start this classis that there must be a commitment to become a classis with a term limit of fifteen years?

The Korean-speaking classis expects to have a term limit. The next generation, which will be bilingual, will take over the leadership from the first-generation leaders in about fifteen years. The Korean-speaking classis will consider setting up some checkpoints after five and ten years.

12. Will the creation of the Korean-speaking classis violate our denominational vision for unity and diversity?

The creation of this Korean-speaking classis does not necessarily violate our denominational vision of 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.

Note: The preceding material is nearly identical to Overture 47 submitted to Synod 1995 (*Agenda*, pp. 412-16).

The following is supplemental to the original overture. Its purpose is to respond to Synod 1995's recommendations regarding monitoring, training, and the relationship of a Korean-speaking classis with the broader church.

III. Supplement to Overture 47, Synod 1995

A. Monitoring

1. The Korean-speaking classis will request advisers from at least two neighboring classes for all its meetings during the first three years of its existence. After this initial period, these advisers will be requested once a year for the next two years. (This expands the concern of Question and Answer 7 above.)
2. Synod will monitor the development of the Korean-speaking classis every two years through a six-member task force comprised of two representatives from Classis Greater Los Angeles, Classis California South, and the Korean-speaking classis. That task force will report to synod on the development of that classis and on possible ways to improve its functioning. The ten- and fifteen-year reviews will also address the question of the continuity of the Korean-speaking classis. It may suggest the time for the end of the classis or the advisability of its continuation. Some of the guidelines for evaluation are (a) adherence to the Church Order and Rules for Synodical Procedure, (b) participation in the work of the denominational boards and agencies, (c) contribution of classical and synodical ministry shares, and (d) relationship with neighboring classes.

B. Training

1. Pastors and other church officers will receive adequate, long-term training on the Church Order and the Rules for Classical Procedure. This training will be given by the Korean ministries director, the Korean professor at Calvin Theological Seminary, and other qualified teachers available to the classis. (This statement expands the meaning of Ground E above.)
2. Upon its establishment and in order to set training on the right footing, the Korean-speaking classis will sponsor a two-day intensive course on Christian ecclesiology, structure, and church order. (This statement expands the meaning of Ground E above.)

C. *Relationship with the broader church*

1. The Korean-speaking classis will send delegates to the denominational boards in which other classes participate. (This statement expands the meaning of Ground C above.)
2. The churches in the classis will contribute their classical and denominational ministry shares. (This statement reaffirms Questions and Answers 4 and 5 above.)
3. The classis will appoint delegates to the Southern California Race Relations Committee and other interclassical regional bodies (CRWRC, California Regional Leaders, etc.) or projects (Multi-Ethnic Celebration, Camp Dunamis). (This statement clarifies Question and Answer 4 above.)
4. The Korean-speaking classis will accept as advisers the regional representatives of CRC agencies. (This statement clarifies Question and Answer 4 above.)

Classis Greater Los Angeles
Dick Van Weerthuizen, stated clerk

Overture 57: Lead the Churches of Our Denomination in Repentance

Classis California South overtures synod to lead the churches of our denomination in repentance by

A. Declaring the decision of Synod 1995 regarding women in ecclesiastical office to be in conflict with the Word of God and the Church Order and by reaffirming the decision of Synod 1994 regarding women in office (*Acts of Synod 1995*, pp. 726-36; *Acts of Synod 1994*, pp. 513-16).

Grounds:

1. Synod 1995 violated Church Order Article 47, which states that "no substantial alterations shall be effected by Synod in these matters [of the Church Order] unless the churches have had prior opportunity to consider the advisability of the proposed changes."
2. The decision of Synod 1995 to use the word "inoperative" has the effect of allowing churches to do as they please and therefore creates disunity rather than unity. Our Church Order, however, was established "that in all the churches all things are to be done decently and in order (I Cor. 14:40)" (Church Order Art. 1).
3. The action of Synod 1995 violates Church Order Article 29 by failing to produce any evidence that Synod 1994 was in conflict with the Word of God and with the Church Order on this matter of women in office.
4. The actions of Synod 1995 regarding women in ecclesiastical office violate Church Order Article 31 by failing to present any new and sufficient grounds to revise the decision of Synod 1994.
5. Synod 1995 ignored the clear scriptural grounds set out by Synod 1994 to demonstrate that women may not serve in the offices of minister and elder.

B. Immediately terminating ecclesiastical fellowship with the GKN.

Ground: The GKN permit and encourage beliefs and practices judged to be incompatible with positions of the CRC, namely positions regarding Scripture and homosexual practice, among others (see *Agenda for Synod 1995*, pp. 232 and 243).

C. Heeding the call of fellow Christians of other Reformed churches to maintain a biblical position with regard to these important matters.

Grounds:

1. The Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (CGKN) have decided to sever their relations with the Christian Reformed Church over these same issues. The CGKN objected to the CRC's "view of the authority of the Bible, to its positions on women in office, and its relationship with the GKN" (*Reformed Ecumenical Council News Exchange*, Nov. 1995).
2. NAPARC addressed 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 express the devout hope that this position will not change" (*Agenda for Synod 1995*, p. 217).
3. Both the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) have urged the CRC not to open the offices of minister and elder to women (*Agenda for Synod 1995* pp. 221-23).

Classis California South
James Howerzyl, stated clerk

Overture 58: Change Article 36-a of the Church Order

I. Overture

Classis Chatham overtures synod to change Article 36-a of the Church Order to read as follows:

The council, consistory, and diaconate shall meet at least once a month at a time and place announced to the congregation. Each body shall select its own president and officers.

Grounds:

1. When Synod 1973 inserted the word "ordinarily," it gave the following grounds, which today would seem self-evident and even somewhat condescending:

Grounds:

1. The offices of minister and elder as rulers are equal.
2. There are experienced elders who are quite capable of chairing meetings of council.
3. In crucial times, such as when a congregation is without a pastor, elders preside over the meetings and have proven themselves capable to do so quite adequately.

(*Acts of Synod 1973*, p. 82)

2. Officers of councils should be chosen on the basis of gifts, talents, and abilities. Ministers are not necessarily the most educated, gifted, or qualified to preside.
3. Many legal jurisdictions do not allow paid employees (e.g., pastors) to be officers of a governing council of a charitable organization (e.g., a church).
4. In many CRC churches, it is common practice, not the exception, to have elders chair/preside at council and consistory.
5. The proposed wording retains the important concepts of regular and orderly meetings.

II. Explanation

Article 36-a presently reads,

The council, consistory, and diaconate shall meet at least once a month at a time and place announced to the congregation. 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.

The intent of this overture is to delete the provision that the minister (ordinarily) should chair/preside at council and consistory meetings. The proposed new wording suggests much more flexibility and freedom to select the best possible president, regardless of which office this person holds.

Classis Chatham

Jan H.G. Vandergeest, stated clerk

Overture 59: Provide Direction about and for Pastoral Care of Homosexual Members

Classis Chatham overtures synod to give direction about and for pastoral care of homosexual members in a manner consistent with Synod 1973 (*Acts of Synod 1973*, Report 42). Since these recommendations are now a generation old, we believe it is time to review how effectively they encourage the churches in providing ministry to their homosexual members.

Grounds:

1. Christian homosexuals are beginning to turn away from their isolation, despair, and practice (homosexuality) and are beginning to turn to the church for a sense of community. Many ministries to homosexuals have developed in the years since the 1973 report on homosexuality was written. The churches of our denomination would be well served by a study to evaluate these ministries and give direction to our churches.
2. The pastoral recommendations of Report 42 of 1973 seem to have born little fruit in helping homosexuals feel ministered to in our churches. Our proposed study could help us to understand to what degree these recommendations have been effectively carried out and to uncover reasons why this may or may not be so.
3. The Christian Reformed Church has established a long and healthy tradition of involving in synodical studies those people who will eventu-

ally be helped by the studies. We encourage those receiving ministry regarding homosexuality to participate in this study.

4. This issue is too big for any of our churches or classes to deal with individually. Several classes and congregations have conducted such studies (e.g., Classes Alberta North, Grand Rapids East, and Toronto and the Council of First CRC, London, Ontario). But these local studies have not exhaustively studied all the available ministry possibilities. Our churches need to hear from the larger Christian community and to learn from one another.
5. Recent synods (1993, 1994, and 1995) have dealt with overtures to review the 1973 decisions re homosexuality. These synods consistently responded by noting that synod made a definitive decision in 1973. However, these previous overtures all asked synod to change substantially the decision of 1973. This overture asks synod to build on Synod 1973's action by evaluating progress made since then on recommendations made at that time.

Classis Chatham

Jan H.G. Vandergeest, stated clerk

Overture 60: Withhold Approval of the Work of Synodical Deputies

Classis Grand Rapids East overtures synod to withhold approval of the work of the synodical deputies from Classes Grand Rapids North, Grand Rapids South, and Grandville who concurred in the September 19, 1995, decision of Classis Thornapple "that Rev. G. Beerens be considered as one dismissed from the ministry."

Ground: The synodical deputies did not review the written allegations of abuse of office submitted to the Brookside consistory and to the Thornapple CIC by sixteen victims of alleged abuse (cf. Church Order Art. 14-b and Supplement, Arts. 82 and 83).

Classis Grand Rapids East

Philip Lucase, stated clerk

Overture 61: Appoint a Committee to Review the Bylaws of the Joint-Ministries Management Committee

Classis Illiana overtures synod to appoint a committee of seven members (two from Canada, five from the U.S.A., none of whom is employed in the denominational headquarters in Grand Rapids or is married to such an employee) to review and possibly to revise the bylaws of the Joint-Ministries Management Committee. This review should pay special attention to biblical foundations and the Reformed tradition in assessing directions taken and projected by new structures, new names, and new salary levels for ordained ministers employed as denominational administrators.

In order to mandate such review and possible revision, Synod 1996 would have to consider this overture before approving the internal review which is scheduled to be presented to this synod (see *Agenda for Synod 1995*, p. 571, IV).

Grounds:

1. "Church order is to be regarded as a part of the proclamation in which the Church's witness is expressed, as it is in its preaching" (Edward Schweizer, *Church Order in the New Testament*, I, a). The 1619 Church Order, amended in 1914, was profoundly changed in 1965 in ways not adequately discussed and considered at the time. Incremental changes in recent years, and especially conceptual changes recorded in name changes, have not been fully understood or affirmed by local churches. Current unrest and secession are often attributed to one or another doctrinal issue, but Church Order issues (hierarchicalism, bureaucracy, and administrative maneuvering) are almost always cited. Matters to be considered in the proposed review may be a root cause of the very real and growing threats of schism in our classis and in the denomination.
2. "All things should be done decently and in order" (I Cor. 14:40). Good order is essential not only in worship services but also in the forms we use to covenant together. In matters of corporate responsibility and accountability to classes and consistories our standards should be at least as high as those set by industry, other nonprofit organizations, and governments in North America. For a review of structures crucial to consistories, classes, and future synods, synod itself should choose the committee. Members of the Board of Trustees and administrators immediately affected by the recommendations should not themselves be members of the review committee.
3. "No Church shall in any way lord it over other Churches, no Minister over other Ministers, no Elder or Deacon over other Elders or Deacons" (Art. 84 in the pre-1965 Church Order, cf. also Art. 17). This Church Order article was designed to prevent hierarchical administration in Reformed churches. The replacement Church Order Articles 85 and 2 seem, by design or by accident, unable to prevent the evolution of such hierarchy. This failure is strikingly indicated by the vast difference in salary ranges for ministers employed as denominational administrators and those employed as pastors of congregations (see *Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 577, XII).

Classis Illiana

Laryn G. Zoerhof, stated clerk

Overture 62: Suspend the One-Year Residency at Calvin Theological Seminary Required for Ministerial Candidates in the CRC

Classis Illiana overtures synod to suspend the one-year residency at Calvin Theological Seminary required for students from other confessional and distinctively Reformed seminaries to become eligible for ministerial candidacy in the CRC.

Grounds:

1. Though this matter has been addressed by previous synods, times have changed. Presently there is a severe shortage of ministers in the CRC. This requirement is excessively restrictive and discourages CRC students who choose to attend other Reformed seminaries from entering the ministry of the CRC.

2. A modified residency program has been established at Calvin Theological Seminary for minority students who attend other seminaries which may or may not be Reformed. This provision discriminates against students who have been born and raised in the CRC and choose not to attend Calvin Seminary.
3. The enrollment at Calvin Seminary will not meet the denomination's need for ministers in the foreseeable future.

Classis Illiana

Laryn G. Zoerhof, stated clerk

Overture 63: Declare the New King James Version Acceptable for Use in Worship Services

The Classis of the Heartland overtures synod to declare the New King James Version of the English Bible to be acceptable for use in worship services.

Grounds:

1. The King James Version already has this status.
2. The New King James Version retains the poetic beauty of the Authorized Version but in contemporary English.
3. *The New Geneva Study Bible*, a study Bible from a distinctively Reformed perspective, edited by R.C. Sproul, uses the New King James Version as the base text. Roger Nicole, J.I. Packer, Simon Kistemaker, Wayne Grudem, Leon Morris, Meredith Kline, and the late Raymond Dillard are among the many Reformed scholars who contributed to this work.
4. The New King James Version is gaining wide acceptance in the evangelical community.

Classis of the Heartland

Jack M. Gray, stated clerk

Overture 64: Request the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA to Convene a Forum on Cross-Cultural Ministries

Classis Alberta North overtures synod to request the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA to convene a forum on cross-cultural ministries which will focus on meeting the challenges of culture and worship. The participants should include but not be limited to leaders and members of Classis Red Mesa, the Korean churches in the CRC, the Race Relations Committee, the Committee for Racial Reconciliation in Canada, the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee, Christian Reformed World Missions, Calvin Theological Seminary, and first nations peoples of Canada and the United States.

Grounds:

1. These above-listed agencies and communities as well as others continually face the issue of cross-cultural ministries and must grapple with this problem.
2. Such a forum will resoundingly affirm Christ's power to transform culture.

3. Such a forum will provide an opportunity for clarification, debate, mutual support, and encouragement among our denominational ministries.

Classis Alberta North

Nicholas B. Knoppers, stated clerk

Overture 65: Declare the Position on Abortion in *Christian Faith, Health, and Medical Practice* to Be Contrary to the Position of the CRC.

I. Introductory statement

The 1985-1986 team of the Calvin Center for Christian Scholarship (CCCS) produced the book *Christian Faith, Health, and Medical Practice*. After four introductory chapters which establish the book's perspective, each of the remaining chapters focuses on one of a variety of medical-ethics issues confronting Christians today. We applaud attempts to address such significant issues in the light of Scripture. However, we have serious concern regarding the position on abortion expressed in Chapter 8, "Abortion: A Covenantal View."

II. Background

A. The book

In a letter responding to our concern, one of the authors, Dr. Hessel Bouma III, expresses the *hope* that we "sense it is a strongly pro-life book." However, hopes do not always match reality. Early in Chapter 8 the authors reaffirm a position they established in Chapter 2 regarding the status of unborn human beings: "They are *potential* persons" (p. 208). The obvious conclusion is that "this view does not equate abortion with murder" (p. 208) and that "abortion is not the moral equivalent of murder" (p. 223). The reason for our concern becomes apparent when the conclusion is applied in several specific situations. In Chapter 8 the authors *recommend* abortion "in the [rape] cases of some young teenagers" (p. 226) and when a fetus "is not a potential person because of deformities" (p. 227). Summarizing the chapter, they add, "[S]ometimes we should tolerate and even cooperate with abortions we would not recommend" (p. 232). In discussing political goals, the authors state, "[W]e cannot support either the *right-to-life amendments* [emphasis added] or abortion on demand" (p. 225). In addition, they make such statements as "we do not believe abortion should be made illegal, at least not during the first trimester" (p. 228), "we do not believe that first-trimester abortions threaten the very foundations or life of society" (p. 229), and "we believe that early induced abortions should not be criminalized" (p. 230). Does this sound like a strongly pro-life book? Does hope match reality?

We have summarized a complex position in a brief paragraph. Obviously, there are nuances and amplifications that we have not reflected. However, we have tried to reflect accurately the authors' position on abortion.

B. Professor Hessel Bouma

Normally CCCS teams work together for one year researching a specific issue and publishing their conclusions. After their term of service is completed, the Christian Reformed Church no longer has any official relationship with the team. However, one member of the 1985-1986 team, Dr. Hessel Bouma III,

remains an official servant of the Christian Reformed Church as a biology professor at Calvin College. In response to our concerns, Dr. Bouma related his perspective and his use of the book in the classroom. He expressed "misgivings about an absolutely pro-life position," referring to part of the 1972 synodical report on abortion as his defense. He dismissed the decision of Synod 1976 as "an emotional response to the dramatic increase in abortions in the wake of *Roe v. Wade*, based on minimal Scripture exegesis." He continued by observing that the "conceptionist position as reflected in the proposed Human Life Amendment comes perilously close to making a god of human life." He personally believes that "abortion is not the moral equivalent of murder" and "that under exceptional circumstances, abortion occasionally may be recommended, cooperated with, or tolerated." Does this sound like a strongly pro-life professor? Does hope match reality?

C. *The position of the Christian Reformed Church on abortion*

1. Synod 1972

Before the famous U.S. Supreme Court *Roe v. Wade* decision, which allowed abortion on demand in the United States, Synod 1972 addressed the hard cases (e.g., rape, incest, early teen pregnancy, and severe neurological deformity), taking a strong position against abortion. It adopted the following recommendations:

- a. That synod affirm the unique value of all human life and the special relationship of man to God as his image-bearer.
- b. 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.
- c. 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.
- d. 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, pp. 63-64)

2. Synod 1976

In response to an overture from Classis Hackensack, synod endorsed the Human Life Amendment as worded by the legal committee of the National Right to Life Organization and adopted the following recommendation:

That synod call 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.

Grounds:

- a. The will of God regarding the sanctity of human life. (Gen 1:26, 27; 9:6; Ex. 20:13; etc.)
- b. The threat which the abortion and euthanasian mentality poses for all of us, commencing with those who are weak, judged unproductive, or considered undesirable.
- c. The decision of the Synod of 1972 "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 1976, p. 64)

3. Synod 1981

Synod 1981 responded as follows to an overture to declare January 22 a national day of mourning, prayer, and fasting:

That synod encourage all of our churches to give continued attention to this important issue, and encourage our members in the United States to make use of January 22, the anniversary of the Supreme Court decision concerning abortion, in the most effective ways possible.

Ground: Christians may not rest while the evil abuse of abortion persists, but are called to testify and act in public life in obedience to their Lord.

(Acts of Synod 1981, p. 61)

4. Synod 1993

Synod 1993 did not accede to an overture to restudy the issue of abortion in light of new medical research and current political debate, reaffirming instead the direction set by Synod 1972: "The 1972 recommendations regarding induced abortion and the role of the believing community (Acts of Synod 1972, pp. 63-64) give sufficient pastoral guidance to the church as it deals with these issues" (Acts of Synod 1993, p. 515).

D. The authority of ecclesiastical decisions

Church Order Article 29 states, "Decisions of ecclesiastical assemblies shall be reached only upon due consideration. 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." Synod 1975 clarified the use and function of synodical pronouncements on doctrinal and ethical matters and their relation to the confession when it said,

Synodical pronouncements on doctrinal and ethical matters are subordinate to the confessions, and *they* [emphasis added] "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." (Acts of Synod 1975, p. 44)

III. Overture

Therefore, Classis Wisconsin overtures synod

A. To declare that the book *Christian Faith, Health, and Medical Practice* presents a position on abortion contrary to the position of the Christian Reformed Church.

Ground: In spite of the disclaimer that "the viewpoints expressed in this book ought not to be taken as positions of Calvin College or the Christian Reformed Church" (p. xiv), the fact remains that synod has taken a position on abortion, this book takes a contrary position, and it was written by servants of the Christian Reformed Church.

B. To instruct Dr. Hessel Bouma to bring his position on abortion into compliance with the position of the Christian Reformed Church and to instruct the Calvin College Board of Trustees to ensure his compliance.

Grounds:

1. As a Calvin College professor he is a servant of the Christian Reformed Church.
2. Synod 1995 defeated a recommendation supporting the Calvin College Board of Trustees' understanding of "settled and binding" (*Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 753).

Classis Wisconsin

Adrian Dieleman, stated clerk

Overture 66: Change Church Order Supplement, Article 7 (Section A, 1)

I. Background

The Church Order requires far fewer documents from people applying to be ordained via Church Order Article 7 than it does from any other persons pursuing ordination. Article 7 and its supplement require only that the petitioner "apply to his council and then to the classis" and that "classis shall first of all examine the written credentials of the council concerning the required qualifications as stated in Article 7. . . ."

Church Order Supplement, Article 8 requires of ministers from other denominations who desire admittance to the Christian Reformed ministry that "the classis shall receive from the minister a statement of health, appropriate diplomas, and the evaluated psychological report prior to beginning the determination of need" (8, D, 4) in addition to "a testimonial from his council or classis or presbytery, concerning his purity of doctrine and sanctity of life" (8, D, 8).

A health certificate is also required of all seminary graduates applying for candidacy, and a psychological report is also required of all seminary students.

II. Overture

In the light of the above, Classis Minnesota South overtures synod to change Church Order Supplement, Article 7, A, 1 to read as follows:

If anyone wishes to be admitted to the ministry of the Word in accordance with Article 7, he should apply to his council and after that to the classis. *The classis shall receive from the petitioner a statement of health, an evaluated psychological report, and a written recommendation from the council prior to beginning the determination of need.*

Together with the delegates of examination from the neighboring classes, the classis shall first of all examine the written credentials ~~of the Council~~ concerning the required qualifications as stated in Article 7 and thereupon the classis shall proceed to examine him to ascertain whether the petitioner is to be given the right. . . . [Material in italics is added. Material struck through is to be omitted.]

Grounds:

- A. A statement of health and an evaluated psychological report are already required of seminary students and of ministers from other denominations seeking ordination in the CRC. This change would bring the requirements for Article 7 into conformity with those for Article 8.
- B. This change would ensure that applicants under Article 7 are given equal treatment in all classes.

Classis Minnesota South

Norman Visser, stated clerk

Overture 67: Take Decisive Action to Heal the Rift in the CRC

I. Background

The debate re women in ecclesiastical office has raged in varying degrees of intensity for over two decades. Most recently actions of synod have brought pain to the entire denomination. For example, many in the CRC were hurt by the surprising action of Synod 1993 to open all ecclesiastical offices to women. Even many in favor of women in office were disappointed by the way delegates reached the decision.

According to Church Order, a following synod should have ratified the decision of 1993 to open all offices to women. Synod 1994 chose not to ratify the 1993 decision and issued a strong statement against the propriety of women in ecclesiastical office. This time people on the other side of the debate were hurt by the action of synod. The procedure synod used was not the issue this time, but many took offense at the ground that called the teaching of Scripture "clear" when two decades of debate had shown that the issue was not clear to many in the CRC.

Synod 1995 tried to bring about a measure of healing by attempting yet another compromise solution. This synod said that the CRC could use a time of rest from the incessant debating that made other issues on the floor of synod minor compared to the issue of women in office. So synod decided on a moratorium until 2000. However, the compromise has not worked. Neither have the decisions of 1995 concerning women in office proved to be just or good decisions. Action, not waiting, is required in 1996.

Finally, it might be helpful for us to address the polarity in the CRC in the light of an illustration from marriage, each side of the women-in-office issue representing one partner. As in a marriage, failure to address issues that create tension only compounds the problems in the church. As in a marriage, divorce is not the best solution for the problems of the CRC. Classis Columbia recognizes that there are people on both sides of the women-in-office issue who honor the Scriptures as the infallible Word of God. We need to reaffirm our commitment to one another and to the hard steps of confession, forgiveness, and reconciliation. We must return to doing things decently and in good order as members of the body of Christ.

II. Overture

Classis Columbia overtures synod to take decisive action to heal the rift in the CRC:

A. To acknowledge by decision and by a time of confessional prayer that members of the body of Jesus Christ in the CRC have damaged the union of the CRC. For example, some have called others who also affirm the three forms of unity "apostate" and other such names because of their support for women in office.

B. To acknowledge by decision and by a time of confessional prayer that members of the body of Jesus Christ in the CRC have damaged the union of the CRC by subverting good synodical process. For example, the 1993 decision on women in office was based upon the rule that "All other matters may be considered which synod by a majority vote declares acceptable" rather than on

the normal manner of changing the Church Order by proving that a previous decision conflicts with the Word of God or the Church Order (Art. 29) and then only if sufficient and new grounds for reconsideration are presented (Art. 31).

C. To reaffirm that the word "male" in Church Order Article 3 will remain in effect unless evidence is provided, according to Church Order Articles 29 and 31, which leads to a change in Church Order Article 3 that is ratified by a succeeding synod.

Ground: Synod 1995 violated its own rules in the action it took on the women-in-office issue. Evidence for this claim is as follows:

1. According to Church Order Articles 29 and 31 Synod 1995 did not have sufficient grounds to make its decision on women in office.
2. The grounds presented were flawed.
 - a. Although Synod 1995 claimed that the "regional" option of this decision "avoids" the dangers of congregationalism (*Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 733, I, 2, c), it does not. Synod 1995 allowed any congregation to have women elders without threat of discipline (*Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 733, I, 3, c).
 - b. The claim that this decision will "allow Article 3 to remain as it is" (*Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 736, I, 5, a) is true only in an overly narrow technical sense. The meaning and effect of Article 3 are substantially changed by the supplement adopted by Synod 1995.
 - c. Designating this decision as a supplement to avoid need for ratification is not logically valid. Synod 1995 substantially changed the Church Order by this decision, which violated Synod 1979's stipulations regarding Church Order Article 47: "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." Ratification should be required.
3. Synod 1995's decision has created a whole new category of diminished offices to be filled by women. A double standard for describing the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist is contrary to good Church Order.
4. Our system of government has served us well and has preserved our denominational unity.
5. This action provides for continuing debate for those who believe that the Bible permits women to hold all ecclesiastical offices.

Classis Columbia

Howard B. Spaan, stated clerk

Overture 68: Ensure That Reports Recommending Changes Affecting the Life of Congregations and Classes Be Submitted to the Churches by November 1

I. Background

On January 12, the agenda deadline for the March 2 meeting of Classis Lake Erie, the Michigan churches in Classis Lake Erie received the study-committee report regarding a one-calendar-week synod. The Ohio churches received it during the next week. The report's cover letter informed us that "the attached

report will be presented to Synod 1996 for adoption. Please discuss the report at your council meeting. The normal channel for suggesting changes is by way of an overture to your classis." Obviously, the councils in our classis were unable to follow the "normal channel" in responding to this report since they received it too late. We suspect the same is also true of the other twenty-seven (out of forty-six) classes that meet in late February and early March. Classis Lake Erie was able to respond to the report because one of its members received a copy of it on January 5 and because it did not follow the "normal channel."

We are very supportive of a one-calendar-week synod. We are also very supportive of the synodical rule stating that "the general secretary shall distribute [study-committee reports] to the churches no later than November 1" (*Rules for Synodical Procedure 1995*, p. 74). Disregard for this rule takes away from councils and classes the opportunity to be actively involved in the affairs of the denomination. Such disregard is unwise at any time. It is especially unwise when a number of people believe that the CRC is becoming more and more centralized and that their voice is no longer welcome or heard.

Two years ago Classis Lake Erie expressed the same concern to Synod 1994 in light of a study-committee report concerning the denomination's Fund for Smaller Churches. The Board of Trustees accepted the recommendations of that committee at its March 1994 meeting and, contrary to the request of members of our classis, asked Synod 1994 to act on those recommendations. At its March 1994 meeting Classis Lake Erie overtured synod to submit these recommendations to the churches for study, and synod adopted that overture (*Acts of Synod 1994*, p. 468). In 1995 we raised a similar concern, and again synod specified that policy changes affecting the life and ministry of congregations and classes be sent to the councils by November 1 because "this will allow churches and classes adequate time for response before synod acts on the recommendations" (*Acts of Synod 1995*, pp. 752-53). In light of the 1994 and 1995 synodical decisions, we are disappointed that Synod 1996 is being asked to adopt a report which over half the classes have had no opportunity to consider.

For the third year in a row we ask synod to ensure that councils and classes receive materials early enough to study them and, if so desired, to respond to them by established deadlines.

II. Overture

Classis Lake Erie overtures Synod 1996 to ensure that study-committee reports and policy changes which directly affect the life and ministry of congregations and classes be submitted to the churches by November 1.

Grounds:

- A. Increasingly, churches and classes are receiving such material too late to give it adequate consideration before synod acts on it.
- B. Such action will demonstrate that synod values the participation of councils and classes in the life of the denomination.

Classis Lake Erie

George F. Vander Weit, stated clerk

Overture 69: Revise the Nominating Procedure Proposed by the Committee to Design a One-Calendar-Week Synod

I. Background

Classis Lake Erie is very supportive of the proposal to move to a one-week synod because a shorter synod should make it possible for more elders to serve the denomination as synodical delegates. However, we do have some concerns about the recommendations of the study committee. On the first Sunday of synod a worship service will be used to handle some of synods "business," namely, "greetings from two fraternal delegates (one from North America and one from overseas) and the introduction of missionaries, chaplains, candidates, and persons in ministries in special settings." We recognize the exciting possibilities of incorporating these items into the worship service but also recognize the danger of lengthening and destroying the worship experience if these elements are not incorporated wisely and well. We are especially concerned about the incorporation of fraternal delegates, since fraternal delegates have often used their time at synod not to celebrate our common commitment to the Lord Jesus but to chastise our denomination because of a position it holds or is discussing. We raise this point only as a caution and trust that the convening church and the Board of Trustees will be attentive to this concern as they plan this service.

We are more concerned about the details of the nominating procedure for synodical officers. Because Synod 1995 defeated Classis Lake Erie's request for a new procedure (*Acts of Synod 1995*, pp. 695-96), at our October 1995 meeting we sent to Synod 1996 a request for reconsideration of this matter. We are very thankful that the committee is recommending a nominating procedure, but we believe it must be more responsive to elders. In our request for reconsideration we observe that well-known ministers are elected to be the officers of synod. One can look at the list of delegates to any given synod and almost guarantee who the officers will be. The study committee is recommending that each delegate submit nominees in two categories and that "the twelve persons (in each category) who receive the highest number of nominating votes will be the slate from which the officers are chosen at the first plenary session of synod." In essence, the nominating procedure will be the first vote. Although each slate will contain twelve names, we anticipate that many of the same names will be on both slates and that most, if not all, those names will be ministers.

Especially in Canada, elders serve as chairpersons of councils. For years elders throughout the denomination have served as clerks of councils, and the 1995 *Yearbook* indicates that one-fifth of our classical stated clerks are non-clergy. Undoubtedly, there are gifted elders who could serve as the president or vice president of synod and even more who could serve as first or second clerk. Yet few elders, if any, will be among the highest vote getters on either of the two slates of nominees.

Though all of us recognize the necessity of handicapping golfers and bowlers to make the game fair, there is resistance to efforts that attempt to do the same in human relationships. We recognize that resistance but believe the denomination must proactively incorporate elders into our synodical leadership even as it is attempting to be more responsive to elders by moving to a one-week synod. We believe that at least one-fourth of the nominees on the final slates for synodical officers should be elders, no matter how many nominating votes they receive

compared to ministers nominated for the same slate. Naturally, if fewer than three elders are nominated for each slate, the twelve-person slates would be completed by the addition of ministers' names.

To better ensure that synodical officers are chosen on the basis of their qualifications and to give all delegates some knowledge of the nominees, a brief description of each nominee's qualifications should be provided, as is currently done with all other nominees submitted to synod for election.

Our final concern is that, for a number of reasons, we do not believe it is wise to allow alternate synodical delegates to be nominated from the floor on the day that synod convenes. This provision allows a delegate to be placed on a slate on the basis of one nominating vote, whereas other delegates already will have been dropped from the slate even though they received three or four nominating votes. Also, this provision, unless very tightly controlled, will result in nominating speeches that may prejudice the election. In addition, this provision for nominating alternates from the floor of synod is based on the premise that there is a small pool of ministers from which synod routinely selects its officers. The provision is designed to give synod the opportunity to use one of these ministers if he is delegated at the last minute. While we understand the rationale for this provision, there are more liabilities than benefits to it. The denomination is not so impoverished in terms of synodical leadership that it must find a way to incorporate last-minute delegates in the nominating procedure. Nominations should be closed on May 15, as the committee suggests, with no exceptions.

III. Overture

Classis Lake Erie overtures synod to revise the nominating procedure proposed by the Committee to Design a One-Calendar-Week Synod in the following way:

A. The names of three elder nominees shall be placed on each slate. (If three elders are not nominated, the vacancies on the slate shall be filled with minister nominees.)

Ground: This provision will assist in making it possible for elders to be incorporated into synodical leadership.

B. A brief description of the qualifications of each nominee shall be provided to the delegates.

Ground: This will assist the delegates in electing officers on the basis of their qualifications.

C. The nominations for synodical officers shall be closed on May 15, with no exceptions.

Ground: The denomination is not so impoverished in terms of synodical leadership that it must find a way to incorporate last-minute delegates in the nominating procedure.

Classis Lake Erie

George F. Vander Weit, stated clerk

Overture 70: Appoint a Committee to Review and Revise Abuse Guidelines

I. Background

In recent years, the Christian Reformed Church has sought to address the problem of abuse. Classis Lake Erie is supportive of efforts to curtail abuse and to bring healing to the lives of those touched by it. We are also concerned that our synods are not taking the care necessary to give adequate guidance to our churches in this matter. We fear that this lack of care will diminish the long-term effectiveness of denominational efforts.

Classis Lake Erie initially addressed this matter at its March 1992 meeting, when a member of the denominational committee to study abuse presented the committee's report. After that presentation, classis drafted an overture to Synod 1992 asking that the committee's recommendations be "replaced with ones that are pastoral instead of punitive" (*Agenda for Synod 1992*, p. 485). Classis especially noted a lack of concern for the alleged perpetrator and believed that the harshness of the report would "only perpetuate the denial and fear of exposure already present."

When guidelines were proposed at Synod 1994, delegates from Classis Lake Erie again raised some concerns. Synod 1993 had instructed the Ad Hoc Committee to Implement the Decisions re Physical, Emotional, and Sexual Abuse "in consultation with the Pastor-Church Relations Committee and the Church Polity Department of Calvin Seminary, to develop clear guidelines concerning the church's response to ministerial misconduct and abuse of office." The ad hoc committee did not consult with the Church Polity Department of Calvin Seminary, and its guidelines conflicted with current church polity in several places. Synod acknowledged that but decided to send the material to the churches for "study, prayer, and response" because "these reports can help inform the church in the interim in which a more fully integrated action plan is being developed" (*Acts of Synod 1994*, p. 466).

Our delegates to synod also expressed concern about the legal liability that the churches might incur if these guidelines were followed. Synod was told that the committee had consulted legal experts in formulating this material. Thus, the guidelines were approved on June 17 (*Acts of Synod 1994*, p. 466). On June 22 the synodical advisory committee that recommended this decision asked that it be recommitted to the committee. On June 23 synod was informed that a June 21 letter had been received from a law firm that the executive director of ministries had consulted for advice because of "a question from the floor." The attorneys urged synod "to clarify a number of concerns, focusing on less directive language and a more clearly defined due-process procedure" (*Acts of Synod 1994*, p. 528). In response to this letter, synod instructed the Board of Trustees "to arrange for a careful editing of the guidelines . . . and for their legal review as appropriate before they are referred to the churches for study, prayer, and response" (*Acts of Synod 1994*, p. 528).

After Synod 1994 representatives from at least three Classis Lake Erie churches responded to the adopted guidelines. A number of practical suggestions were given. Again, concern was expressed that the guidelines seemed to demonstrate very little concern for the alleged perpetrator. One council wrote, "The guidelines, if adopted, must be fair to all parties involved. Because of the nature of abuse cases, determination of fact will often be difficult; but the

accusations themselves are extremely damaging not only to the person accused but also to the institution the person represents.”

At Synod 1995 another set of guidelines was presented. Classis Lake Erie's synodical delegation presented five and a half pages of comments to the synodical advisory committee considering these guidelines. Many of those comments addressed concerns raised in the past: the conflict of the guidelines and the Church Order, the absence of justice for the accused, the legal liabilities that might be incurred if these guidelines were followed, and so forth. When the guidelines were presented to synod, synod was assured that the denomination's legal counsel had reviewed them. However, the denomination's legal counsel in Canada, himself a synodical delegate, informed synod that he had never seen them, that there were legal problems with them, and that they did not provide basic justice for the accused. A lawyer from our classis, in material given to the advisory committee, observed, “Fundamentally, the hearing process outlined in the proposed guidelines turns the traditional presumption of innocence on its head, requiring instead that the accused prove his or her innocence.”

Synod 1995, like Synod 1994, was eager to provide direction to the churches and brushed aside the concerns raised about these guidelines. Unfortunately, Synod 1995 ended as did Synod 1994. Because of concerns raised on the floor, at its last session synod authorized “the Board of Trustees . . . 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” (*Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 767).

The churches have received two sets of guidelines in two years, both of them patched by the Board of Trustees after they were adopted by synod and both of them adopted even though synod admitted that they were flawed and needed further correction. We believe that the church will not be well served by such guidelines and that the flaws noted at synod will not be corrected unless they are specifically addressed. Issues like the lack of fundamental justice for the accused and the conflict with the Church Order Supplement, Articles 78-81 must be addressed. In addition, the 1995 guidelines raised the new issue of repressed memory without any discussion or guidance about its use and limitations as well as the new concept of *spiritual abuse*, something extremely difficult, if not impossible, to evaluate, as Synod 1995 itself noted.

II. Overture

Classis Lake Erie overtures Synod 1996 to appoint a committee to review and revise the guidelines on abuse. This committee shall address, among other concerns, the matter of basic justice for all parties concerned, the stridency of the material presented, the harmony of the guidelines and the Church Order, the use and limitations of repressed memory, the use of the category *spiritual abuse*, and any other matters it deems necessary in order to produce a set of materials/guidelines that demonstrate the denomination's desire that justice and healing be secured for all parties involved when allegations of abuse are raised. This committee shall include persons who are concerned about alleged abusers as well as those concerned about those who allegedly have been abused. It shall also include persons with legal expertise, or it shall submit its guidelines to the legal counsel of the denomination before presenting them to the churches for consideration or to synod for adoption.

Grounds:

- A. Members of the denomination have repeatedly asserted that the adopted guidelines do not provide basic justice for alleged perpetrators.
- B. Even delegates who voted for these guidelines stated that they contained flaws that needed to be corrected.

Classis Lake Erie

George F. Vander Weit, stated clerk

Overture 71: Restructure the Back to God Hour Board

I. Background

At our October 6 meeting Classis Lake Erie expressed a desire to have our regional board representatives personally report to us and adopted a motion "to instruct the stated clerk to request our regional representatives to the Calvin College, Calvin Seminary and denominational Trustee Boards to be present at one of our two meetings each year." Our stated clerk reflected our discussion on this matter when he contacted our regional representatives, saying,

We very much value a personal report from time to time, and we also think that it's valuable for each of you to spend time at our meetings so that you can better represent us. Even though your presentation will only take a few minutes, we trust that you will remain with us for a few hours to get a flavor of our classis.

Shortly after the October meeting we realized that we had never been contacted by anyone who identified himself/herself as our Back to God Hour Board regional representative. Our classis has never been solicited for nominees for this board, nor have we ever had the opportunity to vote for a person in our region who would represent us.

The Back to God Hour is one of the major ministries of our denomination and one of the major ministry-share recipients. Historically, representation on the Back to God Hour Board has not conformed to the pattern of classical representation that characterized other major boards, and The Back to God Hour has always been governed by a smaller board. Now that the denomination has moved to regional representation for a number of its other boards, we believe the Back to God Hour Board should be restructured in the same way.

Currently, fourteen people serve on the Back to God Hour Board. It is not difficult to retain a fourteen-member board that conforms to existing denominational regions and provides at-large members to give the Back to God Hour Board the flexibility needed to secure people with particular expertise. The Back to God Hour Board could very easily be restructured along the lines of already existing regions:

Far West, Subgroups I and II (2)
Great Plains (1)
Central U.S., Subgroups I, II, III, and IV (4)
At-large members (3)

Eastern U.S. (1)
Eastern Canada, Subgroups I and II (2)
Western Canada (1)

This distribution would create a board of fourteen.

We believe that restructuring the Back to God Hour Board in this way will bring the work of The Back to God Hour closer to the churches and will

facilitate more effective communication between the board and the churches. It will also give the regions a greater sense of ownership since they will be involved in the election of the people who report to them on the ministry of The Back to God Hour and who represent them to the board. The details of effecting this transition can be left to the existing board and the executive director of ministries, but the transition should be completed no later than 1999.

The procedure for electing people to this board should be the same as the procedure used to elect members to the boards of Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary:

- A. Following the spring board meetings each board secretary notes which board positions will need to be filled and informs the general secretary's office which regions/subregions need to elect trustees.
- B. The general secretary informs the classes in a given region that they need to nominate a person(s) for a particular vacancy.
- C. **The classes prepare nominations at their fall meetings** (September or October—voting takes place at the spring meeting of classis) and send them to the general secretary with information on the nominees. An information form should be completed for each nominee.
- D. The general secretary passes the nominations and information on the nominees to the respective boards. The boards, or their designated subcommittees, prepare slates of nominees, keeping in mind **rotation between classes, expertise, clergy-lay/gender/minority balance**, etc. The boards send their slates of nominees to the general secretary.
- E. The general secretary prepares ballots for the respective classes.
- F. **The classes vote at their spring meetings.** They submit their total votes to the general secretary. He submits the totals to synod for approval. (The person who receives the highest number of votes will be the regional representative; the other person will be the alternate regional representative, who takes the place of the regional representative as needed and fills his/her unexpired term if a vacancy arises during a term.)
- G. Tie votes will be resolved at synod by the synodical delegates from the classes of the region where the tie occurred.

II. Overture

Classis Lake Erie overtures synod

- A. To restructure the Back to God Hour Board so representation on the board conforms to the pattern of regional representation on other denominational boards.
- B. To instruct the Back to God Hour Board to use the election procedure currently used by the boards of Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary.
- C. To instruct the Back to God Hour Board, in conjunction with the executive director of ministries, to complete this transition as soon as possible but no later than 1999.

Grounds:

1. Such restructuring will bring the work of The Back To God Hour closer to the churches and will facilitate more effective communication between the board and the churches.

2. Such restructuring will give the regions a greater sense of ownership since they are involved in the election of the people who represent them on the board.

Classis Lake Erie

George F. Vander Weit, stated clerk

Overture 72: Amend Article V of the Proposed Constitution of the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA

I. Background

Over the past two decades there has been considerable discussion about the most effective way to supervise the agencies of our denomination. The "Vision 21" Committee addressed this concern from 1983 to 1987, and the Committee on Structure Review did the same from 1987 to 1990. Both committees suggested a stronger board that would have the authority to manage the denomination's ministries and agencies. During the discussion of this matter, concern was repeatedly raised about the relationship of this board to the churches. For example, Synod 1987 mandated the Committee on Structure Review to review "the accessibility and accountability of the executive board of synod to the supporting constituency" (*Acts of Synod 1987*, p. 596). Although the Committee on Structure Review recommended that each classis have a representative on this board, synod decided that this board would be comprised of regional representatives.

Synod 1993 adopted a provisional constitution for the Board of Trustees (cf. *Acts of Synod 1993*, pp. 342-46), a constitution that is to be given final approval at Synod 1996. Article V of that constitution specifies that Board members "be elected by synod" and describes the process by which that happens. At their fall meetings, classes are invited "to select one prospective nominee per vacancy on the Board and to submit such nominations to the Board for consideration at the Board's first regular meeting of the calendar year following the year in which the notice is given." The Board prepares a list of nominees and submits that list to synod for election by the delegates.

Classis Lake Erie does not believe this procedure is necessary or helpful. In fact, it risks the possibility of making classes feel less involved in the work of the denomination than they presently feel. Delegates to the majority of our other denominational boards are elected by the classes alone or by a number of classes in a particular region. We believe the nominating/electing procedure described in Article V should be replaced by the procedure used to elect regional representatives to the boards of Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary:

- A. Following the spring board meetings each board secretary notes which board positions will need to be filled and informs the general secretary's office which regions/subregions need to elect trustees.
- B. The general secretary informs the classes in a given region that they need to nominate a person(s) for a particular vacancy.
- C. The classes prepare nominations at their fall meetings (September or October—voting takes place at the spring meeting of classis) and send them to the general secretary with information on the nominees. An information form should be completed for each nominee.

- D. The general secretary passes the nominations and information on the nominees to the respective boards. The boards, or their designated subcommittees, prepare slates of nominees, keeping in mind **rotation between classes, expertise, clergy-lay/gender/minority balance**, etc. The boards send their slates of nominees to the general secretary.
- E. The general secretary prepares ballots for the respective classes.
- F. **The classes vote at their spring meetings.** They submit their total votes to the general secretary. He submits the totals to synod for approval. (The person who receives the highest number of votes will be the regional representative; the other person will be the alternate regional representative, who takes the place of the regional representative as needed and fills his/her unexpired term if a vacancy arises during a term.)
- G. Tie votes will be resolved at synod by the synodical delegates from the classes of the region where the tie occurred.

Currently, the Board prepares its list of nominees at its March meeting for submission to synod. Under the above procedure, the Board would prepare a list of nominees at its December meeting for submission to the classes at their spring meetings. We believe the regions that nominate people who will represent them on the Board ought to vote for these people. In fact, we contend that they are uniquely qualified to do so since they are more likely to have personal knowledge of the nominees than are synodical delegates who live hundreds of miles away.

II. Overture

Classis Lake Erie overtures synod to amend Article V of the proposed Constitution of the Board of Trustees to reflect the nominating/electing procedure currently used by the boards of Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary.

Grounds:

- A. Such a procedure furthers the goal of having local congregations and classes actively involved in the work of the denomination.
- B. The regions that nominate individuals to represent them are more likely to have personal knowledge of the nominees than are synodical delegates who live hundreds of miles away.

Classis Lake Erie

George F. Vander Weit, stated clerk

Overture 73: Terminate CRC Membership in the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council

I. Background

In 1957 the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) became a charter member of the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC), a fellowship "that enables the constituent churches to advise, counsel and cooperate in various matters with one another and hold out before each other the desirability and need for organic union of churches that are of like faith and practice" (*Acts of Synod 1975*, p. 353). In recent years some of our NAPARC partners have expressed disagreement with our decisions on a variety of matters, especially with our decision to allow our congregations to use the gifts of women in the

offices of the church. They have also informed us that if we persist in such decisions, our relationship with them and with NAPARC will be adversely affected. To prevent a bitter debate over expulsion from NAPARC, we believe Synod 1996 ought to terminate CRC membership in this council.

One of the purposes of NAPARC is to "facilitate discussion and consultation between member bodies on those issues and problems which divide them . . ." (*Acts of Synod 1975*, p. 353). We are certainly willing to hear the point of view of our NAPARC partners. In fact, we have graciously listened even when there were legitimate questions about the accuracy of what was communicated. For example, in 1993 the general assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) adopted an overture asking it to communicate its "desire to see the CRC correct these errors and repent of these sins" (*Agenda for Synod 1994*, p. 220). To their credit, 203 ministers and 78 elders protested the adoption of this overture, correctly observing that the general assembly "had spread upon its minutes unsubstantiated allegations against brothers in violation of biblical principles of love and justice, without giving the accused an opportunity to reply to the allegations" (*Agenda for Synod 1994*, p. 220).

The general assembly of the PCA responded to our 1995 decision to give classes permission to allow women to serve in all church offices by saying that "the action of the Christian Reformed Church is in contradiction to the clear teaching of Scripture and the historic Presbyterian and Reformed confessions of faith" (September 15, 1995, letter to general secretary Dr. David Engelhard). This is a legitimate communication to us. In the same statement the PCA goes on to say, ". . . we commend the sizable number in your midst who are working hard to see the CRC remain faithful to Scripture on this issue and pray for God to use this group to prevail at the 1996 Synod" (September 15, 1995, letter). This is clearly a call to divisiveness, contrary to the decision of Synod 1995 to live with this decision until the year 2000 in the hope that "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" (*Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 735). In pressing its agenda, there is little evidence that the PCA has made much effort to understand the struggles of our denomination, our long study of the women-in-office issue, and our perspective on what it means to be a Reformed church in this time.

Similar dynamics have been evident in our relationship with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC), another of our NAPARC partners. Synod 1956 adopted the recommendation of its Ecumenicity and Church Correspondence Committee to "invite the General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church to appoint a committee of four for the purpose of carrying on ecumenical and closer fellowship conversations with a committee appointed by the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church" (*Acts of Synod 1956*, p. 63). Talks between the two denominations began in 1957. In 1967 the climate of those talks changed as the OPC raised charges of liberalism. Many of those charges came from newsletters of the Association of Christian Reformed Laymen and from similar sources. In 1972, after five years of trying to defend itself against such charges, the CRC dropped its talks with the OPC.

Recent history is a repeat of the past. The Alliance of Reformed Churches has continually criticized the CRC and has officially adopted a resolution that "it has *now* become evident that withdrawal from the CRC should occur." As the churches of the Alliance were withdrawing from the CRC, members of the

OPC's Committee on Ecumenicity met with its representatives to explore the possibility of "a united Reformed church." One of the members of that committee attended Alliance meetings, allegedly as an observer. The *observer* participated in the committees of the Alliance and assured it that "the heart of the OPC is with you."

For years the OPC has recycled the charges leveled against us by some of our own members. For years the OPC has informed us that it will sever its relationship with us if we do not agree with it on the issue of women in office:

A. Members of the OPC Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations Committee stressed that in their denomination "there was a unified concern about the issue of women in office that, if adopted by the CRC, would seriously call into question our continued fellowship." "The CRC decision on that matter will bear on relations between our two churches as well as NAPARC" (*Agenda for Synod 1993*, p. 213).

B. In all candor, your handling of this matter may affect our relationship with you in the future" (*Agenda for Synod 1994*, p. 218).

C. "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 [will] 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 CRCNA will be placed on the docket of the 1995 General Assembly" (*Agenda for Synod 1995*, p. 222).

Though the CRC wishes to end the debate on women in office, our ecumenical partners wish to keep it alive. The PCA wants the CRC to open this issue again at Synod 1996 and informs us, "[W]e have instructed our Interchurch Relations Committee to use all due process to remove the Christian Reformed Church from membership in NAPARC if the Christian Reformed Church does not repent of and rescind the action at the synod" (September 15, 1995, letter).

In view of the fact that the PCA has decided to pursue this course of action and in light of our unhappy history with at least two of our NAPARC partners, it is best for our denomination simply to resign its NAPARC membership. Little is to be gained by our continued membership in an organization where we are not wanted and where other members seem intent on fostering division among our churches.

The New Testament requires that disciples of Jesus Christ live in love for each other. Our Lord taught us, "[B]y this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." The apostle added, "Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope when you were called—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all." In the Christian Reformed Church, even in the midst of deep differences of opinion, we are trying to honor those instructions by staying together. In the case of NAPARC we honor those instructions best simply by stepping aside and refusing to enter the battle.

II. Overture

Classis Lake Erie overtures synod to terminate CRC membership in the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council.

Grounds:

- A. Such action is consistent with the expressed desire of the PCA.
- B. Such action is consistent with recent communications from the OPC.
- C. Such action prevents a bitter debate over expulsion from NAPARC.

Classis Lake Erie

George F. Vander Weit, stated clerk

Overture 74: Appoint Study Committee to Provide an Appropriate Way to Appeal Ministry Decisions Made by Denominational Agencies

I. Background

In September 1991 the Board of Home Missions committed to funding the Campus Ministry at Wayne State University in Detroit with \$39,000. This funding, along with local and classical support, was to help cover salary and benefits in the 1991-1992 ministry year. In the summer of 1992 the WSU ministry committee was informed that anticipated board income was low and that therefore the last quarterly support check would be reduced by \$1,584. Requests for dialogue about the board's spending priorities during this period went unanswered. When the ministry committee saw that land purchases had been made (at a "savings"), not suspended, during this same period, the committee attempted to remind the staff of the board that synod had long urged all churches and ministries to pay salaries before making expenditures for other ministry needs. Again the committee received no answer.

Application for Board of Home Missions funding assistance was made by the WSU committee according to all board rules in 1995. Following the board meeting, the committee received a three-sentence note informing it that the approved grant would be \$6,440 less than anticipated by the committee. The treasurer of the committee sent correspondence to the staff of the board requesting an explanation. No reply was sent. The pastor of the supervising church requested the executive director of Home Missions to have an explanation sent. No reply was sent. The secretary of the classical home-missions committee requested of the regional director an explanation of how the formulas were used to arrive at the reduced figure. No reply was sent.

In recent years a variety of board and staff ministry decisions have drastically affected a variety of local and regional ministries. Most clearly the funding decisions made by the Board of Home Missions have affected the locations and types of ministries across the U.S. and Canada. On occasion staff and board members have failed to communicate the reasons for such ministry decisions. Presently there is no appropriate vehicle for appealing decisions, even those which are major factors in the termination of ministries.

It is inappropriate that boards should be the court of last appeal in matters which may actually involve differences in principles and priorities for local ministries, over which denominational boards should not exercise control. A separate body should hear both sides of such a matter and should have power to enforce a decision upon both parties.

Though appeal directly to synod may seem to be the answer to this need, that route fails on two counts:

A. Often the ministry decisions would appear "too small" to warrant an appeal to the annual synod. On the crowded agenda of synod and its committees many such appeals would be deemed trivial (i.e., appeal of a \$5,000 reduction in funds or of the particular focus of a new ministry).

B. Often the effect of the ministry decision by a particular board has long begun to take root before the annual synod is in session.

II. Overture

Classis Lake Erie overtures synod to appoint a study committee to explore the feasibility of and to recommend to synod a means for the swift hearing of appeals on ministry decisions made by synodical boards, committees, and staff employed by those boards and committees.

Ground: There is no appropriate vehicle to expedite the hearing and disposition of appeals on ministry decisions made by denominational boards and staff of those boards.

Classis Lake Erie
George Vander Weit, stated clerk

Overture 75: Exempt Full-Time Students from Being Assessed Ministry Shares

Classis Northern Michigan overtures synod to exempt full-time students from being assessed ministry shares.

Grounds:

1. It is unrealistic to ask full-time students to contribute ministry shares because their limited income must be used largely for self-support.
2. Being assessed ministry shares for full-time students, who cannot themselves contribute the ministry share, places a great burden on some churches.
3. The process for reduction could be accomplished in an easier way than that established by synod if synod would simply classify full-time students with members under 18.

Classis Northern Michigan
P.J. Veenstra, stated clerk

Overture 76: Revise the Provisions of Church Order Articles 6 and 8

The Council of Newton CRC, Newton, New Jersey, overtures synod

- A. To delete Church Order Article 6-c.
- B. To delete the supplement to Article 6 in the Church Order.

C. To add the following to Church Order Article 8-b:

Ministers of other denominations or seminary graduates of theological seminaries other than the theological seminary of the Christian Reformed Church desiring to become ministers in the Christian Reformed Church shall be declared eligible for a call by a classis only after a thorough examination of their theological training, ministerial record (if applicable), knowledge of a soundness in the Reformed faith, and their exemplariness of life. The presence and concurring advice of the synodical deputies are required.

Grounds:

1. Those who oppose the ordination of women on biblical grounds can no longer encourage potential seminary students to attend Calvin Theological Seminary, where their consciences will be violated because actions with respect to the ordination of women must follow the unbiblical stand of our denomination.
2. Other seminaries are capable of training and recommending men for ministry of the Word in the CRC.
3. Classes have the ability to judge potential candidates for the ministry of the Word.
4. There are at the present time over one hundred churches in the denomination without permanent ministers. It is not prudent to hinder their search for ministers by limiting them to the traditional, narrow confines of the denominational institution.
5. Ecclesiastical relationships with other seminaries have been long-standing. It is, along with the other changes being pressed upon us, time to remove those unwarranted barriers that exist between the vacant churches and qualified men from other seminaries.
6. The present number of ministers graduating from Calvin Theological Seminary is not sufficient to meet the increasing number of vacancies occurring as a result of retirements.
7. The current situation in the denomination calls for a realistic appraisal. There is within the denomination a significant number of churches and members no longer satisfied with the philosophical trends infiltrating historic Reformed theology. These churches need and deserve an approved alternative to Calvin Theological Seminary.
8. The biblical qualifications for an elder listed in Acts 14:23, I Timothy 3:1-7, and Titus 1:5-9 are void of traditional or institutional elitism. Other stated requirements in those texts have been waived by Synod 1995. There certainly exists a climate for reasonable change.

Council of Newton CRC, Newton, NJ
Peter Teune, clerk

Note: This overture was submitted to Classis Hudson but was not adopted.

Overture 77: Appoint a Study Committee to Provide Guidelines in Certain Ministerial Matters

Classis Pacific Northwest overtures synod to appoint a study committee to develop guidelines, in consultation with Pastoral Ministries, in the following two areas:

A. Guidelines for congregations which are considering separation from their ministers under Church Order Articles 14, 16, and 17.

Grounds:

1. Such guidelines have not been established.
2. Councils need guidance with matters such as the specific terms of a leave of absence under Article 16; salary, housing, and benefits during the process of separation under Articles 16 and 17; and the proper channels by which to communicate with the congregation.
3. Pastors in need of admonition, counsel, and correction are often separated under Church Order Article 14-a, and unresolved problems are not communicated to the next congregation.
4. During a time of vacancy, congregations could benefit from guidelines that help them examine unhealthy dynamics in their fellowship that may have contributed to the separation from their minister.
5. The ministry of church visitors and regional pastors would benefit from additional, specific guidelines.

B. Guidelines for attending to the ongoing physical and spiritual needs of ministers suspended and/or deposed under Church Order Articles 82-84.

Grounds:

1. Such guidelines have not been established.
2. The number of suspensions and depositions has increased in recent years.
3. Church visitors and regional pastors would benefit from specific guidelines.
4. Councils need guidance on financial arrangements during the suspension and after the deposition of their minister, including guidance on severance pay and payment of insurance and pension.
5. Little is being done to follow up on the ongoing needs of deposed ministers and their families.

Classis Pacific Northwest
Harvey Brink, stated clerk

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APPEALS

Appeals

1. Newton CRC, Newton, New Jersey, appeals from a decision of Classis Hudson to endorse the position of its Eastern Mission Board regarding the employment of a non-Christian Reformed lay evangelist who is seeking ordination in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The complete appeal document will be submitted to the advisory committee dealing with this matter.

Personal Appeals

1. Dr. Florence Kuipers appeals from a decision of Classis Hackensack (March 7, 1995)
2. Dr. Florence Kuipers appeals from a decision of Classis Hackensack (September 26, 1995)
3. Dr. Florence Kuipers appeals from a decision of Classis Hackensack (March 5, 1996)
4. Mr. Charles Fluit appeals from a decision of Classis Hamilton

Judicial Code Appeals

1. Appeal of Mr. and Mrs. William Evenhouse
2. Appeal of Rev. Jacob Binnema
3. Appeal of Mr. Gerald Rutgers
4. Appeal of Dr. Florence Kuipers
5. Appeal of Rev. John Van Hemert

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COMMUNICATIONS

Communication 1: Classis Lake Erie

I. Background

Though many in the Christian Reformed Church have opposed the ordination of women to some or all the offices of the church, virtually everyone has said that the gifts of women should increasingly be used in a wide variety of ways in the church. Synod itself encouraged the use of women's gifts two decades ago when it urged "the churches to make all possible use, within Biblical guidelines and the restrictions of the Church Order, of the talents and abilities of women in the work of the church" (*Acts of Synod 1975*, p. 78). On June 15 Synod 1995 specifically directed those words to itself when it adopted a motion to "encourage boards, agencies, and *itself and future synods* [italics added] 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" (*Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 656).

In its final session only six days later, on June 21, Synod 1995 appointed a seven-member male committee to serve the Council of the Christian Reformed Churches in Canada (CCRCC) with advice. In spite of opposition voiced twice by the Classis Lake Erie delegation, this appointment was overwhelmingly approved. Specifically, this appointment is an affront to Canadian women. Women deacons were delegated to the biennial meetings of the Council in 1989, 1991, 1993, and again in 1995.

Not only is this appointment an affront specifically to Canadian women, but it is an affront to women throughout the denomination and to those who support the use of women's gifts. It is also a denial of synod's affirmation that "the Holy Spirit has given to women many gifts and talents which can and should be used for the edification of the church" (*Acts of Synod 1975*, p. 78; *Acts of Synod 1976*, p. 47). This appointment is also very poor modeling by synod in terms of respect for synodical decisions; synodical decisions ought to be regarded with healthy respect.

Unfortunately, Synod 1996 cannot redress this matter by adjusting the committee's personnel. The committee appointed was to report to the CCRCC at its fall 1995 meeting. Synod 1996 can, and ought, to reaffirm synodical encouragements "to make all possible use . . . of the talents and abilities of women in the work of the church" and "to include in [its] committees persons who reflect the gender diversity of our denomination."

II. Protest

Classis Lake Erie protests the decision of Synod 1995 to appoint a seven-member male committee and requests that Synod 1996 reaffirm previous synodical decisions "to make all possible use . . . of the talents and abilities of women in the work of the church" and "to include in [its] committees persons who reflect the gender diversity of our denomination."

Grounds:

- A. Such action will demonstrate that synod is indeed serious about using the talents and abilities of women in the work of the church.
- B. Such action will demonstrate that synod itself has a healthy respect for synodical decisions.

Classis Lake Erie

George F. Vander Weit, stated clerk

Communication 2: Classis Arizona

This is a communication from Classis Arizona to Synod 1996 and to the officers of the Inter-Classical Conference. We realize that the letter of the South Holland Conference has no ecclesiastical standing and is not properly before synod. However, since it has become so public and since it may be discussed at synod, we forward this response.

Dear Family of the Lord,

The letter from the Inter-Classical Conference (ICC) has been received by the churches and has called for the Christian Reformed Church and specifically Synod 1996 to repent from sin and return to the high view of Scripture. We took the opportunity to reflect on whether the women-in-office position entails a low view of Scripture so that one who holds such a view in fact disregards the plain and clear words of the text.

Before stating our understanding of the position which is called into question, let us ask whether it is possible to "hear the voice of the Good Shepherd" even as we disagree with the position of the ICC on certain matters. In full knowledge that the Lord Jesus Christ is head of the church and that we are his undershepherds who will give an account for this answer, we answer yes. The reason we can so confidently say this is as follows:

A. *The ICC letter falsely claims clarity of Scripture.*

The ICC letter asserts that Scripture is "clear" on the matter of "declaring inoperative" the word "male" in Article 3 of the Church Order and that the debates over this issue have "resulted in the disregarding of the plain and clear words of the text of Scripture." We are called to return to the "perspicuity" or "clarity" of Scripture which has "marked the Reformation from generation to generation: such a high view of the words on the page, and such a high regard for the plain meaning of the sentences and words written down for our instruction. . . ."

If it were so clear, the church would not have discussed this for the past quarter century. We find the ICC letter to falsely claim the clarity of Scripture on this issue. To apply the perspicuity (clarity) of Scripture to the matter at hand is not consistent with the Reformed teaching on the perspicuity of Scripture,

which is taught with respect to the knowledge necessary to the way of salvation, not with respect to our theological debate over women in office in the Christian Reformed Church.

Louis Berkhof taught the following:

... the Reformers stressed the perspicuity of scripture. They did not intend to deny that there are mysteries in the Bible which transcend human reason, but freely admitted this. Neither did they claim such clarity for scripture that the interpreter can well dispense with scientific exegesis. As a matter of fact, they engaged in exegetical labors far more than the votaries of Rome. Moreover, they did not even assert that the way of salvation is so clearly revealed in scripture that every man, whether or not he be enlightened by the Holy Spirit, and whether or not he be deeply interested in the way of salvation, can easily understand it. Their intention was simply that the *knowledge necessary unto salvation*, though not equally on every page of scripture, is yet conveyed to man throughout the Bible in such a simple and comprehensive form that one who is earnestly seeking salvation can, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit by reading and studying the Bible, easily obtain for himself the necessary knowledge, and does not need the aid and guidance of the church and of a separate priesthood. [Italics added.]

(Louis Berkhof, *Introductory Volume to Systematic Theology*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1932, p. 167)

The perspicuity of Scripture may be applied to this debate only as this debate is part of the knowledge necessary unto salvation. Would anyone claim that salvation depends on the answer to the question of whether women may serve in the offices of elder and minister in the CRC? We think not.

B. *Both positions have a high view of Scripture.*

We should note that this issue has called us to engage in a great exegetical struggle. Neither side of this debate has shown a low regard for the text of Scripture. We have taken grammar, words, contexts, and the analogy of Scripture into consideration. The Christian Reformed Church has struggled because of her high regard for Scripture on a matter that is not "knowledge necessary unto salvation." We have struggled over "idol meat." The ICC letter calls the church to repent of her sin and to return to a high view of Scripture. The fact is that, using our commonly understood laws of hermeneutics as taught in Berkhof's *Principles of Biblical Interpretation*, we take different interpretive turns which lead us to different answers to the question of whether women may serve as elder and ministers in the church of Jesus Christ. The different interpretive choices that we make regarding several key passages are clearly presented in Report 31, *Agenda for Synod 1992*. Also, John Cooper's work "A Cause for Division?" (Calvin Theological Seminary, 1991) dealt with the fact that both positions used consistent Reformed hermeneutics in the discussion of women in office.

Therefore, we emphatically state that it is possible for us to live together in the CRC with differing views on this question. The fact that two positions make different hermeneutical choices does not call into question the infallibility of Scripture or the perspicuity of Scripture. Our differing answers simply call into question our interpretive and scholarly choices. That is where the disagreement is.

We assert that the ICC misapplied the doctrine of perspicuity of Scripture when applying that doctrine to this nonsalvation issue. No room is allowed for legitimate disagreement.

To summarize this point, our reflection leads us to think that a major difference between the two positions is that the ICC teaches that this matter is of such biblical significance that disagreeing with its interpretive choices implies a denial of Scripture. Our position is that we disagree on interpretive choices of Scripture passages and that disagreeing on the women-in-office question does not imply a denial of Scripture's perspicuity, authority, or infallibility.

We believe the dissension within the Christian Reformed Church would be lessened if the ICC would declare this debate as not a part of the knowledge necessary for salvation and retract and correct the communication which is based on a non-Reformed understanding of the perspicuity of Scripture. We think it would be a healing to the denomination and the right thing to do if the ICC would make such a declaration and correct its teaching.

We have studied the twelve statements that the ICC passed in order to form the Covenant Union of Christian Reformed Churches, and we state that we are extensively in accord with eleven out of twelve of those statements. We want to pose this question to our brothers who threaten to leave if Synod 1996 does not change, repent of sin, and affirm their position on the women-in-office question: Can you, before God, bring such disruption to Christ's body, to families, and to congregations when those you are leaving agree with eleven out of twelve statements?

The following highlights why we do not agree with the women-in-office statements. We put this position¹ forward not because all within our classis are compelled by it but because we affirm that this position models both a high view of Scripture and a proper use of Reformed hermeneutics.

1. Creation

- a. Genesis 1:26-28 teaches that God created human beings in his own 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 1987*, pp. 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 1987*, 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* also refers to God as our helper (e.g., Psalm 37:40; Psalm 46:5).

2. Fall

- a. Genesis 3:16 teaches that the disruption of this 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 are alleviated or even removed.

¹The biblical summary presented is largely indebted to Classis Grand Rapids East's communication to Synod 1995 found in the *Agenda for Synod 1995*, pages 544-45. A detailed description of the biblical grounds for allowing women to serve in ecclesiastical office is found in the *Agenda for Synod 1992*, Report 31, pages 361-66.

- b. The Old Testament, even after the story of the fall, provides glimpses of the original parity between male and female. Women occupied positions of leadership in Israel, e.g., Miriam (called a leader in Micah 6:4), Deborah (Judges 4:4ff.), and Huldah (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.
- c. Many prophetic passages look forward to the restoration of the original parity between man and woman (e.g., Numbers 11:29; Ezekiel 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 prophecy."

3. Redemption

- a. 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). Also Anna is identified as a prophetess, and there is mention of her prophecies concerning the Christ-child (Luke 2:36-38). Luke also records Jesus' observation that Mary, who sat at his feet and listened to his teachings while Martha served, "had chosen what is better."

John reports not only that Jesus, violating Jewish custom, ministered to the Samaritan woman at the well but also that this woman's testimony caused many to believe on him (John 4:7-42).

- b. Joel's prophecy was fulfilled at Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4; 14-21) when women also 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). Women, too, were prominent as first converts and as members of the church (Acts 16:14; 17:34). Women served as "disciples" in doing deeds of mercy (Acts 9:36). Women "prophesied" (Acts 21:9) and were persecuted for their testimony (Acts 8:3).
- c. 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 businesswoman, 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 Syntyche are described by Paul as those who "contended at [his] side in the cause of the gospel" (Phil. 4:2-3). Women prayed and prophesied (I Cor. 11:5).

- d. 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 reinforced in John 17:20-21 and I Corinthians 10:16-17.
- e. 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; I Cor. 12:4-31; Eph. 4:1-16).
- f. Although people often argue that Paul in I Timothy 2:1-15 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 times 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 (I Tim. 2:8-9; 5:4) still apply today. The report of 1973 already dealt with the I Timothy passage for three full pages before concluding that "it is clear from this passage as well that one cannot extract strong arguments in defense of the practice of excluding women from ecclesiastical office. In the light of this passage and of what Paul says further about the function of women, especially that of the older widows, one can find arguments here which are more pro than contra women holding office in the church" (*Acts of Synod 1973*, p. 567). Subsequent studies carried out by some of our best minds have also wrestled with this passage that on first reading seems "clear." For those who study Scripture, and for our denomination, the interpretation of this passage has not been clear.

Similarly, it is not clear that the parallel passages of I Corinthians 11:2-16 and I Corinthians 14:33-35, in which Paul instructs women about wearing a veil and "not speaking in church," are meant to bind the church today. The report of 1973 says, "At first glance I Corinthians 14:33b-36 seems to be a section which without doubt justifies the practice of excluding women from ecclesiastical office" (p. 561). But as careful study of Scripture quickly shows, the matter is not that simple. For those who have not done so, a careful study of the text and the history of its interpretation will soon reveal that the meaning of this passage, too, has not by any means been clear to the church. But this should not overly bother us. John Calvin, commenting on I Corinthians 14:35 said,

In the meantime, it is the part of the prudent reader to consider, that the things of which he here treats are intermediate and indifferent, in which there is nothing unlawful, but what is at variance with propriety and edification.

(John Calvin, *Commentary on the Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians*, Vol. I. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948, p. 469)

Calvin was the first Reformed interpreter to claim that this passage dealing with local conditions was not to be universally applied. While commenting on verse 36, he says,

Paul here does not employ an argument of universal application, but one that was specially applicable to the Corinthians, as is frequently the case. . . . Hence it does not follow, that churches that are of later origin must be bound to observe, in every point, the institutions of the earlier ones, inasmuch as even Paul himself did not bind himself by this rule, so as to obtrude upon other churches the customs that were in use in Jerusalem.
(Calvin, p. 470)

This, in a brief form and without much commentary, is the outline of the biblical argument in question. This argument for women in office, we believe, takes a high view of Scripture and is consistent with Reformed hermeneutics as described in *The Principles of Biblical Interpretation* by Berkhof. Though not all find it compelling, we at least allow people to hold this view without questioning their view of Scripture.

After reviewing it, we judge it reasonable to conclude that the parity of authority between man and woman that was once present in creation and was lost in the fall is restored in Christ's redemption. We find it reasonable, if not compelling, to conclude that I Timothy 2:11-15 and I Corinthians 14 were speaking to a local situation. We find it misleading to assert that these texts are "clear." When looking in the *NIV Study Bible* under I Timothy 2 and I Corinthians 14 passages, we see that the notes allow for several conclusions. Why can't we in the CRC live together as easily as the words on that page? So we wish to convey to those who call the CRCNA to repentance that we have seriously reflected on the letter of the ICC. We find its understanding of perspicuity to be falsely applied to the women-in-office question. We broadly affirm eleven out of twelve of the statements adopted by the ICC. We also believe that the scriptural argument put forward above does maintain a high view of Scripture. We believe the letter of the ICC takes an indifferent matter and makes it into a divisive issue. The assertions made in the letter and the threat to form a new denomination greatly damage the flock of the CRC.

Classis Arizona

Carl J. Toeset, stated clerk

Communication 3: Cloverdale CRC, Boise, Idaho

The Council of Cloverdale CRC, Boise, Idaho, submits to Synod 1996 of the Christian Reformed Church the following communication, which originated as the result of the Inter-Classical Conference, called together by Classis California South and held on November 6 and 7, 1995, in South Holland, Illinois.

This is to inform you that we as a council officially adopted as our own this communication at our January 8, 1996, council meeting. We also sent this communication on to the March 1, 1996, meeting of Classis Yellowstone, asking that our classis also endorse this communication and send it on to synod.

This motion failed in our classis meeting, but at our March 5, 1996, council meeting, we voted to send this letter on to Synod 1996 as a communication from our church.

We ask that you please receive and act upon the contents and substance of this communication from us as our people are extremely concerned about the decision of Synod 1995 on women in ecclesiastical office. We plead with you to help us.

The Inter-Classical Conference of CRCs called together by Classis California South met on November 6-7, 1995. The conference numbered some 300 individuals, including participants from 110 individual congregations and 37 classical areas.

As members of these individual churches and classes, and as part of the Christian Reformed Church in North America, we wish to communicate with the broadest assembly of our denomination in a fraternal manner and with a spiritual tone. We hope to speak to your hearts, concerned first of all with righteousness and fraternal duty as we live together before the face of God rather than with political or procedural correctness.

Recent years in our denomination have witnessed much division, much of it rancorous, and little of it ennobling. We have wrangled in closely contested debates, counting carefully to determine "who has the votes" from one year to the next. This we have done particularly on the issue of women in church office, but also on other issues. Last year, Synod 1995 overturned a decision made in 1994 on the women-in-office matter, but did not do so with clear reference to biblical grounds. Instead, the entire matter seemed to be handled with a political flavor, suggesting "compromise" was the solution to the 25-year-long struggle. At the same synod, a delegate from the GKN seemed to add fuel to the fire, describing that denomination's perspective on homosexuals in ministry. Once again, the debates raged fast and furious within our churches and assemblies, now on a new, but related, and potentially destructive, issue. And, at the same synod, urgent appeals on these very issues from close brothers and sisters in the NAPARC alliance seemed to be treated as insignificant, "received for information" only.

Through the entire decades-long debate over the hermeneutics of the women-in-office issue, several sad things have happened. One is that the CRC has lost the unity of her faith and witness. Another is that she has come to appear to be indecisive and wavering on biblical truth—one year prohibiting "on biblical grounds," the next permitting "by declaring the word 'male' inoperative." But no consequence of this sad history is more grievous than that our people have lost confidence in the text of Scripture. As a denomination, we may possess a heritage that is right, accurate, and even articulate theologically. But in the way we have handled the Bible in our synodical debates in recent years, we have committed a heinous sin. We have so trifled with the text that our people have lost the ability to use Scripture believingly, lovingly, trustingly. We have affirmed "infallibility" (if not "inerrancy"), but we have effected confusion. We have established anew what the Reformers sought with blood to abolish: a priesthood that stood between the people and the Bible. This new

priesthood is different than that in the days of Luther and Calvin. It is one of scholars, of hermeneutic experts, of theologians who tell the people why the plain words on the page of the Bible don't mean what they obviously say. But the effect is the same: God's people stop picking up the Bible because they believe they cannot understand it.

This is tragic. It is sinful. And we are together responsible for it.

To the extent that we "conservatives" have contributed to this sin by trusting in political processes and denominational procedures, by counting votes instead of praying for God's healing power, we must ourselves repent before God. And we do. To the extent that "liberals" have contributed to this tragic and sinful apathy that grips our denominational life, we call them to repentance in this communication. And to the extent that "moderates" (whatever any of these terms mean!) have sought to preserve peace where there is no peace by marching along in studied denial of the spiritual malaise that has gripped our once-devoted membership, we call them to repentance. We must return to the Bible, to the plain meaning of its words and sentences without hermeneutical gymnastics that seem to make it say what its words do not say, and to so return by way of repentance and confession of sin, which alone will bring God's healing mercies.

Brothers, synod must take leadership in these times, lest the Lord become disgusted with our lack of faith. We call on you to lead our churches in confession and repentance of the sin that has resulted in this grievous situation. We call on you to communicate to every church in our denominational federation your grief and sadness that our lengthy debates have resulted in the disregarding of the plain and clear words of the text of Scripture while we "allow" classes and councils to "declare inoperative" what Scripture clearly views otherwise. We call on you to plead with our churches to return to the view of Scripture that has marked the Reformation from generation to generation: such a high view of the words on the page, such a high regard for the plain meaning of the sentences and words written down for our instruction, that we have for centuries declared, without hesitation, that Scripture has "perspicuity" or "clarity."

It is not our intent in this letter to list a catalog of synodical sins and to chart specific reactions to each, although we could do so. As sinful men ourselves, we are painfully aware of our own failings, and we face the dangerous temptation in such ecclesiastical struggles to be self-righteous in our own attitude. What we seek instead is a heart response. We long to see synod humble itself, cry tears of sadness that we have ripped the Bible from the hands of our people. We long to see synod grieve that we have been more concerned to preserve and maintain tradition with the GKN, despite her grievous and unrepented sins with homosexual ordination and many other departures from the Reformed faith, than to honor the zeal and love of churches like the PCA and the OPC who stand by us in everything we hold dear, including Christian education, a high view of Scripture and preaching, and an urgent call to conversion as we seek to evangelize

the lost in this dark world. We long to see synod return the CRC to the role of leadership within the Reformed and Evangelical world, when "what the CRC said" on a subject could be expected to be marked by biblical fidelity and faithfulness of the highest order.

If God does not grant such a heart response at Synod 1996, it will break our hearts, and it may well break our bond. We earnestly pray that our denomination will not break asunder, as have so many in recent years. But we also affirm that denominational federation must stand on solid ground of confession and practice, not on the superficial ground of bygone tradition and the superfluous ground of a bureaucratic structure.

Should you not lead our churches in repentance for sin and a return to the high view of the text of Scripture, for which the CRC has historically been known—until recent years—we will be forced to convene next year to consider painful options, one of which must be a proposal to form a new or different denominational federation. We hope and pray this will not be.

Please give this communication the prayerful seriousness it deserves. We plead with you to heed our spiritual concern for the welfare of the flock of the Lord as a whole, and for the individual lambs as well. All must "hear the voice of the Good Shepherd." When we still his voice through our hermeneutical gymnastics, the lambs become confused, and the flock is open for attack by the wolves. We dare not have such sin on our conscience (cf. Ezek. 34).

Council of Cloverdale CRC, Boise, Idaho
Al Sprik, clerk

Communication 4: Council of the Christian Reformed Churches in Canada

Synod 1997 will receive a detailed proposal for structuring the ministries of the CRC in Canada. The ministries of the Council of the Christian Reformed Churches in Canada (CCRCC), an agency of the twelve classes in Canada, will be incorporated into that proposed new structure. The general secretary of synod encouraged me, the executive secretary of the CCRCC, to provide a brief report to Synod 1996 that could serve to introduce the ministries of the CCRCC to church councils and classes in the United States. Together with the interim report by the synodical committee on structure (also in this *Agenda*), this report may serve as background for the proposal Synod 1997 will receive.

Thirty years ago synod approved the formation of the Council of the Christian Reformed Churches in Canada. Two years later the eleven classes in Canada gave it the present name and affirmed the Agreement of Cooperation:

Believing that the God of all grace brought the Christian Reformed Churches into being in the Dominion of Canada for His own purposes, we, classes of these churches, accept the calling and affirm the need of engaging in mutual consultation and cooperation on a nationwide basis. To this end, we pledge ourselves to work together in an assembly for such consultation and joint action.

The vision of the founders of the CCRCC to bear public witness to the meaning of God's Word for all of life is as relevant today as it was in 1966, and more necessary. Synod 1966 wisely approved an open-ended mandate for the CCRCC. This freedom enabled classes and churches to develop a flexible mechanism for responding confessionally and relevantly to issues of public concern. These areas include official contact with the Canadian and provincial governments, contact with other churches in Canada, liaison with Christian organizations, chaplaincies, and evangelism in the national context.

To encourage wider participation, the CCRCC's Committee for Contact with the Government has begun to implement the call of Synod 1978 for the formation of every-congregation public-justice committees. Several advantages for public witness have resulted. Council and its committees receive more cooperation in research and witness. Deacons are equally involved in Council's meetings and committees. Our churches are located in most of the ridings (districts) represented in the House of Commons. Thus local committees can deliver the message to their own members of Parliament. Add to this the fact that the numerical strength of Christian Reformed Canadians in relation to the total population of Canada has grown to more than thirty times the corresponding number in the United States. We must also appreciate the impact of our par-ecclasiastical Christian organizations in the areas of public justice, education, labor, and care for the elderly and for persons challenged in their gifts.

The experience of our ministers and members in their own communities raised the awareness early that cooperation in clergy and church associations provided opportunity to use their gifts in interchurch endeavors. Partly as a result of this experience, Council a decade ago joined the twenty-eight-member Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC). In this organization churches of British, U.S., and western European evangelical origin participate for mutual encouragement in matters of missions, family, church growth, morality, and witness to government. Last year Council decided to join the forum of the other churches in Canada, the Canadian Council of Churches (CCC), which is comprised of the mainline Protestant, Roman Catholic, and Eastern Orthodox churches.

Both in EFC and CCC the CCRCC holds the unique position of being the only church committed in practice to the Reformed confessions of John Calvin's followers. We have earned a good measure of trust from other churches and now engage each other in struggling to understand and apply God's Word for our times. In fact, we are currently mediating an engagement to explore further cooperation between CCC and EFC through Council's Interchurch Relations Committee (IRC).

It hardly needs saying that Council needs the understanding and trust of synod in order to accommodate the realities of a national border and the separate origins and histories of the churches in each country. For its part, the Council's IRC works comfortably within the ecumenical charter of the CRC. This committee recognizes, for example, that reception of ministers and congregations, as well as any steps toward organic union fall within the mandate of synod.

A prominent feature of interchurch life in Canada deserves special comment. In the last two decades, when issues of gross public injustice or grave need aroused outrage among their members, the traditional churches banded together to form an interchurch coalition to address a related, limited, and

specific task. Out of a dozen such national task forces, the CCRCC has joined forces with three of them—with the Interchurch Committee on Refugees in 1980, with the Aboriginal Rights Coalition in 1981, and with the Interchurch Committee on Human Rights in Latin America in 1984. When Council failed to persuade other churches to adopt a common-basis statement for a task force, it presented its own guidelines as explanation for our cooperation. Council's Consultative Committee for Task Forces holds Council's representatives on each task force accountable to our churches.

We here include a quotation from the guidelines for our participation in task forces:

Governing all, we confess that human sinfulness has deeply scarred our relation to God, to each other, and to the earth God created for us. "Sin is present everywhere—in pride of race, in arrogance of nations, in abuse of the weak and helpless, in disregard for water, air, and soil, in destruction of living creatures, in slavery, deceit, terror, and war, in worship of false gods . . ."

(Our World Belongs to God, par. 17)

The CCRCC joined the Interchurch Committee for Human Rights in Latin America in response to the plight of citizens living under abusive regimes in Latin American countries. Council reasoned,

We as a community united by faith in God through Jesus Christ, are called not only to compassion, but to action. We, who live by the grace of God, may not be indifferent to the suffering of others. Men and women have rights. We cannot be indifferent to the abuse of individual and communal rights—the abuse of the image of God—in other people. Involvement is an inescapable implication of Christian commitment.

The CCRCC also joined the Aboriginal Rights Coalition. In part, its rationale reads,

As a Christian Reformed community in Canada we commit ourselves to listen to the aboriginal people's own story, to join the voices speaking on their behalf and interceding with them before God the Creator. We support aboriginal peoples in their search for a distinct, self-reliant, and meaningful place in Canada. We support their need for land, for economic, cultural, spiritual, and political self-sufficiency, and for the entrenchment of their historic rights in Canadian constitutional reform.

Together with CRWRC-Canada, the Council joined the Interchurch Committee for Refugees. It said,

In the face of political and religious persecution, as Reformed Christian communities, living in a long tradition of struggles for religious and political freedom, and grateful for the peace we have received as immigrants, we take joy in enabling refugees also to find a new place in God's creation.

We also sustain a corresponding or observing relationship to task forces dealing with economic, environmental, and penal-justice concerns. Ad hoc working groups have called for or critiqued legislation addressing pornography in the media, violence and abuse of women and children, homosexual rights, assisted suicide, and recognition of Christian and other nongovernment schools.

Seven standing committees of competent volunteers carry out tasks given them by the fifteenth assembly last November. They are joined in our Reformed worldview and scrupulously guided by Scripture, our confessions, the Contemporary Testimony, and decisions of past synods.

A sampling of current projects includes

- Calling Calvin Theological Seminary and the agencies to convene a forum on cross-cultural ministries.
- Responding to a first-ever native spiritual assembly by forming a Council for Racial Reconciliation. This would involve the government, national native organizations, and the Christian churches.
- Developing tools for our youth to counteract racial prejudice and practice.
- Involving the congregations' social-justice committees in appeal to the government of Canada that it work toward restoration of justice and democracy in Nigeria.
- Continuing to press Canada for a fair and responsive agreement with the churches for the sponsorship of refugees
- Advocating for adequate financial support of marginalized people in the face of governmental cutbacks in social programs.
- Supporting parent-controlled schools (Jewish and Christian) seeking financial equity before the Supreme Court of Canada.
- Preparing slice-of-life segments for broadcast within Canada on "Faith-20."
- Participating in new interagency ventures such as ServiceLink and CRC *Source.*

We wish to seize opportunities for witnessing that our world belongs to God, that Christ's good news changes attitudes and communal life, that the Holy Spirit fills God's people with a passion to act justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with their God.

The CCRCC and its committees are energetically cooperating with synod's Committee to Study Structure for Ministry in Canada. The Structure Committee's mandate opens the opportunity to involve local churches and classes more directly in all Christian Reformed ministries in Canada. The benefits are tangible and good for the Canadian people and for our distinctive witness among them. Respect for our denomination will grow. Support will also. And our ministries will be more lean, flexible, responsive, and accountable both to classes and synod.

The CCRCC in assembly in November 1996 will welcome the introduction of its own successor, for it will enable the one Christian Reformed Church to take its full place in the nation of Canada. Such is our desire, cherished for fifty years.

Council of the Christian Reformed
Churches in Canada

Arie G. Van Eek, executive secretary

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CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA

ACTS OF SYNOD



1996

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FOREWORD

The *Acts of Synod 1996* 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 relevant to matters found in the printed *Agenda for Synod 1996*
- Financial reports
- The minutes of Synod 1996
- Three appendices
 - I. Revised report of the Committee to Articulate Biblical and Theological Principles for the Development of a Racially and Ethnically Diverse Family of God
 - II. Final version of the Constitution and Bylaws of the Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church in North America
 - III. Revised version of the provisionally adopted Abuse Guidelines
- An index

It will be necessary for the user of the *Acts of Synod 1996* to keep the *Agenda for Synod 1996* at hand for ready reference. The pagination continues from the *Agenda* to the *Acts*. Supplementary materials begin on page 353, following preliminary unnumbered pages. Financial reports begin on page 423. Minutes of synod follow, beginning on page 443. The index references both volumes; the numbers in boldface type refer to pages in the minutes of Synod 1996.

The various sections of the *Acts of Synod*, including the minutes of synod, are identified with black bars on page edges to help the reader locate and identify the sections.

May all who read the reports of the ministries and study committees and the minutes of Synod 1996 discover the ways in which the Lord is leading the Christian Reformed Church in North America and give him thanks for its many opportunities to minister 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	Term
Heartland	Synodical deputy CRWRC		Rev. Jack M. Gray Mr. Greg Geels	
Iakota	CRC Publications		Dr. Mike Vanden Bosch	
Northern Michigan	Home Missions		Mr. Mark Mortenson	
Pacific Northwest	Home Missions		Mr. Ron Bode	
Eastern U.S. Region	Calvin Theological Seminary		Mr. John Steen	
Central U.S. Region Subgroup I	Board of Trustees		Rev. Laryn G. Zoerhof	

II. Board of Trustees membership

A. Trustees whose terms expire in 1996

District	Member	Alternate
Far West U.S.		
Subgroup I	Dr. John Van Schepen	Rev. Alfred Lindemulder
Subgroup II	Dr. Eugene Vander Wall	Dr. Tom Van Groningen
Great Plains	Mr. Harry G. Vermeer	Mr. Harold Van Maanen
Central U.S.		
Subgroup IV	Rev. Wilmer R. Witte	Rev. Ben Becksvoot
Eastern U.S.	Rev. Vernon Geurkink	Rev. Stanley J. Workman
Eastern Canada		
Subgroup I	Rev. Jake Kuipers	Rev. Ed Den Haan
At-large	Mr. William Wildeboer	Mr. Durk De Jong

Words of thanks are in order for Rev. Jake Kuipers and Mr. William Wildeboer, who are completing their first terms of service to the Board. Five members are leaving the Board after six years of service: Dr. John Van Schepen, Dr. Eugene Vander Wall, Mr. Harry G. Vermeer, Rev. Wilmer R. Witte, and Rev. Vernon Geurkink. 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 as members of the Board.

B. *Nominations for Board member*

The Board report in the *Agenda for Synod 1996* (p. 33) indicated that nominations for the Eastern U.S. Region would be presented in the supplementary report.

Eastern United States

Rev. Brent A. Averill, pastor of New Covenant CRC, Hampton, New Hampshire, is a graduate of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. He has a D.Min. from Westminster Theological Seminary and an M.A. in counseling from Gordon-Conwell. He served on the Synodical Interim Committee (now BOT) from 1987-1990. He has also served on the Board of Home Missions and on various classical committees.

Rev. Stanley J. Workman (incumbent alternate), pastor of Oasis Community CRC, Orlando, Florida, is a graduate of Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary. He has served on the boards of Home Missions and World Missions. He has also served on ministerial association boards and on the Community Mental Health Board in Orlando as well as on various classical committees.

III. **Judicial Code Committee nominations**

A. *For the position of Mr. Robert J. Jonker*

Mr. Richard L. Bouma, attorney and partner in the Warner, Norcross, and Judd, LLP law firm, Grand Rapids, Michigan, is a member of LaGrave Avenue CRC. He is a graduate of Calvin College and the University of Michigan Law School. He is a member of the State Bar of Michigan Health Law Section, the American Bar Association Health Law Forum, and other professional organizations.

Rev. Gerald L. Zandstra, pastor of preaching and administration at Seymour CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan, is a graduate of Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary. He has done graduate work at Drew University and Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, Illinois. He represented Classis Hudson's interests before the Judicial Code Committee a few years ago and since then has been fascinated by the intersection of law and church order.

B. *For the position of Rev. John Van Ryn*

Rev. Dick M. Stravers, retired pastor, is a member of Holland Heights CRC, Holland, Michigan. He served churches in Cleveland, Ohio; Kalamazoo, Michigan; and Grand Rapids, Michigan, prior to his retirement in 1992.

Rev. John G. Van Ryn (incumbent), former executive director of Christian Reformed Home Missions, is serving as pastor of Providence CRC, Cutlerville, Michigan, and plans to retire in September. He formerly served churches in Lakewood, California; Paterson, New Jersey; and South Holland, Illinois. He is completing his first term on the Judicial Code Committee and is eligible for reelection. He also served on the Home Missions and World Missions boards and the Ministers' Pension Funds Committee.

C. *For the position of Mr. Wietse Posthumus*

Mr. Leonard D. De Vries, barrister and solicitor, is a partner in the firm of Poolman and De Vries, Toronto, Ontario. He is a member of First CRC, Toronto, and presently serves on the board of Christian Stewardship Services. He has served on the board of management committee of First CRC.

Mr. Wietse Posthumus (incumbent) is a barrister and solicitor, operating his own firm, W.G. Posthumus Law Offices, Toronto, Ontario. He serves as legal

counsel for the CRCNA in Canada. He is on the board of directors of the Institute for Christian Studies and has previously served as a member of the Synodical Interim Committee. He is completing his first term on the Judicial Code Committee and is eligible for reelection. He is a member of First CRC, Toronto.

IV. Classes which have declared the word "male" inoperative in Church Order Article 3-a

In addition to the classes reported in the *Agenda for Synod 1996* (p. 31), two more classes have declared the word "male" inoperative in Church Order Article 3-a:

Florida
Rocky Mountain

V. Annual Day of Prayer

The Christian Reformed Church has promoted its own Annual Day of Prayer on the second Wednesday of March for over one hundred years. During that time there have been proposals to have the designated day coincide with a world day of prayer or with a national day of prayer. On more than one occasion synod has emphasized that congregations have the freedom to set their day of prayer at another time in the year but has retained the second Wednesday in March as the denominational Annual Day of Prayer.

Since 1988 the U.S.A. has had a day of prayer in the spring of each year on the first Thursday in May. More and more of our U.S.A. congregations are holding services in May and not in March. The issue of changing the designated Annual Day of Prayer continues to surface, especially among our U.S.A. churches. Therefore, the Board of Trustees proposes the following recommendation to synod:

That the denominational Annual Day of Prayer be changed from the second Wednesday in March to the first Thursday in May.

Grounds:

1. The proposed date coincides with the national day of prayer in the U.S.A.
2. The proposed change allows our U.S.A. congregations to promote and participate in ecumenical community prayer services.
3. Canada does not have a designated day of prayer; therefore, the proposed change from March to May need not be a problem for the Christian Reformed churches in Canada.

VI. Ethnic advisers to synod

The printed agenda (*Agenda for Synod 1996*, p. 27) provides synod with the guidelines which have been prepared to regulate the position of ethnic advisers at synod. Since that time, the following ethnic advisers for 1996 have been appointed and have graciously accepted the responsibility on behalf of the churches:

Rev. Joseph E. Almaraz
Mr. Bing Goei
Rev. Emmett A. Harrison

Rev. Stanley A. Jim
Mr. Socheth Na
Rev. Yong-Ju Oh

VII. Electronic balloting system

The prototype for the electronic balloting system for synod was unveiled on Monday, May 6, 1996. Four senior engineering students from Calvin College have prepared the prototype, which will be available for viewing by interested delegates to Synod 1996. Demonstrations of the system will be held on three separate days during the lunch hour of synod:

Thursday, June 13, at 12:45 p.m.

Friday, June 14, at 12:45 p.m.

Monday, June 17, at 12:45 p.m.

The demonstrations will be held in Room 144 of the Science Building.

Refinements in the system will be completed during the summer and fall of 1996 under the direction of three Calvin College faculty members from the Engineering Department. When the refinements are completed, the system will be assembled and ready for use by Synod 1997.

The Christian Reformed Church is grateful to the generous donors who are underwriting the majority of the costs for the construction of this electronic system. They wish to remain anonymous, but they ask us to join them in expressing thanks to God for the good things he gives his children.

VIII. The size of agency boards—regional or classical representation

The printed *Agenda for Synod 1996* (pp. 43-44, II, C, 8) presents the Board of Trustees' recommendation concerning the downsizing of agency boards. Since the printing of the *Agenda*, both CRWRC and CRC Publications have addressed this issue in their spring board meetings. World Missions is still giving consideration to a possible response. The following is provided for synod's information:

A. CRWRC's response

1. The binational board of CRWRC proposed to the Board of Trustees that the BOT's recommendation to synod be revised to permit one annual classically delegated board meeting (presently CRWRC has two such meetings per year) and that CRWRC also be governed by a binational board of twelve (12) which would meet up to four (4) times per year to conduct the governance of the agency between annual meetings. It is understood that this board of twelve (12) would have the full authority of a synodical governing board. (A copy of the more detailed CRWRC response is available from the executive director of ministries.)
2. The BOT decided not to accede to CRWRC's request because the submitted proposal for revision did not, in the BOT's judgment, achieve the objective of downsizing governing boards. Furthermore, the BOT judged that the combination of an annual board meeting of forty-six (46) and a smaller board of twelve (12) was confusing if both assemblies had board responsibilities. It seems that the CRWRC proposal is really a minor revision of the traditional classical board, meeting once per year and having an executive committee of twelve to conduct the business of the agency between annual meetings.

B. CRC Publications' response

The executive committee of CRC Publications did not submit its communication to the BOT because the meetings of CRC Publications and of the BOT took

place simultaneously. Therefore, the BOT has no recommendation concerning the request of CRC Publications. It is passed on to synod's advisory committee as information.

At its meeting on May 10, 1996, the CRC Publications executive committee reviewed the Board of Trustees' decision to recommend to synod that all denominational boards become regional boards. In light of this decision, the executive committee approved the following motion:

The CRC Publications Board wishes to communicate the following to synod:

- a. While it may be true that regional boards will provide more efficient and effective governance than classical boards,
- b. We are concerned that the Board of Trustees' recommendation has not sufficiently taken into account the loss of connectedness with local churches that will result from moving in this direction. We believe that the Board of Trustees should have balanced its support of downsizing with a greater degree of support for agency-created communication systems.
- c. CRC Publications cannot support this direction unless, concurrently, a communication system is developed and implemented to compensate for this loss of connectedness. CRC Publications would plan to develop its communication system, possibly in coordination with other agencies. This system would probably cost more than the money saved by moving to a regional board; we hope sales of our products would increase sufficiently to fund these increased costs.

IX. CRWRC

A. Ratification of appointment

CRWRC-Canada had selected Mr. H. Wayne deJong to become the director of CRWRC-Canada, and the Board of Trustees appointed Mr. deJong to that position at its meeting May 9, 1996. The Board of Trustees recommends that synod ratify this appointment.

B. The following nominees are submitted to synod for two at-large positions on the board of CRWRC-Canada:

1. At-large member

Ms. Arnette Dekker (incumbent) is a member of Waterloo CRC in Waterloo, Ontario. She has served as a member-at-large alternate for CRWRC of Canada, currently serves on the CRWRC Binational Long-Range-Planning Committee, and is also a member-at-large delegate for CRWRC of Canada. She formerly served four years as a staff person with CRWRC International as team leader among the Krim people in Sierra Leone. Ms. Dekker holds a degree in social work and works as a marriage and family therapist for a counseling agency in Kitchener, Ontario. She is the former author of "Family Matters" in *The Banner*.

Ms. Greta De Groot (incumbent alternate), a member of Emmanuel CRC of Calgary, Alberta, serves as a member-at-large alternate for CRWRC of Canada. She served as a CRWRC volunteer in Rwanda for six weeks in 1994, assisting war-orphaned children; she has also visited CRWRC program activities in Sierra Leone. A nurse by profession, she finds time for significant involvement in ministry activities in the Calgary community.

2. At-large member

Mr. Peter Bullhuis (incumbent) is a member of Mountainview CRC of Grimsby, Ontario. He serves as a member-at-large for CRWRC of Canada and as vice president of the board for CRWRC of Canada. He previously served as CRWRC of Canada's representative to the board of Christian Cottage Imports. He is a teacher at Smithville District Christian High School.

Ms. Barb Hoekstra (incumbent alternate), a member of Bethel CRC in Waterdown, Ontario, serves as a member-at-large alternate for CRWRC of Canada. She previously served as board member for CRWRC-U.S.A. from Classis Illiana. She has significant involvement in ministry activities, including the development of "Discover Your Place in Ministry" workshop for Bethel CRC, development of stewardship-education material for Christian Stewardship Services, and coordinating vacation Bible school. She is currently studying for her master's degree in landscape architecture.

C. The following nominees are submitted to synod for member-at-large and alternate member-at-large positions on the board of CRWRC-U.S.A.:

1. Member-at-large (financial)

Ms. Barbara Clayton has served as an alternate member-at-large (business person) for CRWRC during the past three years. She is a member of Lawndale CRC in Chicago and works for the Chicago Board of Education. Ms. Clayton has served on the boards of Circle Family Care, Co-Laborers with Christ, Calvin College, YMCA, and SCORR.

Mr. Greg Bootsma is a member of Alger Park CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan, where he serves as chairperson of the financial committee. He is an investment counselor for the Ohio Company.

2. Alternate member-at-large (financial)

Mr. Henry Washington has served as a delegate member-at-large (business person) for the last three years. He has served on the boards of SCORR (1986-1992) and of the CRC Loan Fund Committee. Mr. Washington has also served as a small-loan officer with a bank for fourteen years and is currently employed as a business-opportunity specialist with the Small Business Administration in Chicago, Illinois. He is a member and elder of Pullman CRC, Chicago.

Mr. Randy Kroll is a member of Faith CRC, New Brighton, Minnesota, where he currently serves as chairperson of deacons and cochairperson of the Vision Implementation Team. Mr. Kroll has served as a board member of the diaconal conference since its origin in 1987 and as an officer from 1987 to 1990. He is a CPA with the firm of Wilkerson, Guthmann, and Johnson, Ltd., where he is director of financial reporting services. He served as a CRWRC delegate from 1989 through 1995, acting as board treasurer, executive-committee member, and member of the Long-Range-Planning Committee.

D. The following nominees are submitted to synod for two at-large positions for attorney on the board of CRWRC-U.S.A.:

1. Member-at-large (attorney)

Mr. Thomas Geelhoed (incumbent) has served as an alternate member-at-large for CRWRC during the past three years. He owns his own law practice in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Mr. Geelhoed, who is a member of Sherman

Street CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan, has served as elder and deacon and as vice president of Classis Grand Rapids East. He has previously served on the boards of Camp Tall Turf and the Baxter Community Center.

Mr. Thomas Waalkes graduated from Calvin College in 1966 and received his law degree from Wayne State University in 1969. He is presently a partner in the law firm of Verspoor, Waalkes, Lalley, and Slotsema in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Mr. Waalkes is a member of Sunshine Community Church and is a member of its finance committee.

2. Alternate member-at-large (attorney)

Mr. Peter Kladder III (incumbent alternate) is a member of Seymour CRC, Grand Rapids, where he has served as both elder and deacon. Mr. Kladder has served on CRWRC's board both as delegate (six-year term) and alternate. He was board president, officer, and a member of the executive committee during his term of office. He is an attorney with the Grand Rapids law firm of Wheeler, Upham, P.C.

Person not chosen for member-at-large (attorney).

X. World Missions-International executive director

In a communication received from Christian Reformed World Missions the BOT was informed that Rev. William Van Tol has agreed to serve some additional time as the executive director since World Missions was unable to make an appointment at its meeting in February 1996. World Missions now requests that, if the search for Rev. Van Tol's replacement is successful and if a candidate is selected at the February 1997 annual meeting of World Missions, synod authorize the Board of Trustees not only to approve such an appointment but, by way of exception, also to ratify it at the same time so that the transition from Rev. Van Tol to the new appointee can begin immediately upon appointment. The rationale for this request is that Rev. Van Tol has already extended his stay with World Missions on two previous occasions and is eager to begin his studies. Waiting for ratification by Synod 1997 delays the process by several months.

XI. Financial matters

The BOT requests synod to note that Recommendations C and D on pages 174-75 of the printed *Agenda*, which deal with a change in funding method for the Ministers' Pension Funds, have been withdrawn by both the U.S. Board of Pensions and Insurance and the Canadian Board of Trustees of Pensions and Insurance. The matter needs further discussion and will likely be returned to synod at a later time.

The Board of Trustees has completed its review of the denominational agencies' fiscal year 1995 financial reports, fiscal year 1996 revised budgets, fiscal year 1997 proposed budgets, and ministry-share requests for 1997.

The *Agenda for Synod 1996—Financial and Business Supplement* has been prepared from the material reviewed. Copies are made available to all synodical delegates and will be available to all 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. Ministry shares

The process for development of individual agency budgets for 1997 began in late 1995. The final budgets reflect the scrutiny provided by a combination of administrative evaluation, interagency consensus, and Board oversight.

The 1997 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 1997, 20 percent of the church's ministry-share determination will be on the basis of families; 80 percent will be based on the number of professing members over 18 years of age.

	Per Member	Per Family
The Back to God Hour	\$31.84	\$73.91
CRC TV	11.42	26.50
Calvin College	25.84	59.38
Calvin Theological Seminary	19.39	44.81
CRC Publications		
World Literature Ministries	2.29	5.23
Home Missions	52.47	120.64
World Missions	49.51	114.93
Pastoral Ministries	11.18	25.90
Denominational Services	15.15	35.94
Fund for Smaller Churches	8.44	19.58
Ministers' Pension Funds	17.46	40.47

B. Denominational and denominationally related agencies recommended for one or more offerings

1. Denominational agencies

The 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

CRC Publications

World Literature Ministries—above-ministry-share needs

Christian Reformed Home Missions—above-ministry-share needs

Christian Reformed World Missions—above-ministry-share needs

Christian Reformed World Relief— one offering per quarter because CRWRC receives no ministry-share support

Pastoral Ministries

a. Abuse Prevention—above-ministry-share needs

b. Chaplaincy Ministries—above-ministry-share needs

c. Disability Concerns—above-ministry-share needs

d. Pastor-Church Relations—above-ministry-share needs

e. Race Relations

1) Above-ministry-share needs

2) Multiracial Student Scholarship Fund

2. Denominationally related agency

United Calvinist Youth

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. Miscellaneous agencies

American Bible Society
Faith, Prayer and Tract League
Friendship Ministries
Gideons International
International Bible Society
InterVarsity Christian Fellowship
Lord's Day Alliance
Metanoia Ministries
Mission 21 India
PRM International
Seminary Consortium for Urban Pastoral Education
The Bible League
Wycliffe Bible Translators

b. Benevolent agencies

Bethany Christian Services
Calvary Rehabilitation Center
Cary Christian Center
Christian Health Care Center
Elim Christian School
International Aid, Inc.
The Luke Society
Pine Rest Christian Hospital

c. Educational agencies

Center for Public Justice
Christian Schools International
Christian Schools International Foundation
Dordt College
Reformed Bible College
Rehoboth Christian School
Roseland Christian School
Trinity Christian College
Westminster Theological Seminary, California
Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia
Worldwide Christian Schools

2. Canadian agencies

a. Miscellaneous agencies

Canadian Bible Society
Evangelical Fellowship of Canada

Friendship Groups—Canada
Gideons International—Canada
InterVarsity Christian Fellowship of Canada
The Bible League—Canada
Wycliffe Translators of Canada, Inc.

b. Benevolent agencies

Beginnings Counseling & Adoption Services of Ontario, Inc.

c. Educational agencies

Canadian Christian Education Foundation
Dordt College
Institut Farel
Institute for Christian Studies
Redeemer Reformed Christian College
Reformed Bible College
The King's University College
Trinity Christian College
Worldwide Christian Schools

D. Deletions

The following previously accredited organizations have not renewed their applications and are therefore deleted from the 1996 accreditation list:

The Evangelical Literature League (TELL)—This organization has been merged into CRC Publications and no longer exists.

Christian Labor Association of Canada—Though CLAC is still in existence, the status of this organization in Canada no longer allows it to accept charitable contributions.

E. New organizations

The following organizations have applied for accreditation for the first time this year and are recommended for inclusion by the Board of Trustees:

1. Work Research Foundation (Canada only)
2. International Bible Society—Canada (Canada only)
3. Worldwide Christian Schools of Canada (Canada only)
4. Crossroad Ministries (U.S.A. only)

The Reformed Ecumenical Council also requested accreditation in support of programs that parallel those conducted by World Missions and Calvin Theological Seminary. The Board of Trustees judged that accreditation was not appropriate and decided not to recommend the REC for inclusion.

F. Recommended salary ranges for 1997

Synod 1984 directed that "compensation ranges be recommended annually by the Synodical Interim Committee," now the Board of Trustees. The proposed salary ranges are based on the market data provided by Hay Associates, our compensation consultant. The ranges proposed below represent an adjustment of 2.6 percent for the United States and 1.7 percent for Canada.

The Board recommends the following salary ranges for 1997:

Current Grade	Proposed U.S. 1997 Range			Proposed Canadian 1997 Range		
	80%	Midpoint	120%	80%	Midpoint	120%
25	\$62,500	\$78,212	\$93,900	\$87,500	\$109,413	\$131,300
24	\$59,300	\$74,118	\$88,900	\$80,600	\$100,759	\$120,900
23	\$57,900	\$72,358	\$86,800	\$74,100	\$92,572	\$111,100
22	\$55,700	\$69,655	\$83,600	\$69,000	\$86,296	\$103,600
21	\$53,500	\$66,846	\$80,200	\$63,100	\$78,922	\$94,700
20	\$49,400	\$61,791	\$74,100	\$57,600	\$72,024	\$86,400
19	\$46,600	\$58,285	\$69,900	\$52,500	\$65,601	\$78,700
18	\$43,400	\$54,188	\$65,000	\$47,700	\$59,654	\$71,600
17	\$41,100	\$51,431	\$61,700	\$43,300	\$54,183	\$65,000
16	\$37,100	\$46,330	\$55,600	\$39,200	\$48,950	\$58,700

Note: The unshaded area of the chart represents ranges which have been defined but where no denominational employee is currently classified under the Hay system.

Note: The Board of Trustees informs synod that it has granted an exemption to Calvin College from the denominational Hay Position Evaluation and Salary Administration procedure.

G. Pension computation for 1997

The Ministers' Compensation Survey 1996 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 final average salaries to be used for calculating pensions of retired ministers are recommended to be \$30,352 (U.S.) and \$32,991 (Canada).

XII. Recommendations

- A. That synod approve the Boards 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 IV).
- D. That synod adopt the Board of Trustees' proposal that the denominational Annual Day of Prayer be changed from the second Wednesday in March to the first Thursday in May (see Section V).
- E. That synod ratify the appointment of Mr. H. Wayne deJong as director of CRWRC-Canada (see Section IX).
- F. That synod grant power to act to the Board of Trustees to ratify the appointment of the World Missions-International executive director before the meeting of Synod 1997 (see Section X).
- G. That synod approve the per professing member and per family ministry shares as recommended for 1997 (see Section XI, A).
- H. That synod approve the list of denominational and denominationally related agencies recommended for one or more offerings (see Section XI, B).

- I. That synod approve the list of nondenominational agencies recommended for financial support but not necessarily for one or more offerings (see Section XI, C).
- J. That synod take appropriate action on the deletion of previously accredited agencies (see Section XI, D).
- K. That synod approve the proposed additions to the list of accredited agencies (see Section XI, E).
- L. That synod approve the recommendation of the Board of Trustees not to add the Reformed Ecumenical Council to the list of accredited agencies (see Section XI, E).
- M. That synod approve the proposed salary ranges for 1997 (see Section XI, F).
- N. That synod approve the final average salaries recommended for computing 1997 pension amounts in the U.S. and Canada (see Section XI, G).

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

AGENCY AND COMMITTEE SUPPLEMENTS

Calvin College

The Calvin College Board of Trustees met May 16-17, 1996. We present this supplement to guide delegates to synod in their decisions and to inform them of other matters relating to Calvin College.

On Friday afternoon, May 17, the board honored Dr. Gordon and Mrs. Mary Van Harn at a farewell reception. A number of trustees expressed the board's appreciation to Dr. Van Harn for his thirty-five years of service to Calvin College—as professor, as dean, and, for the last eleven years, as provost—and wished him well as he recovers from recent heart surgery. Dr. Van Harn will return to teaching in the fall.

I. Staff matters

A. *Cornelius Plantinga, Jr, Dean of the Chapel*

In 1989 the board of trustees approved a position entitled Dean of the Chapel. Due to an unanticipated decline in enrollment and the lack of funding, the implementation of this action had to be postponed. The board is pleased to announce that funding for the position is now in place and that Dr. Cornelius Plantinga, Jr, has been appointed to the position. Dr. Plantinga will teach one or two courses per year at the college. He will also retain faculty status at Calvin Theological Seminary and teach a core course there.

Synod is asked to ratify the appointment (see Recommendation IV, A).

B. *Retirees* (see Recommendation IV, B, 1-6)

C. *Tenure appointment* (see Recommendation IV, C)

II. Student-life matters

A. *Multicultural Year*

The 1996-1997 academic year has been declared the Multicultural Year at the college. It is a year in which Calvin will recommit itself to learning more about and celebrating the diversity God created in the world. A floor of men and a floor of women in the Kalsbeek-Huizenga residence-hall complex will be devoted to a mosaic community. It will be an intentionally diverse community of international students from around the world and North Americans from European, African, Asian, Latin, and Native American heritages. It will be a living and learning opportunity which will be open to all students.

B. *Sunday-observance program*

Last fall the college implemented a one-year trial program in which arrangements were made for students to attend Sunday-morning services at area

churches instead of at the long-standing Knollcrest Worship Service. It also introduced a new Sunday-evening service of worship.

This change in Calvin's Sunday-observance program has been overwhelmingly well received by local churches and by students. Twenty-six churches have responded positively in welcoming students to their worship services, and seven provide transportation from campus.

The Sunday-evening worship and fellowship service, called the LOFT (Living Our Faith Together), has had an average attendance of seven to eight hundred per week. Chaplain Cooper wrote after the first LOFT service, "A rousing evening—one of the best I've ever had at Calvin College. The tone of the entire evening was eminently worshipful, contemporary but with a sense of history to it." He reported later that "numerous persons have indicated that this time of worship, fellowship, and training in discipleship has helped them to be more willing and obedient followers of Jesus Christ."

After an extensive report from the Student Life Committee, the board approved the following Sunday-observance program for Calvin students:

1. The permanent discontinuation of the Knollcrest Worship Service as a "non-official function of the college" (cf. *Acts of Synod 1972*) and the reporting of this action to Synod 1996.
2. Charge the Student Life Division, through the office of the chaplain and with the support of the dean of the chapel, to
 - a. Promote involvement with local churches, both Christian Reformed and others, to currently enrolled students for their Sabbath worship and fellowship.
 - b. Offer a Sunday-evening service of worship, discipleship, and fellowship in the college chapel.

The board of trustees reports this to synod and asks for your prayers for this new venture.

III. Election of college trustees

A. *Regional trustees* (see Recommendation IV, D, 1)

B. *Alumni trustee* (see Recommendation, IV, D, 2)

The board appointed Dr. Tom R. DeMeester for the one open position. Dr. DeMeester is professor of general and cardiovascular-thoracic surgery and chairman of the Department of Surgery at the University of Southern California School of Medicine. A 1959 graduate of Calvin College, he has been an influential adviser to the college for a number of years and in 1994 was awarded the Calvin College Distinguished Alumni Award. Dr. DeMeester is a member of Lake Avenue Congregational Church of Pasadena, California.

C. *At-large trustees* (see Recommendation IV, D, 3)

The terms of four at-large trustees expire this year: Mrs. Grace Achterhof, Mrs. Sheri Haan, Mr. Thomas Page, and Dr. John Van Engen. One expired term was not filled in 1995.

Having established that concerns of ethnic diversity, gender balance, clergy/laity representation, geographical representation, and expertise and gifts

be considered, the board proposes the following for at-large trustees for three-year terms.

1. *Mrs. Grace Achterhof* has served the college enthusiastically in a variety of capacities, including as vice president of the board and chair of the Presidential Search Committee. A subsequent three-year term would continue to provide the board with her experience and expertise. Mrs. Achterhof is the executive administrator at Cardiology Associates of Western Michigan and is a member of LaGrave Avenue CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan.
2. *Mrs. Sheri Haan* has recently retired from her position as executive director of Christian Schools International. Mrs. Haan has a strong interest in and commitment to Christian education at all levels. She presently serves as vice president of the board and is a member of the college Planning and Priorities Committee. She is a member of Westview CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan.
3. *Mr. Milton Kuyers*, a partner in a variety of businesses in the Milwaukee area, is a long-time friend and supporter of Calvin College. He is a member of the steering committee for the recent fund drive and a member of the Calvin Business Advisory Council of the Department of Economics and Business. He has served on a number of denominational boards and presently serves on the Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church in North America. Mr. Kuyers is a member of Brookfield CRC, Brookfield, Wisconsin.
4. *Mr. Thomas Page* is a person of color whose gifts and experience in areas of teaching, music, and urban ministry will continue to greatly benefit the board's ongoing efforts to be sensitive to minority concerns. Mr. Page is involved in prison ministry and is a member of Madison Avenue CRC in Paterson, New Jersey.
5. *Dr. John Van Engen* is professor of history and director of the Medieval Institute at the University of Notre Dame. Dr. Van Engen was a valuable member of the Presidential Search Committee and presently serves on the Academic Affairs Committee of the board. He has served as elder and council president at South Bend CRC, South Bend, Indiana.

IV. Recommendations

A. That synod ratify the appointment of Cornelius Plantinga, Jr., as Dean of the Chapel, with faculty status, for three years, effective July 1, 1996.

B. 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. Johanna A. Duyst, M.A.L.S., Librarian, Emerita (February 1, 1996)
2. David J. Holquist, M.A., Ed.S., Professor of Communication Arts and Sciences, Emeritus
3. J. William Smit, M.A., Ph.D., Professor of Sociology, Emeritus
4. Richard F. Wevers, M.A., Ph.D., Professor of Classical Languages, Emeritus (February 1, 1996)
5. Donald R. Wilson, M.Div., M.A., Ph.D., Professor of Sociology, Emeritus
6. Doris J. Zuidema, M.A., Professor of Physical Education, Emerita

C. That synod ratify the following reappointment with tenure:

Michelle Loyd-Paige, Ph.D, Associate Professor of Sociology and Social Work

D. 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	Dennis Van Andel	John Van Schepen	1999
Central U.S. I	Jan De Roos	Janice Van Dyke	1999
Central U.S. IV	Rod Alderink		1999
Eastern U.S.	Christopher De Vos	Edward Wierenga	1999
Western Canada	Nicholas Terpstra	Jack Hielerna	1999

2. Alumni trustee

Dr. Tom R. DeMeester 1999

3. At-large trustees

Mrs. Grace Achterhof 1999

Mrs. Sheri Haan 1999

Mr. Milton Kuyers 1999

Mr. Thomas Page 1999

Dr. John Van Engen 1999

E. 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.

Calvin College Board of Trustees
James Cooper, secretary

This report includes actions and recommendations of the Board of Trustees of Calvin Theological Seminary resulting from its April executive committee and its plenary meeting of May 23-24, 1996.

I. Information

A. *Board of trustees of Calvin Theological Seminary* (see Recommendation II, A)

Through the general secretary's office the board was notified of regional trustee elections for terms to begin on July 1, 1996, and to extend for three years. These elections need synodical ratification.

Central U.S., Subgroup II

Rev. Yong-Ju Oh, trustee

Rev. Jeung Jai Kang, alternate

Central U.S., Subgroup III

Rev. Joel R. Boot, trustee

Rev. Marvin J. Hofman, alternate

Eastern U.S.

Mr. Peter Steensma, trustee

Mr. John Steen, alternate

Eastern Canada, Subgroup II

Rev. William Dykstra, trustee

Rev. Jack B. Vos, alternate

Western Canada, Subgroup II

Mr. Hessel Kielstra, trustee

Mr. Dennis Danielson, alternate

B. *Proposed revisions of the Constitution and Bylaws of the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA*

The board responded to five items in the proposed revisions to the bylaws which in the board's judgment were problematic for academic accreditation, student loans, and issuing bonds. It recommended to synod that synod not approve these recommended changes in the synodical Board's bylaws as they appear in the printed *Agenda* and authorized the seminary president and a trustee to negotiate resolution of these matters prior to synod. In meetings with college counterparts and representatives of the synodical Board on June 3 and 4, these matters were resolved orally on June 4. In a memorandum dated June 5, 1996, and entitled "Revisions to the BOT Bylaws," the executive director of ministries, on behalf of the synodical Board of Trustees, articulated the resolution for the synodical services advisory committee of synod.

C. *Special Program for Ministerial Candidacy (SPMC)* (see Recommendation II, B)

This program was designed to define the synodically required final year at Calvin Seminary for students attending other seminaries. This residency at our seminary is required before application for candidacy. In most recent cases the program has been taken by people who have already graduated from other seminaries. The program has been especially difficult to complete for older students, many of whom are already engaged in some form of unordained ministry and for whom relocation for an entire year poses particular difficulties.

The board and synod have already reduced residency to one (1) quarter with the addition of short-term courses for qualifying ethnic-minority candidates. The board now recommends to synod that this program be adjusted for a three-year trial period for students who are at least 40 years of age at the time of residency and meet other criteria.

The adjusted program follows.

1. Eligibility

- a. Students who are able to demonstrate considerable knowledge of and varied experience in the CRC and ordinarily have been members of the CRC for at least five years at the time of residency at the seminary;
- b. And who have demonstrated their gifts for ministry in effective service in the church and kingdom, including significant Christian Reformed ministry experience;
- c. And whose family, geographical, and/or ministry circumstances are such that a year at Calvin Theological Seminary poses an unreasonable hardship for the students' families and/or their local congregation.

2. Course work

The following course work, most of which can be completed in a fall quarter and in which students must ordinarily have a cumulative GPA of 2.85, must be completed:

Christian Reformed Church History (332)	3 hours
Church Polity (603)	4 hours
Confessional Preaching (653)	1 hour
Senior Preaching (655)	1 hour
Old Testament exegetical elective	3 hours
New Testament exegetical elective	3 hours
Theological Division elective or core course	3 hours
Church and Ministry Division elective or core course	3 hours
Total	21 hours

(Note: For some students the faculty may specify certain courses in the elective or core category, and the student may take two of these courses in a nontraditional way.)

3. Other requirements or adjustments

- a. One fall quarter in residence at Calvin Theological Seminary is required for all students.
- b. Matters concerning admission requirements, psychological evaluations, licensure procedures, field education, and comprehensive examinations are not adjusted, but since the course work is less specified and significantly reduced, the interview with the faculty will be more comprehensive.
- c. Students who are at least 50 years of age at the time of residency at the seminary may apply for a waiver of the language comprehensive examinations (competence in Hebrew and Greek must be demonstrated by successful completion of the Old Testament and New Testament exegetical electives). They will also usually not be required to do additional college

work to meet admission requirements if they have an acceptable B.A. degree or its equivalent.

- d. During their programs students will be mentored and evaluated by a three-person classical committee appointed by the seminary.

D. Study committee on routes to ordained ministry in the CRC (see Recommendation II, C)

The three-year trial period attached to the foregoing recommendation is designed to coincide with the appointment and work of a synodical study committee (1) to examine routes presently being followed to ordained ministry in the CRC and related denominations, (2) to define standards for effective ministry in the CRC, and (3) to propose any changes in present policy that it judges to be necessary.

This recommendation is brought after considerable reflection and discussion by both the faculty and the board of trustees. A major issue was whether the seminary and its board should undertake this study or whether it is an issue of such denominational significance that it warrants a synodical study committee. The latter opinion prevailed. The question, simply put, is whether the defining intention for a denominational seminary to train our ministerial leaders seems to need review in the light of a number of practices and attitudes within the CRC.

1. Alternative seminary education

Originally and through most of its history Calvin Seminary was universally accepted as the place for training Christian Reformed ministers. Denominational identity and loyalty compelled this denominational value. Today, more students than previously, opt, for a variety of reasons, to attend other seminaries with the intention of entering ministry in the Christian Reformed Church. Is this denominationally desirable? Why or why not? What is the impact of this pattern on the denomination? What do graduates of other seminaries bring to ministry in the CRCNA that is constructive or that may be problematic? What is the success rate of the SPMC program? Is it being used as intended? And, in that light, what should be its future? What are the reasons students choose other seminaries, and what should be done to address these reasons? Answers to all of these and other questions related to ministerial students attending other seminaries will enable the denomination to shape its future more intentionally and responsibly than at present.

2. Exceptional cases

Various exceptions to denominational policy are claimed today. They deserve review, clarification, and standardization of policy. Some graduates of other seminaries avoid the SPMC program entirely, are called and ordained by classes as evangelists, and openly express their intention to apply under Article 7 of the Church Order for ordination as pastors in several years. Some have already followed this approach. How is this circumvention of synod's policy to be evaluated and handled? Some congregations, claiming need, employ seminarians or graduates of other seminaries who have not been in the SPMC program, using them as stated supply and sometimes even expressing a desire or intent to call them. Some churches readily look outside the denomination for pastors, claiming need or unavailability of suitable CRC pastors. Some congregations are employing as staff persons on

their ministry teams people with little or no background in the Reformed faith, some with church and theological backgrounds in significant contrast to the Reformed faith. What is the impact of these attitudes and approaches to ministry on the local congregation and on the denomination theologically, confessionally, in terms of church polity or ministerial practices? Is there actually need? Do the statistics bear out this claim? Are other considerations operative in these claims? If so, have they been properly established and addressed? And do our synodical deputies uniformly understand and apply denominational policy when called upon? What has been the history of using Church Order Article 7, and is it being applied as it was intended and in a way beneficial for our churches and denomination?

3. Agency and classical programs

Several of our colleges have instituted and advertised programs for unordained church leaders or staff persons. Christian Reformed Home Missions has supported training programs for ethnic-minority pastors, church planters, and evangelists that are independent of synodically defined and approved routes into Christian Reformed ministry. One of our classes is experimenting with its own such training program. Expectations are that in time the most successful of these people will be ordained as pastors. How does this approach relate to the denomination's stated value of a theologically, seminary-trained ministry built on the base of a liberal-arts education? If this becomes a sanctioned route to ordination, are there standards and expectations that should be defined for and met by people taking this route? If so, what are they? And what role should continuing education play in the continuing development of these and all spiritual leaders of the church? What are the long-range implications of these new strategies (agency, college, and classical training) for denominational cohesiveness, a unified understanding and application of our confessional vision for the church of Christ, and the spiritual growth of our people? Where does the church desire the training of its pastoral and church leadership to occur? According to what standards and by people with what qualifications? Should all programs of pastoral training be assigned to the seminary rather than to agencies and classes? What uniform standards and training should apply to unordained church staff, if any? These are new questions arising from new, untested models of ministerial formation.

The board, along with the faculty, believes that answers to these questions are crucial to the unity and the vitality of the CRC of the future. A responsible report—examined by the churches, debated in its assemblies, and yielding constructive recommendations in tune with our times—would serve our churches well.

E. *Graduates, licentiates, candidates* (see Recommendation II, D)

Forty-two students graduated from six degree programs this spring. Successful interviews were conducted with twenty-four new candidacy applicants recommended by the faculty.

Twenty-three students were granted regular licensure to exhort; eight were granted some form of temporary licensure or licensure extension.

F. *Finances* (see Recommendation II, E)

The board approved a 1996-1997 operating budget of \$3,753,100.

The board approved a base salary increase of 3 percent and a tuition increase of 5 percent.

The board recommends to synod that Calvin Theological Seminary be included on the approved list for church offerings—for above-ministry-share general operations and for the seminary Revolving Loan Fund.

G. Salary disclosure

Job level	Number of positions	Compensation quartile (includes housing allowance)
23	1	3rd

II. Recommendations

A. That synod approve the election of regional trustees and their alternates for terms beginning on July 1, 1996, and running for three years.

B. That synod approve for a three-year term adjustments to the Special Program for Ministerial Candidacy for students who are at least 40 years of age at the time of residency at the seminary.

C. That synod appoint a study committee (1) to examine routes presently being followed to ordained ministry in the CRC and related denominations, (2) to define standards for effective ministry in the CRC, and (3) to propose any changes in present policy that it judges to be necessary.

D. That synod declare the following as candidates for the ministry in the Christian Reformed Church, subject to completion of all requirements:

- | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| Mary S. Hulst Antonides | Harrison A. Newhouse |
| Darrell J. Bierman | Stephen K. Rhoda |
| Mary-Lee Bouma | Gary M. Stevens |
| Jeffrey J. Brower | Richard A. Terpstra, Jr. |
| M. Dale Fopma | Bruce J. Vaandrager |
| Richard E. Grift | Peter L. Vander Beek |
| Ruth M. Hofman | Jeffrey C. Vanderhooft |
| Peter J. Janssens | Everett J. Vander Horst |
| Munchul Kim | Geoffrey A. VanderMolen |
| James H. McCune | Roger J. Visker |
| Anthony J. Meyer | John W. Wilczewski |
| Marc A. Nelesen | Steven A. Zwart |

E. That Calvin Theological Seminary be included on the approved list for church offerings—for above-ministry-share general operations and for the seminary Revolving Loan Fund.

Calvin Theological Seminary
Board of Trustees
Elmer Walcott, secretary

Abuse Prevention

[*Note:* Synod 1996 did not adopt the following guidelines. See Appendix III, pages 634-42 for the most recent edition.]

Note: The numbering system of the material below fits the synodically approved guidelines which appear in *Acts of Synod 1995*, pages 783-88. Strikeouts indicate material deleted from the approved guidelines; italics indicate new material.

II. Procedures and Guidelines for Handling Abuse Allegations Against a Church Leader

B. Guidelines

1. Definitions

The Canadian provinces and each of the fifty states have legal definitions of child abuse, child sexual abuse and exploitation, and physical abuse as well as a host of definitions of crimes committed against adults, including assault and battery, rape, and sexual harassment. Ecclesiastical procedures such as those outlined in sections 2 and 3 below cannot measure a person's guilt by a legal standard; only civil authorities are entitled to hold a person accountable for violation of a civil or criminal code. For that reason, an ecclesiastical procedure cannot judge a person to be guilty of child abuse or rape as defined by law. An ecclesiastical procedure can, however, judge someone to be guilty of ungodly conduct, misuse of power, misuse of spiritual authority, sexually inappropriate behavior, and neglect and abuse of office. These behaviors are not violations of civil or criminal code and therefore not subject to criminal prosecution or civil redress. They are, instead, behaviors that violate the trust and well-being of individuals and the community of believers and taint the office held by the offender.

The following definitions are given to further assist the churches in understanding the types of behaviors which might constitute ungodly conduct, misuse of power, sexually inappropriate behavior, etc.:

- 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. *(For the purposes of this document, neglect applies only to minors.)* ~~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. *Emotional abuse is harm or threatened harm to a person's welfare or well-being by a pattern of intentional and manipulative threats, words, harassment, or deprivation.*
- e. 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 other person's ~~emotional or~~ spiritual well-being. *(For the purposes of this document, spiritual abuse applies only to adults.)*

There are two possible procedures to be followed 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 be followed (a) when the alleged victim is an adult or (b) when the alleged victim comes forward as an adult with an allegation of abuse that took place during the victim's childhood or adolescence.

The guidelines for handling abuse allegations by an adult against a church leader ~~envision the use~~ *assume the availability* 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 *should* ~~contacts~~ the pastor, president of the council, 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 *should* ~~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), *should* 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~~ *should be* 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 *should* ~~contacts~~ the accuser that a hearing will be conducted. The advisory panel should choose 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~~ *should be* made by the panel members, pastor, president, vice president, or accuser.
- d. When the advisory panel is convened, a chairperson ~~is~~ *should be* 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~~ *should also be confidential*, as is any report of the advisory panel.
- e. The advisory panel *should* ~~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 *should* contact the accused person and ~~notifies~~ him/her that a hearing has taken place. The accused person ~~is~~ *should then be* 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~~ *should be* conducted seven days after the hearing of the accuser. At the time the accused is notified, he/she ~~is~~ *should be* 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~~ *must be* presented in writing ~~if requested~~.
- g. The advisory panel *should* ~~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 *should* convene to consider the gravity and the probable veracity of the allegations as quickly as possible. A summary of its findings ~~is~~ *should be* 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 *should* ~~reports~~ the panel's summary to the executive committee of the council of the alleged abuser's church. This meeting ~~is~~ *should be* convened within forty-eight hours of the advisory panel's formulation of its summary. Members of the advisory panel *should* 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 *should* ~~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 *should* notify the accused person within twenty-four hours that allegations of abuse have been lodged against him/her. The designees *should* also indicate to the accused the specific charges and the names of those making the charges. These charges ~~are~~ *should be* given in writing.

Also, within twenty-four hours, the accuser(s) ~~is~~ *should be* notified by two members of the consistory that charges of abuse have been accepted against the accused person and that he/she/they ~~is~~ *are* being notified of such charges. A summary of the consistory's deliberations ~~is~~ *should be* given in writing if requested. The accused person/s may acknowledge or deny his/her/their guilt at the notification meeting. Such acknowledgment or denial ~~is~~ *should be* confirmed by the two consistory members present. This acknowledgment or denial ~~is~~ *should be* brought to a full council meeting to be scheduled for seven days after the notification meeting.

1. 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. *The accused has the right to receive the specific charges in writing and to meet the accuser in the hearing. If a face to face meeting between accuser and accused would be detrimental to the accuser, then alternate arrangements might be made for the accuser to be available, but out of the sight or presence of the accused. Both the accused and the accuser should meet separately with the consistory.* A tape recording of the testimony should be made.

The consistory ~~should~~ 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~~ *should be* notified of the consistory's deliberations. If the accused is found guilty, the council ~~shall~~ *should 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~~ *should be* 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~~ *should be* 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 should inform the congregation *in writing* 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~~ *describe* 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 most Canadian~~ provinces a child is defined as a person 16 years ~~old~~ or younger.

~~The guidelines for handling allegations of~~ *Allegations of potentially illegal emotional abuse, physical abuse and neglect, and sexual abuse against a church leader by a minor child should include an investigation by an* ~~be reported to an appropriate~~ agency outside the church, such as Child Protective 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~~ *should contact* 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 *should* contact 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 Protective Services or the local police officials are to be notified. *In case of any uncertainty about legal reporting requirements, an attorney with expertise in the area should be consulted.*

- c. At any point in the process, if the alleged abuser admits wrongdoing against the alleged victim, the admission of guilt ~~is~~ *should be* brought to the attention of the consistory, which *should* deliberate and disposes of the matter according to Church Order Articles 81-83.

~~The~~ *Subject to the best interests of the abused child, 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. Such disclosure should not exceed the scope of the admission and should be factual and pastoral. Such disclosure should not attempt to state any legal conclusions about guilt or innocence of any crime.*

- d. The person contacted by the alleged victim *should* request 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 *attempt* to 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~~ *should notify* his/her counterpart (unless that person is implicated in the allegations) in the other church, and both *should* become contact persons for the matter.

- e. Before formal *legal* 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/they ~~should notify~~ *should notify* the ~~executive committee~~ *consistory* of the ~~council~~ *church* of the alleged abuser.

- 2) ~~Within twenty four hours of the executive committee's being notified,~~
The consistory is convened and should be presented with 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.)
 - 3) *The consistory shall give the accused an opportunity to confront and respond to the allegations, according to the following procedure:*
The accused shall be given the charges in writing. The accused shall have an opportunity to confront and respond to the evidence presented by or on behalf of the accuser. The accused should also have opportunity to present evidence in support of the defense. Caution should be exercised to safeguard the well-being of a minor child asked to present oral testimony. Fear of the alleged offender and/or an inability to discern the consequences of the hearing for either the alleged victim/offender could be reasons to reject a request for the accuser and accused to meet before the consistory. In place of oral testimony by a minor, the alleged offender must be given a detailed written report of the allegations to which he/she can respond. This written report should serve to protect the interests of the minor without interfering with other legal proceedings.
 - 4) In light of the information presented, the consistory should recommend 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~~ should be carried out with full pay (for paid staff) and without prejudice.
 - 5) ~~Within one week of the consistory meeting,~~ The full council should consider the recommendations of the consistory and ~~implements~~ *make its decision regarding* appropriate action. Suspension of an office-bearer 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. In the case of suspension, a council member is should be 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. As noted above, such disclosure must not include any legal conclusions.~~
- f. After ~~criminal~~ formal legal 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/they should ~~notify~~ *notify* the executive committee ~~consistory~~ of the ~~council~~ church of the alleged abuser.
 - 2) ~~Within twenty four hours of the executive committee's being notified,~~
The consistory is convened and should be presented with a written

document from the executive committee specifying the nature of the allegations and the information known at this point.

- 3) *The consistory should give the accused an opportunity to confront and respond to the allegations, according to the following procedure:*

The accused should be given the charges in writing. The accused shall have an opportunity to confront and respond to the evidence presented by or on behalf of the accuser. The accused shall also have opportunity to present evidence in support of the defense. Caution should be exercised to safeguard the well-being of a minor child asked to present oral testimony. Fear of the alleged offender and/or an inability to discern the consequences of the hearing for either the alleged victim/offender could be reasons to reject a request for the accuser and accused to meet before consistory. In place of oral testimony by a minor, the alleged offender must be given a detailed written report of the allegations to which he/she can respond. This written report protects the interests of the minor without interfering with other legal proceedings.

- 4) *In light of the information presented, the consistory should recommend one of the following options to the full council:*
- a) *Take no action at this time.*
 - b) *Limit the accused from contact with children or limit the conditions under which this contact is to take place, pending further information.*
 - c) *Suspend the accused from office, position, or duty. Suspension is should be carried out with full pay (for paid staff) and without prejudice.*
 - 5) ~~*Within one week of the consistory meeting,*~~ *The full council should considers the recommendations of the consistory and implements appropriate action. Suspension of officebearers is should be 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. In case of suspension, a council member is should be appointed to disclose to the congregation only the facts known at the time; this council member may should not convey any of the particulars relating to the alleged victim's allegations.*
- g. *Once criminal proceedings have concluded, the council should promptly revisit the matter. This should occur whether the result is conviction, acquittal, or dropped charges. In the event the criminal charges are dropped or prosecution does not result in conviction, the council should decides whether or not to rescind its earlier action and/or take additional action. 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 who has been suspended should is not be 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. In the event of prosecution resulting in conviction, the abuser*~~

may be subject to further suspension, deposition (as provided in Church Order Articles 82-83), employment termination, or denial of reinstatement to a volunteer position. In the event the accused should request to meet with the council, the council is advised to consult with professionals knowledgeable about treatment of offenders and also to read the preface to the guidelines (Acts of Synod 1995, pp. 781-83), which raises the issue of danger in "forgiving too quickly."

4. ~~Two~~ Three important footnotes regarding both sets of guidelines
 - a. These guidelines are suggested guidelines. The circumstances of abuse may dictate that church officials deviate from these guidelines. ~~Bylaws~~ *Provisions* 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 *with expertise in the area* to define the legal standards relevant to ~~the~~ a 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 *disclose and/or* 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 *those* expressly described under these guidelines or ~~as may be~~ required by law.

Accuracy is of the utmost importance in the disclosure of allegations or surrounding circumstances to those individuals or entities named in these guidelines. Wrongful or inaccurate dissemination of information can ~~potentially~~ lead to adverse legal consequences.
 - c. *Whenever a disclosure of allegations of child abuse or assault is warranted, the disclosure must include the language of the criminal code along with the indication that criminal authorities have made the charges and will follow them up to the full extent of their capabilities. When the allegations are ungodly conduct, abuse of office, etc., then the disclosure must include the language of the Church Order along with the indication that church officials will follow up to the full extent of their capabilities. After a judgment on the matter is rendered, subsequent disclosure must include the language of the Church Order; an explanation of the violation(s) can be given with care so as to protect the identity of the victim. Failure to explain the nature of the violation enables the offender to continue a pattern of denial or minimization and promotes the perception that the matter is being covered up somehow.*

I. Council of the Christian Reformed Churches in Canada (CCRCC)

The January 18, 1996, minutes of the Interchurch Relations Committee (IRC) of the Council of the Christian Reformed Churches in Canada (CCRCC) record the CCRCC's approval of its IRC's proposal to join the Canadian Council of Churches. When questions regarding this decision were directed to the Canadian IRC, the committee "continue[d] to stand by the decision to join the CCC, arguing that such a step is important to the work of the CRC in Canada."

The CRCNA Interchurch Relations Committee decided to report to Synod 1996 that it considered this matter. In this connection it presents the following recommendation to synod:

That authorization for Canadian churches, classes, or groups of classes—such as the CCRCC—to engage in interchurch relationships be a part of the Canadian structure study and that if such authorization is to be given, it be clearly stipulated.

II. Ecumenical organizations: North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC)

Through the general secretary the IRC received a request from the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA to consider seriously whether the CRCNA should remain a member denomination of NAPARC.

The IRC provided the Board of the CRCNA with a response, which it also includes as Appendix A to this supplementary report. It is submitted to synod as information.

III. Churches in ecclesiastical fellowship in North America

A. *Relationship of the CRCNA to the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC)* (see *Agenda for Synod 1996*, p. 191, Section X, A)

A letter dated June 7, 1995, was sent by the OPC to Synod 1995. This letter was submitted to synod as Communication 13. Synod 1995, believing that an immediate response was appropriate, took note of the unanimous decision of the OPC general assembly to offer the apology expressed in its communication and graciously received its apology (*Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 701). The remainder of Communication 13 was referred to the IRC.

In this letter the OPC suggests that our churches "make serious effort to restore a fellowship that was so close for many years." Its general assembly therefore offers to consult with the CRCNA on three matters: women in ecclesiastical office, homosexuality, and differing views of church discipline.

Rather than receiving the remainder of the letter as information, the IRC adopted the following recommendation for presentation to Synod 1996:

That synod respond to the OPC's suggestion that the OPC and the CRCNA mutually discuss women in office, homosexuality, and church discipline by informing the OPC that

1. With respect to matters already decided by the CRCNA, its positions are a matter of record. The CRCNA is not inclined to reopen the issues in response to the OPC's requests.

2. With respect to issues already decided by the CRCNA, we are willing to serve in a consultative capacity to a study committee of the OPC.
3. With respect to new issues, the CRCNA suggests that there be mutual discussion between our respective church committees dealing with a particular issue.

B. Relationship of the CRCNA to the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) (see Agenda for Synod 1996, pp. 191-92, Section X, B)

The IRC has reviewed the September 15, 1995, letter conveying to the CRCNA a decision of the general assembly of the PCA adopted in June 1995. With a view to assisting synod in the preparation of a response, the IRC is proposing the following recommendation:

That synod adopt Appendix B as its letter of reply to the PCA.

C. Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America (RPCNA)

The following excerpts from a letter received from the chairman of the Interchurch Committee of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America, dated January 25, 1996, are submitted to synod as information:

We are writing to encourage you to remain faithful to the Word of God with regard to the ordination of women as elders and pastors. You still acknowledge in your stated Church Order that the Lord prohibits ordaining women to ruling and teaching offices in his church. We share this position with you. . . . Therefore, although it pains us to do so, we find that we must protest vigorously the decision of your 1995 Synod to permit classes and churches to act contrary to Church Order by ordaining women to ruling and teaching offices in the churches for the next five years.

While we are aware that your Synod's action came as an attempt to bring to resolution a debate that has increasingly divided your communion over the past two decades and more, we are nevertheless constrained to counsel you that true peace cannot be bought at the expense of obedience.

As friends and brothers who desire to be faithful to you for Christ's sake and faithful to Christ for your sake, we urge you to reconsider this compromise. In love, we encourage you to continue to enforce the Church Order which you have adopted, and to resolve the issue of the role of women in the Church on the basis of Biblical truth.

**IV. Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (RCN)
(Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland) (GKN)
(see Agenda for Synod 1996, p. 188, Section IV)**

The report of the delegation sent to represent the CRCNA at the April 1996 General Synod of the GKN and to meet with representatives of the GKN is included with this supplementary report as Appendix C.

Included in the document are also reports of visits of the CRC delegation with representatives of both the Christian Reformed Churches in the Netherlands/Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland and the Netherlands Reformed Churches/Nederlandse Gereformeerde Kerken.

A. Options re the relationship of the CRCNA and the GKN

Having reviewed the report (Appendix C), the IRC considered several options relative to preparing recommendations to Synod 1996. Some of the options were to

1. Submit the report as information but make no recommendations.
2. Recommend that synod continue the present restricted ecclesiastical fellowship with the GKN.
3. Recommend that synod terminate ecclesiastical fellowship with the GKN.
4. Recommend that synod place further restrictions on the ecclesiastical relationship with the GKN.
5. Recommend that synod suspend ecclesiastical fellowship with the GKN.
6. Recommend that synod find a new approach to this troublesome situation that would allow continued discussion and dialogue with the GKN but would not relate the CRCNA to the GKN in the same way that ecclesiastical fellowship does.

B. Recommendations

After extensive debate on the various options, the IRC recommends the following to synod:

1. That synod hold in abeyance—put on hold—its ecclesiastical fellowship with the GKN, with its provisions, for a minimum of two years.

Grounds:

- a. The growing unrest within the CRC regarding the GKN suggests that the status quo should not be maintained and that the relationship needs to be altered in some way.
- b. The continuing changes within the GKN, especially the process of federating with two other churches, suggest that a new relationship will need to be established which recognizes and makes accommodations to that new reality.
- c. Ecumenical relationships with other churches have been weakened or severed in part because of our present relationship with the GKN.
- d. This action shows respect for the consciences of those who believe that fellowship with churches which tolerate practicing homosexuals as members and officebearers is contrary to the teaching of and disobedient to Christ and the gospel.

Note: The IRC wishes to inform synod that it does not intend this recommendation to be understood as a disciplinary step but as a way to provide the CRC adequate time to discover a way of relating to the GKN which is consistent with our Ecumenical Charter and with the changing realities within and between our two churches.

2. That the IRC be mandated to continue dialogue with the GKN concerning matters of mutual interest and concern.

Grounds:

- a. Continuing dialogue demonstrates the CRC's desire to maintain meaningful contact with the GKN and gives both churches an opportunity to search for ways to work together for unity and truth.
- b. 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 to work toward substantive exchange.

- c. The GKN have always been open to hearing our concerns and dialoguing with us, even when disagreeing with our criticism.
 - d. The issues between our churches are of such a nature as to require ongoing discussion to seek mutual understanding for a common confession.
3. That the IRC be mandated to observe the developing relationship of the GKN and their two partners in Together on the Way (*Samen op Weg*) and to provide synod with advice regarding the proper mode for a continuing relationship with the GKN.

Ground: The GKN are progressing toward federation with the Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk and the Evangelisch Lutherse Kerk, and this new federation (called Together on the Way or *Samen op Weg*) will likely require a new relationship between the CRCNA and the GKN. Within two years this new United Protestant Church in the Netherlands should have a clearer understanding of the kind of ecumenical and interchurch fellowship it intends to maintain.

V. Reformed Churches in South Africa (see *Agenda for Synod 1996*, p. 190, Section VI)

A. Background

The IRC has reviewed and evaluated relevant synodical decisions, recent correspondence, and available information regarding the suspension of ecclesiastical relations with the RCSA. This includes the following:

1. Decision of Synod 1989 (*Acts of Synod 1989*, pp. 495-96).
2. Decision of Synod 1995 (*Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 700):

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.
3. A twenty-six-page letter from the IRC to the RCSA, dated July 5, 1995, in which various issues raised by the 1991 Synod of the RCSA were candidly and forthrightly addressed.
 4. A January 20, 1996, response from the RCSA to the IRC.

5. A May 6, 1996, meeting of IRC members with Dr. A. du Plooy of Potchefstroom University, a meeting requested by the RCSA deputies for correspondence with churches in foreign countries.

B. Observations

1. The issue of apartheid that led to the CRCNA suspension of RCSA ecclesiastical relations has been resolved by the political changes in South Africa.
2. Reconciliation within the family of RCSA churches is underway with observable progress. The student body and faculty have been integrated into one seminary. The Suidlands Synod (colored) has been merged into the National Synod (white), and relations with the Midlands Synod (black) and Soutpansberg Synod (black) are in the process of reconciliation.
3. The CRCNA wrestled seriously with the difficult issue of apartheid in the RCSA and throughout the process sought to bear its witness and fulfill its ecumenical responsibility to the RCSA. To continue the suspension appears unwarranted in the light of our ecumenical responsibility to the RCSA.
4. The conditions Synod 1989 specified for the suspension to be lifted are either no longer of sufficient gravity to continue the suspension or, where still applicable, are being met by the RCSA.
5. To retrace the complex developments from 1982 to 1989 that resulted in the suspension of relations between the RCSA and the CRCNA in order to adjudicate the responsibilities, misunderstandings, and culpabilities of the entire history is a well-nigh impossible and unprofitable task.
6. Lifting the suspension recognizes that the situation that created the suspension six years ago, at which time both of our churches were under great pressure, is changed.
7. As noted in the *Agenda for Synod 1996*, at the request of the IRC, Synod 1995 continued the suspension of the RCSA until 1997. This was in part because the next RCSA triennial synod meets in January 1997. If the CRC lifts the suspension now, the RCSA synod will be so informed at its next assembly.

C. Therefore the IRC submits the following recommendation to synod:

That the suspension of CRCNA ecclesiastical fellowship with the RCSA be lifted and all provisions of such fellowship be reinstated.

Grounds:

1. The issue of apartheid, which led to the CRC suspension of ecclesiastical fellowship with the RCSA, is moot because of political changes in South Africa and is no longer a valid basis for continuing the suspension.
2. The RCSA in their position, attitude, and practice are pursuing racial reconciliation within the family of churches.
3. Lifting the suspension will demonstrate CRCNA commitment to its ecumenical responsibility and its strong desire to maintain ecclesiastical fellowship with the RCSA.
4. By lifting the suspension, the CRCNA creates a more positive climate in which to grow in our ecumenical relationships.

VI. Ecumenical Charter

The ecumenical realities of the late twentieth century are in tension and transition. IRC's experiences of this past year have forced it to review the CRC's Ecumenical Charter (see *Agenda for Synod, 1987*, pp. 170-75, and *Acts of Synod 1987*, pp. 588-90) on more than one occasion. Challenges to our relationship with NAPARC and the GKN, coupled with the decisions of the Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland and the Reformed Churches in New Zealand either to sever or suspend relations with the CRC, have required some soul searching regarding ecumenical relationships.

This process of reflection has led the IRC to reaffirm its commitment to the scriptural and confessional basis of the charter and to the principles stated within it. It has also led us to the conclusion that it is better to remain in NAPARC than to withdraw at this time (see Appendix A).

The IRC has committed itself to reflect further on these matters and has adopted the following recommendation for its work:

That the IRC review the ways in which the basis and principles of the Ecumenical Charter are applied and implemented.

Grounds:

1. We find ourselves in rapidly changing ecumenical and interchurch situations.
2. The present implementation of the basis and principles of the Ecumenical Charter has resulted in
 - a. Conflict within the CRCNA re some ecumenical decisions.
 - b. Termination of contact with the CRC by some denominations.
 - c. Troubled relationships with some of the churches that continue in ecclesiastical fellowship with us.
3. Weakened and/or broken ecumenical ties suggest that we should review, evaluate, and possibly revise the implementation and application of our policies and procedures.

We trust that synod will recognize that this endeavor is necessary and that it is integral to the mandate of this committee. Furthermore, the implementation of the charter's principles relates directly to our continued relationship with NAPARC and the GKN.

VII. Hospitality Committee for Interchurch Relations, Synod 1996

The following have been appointed to serve as the Hospitality Committee for Interchurch Relations during Synod 1996: Rev. and Mrs. Gerard Bouma, Rev. and Mrs. William Buursma, and Rev. and Mrs. Alfred Luke.

VIII. Matters requiring synodical action

- A. That authorization for Canadian churches, classes, or groups of classes—such as the CCRCC—to engage in interchurch relationships be a part of the Canadian structure study and that if such authorization is to be given, it be clearly stipulated (see Section I).
- B. That synod adopt the proposed response to the letter from the OPC (see Section III, A).
- C. That synod adopt Appendix B as its response to the PCA (see Section III, B).

D. That synod adopt the recommendations relating to the RCN/GKN (see Section IV, C).

E. That synod adopt the recommendations relating to the RCSA (see Section V, C).

Interchurch Relations Committee
Leonard J. Hofman, administrative secretary
Edward A. Van Baak, president

APPENDIX A: The CRCNA and NAPARC

At its December 1995 meeting the Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA) requested the Interchurch Relations Committee (IRC) of the CRCNA to consider seriously whether or not the CRCNA should remain a member denomination of the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC).

The decision to make such a request followed upon the report to the Board of the general secretary, who, with Rev. Leonard Hofman (administrative secretary of IRC) and Rev. Edward Van Baak (president of IRC), had served as delegates to NAPARC at its meeting in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in November 1995.

On December 28, 1995, the delegation met to give consideration to the request of the Board and specifically to address the appropriateness of continuing as a member denomination of NAPARC. The following was submitted as a response to the Board of Trustees.

History

On October 24-25, 1974, the full membership of the interchurch relations committees of the following denominations gathered in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church (ARPC), the CRC, the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA), the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC), the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America (RPCNA), and the Reformed Presbyterian Church (Evangelical Synod)(RPC/ES). A committee of two from each church was named to draw up a plan for a council of Presbyterian and Reformed churches which would function as an ecumenical agency for the churches involved. The Reformed Church in the United States was also invited.

With our representatives playing a very significant role in developing the final recommendations of the committee, at a meeting in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, on January 22-23, 1975, a proposed constitution and bylaws were adopted for a North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC). Synod 1975 endorsed the action of the IRC and mandated the IRC to formalize the membership of the CRC in the council.

The beginning membership consisted of the CRC, PCA, OPC, RPCNA, and the RPC/ES. Since that time the RPCNA and the RPC/ES have merged into one denomination. Later the ARPC became a member. Through the years only one denomination was added, namely, the Korean American Presbyterian Church, until 1995, when the Reformed Church in the United States was received into membership. Currently the membership of NAPARC consists of seven denomi-

nations, 3088 congregations, and 650,208 members. All the member denominations are churches in ecclesiastical fellowship with the CRCNA except the RCUS.

Representatives of other Presbyterian and/or Reformed churches are also invited to attend as observers. Members of the religious press are usually present.

Constitutional Provisions (selected)

Basis of the Council

Confessing Jesus Christ as only Savior and Sovereign Lord over all of life, we affirm the basis of the fellowship of Presbyterian and Reformed Churches to be full commitment to the Bible in its entirety as the Word of God written, without error in all its parts, and to its teaching as set forth in the Heidelberg Catechism, the Belgic Confession, the Canons of Dordt, the Westminster Confession of Faith, and the Westminster Larger and Shorter Catechisms.

That the adopted basis of fellowship be regarded as warrant for the establishment of a formal relationship of the nature of a council, that is, a fellowship that enables the constituent churches to advise, counsel, and cooperate in various matters with one another and hold out before each other the desirability and need for organic union of churches that are of like faith and practice.

Purpose and Function

1. Facilitate discussion and consultation between member bodies on those issues and problems which divide them as well as on those which they face in common.
2. Promote the appointment of joint committees to study matters of common interest and concern.
3. Exercise mutual concern in the perpetuation, retention, and propagation of the Reformed faith.
4. Promote cooperation wherever possible and feasible on the local and denominational level in such areas as missions, relief efforts, Christian schools, and church education.

Membership

Those churches shall be eligible for membership which profess and maintain the basis for fellowship expressed in [Basis of the Council] and that maintain the marks of the true church. Admission to and termination of membership shall be by recommendation of the Council by two-thirds of the ballots cast and this recommendation must then be adopted by the approval of two-thirds of the major assemblies of the member churches.

Note: At its 1995 meeting NAPARC adopted a revision to the Membership section of the constitution, providing for the possible suspension of the membership of a member denomination. This revision awaits the approval of the major assemblies of the member denominations.

Past Policies and Present Practices

Through the twenty years of its existence NAPARC has held annual meetings, hosted by member denominations. Its Interim Committee normally meets at the time of the meeting of the Council. The interchurch relations committees of some of the member churches take the opportunity to meet just prior to or just following the Council meeting, though this has not been the policy of the CRCNA. Only on rare occasions are meetings of the Interim Committee or other ad hoc committees held between the annual meetings.

The bylaws of NAPARC provide for "annual consultations between the agencies of the various NAPARC churches." In previous years there have been

simultaneous meetings of world-missions agencies, domestic-missions agencies, church-education agencies, and sometimes, depending on the schedules of other meetings, the stated clerks of the denominations would meet to share items of mutual interest or concern. In recent years only the world-missions consultation is continuing; the other agencies are generally no longer meeting.

Ordinarily the host denomination sponsors an evening dinner with a speaker who addresses the Council on a topic of common interest. This provides the delegates with an opportunity to interact and to become acquainted. Members of agencies and other observers and guests are usually also present at the dinner.

An important part of the Council meetings is the sharing of significant decisions made by the major assembly of each denomination, discussion of major issues confronting the churches, and a season of prayer for each church.

However, an inordinately large part of the agenda of Council meetings has dealt with the question of whether or not to admit a denomination to membership or to "suspend" a denomination's membership. No denomination has shown greater perseverance and more grace in applying for membership than the Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC), a church in ecclesiastical fellowship with the CRCNA. Representatives of the EPC have attended the meetings of the Council since 1984 as observers. In 1988 that denomination applied for membership. However, because of its position with respect to such matters as women in "teaching and ruling offices" and the existence of charismatic gifts, NAPARC decided to postpone admitting it to membership. This year the EPC again requested that it be received into membership, and once more, with a 4 to 3 vote, its admission was postponed. The church has been before NAPARC for eleven years in good faith. Many hours have been spent on the matters of concern. Its representatives requested that NAPARC give them some definitive guidance and not postpone again. However, some delegates are inflexibly opposed to admitting the EPC to membership.

Reasons for Leaving NAPARC

A less than cooperative atmosphere along with a lack of productive activity prompts some in the CRCNA to question whether or not the CRCNA should remain in NAPARC as a member denomination.

NAPARC is not engaged in joint ministry that is making an impact on the ecclesiastical, social, or political worlds. It does not address the conditions of our time with a prophetic voice. It has not served to significantly strengthen the ministries of the member denominations.

It appears at times to be counterproductive, seeking more to criticize than to encourage. Although it has adopted a comity agreement, some member denominations have chosen not to abide by the agreement in church planting. It has adopted a statement on transfer of members under discipline more with a view to keeping and controlling than to assisting either the members in question or other member denominations.

Much of its agenda in the last ten years has been devoted to building fences and excluding churches rather than to reaching out toward others with a view to facilitating, discussing, consulting, and promoting cooperation.

Some in NAPARC presume that it has an authority to exercise discipline over its members. It might rightly be asked whether this assumes an authority that does not properly belong to a council. However, the differing concepts of church

government result in conflicting opinions and positions with respect to areas of authority and discipline.

It may be that the CRCNA will be asked to leave NAPARC by member denominations that disagree with certain positions of the CRCNA, such as its position regarding women in ecclesiastical office or homosexuality.

On the other hand, the CRCNA is concerned with the tolerance of or endorsement of positions held by some NAPARC churches which seem to contradict carefully studied and long-held positions of other Reformed churches with respect to the teaching of Scripture.

Reasons for Continuing in NAPARC

The Ecumenical Charter of the CRCNA states that "the Christian Reformed Church should seek rapprochement with all churches of Christ but should attach first priority to Reformed churches, particularly those churches which are Reformed as to confession, polity, and liturgy, as determined not only by their formal standards, but also by their actual practice." Although there are differences among the member denominations of NAPARC, the oneness in Christ and in confession that we share requires that we work with and toward one another rather than against and away from each other.

The charter also calls the Christian Reformed Church to "seek rapprochement with churches of Christ in the ever-widening circles of churches as circumstances and opportunities provide, fulfilling its task in keeping with the biblical principles on ecumenicity and the principles for ecumenical practice."

All the member denominations of NAPARC, except one, are churches in ecclesiastical fellowship with the CRCNA. Is it reasonable to separate from NAPARC and yet continue in that ecclesiastical relationship, or does severance from NAPARC in actuality imply and effect termination of ecclesiastical fellowship with the individual member denominations?

At this time when the Christian Reformed Churches of the Netherlands and the Reformed Churches in New Zealand have severed or suspended fellowship with the CRCNA, would we serve the cause of Christ well by taking action to perpetuate such growing division among Reformed churches?

Because NAPARC is the only Reformed fellowship of its kind in North America, we should insist on our right to belong to such an ecumenical organization, hoping that it will become and helping it to become what its own constitution claims it ought to be. It provides a forum for member denominations cooperatively to address issues relating to education, relief, justice, and other societal issues.

Furthermore, a wrong and confusing testimony is presented to the ecclesiastical world when churches of like faith sever their relationships.

Conclusion

Rather than withdrawing, the CRC should more appropriately bring its concerns to NAPARC and to other churches in ecclesiastical fellowship. It would be nobler for us to promote the agreed-upon provisions of NAPARC than to escape, or retreat, or even shake the dust off our feet.

Interchurch Relations Committee

Leonard J. Hofman, administrative secretary

APPENDIX B

Dr. Paul R. Gilchrist, Stated Clerk
Presbyterian Church in America
1852 Century Place, Suite 190
Atlanta, Georgia 30345

Dear Dr. Gilchrist:

We greet you in the name of the risen and ascended Lord.

Your letter of September 15, 1995, addressed to the Christian Reformed Church in North America, officially conveying the communication adopted by the 23rd General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America, meeting in Dallas, Texas, on June 19-23, 1995, was received by the office of the general secretary. Following review and recommendation by the Interchurch Relations Committee, Synod 1996 of the Christian Reformed Church in North America provides you with the following reply.

We appreciate the expressed desire of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) to continue in full fellowship with the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA). We are grateful that you value the relationship we have through the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC).

The CRCNA does not take lightly its relationship with churches in ecclesiastical fellowship. Our denominations have enjoyed this ecclesial relationship since 1975.

In that light we consider seriously your grief and distress over the action of the 1995 Synod of the CRCNA to permit women to hold the offices of minister and elder. We also take note of your statement that "the action of the Christian Reformed Church is in contradiction to the clear teaching of Scripture and the historic Presbyterian and Reformed confessions of faith."

As you know, for many years the CRCNA has prayerfully and carefully debated the issue of admitting women to ecclesiastical office. Although synodical decisions in recent years have not always followed a consistent pattern, it must be maintained that in every substantive decision made, the CRCNA put forth a sincere effort to be obedient to the infallible Word of God and to the church's confessional standards. Synod 1995 did not declare that one approach to the matter was right and the other wrong. With respect to the issue of whether women are to serve in the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist, it concluded that careful Reformed scholarship and obedient discipleship could bring individuals, local churches, and classes to differing perspectives and convictions, both of which honor the Scriptures as the infallible Word of God. Therefore, in the interest of both fidelity to the Scriptures and the unity of the body of Christ, Synod 1995 decided that its classes, responding to local needs and circumstances, may authorize the churches under their jurisdiction to ordain and install women in the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist (cf. *Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 733).

The CRCNA marvels at the fact that the PCA calls us to "repent and rescind." First it should be noted that our rules of procedure do not permit a subsequent synod to "rescind" the action of a previous synod. A following synod may, however, alter the stand of a previous synod by reaching 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.

More importantly, what is the sin from which the CRCNA must repent? Does this have reference to the heart-wrenching struggles experienced by the CRCNA in its desire to be faithful to the Word and the confessions? If some of our classes conclude that it is appropriate to ordain women to the specified offices, a practice followed in various ways by other denominations, the CRCNA questions the consistency of your calling our denomination to repentance while you tolerate such diversity in other denominations with whom you have an ecumenical relationship.

Furthermore, we believe that a church in ecclesiastical fellowship with the CRCNA should not instruct its Interchurch Relations Committee to "use all due process afforded them in NAPARC to remove the CRCNA from membership in NAPARC." The implications of such an act would likely lead to the termination of our formal ecclesiastical fellowship.

The CRCNA would humbly submit that there are not only a "sizable number in [our] midst who are working hard to see the CRC remain faithful to Scripture on this issue" but that this description characterizes the whole CRCNA.

Rather than straining or breaking relationships, let us strive together to understand one another, noting our differences, and let us "exercise . . . mutual concern and admonition with a view to promoting the fundamentals of Christian unity" (*Provisions of Ecclesiastical Fellowship, Acts of Synod 1974*, p. 57).

For the Christian Reformed Church
in North America

APPENDIX C

Report to Synod 1996 re the IRC Visit to the Netherlands

The undersigned were delegated and mandated by the Interchurch Relations Committee (IRC) to travel to the Netherlands to meet with three of our ecumenical partners. While the principal mandate was to meet with the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (GKN), we were pleased also to meet with the Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (CGKN) and the Nederlandse Gereformeerde Kerken (NGK).

We thank God that he watched over and cared for us in our coming and going. We felt his presence with us during the various meetings that we attended. He gave us strength to meet the demands of a heavy and intense schedule. We thank him also for enabling us to work together in a supportive and harmonious spirit.

Herewith we present our report to Synod 1996.

I. Mandate

Synod 1995 adopted the following recommendations regarding the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (GKN):

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.

2. That synod mandate the Interchurch Relations Committee to discuss with the official representatives 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.
3. That synod instruct the IRC to report regularly to synod on its dialogue with the GKN.

A subsequent meeting of the IRC on September 29, 1995, took note of these decisions and decided

1. That a delegation be appointed to go to the Netherlands at the time of the GKN General Synod, April 22-24, 1996, to
 - a. Present fraternal greetings on behalf of the CRCNA, and to
 - b. Discuss with GKN representatives the issues of concern to the CRCNA.
2. That, in the interim, in consultation with the entire IRC, the delegation prepare for the discussion by
 - a. Informing itself concerning the GKN position(s) re the issues of concern.
 - b. Identifying the points at issue that are the most troublesome.
 - c. Formulating a statement that reflects the reasons for and the nature of the CRCNA concerns.
3. That the delegation report to the IRC in sufficient time for the IRC to present a report and make recommendations to the CRCNA Synod of 1996.

At the same meeting the IRC appointed the following to serve as members of the delegation to the GKN: Dr. J.B. Hulst, convener; Dr. D. Engelhard; Dr. H. Zwaanstra.

II. Preparation—issues of concern

Early in its preparation the delegation identified *four issues of concern*:

- A. The authority of Scripture: *God met Ons* and its *Sequel*.
- B. Homosexuality, homosexuality: *Homophilia* report.
- C. Mission to the Jews, change in Church Order of the GKN.
- D. Euthanasia, an issue that surfaced in the address of Dr. R. Vissinga at Synod 1995.

Subsequently two new concerns (questions) were identified relative to our continued relationship with the GKN:

- E. What are the confessional and theological implications of the GKN's proposed federation with other churches in the Netherlands?
- F. What are the implications for the internal unity of the CRC and our other ecumenical relationships if we retain fellowship with the GKN?

The delegation completed its work and on April 8, 1996, sent its report to Dr. Leo J. Koffeman, executive secretary of the Committee for Ecumenical Relations of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands. At its meeting on April 12, 1996, the Interchurch Relations Committee of the Christian Reformed Church in North America received the same report for information.

III. Meeting with the Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland

On Friday, April 19, 1996, Dr. David Engelhard and Dr. Henry Zwaanstra met with the ecumenical deputies of the Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (CGKN) at one of their churches in Bunschoten, the Netherlands.

The meeting began with a served luncheon. During lunch we engaged in casual conversation about our respective churches and our shared history.

Following lunch we had a more formal conversation in one of the church's meeting rooms. Seven of their deputies were present. From our perspective we were there "with a view to demonstrating our sincere desire that the relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship between our denominations would continue." They had indicated, through a letter from Dr. P. den Butter, that they would be willing to meet with us "to discuss the decision of our [CGKN] synod [to terminate relations with the CRCNA] and the arguments behind that decision." The goals of both the CRCNA and the CGKN were accomplished in the meeting.

In our opening remarks we apologized for a number of things that had marred our relationship in the past few years. Most of them were due to benign neglect, but cumulatively they led the CGKN to the conclusion that the CRCNA did not value them and their concerns. They accepted our apologies and assured us that there were no hard feelings remaining.

We discussed openly and freely the concerns voiced by the CGKN concerning the CRCNA's decision regarding women in ecclesiastical office and our continuing ecclesiastical fellowship with the GKN. Before long it became clear that our continuing relationship with the GKN was more troublesome than the issue of women in ecclesiastical office, because they had judged that the GKN have left the Reformed path and are no longer a faithful church. We talked for a long time about our view of ecumenical relations, our sense of obligation to churches from a variety of traditions, and our special desire for relationships with churches of the Reformed tradition. It is our judgment that they have a more restricted idea of ecumenical relations than we do and that this fact contributed to their decision to sever relations with the CRC.

Reestablishing relations with the CGKN while we are in fellowship with the GKN seems very unlikely. One of their members did, however, request that we suggest a way to maintain contact. The CGKN categories for contact are "full correspondence" or "limited correspondence." When pressed, they were somewhat vague about the differences in the two categories. They knew, however, that neither was suitable for their relationship with the CRCNA.

In order to show good faith with our Ecumenical Charter, we believe that we should maintain contact with the CGKN with the hope that eventually full ecclesiastical fellowship may be reestablished.

IV. Meeting with the Nederlandse Gereformeerde Kerken

On Sunday, April 21, 1996, following attendance at the morning worship in the Paulus Kerk (GKN), Amstelveen, we worshiped with two congregations of the Nederlandse Gereformeerde Kerken (NGK)—one a contemporary seeker service and the other a more traditional service, although it was held in the assembly room of a college. We felt very much at home in both services and were edified by Scripture, sermon, and song.

Following the evening worship we met for supper with two of the ecumenical deputies of the NGK at the home of Rev. Alex Boshuizen. We were treated to a light supper and a heavy conversation with two brothers who are of like mind and spirit with us in most matters.

At the center of our conversation was the report they (Alex Boshuizen and Henk Geertsema) wrote regarding the CRCNA Synod 1995. The report is comprehensive and balanced.

The deputies wanted to discuss especially two matters with us. The first matter was their perception that evangelicalism is having a major influence on the CRCNA—especially the individualism and superficial theology associated with evangelicalism. Conversations with individual CRCNA representatives, as well as the debates at synod re women in ecclesiastical office and relationships with the GKN, fostered their impressions regarding these evangelical influences.

A second matter, related to the first, was their critique that we are not discussing nor asking the fundamental question(s) about the purpose and role of the church in our time. For example, while they also are critical of current trends in the GKN, they observed that our critique of the GKN is too single-issue oriented and not sufficiently focused on the foundational question of the place and task of the church in the twenty-first century. We need to engage each other as churches not solely on the correct understanding of an issue, but on our larger and more basic purpose as God's church working in God's world.

We had a good conversation and left the meeting with the satisfaction that we had been with fellow believers who share our deepest convictions and who wish to minister in God's world from a Reformed perspective. The NGK are churches in ecclesiastical fellowship with us, and we must continue to nurture our relationship with them whenever and however we are able.

V. Meetings with the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland

A. Initial meeting on April 19, 1996

Dr. D. Engelhard and Dr. H. Zwaanstra had an initial meeting with the GKN deputies for ecumenical relations on Friday afternoon, April 19, 1996. The deputies for bilateral relations, as well as the deputies for multilateral relations, were present. (Definitions: "bilateral relations" refers to contact with another denomination; "multilateral relations" refers to relationships with churches via ecumenical organizations such as the World Council of Churches [WCC] and the Reformed Ecumenical Council [REC].)

Dr. H. Weiland chaired the meeting and began the discussion by reacting to the written report the CRCNA delegation had sent in advance. Four concerns were dealt with in the report, i.e., the authority of Scripture, homosexuality, mission to the Jews, and questions of life and death (euthanasia).

The deputies were primarily concerned about the "status of the questions" they found in the report. They informed us that they have discussed many of the same questions about Scripture and homosexuality with more than one delegation from the CRC during the past decade and that they thought that most of the issues had been resolved. An additional reason they were perplexed about the questions is that their decision to adopt the REC document *Hermeneutics and Ethics* (1991-1992) has altered their position on Scripture, and this document supersedes *God met Ons* (*God with Us*) and its *Sequel*. We heard at this meeting what became a common thread in our visit: *God met Ons* is no longer the way we speak about Scripture; *Hermeneutics and Ethics* has become our new statement.

Our delegation was caught by surprise regarding the status of the *Hermeneutics and Ethics* document within the GKN. However, it turned out to be a pleasant surprise, since the REC document—even though not officially adopted by the CRCNA—gives our churches a common statement around which we can discuss new issues facing our respective churches. But more about this matter later in this report.

Many of the deputies addressed questions to us, but we had only limited time to discuss the issues at this first meeting. Even though this meeting was formal in nature and too limited in time, it did set the stage for later, more fruitful discussions, as this report will indicate.

B. Fraternal greetings, April 23, 1996

On Tuesday, April 23, 1996, Dr. David Engelhard, on behalf of the entire CRCNA delegation, presented fraternal greetings to the general synod of the GKN (see Appendix D).

1. Summary

Dr. Engelhard began the presentation by observing that “Our histories have been intertwined during the past one hundred years in ways that I believe have enriched both of our churches as well as the countries and continents in which we work and live.” He went on to note, however, that our relationship has weakened over the years because of geographical distance and because of conflict in the areas where—from the CRCNA viewpoint—the GKN “has made wrong or inadequate decisions or where she has articulated the Christian faith inaccurately.”

Engelhard then referred to the report of the GKN deputies for ecumenicity that stated, “The relationship with the Christian Reformed Church in North America appears to have improved.” He pointed out, however, that there is deep concern in the CRCNA about issues and trends in the life and practice of the GKN that trouble our ecclesiastical relationships and that there is, in fact, “greater disharmony in the CRCNA [regarding the GKN] as well as unrest among some of our other ecumenical partners.” Reference was made to recent decisions of the Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland and the Reformed Churches of New Zealand either to terminate or suspend relationships with the CRCNA; nine overtures before the CRCNA Synod 1996 asking for termination, suspension, or intensified restrictions on the relationship with the GKN; and the reaction of the CRCNA to the address given by the fraternal delegate of the GKN to Synod 1995.

Without passing judgment on the GKN delegate and his address, Engelhard simply and correctly observed that many in the CRCNA were shocked, disappointed, and disgusted because the fraternal address suggested, regarding the acceptance of homophile members, that the GKN had moved from a position of “not condemning” and “not condoning” to a position of “commending” homophile relationships in love and fidelity—and that on the basis of Scripture, e.g., Galatians 3:28.

The greetings were concluded with the observation that this may be the defining moment in the CRCNA relationship with the GKN and with a call to work together in truth as well as in unity.

2. Response

The reaction of the GKN synodical delegates to the address was mixed but largely negative. Some of the initial comments clearly reflected this negative reaction:

- a. The address did not point to reconciliation; in fact, it constituted an attack on the person of the fraternal delegate of the GKN to the CRCNA Synod of 1995.
- b. We thought that relationships with the CRCNA were improved; how do you explain the turn in the opposite direction?
- c. The spirit of the address was not so much "dialogue with us" as "examination of us."
- d. We understand Scripture differently because of our situation, our experience.

The chairman of the GKN Interchurch Relations Committee, Rev. Evert Overeem, sounded a more balanced note. He began his remarks by observing, "Nice people sometimes say harsh things." He acknowledged that an "accident" happened at the CRCNA synod in 1995. He insisted that the GKN did not send the 1995 fraternal delegate with an official message and that the GKN is not "commending"—on the basis of Galatians 3:28 or any other Scripture—"homophile relationships in love and fidelity."

Overeem went on to observe that we live in different cultures. The GKN confront secularism, while the CRCNA has to deal with fundamentalism. And this explains, in large part, why we take different approaches to issues, especially ethical issues such as homosexuality. Nevertheless, we must continue to talk about these matters. The GKN would find it difficult to talk about homosexuality in the World Council of Churches, but not in the Reformed family. "The GKN must swallow the pill it has been given and, of course, proceed to talk about the issues before us."

Even though your delegation did not agree with them, we understood the reasons for the negative reaction from the synodical delegates. At the same time, we appreciated the comments of Rev. Overeem because they provided a context in which we could at least discuss the issues we were instructed to raise in further consultations.

C. *Issues raised by the CRCNA*

1. Euthanasia

Dr. R.S.E. Vissinga, fraternal delegate from the GKN to the CRCNA Synod 1995, first brought the report entitled *The Choice between Life and Death* to the attention of the CRCNA. In his address to synod Vissinga said that the study noted "that in exceptional cases it may not be irresponsible to terminate life." As a result of this comment, the Interchurch Relations Committee included euthanasia on its agenda of issues to be discussed with representatives of the GKN's Committee for Ecumenical Relations.

A special committee comprised of representatives from the three uniting churches in the Netherlands (Together on the Way), i.e., the Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk (NHK), the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (GKN), and the Evangelisch Lutherse Kerk (ELK), produced *The Choice between Life and Death*. The joint committee deals with pastoral issues that are of common concern to the uniting churches. The report specifically addresses the unavoidable pastoral and ethical issues that arise in the medical treatment

and care of seriously handicapped newborn infants. From the perspective of the Christian faith the report attempted to assist government agencies, hospitals, Christian medical doctors, hospital chaplains, the churches, and parents in finding answers to the very difficult moral problems and choices that must be made.

An initial draft of the report was submitted to the synods of the three churches. In light of these discussions, the report was revised and placed on the agenda of a general assembly of the synods of the three cooperating churches meeting in January 1994. The general assembly then asked the synods of the three churches to ratify the assembly's action on the report.

After observing that the report had too little information on the ethical issues, the general assembly approved it as a contribution (*handreiking*) to the furthering of reflection on the pastoral and ethical questions involved in the treatment of seriously handicapped newborn infants. The assembly did not adopt the report as its official position or that of the participating synods of the churches. The general assembly asked the officers of the various synods, when presenting the report to their churches for discussion, to indicate other literature containing clearer information on the ethical issues involved in the various problems and dilemmas. The assembly also asked the officers to inform their churches of the discussions at the various synods regarding the (non)permissibility of active involvement in terminating life. The representatives of the GKN reported that, while their synod did not make a decision regarding the (non)permissibility of resorting to intentional means to end life, they would not rule out the possibility of employing such means in special cases of extreme suffering. It is at this point that the IRC delegation, while expressing appreciation of their concern for seriously handicapped newborn infants, reminded representatives of the GKN of two observations contained in our report:

- a) That we would not want to endorse a recommendation that declares "In exceptional cases it is responsible to resort to intentional means to end life."
- b) That we find it troublesome that in this discussion we find the same ambiguity we have noted in the approach to other ethical issues, e.g., the issue of homosexuality and homosexual practice.

2. Mission to the Jews

Since 1989, the Christian Reformed Church has followed with interest the changes that the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (GKN) have adopted in the Church Order regarding the relationship of the church to Jews/Israel. The changed position of the GKN is contained in Article 10 (previously Article 9) and Article 88-a (previously Article 93) of the Church Order:

Previous Text

Artikel 9

1. De taak van de dienaar des Woords is de bediening van het Woord aan de gemeente en al naar de gelegenheid eveneens de verkondiging van het evangelie aan hen, die vervreemd zijn van het evangelie, aan de Joden en aan de niet-gekerstende volken; de bediening van de sacramenten; etc. . .

Artikel 93

1. De kerken zullen zich richten tot de Joden in en zo mogelijk ook buiten Nederland om hun uit de Heilige Schrift te betuigen, dat Jezus de Christus is.
2. Dit werk zal ter hand genomen worden door de daarvoor in aanmerking komende kerken, die dat, met steun van de overige kerken, verrichten in overleg met de door de generale synode benoemde deputaten voor de verkondiging van het evangelie onder Israel en overeenkomstig de door haar vastgestelde bepalingen.

Article 9

1. The task of the minister of the word is the ministry of the word to the church, and likewise as opportunity affords, the proclamation of the gospel to those who are estranged from the gospel, to the Jews, and to non-Christianized people; the ministry of the sacraments; etc.

Previous Text

Article 93

1. The churches shall direct themselves to the Jews within and as far as possible also outside the Netherlands in order to testify to them that Jesus is the Christ.
2. This work shall be undertaken by the churches designated for this task, and who perform it with the support of the other churches and in consultation with the synodical deputies charged with overseeing the proclamation of the gospel to Israel and in accordance with the synodically established regulations.

Present Text

Artikel 10

De taak van de dienaar des Woords is de bediening van het Woord aan de gemeente en al naar de gelegenheid eveneens de verkondiging van het Evangelie aan wie het Evangelie niet kennen; de bediening van de sacramenten; etc. . .

Artikel 88-a

1. De kerken zijn geroepen gestalte te geven aan de onopgeefbare verbondenheid van de gemeente van Christus met het volk Israel en te zoeken naar gelegenheid voor Joden en Christenen tot wederzijds getuige zijn;
2. Ten behoeve van dit werk benoemt de generale synode deputaten voor Kerk en Israel met de opdracht de kerken met adviezen te dienen en tevens namens de kerken deel te nemen aan het overleg tussen Joden en Christenen.

Article 10

1. The task of the minister of the word is the ministry of the word to the church, and likewise as the opportunity affords, the proclamation of the gospel to those who do not know the gospel; the ministry of the sacraments; etc.

Present Text

Article 88-a

1. The churches are called upon to give shape to the indissoluble tie that the church of Christ has with the people of Israel and to seek out opportunity for Jews and Christians to witness to each other.
2. To assist in this work the General Synod appoints deputies for Church and Israel with the mandate to serve the churches with advice and at the same time on behalf of the churches to take part in the consultation between Jews and Christians.

The new statement in the Church Order regarding the task of a minister has eliminated specific mention of the work of proclamation to the Jews, but it does explicitly mention that the minister's task is "the proclamation of the gospel to those who do not know the gospel." The missiological article (93/88-a) has eliminated explicit mention about directing evangelistic attention to the Jews "to testify to them that Jesus is the Christ." It has replaced the prescription with a call to the churches "to give shape to an indissoluble tie" between the church and the people of Israel and "to seek opportunities" for Jews and Christians to "witness to each other."

The expression "to witness to each other" is open to various interpretations. Some might conclude that this suggests that both witnessing parties have the same goals and chief aim and that together they find a mutually agreed upon path to achieve it. Others may conclude that in witnessing to each other it must be clearly stated that salvation is impossible apart from faith in Jesus Christ. Between these two positions there is a variety of other possible positions which allow for salvation on the basis of implicit faith in Christ, a morally upright life, or living by the best light a religious person may possess.

The GKN seem mindful of these difficulties, and in the most recent publication of the Church Order (1993) a "guideline" (*bepaling*) for Article 88-a has been included. The guideline is as follows:

Bepaling bij artikel 88-a van de kerkorde

en heen gegroeide wederzijdsheid in de relaties - formeel en in andere verbanden - tussen Joden en Christenen biedt ruimte voor overleg en gesprek, waarin Christenen voor hun deel getuige zijn in woord en daad van hun geloof in Jezus Christus als de levende Heer.

Mijdsrecht 1991, Art. 56

[Translation: Over the years a reciprocity in relationships has grown both formally and informally between Jews and Christians which provides opportunity for consultation and conversation in which Christians are witnesses in word and deed to their belief in Jesus Christ as the living Lord.]

The guideline states clearly that "in word and deed" Christians "are witnesses to their belief in Jesus as Lord and Savior." In whatever circumstances or occasions, when Christians are together with Jews, they are acting as witnesses to Christ.

In conversation with the GKN's deputies for Church and Israel, the IRC delegation discussed with them the following questions:

- Do the GKN still believe that Jews *must* acknowledge Jesus Christ for salvation, or is there another way of salvation for Jews?
- Are there two covenants or one?
- Are repentance from sin and faith in Jesus mandatory for Jews?
- Is the Jewish existence as the elect people of God in history self-contained, without any necessary or essential relationship to Jesus Christ?
- Does the church have any obligation to evangelize Jews?
- Is the evangelizing purpose and goal of the church effectively accomplished through a mutual witness to each other?
- Is the role of the proclamation of the gospel in the mission of God enhanced or diminished in dialogue?
- Does the GKN position adequately take into consideration the Pauline assertion that "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" (Rom. 10:13)?

- Does the GKN position deny or diminish the Pauline assertion that the “hardened” Jews (cf. Rom. 11:7) will be engrafted again “if they do not persist in unbelief” (Rom. 11:23)?
- Does the GKN position give sufficient weight to Peter’s words to the Sanhedrin: “Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12)?

These questions were intended to help us discern whether the GKN have altered their theology of mission or their missiological strategy. Our discussions revealed that in some ways both their theology and their strategy have been altered.

When the IRC reported to synod on this matter in 1995, it quoted a statement from the GKN *Bulletin* (December 1991):

The change [in the Church Order of the GKN] 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. (*Agenda for Synod 1995*, p. 237)

Dissociating themselves from “mission among the Jews” has occurred gradually, systematically, and intentionally within the GKN. In some ways this paralleled a similar situation in the CRCNA, which since 1971 has worked with the principle that mission to the Jews “does not imply a specific method other than confronting the Jews with a personal and collective witness to the saving grace of God in Christ by the church” (*Acts of Synod 1971*, p. 59).

We heard repeatedly that the redemptive work of Jesus Christ is crucial and necessary for the salvation of the Jews. The gospel, we were told, is good news for all peoples, including the Jews. Jesus’ work for humanity is unique and important for Jews and gentiles alike.

The GKN representatives made a distinction between the “faith of Jesus” and “faith in Jesus.” Because Jews, as the continuation of the Old Testament people of God, have the Old Testament Scriptures, they can have the “faith of Jesus” but not necessarily “faith in Jesus.” Their faith is shaped by the Old Testament, and they look to the same God that Jesus did for their hope and deliverance.

Strategically the GKN are reticent to confront the Jews in Europe with a challenge to believe in Jesus. The Holocaust and Christians’ general unwillingness to defend and protect Jews has produced a guilty conscience within the churches of Europe. Confronting Jews with the gospel and expecting them to abandon their Judaism are viewed by Jews, as well as by many Christians, as yet another way to eliminate Jews in Europe.

Social, historical, and psychological factors have made the *church* a stumbling block to Jews. At least for this generation the church needs to find new ways to witness and to build trust between Christians and Jews. The GKN representatives said that the church in Europe was the “soil in which hate to the Jews was bred,” and that hate needs to be overcome. Therefore, the deputies for Church and Israel are mostly involved in an *educational* task within the churches to change attitudes toward Jews and to replace misinformation with correct information. In addition, they also participate in some official group discussions with Jewish organizations.

In this historical, social, and psychological context a new theology regarding the relationship between church and Israel has been and is being

forged. The GKN continue to wrestle with the question(s) regarding the relationship and task of the church toward the Jews in post-Holocaust Europe. Some GKN representatives admitted that they had more questions than answers, but they still work toward solutions.

In summary, we can categorize the GKN's reasons for not speaking about "mission to the Jews" in the following way:

- a. Historical reason: The church is a stumbling block to post-Holocaust Jews, and requiring conversion is viewed as a way of eliminating Jews.
- b. Theological reasons
 - Engaging in "mission to the Jews" would be treating them like Hindus, Buddhists, or Muslims and not recognizing the covenantal relationship between the Old Testament people of God and the New Testament church.
 - An older GKN missiology and theology re the Jews was polemical and supersessionistic, and this view needed to be purged from the church.
 - Uncertainty about the exegesis of Romans 9-11, and especially the statement "so all Israel will be saved," has led the GKN to be cautious about what it requires from Jews.

We learned during our visit that the GKN have been involved in work among the Jews since 1895. A recently published book chronicles that history. The book's English title is *A Church in Search of Israel: History of the Committee on Church and Israel of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands 1895-1995*. This book speaks about such matters as the mission work attempted, the education provided, the contacts made, the theology examined, the disappointments experienced, and the successes accomplished. One reads here a realistic account of struggles and not a triumphalistic presentation of history.

It has sometimes been said that the GKN promote two different ways of salvation, one for Christians and one for Jews. Even though their position is not yet completely worked out, they consistently disavow a two-way theory. We would urge them to assert more clearly that Jews need to repent and believe in Jesus, for "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" (Rom. 10:13, said about the Jews of Paul's day). Furthermore, they need to acknowledge that the "hardened" (Rom. 11:7) Jews will be engrafted again only "if they do not persist in unbelief" (Rom. 11:23).

In his comments about the book referred to above (*A Church in Search of Israel*), Rabbi Van Voolen remarked that "for you [GKN] to walk the road to God it is not necessary [for you] to convert Jews." The rabbi respects the GKN for honoring the identity and religion of the Jews. From the perspective of those who believe that the church finds the key to its identity in the great commission and promises which Jesus left us before his ascension (cf. Matt. 28:18-20), the remarks of the rabbi are very faint praise.

We applaud the GKN for their efforts to ameliorate the effects of the Holocaust and to diminish the perception of the church as a stumbling block to the Jews. Even though the gospel itself has been from early times a "stumbling block to the Jews," there is no excuse for the messenger of the gospel to become a cause for offense. Nonetheless, we believe that the GKN have become too cautious in their presentation of the gospel to the Jews, and we pray that they find the necessary courage to present Jesus as the Messiah

for all people, especially for those who are sons and daughters of Abraham according to the flesh.

3. Homosexuality and homosexual practice

The CRCNA and the GKN do not agree on homosexuality and homosexual practice. The CRCNA's position is stated in Report 42 and the decisions of Synod 1973. Briefly stated, the CRCNA takes its starting point in the creation of human beings as male and female (Gen. 1) and the institution of marriage (Gen. 2). The CRCNA affirms with the historic Christian church and with the vast majority of Christian churches today that intimate, physical sexual relations are morally appropriate only within the bond of marriage. Homosexual orientation is considered a consequence of the brokenness of the human condition (the fall) and a distortion of creational life as God intended it. The CRCNA interprets Old Testament and New Testament texts dealing with homosexual activity as clear prohibitions of homosexual practice. They express and defend God's original intention regarding human sexuality; they affirm the universal moral order and thus bind Christian consciences today. The CRCNA, therefore, judges homosexual practice to be unnatural (contrary to the intention of the Creator and the creational and moral order), immoral, and sinful.

Pastoral concerns occasioned and, to some extent at least, have continued to shape the GKN's position on homosexuality. Suicides and threats of suicide by students tortured with their homosexuality led the GKN Synod of Delft in 1979 to issue a pastoral letter on the subject. The synod did so in spite of the fact that, after many years of study, it could not reach a conclusion on the teaching of Scripture on the matter. The pastoral letter said the intention of the synod was to foster discussion among heterosexual and homosexual members, not to render an ethical or moral judgment.

The Synod of Delft did, however, take a position on homosexuality and its practice. The letter stated, "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" (quoted in *Homophilia*, p. 1). Two years later the GKN's Commission on Church and Theology submitted a report, *Homophilia*, to the Synod of Bentheim. This report presented the biblical data supporting the 1979 synodical decision and pastoral letter. According to the Committee on Church and Theology, *Homophilia* continues to provide the biblical basis and support of the GKN's position on homosexuality and homosexual practice.

The GKN has refrained from making an official ethical judgment on the permissibility or nonpermissibility of homosexual practice. The moral judgment is left to persons with homosexual dispositions to decide in their consciences before God. The GKN do, however, permit and tolerate in their membership and offices homosexuals who are living together in a relationship of love and faithfulness.

The GKN interpret the biblical passages dealing with homosexual practice differently than the CRC does. Moses and Paul, representatives of the GKN argue, did not know homosexuality as we know it today. They did not know

that the disposition may be inherited, nor did they understand it psychologically. Moreover, when Moses or Paul comments on homosexual behavior, it is always in the context of pagan, idolatrous worship or sexual lust and promiscuity. The Scriptures condemn licentious, promiscuous homosexual behavior by persons whose sexual disposition and orientation are hetero- rather than homosexual. The Scriptures, they argue, do not answer the question whether or not intimate sexual relations are permitted between persons of the same sex living in a monogamous relationship of love and fidelity. Members of the GKN's Committee on Church and Theology insisted that their church also affirms without qualification that the human body is the temple of the Holy Spirit.

The CRCNA's conscience was so burdened by the GKN's decision on homosexuality that already in 1983 the synod decided to restrict terms of ecclesiastical fellowship with the GKN. Pulpit and table fellowship no longer applied. The GKN have come to accept these restrictions.

Our present impasse on homosexuality cannot be easily and quickly removed. The GKN refused to discuss their position either in committee meetings or in plenary sessions at the REC Assembly, Athens, 1992. They gave two reasons for their unwillingness to do so. The first was pastoral. Homosexual brothers and sisters in the GKN have been hurt through public debate, and the GKN do not want to create uncertainty about their churches' acceptance of them. Therefore, the GKN did not want to reopen the discussion. The second was the fact that the GKN consider further discussion pointless unless hermeneutical issues are addressed, because it is impossible to deal with homosexuality without going into the deeper hermeneutical issues. Members of the GKN Committee for External Ecumenical Relations informed the CRCNA delegation that these two conditions also apply to any conversations with the CRCNA regarding the GKN position on homosexual practice.

The GKN are, however, willing to discuss the hermeneutical issues and possibly, in the light of this dialogue, to reconsider their position. The CRCNA delegation on several occasions received the impression that the GKN are very willing to discuss and enter into dialogue with the CRCNA regarding a wide range of issues, as long as our churches are committed to staying together and discussing as equal partners who are seeking the truth. The GKN are not, however, interested in being interrogated by the CRCNA for the purpose of testing their faithfulness in doctrine and practice. Likewise, the GKN are not willing to discuss their views on homosexual practice under threat of church discipline. They are, however, willing to discuss the ethical and hermeneutical issues supporting their position.

In conclusion, it should be noted that the GKN live in a highly secular society. By a vote of 80 to 60 the Dutch parliament recently asked the government to grant homosexual domestic partners the same benefits and privileges married couples enjoy. Churches in the Netherlands are also much more tolerant of homosexual partnerships than are the churches in North America and in other parts of the world.

4. The authority of Scripture

As indicated above, our discussion concerning the authority of Scripture began in the initial orientation meeting on April 19, 1996.

In this meeting the GKN deputies for ecumenical relations informed us that they were concerned about the "status of the questions" they found in our report. They informed us that they thought most of the issues regarding the authority of Scripture (and homosexuality) had been resolved, since they had discussed many of the same questions with more than one delegation during the past ten years. Another reason they were perplexed about our questions had to do with their decision to adopt the REC document *Hermeneutics and Ethics*. They pointed out to us that the adoption of *Hermeneutics and Ethics* not only altered their position on Scripture, but it also superseded *God met Ons* and its *Sequel*. Again and again we were told: *God met Ons* is no longer the way we speak about the authority of Scripture; *Hermeneutics and Ethics* has become our new statement.

We responded to their first concern by acknowledging, as our report also indicates, that during the past decade more than one delegation from the CRCNA had discussed with them their position on the authority of Scripture. The initial discussion centered around *God met Ons* (1980) and the concept of "the relational nature of truth." The CRCNA delegation reported that much progress was made in understanding the GKN position; however, there were many questions that remained unanswered. In an endeavor to respond to those unanswered questions, the GKN prepared and published a *Sequel* (1985) to *God met Ons*. In response to the *Sequel*, the CRCNA had noted many commendable features. At the same time, it had evoked many critical questions that continued to appear unanswered. And, as we pointed out to the deputies, many of those questions are still unanswered.

As to their second concern, we indicated that we were surprised not so much that they had adopted *Hermeneutics and Ethics* but that their adoption of *Hermeneutics and Ethics* had altered their position and that it superseded *God met Ons* and its *Sequel*. When the GKN dealt with *God met Ons* in 1980, they did not adopt the report as their official position on the authority of Scripture but judged the report to be "a clear and confessionally responsible exposition of the way in which the Scripture wants to be understood so that we can hear what the Word of God has to say to us" (*God met Ons*, p. 1). As a result, the decisions of the GKN regarding Scripture (*God met Ons*, the *Sequel*, and *Hermeneutics and Ethics*) are not to be seen as the adoption of official positions, but as the approval of guidelines, pastoral advice to the churches concerning the understanding and authority of the Scripture. This means, of course, that the position of the GKN regarding Scripture is in no way fixed but is undergoing continual revision and change.

The introduction to *Hermeneutics and Ethics* states,

The document on the following pages was adopted by the Reformed Ecumenical Council at its Assembly in Athens, 1992. The document is a revision of a study committee report presented to the Assembly. In 1988 the REC appointed the committee "to formulate a positive position on the authority and interpretation of Scripture, including hermeneutical questions relating to the use of biblical data in Christian ethics" (*Acts 1988:123*). After revision, the Assembly declared this document "its own position on the use of hermeneutics to arrive at scripturally obedient answers to current ethical challenges and problems." The Assembly further recommended the statement to its member churches for their own use. It suggested they share it with their national and regional ecumenical bodies. The Assembly also requested member churches to inform the REC of critical issues this statement was applied to in their own experience.

When the GKN decided to adopt *Hermeneutics and Ethics*, they approved a document that is summarized as follows:

- a. The Scriptures, as the only rule or *kanon* of Christian faith and life, are to be received and understood in terms of their center: God's work of salvation in Jesus Christ.
- b. The Scriptures, as God's Word of truth, are trustworthy throughout, reflecting both the trustworthiness of God himself and the variety of ways in which he reveals truth.
- c. Although there are difficult passages in the Bible and there is need for responsible exegesis and preaching, the Scriptures are clear on all matters necessary for salvation.
- d. Although tradition and nature are not without value for discerning the will of God, the Scriptures alone are sufficient for knowing the way of salvation.
- e. Though clear and sufficient, the Scriptures are in need of interpretation.
- f. Biblical exegesis and therefore the discriminating use of available exegetical methods are of great value.
- g. All parts of the Bible must be read in the light of the whole, and no aspect of Scripture may be played off against another.
- h. Tradition can play not only a negative but also a positive role in interpreting Scripture.
- i. The interpretation of Scripture is a task that must not be undertaken in an individualistic or sectarian spirit but as an integral part of the worldwide fellowship of believers.
- j. Through preaching and other forms of the administration of the Word, the Scriptures have pervasively shaped the ethos of the Reformed tradition.
- k. It is only by the illumination of the Spirit that the Scriptures can be correctly understood and applied to new situations.
- l. It is to be expected that the unity of faith should come to expression in different life-style decisions in different times and circumstances.
- m. Ethical reflection in the Reformed tradition has emphasized such basic biblical themes as discipleship, self-denial, the image of Christ, new life in Christ, gratitude, the third use of the law, prayer, conscience, the kingdom of God, and many more.
- n. In the Reformed understanding, love does not stand in tension with the commandments but comes to expression in observing them.
- o. Although fulfilled in Christ, the Old Testament laws still have validity as pointers to the will of God and for the Christian life.
- p. The freedom of the Christian life is an honor and entails the recognition and exercise of responsibility in ethical decision making.
- q. In applying scriptural ethical directives to concrete life situations, it is necessary to take into account contextual factors in the believer's situation, such as prevailing customs, institutions, and traditions.
- r. In relating Scripture to these contextual factors, it is necessary to maintain the priority of Scripture, the legitimacy of contextual factors, and the need for spiritual discernment.

(Hermeneutics and Ethics, pp. 26-27)

Given the fact that the GKN have adopted the REC document as their own and that they view this document as superseding *God met Ons* and the *Sequel*, we were able, in part at least, to understand why their deputies were perplexed concerning "the status of the questions" in our report. Still, we felt it necessary to place these questions before them because the questions reflect the concerns raised in our churches.

In our report we had indicated that the primary problems with *God met Ons* were

- a. Its presentation of the dubious relational nature of truth.

- b. Its tendency to slip into "Scripture criticism" in dealing with matters of "historical-critical studies."
- c. The problematic nature of its hermeneutic "point of entry."
- d. Its serious misrepresentation of the classic Reformed confessional position and theological tradition on the doctrine of Scripture.

Concerning the *Sequel* our report raised such critical questions as the following:

- a. Does Scripture become the Word of God only in the act of hearing it in faith?
- b. Can we speak of a deposit of revelation conveyed to us by Scripture?
- c. Can anything be said about revelation *an Sich*?
- d. Do they assume the religious neutrality of the methods of critical biblical scholarship?

In the discussion of these matters, the GKN deputies emphasized, once again, that they had viewed *God met Ons* as a "good confessional statement," that the *Sequel* was a further "study" of the issue of the authority of Scripture, and that *Hermeneutics and Ethics* should be seen as their "present position" on the authority and interpretation of Scripture.

They insisted that the relational concept of truth had been withdrawn in the *Sequel*. "We have gone away from a relational view of the truth because of our fight, our struggle, with relativism," they said. Having adopted *Hermeneutics and Ethics* as their "present position," they acknowledge that there is a deposit of revelation conveyed in the Scripture and that we can say something about revelation *an Sich*, because the Scripture "is the Word of God." At the same time, they would insist that it is impossible to speak of revelation without faith. That does not mean that the authority of Scripture is dependent upon faith, but it is not recognized without faith. The same point was made in regard to the "miracle" of the resurrection. They would say that the resurrection has occurred but that it is known and acknowledged only through faith. And, as concerns the "historical critical interpretation" of Scripture, they want to avoid "Scripture criticism" and, therefore, would not want to take the position that the interpretation of Scripture is "neutral" activity. Instead they would want, again, to emphasize the importance of faith, both in the acknowledgment and interpretation of Scripture.

Your delegation agreed, as a result of our discussion, that there are positive signs in the direction that is being taken by the GKN in their consideration of the authority and interpretation of Scripture. We also agreed, however, that there continue to be important questions about their position, especially as it relates to "the use of biblical data in Christian ethics." Our consultations regarding such issues as homosexuality and euthanasia, for example, indicate that there are significant differences that are both hermeneutical and exegetical in nature.

D. *Issues raised by the GKN*

- 1. Bilateral relations with CRC "daughter" churches

The GKN informed us in advance that they wished to talk to us about the

permissibility of a "sister" church of the CRCNA entering into a bilateral relationship with a "daughter" church of the CRCNA. The Christian Reformed Churches of the Philippines and Myanmar have approached the GKN and are requesting ecclesiastical fellowship (bilateral relations) with them.

We informed the GKN deputies that we have no policy regulating such relationships and that they are free to pursue these relationships if they wish. Furthermore, we informed them that it has been the policy of CRCNA World Missions to encourage "daughter" churches to take independent initiative to enter into ecclesiastical fellowship with churches of their choice. There is, therefore, no hindrance from our perspective to their continuing conversations with these churches.

2. Capital punishment

In 1991 the GKN were contacted by Amnesty International, asking for a radical study and analysis of the issue of capital punishment. The GKN are now carrying out that study and wondering if the CRCNA has engaged in any recent consideration of this matter.

We shared with the deputies the 1981 Report of the Capital Punishment Study Committee and the following declarations by the CRCNA Synod 1981 concerning the matter of capital punishment:

- a. Modern states are not obligated by Scripture, creed, or principle to institute and practice capital punishment.
- b. The Scriptures acknowledge the right of modern states to institute and practice capital punishment.
- c. The Scriptures require that if capital punishment is exercised, it be exercised only with utmost restraint.

We also informed the deputies that, to our knowledge, there has been no recent official, public debate regarding this issue in the CRCNA.

VI. Summary

A. Review

By way of review we would observe that, while questions and difficulties remain regarding the application of Scripture to ethical issues, the GKN appear to be moving in a positive direction concerning the *authority of Scripture*. As to the matter of *homosexuality* and homosexual life-style, it is clear that the CRCNA and the GKN do not agree. The GKN are, however, willing to discuss or dialogue concerning this issue, but not in the context of being examined and/or subjected to ecclesiastical discipline. Concerning *mission to the Jews*, the GKN reject the two ways to salvation approach but appear to be too hesitant in their presentation of the gospel to the Jews. It is difficult to report clearly on the GKN position regarding *euthanasia*, since this matter is still under consideration; but it should be noted that the GKN have not officially endorsed "intentional" euthanasia.

B. Ecumenical difficulties

Our meetings with the GKN and the other ecumenical experiences of the IRC during 1995-1996 indicate that involvement in ecumenical relationships has become increasingly problematic in the late twentieth century. Tensions and

discussions within denominations create barriers to beneficial contact and meaningful relationships between denominations.

General ecumenical difficulties are exacerbated in connection with the GKN because of their commitment to church-union plans (*Together on the Way / Samen op Weg*) with the Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk and the Evangelisch Lutherse Kerk. The end result of this process will be a federated church with a common church order, coordinated ministries, blended/merged congregations, and joint synods, though each church will retain some separate identity.

Within the union churches there are differing ways of maintaining inter-church relationships. The GKN have both bilateral and multilateral relationships, but the NHK has only multilateral relations. Since these differences have not been resolved, the way we will relate to the GKN in the future is uncertain and needs to remain flexible.

We offer this report as an initial fulfillment of the mandate of Synod 1995 and with the prayer that it will assist the Christian Reformed Church in North America in the fulfillment of its calling to promote the unity of the church in harmony with the demands of Scripture and the Reformed confessions.

Humbly submitted,
Dr. David H. Engelhard
Dr. John B. Hulst
Dr. Henry Zwaanstra

APPENDIX D

To the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands
Greetings from the Christian Reformed Church in North America

Dear brothers and sisters:

I bring you the greetings of the Christian Reformed Church in the name of our triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. As churches, our histories have been intertwined during the past one hundred years in ways that have enriched both the Gereformeerde Kerken and the Christian Reformed Church, as well as the countries and continents in which we work and live.

Those, like me, who are fourth-generation Dutch immigrants to North America have to work very hard to learn and remember anything about the ecclesial relationship between our two churches. First-generation family members usually continue contact with siblings and relatives in faraway places. Second-generation cousins often know about each other because their parents teach them the family tree. Third and fourth generation relatives, however, usually ignore each other because of lack of memory. If it is to be otherwise, it requires a concentrated effort to piece together the family tree. And so, too, it is with church families. Some of our CRC members are still closely linked with family in the GKN, but most of our members know very little about our relationship and our history.

In my own experience I remember hearing from my grandfathers the names of Kuyper (Abraham) and Bavinck (Herman), who gave intellectual and spiritual vigor to the Dutch Calvinist tradition. From my theological professors I

learned about the Ridderboses—Jan, Nico, and Herman; about Berkouwer; Schippers; Verkuyl; and others. The struggles over the theology of the proclamation and interpretation of historical texts gave prominence in my experience to the names of B. Holwerda, K. Schilder, M.B. Van't Veer, C. Veenhof, and others who debated the merits of "redemptive-historical" preaching over "exemplar" preaching. Through these and other ways the intellectual and spiritual vigor of Dutch Calvinism made its way into the faith and thinking of my generation even though many of us never knew a word of Dutch until we studied it in college.

Members of the CRC sometimes refer to the GKN as our "mother" church. The perception of our closeness over the years and our dependence on you for theological assistance in the early years of the twentieth century has fostered this mother/daughter metaphor. As a daughter church we were helped again and again by your churches to maintain a confessionally Reformed position in the midst of the liberal and fundamentalist controversies which raged in North America in the early twentieth century. The pragmatism of North America was counteracted by the principled, confessional thinking of our Reformed relatives in the Netherlands, who strengthened and deepened our thinking.

The closeness of the mother/daughter relationship has weakened over the years, in part because of the geographical and generational distances between us. At some point we became "sister" churches, and instead of a dependent relationship we began to have a more interdependent relationship—each assisting the other. While our relationship has not been plagued by sibling rivalry, in recent years we have had our share of sibling conflict. The CRC has identified some areas where it believes that its sister (the GKN) has made wrong or inadequate decisions and where it has articulated the Christian faith inaccurately. This sibling conflict has strained our relationship.

Your deputies for ecumenicity note in their report to this synod that "the relationship with the Christian Reformed Church in North America appears to have improved." One sign of that improved relationship may be the conversation and consultation about ministry and agency work which Dr. Peter Borgdorff, executive director of ministries in the CRC, had with representatives of the GKN in May 1995. Some may see the 1995 CRC report about the GKN and the Interchurch Relations Committee's recommendation not to terminate ecclesiastical fellowship with the GKN as further evidence of an improved relationship. The IRC report was reviewed by your deputies before it was submitted to our synod, and they judged it to be a fair and careful assessment of the developments within your churches and between our churches. Even though the report raised many concerns about the GKN's position on a number of issues, our IRC recommended and Synod 1995 decided to continue a restricted ecclesiastical fellowship with the GKN. The continuing, and even increasing, unrest in the CRC about our relationship as well as the mandate of Synod 1995 undergirding our visit painfully remind us that the relationship between our churches has not improved as much as the above indicators may suggest.

Synod 1995 mandated the Interchurch Relations Committee "to discuss with the official representatives 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." The grounds given for this mandate are instructive:

- 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).

The response received to the decision of Synod 1995 regarding the relationship of our churches was not anticipated. The decision has resulted in increased disharmony in the CRC as well as unrest among some of our other ecumenical partners. The Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland and the Reformed Churches of New Zealand have either terminated or suspended relationships with us due in part to our continuing relationship with you. Synod 1996 of the CRC will have on its agenda nine overtures (seven from classes, two from councils) asking it to intensify its restrictions on the relationship with the GKN or to suspend or terminate that relationship.

The strong reaction in the CRC was fueled by the address your fraternal delegate presented to our Synod 1995. Your deputies refer to his speech as a "frank picture (*openhartig beeld*) of the situation in the GKN" in which he referred to his own experiences in Kampen regarding the "acceptance of homophile members." It did not surprise the CRC synod that GKN congregations have accepted homophile members, because the 1995 IRC report mentioned it, as had many other reports in the past. What shocked, disappointed, and dismayed many of us in the CRC was your representative's explicit biblical justification for accepting homophile members.

Your fraternal delegate's presentation introduced an unexpected barrier into our relationship. We had been led to believe over the years that the GKN neither condemned "homophilial relationships in love and fidelity" nor condoned them. Even though we have judged your position to be biblically and morally weak, we have gained some understanding of why you think the way you do.

Last summer, however, your representative seemed to suggest that your churches have now moved from a position of "not condemning" and "not condoning" to a position of actually commending "homophilial relationships in love and fidelity" as a gift from God. Justification for commending homophilial relationships was found in Galatians 3:28, about which your representative said,

Where believers are true to each other in love, and are committed to the edification of Christ's church, the apostle's words become true that in Christ there is neither male nor female, slave nor free, Jew nor Greek—and I might add, neither hetero nor homo [emphasis added].

Our delegation is here to discuss this and other matters with your representatives. If the synod itself wishes to speak to the issue just mentioned and to give us a message to carry to North America, our churches would be most pleased.

My remarks have been a bittersweet mixture—fond memories of a mutually beneficial relationship and the vivid realization that our relationship has been and continues to be marked by sharp differences. Siblings often fight and reconcile so that their relationship is not permanently affected. Sometimes, however, irreconcilable differences drive brother away from brother and sister from sister. Sometimes the siblings live at a distance and ignore each other. Sometimes they make a public declaration that they want nothing to do with each other. The CRC and the GKN have tried to avoid both of these ways of dealing with each other. But now pressures are mounting for us to go our separate ways and to sever relationships. This course of action is being recommended even by those who have previously discouraged such action.

Some think this visit is a defining moment in our relationship. Whether that is true or not we have no way of knowing at this time. We do know, however, that the church of Jesus Christ (including the Christian Reformed Church and the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland) is called to both truth and unity. Let us work together to maintain both of them.

We pray that our triune God will give you patience and wisdom to transact the business of your agenda and to do his work faithfully in the world.

Dr. David H. Engelhard, General Secretary
Christian Reformed Church in North America

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OVERTURES AND COMMUNICATION

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OVERTURES

Overture 78: Rule Gender-Sensitive Language Changes in the Belgic Confession and Canons of Dort to Be Out of Order

Classis Hudson overtures synod to rule the Worship Committee's recommendations re gender-sensitive language in the Belgic Confession and Canons of Dort to be out of order until the churches at large have had the opportunity to determine whether or not the recommended changes are substantial.

Ground: Church Order Article 47.

Classis Hudson
Donald P. Wisse, stated clerk

Overture 79: Not to Adopt Gender-Sensitive Changes Proposed for the Belgic Confession

I. Background

We readily agree that, regarding the Belgic Confession and the Canons of Dort, in a number of instances one could indeed speak of a "male bias" that appears to downplay the equal standing that women have before God. Therefore, even though these are historic documents, we believe some changes to be appropriate and possible without alteration of the historical content.

But the same cannot be said for all the changes that are being proposed in these two documents. There are even some theological questions involved in some of the changes. Presenting them to synod for adoption without the churches having opportunity to take a closer look at these changes seems inappropriate.

There is also the question of inconsistent use of Scripture translations, a practice that seems to be tailored more to what we want a passage to mean than to what it actually says.

The following overture refers only to the Belgic Confession, since time did not permit a close review of the Canons of Dort, but similar problems may well exist with the proposed changes in that confession.

II. Overture

Classis Huron overtures synod not to adopt all the gender-sensitive language changes proposed for the Belgic Confession because these proposed changes go far beyond merely providing a more gender-sensitive translation of this historic document.

Grounds:

- A. Some of the changes are not faithful translations of Scripture even though presented as direct quotations (see Arts. 3, 14, 18, and 26).
- B. The addition of Eve's name to Adam's in Articles 15 and 16 amounts, among other things, to a theological change.
 - 1. Only Adam is considered a covenant head in Scripture (see Rom. 5:15-17 and I Cor. 15:22).
 - 2. The language of Scripture should be the language of our confessions.
- C. Some of the changes are unwarranted in a historic document.
 - 1. Substituting "Israel" for "the early fathers" in Article 18 is less than accurate.
 - 2. The change in Article 36 is another such example.
- D. There is a marked inconsistency in the replacement of the generic term "man." It is variously changed to "humankind," "humanity," and "human beings" (see Arts. 9, 12, 14, 17, and 24).

Classis Huron

Hilbert Rumph, stated clerk

Overture 80: Reject Recommended Change in Rules for Synodical Procedure

I. Background

The present rules for synodical procedure allow delegates on the speaker's list to make their comments after a motion to cease debate has passed. Once the question has been called for, most delegates on the speaker's list either pass or make their comments brief and to the point. The Committee to Design a One-Calendar-Week Synod proposes to change this procedure (see *Agenda for Synod 1996*, p. 241). It recommends that, when a motion to cease debate has passed, no further speakers be allowed. This change may mean that a delegate who has listened carefully to others, has waited patiently on the speaker's list, and has been recognized as being on that list by the chair will be denied the opportunity to make a contribution or even to ask for clarification on some aspect of the issue prior to voting. We believe that the disadvantages of this proposal outweigh the advantages.

II. Overture

Classis Toronto overtures synod to reject the change recommended in Rule VIII, J, 5 of the Rules for Synodical Procedure.

Grounds:

- 1. The amount of time that will be saved is in fact negligible.
- 2. The rule change penalizes those who listen to a debate with care before sharing their insight.
- 3. It encourages motions to cease debate immediately after someone has made an effective speech for one side or the other, thereby cutting off the opportunity for balanced response.
- 4. If we err in debate, particularly on issues that test the unity of the denomination, we ought to do so on the side of generosity.

Classis Toronto

John Tenyenhuis, stated clerk

COMMUNICATION

Communication 5: Classis Rocky Mountain

At its March meeting Classis Rocky Mountain received a request from Luctor Christian Reformed Church, Luctor, Kansas, for permission to call and share a minister with Prairie View Reformed Church (RCA). Having considered the background, the rationale, and the Church Order concerns, Classis Rocky Mountain rendered the following decisions, which it communicates to Synod 1996.

In response to Luctor CRC's request for advice regarding the possibility of sharing a minister with credentials in another denomination, Classis Rocky Mountain offers the following advice:

1. That classis support in concept the proposal for a shared pastor between Prairie View Reformed Church and Luctor Christian Reformed Church. We commend these churches for a creative plan.
2. That classis endorse the outline for implementing a shared-pastor arrangement as submitted to Classis Rocky Mountain on March 5, 1996, via the classical credentials for Luctor CRC.
3. That if the minister called to these congregations is a CRC pastor (or wishes to become a CRC pastor), such a pastor will be called in accordance with the relevant Church Order articles and synodical regulations concerning the calling of a pastor.
4. If the pastor to be called is an RCA pastor, the process is not quite as clear. The Church Order of the Christian Reformed Church does not presently address such an issue, but we believe that the door is left open just a bit.
5. Presently the RCA is in ecclesiastical fellowship with the CRC. This fellowship entails the possibility of pulpit exchange, including administration of the sacraments, between the two denominations.
6. Synodical regulations allow pastors in our foreign-mission churches to hold dual membership—in the CRC and in the local indigenous church.
7. Based on the above, we recommend that classis, by way of exception, allow Luctor CRC to accept as a communicant member in the CRC a minister of the RCA, should he be called. We furthermore recommend that such a call entail that the pastor be accepted and installed as a teaching elder in the church. The minister, as a member and an elder of Luctor CRC, could and ought to represent the Luctor congregation at the broader assemblies of the CRC.

8. That Luctor CRC maintain contact with the general secretary of the Christian Reformed Church concerning the above arrangements. The Luctor CRC, in consultation with the classical interim committee of Classis Rocky Mountain, may make minor adjustments in the above arrangements as needed. Should this arrangement be implemented through the calling of an RCA pastor, classis should overture synod to make a formal synodical declaration that such an arrangement is an allowable practice in the CRC by way of exception.

Classis Rocky Mountain

Meindert Bosch, stated clerk

Note: The synodical advisory committee to which this communication is assigned will be provided with a copy of the Luctor CRC's request to Classis Rocky Mountain.

FINANCIAL REPORTS

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The Back to God Hour/CRC-TV

Operating Budget Fiscal Year 1996-97

	Fiscal 1994/95 Actual	Fiscal 1994/95 Budget	Fiscal 1996/96 Budget	Fiscal 1996/97 Proposed
INCOME:				
Ministry Share	\$4,419,470	\$4,544,500	\$4,543,240	\$4,463,350
% of Total Income	55.3%	50.5%	50.0%	54.5%
Other Gift Income:				
Ministry Support	\$3,197,191	\$3,680,500	\$3,793,850	\$3,170,250
Television	58,877	175,000	130,000	57,000
Total Gift Income	\$3,256,068	\$3,855,500	\$3,923,850	\$3,227,250
% of Total Income	40.8%	42.8%	43.2%	39.4%
Other Income:				
Legacies	\$179,963	\$425,000	\$450,000	\$350,000
Other	130,119	175,000	175,000	155,000
Total Other Income	\$310,082	\$600,000	\$625,000	\$505,000
% of Total Income	3.9%	6.7%	6.9%	6.2%
TOTAL INCOME	\$7,985,620	\$9,000,000	\$9,092,090	\$8,195,600
EXPENDITURES:				
Program Services:				
English	\$2,579,280	\$2,683,500	\$2,632,240	\$2,501,500
Spanish	406,816	446,000	443,850	349,000
Portuguese	366,478	230,000	230,000	366,500
Arabic	498,100	551,000	530,500	342,250
French	332,383	374,000	338,250	247,750
Indonesian	100,597	143,000	128,000	107,250
Japanese	612,971	458,500	478,500	571,000
Chinese	461,151	435,000	453,750	482,350
Russian	206,313	187,000	227,500	192,000
Television	2,131,187	2,364,000	2,398,500	2,053,000
Total Program Services	\$7,695,276	\$7,872,000	\$7,861,090	\$7,212,600
% of Total	89.0%	87.5%	86.5%	88.0%
Support Services:				
Management	\$305,404	\$363,500	\$366,000	\$312,500
Fund Raising	538,501	564,500	580,000	597,500
Capital & Other	111,182	200,000	285,000	73,000
Total Support Services	\$955,087	\$1,128,000	\$1,231,000	\$983,000
% of Total	11.0%	12.5%	13.5%	12.0%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$8,650,363	\$9,000,000	\$9,092,090	\$8,195,600
NET SURPLUS (DEFICIT)	(\$664,743)	\$0	\$0	\$0

**Operating Budget
Fiscal Year 1996-97**

	Fiscal 94-95 Actual	Fiscal 94-95 Budget	Fiscal 95-96 Budget	Fiscal 96-97 Proposed
INCOME:				
Ministry Share	\$2,722,813	\$2,900,000	\$2,725,000	\$2,725,000
% of Total Income	6.4%	6.7%	5.9%	5.3%
Other Gift Income:				
Annual Fund Gifts	2,200,000	2,200,000	2,200,000	2,700,000
Other Gifts	71,340	76,000	71,000	0
Total Gift Income	2,271,340	2,276,000	2,271,000	2,700,000
% of Total Income	5.3%	5.3%	4.9%	5.2%
Other Income:				
Tuition	35,877,446	36,545,800	39,617,700	44,575,800
Investment	577,422	513,700	539,500	539,500
Other	1,079,197	851,300	917,700	917,700
Total Other Income	37,534,065	37,910,800	41,074,900	46,033,000
% of Total Income	88.3%	88.0%	89.2%	89.5%
TOTAL INCOME	42,528,218	43,086,800	46,070,900	51,458,000
EXPENDITURES:				
Program Services:				
Instructional	13,596,876	13,837,500	14,722,200	16,198,000
Research	245,324	285,400	194,500	197,400
Public Service	111,386	100,000	121,400	129,200
Academic Support	3,500,859	3,668,900	4,151,600	4,591,400
Student Services	3,080,232	3,073,200	3,454,300	3,612,800
Student Aid	9,597,157	9,781,100	10,453,100	11,853,800
Total Program Services	30,111,834	30,746,100	33,097,100	36,582,400
% of Total Expenditures	70.9%	71.4%	71.8%	71.1%
Support Services:				
Management - General	8,752,839	8,823,800	9,162,500	10,301,600
Fund Raising	742,615	714,900	772,800	848,300
Plant Operations	2,686,721	2,278,000	2,513,500	2,948,000
Debt Service	203,386	524,000	525,000	777,700
Total Support Services	12,385,561	12,340,700	12,973,800	14,875,600
% of Total Expenditures	29.1%	28.6%	28.2%	28.9%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	42,497,395	43,086,800	46,070,900	51,458,000
NET SURPLUS (DEFICIT)	\$30,823	\$0	\$0	\$0

Calvin Theological Seminary

Operating Budget Fiscal Year 1996-97

	Fiscal 94-95 Actual	Fiscal 94-95 Budget	Fiscal 95-96 Budget	Fiscal 96-97 Proposed
<u>INCOME:</u>				
Ministry Share	\$1,762,056	\$1,980,800	\$1,917,200	\$1,989,300
% of Total Income	60.7%	62.9%	57.8%	57.0%
Other Gift Income:				
Annual Fund Gifts	327,343	315,300	469,000	469,000
Church Offerings	33,221	55,000	55,000	55,000
Total Gift Income	360,564	370,300	524,000	524,000
% of Total Income	12.4%	11.8%	15.8%	15.0%
Other Income:				
Tuition	690,281	720,500	793,100	889,100
Investment	63,300	63,300	63,300	63,300
Other	28,055	12,000	21,500	21,500
Total Other Income	781,636	795,800	877,900	973,900
% of Total Income	26.9%	25.3%	26.4%	27.9%
TOTAL INCOME	2,904,258	3,146,900	3,319,100	3,487,200
<u>EXPENDITURES:</u>				
Program Services:				
Instructional	1,204,501	1,243,000	1,301,400	1,378,900
Public Service	49,706	50,400	51,800	54,000
Academic Support	355,320	356,000	363,000	388,500
Student Services	187,963	258,800	217,100	216,700
Student Aid	110,632	107,600	150,300	168,800
Total Program Services	1,908,122	2,015,800	2,083,600	2,204,900
% of Total Expenditures	63.6%	64.2%	62.8%	63.2%
Support Services:				
Management - General	795,010	811,100	893,900	905,700
Fund Raising	118,981	130,100	132,700	142,400
Plant Operations	177,541	183,500	208,900	234,200
Total Support Services	1,091,532	1,124,700	1,235,500	1,282,300
% of Total Expenditures	36.4%	35.8%	37.2%	36.8%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	2,999,654	3,140,500	3,319,100	3,487,200
NET SURPLUS (DEFICIT)	(\$95,398)	\$6,400	\$0	\$0

**Operating Budget
Fiscal Year 1996-97**

	Fiscal 94-95 Actual	Fiscal 94-95 Budget	Fiscal 96-96 Budget	Fiscal 96-97 Proposed
<u>INCOME:</u>				
Ministry Share	\$204,000	\$238,000	\$247,000	\$221,000
% of Total Income	3.6%	4.1%	3.7%	3.3%
Other Gift Income:				
Donations/Offerings	\$66,000	\$75,000	\$189,000	\$125,000
Total Gift Income	\$66,000	\$75,000	\$189,000	\$125,000
% of Total Income	1.2%	1.3%	2.8%	1.9%
Other Income:				
Sales Revenue	\$5,234,000	\$5,216,000	\$6,074,000	\$6,251,000
Miscellaneous	177,000	262,000	194,000	126,000
Total Other Income	\$5,411,000	\$5,478,000	\$6,268,000	\$6,377,000
% of Total Income	95.2%	94.6%	93.5%	94.8%
TOTAL INCOME	\$5,681,000	\$5,791,000	\$6,704,000	\$6,723,000
<u>EXPENDITURES:</u>				
Program Services:				
Banner	\$1,497,000	\$1,571,000	\$1,554,000	\$1,673,000
Education (EWE)	3,555,000	3,385,000	3,928,000	3,919,000
World Lit Ministries	382,000	411,000	484,000	410,000
Total Program Services	\$5,434,000	\$5,367,000	\$5,966,000	\$6,002,000
% of Total	91.0%	89.8%	91.0%	91.3%
Support Services:				
Management & General	\$539,000	\$608,000	\$590,000	\$570,000
Total Support Services	\$539,000	\$608,000	\$590,000	\$570,000
% of Total	9.0%	10.2%	9.0%	8.7%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$5,973,000	\$5,975,000	\$6,556,000	\$6,572,000
NET SURPLUS (DEFICIT)	(\$292,000)	(\$184,000)	\$148,000	\$151,000

Christian Reformed Home Missions

Operating Budget Fiscal Year 1996-97

	Fiscal 84-85 Actual (A)	Fiscal 84-85 Budget (A)	Fiscal 85-86 Budget	Fiscal 86-87 Proposed
INCOME:				
Ministry Share	\$4,802,000	\$4,930,000	\$5,800,000	\$5,800,000
% of Total Income	59.0%	62.4%	67.7%	69.8%
Other Gift Income:				
Missionary Support	\$728,000	\$665,000	\$800,000	\$800,000
Churches and Individuals	666,000	997,000	957,000	852,000
Total Gift Income	\$1,394,000	\$1,662,000	\$1,757,000	\$1,652,000
% of Total Income	17.1%	21.0%	20.5%	19.9%
Other Income:				
Legacies	\$95,000	\$95,000	\$250,000	\$0
Consulting, Conferences	1,001,000	894,000	373,000	352,000
Other	851,000	320,000	385,000	496,000
Total Other Income	\$1,947,000	\$1,309,000	\$1,008,000	\$848,000
% of Total Income	23.9%	16.6%	11.8%	10.2%
TOTAL INCOME	\$8,143,000	\$7,901,000	\$8,565,000	\$8,300,000
EXPENDITURES:				
Program Services:				
Est. Church Development	\$1,759,000	\$2,219,000	\$2,415,000	\$2,331,000
New Church Development	5,138,000	4,608,000	4,950,000	4,847,000
Land Grants and Capital	29,000	15,000	25,000	25,000
Total Program Services	\$6,926,000	\$6,842,000	\$7,390,000	\$7,203,000
% of Total	85.5%	88.3%	86.3%	86.8%
Support Services:				
Management and General	\$781,000	\$534,000	\$650,000	\$601,000
Resource Development	396,000	375,000	525,000	496,000
Total Support Services	\$1,177,000	\$909,000	\$1,175,000	\$1,097,000
% of Total	14.5%	11.7%	13.7%	13.2%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$8,103,000	\$7,751,000	\$8,565,000	\$8,300,000
NET SURPLUS (DEFICIT)	\$40,000	\$150,000	\$0	\$0

(A) Ten Months

Christian Reformed World Missions

Operating Budget Fiscal Year 1996-97

	Fiscal 94-95 Actual	Fiscal 94-95 Budget	Fiscal 95-96 Budget	Fiscal 96-97 Proposed
INCOME:				
Ministry Share	\$4,915,758	\$5,133,500	\$4,930,000	\$5,288,000
% of Total Income	41.8%	39.5%	40.0%	42.4%
Other Gift Income:				
Above Ministry Share	\$4,332,509	\$5,285,501	\$4,721,650	\$4,731,000
Estate Gifts	327,956	521,750	574,550	565,000
Total Gift Income	\$4,660,465	\$5,807,251	\$5,296,200	\$5,296,000
% of Total Income	39.6%	44.8%	43.0%	42.5%
Other Income:				
Field Receipts	\$2,072,811	\$1,865,194	\$1,874,281	\$1,798,241
Miscellaneous	111,454	206,379	222,918	93,528
Total Other Income	\$2,184,265	\$2,071,573	\$2,097,199	\$1,891,767
% of Total Income	18.6%	15.9%	17.0%	15.2%
TOTAL INCOME	\$11,760,488	\$13,012,324	\$12,323,399	\$12,473,767
Transfers from Foundation	602,058	415,250	220,000	220,000
TOTAL INCOME & TRANSFERS	\$12,362,544	\$13,427,574	\$12,543,399	\$12,693,767
EXPENDITURES:				
Program Services:				
Africa	\$3,101,397	\$3,303,278	\$2,943,578	\$2,863,442
Asia	4,408,987	4,371,281	4,280,089	4,199,485
Latin America	3,180,053	3,540,396	3,284,265	3,342,632
Europe/Russia	385,566	557,246	444,306	447,935
N.A. Education	365,028	354,638	387,691	389,234
Total Program Services	\$11,439,031	\$12,126,819	\$11,339,929	\$11,242,728
% of Total	89.2%	89.6%	89.1%	88.6%
Support Services:				
Management General	\$780,483	\$783,559	\$801,974	\$839,317
Support Raising	606,156	620,831	591,317	611,722
Total Support Services	\$1,386,639	\$1,404,390	\$1,393,291	\$1,451,039
% of Total	10.8%	10.4%	10.9%	11.4%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$12,825,670	\$13,531,209	\$12,733,220	\$12,693,767
NET SURPLUS (DEFICIT)	(\$463,126)	(\$103,635)	(\$189,821)	\$0

Christian Reformed World Relief Committee

Operating Budget Fiscal Year 1996-97

	Fiscal 94-96 Actual	Fiscal 94-96 Budget	Fiscal 95-96 Budget	Fiscal 96-97 Proposed
<u>INCOME:</u>				
Ministry Share	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
% of Total Income	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Other Gift Income:				
General	\$6,065,000	\$7,903,000	\$7,087,000	\$7,067,000
Disaster	1,575,000	892,000	609,000	609,000
Total Gift Income	\$7,640,000	\$8,795,000	\$7,696,000	\$7,676,000
% of Total Income	80.2%	83.2%	84.1%	83.4%
Other Income:				
Grants	\$1,791,000	\$1,685,000	\$1,410,000	\$1,453,000
Interest/Other	94,000	82,000	48,000	74,000
Total Other Income	\$1,885,000	\$1,777,000	\$1,458,000	\$1,527,000
% of Total Income	19.8%	16.8%	15.9%	16.8%
TOTAL INCOME	\$9,525,000	\$10,572,000	\$9,154,000	\$9,203,000
<u>EXPENDITURES:</u>				
Program Services:				
International	\$5,874,000	\$5,837,000	\$5,085,000	\$5,066,000
Domestic	1,327,000	1,336,000	1,198,000	1,189,000
Disaster	1,897,000	1,728,000	564,000	557,000
OCI	133,000	156,000	313,000	381,000
Total Program Services	\$9,231,000	\$9,057,000	\$7,160,000	\$7,193,000
% of Total	81.4%	81.2%	78.2%	78.2%
Support Services:				
Resource Development	\$1,051,000	\$1,088,000	\$1,009,000	\$1,018,000
Administration	1,061,000	1,004,000	825,000	821,000
Operating Reserve	0	0	160,000	171,000
Total Support Services	\$2,112,000	\$2,092,000	\$1,994,000	\$2,010,000
% of Total	18.6%	18.8%	21.8%	21.8%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$11,343,000	\$11,149,000	\$9,154,000	\$9,203,000
NET SURPLUS (DEFICIT)	(\$1,818,000)	(\$577,000)	\$0	\$0

Statement of Operations
Fiscal Year 1996-97

	Fiscal 1993 Actual	Fiscal 1994 Actual	Fiscal 1996 Actual
<u>INCOME:</u>			
Ministry Share	\$0	\$0	\$0
% of Total Income	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Other Income:			
Interest	\$516,995	\$581,676	\$717,228
Donations	5,062	0	0
Total Other Income	\$522,057	\$581,676	\$717,228
% of Total Income	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
TOTAL INCOME	\$522,057	\$581,676	\$717,228
<u>EXPENDITURES:</u>			
Administrative	\$92,342	\$95,898	\$106,800
Interest	339,700	370,199	425,889
Provision for Losses	50,000	50,000	50,500
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$482,042	\$516,097	\$583,189
NET SURPLUS (DEFICIT)	\$40,015	\$65,579	\$134,039

Denominational Services

Operating Budget Fiscal Year 1996-97

	Fiscal 94-95 Actual	Fiscal 94-95 Budget	Fiscal 95-96 Budget	Fiscal 96-97 Proposed
INCOME:				
Ministry Share	\$1,539,187	\$1,696,000	\$1,539,187	1,539,187
% of Total Income	83.1%	89.3%	68.6%	62.7%
Other Gift Income:				
Individual Contributions	\$7,382	\$3,000	\$5,000	5,000
Free to Serve Project	\$0	\$0	\$68,955	474,632
Fellowship Fund	0	40,000	40,000	50,000
Total Gift Income	7,382	43,000	113,955	529,632
% of Total Income	0.4%	2.3%	5.1%	21.6%
Other Income:				
Prod. Ser. & Central Oper:				
Revenue for Ser. Rendrd	6,115,128	0	5,596,101	5,687,992
Direct Cost of Service	5,986,745	0	5,166,184	5,426,010
Net Margin from Services	128,383	0	429,917	261,982
Building Assessment	137,483	145,000	145,000	110,000
Other Income	38,818	16,000	16,000	16,000
Total Other Income	304,684	161,000	590,917	387,982
% of Total Income	16.5%	8.5%	26.3%	15.8%
TOTAL INCOME	1,851,253	1,900,000	2,244,059	2,456,801
EXPENDITURES:				
Program Services:				
Synodical Services	\$360,499	\$375,000	\$389,058	390,548
Study Committees	23,051	25,000	25,000	24,000
Service Committees	67,308	93,500	129,477	87,823
Assistance & Grants	42,360	55,000	80,300	41,700
Free to Serve	27,375	0	68,955	474,632
Korean Ministries	26,021	0	33,752	30,328
Total Program Services	\$548,614	\$548,500	\$726,542	1,048,831
% of Total	28.5%	30.7%	36.6%	44.2%
Support Services:				
General Management	\$504,145	\$537,300	\$497,576	484,456
Building Services	534,812	377,200	333,316	414,517
Debt Service	318,052	285,000	408,594	395,000
Resource Dev - Fellshp Fd	22,541	40,000	19,365	29,005
Total Support Services	\$1,379,550	\$1,239,500	\$1,258,851	1,322,978
% of Total	71.5%	69.3%	63.4%	55.8%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	1,928,164	1,788,000	1,985,393	2,371,809
NET SURPLUS (DEFICIT)	(76,911)	112,000	258,666	84,992

Fund for Smaller Churches

Operating Budget Fiscal Year 1996-97

	Fiscal 94-95 Actual (10 MO)	Fiscal 94-95 Budget (10 MO)	Fiscal 95-96 Budget	Fiscal 96-97 Proposed
<u>INCOME:</u>				
Ministry Share	\$674,628	\$776,867	\$852,000	\$970,000
% of Total Income	89.2%	99.5%	99.4%	99.5%
Other Gift Income:				
Offerings & Gifts	\$1,529	\$2,500	\$3,000	\$3,000
% of Total Income	0.2%	0.3%	0.4%	0.3%
Other Income:				
Interest Income	\$3,830	\$1,667	\$2,000	\$2,000
% of Total Income	0.6%	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%
TOTAL INCOME	\$679,987	\$780,834	\$857,000	\$975,000
<u>EXPENDITURES:</u>				
Program Services:				
Subsidy Payments	\$677,292	\$663,333	\$757,500	\$785,000
Moving Expenses	\$6,784	\$12,500	\$16,000	\$16,000
Educational Allowances	3,689	7,083	7,000	7,000
Auto Reimbursement	49,764	58,850	70,000	70,000
Biennial Regional Conf.	0	0	0	50,000
Total Program Services	\$737,509	\$741,768	\$850,500	\$928,000
% of Total	99.1%	98.2%	97.6%	97.8%
Support Services:				
Management & General	\$6,604	\$13,958	\$21,000	\$21,000
	0	0	0	0
Total Support Services	\$6,604	\$13,958	\$21,000	\$21,000
% of Total	0.9%	1.8%	2.4%	2.2%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$744,113	\$755,724	\$871,500	\$949,000
NET SURPLUS (DEFICIT)	(\$64,126)	\$25,110	(\$14,500)	\$26,000

Pastoral Ministries

Operating Budget Fiscal Year 1996-97

	Fiscal 94-95 Actual	Fiscal 94-96 Budget	Fiscal 95-96 Budget	Fiscal 96-97 Proposed
INCOME:				
Ministry Share	\$1,031,839	\$1,202,203	\$1,081,839	1,081,839
% of Total Income	85.2%	86.3%	86.3%	87.8%
Other Gift Income:				
Voluntary Contributions	\$136,224	\$190,350	\$146,376	125,376
Total Gift Income	\$136,224	\$190,350	\$146,376	125,376
% of Total Income	11.2%	13.7%	11.7%	10.2%
Other Income:				
Legacies	\$0	\$0	\$0	0
Pension Reimbursement	\$22,373	\$0	\$25,000	25,000
Other Income	20,648	0	500	0
Total Other Income	\$43,021	\$0	\$25,500	25,000
% of Total Income	3.6%	0.0%	2.0%	2.0%
TOTAL INCOME	1,211,084	1,392,553	1,253,715	1,232,215
EXPENDITURES:				
Program Services:				
Chaplain	\$398,377	\$0	\$423,061	374,395
Race Relations	219,039	0	259,689	252,056
Disability Concerns	104,676	0	115,228	114,359
Pastor-Church Relations	78,436	0	117,162	67,989
Abuse Prevention	44,230	0	50,133	45,623
General PMA Program	0	1,077,920	0	108,300
Total Program Services	\$844,758	\$1,077,920	\$965,273	962,722
% of Total	76.5%	77.4%	77.0%	78.2%
Support Services:				
Administrative Support	\$259,598	\$314,983	\$250,160	229,299
Fund Raising	0	0	38,884	39,155
Total Support Services	\$259,598	\$314,983	\$289,044	268,454
% of Total	23.5%	22.6%	23.0%	21.8%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	1,104,356	1,392,903	1,254,317	1,231,176
NET SURPLUS (DEFICIT)	106,728	(350)	(602)	1,039

Ministers' Pension Funds

Operating Budget 1997

	CANADA (CAN \$)	UNITED STATES (US \$)	Combined (US \$)
INCOME:			
Ministry Share	\$566,826	\$1,532,528	\$1,946,311
% of Total Income	73.5%	65.8%	67.1%
Participant Assessments:	\$204,538	\$804,275	\$953,588
% of Total Income	26.5%	34.4%	32.9%
TOTAL INCOME	\$771,364	\$2,336,803	\$2,899,899
EXPENDITURES AND ACCRUED LIABILITIES:			
Program Services:			
Actuary-Determined Pension Cost ***	\$661,740	\$2,615,694	\$3,098,764
% of Total	83.1%	88.2%	87.4%
Support Services:			
Allocated Fees	\$25,000	\$50,000	\$68,250
Investment/Advisory Fees	85,000	275,000	\$337,050
Other Expenses	25,000	25,000	\$43,250
Total Support Services	\$135,000	\$350,000	\$448,550
% of Total	16.9%	11.8%	12.6%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$796,740	\$2,965,694	\$3,547,314
NET SURPLUS (DEFICIT)	(\$25,376)	(\$628,891)	(\$647,415)

*** "Actuary-determined pension cost" represents the calculation of current cost based on various assumptions including life expectancy and annual investment income. This valuation is completed every three years by independent actuaries. The most recent calculation was done in January 1994.

REPORT OF SYNOD 1996

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SYNODICAL PRAYER SERVICE 1996

June 10, 1996

Seymour Christian Reformed Church
Grand Rapids, Michigan

Welcome to Seymour Church for the Prayer Service which opens Synod 1996 of the Christian Reformed Church in North America. Our congregation is honored to host the delegates and friends of synod and pleased to lead you in prayer. May the Spirit of God bless you as you intercede for and make decisions on behalf of the body of Christ.

At the asterisks (*) please stand, if you are able.

WE REJOICE IN THE LORD

Prelude..... "Praise to the Lord, the Almighty"
Manz, Freudenburg, Burkhardt, Cherwien

Introit "Beautiful River"
R. Lowry, arr. R. De Cormier

Shall we gather at the river, where bright angel feet have trod,
With the crystal tide forever flowing by the throne of God?

Refrain:

Yes, we'll gather at the river, the beautiful, the beautiful river,
Gather with the saints at the river, that flows by the throne of God.

E'er we reach the shining river, lay we ev'ry burden down,
Grace our spirits will deliver and provide a robe and crown.

Refrain.

Soon we'll reach the shining river, soon our pilgrimage will cease;
Soon our happy hearts will quiver with the melody of peace.

Refrain.

*Call to Worship (from Revelation 5)

Leader: O Lord, you are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals
because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men
for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. You
have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God,
and they will reign on the earth.

People: **Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth
and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!**

Leader: Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, singing,

People: **To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power for ever and ever. Amen.**

Leader: Receive the greeting of our God: Grace and peace to you from our God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

People: **AMEN.**

*Mutual Greeting

*Opening Hymns "Holy, Holy, Holy"

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!
Early in the morning our song shall rise to thee.
Holy, holy, holy! merciful and mighty,
God in three persons, blessed Trinity.

Holy, holy, holy! All the saints adore thee,
casting down their golden crowns around the glassy sea.
Cherubim and seraphim falling down before thee,
who wert and are and evermore shall be.

"You Are Worthy"

You are worthy, you are worthy, you are worthy, O Lord,
You are worthy to receive glory, glory and honor and power:
for you have created, have all things created,
for you have created all things,
and by your pleasure they were created;
You are worthy, O Lord! (*Sing twice, second time a cappella.*)

"Our God Reigns"

How lovely on the mountains are the feet of him,
who brings good news, good news,
announcing peace, proclaiming news of happiness:
our God reigns, our God reigns.
Our God reigns, our God reigns,
our God reigns, our God reigns.

WE CONFESS OUR SIN AND FIND RENEWAL

Prayer of Confession (in unison)

Father, we seek to enter this meeting of synod with clean hands and pure hearts. We seek to do your will, to follow your call, to be obedient to you. Tonight, we confess to you that our hands are not clean and that our hearts are not pure. Our love for the church falls short of your love. Our understanding of the scope and breadth of the kingdom is often too narrow. We prefer our own will and our own ways. Forgive us and purify us. Lead us in the way you would have us go. May we look to you for wisdom and understanding and may we know your forgiveness and peace. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Hymn "Have Thine Own Way, Lord"
Psalter Hymnal 287

WE SPEND TIME IN PRAYER

Prayers for World Missions. Rev. W. Thomas De Vries

Anthem "Rise, Heart, Thy Lord Is Risen"
D. Burton/text by G.Herbert

Rise, heart; thy Lord is risen.
Sing his praise without delays,
Who takes thee by the hand
That thou mayst likewise with him rise.
Awake my lute, and struggle for thy part
With all thy art.
The cross hath taught all wood to resound his name
Who bore the same.
His stretched sinews taught all strings
What key is best to celebrate this most high day.
Alleluia!

Prayers for Home Missions Rev. Alan A. Arkema

WE REJOICE IN HIS WORD

*Hymn of Preparation "Spirit of the Living God"
Psalter Hymnal 424
(stanza 2, a cappella)

Scripture Acts 2:42-47

Sermon "A Child's Advice to Synod"

Prayer of Application

*Hymn "Jesus, with Your Church Abide"
Psalter Hymnal 508

WE SPEND TIME IN PRAYER

Prayers for Youth Ministries Mr. John Vanderstoep

Prayers for Educational Ministries Mrs. Mary Bouwma

Prayers for Synod 1996 Rev. L. Bryce Mensink

Close prayer with "Lord, Listen" *Psalter Hymnal 625*

Lord, listen to your children praying,
Lord, send your Spirit in this place;
Lord, listen to your children praying,
send us love, send us power, send us grace.
(Sing twice, second time a cappella)

WE BRING OUR GIFTS

Offertory Prayer

Offering Christian Reformed World Relief Committee
Christian Reformed World Missions
Christian Reformed Home Missions

Choral Offertory..... "Blow Ye the Trumpet"
K. Mechem

Blow ye the trumpet, blow.
Sweet is thy work, my God, my King.
I'll praise my Maker with all my breath.
O happy the man who hears.
Why should we start and fear to die,
With songs and honors sounding loud.
Lovely appearance of death.

WE LEAVE REJOICING

*Parting Blessing

*Choral Anthem..... "Obey the Spirit of the Lord"
Arr. R. De Cormier

I'm gonna sing when the spirit says sing,
I'm gonna shout, pray, and obey the spirit of the Lord.

I'm gonna sing when the spirit says sing, hallelujah,
I'm gonna obey the spirit of the Lord.

I'm gonna shout when the spirit says shout, hallelujah,
I'm gonna obey the spirit of the Lord.

Let the earth be glad, O let the sea be moved,
Let the fields be filled, be filled with joy,
Obey the spirit of the Lord.

I'm gonna pray when the spirit says pray,
I'm gonna obey the spirit of the Lord.

For the earth is his, yes, he made the hills,
And he sits on a heavenly throne.

I'm gonna sing when the spirit says sing,
I'm gonna shout, pray, and obey the spirit of the Lord.
Amen!

Organ Postlude "Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow"
Burkhardt

Participants from Seymour Christian Reformed Church

Minister Rev. Gerald L. Zandstra, Pastor of Preaching and Administration

Liturgist Rev. L. Bryce Mensink, Pastor of Congregational Life

Those Leading in Prayers Mr. John Vanderstoep, Director of Youth Ministries
Mrs. Mary Bouwma, Director of Educational Ministries
Rev. Alan C. Arkema, Pastor of Visitation
Rev. W. Thomas De Vries, Associate Pastor

Organist..... Mrs. Sharon Snoeyink, Director of Music

Guest Musicians

Calvin College Alumni Choir
Mr. Randall Van Wingerden, assistant conductor
Mrs. Thea Hoekman, pianist
Mrs. Kathy Schuurman Sikkema, soprano
Dr. Christopher McGrath, tenor
Mr. William Van Ee, handbells

We invite you to enjoy fellowship and refreshments in the lower level of the church following the service.

The Prayer Room during synod is in the Fine Arts Building, Room 105, the Chamber Music Room. Members of Seymour Christian Reformed Church will be present to welcome those who gather for prayer and to convene prayers each day at 7:45 a.m., 12:45 p.m., and 6:45 p.m. The prayer time will usually last from fifteen to twenty minutes. Prayer-request boxes will be located near the entrances into the auditorium for your requests. Other groups and individuals are welcome to use the Prayer Room at any time.

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MINUTES OF SYNOD 1996

TUESDAY MORNING, JUNE 11, 1996

First Session

ARTICLE 1

President pro tem Rev. L. Bryce Mensink, pastor of congregational life at Seymour Christian Reformed Church, Grand Rapids, Michigan, the convening church, announces *Psalter Hymnal* 465, "Sing Praise to God Who Reigns Above." Mrs. Sharon Snoeyink serves as organist for the opening session.

The assembly is called to order. The president pro tem reads Philippians 2:1-11 and briefly addresses synod, challenging the delegates "in humility [to] consider others better than yourselves" (Phil. 2:3) and "even in disagreement, to honor one another." The president pro tem leads in prayer and announces *Psalter Hymnal* 322, "God, the Father of Your People." 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 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 1996

Classis	Ministers	Elders
Alberta North	John A. Ooms Cornelius Vriend	Job Den Otter Lambert Tuininga
Alberta South	Cornelius Pool Alvin Beukema	Hessel Kielstra Fred Bosma
Arizona	Jeffrey A. Dykema Ray T. Yeo	Kenneth W. Vanderlei John Van Egmond
Atlantic Northeast	Alvern Gelder William G. Vis	Bruce Klanderma Cornelius Van De Weert
B.C. North-West	Pieter L. Hendriks John Koster	John A. Vanderhoek Jan Lok
B.C. South-East	John Boonstra Gerrit Veeneman	Ken Elgersma Fred Gietema
California South	Randal K. Young Bart van Eyk	John Koen Cecil Gosliga
Central California	George G. Vink Case Admiraal	Harry H. Sonke Robert G. den Dulk
Chatham	Jake Kuipers Kornelis de Koning	Jack Geschiere Henry J. Mulder

Classis	Ministers	Elders
Chicago South	Henry B. Vanden Heuvel Cornelius J. De Boer	Herman R. Westerveld Roger C. Lefers
Columbia	Jerald D. Lion Donald J. Wyenberg	Richard J. Anema Ivan R. Imig
Eastern Canada	Allan C. Groen S. John Gerrits	Hilbrent Vander Heide Martin Vanden Berg
Florida	Mark A. Davies Ronald G. Baker	James A. Rozendal Ben Lambers
Georgetown	Joel R. Boot Robert C. Heerspink	Warren T. Faber Floyd Brouwer
Grand Rapids East	Archie L. Vander Hart Scott E. Hoezee	Sidney J. Jansma, Jr. Kenneth L. Andree
Grand Rapids North	Gerald A. Koning Henry Admiraal	Benjamin J. Van Houten Cornelius J. Bykerk
Grand Rapids South	John G. Van Ryn David J. Deters	Paul Ribbens Samuel C. Dykstra
Grandville	Curtis A. Walters Calvin D. Compagner	Dick J. Palsrok Robert J. Alles
Greater Los Angeles	David R. Koll Andrew Vanden Akker	Dick Van Weerthuisen Maurice Slegers
Hackensack	Jochem Vugteveen Ricardo E. Orellana	Bernard A. Van Essendelft
Hamilton	John Postuma Barton P. Velthuisen	Bruce Dykstra Frank Ritskes
Heartland	Jack M. Gray John A. Vermeer	Loren J. Veldhuisen Harvey G. Obbink
Holland	Norman J. Thomasma John C. Hutt	Randy C. Dokter John M. Zinkand
Hudson	LeRoy G. Christoffels John G. Keizer	Donald D. Holwerda Joseph H. Meyer
Huron	Jacob A. Quartel Harry J. Bierman	Vic Vander Molen Hilbert Rumph
Iakota	Jelmer P. Groenewold Daniel W. De Groot	Arthur L. Attema Henry De Lange
Illiana	Bernard J. Haan Laryn G. Zoerhof	John G. Klompmaker Phillip L. Van Noord
Kalamazoo	Leonard J. Vander Zee Mark A. Van Haitsma	Roger L. Klok Loren J. Dykstra
Lake Erie	George F. Vander Weit Richard J. Hamstra	Fred C. Visser Jack Kremers
Minnesota North	James T. Petersen Ronald R. Sprik	Donald L. Jabaay G. Hank Wesselink
Minnesota South	Willard H. De Vries Rodney D. Gorter	Clarence Van Meekeren Jerry L. Blom
Muskegon	Larry D. Baar Leonard P. Troast	Edward D. Knoll Roger A. Westraete
Niagara	Harry A. Vander Windt Richard J. de Lange	Cornelis Van Soelen John Shriver
Northcentral Iowa	David A. Zylstra David J. Dykstra	Arie P. Olsen Clarence R. Henze
Northern Illinois	Vernon G. Vander Zee John F. Schuurman	Martin LaMaire Hendrik Sliekers
Northern Michigan	Merlin N. Buwalda Duane J. Timmermans	Donald L. Boes John Rozeveld
Pacific Northwest	Kenneth D. Koeman John A. Byker	Calvin R. Bratt Harold E. Terpstra
Pella	J. Mark Beach Lawrence J. Howerzyl	Marvin A. Van Haaften Arie Engbers, Jr.

Classis	Ministers	Elders
Quinte	B. Bernard Bakker William T. Koopmans	George J. Vink Lawrence J. Lutgendorff
Red Mesa	Donald E. Byker Michael J. Meekhof	Johnry Harvey Joe Smart
Rocky Mountain	Michael S. Johnson Thomas D. Draayer	Robert S. Steen Marvin Colsman
Thornapple Valley	Gerard L. Dykstra Benjamin J. Becksvoot	Raymond J. Prins Cornelius D. Korhorn
Toronto	Gordon H. Pols William Dykstra	John Kamerman Dan C. Ligterink
Wisconsin	Wendell M. Gebben Clifford E. Bajema	Bernard R. Winter Marvin F. De Vries
Yellowstone	J. William Van Der Heide Gary G. Hofland	Karl J. Cunigan Todd M. Horner
Zeeland	Robert Walter, Jr. Harlan G. Vanden Einde	Paul W. Wagenmaker Egbert H. Kuyers

The roll call indicates that Elder Hessel Kielstra (Classis Alberta South) is absent. Since Elder Thomas J. Henion is unable to attend synod, Classis Hackensack is represented by only three delegates.

ARTICLE 3

The president pro tem introduces Dr. Gaylen J. Byker, president of Calvin College, who welcomes the delegates to the Calvin College campus and briefly addresses synod.

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. John Van Ryn
- Vice President: Rev. Gordon H. Pols
- First Clerk: Rev. Kenneth D. Koeman
- Second Clerk: Rev. Henry Admiraal

ARTICLE 5

The general secretary calls the attention of delegates and visitors to the following matters:

I. Audio and video recordings of synod

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. Although the general sessions of synod have been recorded since 1979, executive sessions are not taped. Synod 1989 approved the following regulations concerning audio and video recordings of synod (*Acts of Synod 1989*, p. 445):

- A. The original and stated purpose of making an audio recording of synodical proceedings is to be honored, namely, that the recording serves 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).

II. Confidentiality of executive sessions of synod

Synod 1996 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)

ARTICLE 6

The general secretary introduces and welcomes the faculty advisers: Dr. Gary J. Bekker, Rev. Carl J. Bosma, Dr. Gaylen J. Byker, Dr. James A. De Jong, Dr. Henry De Moor, Dr. Roger S. Greenway, and Dr. Sidney Greidanus. He also informs the delegates that for the first time ethnic advisers have been appointed to serve synod. He introduces and welcomes Mr. Bing Goei, Rev. Emmett A. Harrison, Rev. Stanley A. Jim, Mr. Socheth Na, and Rev. Yong-Ju Oh.

Mrs. Eileen Christofferson is introduced to synod by Rev. Thomas Draayer, delegate from Classis Rocky Mountain. She is serving as a prayer intercessor at synod, representing Classis Rocky Mountain.

ARTICLE 7

The president of synod, Rev. John G. Van Ryn, expresses the appreciation of synod to Seymour Christian Reformed Church for serving as convening church for Synod 1996, to Rev. Gerald L. Zandstra for his participation in the prayer service, and to the president pro tem, Rev. L. Bryce Mensink, for his participation in the opening of synod. Rev. Van Ryn also acknowledges the services of all others who participated in the prayer service and in the opening session of Synod 1996. The president, on behalf of the officers, thanks the delegates for the confidence placed in the four officers elected. He expresses his desire that this synod will be a spiritual experience for each delegate and that together all participants will serve the Savior at Synod 1996.

ARTICLE 8

The president, having asked 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 ethnic advisers, the representatives of denominational boards, and the editor of *The Banner*.

ARTICLE 10

The following schedule is adopted: morning session, 8:30-11:45; afternoon session, 1:30-5:45; evening session, 7:30-9:30; coffee breaks at 10:00 a.m. and 3:30 p.m.

ARTICLE 11

The general secretary presents the report of the Program Committee, which recommends the following advisory committees for Synod 1996:

Committee 1—Synodical Services

Chairman: Robert G. den Dulk; **reporter:** Laryn G. Zoerhof; **ministers:** John A. Byker, William Dykstra, Rodney D. Gorter, Jelmer P. Groenewold, Richard J. Hamstra, Leonard P. Troast, Vernon G. Vander Zee, Gerrit Veeneman; **elders:** Richard J. Anema, Samuel C. Dykstra, Clarence R. Henze, Roger L. Klok, John Koen, Lawrence J. Lutgendorff, Vic VanderMolen.

Committee 2—Missions

Chairman: Case Admiraal; **reporter:** Harlan G. Vanden Einde; **ministers:** Richard J. de Lange, Jeff A. Dykema, Alvern Gelder, Pieter L. Hendriks, Gerald A. Koning, Andrew Vanden Akker, Mark A. Van Haitsma; **elders:** Floyd Brouwer, Henry De Lange, Jack Kremers, Joseph H. Meyer, Henry J. Mulder, Joe Smart, Hilbrent Vander Heide, Kenneth W. Vanderlei; **advisers:** Roger S. Greenway, Bing Goei.

Committee 3—Education

Chairman: Henry B. Vanden Heuvel; **reporter:** Daniel W. De Groot; **ministers:** Kornelis J. de Koning, Willard H. De Vries, David J. Dykstra, Ricardo E. Orellana, John Postuma, Curtis A. Walters; **elders:** Fred Bosma, Cornelius J. Bykerk, Job Den Otter, Loren J. Dykstra, Donald D. Holwerda, James A. Rozen-dal, Maurice Slegers, Hendrik Sliemers; **advisers:** Gaylen J. Byker, James A. De Jong, Emmett A. Harrison.

Committee 4—Publications

Chairman: John F. Schuurman; **reporter:** David J. Deters; **ministers:** Michael S. Johnson, John Koster, Harry A. Vander Windt, John A. Vermeer, Donald J. Wyenberg; **elders:** Randy C. Dokter, John G. Klompemaker, John Rozeveld, Harry H. Sonke, Lambert Tuininga, Bernard A. Van Essendelft, G. Hank Wesselink, Herman R. Westerveld, **advisers:** Carl J. Bosma, Stanley A. Jim.

Committee 5—Pastoral Ministries

Chairman: Alvin Beukema; **reporter:** John A. Ooms; **ministers:** Ronald G. Baker, Merlin N. Buwalda, Cornelius J. De Boer, Jerald D. Lion, Ronald R. Sprik, Norman J. Thomasma, Robert Walter, Jr.; **elders:** Ken Elgersma, Arie Engbers, Jr., Ivan R. Imig, Paul Ribbens, Robert S. Steen, Clarence Van Meekeren, Roger A. Westrate; **advisers:** Gary J. Bekker, Socheth Na.

Committee 6—Financial Matters

Chairman: Gerard L. Dykstra; **reporter:** Warren T. Faber; **ministers:** Gary G. Hofland, John G. Keizer, Cornelius Pool, Duane J. Timmermans, William G. Vis; **elders:** Donald L. Jabaay, Sidney J. Jansma, Jr., John Kamerman, Edward D. Knoll, Ben Lambers, Arlie P. Olsen, Frank Ritskes, John Shrimmer, Cornelius Van De Weert, John Van Egmond, Benjamin J. Van Houten.

Committee 7—Interdenominational Matters

Chairman: Joel R. Boot; **reporter:** Benjamin J. Becksvoot; **ministers:** B. Bernard Bakker, Bernard J. Haan, Scott E. Hoezee, Bart van Eyk, Cornelius Vriend; **elders:** Calvin R. Bratt, Karl J. Cunigan, Bruce Dykstra, Johnny Harvey, Dick J. Palsrok, Martin Vanden Berg, Dick Van Weerthuizen, John M. Zinkand; **advisers:** Sidney Greidanus, Yong-ju Oh.

Committee 8—Diverse Family of God

Chairman: John C. Hutt; **reporter:** Leonard J. Vander Zee; **ministers:** S. John Gerrits, David R. Koll, Michael J. Meekhof, Barton P. Velthuizen, Jochem Vugteveen, Ray T. Yeo, Randal K. Young; **elders:** Marvin F. De Vries, Todd M. Horner, Martin LaMaire, Roger C. Lefers, Jan Lok, Harvey G. Obbink, George J. Vink, Fred C. Visser; **advisers:** Carl J. Bosma.

Committee 9—Church Order

Chairman: George G. Vink; **reporter:** Jack M. Gray; **ministers:** John Boonstra, Donald E. Byker, Calvin D. Compagner, Mark A. Davies, Allan C. Groen, J. William Van Der Heide; **elders:** Robert J. Alles, Kenneth L. Andree, Cecil Gosliga, Hessel Kielstra, Egbert H. Kuyers, Dan C. Ligterink, Hilbert Rumph, Bernard R. Winter; **adviser:** Henry De Moor.

Committee 10—Appeals

Chairman: Loren J. Veldhuizen; **reporter:** George F. Vander Weit; **ministers:** Larry D. Baar, Clifford E. Bajema, Harry J. Bierman, Thomas D. Draayer, Lawrence J. Howerzyl, James T. Petersen, David A. Zylstra; **elders:** Arthur L. Attema, Jerry L. Blom, Donald L. Boes, Jack Geschiere, Fred Gietema, Raymond J. Prins, Marvin A. Van Haaften; **adviser:** Henry De Moor.

Committee 11—Women in Office

Chairman: Robert C. Heerspink; **reporter:** William T. Koopmans; **ministers:** J. Mark Beach, LeRoy Christoffels, Wendell M. Gebben, Jake Kuipers, Jacob A. Quartel, Archie L. Vander Hart; **elders:** Marvin Colsman, Bruce Klanderman, Cornelius D. Korhorn, Harold E. Terpstra, John Vander Hoek, Phillip L. Van Noord, Cornelis Van Soelen, Paul W. Wagenmaker; **advisers:** Roger S. Greenway, James A. De Jong.

ARTICLE 12

The general secretary presents the Agenda Directory for Synod 1996, which contains a complete listing of all matters on the agenda that require synodical action. He indicates where the materials may be found and to which advisory committee each item has been assigned.

ARTICLE 13

Synod adjourns at 12:05 p.m. It will reconvene on Wednesday at 8:30 a.m.

WEDNESDAY MORNING, June 12, 1996

Second Session

ARTICLE 14

Rev. Gordon H. Pols, vice president, announces *Psalter Hymnal* 428, "O Worship the King," and reads from Ephesians 3:14-21. He leads in opening prayer and announces *Psalter Hymnal* 560, "Like a River Glorious."

The minutes of the session of June 11, 1996, are read and approved.

The roll call indicates that Elder Hessel Kielstra (Alberta South) is present. He rises to express agreement with the forms of unity.

It is moved that synod suspend the rules regarding the reading of the minutes and appoint a committee to review the minutes each day.

—*Adopted*

The following delegates are appointed to review the minutes:

Elder Dick Van Weerthuisen (Classis Greater Los Angeles)

Elder Hilbert Rumph (Classis Huron)

Elder Donald Holwerda (Classis Hudson)

The officers of synod announce the following appointment:

Sergeant at Arms: Elder Roger Lefers (Classis Chicago South)

ARTICLE 15

The morning session is adjourned at 9:05 a.m. so that delegates can continue to work in advisory committees. Synod will reconvene on Thursday at 8:30 a.m. Rev. Kenneth D. Koeman, first clerk, leads in closing prayer.

The banquet of the Reformed Ecumenical Council, to which delegates of Synod 1996 have been invited, is to be held Wednesday evening at 7:00 p.m.

ARTICLE 16

Rev. Henry Admiraal, second clerk, announces *Psalter Hymnal* 410, "Crown Him with Many Crowns," followed by *Psalter Hymnal* 244, "God Himself Is with Us." Following a moment of silent prayer, he reads from Psalm 145. The delegates pray at their tables with their classical colleagues, sing the first stanzas of several hymns, and conclude with individual prayers at their tables.

The roll call indicates that Elder Jacob Lucas replaces Elder Robert J. Alles (Classis Grandville). He rises to express agreement with the forms of unity.

The officers announce the following appointments:

Devotions Committee:

Rev. Clifford E. Bajema

Rev. B. Bernard Bakker

Elder Martin LaMaire

The officers request that synod adopt the following resolution:

Synod 1996 of the Christian Reformed Church in North America, upon the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the Reformed Ecumenical Council (REC), extends its congratulations to the REC for reaching this milestone, its sincere appreciation for having been invited to celebrate this event with the Council at the banquet on the evening of June 12, and its prayers and best wishes for the Lord's continued blessings for many years ahead.

—Adopted

ARTICLE 17

Advisory Committee 3, Education, Rev. Daniel W. De Groot reporting, presents the following:

I. Calvin College

A. Materials

1. Calvin College Report, pp. 70-71
2. Calvin College Supplement, pp. 365-68

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. That synod ratify the following administrative appointments:

- a. Joel Carpenter, Ph.D., Provost of Calvin College for five years, beginning July 1, 1996, with a tenured appointment as Professor in the Department of History.

- b. Thomas McWhertor, M.Div, Vice President for Enrollment and External Relations for two years.
- c. Cornelius Plantinga, Jr., Ph.D, Dean of the Chapel, with faculty status, for three years, effective July 1, 1996.

—*Adopted*

3. That synod ratify the following reappointments with tenure:

- a. John Ferdinands, Ph.D, Professor of Mathematics.
- b. Anna Greidanus-Probes, M.F.A., Associate Professor of Art.
- c. Douglas Howard, Ph.D, Professor of History.
- d. Luis Lugo, Ph.D, Professor of Political Science.
- e. Michelle Loyd-Paige, Ph.D, Associate Professor of Sociology and Social Work.
- f. William Romanowski, Ph.D, Professor of Communication Arts and Sciences.

—*Adopted*

4. 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. Johanna A. Duyst, M.A.L.S., Librarian, Emerita (February 1, 1996).
- b. David J. Holquist, M.A., Ed.S., Professor of Communication Arts and Sciences, Emeritus.
- c. J. William Smit, M.A., Ph.D, Professor of Sociology, Emeritus.
- d. Richard F. Wevers, M.A., Ph.D, Professor of Classical Languages, Emeritus (February 1, 1996).
- e. Donald R. Wilson, M.Div, M.A., Ph.D, Professor of Sociology, Emeritus.
- f. Doris J. Zuidema, M.A., Professor of Physical Education, Emerita.

—*Adopted*

5. 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	Mr. Dennis Van Andel	Dr. John Van Schepen	1999
Central U.S. I	Dr. Jan De Roos	Mrs. Janice Van Dyke	1999
Central U.S. IV	Mr. Rod Alderink		1999
Eastern U.S.	Rev. Christopher J. De Vos	Dr. Edward Wierenga	1999
Western Canada	Dr. Nicholas Terpstra	Dr. Jack Hielerna	1999

b. Alumni trustees

Dr. Tom R. DeMeester 1999

c. At-large trustees

Mrs. Grace Achterhof 1999

Mrs. Sheri Haan 1999

Mr. Milton Kuyers 1999

Mr. Thomas Page 1999

Dr. John Van Engen 1999

—*Adopted*

II. Calvin Theological Seminary

A. *Materials*

1. Calvin Theological Seminary Report, pp. 72-75
2. Calvin Theological Seminary Supplement, pp. 369-73

B. *Recommendations*

1. That Rev. Joel Boot (chairman), Mr. Elmer Walcott (secretary), and Dr. James A. De Jong (president) be given the privilege of the floor when seminary matters are presented.

—*Granted*

2. That synod ratify the following faculty reappointments:
 - a. Professor John Bolt, Professor of Systematic Theology with permanent tenure.
 - b. Professor Roger S. Greenway, Professor of World Missiology with permanent tenure.
 - c. Professor Sidney Greidanus, Professor of Preaching with permanent tenure.
 - d. Professor Calvin P. Van Reken, Associate Professor of Moral Theology for two years (1996-1998).

—*Adopted*

3. That the following staff reappointments be approved:
 - a. Rev. Daniel Devadatta, Director of Recruitment and Financial Aid for two years (1996-1998).
 - b. Rev. Keith Tanis, Coordinator of Field Education for three years (1996-1999), with faculty status.

—*Adopted*

4. That synod ratify the election of regional trustees for the seminary board for terms beginning on July 1, 1996, and running for three years.

Region	Delegate	Alternate	Term
Central U.S. I	Rev. Yong-Ju Oh	Rev. Seung Jai Kang	1999
Central U.S. III	Rev. Joel R. Boot	Rev. Marvin J. Hofman	1999
Eastern U.S.	Mr. Peter Steensma	Mr. John Steen	1999
Eastern Canada II	Rev. William Dykstra	Rev. Jack B. Vos	1999
Western Canada II	Mr. Hessel Kielstra	Mr. Dennis Danielson	1999

—*Adopted*

(The report of Advisory Committee 3 is continued in Article 25.)

ARTICLE 18

Advisory Committee 1, Synodical Services, Rev. Laryn G. Zoerhof reporting, presents the following:

I. Board of Trustees

A. Materials

1. Board of Trustees Report, pp. 23-62 (except Sections II, C, 5 and 8 and III, K and L)
2. Board of Trustees Supplement (except Sections XI and XII, G-N), pp. 353-64
3. Synodical deputies' reports
4. Notifications of retirement

B. Recommendations

1. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Rev. Arthur J. Schoonveld, president; Dr. David H. Engelhard, general secretary; Dr. Peter Borgdorff, executive director of ministries; Mr. William Weidenaar, Board of Trustees; and Mr. Robert Van Stright, director of finance and administration, when matters pertaining to the Board of Trustees are discussed.

—Granted

2. That synod approve the interim appointments made by the Board to the agency boards and committees (I, C, 1-4; Supplement, I).

Board	Classis	Member	Alternate	Term
Synodical Deputies	Arizona		Rev. F.J. Walhof	
	B.C. South-East	Rev. J. Boonstra		
	Grand Rapids East		Rev. R. Opperwall	
	Heartland	Rev. A.L. Kuiper	Rev. J.M. Gray	1999
	Illiana		Rev. H.J. Schutt	
CRC Publications	Minnesota South		Rev. N.J. Visser	
	Chatham		Mr. K. Knight	
	Grandville		Ms. M. Bantjes	
	Hudson		Mr. D. Holwerda	
Home Missions	Iakota		Dr. M. Vanden Bosch	
	Chatham		Rev. D.R. Tigchelaar	
	Columbia		Mrs. M. Geelhood	
	Minnesota South		Mr. W. Sankey	
	Northern Michigan		Mr. M. Mortenson	
World Missions	Pacific Northwest	Rev. Insung Kim	Mr. R. Bode	1998
	Red Mesa	Mr. J. De Groat		1998
World Missions	Alberta North		Mrs. S. Mobach	
	Alberta South		Rev. A.G. Vander Leek	
	Eastern Canada	Mrs. W. Runia	Mr. M. Van Wyk	1998
	Grandville		Mr. M. Geerlings	
	Hackensack		Rev. E.N. Romero	
	Heartland		Mr. J. Kooiker	
	Minnesota North		Rev. J.G. Busscher	
Northcentral Iowa		Mr. B. Drenth		
CRWRC	Arizona		Mr. G. Andringa	
	Georgetown		Mr. G. Hartger	
	Hudson		Mr. R. Comer	
	Iakota		Mr. K. Van Engen	
	Minnesota North, U.S.		Rev. P. Sausser	

Board	Classis	Member	Alternate	Term
Calvin Theological Seminary	Great Plains Eastern U.S. Eastern Canada II		Rev. R.D. Kramer Mr. J. Steen Rev. D.H. Kromminga	
Board of Trustees	Central U.S. Subgroup I		Rev. L.G. Zoerhof	

—Adopted

3. That synod designate Immanuel CRC, Hamilton, Ontario, as the convening church for Synod 1998 (II, A, 1), which will meet at Redeemer College.

—Adopted

4. That synod adopt the proposed guidelines regulating ethnic advisers (II, A, 2).

Guidelines for Ethnic Advisers to Synod

A. General considerations

1. At each synod up to seven members from various ethnic communities in the CRC will serve as advisers to synod.
2. An attempt will be made to appoint some advisers (up to three) who are able to serve two-year terms. This means that there will be some experienced advisers and some new advisers at each synod.
3. Expenses for travel, lodging, and meals will be paid by synod.
4. In keeping with the practice of some classes, remuneration (not to exceed \$50 per day) will be available for an ethnic adviser who is financially disadvantaged through service to synod.

B. Qualifications

Ethnic advisers shall be members in good standing of the Christian Reformed Church with demonstrated leadership capabilities within their church communities.

C. Responsibilities

1. Ethnic advisers shall serve on the advisory committees of synod. They shall have the privilege of the floor but not the right to vote.
2. Ethnic advisers may appear before any advisory committee for the purpose of speaking to the committee about any matter referred to it.
3. Ethnic advisers shall be present at plenary sessions of synod, where they shall have the privilege of the floor for the purpose of advising synod on matters before it, subject to the accepted rules governing discussion. On important questions the chair or any other members of synod may request their advice.

D. Appointments

1. The Board of Trustees shall appoint the ethnic advisers each year at its March meeting. Nominations for the ethnic-advisers positions shall be gathered by the general secretary from suggestions offered by the churches, Race Relations, the ethnic-ministry directors of Home Missions, and the Multiethnic Conference Planning Committee.

2. Ethnic advisers will be assigned their committee assignments by the Program Committee of synod.

—Adopted

5. That synod adopt the proposed change in Church Order Article 51-a (II, A, 8):

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 needs.

—Adopted

6. That synod approve the formation of the Christian Reformed Church in North America Foundation, to be incorporated in the State of Michigan, and authorize the Board of Trustees to implement this decision also in Canada at the appropriate time (II, B, 2).

—Adopted

7. That synod ratify the appointment of Ms. Beth Swagman as the executive director of Pastoral Ministries (part-time) as approved by the Board of Trustees (II, C, 1).

—Adopted

8. That synod schedule a time for recognizing missionaries, chaplains, and others engaged in specialized ministries and for the farewell speeches of Mr. Ray Elgersma and Dr. Joel Nederhood (II, C, 4).

—Granted

9. That synod express its appreciation to retiring members of the Board for their services to the church (see Section II). Dr. John Van Schepen, Dr. Eugene Vander Wall, Mr. Harry G. Vermeer, Rev. Wilmer R. Witte, and Rev. Vernon Geurkink have served six years on the Board of Trustees; we gratefully acknowledge their contributions.

—Adopted

10. That synod express its appreciation to Mr. Robert J. Jonker, retiring member of the Judicial Code Committee, for his faithful service (see Section IV).

—Adopted

11. That synod adopt the Board of Trustees' proposal that the denominational Annual Day of Prayer be changed from the second Wednesday in March to the first Thursday in May (see Section V).

Grounds:

1. The proposed date coincides with the national day of prayer in the U.S.A.
2. The proposed change allows our U.S.A. congregations to promote and participate in ecumenical community prayer services.
3. Canada does not have a designated day of prayer; therefore, the proposed change from March to May need not be a problem for the Christian Reformed churches in Canada.

—Recommitted

12. That synod ratify the appointment of Mr. H. Wayne deJong as director of CRWRC-Canada (see Section IX).

—Adopted

13. That synod grant power to act to the Board of Trustees, by way of exception, to ratify the appointment of a new World Missions-International executive director before the meeting of Synod 1997 (see Section X).

—Adopted

II. Ministerial retirements

A. Information

Synod has received notice of the following ministerial retirements:

Minister	Classis	Effective Date
Clarence Bishop	Minnesota North	July 8, 1996
Peter J. Boodt	Alberta North	July 15, 1996
Peter Breedveld	Alberta North	February 19, 1996
John Bylsma	Wisconsin	January 15, 1996
Michiel M. De Berdt	Pella	October 20, 1995
Peter W. De Bruyne	Niagara	October 10, 1996
John De Jong	Niagara	May 16, 1996
James C. De Young	Pella	August 15, 1996
Milton R. Doornbos	Georgetown	September 15, 1996
John T. Ebbers	Yellowstone	January 31, 1996
*Fred F. Gunnink	Atlantic Northeast	January 16, 1996
Harrison F. Harnden	Alberta South	March 20, 1996
John B. Hulst	lakota	June 30, 1996
Simon J. Kistemaker	lakota	May 31, 1996
**Arie C. Leegwater	B.C. South-East	September 30, 1995
Eugene W. Los	Georgetown	January 1, 1996
Peter Meyer	Toronto	November 21, 1995
Joel H. Nederhood	Illiana	January 1, 1996
Gerard Ringnalda	Toronto	October 1, 1995
William K. Stob	Grand Rapids East	July 31, 1995
John Timmer	Grand Rapids East	December 1, 1995
John E. Top	Chatham	October 1, 1996
Julius Vigh	Thornapple Valley	October 31, 1995
Donald P. Wisse	Hudson	January 1, 1996

*Medical disability

**Deceased

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. Gordon H. Pols leads the assembly in prayer, thanking God for the dedication and the many years of service of these ministers of the Word.

III. Interim report of the Committee to Study Structure for Ministry in Canada—Phase 3

Recommendations

A. That Mr. Ben Vandezande, Dr. Shirley Roels, and Rev. Gordon H. Pols be granted the privilege of the floor when matters concerning the work of the study committee are discussed.

—*Granted*

B. That the Committee to Study Structure for Ministry in Canada—Phase 3 be given permission to present an oral interim report at a plenary session of synod.

—*Adopted*

IV. Work of synodical deputies

A. Classical examinations 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
Timothy D. Blackmon	California South (10-18-95)	F.J. Walhof, Arizona J.R. Kok, Central California J. Van Schepen, Greater Los Angeles
Shawn R. Brix	Huron (9-13-95)	J. Kuipers, Chatham H. Eshuis, Niagara M. Van Donselaar, Hamilton
Craig R. Cunningham	Huron (9-13-95)	H. Eshuis, Niagara J. Kuipers, Chatham M. Van Donselaar, Hamilton
Richard J. Ebbers	Central California (9-19-95)	R.L. Scheuers, California South R. Vander Ley, Pacific Northwest J. Van Schepen, Greater Los Angeles
Charles H. Fondse	Arizona (3-2-96)	G.G. Vink, Central California D.R. Koll, Greater Los Angeles W. Verhoef, Rocky Mountain
Calvin J. Friend	Central California (9-19-95)	R. Vander Ley, Pacific Northwest R.L. Scheuers, California South J. Van Schepen, Greater Los Angeles
Charles Y. Jeon	Florida (9-22-95)	S.J. Vander Klay, Hackensack G.H. Stoutmeyer, Illiana H.B. Vanden Heuvel, Chicago South
Stanley A. Jim	Red Mesa (2-27-96)	J.P. Boonstra, Rocky Mountain R. Bultman, California South G.J. Kamps, Arizona
Moon B. Kim	Grand Rapids North (9-12-95)	J. Gorter, Grandville S.E. Hoezee, Grand Rapids East T. Minnema, Thornapple Valley
Ronald E. Klok	Alberta North (10-3-95)	P. Nicolai, Alberta South H. Jonker, B.C. North-West W.L. Vander Beek, B.C. South-East

Candidate	Classis	Synodical Deputies and Classes
Michael S. McDonald	Heartland (10-11-95)	J.D. Buwalda, Minnesota South D.W. De Groot, Iakota D.A. Zylstra, Northcentral Iowa
Julius T. Medenblik	Chicago South (9-21-95)	J. Bylsma, Wisconsin T.H. Douma, Northern Illinois G.H. Stoutmeyer, Illiana
Jeffrey M. Meyer	Grand Rapids North (9-12-95)	J. Gorter, Grandville S.E. Hoezee, Grand Rapids East T. Minnema, Thornapple Valley
Dongo Pewee	Illiana (1-16-96)	H.B. Vanden Heuvel, Chicago South T.H. Douma, Northern Illinois J. Bylsma, Wisconsin
Jess E. Powell	Pella (9-15-95)	C.E. Fennema, Iakota C.E. Zylstra, Heartland D.A. Zylstra, Northcentral Iowa
Donald R. Ridder, Jr.	Central California (9-19-95)	R.L. Scheuers, California South R. Vander Ley, Pacific Northwest J. Van Schepen, Greater Los Angeles
Harvey J. Roosma	B.C. North-West (9-19-95)	P.J. Kok, Pacific Northwest J. Hofman, Jr., Columbia W.L. Vander Beek, B.C. South-East
John Rop, Jr.	Northern Michigan (9-26-95)	J. Terpstra, Muskegon C. Steenstra, Grand Rapids North K.E. Van Wyk, Zeeland
Trevor A. Rubingh	Hackensack (9-26-95)	W. Timmer, Atlantic Northeast J.J. Hoogland, Hudson W.J. Dykstra, Lake Erie
Joel J. Sheeres	Northern Illinois (9-20-95)	H.B. Vanden Heuvel, Chicago South J. Bylsma, Wisconsin G.H. Stoutmeyer, Illiana
Young Su Shin	Pacific Northwest (4-8-96)	J. Hofman, Jr., Columbia W.L. Vander Beek, B.C. South-East P. Brouwer
Andrew P. Turkstra	B.C. South-East (3-6-96)	J.S. Hielema, B.C. North-West J. Corvers, Alberta South
Gerald P. Van Smeerdyk	Minnesota North (9-12-95)	D.W. De Groot, Iakota J.D. Buwalda, Minnesota South J. Bylsma, Wisconsin
Mark N. Verbruggen	Toronto (9-28-95)	H.R. De Bolster, Hamilton M.D. Geleynse, Huron E. Gritter, Quinte

Recommendation:

That synod approve the work of the synodical deputies with regard to the examinations of candidates.

—*Adopted*

(The report of Advisory Committee 1 is continued in Article 24.)

ARTICLE 19

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 20

The president introduces Dr. Shirley Roels and Mr. Ben Vandezande, members of the Committee to Study Structure for Ministry in Canada—Phase 3. They present an interim report of the study committee's progress. Following the presentation delegates are given an opportunity for questions from the floor.

ARTICLE 21

The executive director of ministries, Dr. Peter Borgdorff, introduces Mr. John Kuyers, executive director of The Back to God Hour. Mr. Kuyers presents Dr. Joel H. Nederhood, director of ministries emeritus of The Back to God Hour, who addresses synod. He expresses his gratitude for the prayers and financial support of the denomination during his years of ministry at The Back to God Hour. He briefly reviews the joys of his ministry in the church and expresses concerns about the culture and the need for the church to address those concerns from the Reformed perspective. He reminds the assembly how important it is for a Reformed church to be always reforming. Rev. Kenneth Koeman, first clerk of synod, responds, quoting the words of Paul from Philippians 1:3, "I thank my God every time I remember you," and on behalf of the delegates and the Christian Reformed Church expresses gratitude to Dr. Nederhood for his ministry. Mrs. Mary Lou Nederhood is also recognized.

ARTICLE 22

The morning session is adjourned. Rev. Kenneth D. Koeman leads in closing prayer.

THURSDAY AFTERNOON, June 13, 1996

Fourth Session

ARTICLE 23

Rev. John Rozeboom, executive director of Home Missions, introduces Rev. Bruce T. Ballast, president of the Home Missions board, who briefly addresses synod. He leads in opening prayer. Rev. Rozeboom gives a progress report on *Gathering God's Growing Family*. He acknowledges the delegates who are or have been engaged in the various aspects of Home Missions ministries. The video *Flourishing in the Land* is shown in observance of the centennial celebration of Home Missions. The presentation is concluded with the singing of *Psalter Hymnal* 556, "Great Is Thy Faithfulness," stanza 3.

The clerks report that the minutes of Wednesday morning, June 12, 1996, are accurate and in order.

Rev. William D. Buursma of the Hospitality Committee introduces Rev. Richard S.E. Vissinga, fraternal delegate from the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, who addresses synod. The president of synod responds.

Rev. Gerard Bouma of the Hospitality Committee introduces Rev. David Dively, fraternal delegate from the Presbyterian Church in America, who addresses synod and concludes by leading the assembly in prayer. The president of synod responds.

Rev. Raymond Brinks, retired missionary with World Missions, introduces fraternal observer Rev. Santos Amador from the Christian Reformed Church of Honduras. Rev. Brinks introduces Rev. Pierre Philippe, a fraternal observer from the Christian Reformed Church in the Dominican Republic, who addresses synod. Rev. Brinks serves as translator. The president of synod responds.

ARTICLE 24

(The report of Advisory Committee 1 is continued from Article 18.)

Advisory Committee 1, Synodical Services, Rev. Laryn G. Zoerhof reporting, presents the following:

I. Work of the synodical deputies

B. *Classical examinations via Church Order Article 7*

1. Synodical deputies G.J. Kamps (Arizona), R. Bultman (California South), and J.P. Boonstra (Rocky Mountain) concur in the decision of Classis Red Mesa, in session on February 27, 1996, that a **need** exists in Classis Red Mesa for proceeding with the ordination of **Ernest P. Benally** (no deputies' report received).
2. Synodical deputies P. Nicolai (Alberta South), H. Jonker (B.C. North-West), and W.L. Vander Beek (B.C. South-East), having witnessed the examination of **Mr. Lloyd Burghart** by Classis Alberta North, in session on October 3-4, 1995, concur in the decision of classis to admit him to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
3. Synodical deputies H. Eshuis (Niagara), J. Kuipers (Chatham), and M. Van Donselaar (Hamilton), having examined the written credentials submitted by the council of Palmerston Christian Reformed Church, having considered the need, and having heard the examination for licensure to exhort in the churches of Classis Huron in accordance with the provisions of Church Order Article 7 and its Supplement, concur in the decision of Classis Huron, in session on September 13, 1995, to grant **Mr. Walter De Ruiter** the right to exhort in Christian Reformed churches.
4. Synodical deputies H.R. De Bolster (Hamilton), J. Kuipers (Chatham), and H. Vander Plaat (Niagara), having considered the gifts of the applicant and having heard the examination in accordance with the provisions of Church Order Article 7, concur in the decision of Classis Huron, in session on October 17, 1995, to declare **Mr. Walter De Ruiter** eligible for call to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
5. Synodical deputies J. Kuipers (Chatham), H.R. De Bolster (Hamilton), and H. Vander Plaat (Niagara), having heard the examination for ordination in

accordance with the provisions of Church Order Article 7, concur with the decision of Classis Huron, in session on January 10, 1996, to admit **Mr. Walter De Ruiter** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

6. Synodical deputies D.J. Van Beek (Grand Rapids North), D. Tinklenberg (Georgetown), and K.E. Van Wyk (Zeeland), having considered the gifts of the applicant, in accordance with the provisions of Church Order Article 7, concur in the decision of Classis Grand Rapids East, in session on January 18, 1996, to declare that **Mr. Harry Lew** has exceptional gifts for ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
7. Synodical deputies D.J. Van Beek (Grand Rapids North), G.W. Sheeres (Thornapple Valley), and J.H. Looman (Kalamazoo), having considered the gifts of the applicant and having heard the examination in accordance with the provisions of Church Order Article 7, concur in the decision of Classis Grand Rapids East, in session on May 16, 1996, to declare **Mr. Harry Lew** eligible for call to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
8. Synodical deputies M.D. Geleynse (Huron), E. Gritter (Quinte), and H.R. De Bolster (Hamilton), having heard the discussion of Classis Toronto and having examined the written credentials, concur in the decision of Classis Toronto in session on September 28, 1995, which established the **need** for Mr. H. Richard Nanninga to enter the ministry of the Word by way of Church Order Article 7.
9. Synodical deputies M. Van Donselaar (Hamilton), E. Gritter (Quinte), and R. Koops (Huron), having considered the gifts of the applicant and having heard the examination in accordance with the provisions of Church Order Article 7, concur in the decision of Classis Toronto, in session on January 25, 1996, to declare **Mr. H. Richard Nanninga** eligible for call to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
10. Synodical deputies P. De Jong (Northern Illinois), G.H. Stoutmeyer (Illiana), and H.B. Vanden Heuvel (Chicago South), having examined the written credentials submitted by the council of Hope CRC, Onalaska, Wisconsin, having considered the **need**, and having heard the examination for licensure to exhort in the churches of Classis Wisconsin in accordance with the provisions of Church Order Article 7 and its Supplement, concur in the decision of Classis Wisconsin, in session on September 26, 1995, to grant **Mr. Donald Range** the right to exhort in Christian Reformed churches until the next meeting of classis.
11. Synodical deputies H.B. Vanden Heuvel (Chicago South), P. De Jong (Northern Illinois), and G.H. Stoutmeyer (Illiana), having considered the gifts of the applicant and having heard the examination in accordance with the provisions of Church Order Article 7, concur in the decision of Classis Wisconsin, in session on November 28, 1995, to declare **Mr. Donald Range** eligible for call to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church.
12. Synodical deputies P. De Jong (Northern Illinois), G.H. Stoutmeyer (Illiana), and H.B. Vanden Heuvel (Chicago South), having heard the examination for

ordination in accordance with the provisions of Church Order Article 7, concur in the decision of Classis Wisconsin, in session on March 5, 1996, to admit **Mr. Donald Range** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

13. Synodical deputies H. Vander Plaat (Niagara), E. Gritter (Quinte), and G. Ringnalda (Toronto), having heard the discussion of Classis Hamilton regarding the **need** for ministry among the Laotian people in Hamilton and also having witnessed the preliminary examination of **Evangelist Sirisac (Zack) Saythavy** regarding the "required exceptional gifts" for ordination to the ministry according to Article 7 of the Church Order, concur with Classis Hamilton in session on September 19, 1995, to proceed "as circumstances may warrant and according to synodical regulations."
14. Synodical deputies R. Koops (Huron), H. Vander Plaat (Niagara), and R. Ringnalda (Toronto) concur with the decision of Classis Hamilton, in session on January 23, 1996, that **Mr. Sirisac Saythavy** sustained his examination under the provisions of Church Order Article 7 and that he be declared eligible for call to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
15. Synodical deputies R. Koops (Huron), E. Gritter (Quinte), and G. Ringnalda (Toronto), having examined the written credentials submitted by the council of Kentville CRC, Kentville, Nova Scotia, having considered the need, and having heard the examination for licensure to exhort in the churches of Classis Eastern Canada in accordance with the provision of Church Order Article 7 and its Supplement, concur in the decision of Classis Eastern Canada, in session on March 5, 1996, to grant **Mr. Hilbrent VanderHeide** the right to exhort in Christian Reformed churches until fall 1998 in accordance with the stipulations formulated by classis in its decision:
 - a. That Mr. VanderHeide be permitted to exhort in the churches of Classis Eastern Canada under the terms of Church Order Articles 7 and 43.
 - b. That he shall exhort in four different churches in Classis Eastern Canada that are not vacant, in the presence of the respective ministers of these churches.
 - c. That classis instruct Mr. VanderHeide to undertake two years of theological education, preferably at Calvin Theological Seminary but, alternatively, at a local institution such as Acadia School of Divinity for one year, followed by one year at Calvin Theological Seminary.
 - d. At his request, classis would be open to a further examination at its 1998 fall meeting (or later if Mr. VanderHeide so chooses) to declare him eligible for call.
 - e. That classis appoint a mentor for Mr. VanderHeide to assist and guide him during this process.

Recommendation:

That synod approve the work of the synodical deputies. (Approval of B, 1 is contingent upon receipt of the written report from the synodical deputies.)

—Adopted

C. *Ministers from other denominations, Church Order Article 8*

1. Synodical deputies T. Minnema (Thornapple Valley), C. Steenstra (Grand Rapids North), and K.E. Van Wyk (Zeeland), having reviewed the documents specified in accordance with Church Order Supplement, Article 8, concur in the declaration of Classis Grand Rapids East, in session on September 21, 1995, that a **need** has been demonstrated to call a minister from another denomination to serve as pastor of youth, discipleship, and outreach at Oakdale Park CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan.
2. Synodical deputies T. Minnema (Thornapple Valley), C. Steenstra (Grand Rapids North), and K.E. Van Wyk (Zeeland), having reviewed the documents specified in accordance with Church Order Supplement, Article 8, concur in the declaration of Classis Grand Rapids East, in session on September 21, 1995, that a **need** has been demonstrated to call a minister from another denomination to serve as missionary pastor for development of a new church sponsored by Madison Square CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan.
3. Synodical deputies D.W. De Groot (Iakota), L.J. Howerzyl (Pella), and A.L. Kuiper (Heartland) urge Classis Northcentral Iowa to encourage the churches of Ackley and Austinville to engage in serious discussions in developing a vision of ministry that would eventually include both congregations. We feel this is a necessary process for the purpose of using God's gifts discerningly.

Nevertheless, the synodical deputies concur with the decision of Classis Northcentral Iowa, in session on February 27, 1996, that the Ackley CRC has demonstrated an immediate and present need to call a pastor from outside the CRC.

4. Synodical deputies J.J. Hoogland (Hudson), S.J. Vander Klay (Hackensack), and G. Ringnalda* (Toronto), having reviewed the documents specified in accordance with Church Order Supplement, Article 8, concur in the declaration of Classis Atlantic Northeast, in session on February 29, 1996, that a **need** has been demonstrated to call a minister from another denomination to serve as pastor of Iglesia Cristiana Reformada Emanuel, Boston, Massachusetts.

*G. Ringnalda, in absentia, confirmed the decision by telephone.

5. Synodical deputies H.B. Vanden Heuvel (Chicago South), G.H. Stoutmeyer (Illiana), and S.J. Vander Klay (Hackensack), having reviewed the documents specified in accordance with Church Order Supplement, Article 8, concur in the declaration of Classis Florida, in session on March 9, 1996, that a **need** has been demonstrated to call a minister from another denomination to serve as pastor of Iglesia El Redentor CRC, Hialeah, Florida.
Comment: This concurrence is contingent upon receiving the medical and psychological endorsement on June 1, 1996.
6. Synodical deputies H.B. Vanden Heuvel (Chicago South), G.H. Stoutmeyer (Illiana), and S.J. Vander Klay (Hackensack), having reviewed the documents specified in accordance with Church Order Supplement, Article 8, concur in the declaration of Classis Florida, in session on March 9, 1996, that

a **need** has been demonstrated to call a minister from another denomination to serve as pastor of North Miami Beach Hispanic CRC.

7. Synodical deputies J.C. Medendorp (Thornapple Valley), J.W. Uitvlugt (Zeeland), and J. Gorter (Grandville), having reviewed the documents specified in accordance with Church Order Supplement, Article 8, concur in the declaration of Classis Georgetown, in session on May 16, 1996, that a **need** has been demonstrated to call a minister from another denomination to serve as associate pastor for service with World Literature Ministries.
Comment: Rev. Humberto Casanova is uniquely qualified to move and be accepted in Hispanic circles in the U.S. and abroad.
8. Synodical deputies D.J. Van Beek (Grand Rapids North), D. Tinklenberg (Georgetown), K.E. Van Wyk (Zeeland), having heard the colloquium doctum of **Rev. Rayfield Benton**, in accordance with Church Order Article 8, concur in the decision of Classis Grand Rapids East, in session on January 18, 1996, to declare him eligible for call to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
Comment: We urge classis to proceed with the proposed plan for continuing theological education.
9. Synodical deputies D.J. Van Beek (Grand Rapids North), D. Tinklenberg (Georgetown), K.E. Van Wyk (Zeeland), having heard the colloquium doctum of **Rev. Glandion Carney**, in accordance with Church Order Article 8, concur in the decision of Classis Grand Rapids East, in session on January 18, 1996, to declare him eligible for call to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
Comment: We urge the classis to proceed with its plans for proposed theological training.
10. Synodical deputies D.W. De Groot (Iakota), R. Bultman (California South), and J. Weeda (Yellowstone), having reviewed the documents specified in accordance with Church Order Supplement, Article 8, concur in the declaration of Classis Rocky Mountain in session on September 26, 1995, that a **need** has been demonstrated to call a minister; **Rev. Sung Ho Chung**, from another denomination to serve as minister of the Word at Korean Presbyterian Galilee Church, Albuquerque, New Mexico.
11. Synodical deputies J. Weeda (Yellowstone), R.L. Scheuers (California South), and W.K. Bulthuis (Red Mesa), having heard the colloquium doctum of **Rev. Sung Ho Chung**, in accordance with Church Order Article 8, concur in the decision of Classis Rocky Mountain, in session on March 5, 1996, to declare him eligible for call to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
12. Synodical deputies J. Weeda (Yellowstone), C. Vriend (Alberta North), and W.L. Vander Beek (B.C. South-East), having heard the colloquium doctum of **Rev. John C. Fraser**, in accordance with Church Order Article 8, concur in the decision of Classis Alberta South, in session on October 17, 1995, to declare him eligible for call to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

13. Synodical deputies F.J. Walhof (Arizona), A. Begay (Red Mesa), and D.R. Koll (Greater Los Angeles), having reviewed the documents specified in accordance with Church Order Supplement, Article 8, do not concur in the declaration of Classis California South, in session on January 17, 1996, that a **need** has been demonstrated to call **Mr. Michael Horton** from another denomination to serve as pastor at a new church in Placentia, California.
Comments: The documents presented show that Mr. Michael Horton is *not* ordained as a "presbyter" but rather as a "deacon" in the Reformed Episcopal Church. Also, his degree from Westminster Seminary is not an M.Div. but an M.A. in religion.
14. Synodical deputies F.J. Walhof (Arizona), A. Begay (Red Mesa), and D.R. Koll (Greater Los Angeles), having reviewed the documents specified in accordance with Church Order Supplement, Article 8, concur in the declaration of Classis California South, in session on May 8, 1996, that a **need** has been demonstrated to call **Mr. Michael Horton** from another denomination to serve as copastor at the new Christ Reformed Church in Placentia, California.
15. Synodical deputies H. Jonker (B.C. North-West), J.R. Kok (Central California), and R. Vander Ley (Pacific Northwest) concur in the decision of Classis Columbia, in session on September 27, 1995, in declaring a **need** for an indigenous pastor for Hope CRC (Korean) of Spokane, Washington. Having established such need and having witnessed the colloquium doctum of **Rev. Chanjoo Jung** by Classis Columbia, the deputies concur in classis' decision to declare him eligible for call to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church.
16. Synodical deputies D.W. De Groot (Iakota), R. Bultman (California South), and J. Weeda (Yellowstone), having heard the colloquium doctum of **Rev. Youchan Kim**, in accordance with Church Order Article 8, concur in the decision of Classis Rocky Mountain, in session on September 26, 1995, to declare him eligible for call to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
17. Synodical deputies R. Bultman (California South), F.J. Walhof (Arizona), and P.J. Kok (Pacific Northwest), having heard the colloquium doctum of **Rev. Jae Dong Lee** in accordance with Church Order Article 8, concur in the decision of Classis Central California, in session on October 12, 1995, to declare him eligible for call to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
Comment: Need is established by virtue of the ethnic (Korean) character of the church.
18. Synodical deputies H. Jonker (B.C. North-West), W.L. Vander Beek (B.C. South-East), and J. Hofman, Jr. (Columbia) concur in the decision of Classis Pacific Northwest in session on September 13, 1995, concerning the need for an indigenous pastor for the Hebron (Korean) Christian Reformed Church of Fife, Washington. Having established such need and having heard the colloquium doctum of **Rev. Woo Chun Lee** by Classis Pacific Northwest, the deputies concur in the decision to admit him to the ministry of the Word in

the Christian Reformed Church in North America and to declare him eligible for a call.

19. Synodical deputies R. Opperwall (Grand Rapids East), J. Gorter (Grandville), and G.W. Sheeres (Thornapple Valley), having heard the colloquium doctum of **Rev. Thomas Mayo**, in accordance with Church Order Article 8, concur with the motion of Classis Grand Rapids North in session on October 17, 1995, to declare him eligible for call to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
20. Synodical deputies J.C. Medendorp (Thornapple Valley), C. Steenstra (Grand Rapids North), and K.E. Van Wyk (Zeeland), having examined his credentials and having been present at the colloquium doctum of **Dr. Richard A. Muller**, concur in the decision of Classis Grand Rapids East, in session on May 18, 1995, to declare **Dr. Muller** eligible for a call to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
21. Synodical deputies G.J. Kamps (Arizona), G.G. Vink (Central California), and R. Bultman (California South), having reviewed the documents specified in accordance with Church Order Supplement, Article 8, concur in the declaration of Classis Greater Los Angeles, in session on October 4, 1995, that a **need** has been demonstrated to call a minister, **Rev. Noah C. Paek**, from another denomination.
22. Synodical deputies F.J. Walhof (Arizona), R. Bultman (California South), and G.G. Vink (Central California), having heard the colloquium doctum of **Rev. Noah C. Paek**, in accordance with Church Order Article 8, concur in the decision of Classis Greater Los Angeles, in session on December 14, 1995, to declare him eligible for call to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
23. Synodical deputies A.L. Kuiper (Heartland), D.W. De Groot (Iakota), and L.J. Howerzyl (Pella), having heard the colloquium doctum of **Rev. Jude Reardon**, in accordance with Church Order Article 8, concur in the decision of Classis Northcentral Iowa, in session on April 30, 1996, to declare him eligible for call to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
24. Synodical deputies J. Bylsma (Wisconsin), H.B. Vanden Heuvel (Chicago South), and G.H. Stoutmeyer (Illiana), having heard the colloquium doctum of **Rev. Eugene Yoonil Shin**, in accordance with Church Order Article 8, concur in the decision of Classis Northern Illinois, in session on September 20, 1995, to declare him eligible for call to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
25. Synodical deputies H.B. Vanden Heuvel (Chicago South), J.H. Scholten (Holland), and K.E. Van Wyk (Zeeland), having heard the colloquium doctum of **Rev. Ildefonso Torres**, in accordance with Church Order Article 8, concur in the decision of Classis Illiana, in session on September 12, 1995, to declare him eligible for call to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

26. Synodical deputies G.G. Vink (Central California), G.J. Kamps (Arizona), and R. Bultman (California South), having heard the colloquium doctum of **Rev. Gilbert Varela** and having observed that the synodical guidelines have been followed in accordance with Church Order Article 8, concur in the decision of Classis Greater Los Angeles, in session on September 7, 1995, to declare him eligible for call to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church.
27. Synodical deputies K.E. Van Wyk (Zeeland), C.D. Vander Meyden (Grand Rapids South), and J.C. Medendorp (Thornapple Valley), having heard the colloquium doctum of **Rev. Richard Verkaik**, in accordance with Church Order Article 8, concur in the decision of Classis Georgetown, in session on June 22, 1995, to declare him eligible for call to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church.
28. Synodical deputies H. Jonker (B.C. North-West), J.R. Kok (Central California), and R. Vander Ley (Pacific Northwest), having witnessed the colloquium doctum of **Rev. Chun Won**, concur in the decision of Classis Columbia, in session on September 27, 1995, to declare him eligible for a call to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church.

Recommendation:

That synod approve the work of the synodical deputies in regard to ministers from other denominations.

—Adopted

D. Ministers in specialized services, Church Order Article 12-c

Minister	Work	Classis and Date	Synodical Deputies
R.M. Berkenbosch	Dean of students, The King's University College, Edmonton, AB	Alberta North (10-3-95)	P. Nicolai, Alberta South H. Jonker, B.C. North-West W.L. Vander Beek, B.C. South-East
H.H. Boer	Chaplaincy, Kapiolani Hospital for Women and Children (UCC) and Dir. of Hospitality House of Pacific Community Church	Greater Los Angeles (9-19-95)	G.J. Kamps, Arizona G.G. Vink, Central California R. Bultman, California South
C.L. Bremer	Director of ministries of The Back to God Hour	Illiana (9-12-95)	H.B. Vanden Heuvel, Chicago South J.H. Scholten, Holland K.E. Van Wyk, Zeeland
H. Casanova	Assistant pastor for service with World Literature Ministries	Georgetown (5-11-96)	J.C. Medendorp, Thornapple Valley J.W. Uitvlugt, Zeeland J. Gorter, Grandville
J.D.S. Cho	Chaplain, Korean Community Concern, Inc.	Florida (3-9-96)	G.H. Stoutmeyer, Illiana S.J. Vander Klay, Hackensack H.B. Vanden Heuvel, Chicago South
R.H. Cok	Chaplain, Veterans' Administration Hospital	Rocky Mountain (9-26-95)	D.W. De Groot, Iakota J. Weeda, Yellowstone R. Bultman, California South
R.J. Dieleman	Bible teacher at Miami Christian High School	Florida (9-23-95)	S.J. Vander Klay, Hackensack G.H. Stoutmeyer, Illiana H.B. Vanden Heuvel, Chicago South

Minister	Work	Classis and Date	Synodical Deputies
E.F. Evenhuis	Pastor counselor, Creative Counseling Center, Claremont, CA	California South (5-8-96)	F.J. Walhof, Arizona A. Begay, Red Mesa D.R. Koll, Greater Los Angeles
W.J. Moxey	Hospice chaplain with VITAS	Illiana (9-12-95)	H.B. Vanden Heuvel, Chicago South J.H. Scholten, Holland K.E. Van Wyk, Zeeland
E. Schering	General department assistant in the Point Man/Ambassador Ministries for Promise Keepers	Rocky Mountain (9-26-95)	D.W. De Groot, Iakota R. Bultman, California South J. Weeda, Yellowstone
<p><i>Note:</i> In conjunction with their approval, the synodical deputies also provided these comments:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In their opinion the work lacks specificity. 2. It is recommended that the position be reviewed and reaffirmed after two years. 3. More firm lines of accountability should be established between the calling church and Rev. Schering. 			
A.J. Vander Griend	Director, Neighborhood Houses of Prayer, Mission 21 India	Grand Rapids South (5-23-96)	D.J. Van Beek, Grand Rapids North G.W. Sheeres, Thornapple Valley D. Tinklenberg, Grandtown
E.B. Verhulst	Chaplain, U.S. Navy	Thornapple Valley (9-19-95)	K.L. Havert, Grandville C. Steenstra, Grand Rapids North C. Vander Meyden, Grand Rapids So.
C. Vink	Coordinator of training, Royal Alexandra Hospital, Edmonton, AB	Alberta North (10-3-95)	P. Nicolai, Alberta South H. Jonker, B.C. North-West W.L. Vander Beek, B.C. South-East
D.J. Vrieland	Naval chaplaincy	G.R. North (1-16-96)	J.C. Medendorp, Thornapple Valley J. Gorter, Grandville S.E. Hoeszee, Grand Rapids East
T.J. Walcott	Military chaplain	Florida (3-9-96)	H.B. Vanden Heuvel, Chicago South G.H. Stoutmeyer, Illiana S.J. Vander Klay, Hackensack
W.S. Yeo	Teacher/chaplain, Chonan College of Foreign Studies in Choong Nam, Korea	California South (1-17-96)	F.J. Walhof, Arizona A. Begay, Red Mesa D.R. Koll, Greater Los Angeles
<p><i>Note:</i> The synodical deputies do not concur in the decision of Classis California South and have attached the following comments:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The main difficulty is that a clear "supervision procedure" is not presented. 2. We suggest that a job description be presented in written form rather than orally. 			

Recommendation:

That synod approve the work of the synodical deputies in regard to ministers in specialized ministries.

—Adopted

(The report of Advisory Committee 1 is continued in Article 60.)

ARTICLE 25

(The report of Advisory Committee 3 is continued from Article 17)

Advisory Committee 3, Education, Rev. Daniel W. De Groot reporting, presents the following:

I. Response to Overture 65

A. *Material*: Overture 65, pp. 313-16

B. *Recommendation*

That synod not accede to Overture 65

Grounds:

1. Overture 65 does not allege a violation of the confessional standards to which faculty members agree by signing the Form of Subscription.
2. The faculty of Calvin College recognize their responsibility to the church community as well as to the academic community of which they are a part. The faculty accept their accountability to the church by signing the Form of Subscription, in which they give assent to and agree not to contradict the confessional standards—the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort.
3. Professor Bouma's writings and discussions on questions of medical ethics and on those situations, if any, in which abortions are morally or religiously justified do not violate the doctrinal standards of the Christian Reformed Church. They fall within the accepted freedom for scholarly investigations, critiques, and expositions of religious, social, and political issues at a Reformed, Christian liberal-arts college.

—*Recommitted*

Note: The established procedures for examining the appropriateness of Professor Bouma's writing and teaching have already been followed, though without a formal allegation being lodged and a formal investigation having been conducted. If a formal allegation of confessional unorthodoxy had been made, the "Procedures for Handling Allegations of Confessional Unorthodoxy" (*Handbook for Teaching Faculty*, Appendix K) and the procedures listed in "Tenure at Calvin College" should have been followed.

II. Calvin Theological Seminary

A. *Material*: Calvin Theological Seminary Supplement, pp. 369-73

B. *Recommendations*

1. That synod approve for a three-year period adjustments to the Special Program for Ministerial Candidacy (SPMC) for students who are at least 40 years of age at the time of residency at the seminary.
The adjusted program is described as follows.
 - a. *Eligibility*
 - 1) Students who are able to demonstrate considerable knowledge of and varied experience in the CRC and ordinarily have been members of the CRC for at least five years at the time of residency at the seminary;
 - 2) And who have demonstrated their gifts for ministry in effective service in the church and kingdom, including significant Christian Reformed ministry experience;
 - 3) And whose family, geographical, and/or ministry circumstances are such that a year at Calvin Theological Seminary poses an unreasonable hardship for the students' families and/or their local congregation.

b. Course work

The following course work, most of which can be completed in a fall quarter and in which students must ordinarily have a cumulative GPA of 2.85, must be completed:

Christian Reformed Church History (332)	3 hours
Church Polity (603)	4 hours
Confessional Preaching (653)	1 hour
Senior Preaching (655)	1 hour
Old Testament exegetical elective	3 hours
New Testament exegetical elective	3 hours
Theological Division elective or core course	3 hours
Church and Ministry Division elective or core course	3 hours
Total	21 hours

(*Note:* For some students the faculty may specify certain courses in the elective or core category; the student may take two of these courses in a nontraditional way.)

c. Other requirements or adjustments

- 1) One fall quarter in residence at Calvin Theological Seminary is required for all students.
- 2) Matters concerning admission requirements, psychological evaluations, licensure procedures, field education, and comprehensive examinations are not adjusted, but since the course work is less specified and significantly reduced, the interview with the faculty will be more comprehensive.
- 3) Students who are at least 50 years of age at the time of residency at the seminary may apply for a waiver of the language comprehensive examinations (competence in Hebrew and Greek must be demonstrated by successful completion of the Old Testament and New Testament exegetical electives). They will also usually not be required to do additional college work to meet admission requirements if they have an acceptable B.A. degree or its equivalent.
- 4) During their programs, students will be mentored and evaluated by a three-person classical committee appointed by the seminary.

—*Adopted*

2. That synod appoint a study committee (1) to examine routes presently being used to ordained ministry in the CRC and related denominations, (2) to define standards for effective ministry (ordained ministry and unordained staff ministry) in the CRC, and (3) to propose any changes in present policy that it judges to be necessary.

Ground: Alternate routes into ministry are being used today that were not envisioned when the present Church Order articles and related policies were adopted.

—*Recommitted*

III. Youth-Ministry Committee

A. *Material*: Youth-Ministry Committee Report, pp. 176-78

B. *Recommendations*

1. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to the Youth-Ministry Committee chairperson, Rev. Jacob P. Heerema, and secretary, Rev. Joel W. Zuidema.
—*Granted*
2. That synod recognize and be introduced to the new United Calvinist Youth division director for Early Teen Ministry, Mr. Nate Vander Stelt.
—*Adopted*

Mr. Vander Stelt briefly relates the work of the new Early Teen Ministry, in which over one hundred churches are already involved.

IV. Dordt College

A. *Material*: Dordt College Report, p. 203

B. *Recommendation*

That synod note the transition of leadership from Dr. John B. Hulst to Dr. Carl Zylstra. Synod gives thanks to God for the faithful service of Dr. Hulst for the past twenty-eight years, fourteen of these as president, and prays for the blessing of God upon Dr. Zylstra as he assumes this post.

—*Adopted*

V. Institute for Christian Studies

A. *Material*: Institute for Christian Studies Report, pp. 204-05

B. *Recommendations*

1. That synod note the continuing commitment of the Institute to making a difference in graduate education. "Making a Difference Together," the ICS theme for the past year, sought to affirm the need and opportunities to witness to Christ as Renewer and Redeemer of learning.
—*Adopted*
2. That synod also note, with gratitude to God, the faithful service of Dr. Calvin Seerveld, who recently retired.
—*Adopted*

VI. The King's University College

A. *Material*: The King's University College Report, p. 206

B. *Recommendation*

That synod note the addition of new programs (i.e., education, environmental studies, sociology, and business) and the appointment of Rev. Roy Berkenbosch as new dean of students.

—*Adopted*

VII. Redeemer College

A. *Material*: Redeemer College Report, p. 207

B. *Recommendation*

That synod note the increased enrollment, excellent retention record, and strong academic program at Redeemer.

—*Adopted*

VIII. Reformed Bible College

A. *Material*: Reformed Bible College Report, pp. 208-09

B. *Recommendation*

That synod note RBC's creative commitment to offering a wide range of educational opportunities, for example the EXCEL program, and for a wide range of students, young and old. That synod note RBC's partnership in education with other educational institutions such as Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and Cornerstone College.

—*Adopted*

IX. Trinity Christian College

A. *Material*: Trinity Christian College Report, pp. 210-12

B. *Recommendations*

1. That synod note that the National League for Nursing awarded Trinity's nursing program another "clean" eight-year accreditation.

—*Adopted*

2. That synod take note of the intent of Dr. Kenneth Bootsma to relinquish his position as president of Trinity Christian College, effective June 30, 1996.

—*Adopted*

(The report of Advisory Committee 3 is continued in Article 56.)

ARTICLE 26

Advisory Committee 2, Missions, Rev. Harlan G. Vanden Einde reporting, presents the following:

Board of Trustees

A. *Materials*

1. Board of Trustees Report, pp. 43-44, II, C, 8; p. 45, III, L
2. Overtures 46, 47, 48, and 71

B. *Observations*

The issue of the size of agency boards has been one particularly knotty component of the discussion on denominational reorganization. In 1987, synod affirmed the three principles and eleven guidelines of the "Vision 21" study-committee report, one of which said, "Boards should be only as large as necessary." It also endorsed "the general direction of the recommendations of the

'Vision 21' study committee in reducing the size and number of denominational boards and committees."

After synods between 1987 and 1990 had developed further implications and details of denominational reorganization, Synod 1991 instructed the SIC to set in motion a process, to be completed by 1993, which included instructing "all agencies to review the following in consultation with SIC and the EDM.

1. Board size and composition (regional representation with preservation of the principle of classical representation)."

This was more difficult than the SIC imagined, and so it reported to Synod 1993 "that the composition of classically delegated boards will not be altered until such time as SIC develops and implements a strategic denominational agencies and ministries plan," repeating the item from 1991 referred to above. Synod 1993 instructed "the SIC to interpret its mandate as a mandate to review and recommend to synod, not as a mandate to implement." It appears that succeeding synods have become less confident that reducing the size of boards is of itself a necessary part of denominational reorganization.

As a result, the present situation varies from agency to agency. Agencies with regional-representative boards are The Back to God Hour, Calvin College, Calvin Theological Seminary, and Pastoral Ministries. One of these, Calvin Seminary, has requested the Board of Trustees to consider the possibility that it return to classical representation. Classically delegated boards remain in place for CRC Publications, CRWRC, Home Missions, and World Missions. The latter agencies, by formal appeal or communication to the Board of Trustees or by oral information to this synodical advisory committee, have all expressed a preference for retaining classically based boards.

The Board of Trustees feels it is time for synod to give clear direction on this issue. To facilitate this, the Board of Trustees recommended the following:

That all denominational boards, with the exception of the Calvin College Board of Trustees be uniformly constituted of sixteen (16) regional representatives and a limited number of at-large members not to exceed five (5), the exact numbers to be determined by the size and complexity of each organization and by approval of the Board of Trustees, and that such representation be from the regions presently defining the Board of Trustees.

It is further recommended that the transition to smaller boards begin July 1, 1996, and be completed no later than July 1, 1998.

Grounds:

- a. This size best serves effective governance.
- b. This size is cost effective.
- c. Vital considerations such as denominational "ownership" of an agency, accountability, and good communication with the churches can be effected in other appropriate ways than through board representation.

C. Recommendations

1. That synod (a) allow all the boards to retain their current structure; (b) mandate the Board of Trustees, in conjunction with the agencies and institutions, to explore new strategies for governance, board composition, and communi-

cation networks which will advance their ministries; and (c) request the BOT to report to Synod 1999 with its observations and/or recommendations.

Grounds:

- a. While all agree a small board, perhaps even smaller than sixteen (16) members, may be better if the board serves solely for governance, some agencies depend on their current board structure to function as an important part of their communication network, as a resource for financial development, and as a channel for input from the classes on agency plans and activities.
 - b. The savings achieved by having smaller boards may be offset by added costs of replacement structures for communication and other functions now done by board representatives.
 - c. This arrangement will allow the agencies time to find alternatives to board representation for enhancing good communication and a sense of denominational "ownership" of agencies.
 - d. A move toward centralization and smaller boards and committees is perceived as harmful at a time when many church members are already concerned about bureaucracy and distance between the local churches and denominational agencies.
 - e. Matters of governance, "ownership," and communication will be enhanced by more racially diverse boards.
 - f. The continuing discussion on Canadian restructuring and the possible broadening of the discussion to include the U.S. scene may influence matters of board size and function.
2. That synod recognize that, while smaller boards may be working well for some agencies, this may not be the best structure for every agency.
 3. That synod declare this to be its answer to Overtures 46, 47, 48, and 71 and to Board of Trustees' Recommendation III, L, page 45.

(The report of Advisory Committee 2 is continued in Article 29)

ARTICLE 27

The afternoon session is adjourned; Rev. B. Bernard Bakker leads in closing prayer.

THURSDAY EVENING, June 13, 1996
Fifth Session

ARTICLE 28

Elder Martin LaMaire announces *Psalter Hymnal* 504, "Holy God, We Praise Your Name." He reads from Revelation 22:1-5 and leads in opening prayer. Second clerk Rev. Henry Admiraal is absent for the evening session.

ARTICLE 29

(The report of Advisory Committee 2 is continued from Article 26)

Advisory Committee 2, Missions, Rev. Harlan G. Vanden Einde reporting, presents the following:

I. The Back to God Hour

A. *Material*: The Back-to-God Hour Report, pp. 65-69

B. Observations

"Permanence in the context of change"—that rather aptly describes the ministry of The Back to God Hour. Not only do cultures change among the nine major language ministries of The Back to God Hour, but the electronic media used to bring the gospel are also constantly changing. In addition, the past several years have seen changes in personnel, the most recent of which was the retirement of Dr. Joel Nederhood, whose name has become synonymous with The Back to God Hour. His place as director of ministries has been filled by Dr. Calvin Bremer. Yet in spite of all of these changes, there is permanence in this ministry, for the content of the Word of God remains the same. Our prayer is that the Lord of the harvest will continue to prosper the ministry of The Back to God Hour.

C. Recommendation

That synod grant the request of the board of The Back to God Hour that Rev. John Bylsma, president; Mr. John Kuyers, executive director; and Dr. Calvin Bremer, director of ministries, be given the privilege of the floor when Back to God Hour matters are discussed.

—*Granted*

Comments of encouragement are extended by President Van Ryn to Dr. Bremer as he adjusts to his new responsibilities.

II. Board of Trustees

A. Materials

1. Board of Trustees Report, pp. 43-44, II, C 8; p. 45, III, L
2. Overture 46, pp. 291-92
3. Overture 47, pp. 292-93
4. Overture 48, pp. 293-94
5. Overture 71, pp. 324-26

B. Observations

The issue of the size of agency boards has been one particularly knotty component of the discussion on denominational reorganization. In 1987, synod affirmed the three principles and eleven guidelines of the "Vision 21" study-committee report, one of which said, "Boards should be only as large as necessary." It also endorsed "the general direction of the recommendations of the 'Vision 21' study committee in reducing the size and number of denominational boards and committees."

After synods between 1987 and 1990 had developed further implications and details of denominational reorganization, Synod 1991 instructed the SIC to set in motion a process, to be completed by 1993, which included instructing "all agencies to review the following in consultation with SIC and the EDM.

1. Board size and composition (regional representation with preservation of the principle of classical representation)."

This was more difficult than the SIC imagined, and so it reported to Synod 1993 "that the composition of classically delegated boards will not be altered until such time as SIC develops and implements a strategic denominational agencies and ministries plan," repeating the item from 1991 referred to above. Synod 1993 instructed "the SIC to interpret its mandate as a mandate to review and recommend to synod, not as a mandate to implement." It appears that succeeding synods have become less confident that reducing the size of boards is of itself a necessary part of denominational reorganization.

As a result, the present situation varies from agency to agency. Agencies with regional-representative boards are The Back to God Hour, Calvin College, Calvin Theological Seminary, and Pastoral Ministries. One of these, Calvin Seminary, has requested the Board of Trustees to consider the possibility that it return to classical representation. Classically delegated boards remain in place for CRC Publications, CRWRC, Home Missions, and World Missions. The latter agencies, by formal appeal or communication to the Board of Trustees or by oral information to this synodical advisory committee, have all expressed a preference for retaining classically based boards.

The Board of Trustees feels it is time for synod to give clear direction on this issue. To facilitate this, the Board of Trustees recommended the following:

That all denominational boards, with the exception of the Calvin College Board of Trustees be uniformly constituted of sixteen (16) regional representative and a limited number of at-large members not to exceed five (5), the exact number to be determined by the size and complexity of each organization and by approval of the Board of Trustees, and that such representation be from the regions presently defining the Board of Trustees.

It is further recommended that the transition to smaller boards begin July 1, 1996, and be completed no later than July 1, 1998.

Grounds:

- a. This size best serves effective governance.
- b. This size is cost effective.
- c. Vital considerations such as denominational "ownership" of an agency, accountability, and good communication with the churches can be effected in other appropriate ways than through board representation.

C. Recommendations

1. That synod (a) allow all the boards to retain their current structure; (b) mandate the Board of Trustees, in conjunction with the agencies and institutions, to explore new strategies for governance, board composition, and communication networks which will advance their ministries; and (c) request the BOT to report to Synod 1999 with its observations and/or recommendations.

Grounds:

- a. While all agree a small board, perhaps even smaller than sixteen (16) members, may be better if the board serves solely for governance, some agencies depend on their current board structure to function as an important part of their communication network, as a resource for financial development, and as a channel for input from the classes on agency plans and activities.
- b. The savings achieved by having smaller boards may be offset by added costs of replacement structures for communication and other functions now done by board representatives.
- c. This arrangement will allow the agencies time to find alternatives to board representation for enhancing good communication and a sense of denominational "ownership" of agencies.
- d. A move toward centralization and smaller boards and committees is perceived as harmful at a time when many church members are already concerned about bureaucracy and distance between the local churches and denominational agencies.
- e. Matters of governance, "ownership," and communication will be enhanced by more racially diverse boards.
- f. The continuing discussion on Canadian restructuring and the possible broadening of the discussion to include the U.S. scene may influence the matters of board size and function.

—*Adopted*

2. That synod recognize that, while smaller boards may be working well for some agencies, this may not be the best structure for every agency.

—*Adopted*

3. That synod declare this to be its answer to Overtures 46, 47, 48, and 71 and to Board of Trustees' Recommendation III, L, page 45.

—*Adopted*

(The report of Advisory Committee 2 is continued in Article 35.)

ARTICLE 30

The evening session is adjourned; Elder Lawrence Lutgendorff leads in closing prayer.

FRIDAY MORNING, June 14, 1996 Sixth Session

ARTICLE 31

Rev. Clifford Bajema reads from Psalm 63. The assembly alternately prays and sings the stanzas of *Psalter Hymnal* 63, "O Lord, My God, Most Earnestly," and continues with several other songs.

The roll call indicates that Rev. Peter Slofstra temporarily replaces Rev. Harry A. Vander Windt (Classis Niagara). He rises to express agreement with the forms of unity.

ARTICLE 32

Synod enters into executive session.

The vice president assumes the chair.

Advisory Committee 12, Judicial Code, Mr. Donald Oosterhouse reporting, presents the following:

I. Charges of Rev. Jacob Binnema against Classis Quinte

A. *Background*

Rev. Jacob Binnema was pastor of Maranatha CRC of Bowmanville, Ontario. Classis approved Rev. Binnema's request for separation from that congregation under Church Order Article 16-b. Although the classis approved his request, Rev. Binnema did not feel that classis had properly acknowledged his reasons for leaving Maranatha Church. He alleged that in failing to take a stand contrary to reports that were circulating, classis was guilty of complicity in the defamation of his character. Jacob Binnema appealed the May 9, 1995, decision of classis to synod. The appeal was referred to the Judicial Code Committee.

B. *Materials and procedure*

The Judicial Code Committee met in Toronto, Ontario, on October 18, 1995, with eight members present to hear the case. Besides the appeal itself the Judicial Code Committee (JCC) was supplied with sixty exhibits. Several members of the classis were present along with their representatives. Jacob Binnema represented himself and called several witnesses. After a full day of hearing and interaction the JCC was of the opinion that both sides had learned a lot during the hearing and probably understood the matter better. Both parties were urged to work together on a mutually satisfactory solution, which would make it unnecessary to bring the appeal to Synod 1996. During the following hour members of classis and Rev. Binnema worked out a solution.

C. *Agreement*

Rev. Jacob Binnema and Classis Quinte were able to reach an agreement which included a signed statement from Rev. Binnema and a statement from the classis which would be recommended to classis to be included in the minutes of Classis Quinte. Classis approved this statement at its next meeting. The JCC was gratified that an amicable agreement was reached and applauded the cooperative spirit of both parties.

D. *Recommendation*

That synod receive as information that the charges of Rev. Jake Binnema against Classis Quinte have been withdrawn and note its appreciation for the fact that Rev. Binnema and the classis were able to reach an agreement.

—*Adopted*

II. Appeal of Dr. Florence Kuipers dated March 25, 1995

A. *Materials*

1. Appeal dated March 25, 1995
2. Letter from Dr. Florence Kuipers dated October 6, 1995
3. Letter from Dr. Florence Kuipers dated November 30, 1995

B. Background

Dr. Florence Kuipers states that this appeal, together with her overture to Synod 1995, "is the culmination of a series of personal appeals and overtures in the Christian Reformed Church (from 1990 to 1995) in the interest of revising Church Order Article 3 on a justice rather than on a 'local option' (or 'conscience') basis."

She states that "My complaint concerns the August 17, 1994, ruling of the Council of the Washington, DC, Christian Reformed Church that my Overture to Synod 1995 is 'out of order'—a decision in which Classis Hackensack acquiesced at its March 7, 1995, session by not sustaining my appeal of the Council's ruling."

C. Procedure

Dr. Florence Kuipers appropriately requested processing of her appeal by the Judicial Code Committee. The JCC did not conduct a hearing on this matter, having determined that, on the basis of the appeal itself, there was no ground for action by the Judicial Code Committee.

D. Rationale for Judicial Code Committee's recommendation

Dr. Kuipers sometimes fails to distinguish between the process which is appropriate for an appeal and the process which is appropriate for an overture. This appeal arises out of an overture submitted to the council of Washington, D.C., Christian Reformed Church, an overture seeking a justice basis for revising Church Order Article 3.

The council did not adopt the overture and, as she alleged, declared the overture "out of order." She appealed this decision to classis, which did not sustain her appeal.

A church member's request to a council to adopt her overture as the council's overture is not a judicial process. It is more accurately described as a legislative process. A council may form its own judgment as to the wisdom of accepting a proposed overture, and the council of Washington, D.C., CRC made the decision not to accept her overture. The terminology "out of order" may not be the preferred terminology, but the effect of the decision is clear: The council did not adopt her overture.

When the council did not adopt her overture, she was free to request the classis to adopt it, which she in fact did, and she submitted the overture to synod, which did not adopt her overture.

Dr. Florence Kuipers was informed of the decision of the Judicial Code Committee to recommend to synod that her appeal be dismissed. The committee's rationale for that recommendation was outlined to her in a letter dated December 27, 1995.

Dr. Kuipers responded by letter dated January 4, 1996, saying, "In the light of Synod 1995's decision on women's ordination, I (as well as all of us) must agree to your findings and your recommendation to synod that the appeal be dismissed."

E. Recommendation

That synod dismiss the appeal of Dr. Florence Kuipers dated March 25, 1995.

—*Adopted*

III. Appeal of Gerald L. Rutgers from a decision of Classis Arizona

A. *Materials*

1. Appeal of Gerald L. Rutgers dated August 28, 1995
2. Elaboration of grounds for the appeal dated September 18, 1995
3. Among the materials supplied by the classis were minutes of Classis Arizona, reports of church visitors, the report of the council with the six charges as to ungodly conduct, a chronology of events (this includes a short summary of events between August 1993 and January 1995 with details for events between January and June 1995), tapes of the Judicial Code hearing held on July 21-22, 1995. (These tapes were transcribed by JCC, 217 pages.)
4. Appellant and his representative, Monti Vander May, provided a document entitled "Ministry Goals," G. Rutgers's April 12, 1995, response to Orangewood elders, correspondence from Mrs. G. Rutgers to the Orangewood congregation, other communications including a number of notes and letters written by people expressing appreciation for Pastor Rutgers.

B. *Background*

Gerald Rutgers (GR) was the pastor of Orangewood Christian Reformed Church in Phoenix, Arizona. Tensions developed between Pastor Rutgers and the church leaders which led the elders to request that GR seek a call to another congregation. This was ratified by the Orangewood council in January 1995. GR requested specific grounds be given for the request. Grounds were prepared, and a meeting with the church visitors was held in February, at which time GR was asked to consider whether he would request release from service under Church Order Article 16-b. This was not pursued because of other developments.

In March 1995 a member of the church made an accusation to an elder that GR was guilty of inappropriate conduct in a counseling session. This led to GR's being temporarily relieved of duty, pending investigation. Church visitors worked with the Orangewood elders, and the classical interim committee became involved. Questions arose about using denominational guidelines for handling matters of abuse. Though the 1995 guidelines had not yet been approved by the CRC synod, they were thought to be better than those of 1994. In April the elders met and heard the accuser. A second accuser was also heard. There were written statements from others. The elders then prepared formal allegations. These were presented to GR. The deacons concurred, and the council proceeded to suspend the pastor.

GR appealed the suspension to the classical interim committee on April 28, 1995. On May 11 he requested that the Judicial Code be invoked for the hearing of his appeal. As things developed, the council decided to overture classis to depose GR for "ungodly conduct." Six grounds were given. "The CIC decided to call a special meeting of Classis Arizona on July 21-22, 1995, to hold a formal hearing to adjudicate the allegations of misconduct that have been leveled against Gerald Rutgers and to hear arguments for and against the petition to depose him" (Brief Chronology of Events). Classis met in a Judicial Code setting on July 21-22. It judged the allegations of some of the accusers to be true and that of one not to be true. On July 29, classis met to consider the motion to depose GR

and voted in favor of the deposition, with the concurrence of the synodical deputies.

GR appealed this action of Classis Arizona, and the case was referred to the Judicial Code Committee of the denomination.

C. The Judicial Code Committee hearing

The Judicial Code hearing was held on February 2, 1996, in Grand Rapids, Michigan. GR was present and was represented by attorney Monti Vander May. Pastor Alfred Lindemulder represented Classis Arizona. Six members of the Judicial Code Committee heard the appeal.

D. Recommendation

The Judicial Code Committee recommends that synod not sustain the appeal of Gerald Rutgers from the decision of Classis Arizona approving the deposition of Gerald Rutgers from the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church.

—Adopted

Rev. Jack H. Gray leads the assembly in prayer on behalf of the Rutgers family.

IV. Appeal of Mr. William and Mrs. Nelle Evenhouse from the decision of the executive committee of Christian Reformed World Missions on February 19, 1995, rejecting the solution to grievances presented by a review committee

A. Materials

1. Appeal dated February 22, 1995, with several attachments
2. Ten exhibits presented by appellants at the hearing
3. Fourteen exhibits presented by the respondent at the hearing

B. History

A hearing on this matter was held by the Judicial Code Committee on August 18, 1995. At the hearing the Evenhouses were represented by Dr. James La Grand, and the respondent was represented by Rev. Russell Palsrok, president of the Board of World Missions, and Rev. William Van Tol, executive director of World Missions.

C. Observations

After hearing the case presented by the appellants and the position presented by the representatives of the Board of World Missions, the members of the Judicial Code Committee observed that there was a possibility that the conflict could be satisfactorily resolved if the two sides had some time to work out their differences. This opportunity was provided late in the day. After a time of discussion between the appellants and the respondents, the Judicial Code Committee was informed that a mutual agreement had been reached and that the respondents would recommend that the Board of World Missions accept the agreement.

The Judicial Code Committee has been informed that the executive committee of the Board of World Missions, meeting on September 7 and 8, adopted the agreement reached on August 18, 1995.

D. *Recommendation*

That synod take note that the appeal of William and Nelle Evenhouse has been resolved by mutual agreement between the Evenhouses and the Board of World Missions.

—*Adopted*

V. **Appeal of Rev. John Van Hemert from a decision of Classis Florida giving an “honorable release” to Rev. John Van Hemert from the ministry of Faith Community Church**

A. *Materials*

1. Appeal dated November 23, 1994, received by the general secretary December 5, 1994
2. Referral of this matter by Synod 1995 to the Judicial Code Committee
3. Numerous documents and correspondence submitted by Rev. John Van Hemert
4. Response from Classis Florida dated August 17, 1995, with attachments, including a document referred to as a Mutual Agreement
5. Communication of J. Van Hemert dated June 13, 1996

B. *History*

1. The referral of this matter from Synod 1995 contained two grounds, as follows:
 - a. The Judicial Code Committee is better able to decide if the appeal is in order.
 - b. If it is in order, the Judicial Code Committee is the appropriate body to adjudicate the case.
2. The Judicial Code Committee met August 18, 1995, to consider the submissions by appellant and respondent and to hear argument from Rev. Harold Dekker, representative for Rev. John Van Hemert, all of which related to the issue raised in Ground 1.

C. *Observations*

1. Summary of facts

Rev. Van Hemert served as a minister of Faith Community Church, a mission church in Lantana, Florida, from 1987 to 1991. At the September 1991 meeting of classis, an executive session was held at which the continued ministry of Rev. Van Hemert at Faith Community in Lantana was discussed. A Mutual Agreement between Classis Florida and Rev. Van Hemert was reached which stipulates that Rev. Van Hemert would “withdraw from active ministerial service to Faith Community Church no later than November 30, 1991. At such time Rev. Van Hemert shall be appropriately honored as founding pastor of Faith Community Church” (quotation taken from Mutual Agreement document adopted by Classis Florida). Rev. Van Hemert says this honoring did not take place.

Since Rev. Van Hemert stepped aside from his ministry at the Lantana congregation, that group has dispersed. Most are not worshipping at any Christian Reformed Church. Some seem to have discontinued meeting with God’s people for worship on the Lord’s Day.

On August 15, 1994, a letter was sent by Rev. Van Hemert to the stated clerk of Classis Florida in which he appeals the 1991 decision and requests that an objective committee be appointed by classis to review the motives, principles, and procedures used by Classis Florida to sever his relationship with Faith Community Church. It is the contention of Rev. Van Hemert that Classis Florida did not live up to the stipulations of the Mutual Agreement.

Rev. Van Hemert was informed by letter from the stated clerk that his appeal and request for a review committee would not be placed on the agenda of classis because it was judged by the stated clerk and others with whom he consulted that there were no new materials presented in the appeal.

After the request to hear the appeal was rejected, Rev. Van Hemert sent his appeal to Synod 1995. Synod referred his appeal to the Judicial Code Committee, as noted above.

The second paragraph of the appeal reads as follows: "I hereby sincerely and urgently request Synod 1995 for an objective committee, with possible staff from SCORR and the Abuse Prevention offices, to review the motives, principles, and procedures used by Home Missions of Classis Florida to sever relations between Faith Community and its minister."

Near the conclusion of the document Rev. Van Hemert states,

I, therefore, sincerely and prayerfully request the following:

1. A sincere, loving resolve to establish biblical correction and justice on the part of those who so severely dealt with the people and community of Faith Church.
2. A true biblical reconciliation between those of classis and the aggrieved with sincere sorrow for sin, so that God's honor be restored and hurts healed. That also the results be shared with the churches by way of the pulpits and the bulletins.
3. That restoration in the Holy Spirit be established wherever possible including continuation of a ministry for all peoples and races in West Lantana according to the many decisions made and the many years of progress in God's harvest.
4. Financial remuneration for the losses sustained by the minister and his family because of the actions of those involved and Classis Florida.

D. Developments after Judicial Code Committee report

After the Judicial Code Committee report and recommendations were submitted to the representative of Rev. John Van Hemert, Rev. Van Hemert submitted the following items to the general secretary or to the Judicial Code Committee:

1. Document dated March 15, 1996, asking for audience with "committee of pre-advice" and synod. Reference is made to Article 30-a of the Church Order.
2. Memo to Judicial Code Committee dated May 31, 1996, enclosing copy of communication to synod.
3. Communication to synod dated May 29, 1996, again requesting a review committee with participation by Pastor-Church Relations, SCORR, and Abuse Prevention.
4. Document dated June 9, 1996, addressed to synod and entitled "Request to Recommit Judicial Code Report, Classis Florida/Van Hemert, Back to This Committee."
5. Withdrawal of appeal by J. Van Hemert dated June 13, 1996.

E. Recommendations

1. That synod approve the withdrawal by John Van Hemert of his appeal from action by and charges against Classis Florida incorporated in a document dated November 23, 1994, which was received by the general secretary December 5, 1994.
—*Adopted*
2. That synod declare that the effect of the approved withdrawal of this appeal by J. Van Hemert is to dispose of all issues raised in that document with finality and to foreclose any attempt by John Van Hemert to raise any issue dealt with in the document by any other appeal or charges filed or to be filed subsequent to November 23, 1994, whether filed under Church Order Supplement, Article 30-a, or Supplement, Article 30-c.
—*Adopted*
3. That synod recognize that Rev. and Mrs. Van Hemert were deeply hurt by the process leading to and the action of separation from Faith Community Church and also by the termination of that ministry. The Christian Reformed Church should exercise pastoral concern to the Van Hemerts in an attempt to achieve closure in this matter.
—*Adopted*
4. That the appropriate regional pastor be asked to meet with the Van Hemerts and show the church's love and concern for them in the suffering they have endured as a result of the matters raised in the appeal.
—*Adopted*

Synod returns to open session.

The president of synod resumes the chair.

ARTICLE 33

Advisory Committee 10, Appeals, Rev. George F. Vander Weit reporting, presents the following:

I. Revisions of the Judicial Code

A. *Material*: Judicial Code Committee Report, pp. 194-99

B. Background

Synod 1995 requested the Judicial Code Committee to clarify the applicability of the five-year statute of limitations, the general secretary asked the committee whether people who are not members of the CRC should also be given the privilege of bringing charges in certain cases, and the committee itself reviewed some provisions of the code in the light of its experience. The committee is now recommending a number of revisions of the Judicial Code.

C. Recommendations

1. That Article 6 be revised to read as follows:
 - a. Every charge, in order to receive a judicial hearing, must be filed in writing with the assembly, must set forth the alleged offense, and must specify the facts relied upon to sustain the charge, including, as far as possible, the time and place of the offense. The complainant shall mail or

otherwise deliver a copy of the charge to the respondent at the same time as it is filed with the assembly.

- b. The charge shall not allege more than one offense. However, several charges against the same respondent, whether brought by one or more complainants, may be presented at the same time and may, at the discretion of the assembly, be heard together. When several charges are heard at the same time, a decision on each charge must be made separately.
- c. Time limits
 - 1) There is no time limit for filing a charge of sexual abuse.
 - 2) An allegation of abuse to a minor other than an allegation of sexual abuse may be filed at any time within five years after the date of the alleged offense or at any time before the person who was allegedly abused reaches age 25, whichever allows the longer time.
 - 3) Except for the provisions in 1) and 2) immediately above, no charge may be filed for an alleged offense which occurred more than five years prior to the date on which the charge is filed.

—Adopted

2. That Article 1, a, 2) be revised to read as follows:

The provisions of Article 1, a pertain to the bringing of written charges by

- a. A member of the Christian Reformed Church (the "church") against another member or against an assembly; or
- b. An assembly against another assembly or against a member; or
- c. A person who is not a member of the Christian Reformed Church against a member or assembly of the Christian Reformed Church, provided such person has been directly affected as an individual by the charged offense.

—Adopted

3. That the material in the Preamble under the title "About Article 1, a" be revised to read as follows:

Article 1, a deals with matters involving members and/or assemblies of the church and, in some limited instances, non-members. With respect to such matters, the provisions of the Judicial Code apply only

- a. When written charges are filed; and
- b. When either party to the dispute requests a judicial hearing or when the assembly first hearing the charges determines to constitute a judicial hearing.

If the above two conditions are met, the assembly must still make a determination as to whether or not informal means have or have not been exhausted. If such means have not been exhausted, the assembly should seriously consider postponing the judicial hearing while further informal efforts are undertaken. If the assembly determines that informal means have been exhausted or if further informal means do not resolve the matter, the assembly will proceed to conduct a judicial hearing.

It should be noted that matters of admonition and discipline do not require a judicial hearing unless there are written charges which either party or the assembly determines require a judicial hearing. The Judicial Code recognizes the fundamental and primary role of informal means in all matters of admonition and discipline; it assumes that these matters are best handled by informal counseling and entreaty; if sanctions are required, it leaves the determination of them to the church under the Church Order.

The assembly must also decide, under Article 10 of the Judicial Code, whether or not the charges are substantial.

—*Adopted*

4. That the material in the Preamble under the title "About Article 1, b" be revised to read as follows:

Article 1, b deals with disputes involving agencies, boards, or committees on one side and their employees or members or assemblies of the church on the other side. With respect to all such matters, the provisions of the Judicial Code apply only

- a. When a written appeal or written charges are filed; and
- b. When a judicial hearing is requested by one of the parties or when the assembly before whom the charges first are filed determines to constitute a judicial hearing.

Article 1, b is not to be treated as an alternative method whereby church members or assemblies can challenge or question the decisions or conduct of agencies, boards, or committees in matters which are properly the substance of an overture or a gravamen.

—*Adopted*

5. That Article 1, a, 3) be revised to read as follows:

- 3) A person or an assembly filing a charge shall be called the complainant, and the person or assembly against whom the charge is filed shall be called the respondent.

—*Adopted*

6. That Article 1, a, 4) be revised to read as follows:

- 4) Written charges brought by a complainant against a respondent alleging an offense in profession or practice against the Word of God, the doctrinal standards of the church, or the Church Order shall, upon the request of either the complainant or the respondent for a judicial hearing, be deemed to require formal adjudication unless the assembly, acting under Article 10, determines that the charges are not substantial. When neither the complainant nor the respondent requests a formal judicial hearing, the assembly before whom the charges are first filed shall determine whether or not to constitute a formal hearing.

—*Adopted*

7. That Article 7 be revised to read as follows:

A respondent shall file a written answer to the charge with the assembly and shall mail or otherwise deliver a copy to the complainant within *sixty (60) days* after the written charge is filed.

—*Adopted*

8. That Article 8 be revised to read as follows:

- a. A hearing for an alleged offense shall begin no later than one year from the time the charge is filed.
- b. The assembly, after consulting with the complainant and the respondent, shall set the time and place for the hearing on the charge and shall notify the parties.
- c. The assembly shall set a time, not less than fifteen (15) days and not more than thirty (30) days, before the hearing by which the parties shall each furnish the other party with a list of witnesses to be called and a copy of each exhibit to be offered at the hearing. A party shall be limited to such witnesses and exhibits unless the party persuades the assembly of good cause for not having the information available by the deadline.
- d. Within the same time period set forth in c above, each party shall furnish the assembly with a list of witnesses that the party plans to call at the hearing and a copy of all documents to be offered at the hearing, in chronological order and indexed.

—*Adopted*

9. That Article 10 be revised to read as follows:

The assembly shall determine whether the written charges are substantial. This may be done by the assembly on the basis of the written charge, the answer, the proposed exhibits, and, if the assembly so desires, an informal conference with the parties and their representatives. The assembly may delegate the review of information and the informal conference to a committee, but the assembly, after receiving a report from the committee, makes the determination. A decision by a council or a classis that a charge is not substantial may be appealed.

The hearing, if ordered, shall proceed as follows:

- a. Each party may make an opening statement summarizing what that party expects to prove.
- b. The complainant shall proceed first with proofs, including witnesses and exhibits.
- c. The respondent shall then proceed with proofs, including witnesses and exhibits.
- d. A witness must testify at the hearing, and all witnesses may be questioned by both parties unless the parties agree in writing at least fifteen (15) days before the hearing to use a written statement of a person not present at the hearing.
- e. The complainant and the respondent shall, in turn, summarize their cases either orally or in writing.

f. If either party objects to irregularity in the proceedings, the objection must be entered into the record. The presiding officer may sustain or disallow the objection. If the chair's ruling is challenged, the assembly must vote on the question of sustaining the chair.

—*Adopted*

10. That Article 15 be revised to read as follows:

If a council or an agency, board, or committee of classis is the respondent, the original hearing shall be before the classis and in accordance with the hearing procedures set forth in Articles 10-14.

—*Adopted*

11. That Article 16 be revised to read as follows:

Appeal of the decision of council may be made to classis. Such an appeal must be made within ninety (90) days. When such an appeal is made, a written notice together with a written statement of grounds of appeal shall be sent to the stated clerk of classis and a copy thereof to the council. The clerk of council shall thereupon transmit the decision of council, together with the record referred to in Article 14, to the stated clerk of classis. The hearing in the classis shall be limited to the grounds set forth in the statement and record.

—*Adopted*

12. That the second sentence of Article 21 be revised to read as follows:

Such an appeal must be made within ninety (90) days.

—*Adopted*

13. That Article 22 be revised by the insertion of the following at the beginning:

If a classis or an agency, board, or committee of synod is the respondent, the original hearing shall be before the Judicial Code Committee in accordance with the procedures set forth in Articles 10-14.

—*Adopted*

14. That Church Order Supplement, Articles 30-a and 30-b be made consistent with the Judicial Code by the following changes:

In Article 30-a, B, 1 and in Article 30-b, Part B, subparagraph 9, sixty (60) days should be changed to ninety (90) days.

—*Adopted*

II. Response to three appeals from Dr. Florence Kuipers

A. *Material*: Personal Appeals 1, 2, and 3, distributed to the advisory committee

B. *Observations*

Some members of our denomination believe the Bible requires the ordination of women to all the offices of the church and that it is unjust to refuse such ordination. Others believe the Bible prohibits such ordination and that no injustice is done when women are not ordained. For years we have struggled with the role of women in the church and have resolved a number of issues by granting "local option." For example, we did this in 1957 with the question of

women voting at congregational meetings and again in 1995 when synod allowed classes to declare the word *male* in Church Order Article 3-a inoperative so that women could be ordained to all the offices.

Dr. Florence Kuipers, a member of our Washington, D.C., church, does not agree with this approach. In 1990 she unsuccessfully appealed to synod "from the decision of Classis Hackensack not to adopt her overture requesting a revision of Article 3 of the Church Order (regarding eligibility for church office) 'on a justice basis'" (*Acts of Synod 1992*, p. 703). Every year since, Dr. Kuipers has submitted to synod one or more overtures or appeals that present the same point. As she says in the first of three appeals considered by our committee, "This appeal, together with my overture to Synod 1995, is the culmination of a series of personal appeals and overtures in the Christian Reformed Church (from 1990 to 1995) in the interest of revising Church Order Article 3 on a justice rather than on a 'local option' (or 'conscience') basis."

It is certainly legitimate for Dr. Kuipers to overture synod on this matter, but it is also legitimate for the Washington, D.C., council and Classis Hackensack to choose not to approve Dr. Kuipers's overtures. However, when her council or classis does not adopt her overture(s), she also appeals those decisions, believing "that an overture tends to be validated and strengthened by the sustaining of an appeal" (Personal Appeal 1). This is unnecessary. For example, the *Agenda for Synod 1996* contains overtures from two individuals and twenty-three church councils simply because these overtures were not approved by church councils or classes. No appeals were necessary to ensure that synod would consider these twenty-five overtures, and synod's work would be seriously impeded if its advisory committee had to meet with twenty-five appellants and if synod itself had to consider twenty-five appeals along with these twenty-five overtures.

Overtures and appeals from Dr. Kuipers on essentially the same issue have been addressed by the following synods:

Synod 1990: Personal Appeal 2, p. 658

Synod 1991: Personal Appeal 3, pp. 772-73

Synod 1992: Personal Appeal 1, pp. 703-06

Synod 1993: Appeal heard by the Judicial Code Committee, pp. 531-32;
Overture 61, p. 616

Synod 1994: Overture 55, p. 518

Synod 1995: Overture 69, p. 736; Personal Appeal 3 was not considered because "the committee was informed that the appellant has resigned as a member of the Christian Reformed Church," p. 736.

In our judgment the position of Dr. Kuipers and its underlying argumentation have been given due consideration. Even though the decisions of synod have not sustained her position, Dr. Kuipers has been heard and has received a response. Despite counsel to the contrary, Dr. Kuipers continues to pursue the same issue and has submitted three appeals to this synod. Both the Judicial Code Committee and the advisory committee have considered Personal Appeal 1, and we have also considered two other appeals. Synodical rules grant "the appellant and the respondent . . . the right to appear before the advisory committee of synod to explain their positions" (Rules for Synodical Procedure 1995, Supplement, Article 30-a, B, 4), and Dr. Kuipers met with our committee to discuss these matters. In addition, a member of our committee met with Dr.

Kuipers to inform her of our decisions and to indicate the pastoral concern of our committee and the denomination. Dr. Kuipers indicated that she was pleased with the way our committee received her and also indicated that she is at peace with the decisions made with respect to her appeals.

Personal Appeal 1 was submitted as Personal Appeal 3 to Synod 1995 and was not considered because "the committee was informed that the appellant has resigned as a member of the Christian Reformed Church" (*Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 736). Dr. Kuipers believes that the council of Washington, D.C., CRC erred "in accepting my May 22 resignation and thereupon using it not only to transfer my membership out of Washington, D.C., CRC and into another denomination, but also willfully and deliberately to obstruct my appeal/overture to Synod 1995" (Personal Appeal 3). The advisory committee was informed that Dr. Kuipers was readmitted as a member of the Washington congregation in August of 1995. Thus, we considered her appeal.

The appeal itself is from a decision of Classis Hackensack, meeting March 7, 1995, "not to sustain Dr. Florence Kuipers' appeal" from a decision of the council of Washington, D.C., CRC to declare her overture to Synod 1995 out of order. We note that the classis nonetheless did consider her overture, deciding not to adopt it as its own (Minutes, Art. 17, C), and that her overture, Overture 69, was subsequently submitted to and considered by Synod 1995 (*Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 736). We also note that Classis Hackensack, during the same session, asked Dr. Kuipers "to cease and desist presenting this overture to the Washington, D.C., church, Classis Hackensack, and the Synod of the CRC for the welfare and good order of God's church" (Minutes, Art. 17, F). We believe the actions of Classis Hackensack were fair to the appellant and pastorally sensitive to all parties involved.

The advisory committee was informed that the Judicial Code Committee also considered Appeal 1 and is recommending to synod "that the appeal be dismissed." We also received a June 5, 1996, letter from Dr. Kuipers indicating, "I have already conceded the dismissal of Appeal 1, but I request the sustaining of my Appeals 2 and 3 by Synod 1996." We concur in the recommendation of the Judicial Code Committee that synod not sustain Personal Appeal 1 and believe it unnecessary for us to bring a duplicate recommendation on this appeal.

Personal Appeal 2 is from a decision of Classis Hackensack, meeting September 26, 1995 (Minutes, Art. 15), to "declare the word *male* in Article 3-a of the Church Order inoperative and to authorize the churches in Classis Hackensack to ordain and install women in the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist, subject to the understanding that any such woman may not be sent as a delegate to synod nor appointed to be a synodical deputy." Dr. Kuipers acknowledges that "this decision of classis is in conformity with the Supplement to Church Order Article 3-a adopted by Synod 1995 . . ." but believes "such action is unjust, not only because it binds the conscience of all to a conscience-based resolution of the women's ordination question, but also because it erects a barrier to the revision of Church Order Article 3-a" (Personal Appeal 2). We believe Dr. Kuipers's appeal is simply the expression of a disagreement of a substantive nature with regard to an issue facing the church. She does not demonstrate that Classis Hackensack had no right to take the action it did. In fact, this right was granted to all classes by Synod 1995.

Contained in the appeal of Dr. Kuipers is a request for adjudication of this appeal through the Judicial Code. We observe, as did the Judicial Code

Committee in its December 27, 1995, letter to Dr. Kuipers in response to Appeal 1, that this is a legislative matter and that this "appeal does not contain anything which is amenable to a judicial process."

In the form given to us, Personal Appeal 3 is directed to Classis Hackensack and appeals from a decision of the Washington, D.C., council that acquiesced in Dr. Kuipers's May 22, 1995, resignation from that congregation. At the March 5, 1996, meeting of Classis Hackensack, it was "moved and supported not to support her in any of the actions requested from us in this session" (Minutes, Art. 14, C). For that reason, Dr. Kuipers forwarded this appeal to synod. Technically, Dr. Kuipers should have indicated that she is now appealing from the decision of Classis Hackensack not to sustain her appeal from a decision of her council. Our committee believes it unwise to rule Personal Appeal 3 out of order on the basis of a technicality, since Dr. Kuipers believes that she has "three appeals on the agenda for Synod 1996" (June 5, 1996, letter).

C. Recommendations

1. That synod declare that the material in Personal Appeal 2 is not amenable to a judicial process.

—Adopted

2. That synod not sustain Personal Appeal 2.

Ground: The right to declare the word *male* in Article 3-a of the Church Order inoperative was given to all classes by Synod 1995 (*Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 733).

—Adopted

3. That synod not sustain Personal Appeal 3.

Ground: A council has a right to acquiesce in a resignation submitted by a member.

—Adopted

4. That synod instruct the general secretary not to include on the agendas of future synods any overture or appeal from Dr. Kuipers that is essentially the same as those considered by synod over the past seven years.

Ground: Because synod has adequately addressed Dr. Kuipers's assertion that Church Order Article 3-a must be revised "on a justice basis," additional documents on the same subject without new and compelling grounds are out of order.

—Adopted

III. Response to an appeal from Mr. Charles Fluit

- A. *Material:* Personal Appeal 4, distributed to the advisory committee

B. Observations

When schism occurred at Mt. Hamilton CRC in the fall of 1992 and two groups decided to worship separately, Mr. Fluit, at that time an officebearer in Mt. Hamilton CRC, and his family were among those who followed the majority of the council to form what came to be known as Hamilton Independent Christian Reformed Church. This is evident from the following:

1. A letter dated September 9, 1992, from the "Council of the Mt. Hamilton CRC" calling for a congregational meeting to be held on September 23, 1992, for the purpose of considering a resolution to change the name of the corporation to "The Mt. Hamilton Independent Christian Reformed Church" was signed for the council by the appellant in his capacity as "Acting Corresponding Clerk."
2. In sworn affidavits dated September 16, 1992, and October 15, 1992, which supported the independent group's claims to rightful authority and the appropriate share of church property, the appellant is identified as an elder and as the "Corresponding Clerk" of the Independent group.

On December 29, 1994, the council of the continuing Mt. Hamilton CRC informed the Fluit family that it had lapsed their memberships at a meeting held on December 12, 1994. Though the family members have affiliated with Hamilton Independent Church and show no current membership interest in the continuing Mt. Hamilton CRC, Mr. Fluit, on behalf of his family, appealed from this decision on the grounds that such action was inappropriate and that, if still considered members, he and his family should have been subject to special and general discipline instead. On April 21, 1995, the council responded that it could not deal with this appeal because the family had not been members "of the Mt. Hamilton Christian Reformed Church since September 1992, which was finalized on December 29, 1994. The church can only discipline members of that church." On behalf of his family, Mr. Fluit then appealed from this decision to Classis Hamilton and was subsequently informed by its stated clerk of Article 28 of the minutes of classis meeting September 20, 1995:

Committee E on the appeal and communication from members of the Independent CRC, Rev. E. Schuringa reports. **Motion:** That classis get involved with the reconciliation process of the Mt. Hamilton CRC beyond the financial situation in Church Order problems and that Interim Committee appoint a committee to do such work. **Defeated.**

On behalf of his family, Mr. Fluit now appeals to Synod 1996 from the actions of council and classis.

After the schism occurred in September 1992, it might be expected that both groups finalize their appropriate membership lists as soon as possible. It appears that the Independent group did that:

- a. A report on meetings held by the Independent council on September 14 and 16, 1992, indicates, with respect to a proposed congregational meeting of September 23, 1992, that "ballots not returned will not be counted to determine the membership of congregations A and B" and that "people not returning the ballot will, however, have to indicate in the near future what they wish to have done with their membership."
- b. A November 29, 1992, bulletin of "Hamilton Independent Christian Reformed Church" reported a decision of its council, taken on November 23, 1992, that "at this time we can determine the membership of our congregation" and then indicated the following: "We therefore request that all who wish to join the Hamilton Independent Christian Reformed Church indicate that choice by so informing a member of council or by signing and returning the following declaration of intent. Please inform

your elder or return your signed statement no later than Monday, Dec. 7/92 at which time the council will draw up the membership list.”

The continuing Mt. Hamilton CRC, on the other hand, apparently did not finalize its list until December 12, 1994. The advisory committee would have expected a much earlier action to acquiesce in the de facto resignation of those who chose to join the Independent group. In any event, the council did finalize its list by declaring memberships lapsed under the provision of Church Order Supplement, Article 67.

The advisory committee further observes that Classis Hamilton did not take specific action on Mr. Fluit’s appeal. This appeal should have been sustained, not sustained, or declared out of order. Instead, the only record of action by classis is a defeated motion. Though it could be argued that, in so responding, classis did not sustain the appeal, it could also be argued that classis simply withheld action on it.

This committee calls the attention of synod to the decisions of Synod 1993 in response to an appeal from the pastor of Hamilton Independent Christian Reformed Church and to an appeal and a request from the church itself. In all three cases Synod 1993 ruled that these appeals were not legally before it because the appellants “lost their right of appeal when they withdrew from the Christian Reformed Church” (*Acts of Synod 1993*, Art. 37, I, II, III, pp. 512-13).

C. *Recommendation*

That synod declare that Personal Appeal 4 is not legally before it.

Ground: The Fluit family lost its right of appeal when it withdrew from the Christian Reformed Church.

—Adopted

IV. Response to Appeal 1 of Newton, NJ, CRC

A. *Material:* Appeal 1, distributed to the advisory committee

B. *Observations*

In January 1994, Revs. Trevor and Linda Rubingh began their service as urban church planters in Jersey City, New Jersey, under the supervision of the Eastern Home Mission Board (EHMB), a joint ministry of classes Hudson and Hackensack. Mr. Rubingh is an ordained minister in the CRC. Mrs. Rubingh is a member of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) (PCUSA), where she was recently ordained. A position paper formulated by the Eastern Home Mission Board indicates that Mrs. Rubingh was seeking “ordination in the PCUSA, possibly as a Chaplain to the Hudson County Jail.” Because the pastor of Newton CRC questioned Mrs. Rubingh’s (at that time, pending) ordination in the PCUSA, the Eastern Home Mission Board formulated and sent to the Newton council a document entitled “Position of the Eastern Home Mission Board regarding Linda Rubingh’s employment and efforts to seek ordination in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)”

This document was included in the agenda of the May 10, 1995, meeting of Classis Hudson along with an overture from Newton CRC. The overture asked for a number of changes regarding the employment of Mrs. Rubingh. Action on this overture was deferred “so that the EHMB will have an opportunity to study the overture and advise classis at its September meeting” (Minutes, Art. 11-c).

The EHMB, after further consultation with the Rubinghs, reviewed its position and communicated that to Newton CRC on August 11, 1995. At its September 27, 1995, meeting, Classis Hudson did not adopt Newton's overture, and at its January 24, 1996, meeting it declared out of order Newton's protest of the September 27 decision. Now Newton CRC appeals to synod from "the decision of Classis Hudson which endorsed the "Position . . ." requesting "that Synod instruct Classis Hudson to instruct the Eastern Home Mission Board that the current 'Position . . .' is unacceptable and must be changed . . ." The council contends that Mrs. Rubingh's membership in the PCUSA and her ordination as a minister in that denomination are incompatible with her position as a lay church planter in the CRC. The council also contends that "the ordination of any woman to the authoritative offices of the church is a violation of biblical teaching."

The advisory committee observes that the latter statement does not accurately reflect the position of the Christian Reformed Church. We also observe that the matter of Mrs. Rubingh's ordination is not relevant to this issue since the Eastern Home Mission Board is employing her as a lay evangelist church planter and not as an ordained evangelist. The board states, ". . . we would certainly recognize that Linda would not be able to conduct sacraments or other official functions of the Minister of the Word in the CRC, but rather carry out the responsibilities that a lay evangelist church planter would do" ("Position . . .").

With the Eastern Home Mission Board, we observe that there are unusual features in this arrangement but also that the overture/appeal of the Newton church has not demonstrated that Mrs. Rubingh's ordination in the PCUSA and potential part-time work in another ministry are incompatible with her official status and part-time work as an unordained church planter in the CRC. Her "love and commitment to Christ, preparation and gifts for ministry, and clear missionary calling to urban ministry warrants [sic] her to continue as an employee of the Eastern Home Mission Board in this church plant" ("Position . . .").

The advisory committee also calls the attention of synod to the fact that Newton CRC has not given a copy of its appeal to Classis Hudson, as required by synodical rules ("A copy shall be promptly given to the clerk of the assembly whose action is being appealed and to any other party to the appeal" [1995 Rules for Synodical Procedure, Supplement, Article 30-a, C, 1, p. 43]). We did meet with two of Classis Hudson's delegates, one who represented the appellant and one who represented the respondent. Since the appeal is exactly the same as the September 27, 1995, overture rejected by classis, the delegation indicated that it would be appropriate for our committee to make a recommendation on this matter.

C. *Recommendation*

That synod not sustain Appeal 1.

Grounds:

1. The Eastern Home Mission Board, at the time of hiring Mrs. Rubingh, had no policy prohibiting the employment of a Christian from another denomination for ministry as an unordained lay evangelist.
2. Appeal 1 has not demonstrated that Mrs. Rubingh's ordination in the PCUSA and potential part-time work in another ministry are incompati-

ble with her official status and part-time work as an unordained church planter in the CRC.

—*Adopted*

ARTICLE 34

The general secretary introduces and welcomes Dr. Jack B. Lowndes from the Lord's Day Alliance, Atlanta, Georgia.

ARTICLE 35

(The report of Advisory Committee 2 is continued from Article 29)

Advisory Committee 2, Missions, Rev. Harlan G. Vanden Einde reporting, presents the following:

I. Home Missions

A. *Material*: Christian Reformed Home Missions Report, pp. 124-36

B. *Observations*

With thanksgiving to God, we take note of the fact that the Christian Reformed Church is celebrating one hundred years of continuing outreach in North America, focusing on the theme "100-Year Journey Toward Tomorrow." In addition to several planned special events during this year, a book entitled *Flourishing in the Land: The 100-Year Journey Toward Tomorrow* has been published, tracing the history of CRC missions in North America. We rejoice that God has greatly blessed the work of Home Missions, evidenced in the fact that 3,170 persons were added through evangelism in 1995. Yet the challenge is still great, as there is a continuing need for church developers.

Please join the staff and all the missionaries in the prayer that God will continue to add to his church those that should be saved.

C. *Recommendations*

1. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Dr. Bruce Ballast, president of the Board of Home Missions; Rev. John Rozeboom, executive director; and Mr. Jack Heinen, director of finance, when matters pertaining to Home Missions are discussed.

—*Granted*

2. That synod, with thanks to God, call to the denomination's attention that 1996 marks one hundred years of continuing gospel outreach in North America by our denomination and that synod take note of a special publication and special observances being planned for the centennial by Christian Reformed Home Missions.

—*Adopted*

II. World Missions

A. *Material*: Christian Reformed World Missions Report, pp. 137-44

B. *Observations*

The Christian Reformed Church continues to heed the admonition to go into all the world and make disciples of all nations. The Spirit of Pentecost has

worked mightily in the hearts of those challenged with the gospel so that it is estimated that in 1995 the churches served by World Missions added some sixty thousand adherents. Nearly \$13 million was expended for missions during the 1994-1995 fiscal year. The new budget will support 107 long-term missionaries (with 90 spouses who volunteer much time to ministry) and 116 short-term missionaries (with 24 spouses), for a total of 337 active missionaries, accompanied by at least 180 children. Continue to ask the Lord to bless the efforts of all those who have gone out worldwide with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

C. Recommendations

1. That synod grant the request of the Board of Christian Reformed World Missions that the president of CRWM-Canada (Rev. Jack Quartel), 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 permit the CRWM-International executive director, on behalf of CRWM and as part of the agency presentation schedule, to present missionary personnel who are on home service to synod on Friday, June 14.

—Granted

III. Christian Reformed World Relief Committee

A. Material: Christian Reformed World Relief Committee Report, pp. 145-53

B. Observations

“Sharing God’s love to people in need”—that has been the theme of the ministry of the CRWRC for the past thirty-four years. Dedicated workers in more than thirty countries carry on this ministry, supported by the prayers and contributions of the members of the CRC. Over the years more than 100,000 families have been helped through this ministry. Volunteers have donated nearly 80,000 hours of work, with a monetary value of around \$800,000. God has richly blessed this diaconal ministry and has used the gifts of his people in multiple ways. We continue to covet the prayers of God’s people for the CRWRC.

C. Recommendations

1. That synod authorize CRWRC directors and board presidents to represent CRWRC at synod.

—Granted

2. That CRWRC expatriate staff who are currently in North America be presented to and acknowledged by synod.

—Granted

IV. Overture 64—... Convene a Forum on Cross-Cultural Ministries

A. *Material*: Overture 64, pp. 312-13

B. *Recommendation*

That synod accede to Overture 64 of Classis Alberta North and request the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA to convene a forum on cross-cultural ministries which will focus on meeting the challenges of culture and worship. The participants should include but not be limited to leaders and members of Classis Red Mesa, the Korean churches in the CRC, the Race Relations Committee, the Committee for Racial Reconciliation in Canada, the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee, Christian Reformed World Missions, Calvin Theological Seminary, and first-nations peoples of Canada and the United States. Thought should be given to holding forums in various geographical areas of the continent and to developing action plans for assisting the denomination in becoming more racially diverse.

Grounds:

1. These above-listed agencies and communities as well as others continually face the issue of cross-cultural ministries and must grapple with this problem.
2. Such a forum(s) will resoundingly affirm Christ's power to transform lives in all cultures.
3. Such a forum(s) will provide an opportunity for clarification, debate, mutual support, and encouragement among our multifaceted ministries.

(The report of Advisory Committee 2 is continued in Article 70.)

ARTICLE 36

The executive director of ministries introduces and presents to synod Mr. Ray Elgersma, director of CRWRC-Canada. Mr. Elgersma briefly highlights activities which have occurred during his ministry with CRWRC. In conclusion he says, "I love this church, and I regard it a privilege to have served in this position for the last six years. I thank God for giving me this opportunity, and I thank you for your prayers and support." The vice president of synod responds.

ARTICLE 37

The morning session is adjourned; vice president Rev. Gordon H. Pols leads in closing prayer.

FRIDAY AFTERNOON, June 14, 1996

Seventh Session

ARTICLE 38

Vice president Rev. Gordon H. Pols assumes the chair.

Ms. Beth Swagman, executive director of Pastoral Ministries, reads from Isaiah 43:1-13 and announces *Psalter Hymnal* 545, "Make Me a Channel of Your Peace." She leads the assembly in opening prayer.

ARTICLE 39

The executive director of ministries introduces the following agency representatives:

I. For Pastoral Ministries

The executive director of Pastoral Ministries, Ms. Beth Swagman, addresses synod with regard to the work of Pastoral Ministries, briefly informing delegates of the activities and ministries of Abuse Prevention, Chaplaincy Ministries, Disability Concerns, Pastor-Church Relations, and Race Relations. She asks the delegates to remember Pastoral Ministries in prayer. The vice president responds.

President John G. Van Ryn resumes the chair.

II. For World Missions

Rev. William Van Tol, international director for Christian Reformed World Missions, briefly addresses synod and introduces the following missionaries:

New missionaries

Mr. Joel and Mrs. Diona Oudbier—Dominican Republic (short-term)

Mr. Harvey Blankespoor—China (short-term)

Missionaries on home service

Rev. Richard, Jr., and Mrs. Sandy Sytsma—Japan

Mrs. Lois Glewen—Philippines (terminating service)

The following persons were also introduced:

Miss Jan Camburn—Nigeria (dental leave)

Miss Winabelle Gritter—C.I.T.E. program, Latin America

Rev. Vince and Mrs. Lucy Apostol—retiring after thirty-five years of service in the Philippines

Rev. Raymond Brinks—retiring after thirty-eight years of service in Argentina and the Dominican Republic

Rev. W. Thomas De Vries—retiring after serving World Missions in Argentina, Puerto Rico, and the home office

Dr. Rob and Mrs. Esther Koops—associate missionaries (United Bible Society, Gambia)

Miss Kathy Vander Stel—short-term service to Nigeria

Rev. Obed Martinez from the Christian Reformed Church in Cuba is introduced.

The president of synod responds.

III. For Chaplaincy Ministries

Rev. Siebert Van Houten, Canadian chaplain director, presents to synod the chaplains of the Christian Reformed Church, who serve in various capacities, including the military, Reserves, Guards, prisons, acute health care, pastoral counseling, institutions, clinical supervising, and industry. The president of synod responds.

ARTICLE 40

Rev. Gerard Bouma of the Hospitality Committee introduces Rev. Wayne Hoffman, fraternal delegate from the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, who addresses synod. The president of synod responds.

Rev. John Koster (Classis B.C. North-West) introduces Rev. David Groenenboom, fraternal delegate from the Reformed Churches of Australia, who addresses synod. The president of synod responds.

Rev. William Buursma of the Hospitality Committee introduces Rev. David G. Angye, fraternal delegate from the Christian Reformed Church of Nigeria, who addresses synod. The second clerk of synod responds.

ARTICLE 41

The general secretary presents the ballot and delegates vote.

ARTICLE 42

Advisory Committee 9, Church Order, Rev. Jack M. Gray reporting, presents the following:

I. Revise Church Order Articles 47 and 86 and Their Supplements

A. *Material*: Overture 3, pp. 247-48

B. *Background*

The genius of Christian Reformed church polity is that all councils are present at synod. We are convinced Christ's authority is administered in the whole denomination (cf. Church Order Art. 45).

C. *Recommendation*

That synod not accede to Overture 3.

Grounds:

1. This overture denies the deliberative character of broader assemblies.
2. The proposed revisions are in conflict with Church Order Articles 26-34. The overture ignores the fact that Christ's authority is exercised by the elders through the broader assemblies by the way of delegation.
3. The adoption and/or revision of the creeds, Church Order, and so forth properly belong to synod, the arena for the broadest possible deliberative and decision-making processes.
4. Similar requests for ratification of synodical decisions by minor assemblies have been rejected repeatedly by synods since 1957 (*Acts of Synod 1957*, Art. 147), most recently in 1994 (*Acts of Synod 1994*, Art. 62, IV).
5. Once a change has been proposed by a synod, all members, councils, and classes have the opportunity to overture the following synod not to adopt the proposed change. Synod is bound by Article 47 of the Church Order, which ensures that such opportunity is sufficiently provided, and the Supplement to Article 47 of the Church Order spells out exactly how such a protest against a change is processed. Our system does not exclude local assemblies from the decision-making process and provides adequate safeguards to uphold the principle that the entire church decides on its own polity.

—Adopted

II. Response to Overtures 1 and 2

A. *Materials*

1. Overture 1, p. 245
2. Overture 2, pp. 245-47

B. *Background*

Overtures 1 and 2 both reveal that the needed "overhaul" of the Supplement to Article 47 accomplished in 1995 remains incomplete in one important respect: the question whether a proposed change is still available to a following synod(s) once it has been rejected and, if so, how long it remains viable. Synod defeated a proposal of the advisory committee in 1995 but did not adopt a regulation to replace the proposed formulation. As a result, the church is still dependent on the interpretation of individual advisers, whose interpretations may vary.

C. *Recommendations*

1. That synod amend Church Order Supplement, Article 47 by adding as item f the following: If a proposed change is rejected by a following synod, that change (or one substantially similar) is not available for adoption unless it has again been proposed by a synod.

Grounds:

1. There is need for clarification.
2. To prolong the life of a rejected proposal may bring additional turmoil to the denomination.
3. A proposed change rejected by synod is no longer before the church. That is the nature of "rejection."

If adopted, this will become Supplement, Article 47-f. The present f will become g.

—*Adopted*

2. That synod declare this its response to Overtures 1 and 2.

—*Adopted*

(The report of Advisory Committee 9 is continued in Article 76.)

ARTICLE 43

The president of synod informs the assembly that though the recognition of candidates will be held at a later session, three of the candidates, who will not be available at that later date, will be recognized and congratulated by the assembly at this time.

Dr. James A. De Jong, president of Calvin Theological Seminary, introduces the following men (together with their families), who will be considered for candidacy by Synod 1996: Darrell J. Bierman, Jeffrey C. Vanderhooft, and Everett J. Vander Horst.

President Van Ryn wishes these candidates and their wives and families God's blessing as they await God's direction for the future. Delegates are given opportunity to extend congratulations to the candidates.

ARTICLE 44

Advisory Committee 6, Financial Matters, Elder Warren T. Faber reporting, presents the following:

I. Board of Trustees

A. Materials

1. Board of Trustees Report (Sections II, C, 5 and III, K), pp. 39, 45
2. Board of Trustees Supplement (Sections XI and XII, G-N), pp. 359-64
3. *Agenda for Synod 1996—Financial and Business Supplement*

B. Recommendations

1. That synod endorse the combined budgets of the denominational agencies that have been reviewed and approved by the Board of Trustees (BOT Supplement, XI).
—Adopted
2. That synod adopt the per professing member ministry share of \$244.99 and the per family ministry share of \$567.29 for 1997. In accordance with action by synod 1993, 20 percent of the ministry share is to be computed on the per family basis, and 80 percent on the per professing member (over 18 years of age) basis. Note that there is no increase in the per family or per member ministry shares requested for 1997 (BOT Supplement, Section XI, A).
—Adopted
3. That synod approve the list of denominational and denominationally related agencies recommended for one or more offerings (BOT Supplement, XI, B).
 - a. Denominational agencies
 - The 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
 - CRC Publications
 - World Literature Ministries—above-ministry-share needs
 - Christian Reformed Home Missions—above-ministry-share needs
 - Christian Reformed World Missions—above-ministry-share needs
 - Christian Reformed World Relief—one offering per quarter because CRWRC receives no ministry-share support
 - Pastoral Ministries
 - 1) Abuse Prevention—above-ministry-share needs
 - 2) Chaplaincy Ministries—above-ministry-share needs
 - 3) Disability Concerns—above-ministry-share needs
 - 4) Pastor-Church Relations—above-ministry-share needs
 - 5) Race Relations
 - a) Above-ministry-share needs
 - b) Multiracial Student Scholarship Fund

b. Denominationally related agency

United Calvinist Youth

—Adopted

4. That synod approve the list of nondenominational agencies recommended for financial support but not necessarily for one or more offerings (BOT Supplement, XI, C).

United States agencies

a. Miscellaneous agencies

American Bible Society
Crossroad Bible Institute *
Faith, Prayer and Tract League
Friendship Ministries
Gideons International
International Bible Society
InterVarsity Christian Fellowship
Lord's Day Alliance
Metanoia Ministries
Mission 21 India
PRM International
Seminary Consortium for Urban Pastoral Education
The Bible League
Wycliffe Bible Translators

b. Benevolent agencies

Bethany Christian Services
Calvary Rehabilitation Center
Cary Christian Center
Christian Health Care Center
Elim Christian School
International Aid, Inc.
The Luke Society
Pine Rest Christian Hospital

c. Educational agencies

Center for Public Justice
Christian Schools International
Christian Schools International Foundation
Dordt College
Reformed Bible College
Rehoboth Christian School
Roseland Christian School
Trinity Christian College
Westminster Theological Seminary, California
Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia
Worldwide Christian Schools

* New organizations added to the list.

Canadian agencies

a. Miscellaneous agencies

Canadian Bible Society
Evangelical Fellowship of Canada
Friendship Groups—Canada
Gideons International—Canada
International Bible Society—Canada *
InterVarsity Christian Fellowship of Canada
The Bible League—Canada
Work Research Foundation *
Wycliffe Translators of Canada, Inc.

b. Benevolent agencies

Beginnings Counseling & Adoption Services of Ontario, Inc.

c. Educational agencies

Canadian Christian Education Foundation
Dordt College
Institut Farel
Institute for Christian Studies
Redeemer Reformed Christian College
Reformed Bible College
The King's University College
Trinity Christian College
Worldwide Christian Schools of Canada *

—*Adopted*

5. That synod take note of the deletion of the following accredited agencies (BOT Supplement, XI, D).

- a. The Evangelical Literature League (TELL) - This organization has been merged into CRC Publications and no longer exists.
- b. Christian Labor Association of Canada - Though CLAC is still in existence, the status of this organization in Canada no longer allows it to accept charitable contributions. Therefore, this agency withdrew its request for accreditation.

—*Adopted*

6. That synod not accede to the request of the Reformed Ecumenical Council to be included in nondenominational agencies recommended for financial support (BOT Supplement, XI, E).

Ground: The programs for which support is requested by the REC are parallel to programs within World Missions and Calvin Theological Seminary.

—*Adopted*

7. That synod approve the proposed salary ranges for 1997 (BOT Supplement, XI, F).

—*Adopted*

8. That synod take note of the final average salaries determined for use in computing 1997 ministers' pension amounts in the U.S. and Canada (BOT Supplement, XI, G).

—Adopted

II. CRC Loan Fund

A. *Material*: CRC Loan Fund, Inc., U.S. Report, pp. 154-55

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. Gerard Borst and Mr. Henry Washington for their years of excellent service on the board of directors.

—Adopted

III. Fund for Smaller Churches

A. *Material*: Fund for Smaller Churches Report, pp. 156-58

B. *Recommendations*

1. That the secretary and treasurer of FSC be consulted on matters pertaining to FSC when considered either by synod or its advisory committee and that the secretary and treasurer be given the privilege of the floor. In the absence of either, the same privilege is requested for other members of the committee.

—Granted

2. That the minimum salary for ministers serving U.S. churches receiving assistance from FSC be set at \$27,700 for 1997 (\$26,900 for 1996; \$26,150 for 1995; \$25,400 for 1994; \$24,700 for 1993) and that the Canadian minimum salary be set at \$30,470 (\$27,700 x 110 percent) (cf. 10 below).

—Adopted

3. That a service increment of \$100 per year for up to thirty (30) years of service continue to be granted.

—Adopted

In light of concerns expressed on the floor of synod, the committee is alerted by the president to pay particular attention to this item when conducting a study and evaluation of this allowance in preparation for Synod 1997.

4. That a 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 31 cents a mile (.30 per kilometer in Canada) multiplied by the percentage of ministry-share reduction granted to a particular congregation.

—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 for pastor and family is mandatory for congregations receiving FSC assistance.

—Adopted

7. That salary allowance for stated supply be set at \$350 for 1997 (\$330 per week for 1996, \$320 per week for 1995, \$310 for 1994, \$300 for 1993).

—Adopted

8. That the contribution toward the minister's salary in congregations receiving assistance from FSC be not less, and if possible more, than \$470 per family for 1997 (\$455 per family for 1996, \$440 per family for 1995, \$425 for 1994, \$415 for 1993).

—Adopted

9. That congregations in the U.S. receiving assistance from FSC shall pay a Social Security/Medicare offset to their pastor in the amount of at least \$2,630 (\$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 ($\$470 \times 110\% = \517).

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 remain at \$350 for 1997. We note that all pastors of churches with fewer than fifty (50) families are eligible to apply for these funds. This educational allowance is not limited to those pastors serving churches receiving FSC grants.

—Adopted

13. That synod approve a Christian-education allowance for pastors of FSC churches in the amount of \$600 per child for each child attending a Christian school, grades K-12, for 1996.

—Adopted

IV. Pensions and Insurance

A. *Material*: Pensions and Insurance Report, pp. 171-75

B. *Recommendations*

1. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to members of the Canadian Board of Trustees of Pensions and Insurance and of the U. S. Board of Pensions and Insurance or to 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 1996 and 1997 as housing allowance for United States income-tax purposes (IRS Ruling 1.1071) but only to the extent that the pension is used to rent or provide a home.
—Adopted
3. That synod express its appreciation to the following members for their services:
 - a. U.S. Board of Pensions and Insurance members Rev. Louis J. Dykstra and Dr. John Vanden Berg.
 - b. Canadian Board of Trustees of Pensions and Insurance members Mr. Ary de Jong, Mr. Harry Schep, and Mr. Alan Van Weelden, who have served for three years and are eligible for reelection.
—Adopted
4. That synod instruct the U.S. Board of Pensions and Insurance and the Canadian Board of Trustees of Pensions and Insurance to consider including the average cash value of housing in the final average salaries used for calculating pensions of retired ministers and report to Synod 1997.

Grounds:

- a. Actual compensation of the minister includes the cash value of housing.
- b. A minister has to provide for his own housing after retirement.
- c. The housing allowance is an important part of a minister's salary, and excluding it results in an understated base salary for pension purposes.

—Adopted

V. Response to Overture 53: Instruct Denominational Personnel re Group Insurance Plan

A. *Material*: Overture 53, p. 301

B. *Recommendation*

1. That Synod not accede to Overture 53.

Grounds:

- a. Rapid changes in the medical field will at times require quick response by the CRCNA regarding selection of a Third Party Administrator (TPA). This response can best be achieved by a small group representing the CRCNA.
- b. Evaluation of services performed by a Third Party Administrator cannot effectively be done by a large group; it can best be done by a small group which then can have direct contact with the TPA.
- c. Plan members can have a voice in their own group insurance by communicating with the CRCNA staff members administering the program. These CRCNA staff members are also members of this insurance program.
- d. Staff recommendations regarding a change of the TPA are subject to approval of the U.S. Board of Pensions and Insurance.

—Adopted

2. That this be synod's answer to Overture 53.

—Adopted

VI. Response to Overture 75: Exempt Full-Time Students from Being Assessed Ministry Shares

A. *Material:* Overture 75, p. 331

B. *Recommendation*

1. That Synod not accede to Overture 75.

Ground: While some full-time student members may not be able to provide full financial support for the ministry of the church, the congregation has the opportunity to make up the difference or obtain a waiver from classis.

—Adopted

2. That this be synod's answer to Overture 75.

—Adopted

VII. Denominational resource allocation

A. *Background*

While examining the budgets presented by the denominational agencies, the advisory committee on finances noted that the percentage of distribution of ministry shares among the agencies has remained essentially unchanged.

B. *Recommendations*

1. That the Board of Trustees be instructed to include in its annual reports to synod, beginning in 1997, a recommendation with regard to resource allocation among the agencies, committees, and institutions which reflects the ongoing strategic planning process and the denominational vision.

Grounds:

- a. Recent budgets proposed by the Board of Trustees suggest that there is a relatively automatic division of ministry shares: ministries may be cut, but infrastructure remains intact.

- b. This recommendation could result in better application of resources, more accountability, greater collaboration among the agencies, and, possibly, integration of agency functions.
- c. This recommendation is consistent with Article III, D of the constitution of the Board of Trustees.

—*Adopted*

2. That the Board of Trustees consider retaining outside experts to evaluate the current ministries of the denominational agencies and their relationship to classical and local ministries.

Ground: An objective, third-party evaluation could provide fresh insights and a firmer foundation for recommendations made by the Board of Trustees.

—*Adopted*

(The report of Advisory Committee 6 is continued in Article 86.)

ARTICLE 45

Advisory Committee 5, Pastoral Ministries, Rev. John A. Ooms reporting, presents the following:

I. Pastoral Ministries

A. *Material:* Pastoral Ministries Report, pp. 159-70

B. *Observations*

1. The advisory committee had a frank and open discussion with the five Pastoral Ministries directors about the challenges facing them in bringing to life this agency created by Synod 1995. They are to be commended for their determination in trying to discover ways to enable five formerly independent ministries with differing histories and methods of operation to work together as one entity. This is not an easy assignment. Synod needs to be aware that meeting this challenge generates understandable degrees of anxiety, uncertainty, and frustration among the directors. Generating a common vision for ministry is proving to be a hard task. Nevertheless, they are committed to carrying out the mandate given to them by synod in the most beneficial and effective way. The directors, the Pastoral Ministries Board, and the newly appointed executive director need the ongoing support and prayers of synod.
2. The Committee on Disability Concerns presented to Synod 1995 a recommendation that Article 41 of the Church Order be amended to include a question regarding the accessibility of the church's buildings and programs to all eligible people, including those with disabilities. Synod referred this recommendation to the newly created Pastoral Ministries Board, one of its grounds being that, since this recommendation "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 Synod" (*Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 671, Art. 33, Section V, B, 2).

C. Recommendations

1. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Rev. Charles Terpstra, chairman of Pastoral Ministries; Ms. Beth A. Swagman, executive director of Pastoral Ministries; and the following division directors: Rev. Jacob P. Heerema (Chaplaincy Ministries), Rev. Alfred S. Luke (Race Relations), Dr. James L. Vanderlaan (Disability Concerns), and Rev. Duane A. Visser (Pastor-Church Relations).

—Granted

2. That synod adopt an amendment to Church Order Article 41 which adds another question to those already on the classical credentials and regularly asked of each council: "Is the church building barrier free, and are significant and reasonable efforts being made to make church services and activities accessible to people with disabilities?"

Grounds:

- a. 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.
- b. To serve people with disabilities in a way which unnecessarily separates them from the full 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.
- c. 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.
- d. The Pastoral Ministries directors and the Pastoral Ministries Board have given their unanimous endorsement.

—Defeated

3. That synod encourage churches to celebrate All Nations Heritage Week from September 29 through October 5, 1997.

Grounds:

- a. The task of eliminating racism is formidable; it is a matter that needs to be put boldly before the congregations at all times and particularly as they celebrate Worldwide Communion Sunday in October.
- b. The financial support that is received when congregations celebrate All Nations Heritage Week dramatically increases Race Relations' ability to award grants and scholarships for multicultural leadership and ministry.

—Adopted

(The report of Advisory Committee 5 is continued in Article 79)

ARTICLE 46

The afternoon session is adjourned; Elder Marvin F. De Vries leads in closing prayer.

For the evening session, the synodical delegates have accepted the invitation of the participants of the Multiethnic Conference to join with them in a program of worship and celebration for the rich ethnic variety God is bringing to the Christian Reformed Church.

ARTICLE 47

Rev. Leonard J. Vander Zee leads the assembly in prayer for the family of Mr. Chris Goral of First CRC, Thunder Bay, Ontario, who died by drowning in a boating accident, leaving his widow, Angela, a three-year-old son, and an unborn child. He announces *Psalter Hymnal* 600, "Christ Is the World's True Light." He leads in opening prayer and reads from Revelation 7:9-12. He announces *Psalter Hymnal* 540, "In Christ There Is No East or West."

The roll call indicates that Elder John Koen (California South), Rev. Daniel W. De Groot (Iakota), and Rev. John F. Schuurman (Northern Illinois) are absent; Elder Robert J. Alles (Grandville) has returned to synod.

The clerks report that the minutes of Thursday afternoon and Thursday evening, June 13, 1996, are accurate and in order.

The president of synod welcomes the Multiethnic Conference participants present for the Saturday-morning session.

ARTICLE 48

Rev. John Koster (Classis B.C. North-West) introduces Rev. Octavianus Anduwatju, fraternal delegate from the Christian Church of Sumba, who addresses synod. Rev. Koster serves as translator. The president of synod responds.

ARTICLE 49

Advisory Committee 8, Diverse Family of God, Rev. Leonard J. Vander Zee reporting, presents the following:

Diverse Family of God

A. Materials

1. Report of the Committee to Articulate Biblical and Theological Principles for the Development of a Racially and Ethnically Diverse Family of God, pp. 215-38
2. Overture 49, pp. 294-95

B. Background

The advisory committee believes that this report comes at a strategically important moment in the CRC. The growing diversity with which God has blessed us demands our careful support and nurture. The powers of evil always seek to divide us, and it will therefore take extraordinary effort, prayer, and commitment to grow more and more into God's dazzling vision for us.

The committee is in broad and enthusiastic agreement with the report and has made additional recommendations which we trust will strengthen its impact and clarify its meaning.

Note: Additions to material in the *Agenda for Synod* are underlined.

C. Recommendations

1. That the privilege of the floor be granted to Rev. Jason Chen (chairman), Rev. Duane Kelderman (reporter), and other members of the committee who are present when this report is under consideration by synod.

—Granted

2. A motion is moved that the following note be added to the report:

It is noted that including a reference to “a historical religion” in the definition of ethnicity (*Agenda for Synod 1996*, p. 219 III, A, 3) does not mean that we celebrate or affirm any non-Christian religions as elements in our oneness in Christ.

—Adopted

3. That synod adopt the following revisions in the report and recommend the revised report to the churches for study. Also, that the revised report be published in the *Acts of Synod* and that the general secretary point to this report and its recommendations in his communication with the churches.

- a. Page 220, 1, par. 2, beginning with the second sentence, add:

As God’s imagebearers all human beings without exception are endowed with royal dignity and share in dominion over all creation. As God blesses them with fruitfulness, all their descendants without any exception also share equally in this royal dignity. Human beings also image God in their capacity for loving relationships with God and with each other in righteousness and holiness. (followed by new paragraph)

- b. Page 220, last open paragraph, substitute:

From these three passages, which set forth foundational truths, we learn that

- c. Page 222, line 2, substitute community for “diversity.”

- d. Page 224, first paragraph, eliminate “most intensely” (twice) and “most deeply.”

- e. Page 224, c, 1), eight lines from bottom, eliminate “or even account for the proliferation of ethnic diversity.”

- f. Page 225, 2), eliminate “God’s confusion community without God.”

Substitute God’s confusion of language at Babel was a tool of God’s judgment against human pride and not a sign that there is any inherent sinfulness in diverse languages. Human beings cannot build community without God.

- g. Page 228, first open paragraph, eliminate “nor even the ‘world of mankind’ as in II Corinthians 5.”

- h. Page 236, 9, eliminate “The church” Substitute The church is God’s strategic vehicle for embodying, proclaiming, and promoting the unity and diversity of the new creation.

- i. Page 233, 11, add . . . to continually repent, to strive for justice, and to battle the powers of evil.

- j. Page 234, at end of 11, add the following paragraph:

Ephesians 3:9 and 10 says that "through the church the wisdom of God in its rich variety might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in heavenly places." In Ephesians 6:12 Paul reminds us that these same rulers and authorities are also pitted against us in a cosmic spiritual battle. The church needs to be deeply aware that racial and ethnic division is so deep, demonic, and pervasive that opposition to it will involve us in all-out spiritual warfare. In the church's struggle to realize God's will for reconciliation, the powers of evil will seek to divide us anew and destroy our every effort toward unity. Only in the might of God's Spirit, the truth of God's Word, and persistent prayer will we prevail.

—*Adopted*

Note: The revised report is found in Appendix I (pp. 597-621).

4. That synod adopt the following biblical and theological principles regarding the development of a racially and ethnically diverse and unified family of God:

Biblical and Theological Principles for the Development of a Racially and Ethnically Diverse and Unified Family of God

Creation

1. The world as God created it is rich and God glorifying in its diversity.
2. The created world with all its diversity has its unity in the one God, who created it through Jesus Christ.
3. The unity and diversity of the human race and of created reality reflect the unity and diversity of the triune God (namely, his oneness and threeness).

Fall

4. A fundamental effect of sin is the breakdown of community.

New Creation

5. The uniting of all things in Jesus Christ is at the heart of God's eternal plan for the ages.
6. Reconciliation with God and reconciliation with one another are inseparable in God's saving work.
7. Already in the old covenant the scope of God's mission is racially and ethnically inclusive.
8. In Pentecost, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the church, God gives new power to the church, power to break down walls of separation and create a community that transcends divisions of race, ethnicity, and culture.
9. The church is God's strategic vehicle for embodying, proclaiming, and promoting the unity and diversity of the new creation.
10. God calls Christians to find their deepest identity in union with and in the service of Jesus Christ.

11. Obedience in matters of racial reconciliation calls us, individually and corporately, to continually repent, to strive for justice, and to battle the power of evil.
12. Christians live and work in the hope that one day the reconciliation of all things will be fully realized.

—Adopted

5. That synod, on the basis of the above principles, declare that to be in Christ is in principle to be reconciled as a community of racially and ethnically diverse people and that to ignore his calling to turn this principle into experienced reality is sinful according to God's Word and the Reformed confessions.

Grounds:

- a. The above report demonstrates that the Bible declares this reconciled community to be God's will.
- b. The confessions declare that the catholicity of the church means that Christ "gathers, protects, and preserves" the church "out of the whole human race" (Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 21).

—Adopted

6. That synod call the **whole church—individual members**, congregations, assemblies, agencies, and other ministries of the CRCNA—to respond to the biblical and theological principles regarding the development of a racially and ethnically diverse and united family of God by committing themselves
 - a. To pray and work for the increased enfolded of ethnic-minority persons into the CRCNA in order to reflect more fully the racial and ethnic diversity of Canada and the United States.
 - b. To ensure the equitable representation and meaningful participation of ethnic-minority persons in leadership and other roles of influence at all levels of denominational life.

—Adopted

Note: The total estimated ethnic-minority membership of 5 percent in the CRCNA compares to an ethnic-minority population of approximately 20 percent in Canada and the United States.

7. That synod call the **churches**
 - a. To articulate the biblical vision for a racially and ethnically diverse and united family of God by means of the preaching, teaching, and study of the above biblical and theological principles.
 - b. To evaluate their life and ministry with regard to their racial and ethnic composition, the social factors contributing to their composition, the selecting and training of their leaders, their worship style, and their ministry to congregational members and to their community in light of their sense of God's vision and call for them as congregations.
 - c. To develop racially and ethnically diverse congregations by all appropriate models and strategies, such as
 - 1) Established churches becoming more inclusive ethnically and culturally.

- 2) Planting and developing multiethnic congregations.
 - 3) Sponsoring new congregations that are ethnically and culturally different from the parent congregation, in the same or separate facilities.
 - 4) Developing relationships (e.g., joint worship, workshops, and work projects) with congregations from other ethnic and cultural backgrounds.
 - 5) Supporting persons and programs at home or abroad that are committed to racial reconciliation.
- d. To witness publicly *against* racism, prejudice, and related unemployment, poverty, and injustices and *in defense of* all people as imagebearers of God.
 - e. To call individual members to promote and establish interracial and cross-cultural relationships in their neighborhoods, workplaces, and communities.

—*Adopted*

8. That synod request the **classes**, with the assistance of the CRCNA offices and agencies,
 - a. To arrange during the next twelve months for the careful classis-wide study of this report and its implications for the churches and their ministries.
 - b. To provide to the churches and ministries of classis guidance in support of racial and ethnic diversity (and unity) by means of public forums and learning events, multicongregational worship celebrations, and joint cross-cultural ministry ventures.
 - c. To assist the churches in developing and supporting new churches and other outreach ministries that are committed to ethnic diversity and racial reconciliation.
 - d. To recruit and assist persons from ethnic-minority groups to participate in the ministries of classis, including representation to synod, agency boards, and other ministries of the CRCNA.

—*Adopted*

9. That synod mandate the **Board of Trustees**, under the leadership of its CRCNA staff and with the assistance of the Race Relations division of Pastoral Ministries and other CRCNA agencies,
 - a. To coordinate and monitor the role and response of the agencies in providing guidance and assistance to the churches and classes in support of ethnic diversity and racial reconciliation as outlined above.
 - b. To serve Synod 1998 with advice and recommendations for ensuring the equitable representation and meaningful participation of ethnic-minority persons in leadership and other roles of influence with the classes and synod, the Board of Trustees, denominational agencies, and other ministries of the CRCNA. The recommendations should include transitional and long-term strategies, training and support needs, financial implications, and periodic reporting to synod on efforts and progress.

- c. To continue to explore ways whereby the biennial Multiethnic Conference can assist the churches, classes, and synod to respond more completely to God's call for ethnic diversity and racial reconciliation in the CRCNA.
- d. To review CRCNA policies and practices in relation to the training, credentialing, and compensating of ethnic-minority pastors and to give recommendations and advice as indicated.

—Adopted

10. That synod respectfully urge **future synods**

- a. To include in their worship times the articulation and celebration of the biblical vision for a racially and ethnically diverse and unified family of God.
- b. To encourage the development of specific recommendations and specific practical guidelines for supporting ethnic diversity in all aspects of denominational life, including interchurch relations in general and ministries of the Reformed Ecumenical Council in particular.
- c. That denominational response to the above decisions be reviewed by Synod 1998 on the basis of an interim progress report by the Board of Trustees.

—Adopted

11. That denominational response to the above decisions be reviewed by Synod 2000 in the light of another progress report with advice and recommendations by the Board of Trustees to Synod 2000.

—Adopted

12. That synod discharge the study committee with recognition for its work.

—Adopted

13. That synod recommend that the Board of Trustees ask representatives of various language groups in the denomination to translate the document into the languages of their groups.

—Adopted

14. That this be synod's response to Overture 49

—Adopted

15. That synod ask Calvin Theological Seminary's Morren Conference Committee to consider organizing a conference on "racial and ethnic reconciliation with repentance and justice" to explore the theological meaning of racial reconciliation and the implications for ministry, pastoral care, ecclesiology, and social justice.

Grounds:

- a. Racial reconciliation with repentance is urgent in the light of the above report.
- b. Reformed theologians are well positioned historically and theologically to address this issue.
- c. The Reformed churches of South Africa are presently experiencing such a process.

—Adopted

(The report of Advisory Committee 8 is continued in Article 71.)

ARTICLE 50

The morning session is adjourned. Mrs. Eileen Christofferson, prayer intercessor from Classis Rocky Mountain, leads in closing prayer.

MULTIETHNIC WORSHIP SERVICE

"Let the Walls Fall Down"
Multiethnic Worship Service
Calvin College Chapel
June 16, 1996, 7:00 P.M.

- Praise Songs Mr. Keith Goodwin, song leader
- Choir Selection Gospel Fellowship Choir
Mr. George Davis, director
- Call to Worship Dr. David H. Engelhard, General Secretary
Christian Reformed Church in North America
- Opening Song "How Great Thou Art"
Mrs. Alice Finley, song leader
- Piano Selection "Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring"
Mr. John Szto
- Choir Selection "Old Rugged Cross"
Lao Community Church
- Confession of Faith The Apostles' Creed
(Feel free to confess this creed in your native tongue.)
- Choir Selection Hahn-In CRC
Mr. Sang Eun Kim, director
- Litany Rev. Ricardo Orellano
- Offertory Prayer and Mrs. Yvonne Rayburn-Beckley
Word of Explanation Evangelist Socheth Na
Offering (for the Multiethnic Leadership-Development Fund)
- Choir Selection Gospel Fellowship Choir
- Scripture Acts 10:34-48
- Message "Patches of Stories"
Rev. Reginald Smith, Pastor
Roosevelt Park Community CRC
- Lord's Supper

Blessing

Spanish	Rev. Felipe Acuna
Laotian	Rev. Sysay Vilaylack
Tagalog	Rev. Elmer Tandayu
Navajo	Rev. Stanley Jim
Zuni	Evangelist Rex Chimoni
Indonesian	Rev. Hendry Lie
Vietnamese	Rev. Viet Hoang Tran
Anglo English	Rev. Donald Klop
African-American English	Rev. Robert Price
Chinese	Rev. Peter Yang
Korean	Rev. Moon Bae Kim
Cambodian	Evangelist Socheth Na

Doxology "Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow"
Mrs. Alice Finley, song leader

* * * * *

Litany of Rededication to Unity

- Leader:** No matter what our age, or race, or color, we are the human family together, for the Creator made us all. Since life is his gift, we foster the well-being of others, protecting the unborn and helpless from harm.
- All:** When humans no longer show God's image, all creation suffers. We abuse the creation or idolize it. We are estranged from our Creator, from our neighbor, and from all that God has made.
- Leader:** At Pentecost the Holy Spirit was given to the church. In pouring his Spirit on many peoples, God overcame the divisions of Babel. Now people from every tongue, tribe, and nation are gathered into the unity of the body of Christ.
- All:** We grieve that the church, which shares one Spirit, one faith, one hope and spans all time, place, race, and languages, has become a broken communion in a broken world.
- Women:** When we struggle for the purity of the church and for the righteousness God demands, we pray for saintly courage.
- Men:** When our pride or blindness blocks the unity of God's household, we seek forgiveness.
- All:** We marvel that the Lord gathers the broken pieces to his work and that he blesses us still with joy, new members, and surprising evidences of unity. We commit ourselves to seeking and expressing the oneness of all who follow Jesus.

We are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord. We are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord. And we pray that all unity may one day be restored; and they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our love, and they'll know we are Christians by our love.

We will walk with each other, we will walk hand in hand. We will walk with each other, we will walk hand in hand. And together we will spread the news that God is in our land; and they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our love, and they'll know we are Christians by our love.

We will work with each other, we will work side by side. We will work with each other, we will work side by side. And we'll guard each man's dignity and save each man's pride; and they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our love, and they'll know we are Christians by our love.

The liturgy for this combined worship service of Synod 1996 and the 1996 Multiethnic Conference was prepared by Mrs. Victoria Gibbs, Dr. David H. Engelhard, Mr. Gary Teja, Rev. Reginald Smith, and Evangelist Socheth Na.

MONDAY MORNING, June 17, 1996

Ninth Session

ARTICLE 51

Rev. David R. Koll announces *Psalter Hymnal* 438, "When Morning Gilds the Sky." He reads from Colossians 1:15-19 and 3:1-4. Delegates join in singing *Psalter Hymnal* 229, "Christ, You Are the Fullness," and devotions are concluded with the singing of *Psalter Hymnal* 234, "Alabaré."

The roll call indicates that Elder John Koen (California South), Rev. Daniel W. De Groot (Iakota), Rev. Harry A. Vander Windt (Niagara), and Rev. John Schuurman (Northern Illinois) have returned to synod. Elder John Van Egmond (Arizona) notifies the chair of his necessary absence from 4 p.m. today through Wednesday, June 19. Rev. John P. Gorter (Classis Grandville) replaces Rev. Curtis A. Walters for the morning session. He rises to express agreement with the forms of unity.

ARTICLE 52

Advisory Committee 7, Interdenominational Matters, Rev. Benjamin J. Becksvoort reporting, presents the following:

I. Interchurch Relations Committee

A. *Material*: Interchurch Relations Committee Report, pp. 184-93

B. Recommendation

That Rev. Edward A. Van Baak (president), Rev. Leonard J. Hofman (administrative secretary), and Dr. Henry Zwaanstra (committee member) represent the Interchurch Relations Committee at synod.

—Granted

II. Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (GKN)

A. Materials

1. Interchurch Relations Committee Report, p. 188
2. Interchurch Relations Committee Supplement, pp. 383-85 and Appendices C and D, pp. 393-413
3. Overtures 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 57 (B and C)

B. Background

The relationship of the Christian Reformed Church and the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (GKN) has been an important one to both our denominations for more than a century. It has been forged out of a common faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, a shared view of Scripture as the revealed Word of God, a common commitment to the creeds and Reformed confessions, and a deep desire to live out this faith in all aspects of the cultures in which God has placed us. Many of our professors have been educated in the schools and nurtured in the churches of the GKN. These educational and confessional connections cannot be separated from the cultural, ethnic, and family ties which still link many members of the CRC with those in the GKN.

At the same time, it is no secret that the relationship of the CRC and the GKN has been deeply troubled for a number of years. From the perspective of the CRC, the relationship has been strained in particular by the position of the GKN on Scripture, as set forth in *God with Us*, and by its pastoral advice and practice toward homosexual members and officebearers. Synod 1983 restricted pulpit and table fellowship with the GKN, which are two of the six provisions of ecclesiastical fellowship listed in the Ecumenical Charter of the CRC (*Manual of CRC Government*, p. 269). Synod 1995 mandated the Interchurch Relations Committee "to discuss with the official representatives of the GKN the issues and trends in the life and practice of the GKN that are of deep concern to the CRC and [that] trouble our ecclesiastical relations."

That discussion took place particularly during the recent visit of Dr. John Hulst, Dr. David Engelhard, and Dr. Henry Zwaanstra with representatives of the GKN in the Netherlands. The advisory committee met with Rev. Edward Van Baak, Rev. Leonard J. Hofman, and Dr. Henry Zwaanstra to gain some perspective on those discussions. In addition, the advisory committee had the unique and providential opportunity to meet at some length with four representatives of the GKN who were here at Calvin for the meetings of the REC. We spent several hours with R.S.E. Vissinga, moderator of the GKN; Dr. Leo J. Koffeman, executive secretary of the Committee for Ecumenical Relations of the GKN; Dr. Case Vander Kooi, professor of systematic theology at the Free University of Amsterdam; and Dr. Klaas Runia, retired professor and long-term observer and participant in the CRC and GKN dialogue.

We were appreciative of the eagerness with which they approached our conversation. The questions and responses from both parties were very candid and to the point. The GKN representatives were open and vulnerable to the real differences in approach and practice in our two fellowships. We sensed throughout our time together that this was a meeting among brothers. Our committee learned much about the cultural setting in which the GKN lives and works out its faith. We sensed from the GKN representatives a deep desire to maintain our

fellowship and dialogue and a conviction that we have much to learn from each other.

At the same time, our dialogue sharpened our understanding of some of the issues on which our two churches are far apart. That aspect of our conversation, coupled with the growing concern on the part of many churches and classes in our denomination, gave rise to the recommendations which follow. On the one hand, the intention of the advisory committee in presenting these recommendations is to communicate to the GKN and to our own denomination our grave concern over ethical and theological issues on which we disagree. On the other hand, we feel a responsibility in this relationship to do all in our power to honor the desire of our Lord that his people "be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me . . ." (John 17:23).

C. Recommendations

1. That the CRCNA further restrict its ecclesiastical fellowship with the GKN for a minimum of two years by refraining from

- a. "[E]xchange of fraternal delegates at major assemblies."

—Adopted

- b. Initiating new "joint action in areas of common responsibility."

(*Ecumenical Charter, Manual of Christian Reformed Church Government*, p. 269)

(*Note: The role of fraternal delegate includes the privilege of the floor and the bringing of official greetings at synod. Though this official role will not be exercised for a time, it is our intention that mutual dialogue and consultation will continue.*)

Grounds:

- a. The growing unrest within the CRC regarding the GKN suggests that the status quo should not be maintained and that the relationship needs to be further restricted.
- b. This action acknowledges the concerns of those who believe that fellowship with churches which tolerate practicing homosexuals as members and officebearers is contrary to the teaching of and disobedient to Christ and the gospel.

—Adopted

2. That the Interchurch Relations Committee be mandated to intensify its pursuit of the two remaining provisions of ecclesiastical fellowship with the GKN:

- a. "[C]ommunication on major issues of joint concern."

- b. "[T]he exercise of mutual concern and admonition with a view to promoting the fundamentals of Christian unity."

(*Ecumenical Charter, Manual of Christian Reformed Church Government*, p. 269)

Grounds:

- a. Continuing dialogue demonstrates the CRC's desire to maintain meaningful contact with the GKN and gives both churches an opportunity to search for ways to work together.

- b. The GKN and the CRC have common historical roots of biblical faith and practice which are a basis for ecclesiastical discussion.
- c. The GKN continue to be open to hearing our concerns and dialoguing with us, even when disagreeing with our criticism.
- d. The issues between our churches are of such a nature as to require ongoing discussion to seek mutual understanding for a common confession that affirms biblical truth and unity.
- e. Synod 1995 encouraged the IRC to pursue its discussion with the GKN and "to report regularly to synod."

—Adopted

- 3. That the Interchurch Relations Committee be mandated to observe the developing relationship of the GKN and their two partners in Together on the Way (*Samen op Weg*) and to provide synod with advice regarding the proper mode for our relationship with this new entity.

Ground: The GKN are progressing toward federation with the Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk and the Evangelisch Lutherse Kerk; this new federation will likely require a new relationship between the CRCNA and the new United Protestant Church in the Netherlands.

—Adopted

- 4. That synod declare this to be its answer to Overtures 36-43 and 57 (B and C)

—Adopted

III. Council of the Christian Reformed Churches in Canada (CCRCC)

A. *Material:* Interchurch Relations Committee Supplement, p. 382

B. *Recommendation*

That synod assign to the Committee to Study Structure for Ministry in Canada this additional matter: the authorization for Canadian churches, classes, and groups of classes (such as the CCRCC) to engage in interchurch relationships. If such authorization is to be given, it should be clearly stipulated.

—Adopted

IV. Churches in ecclesiastical fellowship in North America

A. *Material:* Interchurch Relations Supplement, III, A, pp. 382-383

B. *Recommendation*

That synod respond to the OPC's suggestion that the OPC and the CRCNA mutually discuss women in office, homosexuality, and church discipline by informing the OPC that

- 1. With respect to matters already decided by the CRCNA, its positions are a matter of record. The CRCNA is willing to discuss these positions in response to the OPC's requests.
- 2. Although the CRCNA is not inclined to reopen issues already decided, it is willing to serve in a consultative capacity to a study committee of the OPC.

3. With respect to new issues, the CRCNA suggests that there be mutual discussion between our respective church committees dealing with a particular issue.

—Adopted

(The report of Advisory Committee 7 is continued in Article 55.)

ARTICLE 53

The morning session is adjourned; Elder Lambert Tuininga leads in closing prayer.

MONDAY AFTERNOON, June 17, 1996

Tenth Session

ARTICLE 54

Dr. Harvey Smit, editor in chief of Education, Worship, and Evangelism (EWE) of CRC Publications, announces *Psalter Hymnal 201*, "Fear Not, Rejoice and Be Glad." He reads from Ephesians 4:1-16 and leads in opening prayer.

Dr. Smit addresses synod, highlighting some educational materials developed by EWE and published by CRC Publications. He reports that the LiFE curriculum has a wide distribution in non-Christian Reformed as well as in Christian Reformed churches. He reports on *Guiding the Faith Journey, A Map for Spiritual Leaders*, which is new. The president of synod responds.

The general secretary introduces Mr. Jeffrey Van Dorp, leader of four senior engineering students who developed an electronic balloting system which will be available for use at Synod 1997.

Rev. Gerard Bouma of the Hospitality Committee introduces Dr. William B. Evans, fraternal delegate from the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church, who addresses synod. The president of synod responds.

Rev. David Baak, fraternal delegate from the Reformed Church in America, is introduced and addresses synod. The president of synod responds.

Rev. Yasunori Ichikawa, fraternal delegate from the Reformed Church in Japan, is introduced and addresses synod. The president of synod responds.

Rev. Leonard J. Hofman, president of the National Association of Evangelicals, addresses synod. The president of synod responds.

Rev. John P. Galbraith, fraternal delegate from the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, addresses synod. He explains a letter, dated June 13, 1996, sent to the CRCNA from the Orthodox Presbyterian Church general assembly to suspend the relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship with the CRCNA. The president of synod responds.

ARTICLE 55

(The report of Advisory Committee 7 is continued from Article 52.)

Advisory Committee 7, Interdenominational Matters, Rev. Benjamin J. Becksvort reporting, presents the following:

I. Ecumenical organizations: North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC)

A. Materials

1. Interchurch Relations Committee Supplement, Appendix A, "The CRCNA and NAPARC," pp. 388-91
2. Overture 73, p. 327
3. Interchurch Relations Committee Report, pp. 185-86

B. Recommendations

1. That synod remind our congregations, classes, and agencies of the Golden Rule Comity Agreement, which is quoted below (*Agenda for Synod 1996*, p. 186).

Background: NAPARC has requested the major assemblies of all the member churches to remind their congregations and regional assemblies of the terms of this agreement.

Golden Rule Comity Agreement

Out of a concern to build a Church of Jesus Christ rather than our own denominations and to avoid the appearance of competition, we affirm the following courteous code of behavior to guide our church-planting ministries in North America:

1. We will be sensitive to the presence of existing churches and mission ministries of other NAPARC churches and will refrain from enlisting members and take great care in receiving members of those existing ministries.
2. We will communicate with the equivalent or appropriate agency (denominational missions committee or board, presbytery missions or church extension committee, or session) before initiating church planting activities in a community where NAPARC churches or missions exist.
3. We will provide information on at least an annual basis describing progress in our ministries and future plans.
4. We will encourage our regional home-missions leadership to develop good working relationships.

—Adopted

2. That synod not approve the proposed change in Article V, Section 3, of the constitution of NAPARC.

Note: NAPARC, at its November 28-29, 1995, meeting, asked its member denominations to approve the proposed changes in Article V, Section 3, of the constitution. During the discussion the CRCNA delegates did not speak in favor of the proposed change. Though the IRC earlier recommended that Synod 1996 adopt the proposed changes, upon consultation with the synodical advisory committee, the IRC concurs with the advisory committee's recommendation not to adopt the proposed changes. The statement of the proposed changes follows:

Admission to, *suspension from*, *restoration to (after suspension)*, and termination of membership shall be *proposed* by recommendation of the Council to the member churches by two-thirds of the ballots cast; and this proposal recommendation must then be approved adopted within three years by the approval of two-thirds of the major assemblies of the member churches. *A proposal to suspend or terminate the membership of a member church may be initiated only by a major*

assembly of a member church. A suspended church may send delegates to meetings of the Council, but they shall not vote, nor may that church be represented on the Interim Committee.

Note: Wording in italics is new. Underscored material is to be deleted.

Grounds for Recommendation 2 above:

- a. It is not the prerogative of an ecumenical council to take disciplinary action against member denominations.
- b. Instead of promoting unity, the proposed change of adding the step of suspension provides an easy method for excluding member denominations from the decision-making process of NAPARC.
- c. Suspension, because of the conditions for restoration, could be used to put undue pressure on member denominations to bring their polity and practice in line with NAPARC's thinking on specific issues.

—Adopted

3. That synod not accede to Overture 73.

Background: Classis Lake Erie asks in Overture 73 that "synod terminate CRC membership in the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council." The overture indicates that member churches of NAPARC not only have protested recent CRCNA decisions but also have indicated that these decisions may make us unwelcome in NAPARC. The advisory committee recognizes these tensions in our relationship with NAPARC. Yet it comes with the above recommendation and the following grounds.

Grounds:

- a. The CRCNA is committed to exercising Christian fellowship with other Reformed denominations. (See Church Order Art. 49 and the Ecumenical Charter, *Manual of Christian Reformed Church Government*, p. 265ff.)
- b. The CRCNA played a significant role in the formation of NAPARC, and NAPARC is the only Reformed fellowship of its kind in North America.
- c. Taking action that perpetuates growing division among Reformed churches would not serve the cause of unity in Christ.

—Adopted

4. That synod urge the IRC to be proactive in calling NAPARC to fulfill its stated purpose and function, especially to

Promote cooperation wherever possible and feasible on the local and denominational level in such areas as missions, relief efforts, Christian schools, and church education.

(NAPARC Constitution, Purpose and Function, 4)

Ground: Though NAPARC meetings seem at times to be counterproductive, including more criticism than encouragement, they do provide a forum for member churches to address cooperatively issues relating to education, relief, justice, and other social issues.

—Adopted

II. Churches in ecclesiastical fellowship in North America

A. Materials

1. Interchurch Relations Committee Report, pp. 191-92, Section X, B
2. Interchurch Relations Committee Supplement, p. 383 and Appendix B, pp. 392-93

B. Background

The Interchurch Relations Committee received a letter, dated September 15, 1995, communicating a decision of the general assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America which had been adopted in June 1995. That decision called upon the CRCNA to "repent of and rescind" the action taken at Synod 1995 regarding women in office. The IRC prepared the following response, which the advisory committee has reviewed and edited.

C. Recommendation

That synod adopt the following letter as its response to the communication from the Presbyterian Church in America.

Dr. Paul R. Gilchrist, Stated Clerk
Presbyterian Church in America
1852 Century Place, Suite 190
Atlanta, Georgia 30345

Dear Dr. Gilchrist:

We greet you in the name of the risen and ascended Lord.

Your letter of September 15, 1995, addressed to the Christian Reformed Church in North America, officially conveying the communication adopted by the 23rd General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America, meeting in Dallas, Texas, on June 19-23, 1995, was received by the office of the general secretary. Following review and recommendation by the Interchurch Relations Committee, Synod 1996 of the Christian Reformed Church in North America provides you with the following reply.

We appreciate the expressed desire of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) to continue in full fellowship with the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA). We are grateful that you value the relationship we have through the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC).

The CRCNA does not take lightly its relationship with churches in ecclesiastical fellowship. Our denominations have enjoyed this ecclesial relationship since 1975. In that light we consider seriously your grief and distress over the action of Synod 1995 of the CRCNA to permit women to hold the offices of minister and elder. We also take note of your statement that "the action of the Christian Reformed Church is in contradiction to the clear teaching of Scripture and the historic Presbyterian and Reformed confessions of faith."

As you know, for many years the CRCNA has prayerfully and carefully debated the issue of admitting women to ecclesiastical office. Although synodical decisions in recent years have not always followed a consistent pattern, it must be maintained that in every substantive decision made, the CRCNA put forth a sincere effort to be obedient to the infallible Word of God and to the church's confessional standards. Synod 1995 did not declare that one approach to

the matter was right and the other wrong. With respect to the issue of whether women are to serve in the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist, it allowed that careful Reformed scholarship and obedient discipleship could bring individuals, local churches, and classes to differing perspectives and convictions, both of which honor the Scriptures as the infallible Word of God. Therefore, in the interest of both fidelity to the Scriptures and the unity of the body of Christ, Synod 1995 decided that its classes, responding to local needs and circumstances, may authorize the churches under their jurisdiction to ordain and install women in the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist (cf. *Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 733).

The CRCNA respectfully disagrees with the PCA call for us to “repent and rescind.” We acknowledge that our denomination has struggled as it has tried to discern the faithful contemporary application of Word and confession in the employment of women’s gifts in the body of Christ. Has this process reached a sinful conclusion? We think not. If some of our classes conclude that it is appropriate to ordain women to the specified offices, a practice followed in various ways by other denominations, the CRCNA questions the consistency of your calling our denomination to repentance while you tolerate such diversity in other denominations with which you have ecumenical relationships.

Furthermore, we believe that a church in ecclesiastical fellowship with the CRCNA should not instruct its Interchurch Relations Committee to “use all due process afforded them in NAPARC to remove the CRCNA from membership in NAPARC.” The implications of such an act would likely lead to the termination of our formal ecclesiastical fellowship.

The CRCNA would humbly submit that there are not only a “sizable number in [our] midst who are working hard to see the CRC remain faithful to Scripture on this issue” but that this description characterizes the whole CRCNA.

Rather than straining or breaking relationships, let us strive together to understand one another, noting our differences, and let us “exercise . . . mutual concern and admonition with a view to promoting the fundamentals of Christian unity” (Provisions of Ecclesiastical Fellowship, *Acts of Synod 1974*, p. 57).

For the Christian Reformed Church in North America
David H. Engelhard, general secretary

Enc.: *Church Order and Rules for Synodical Procedure 1995*, Supplement, Article 3-a, pp. 23, 24.

—Adopted

III. Reformed Churches in South Africa (RCSA - Potchefstroom)

A. Materials

1. Interchurch Relations Committee Report, p. 190, Section VI
2. Interchurch Relations Committee Supplement, pp. 385-86

B. Background

After a lengthy and painful process of communicating with the Reformed Churches in South Africa (RCSA) concerning their theological defense of apartheid, Synod 1989 acted to “suspend the ecclesiastical fellowship of the Christian Reformed Church with the Reformed Churches in South Africa.” Synod 1995 voted to extend the suspension until 1997 so that representatives of

our Interchurch Relations Committee could meet with and continue to correspond with representatives of the RCSA.

Our IRC has had significant contact by letter and visit with the RCSA during this past year. The judgment of our Interchurch Relations Committee is that the RCSA have made significant progress in meeting the conditions suggested by Synod 1989 for the lifting of the suspension. A basic ground presented by Synod 1989 is "that the RCSA give evidence of their repentance for their complicity in the support of apartheid in South Africa and the evils apartheid has created."

We understand that the dramatic changes in South Africa have come about as the result of a political upheaval, not an ecclesiastical process. But we see in this movement a powerful indication of the providential hand of God, setting one up and taking another down. The RCSA have joined in the effort in the new South Africa to seek peace, reconciliation, and forgiveness. There is still a long journey ahead, but some significant first steps have been taken. Synod 1989 imposed suspension with humility, acknowledging our own failure in church and society to pursue racial justice and equality. The advisory committee is recommending that Synod 1996 now lift the suspension with that same humility and with the reminder that God can also intervene directly in our own countries to accomplish his divine purpose.

C. *Recommendations*

1. That the suspension of CRCNA ecclesiastical fellowship with the RCSA be lifted and all provisions of such fellowship be reinstated.

Grounds:

- a. The issue of apartheid, which led to the CRC suspension of ecclesiastical fellowship with the RCSA, is moot because of political changes in South Africa and is therefore no longer a valid basis to continue the suspension.
- b. The RCSA in their position, attitude, and practice are pursuing racial reconciliation within the family of churches (IRC Supplement, p. 386, V, b, 1-7).
- c. Lifting the suspension will demonstrate CRCNA commitment to its ecumenical responsibility and its strong desire to maintain ecclesiastical fellowship with the RCSA.
- d. By lifting the suspension, the CRCNA creates a more positive climate in which to grow in our ecumenical relationships.

—Adopted

The following negative vote is registered: Kenneth L. Andree (Grand Rapids East).

2. That synod express its joy and thanksgiving that God in his providence has created the conditions in which ecclesiastical fellowship between the CRCNA and the RCSA can be restored.

—Adopted

IV. **The Ecumenical Charter**

- A. That synod take note of the fact that the IRC has committed itself to review "the ways in which ecclesiastical fellowship might be restored as the basis and

principles of the Ecumenical Charter are applied and implemented" (IRC Supplement, p. 387).

—Declared

B. That synod thank the members of the IRC for their dedicated work and patience.

—Declared

ARTICLE 56

(The report of Advisory Committee 3 is continued from Article 25.)

Advisory Committee 3, Education, Rev. Daniel W. De Groot reporting, presents the following:

I. Response to Overture 65: Declare the Position on Abortion in *Christian Faith, Health, and Medical Practice* to Be Contrary to the Position of the CRC

A. *Material*: Overture 65, pp. 315-16

B. *Observations*

The Wisconsin overture asks synod to declare that the book *Christian Faith, Health, and Medical Practice* presents a position on abortion contrary to the position of the Christian Reformed Church and asks that the Board of Trustees of Calvin College ensure Dr. Hessel Bouma III's compliance with all details of the synodical decision of 1972.

The Board of Trustees of Calvin College examined the book and Professor Bouma's teaching and concluded that certain of the book's conclusions and his positions do not agree with the decision of synod in every respect. However, the board also concluded that the book and Professor Bouma are strongly but not absolutely pro-life and that Professor Bouma maintains a healthy respect for the decisions of synod and reflects this in his teaching.

In addressing its concern, Classis Wisconsin uses Church Order Article 29. It is important to note that neither the Board of Trustees of Calvin College nor Classis Wisconsin alleges any violation of the confessions or of Scripture. The key issue involves the authority of synodical decisions and related procedures. Synod 1975 stated,

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 purpose, in the measure of agreement expected and in their use and function.

(*Acts of Synod 1975*, p. 44)

Article 29 does not preclude faculty discussion, debate, or disagreement with the substance of a synodical decision or position taken.

C. *Recommendation*

That synod declare the above observations to be its answer to Overture 65.

—Adopted

II. Calvin Theological Seminary

A. *Materials*

1. Calvin Theological Seminary Supplement, pp. 371-73
2. Overture 62, pp. 311-12
3. Overture 76, pp. 331-32
4. Communication 5, pp. 419-20

B. *Observations*

This recommendation is brought after considerable reflection and discussion by both the faculty and the seminary board of trustees. A major issue was whether the seminary and its board should undertake this study or whether it is an issue of such denominational significance that it warrants a synodical study committee. The latter opinion prevailed. The question involves the relationship of the denominational seminary to the training and calling of ministerial leaders. It seems to need review in the light of a number of practices and attitudes.

1. Alternative seminary education

Originally and through most of its history Calvin Seminary was universally accepted as the place for training Christian Reformed ministers. Denominational identity and loyalty compelled this denominational value. Today, more students than previously, opt, for a variety of reasons, to attend other seminaries with the intention of entering ministry in the Christian Reformed Church. Is this denominationally desirable? Why or why not? What is the impact of this pattern on the denomination? What do graduates of other seminaries bring to ministry in the CRCNA that is constructive or that may be problematic? What is the success rate of the SPMC program? Is it being used as intended? And, in that light, what should be its future? What are the reasons students choose other seminaries, and what should be done to address these reasons? Answers to all of these and other questions related to ministerial students attending other seminaries will enable the denomination to shape its future more intentionally and responsibly than at present.

2. Exceptional cases

Various exceptions to denominational policy are claimed today. They deserve review, clarification, and common policy. Some graduates of other seminaries avoid the SPMC program entirely, are called and ordained by classes as evangelists, and openly express their intention to apply under Article 7 of the Church Order for ordination as pastors in several years. Some have already followed this approach. How is this circumvention of synod's policy to be evaluated and handled? Some congregations, claiming need, employ seminarians or graduates of other seminaries who have not been in the SPMC program, using them as stated supply and sometimes even expressing a desire or intent to call them. Some churches readily look outside the denomination for pastors, claiming need or unavailability of suitable CRC pastors. Some congregations are employing as staff persons on their ministry teams people with little or no background in the Reformed faith, some with church and theological backgrounds in significant contrast with the Reformed faith. What is the impact of these attitudes and approaches to ministry on the local congregation and on the denomination theologically,

confessionally, in terms of church polity or ministerial practices? Is there actually need? Do the statistics bear out this claim? Are other considerations operative in these claims? If so, have they been properly established and addressed? And do our synodical deputies uniformly understand and apply denominational policy when called upon? What has been the history of using Church Order Article 7, and is it being applied as it was intended in a way beneficial for our churches and denomination?

3. Agency and classical programs

Several of our colleges have instituted and advertised programs for unordained church leaders or staff persons. Christian Reformed Home Missions has supported training programs for ethnic-minority pastors and for church planters and evangelists that are independent of synodically defined and approved routes into Christian Reformed ministry. One of our classes is experimenting with its own such training program. Expectations are that in time the most successful of these people will be ordained as pastors. How does this approach relate to the denomination's stated value of a theologically, seminary-trained ministry built on the base of a liberal-arts education? If this becomes a sanctioned route to ordination, are there standards and expectations that should be defined and met by such people? If so, what are they? And what role should continuing education play in the continuing development of these and all spiritual leaders of the church? What are the long-range implications of these new strategies of agency, college, and classical training for denominational cohesiveness, a unified understanding and application of our confessional vision for the church of Christ, and the spiritual growth of our people? Where does the church desire the training of its pastoral and church leadership to occur? According to what standards and by people with what qualifications? Should all programs of pastoral training be assigned to the seminary rather than to agencies and classes? What uniform standards and training should apply to unordained church staff, if any? These are new questions arising from new, untested models of ministerial formation.

The advisory committee agrees with the board of trustees and seminary faculty that answers to these questions are crucial to the unity and the vitality of the CRC. In addition, items raised by the number of cases involving Church Order Articles 7 and 8 and the involvement of synodical deputies in them require reflection. A responsible report—examined by the churches, debated in its assemblies, and yielding constructive recommendations in tune with our times—would serve our churches well.

C. *Recommendation*

1. That synod appoint a study committee (1) to examine routes presently being used to ordained ministry in the CRC and related denominations, (2) to define standards for effective ministry (ordained ministry and unordained staff ministry) in the CRC, and (3) to propose any changes in present policy that it judges to be necessary. This study is to include but not be limited to
 - a. Church Order Articles 6, 7, and 8, their Supplements, and related policies.
 - b. The special needs of various ethnic communities.
 - c. The concerns related to the standards for the work of synodical deputies.

This study committee will report to Synod 1999.

Ground: Alternate routes into ministry are being used today that were not envisioned when the present Church Order articles and related policies were adopted.

—Adopted

2. That synod declare this to be its answer to Overtures 62 and 76.

—Adopted

(The report of Advisory Committee 3 is continued in Article 75.)

ARTICLE 57

Advisory Committee 4, Publications, Rev. David J. Deters reporting, presents the following:

I. CRC Publications

A. Materials

1. CRC Publications Report, pp. 76-123 (except Sections III, F and IV, F)
2. Overture 78
3. Overture 79

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. Sherry Ten Clay, president
Rev. Stanley Mast, vice president
Mr. Gary Mulder, executive director

For *The Banner*:

Rev. John Suk, editor in chief

Note: Rev. Suk asks that synod be informed that the Board of Publications is taking into serious consideration the possibility of moving to biweekly publication of *The Banner* within the next eight to twelve months.

For Education, Worship, and Evangelism

Dr. Harvey Smit, editor in chief

For the Worship Committee

Dr. Emily Brink
Rev. Jack Reiffer

—Granted

2. That synod appoint Mr. Jeffrey Jappinga as the fraternal delegate to the CRC Publications Board representing the Reformed Church in America for a three-year term.

—Adopted

II. Committee to Design a One-Calendar-Week Synod

A. Materials

1. Report of the Committee to Design a One-Calendar-Week Synod, pp. 239-42
2. Overture 51, pp. 298-99
3. Overture 69, pp. 320-21
4. Overture 80, p. 418

B. Recommendations

1. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to the chairman and reporter of the committee, Rev. Michael De Vries and Mr. Kenneth Kuiper, when this report is considered.

—Granted

2. That synod alter its meeting dates by beginning its sessions in the afternoon of the second Saturday of June and adjourning by noon on Saturday of the following week:

Grounds:

- a. An assembly of seven working days should provide adequate time for conducting the business of the church.
Note: If the proposed 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. Furthermore, guidelines listed below will result in further time savings and greater efficiency.
- b. An assembly of one week's duration would make it possible for a greater number of elders to be available as nominees to attend synod.
- c. Most North American denominations are able to conduct their business in one week.

—Adopted

3. That synod adopt the schedule and guidelines presented below:

a. Schedule

Synod will begin on Saturday and meet according to the following schedule:

1) First Saturday

2:00 - 3:15 p.m.	New-delegate orientation
4:00 - 6:00 p.m.	Convening of synod Opening worship Election of officers Housekeeping details
6:15 - 7:15 p.m.	Dinner
7:30 - 10:00 p.m.	Convening of advisory committees

Ground: Even though Synod 1995 seemed to suggest that synod should begin on Sunday, beginning on Saturday is necessary to protect Sunday from becoming a day of travel and work for the delegates and to provide the extra time needed for organizing and beginning the work of synod.

2) Sunday

Morning—Worship with local congregations

Afternoon—Prayer and Praise Festival (4:00 - 6:00 p.m.) (formerly, Prayer Service for Synod)

This service would incorporate congregational singing, preaching of the Word, prayers, an offering of thanksgiving, greetings from two fraternal delegates (one from North America and one from overseas), and the introduction of missionaries, chaplains, candidates, and persons in ministries in special settings. This service will ordinarily be held in the Calvin College Chapel except in extraordinary circumstances, when it will be held in the sanctuary of the convening church. Regardless of the location, following the service a light supper will be served to delegates only.

Note: Details of this service will be planned jointly by the convening church and the Board of Trustees.

3) Monday

8:00 - 8:30 a.m.	Brief plenary session
8:30 - 11:45 a.m.	Committees in session
12:00 - 1:00 p.m.	Lunch
1:15 - 5:15 p.m.	Committees in session
5:30 - 6:45 p.m.	Dinner
7:00 - 10:00 p.m.	Plenary session (or advisory committees if necessary)

4) Tuesday through noon of second Saturday

8:00 - 11:45 a.m.	Morning session (break 9:45 - 10:05 a.m.)
1:15 - 5:15 p.m.	Afternoon session (break 3:00 - 3:20 p.m.)
7:00 - 10:00 p.m.	Evening session (no break)

b. Guidelines

- 1) The synodical delegates will submit their choices of **nominees for officers** of synod to the general secretary prior to the beginning of the assembly. Each delegate may submit one name for the officer category of president/vice president and one name for the officer category of first clerk/second clerk.

The general secretary will receive names of nominees until **May 15**, at which time the nominations will be closed. There will be a slate of twelve (12) nominees. It will be made up of the nine ministers who receive the highest number of clergy nominations and the three elders who receive the highest number of elder nominations. Should there be a shortage of elder nominations, the remaining nominees will be clergy.

Ground: This provision will assist in making it possible for elders to be incorporated into synodical leadership.

Ordinarily this list will not be made public prior to the convening of synod.

A brief profile of each nominee will be provided to the delegates.

Ground: This will assist the delegates in electing officers on the basis of their profiles.

When synod convenes, the names of **alternate delegates** who actually attend synod may be added to the slate by motion and synodical vote without debate. This procedure is necessary to give the body opportunity to nominate an alternate delegate for office once it knows the alternate will actually be in attendance.

- 2) The number of **advisory committees** will be increased by a third, and each committee's workload will be decreased proportionately. The advisory committees will have no more than twelve persons and no fewer than ten. These committees, being an optimum size for committees, will require less time for committee work than larger committees and will allow sufficient time for plenary sessions.
- 3) Prior to synod each committee will be assigned a **chairperson**, an **alternate chairperson**, a **reporter**, and an **alternate reporter**. Availability of alternates will expedite matters should any chairperson or reporter be unable to assume the duties. The Program Committee will make these assignments prior to synod's convening.
- 4) The total time for **fraternal delegates'** greetings will be cut from the current two hours to one hour. The Interchurch Relations Committee will determine the best way to divide this time.
- 5) Although the **agencies and ministries** will already have presented their groups at the Prayer and Praise Festival, their regular rotation of **program presentations** will be continued as presently permitted.
- 6) The **minutes** will not be read at the beginning of each session of synod but will be proofread by a small committee appointed by the officers of synod. After being proofread, the minutes will be posted in a public place where they can be read by interested delegates.
- 7) The officers of synod will be permitted to assign a **time limit for debate** on issues they expect to take longer than one hour. This time limit will be announced prior to the presentation of the report. The delegates may vote to extend debate for half-hour intervals when the time limit has been reached.
- 8) The evening **banquet** that has been used to honor retirees and recognize special achievements will be eliminated, and an expanded noon **luncheon** will be initiated for this purpose on Wednesday or Thursday. The Board of Trustees will be responsible for planning this testimonial luncheon.

—Adopted

4. That these arrangements be adopted and implemented for the synods of 1997 through 2000. Synod 1999 should appoint a committee to review these guidelines and recommend its findings to Synod 2000.

—Adopted

5. That if this report is accepted as recommended, the Rules for Synodical Procedure be updated to accommodate the changes suggested herein.

—Adopted

6. That the above be synod's response to Overtures 51, 69, and 80.

—*Adopted*

7. That the work of the committee be declared completed and the committee be discharged.

—*Adopted*

III. Response to Overture 54: Appoint Committee to Study Surrogate Parenting

A. *Materials*: Overture 54, p. 302

B. *Recommendations*

1. That synod not accede to Overture 54.

Grounds:

a. Although the issue is one of sincere importance to classis Northern Michigan, it does not seem to be an issue of major critical concern across the denomination.

b. There are a growing number of people and resources available to give advice on the issue.

—*Adopted*

2. That synod encourage Classis Northern Michigan to appoint a study committee of its own with the goal of serving the church with its findings.

—*Adopted*

IV. Response to Overture 63: Declare the New King James Version Acceptable for Use in Worship Services

A. *Material*: Overture 63, p. 312

B. *Recommendations*

1. That synod declare the New King James Version of the English Bible acceptable for use in worship services.

Ground: The King James Version already has this "acceptable" status.

It is moved that synod refer the request to declare the New King James Version of the English Bible acceptable for use in worship services to CRC Publications for study (in consultation with experts in Old and New Testament) and recommendation.

—*Adopted*

2. That this be synod's answer to Overture 63.

—*Adopted*

(The report of Advisory Committee 4 is continued in Article 69)

ARTICLE 58

The afternoon session is adjourned; Elder Cornelis Van Soelen leads in closing prayer.

MONDAY EVENING, June 17, 1996
Eleventh Session

ARTICLE 59

Elder Jack Kremers announces *Psalter Hymnal* 453, "Let All Things Now Living." He reads from John 12:44-50 and leads in opening prayer, especially remembering the Mt. Hamilton congregations.

ARTICLE 60

(The report of Advisory Committee 1 is continued from Article 24.)

Advisory Committee 1, Synodical Services, Rev. Laryn G. Zoerhof reporting, presents the following:

I. Constitution and Bylaws of the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA

A. *Material*: Board of Trustees Report, Appendices A and B, pp. 45-58

B. *Recommendations*

1. A motion is made that synod amend Article 5 of the proposed Constitution of the Board of Trustees to reflect the nominating/electing procedure currently used by the boards of Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary.

Grounds:

- a. Such a procedure furthers the goal of having local congregations and classes actively involved in the work of the denomination.
- b. The regions that nominate individuals to represent them are more likely to have personal knowledge of the nominees than are synodical delegates who live hundreds of miles away.

—*Adopted*

2. That synod approve the Constitution and Bylaws of the Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church in North America as proposed and amended, as well as the resulting revision of the Rules for Synodical Procedure (II, B, 3).

—*Adopted*

Note: The final version of the Constitution and Bylaws is contained in Appendix II, pages 620-33.

II. Response to Overture 60: Withhold Approval of the Work of Synodical Deputies

A. *Material*: Overture 60, p. 310

B. *Recommendation*

That synod not accede to Overture 60.

Ground: Having discussed the issue with the three synodical deputies in question and with representatives of Classis Thornapple Valley and Classis Grand Rapids East, the advisory committee is convinced that the synodical deputies had adequate information to concur with the judgment rendered by

Classis Thornapple Valley and that the synodical deputies were not negligent in the discharge of their duties.

—Adopted

III. Work of synodical deputies

A. *Material*: Synodical deputies' reports

B. *Article 14-b*: Release from office to enter ministry in another denomination

1. Synodical deputies K.L. Havert (Grandville), C. Steenstra (Grand Rapids North), and C.D. Vander Meyden (Grand Rapids South) concur with Classis Thornapple Valley, in session on September 19, 1995, in its acquiescence to the resignation of **A. Gene Beerens** and the declaration of his dismissal from the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church.
2. Synodical deputies J.J. Hoogland (Hudson), S.J. Vander Klay (Hackensack), and G. Ringnalda* (Toronto), having heard the discussions relating to the resignation of **Robert A. Heerema**, in accordance with Church Order Article 14-b, concur in the decision of Classis Atlantic Northeast, in session on February 29, 1996, to declare that **Robert A. Heerema** is released from the office of minister of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

*G. Ringnalda, in absentia, confirmed the decision by telephone.

3. Synodical deputies J. Bylsma (Wisconsin) and T.H. Douma (Northern Illinois), having heard the discussions relating to the resignation of **Paul R. Ipema**, in accordance with Church Order Article 14-b, concur in the decision of Classis Illiana, in session on May 14, 1996, to declare that **Paul R. Ipema** is dismissed from the office of minister of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church.

Synodical deputy H.B. Vanden Heuvel (Chicago South), does not concur in the decision of Classis Illiana, stating, "I believe it would have been more charitable to use the word *released*."

4. Synodical deputies G.W. Sheeres (Thornapple Valley), S.E. Hoezee (Grand Rapids East), and D. Tinklenberg (Georgetown), having conferred regarding the resignation of **Stephen J. Kelley**, in accordance with Church Order Article 14-b, concur in the decision of Classis Lake Erie, in session on March 2, 1996, to declare that **Stephen J. Kelley** is honorably released from the office of minister of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
5. Synodical deputies D.W. De Groot (Iakota), R. Bultman (California South), and J. Weeda (Yellowstone), having heard the recommendation of Third CRC, Denver, Colorado, concerning the resignation of **Nick A. Negrete** from the office of minister of the Word, concur in the decision of Classis Rocky Mountain, in session on September 26, 1995, to acquiesce in the resignation of **Nick A. Negrete** and to declare that he be considered as one deposed.
6. Synodical deputies J. Van Schepen (Greater Los Angeles), R.L. Scheuers (California South), and R. Vander Ley (Pacific Northwest), having reviewed the decision Classis Central California made at its March 5, 1996, meeting regarding **Timothy Overweg**, concur in the decision of classis that Timothy Overweg's acceptance of a call to the Westwood Community Church (RCA)

of Omaha, Nebraska, does constitute his de facto resignation from the ministry in the Christian Reformed Church, that this action be made retroactive to September 1994, and that he be considered released from the ministry of the Word in the CRC.

7. Synodical deputies J.C. Medendorp (Thornapple Valley), C.D. Vander Meyden (Grand Rapids South), and J. Gorter (Grandville), having heard the discussions relating to the resignation of **Brent A. Pennings**, in accordance with Church Order Article 14-b, concur in the decision of Classis Georgetown, in session on February 8, 1996, to declare that **Brent A. Pennings** is released from the office of minister of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
8. Synodical deputies S.E. Hoezee (Grand Rapids East), J. Gorter (Grandville), and D. Tinklenberg (Georgetown), having heard the discussions relating to the resignation of **Jung S. Rhee**, in accordance with Church Order Article 14-b, concur in the decision of Classis Kalamazoo, in session on September 12, 1995, to declare that **Jung S. Rhee** is honorably released from the office of minister of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church.
9. Synodical deputies G. Ringnalda (Toronto), J.J. Hoogland (Hudson), and S.J. Vander Klay (Hackensack), having been informed by telephone through the stated clerk of Classis Atlantic Northeast about the discussions relating to the resignation of **Kenneth Sanders**, in accordance with Church Order Article 14-b, concur in the decision of Classis Atlantic Northeast, in session on October 5, 1995, to declare that **Kenneth Sanders** is released from the office of minister of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
10. Synodical deputies D.W. De Groot (Iakota), J.D. Buwalda (Minnesota South), and D.A. Zylstra (Northcentral Iowa), having heard the discussions relating to the resignation of **William G. Van Hal**, in accordance with Church Order Article 14-b, concur in the decision of Classis Heartland, in session on October 11, 1995, to declare that **William G. Van Hal** is honorably released from the office of minister of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
11. Synodical deputies J. Bylsma (Wisconsin) and T.H. Douma (Northern Illinois), having heard the discussions relating to the resignation of **Arthur J. Verburg**, in accordance with Church Order Article 14-b, concur in the decision of Classis Illiana, in session on May 14, 1996, to declare that **Arthur J. Verburg** is dismissed from the office of minister of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

Synodical deputy H.B. Vanden Heuvel (Chicago South) does not concur in the decision of Classis Illiana regarding **Arthur J. Verburg**, stating, "I believe it would have been more charitable to use the word *released*."
12. Synodical deputies J.D. Buwalda (Minnesota South), D.W. De Groot (Iakota), and D.A. Zylstra (Northcentral Iowa) concur in the decision of Classis of the Heartland to declare that, when **Jay A. Wesseling's** membership is sent from First CRC, Sheldon, Iowa, to Cornerstone Church, Hudsonville, Michigan, it is a de facto resignation from the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church. Classis of the Heartland declares that his status will be as one honorably released from the ministry of the Word in the CRCNA.

13. Synodical deputies T.H. Douma (Northern Illinois) and J. Bylsma (Wisconsin) concur in the decision of Classis Illiana, in session on January 15, 1996, to declare **Thomas D. Wetselaar** dismissed from the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

Synodical deputy H.B. Vanden Heuvel (Chicago South) does not concur with the decision of Classis Illiana regarding **Thomas D. Wetselaar**, stating, "I believe that the word *release* would have been more appropriate and would lead to a greater opportunity for healing in this tragic situation."

14. Synodical deputies C. Steenstra (Grand Rapids North), C.D. Vander Meyden (Grand Rapids South), and D. Tinklenberg (Georgetown) concur in the decision of Classis Grandville, in session on September 21, 1995, to rescind the action of January 1993 regarding **Peter Honderd** and **Richard Veldman** and now to declare them honorably released from the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

—Adopted

C. Article 14-c: Release from office to enter a nonministerial vocation

Synodical deputies D. Tinklenberg (Georgetown), J. Gorter (Grandville), and J.H. Scholten (Holland), having heard the discussion of Classis Kalamazoo, in session on January 23, 1996, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 14-c, that **Stephen M. Merz** is released from the office of minister of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America to enter a nonministerial vocation.

D. Article 14-d: Release from office of one whose vocation is judged to be nonministerial

1. Synodical deputies J. Hofman, Jr. (Columbia), W.L. Vander Beek (B.C. South-East), and R. Vander Ley (Pacific Northwest) concur in the decision of Classis B.C. North-West, in session on March 5, 1996, to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 14-d, that **Ronald D. Ravensbergen**, having entered a vocation that is judged to be nonministerial, is released from the office of minister of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
2. Synodical deputies D.J. Van Beek (Grand Rapids North), D. Tinklenberg (Georgetown), and K.E. Van Wyk (Zeeland), having heard the discussion of Classis Grand Rapids East, in session on January 18, 1996, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 14-d, that **George W. Whyte**, having entered a vocation that is judged to be nonministerial, is honorably released from the office of minister of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America, effective January 18, 1996.

E. Article 16-c: Release from office or extension of eligibility for call

1. Synodical deputies S.J. Vander Klay (Hackensack), H.B. Vanden Heuvel (Chicago South), and G.H. Stoutmeyer (Illiana) concur in the decision of Classis Florida, in session on September 23, 1995, to extend the ministerial credential of **Rev. John D.S. Cho** for a period of one year with the condition that he seek and obtain full acceptance by CRC Chaplaincy Ministries by no later than August 22, 1996, according to Article 16-c of the Church Order.

Additionally, we concur in the condition adopted by Classis Florida that **Rev. John D.S. Cho** be requested to consider not attending the worship

services of Bethel Korean CRC, Boca Raton, Florida, or to be involved in any other way in its ministry.

2. Classis California South extended the leave of absence for **Thomas Van't Land** for one year, from June 1, 1996, to May 31, 1997, due to the continuing serious illness of his wife. Due to a misunderstanding on the part of the classis, the synodical deputies were not asked for their concurrence in this matter. (Minutes supplied.)
3. Synodical deputies G.H. Stoutmeyer (Illiana), H.B. Vanden Heuvel (Chicago South), and S.J. Vander Klay (Hackensack), having heard the discussion of Classis Northern Illinois, in session on March 6, 1996, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 16-c, that **Robert Vander Roest** is released from the office of minister of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

F. Article 17-a: Release from ministerial service in a congregation

1. Synodical deputies D.W. De Groot (Iakota), C.E. Zylstra (Heartland), and D.A. Zylstra (Northcentral Iowa), having heard the grounds submitted by the council of Tracy CRC of Tracy, Iowa, and the discussion of Classis Pella in session on March 1, 1996, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-a, that **Rev. Ferenc Varga** is released from ministerial service in Tracy CRC of Tracy, Iowa.
2. Synodical deputies R. Koops (Huron), J. De Jong (Niagara), and G. Ringnald (Toronto), having heard the grounds submitted by the council of Hope CRC, Port Perry, Ontario, and the discussion of Classis Quinte in session on May 14, 1996, concur with the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-a, that **Rev. Ken Van Schelven** is released from ministerial service in Hope CRC.

G. Article 17-c: Release from office or extension of eligibility for call

1. Synodical deputies J.C. Medendorp (Thornapple Valley), J. Gorter (Grandville), and S.E. Hozee (Grand Rapids East) concur in the decision of Classis Grand Rapids North, in session on January 16, 1996, that the ordained ministerial status of **Rev. Henry G. Entingh** and his eligibility for call be extended for a period of three years in accordance with Church Order Article 17-c.

Ground: Following the merger of his most recent charge—Twelfth Street CRC—with West Leonard CRC, Rev. Henry Entingh has been seeking but has not yet received a call to serve another congregation. He desires to continue this process, however, and also desires to continue serving as a minister of the Word during his retirement, which could begin as early as January 1999.

Comment: We note that the three-year extension is by way of exception from the ordinary annual renewal but feel that under the circumstances this decision is in keeping with the spirit of the Church Order.

2. Synodical deputies T. Minnema (Thornapple Valley), K.E. Van Wyk (Zeeland), and C. Steenstra (Grand Rapids North) concur in the decision of Classis Grand Rapids East, in session on September 21, 1995, to extend the

eligibility for call of **Rev. James Lucas** for one year, according to Church Order Article 17-c.

Grounds:

- a. Rev. Lucas attests to a continued call from God to the ordained ministry.
 - b. Rev. Lucas continues to demonstrate gifts for ministry in preaching, teaching, and pastoral care.
 - c. Rev. Lucas is actively pursuing a call to ministry as chaplain to AWARE.
3. Synodical deputies R. Opperwall (Grand Rapids East), J. Gorter (Grandville), and G.W. Sheeres (Thornapple Valley), having heard the discussion of Classis Grand Rapids North, in session on October 17, 1995, concur with the motion of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-c, that **Stephen J. Sietsema** is honorably released from the office of minister of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

Grounds:

1. This conforms to his request.
2. Over a seven-year period no church has extended a call to him.

H. Articles 82 and 83: Depositions

1. Synodical deputies P.J. Kok (Pacific Northwest), J. Hofman, Jr. (Columbia), and W.L. Vander Beek (B.C. South-East), having heard the grounds submitted by the council of Burnaby Christian Reformed Church, Burnaby, British Columbia, and the discussion of Classis B.C. North-West, in session on September 19, 1995, concur in the decision of classis to approve, in accordance with Church Order Articles 82 and 83, the deposition of **Orlin J. Hogan** from the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
2. Synodical deputies S.A. Van Houten (Hamilton), R. Koops (Huron), and H. Vander Plaat (Niagara), having heard the discussion of Classis Chatham on the matter of the deposition of **John W. Postman**, concur in the decision of classis, in session on June 29, 1995, to approve the deposition of John W. Postman from the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church.
3. Synodical deputies J.R. Kok (Central California), R. Bultman (California South), and W. Verhoef (Rocky Mountain), having heard the grounds submitted by the council of Orangewood Christian Reformed Church of Phoenix, Arizona, and the discussion of Classis Arizona, in session on July 29, 1995, concur in the decision of classis to approve, in accordance with Church Order Articles 82 and 83, the deposition of **Gerald L. Rutgers** from the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
4. Synodical deputies C. Steenstra (Grand Rapids North), J.W. Uitvlugt (Zeeland), and J.C. Medendorp (Thornapple Valley) concur with the motion before Classis Grandville, in session on January 18, 1996, that it "concur with the decision of Lee Street CRC that **Henry J. Steen** be deposed from the office of the ministry of the Word on the ground of deviation from godly conduct" (Arts. 82, 83).

I. Recommendation

That synod approve the work of the synodical deputies (E, 2 approved pending receipt of a written report from the synodical deputies).

—Adopted

(The report of Advisory Committee 1 is continued in Article 85.)

ARTICLE 61

The general secretary reports the results of Ballot 1.

The general secretary presents Ballot 2, and delegates vote.

ARTICLE 62

The evening session is adjourned; Rev. William Dykstra leads in closing prayer.

TUESDAY MORNING, June 18, 1996

Twelfth Session

ARTICLE 63

The officers of synod, out of concern for the deep distress all of us and especially our African-American brothers and sisters are experiencing over the recent spate of tragic burnings of more and more of their places of worship, present to synod the following resolution:

The synod of the Christian Reformed Church in North America laments the recent burnings of some African-American churches in parts of the United States. We express support for brothers and sisters who have suffered because of these actions. We call on those responsible for the burnings to cease their actions, repent of their sins, and step forward that justice be served. May God lead us to be reconciled with one another.

It is moved that synod adopt the resolution.

—Adopted

Rev. Randal Young reads from I Corinthians 1:18-2:5 and leads in opening prayer. He announces *Psalter Hymnal* 384, "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross."

The roll call indicates that Elder John Van Egmond (Classis Arizona) is absent.

The clerks report that the minutes of Thursday morning, June 13, 1996, Friday morning and afternoon, June 14, 1996, and Saturday morning, June 15, 1996, are accurate and in order.

Rev. John Postuma (Classis Hamilton) leaves synod during the morning session and is replaced by Rev. Peter Veltman, who rises to express agreement with the forms of unity.

ARTICLE 64

Advisory Committee II, Women in Office, Rev. Wendell M. Gebben reporting, presents the following:

Women in ecclesiastical offices (majority report)

A. *Materials*

1. Overtures 9-35, pp. 254-83
2. Overture 57 (A), p. 307
3. Overture 67, pp. 317-18
4. Communication 2, pp. 338-43
5. Communication 3, pp. 343-46

B. *Background*

Following the decision of Synod 1995 regarding women in the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist (hereinafter, "women in office"), Synod 1996 received twenty-nine overtures and two communications related to the decision. The overtures can be classified as follows: Ten were from classes that asked synod to revise the decision of 1995 and return to the position of 1994; fourteen similar overtures were received from individual churches but were not approved by their classes; one individual sent an overture calling for revision or modification of the 1995 decision; four additional overtures were received on related topics.

The number of overtures indicates something of the pain and distress that some are experiencing regarding the matter of women in office. The weight of the overtures should not blind us to the fact that fourteen classes and a number of churches have opened ecclesiastical office to women according to the rules of synod. It was with earnest prayer and with a deep desire to be helpful and pastoral to the church of our Lord Jesus that Advisory Committee II dealt with the overtures before it. It is our prayer and the prayer of many that synod's action will promote healing in our beloved denomination.

The advisory committee wrestled deeply with the issues in an effort to come to common ground. Our discussions were marked by a willingness to listen to one another and to appreciate each other's concerns. Although the advisory committee was not able to bring a unified report to synod, the spirit and tone present in our discussions demonstrate a model for synod and the denomination.

C. *Analysis*

It is our general impression that many overtures question the spirit in which synod 1995 acted and imply that synod acted in less than good faith. The majority committee disagrees with that assessment and is persuaded that synod acted pastorally and out of a deep concern for the church.

It is the intention of the majority committee to respond to the overtures submitted to us for recommendation. Two primary areas of concern (namely biblical issues and Church Order issues) emerge, along with some other concerns.

1. Biblical concerns

- a. Many of the overtures charge that biblical grounds *were not given* for the decision of 1995. The decision of 1995, however, declared the following:

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:

1. The numerous overtures to this [1995] synod on this issue, as well as decisions and reports of previous synods, adduce good biblical grounds for both positions.
2. The Scriptures (e.g., Rom. 14) and previous synodical decisions advocate a position of tolerance on nonconfessional issues.

While the majority committee notes that only a single Scripture passage is cited (Rom. 14), the 1995 decision makes reference to "numerous overtures to this synod on this issue, as well as decisions and reports of previous synods." Hence, Synod 1995 is appealing to a wealth of biblical study on this matter. Explicit references are to be found in

- *Agenda for Synod 1995*, Overtures 49-76, pp. 419-524; *Acts of Synod 1995*, Overture 85, pp. 606-10.
- *Agenda for Synod 1992*, Report 31 (pp. 359-83), "Ad Hoc Committee to Gather Grounds for the 1990 Decision to Change Church Order Article 3." The report contains bibliographical references to related booklets.
- *Agenda for Synod 1990*, Report 24 (pp. 309-30), "Committee to Study Headship." This report shows how many of the pertinent texts support women in office.

These and other materials substantiate the biblical grounds that were claimed for the decisions of 1995.

- b. Some overtures to Synod 1996 argue that the biblical case for women in office is *not persuasive*. Disagreement on this precise point is the issue before the church. The decision of 1995 was made because an impasse existed.

2. Church Order concerns

The next major area of concern in the overtures is the alleged violation of Church Order Articles 1, 3, 29, 31, 47, and 86 by the 1995 decision on women in office. Most overtures address one or more of these articles.

This committee is not convinced that the 1995 decision violated any of these articles. We recognize that many feel very strongly that these articles are violated, and we grieve for the breakdown of trust that has been occasioned by this.

This committee submits these judgments to Synod 1996:

- a. Some overtures allege that the principle articulated in Church Order Article 1 ("all things are to be done decently and in good order") was violated. We note, however, that Synod 1995 reached its decisions on women's ordination through the orderly, prescribed process of synodical pre-advice, floor discussion, and decision. The deliberations were conducted as prescribed in the Rules for Synodical Procedure.

This committee judges, therefore, that this allegation has no basis.

- b. Some overtures allege that by adding the Supplement to Article 3-a ("confessing male members . . . are eligible") Synod 1995 violated Article 3-a. Church Order Supplement, Article 3-a provides an exception to

Church Order 3-a. An exception does not constitute a violation. Synod reserves the right to grant exceptions. Exceptions may take effect immediately and do not require adoption by a later synod. A precedent for providing an exception to a Church Order article can be seen in the Supplement, Articles 4-a and 40-a and -c.

This committee judges, therefore, that this allegation has no basis.

- c. In claiming a violation of Church Order Article 29 (decisions are to be reached "upon due consideration" and shall be "considered settled and binding, unless it is proved that they conflict with the Word of God or the Church Order"), the overtures touch two issues.

First, lack of "due consideration" is alleged because the 1995 decisions are seen as a de facto change of Article 3 without the mandatory adoption by a following synod. The majority committee notes, however, that the Church Order was not changed. Rather, permission was granted to classes who so decide by orderly process to make a local exception to this article.

Second, appeal is made to the fact that "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." This statement is interpreted in the overtures to mean that a synod may not take a decision at variance or in conflict with a decision made by a previous synod, unless biblical or Church Order evidence is brought. Such an interpretation would make Church Order Articles 30 and 31 superfluous. Note the following in the Rules for Synodical Procedure, VIII, I, 2:

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.

Article 29 establishes the binding character of decisions on the narrower assemblies. Interpreted to apply to a subsequent synod, Article 29 would cast virtually all synodical decisions in stone.

This committee judges, therefore, that this allegation has no basis.

- d. In claiming a violation of Article 31 (the need for "sufficient and new grounds for reconsideration"), the overtures fail to recognize that it is the synod to which appeal is made that determines whether there is sufficient reason for reconsideration. By the very consideration of the women-in-office issue, Synod 1995 determined that sufficient grounds existed.

This committee judges, therefore, that this allegation has no basis.

- e. In claiming a violation of Church Order Article 47 ("prior opportunity" to consider changes), the overtures again ignore the fundamental premise of Synod 1995: No change in the Church Order was made. Furthermore, change to the Church Order Supplements is not subject to the requirement that churches be given "prior opportunity" to study the change before it is made (Church Order Supplement, Art. 47-f).

This committee judges, therefore, that this allegation has no basis.

- f. In claiming a violation of Church Order Article 86 ("This Church Order . . . shall be faithfully observed, and any revision thereof shall be made only by synod"), the overtures commit the same mistake. Church Order Article 3 was not changed by Synod 1995. A carefully defined and

limited exception was granted, after full synodical deliberation, only to those classes which by their own process of responsible deliberation choose to grant that exception to churches in their jurisdiction.

This committee judges, therefore, that this allegation has no basis.

Even though the action of Synod 1995 is defensible, the action nevertheless has been perceived as setting a precedent for a new approach to revising the Church Order. In response, it should be noted that Synod 1995 took this unusual action only after twenty-five years of debate, which had led the church to an impasse. Moreover, Synod 1995 intended this decision as a temporary solution—to be reviewed in the year 2000.

3. Other concerns

- a. Several overtures allege that the action of Synod 1995 promotes denominational disunity and congregationalism. In fact, last year's synod honestly faced the growing disunity of the denomination and through its decision provided a way in which the churches might live together. The specifics of the decision were so designed as to avoid a congregational approach to the issue.
- b. Several overtures allege that Synod 1995 established through its decision a dual hermeneutic. In fact, the struggle which the denomination has faced grows from the fact that a responsible Reformed hermeneutic can yield both conclusions on the women-in-office issue.
- c. Overture 14 raises the concern that Synod 1995 proscribed for five years synodical debate concerning women's ordination, thus imposing a moratorium. The majority committee observes that a synod cannot impose such a moratorium, nor did Synod 1995 do so. While Synod 1995 expressed the hope that this course of action would effectively remove the debate from the floor of synod, the fact that this issue is before Synod 1996 indicates that further debate was not proscribed. The majority committee agrees with Synod 1995 that there is wisdom in asking the denomination to wait until the year 2000 before revisiting the issue. The majority committee is of the opinion that it would be wise for a future synod to appoint a study committee to advise Synod 2000, although such appointment at this time is judged to be premature.
- d. Several overtures raise concern that the consciences of those who oppose women in office would be offended if they would be asked to participate in church or classical functions with women elders or ministers. This committee is sensitive to their concern but notes that this issue cuts both ways. Many in favor of women in office feel that their consciences have been violated by the church's failure to ordain women to office earlier. This committee recognizes that Synod 1995 addressed matters of conscience by adopting regulations contained in Supplement 3-a, B. The recommendations which follow are motivated by a similar concern.

D. Recommendations

1. That synod not accede to overtures which ask for a revision of the decision of Synod 1995 regarding women in office and that Synod 1996 affirm the 1995 decision:

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 authorize the churches under its jurisdiction to ordain and install women in the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist.

(Supplement, Article 3-a, A)

Grounds:

- a. Previous study committees (see references in C, 1) have established viable biblical grounds for this position.
 - b. It has not been proved that this action is in violation of the Church Order.
 - c. The denomination is not well served by continual reversals on this issue.
2. That synod not accede to Overture 22 to modify Regulation f associated with the 1995 declaration on women in office to read, "Synodical agencies (e.g., Home Missions, World Missions, Chaplaincy Ministries, etc.) shall respect local views on women in office in the placement of ministerial personnel."

Ground: Ministry personnel placed by synodical agencies represent the entire denomination. Respect for the consciences of those who oppose women in office demands that we honor the decision of Synod 1995 on this matter.

3. That synod not accede to Overture 23 to appoint a committee to receive responses of the church to the decision of 1995 concerning women in office.

Ground: The committee proposed by Overture 23 removes the possibility of direct appeal to synod, a right which the churches cannot be denied.

4. That synod not accede to Overture 12 to appoint a committee to provide grounds for only males in office and for both males and females in office.

Ground: The biblical interpretation for such positions is available in the *Agenda for Synod* and *Acts of Synod* of 1995, 1994, 1992, 1990, and others (see also *Communication 2, Agenda for Synod 1996*, p. 338).

5. That synod urge our churches to be in prayer for reconciliation and healing regarding the pain and distress occasioned by decisions regarding women in office and to exercise mutual respect for those with differing views.

Grounds:

- a. This has been a divisive issue for twenty-five years, and efforts to heal the wounds have not been effective.
 - b. There is no position that can be taken that will be universally acceptable, and we must learn how to live together in Christian love in spite of our differences.
 - c. We share a deep, fundamental unity of salvation in Christ, a love for a Reformed interpretation of and submission to God's Word, and a common allegiance to the Reformed creeds as a true interpretation of the Word. We can build on this unity and promote rather than destroy it.
6. That synod declare this to be its answer to Overtures 9-35, 57 (A), and 67 and Communications 2 and 3.

According to Rules for Synodical Procedure, the minority report of the advisory committee is read as information by Rev. William T. Koopmans.

Women in ecclesiastical offices (minority report)

A. Materials

1. Overtures 9-35, pp. 254-83
2. Overture 57 (A), p. 307
3. Overture 67, pp. 317-18
4. Communication 2, pp. 338-43
5. Communication 3, pp. 343-46

B. Background

Throughout the most recent quarter-century of the Christian Reformed Church's history, much pain and dissension have been caused by the debate concerning women in ecclesiastical office. Each synod faces the dilemma that whatever decision it makes will add to the existing pain.

Within such a context it is important to affirm that brothers and sisters who disagree on the issue of women's ordination may yet celebrate their unity in Christ. Mutual love and respect for each other ought to offset, in part, the pain that is felt in the area of disagreement.

Synod 1994 was faced with the question whether to ratify the decision of 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). In an attempt to come to a deeper understanding of the biblical issues involved in the debate, Synod 1994 allotted time for a ninety-minute panel debate by four Christian Reformed leaders. After it heard the panel discuss both sides of the issue, reviewed the history of the discussion, and considered the extensive biblical arguments which were presented as grounds for the recommendation, Synod 1994 decided not to ratify the change in the Church Order.

Synod 1995 took an entirely different route. It adopted a recommendation which stated 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" (*Acts of Synod 1995*, pp. 731-32). Furthermore, Synod 1995 decided that "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" (*Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 733).

Synod 1996 has received a few overtures requesting refinement of the 1995 decision. Synod 1996 also faces twenty-five overtures which protest the failure of Synod 1995 to provide biblical grounds for its decisions on women in office, express deep concern with regard to the manner in which the Church Order was circumvented, warn against the setting of a dangerous precedent, and request a revision of the 1995 decision.

C. Recommendations

1. That synod delete Church Order Supplement, Article 3-a.

Grounds:

- a. Synod 1994 adopted extensive biblical grounds which preclude the ordination of women as ministers, elders, or evangelists. Synod 1995 did not demonstrate that those grounds are incorrect, which means that in the

- synodical records the only current extensive biblical grounds that have been adopted on this matter are those of 1994.
- b. Although Synod 1995 asserted that previous overtures and reports adduce good biblical grounds for both positions, it did not demonstrate any biblical support which would allow or necessitate women's ordination. (See attached copies of the decisions of Synod 1994 and Synod 1995 for comparison.)
 - c. The only explicit scriptural ground provided by Synod 1995 is a reference to Romans 14, which is presented to advocate a position of tolerance on nonconfessional issues. However, it is not warranted to treat the women-in-office question as "adiaphora," or peripheral matter, which seems to be the matter addressed in Romans 14. The issue of women's ordination cannot be considered peripheral for the following reasons:
 - 1) The New Testament specifically addresses the key position in which officebearers serve in the life of the church (e.g., I Tim. 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9).
 - 2) The New Testament also speaks specifically to the question of male and female differentiation in the leadership and authority of the church (I Tim. 2:11-13; I Cor. 11:2-16 and 14:33-35).
 - 3) In the New Testament this matter is not permitted to be left to local option (I Cor. 14:33-34). The apostle, in concluding his discussion of headship and propriety in worship, declares, "we have no other practice—nor do the churches of God" (I Cor. 11:16).
 - 4) The headship principle in the church is not of temporary relevance because it is grounded in creation order (I Tim. 2:13; I Cor. 11:8-9).
 - 5) For the apostle Paul there was evidently no contradiction between the full employment of all the gifts of all members (1 Cor. 12:4-14) and a restriction to male eldership. The Bible, therefore, affirms male headship in the church and also the full equality and giftedness of women.
 - 6) Women's ordination does have confessional overtones, as is indicated in the synodical decision of 1994.
 - d. Synod 1995 adopted a Supplement to Church Order Article 3 which sets aside the principle stated in this article. Supplements are meant to clarify and explain the meaning of an article; they are not meant to negate an article.
 - e. Rather than promoting harmony in the denomination, the provisions allowed in Church Order Supplement, Article 3-a have further fractured denominational unity.
2. That synod declare that those women who have already been ordained as elders or evangelists prior to the decisions of Synod 1996 be permitted to fulfill the terms of their offices but that no further election of women for ordination as ministers, elders, or evangelists be permissible in any of the churches, including those churches where such ordination has already taken place.

Grounds:

- a. It would be injurious to the persons and congregations involved to remove from office those women who have already been installed.
- b. A precedent for such action was set with the deacon situation (*Acts of Synod 1980*, pp. 55-56).

3. That synod declare this to be its answer to Overtures 9-35, 57, and 67.

Synod returns to its consideration of the recommendations of the advisory-committee majority report.

1. That synod not accede to overtures which ask for a revision of the decision of Synod 1995 regarding women in office and that Synod 1996 affirm the 1995 decision:

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 authorize the churches under its jurisdiction to ordain and install women in the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist. (Church Order Supplement, Art. 3-a, A)

Grounds:

- a. Previous study committees (see references in C, 1) have established viable biblical grounds for this position.
- b. It has not been proved that this action is in violation of the Church Order.
- c. The denomination is not well served by continual reversals on this issue.

(The report of Advisory Committee 11 is continued in Article 67)

ARTICLE 65

The morning session is adjourned; Elder Fred Gietema leads in closing prayer.

TUESDAY AFTERNOON, June 18, 1996

Thirteenth Session

ARTICLE 66

Rev. Michael J. Meekhof reads from Acts 16 and announces *Psalter Hymnal* 315, "Blest Be the Tie That Binds." The delegates sing "Bind Us Together" as the opening prayer; devotions are concluded with the doxology, "Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow."

ARTICLE 67

Advisory Committee 11, Women in Office, Rev. Wendell M. Gebben reporting, presents the following:

Women in ecclesiastical offices

A. *Materials* (see Article 64)

B. *Recommendations*

1. That synod not accede to overtures which ask for a revision of the decision of Synod 1995 regarding women in office and that Synod 1996 affirm the 1995 decision:

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 authorize the

churches under its jurisdiction to ordain and install women in the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist. (Church Order Supplement, Article 3-a, A)

Grounds:

- a. Previous study committees have established viable biblical grounds for this position (see references in Art. 65, C, 1 above and Communication 2, *Agenda for Synod 1996*, pp. 338-43, which reflects succinctly many of the findings of these study committees).
- b. It has not been proved that this action is in violation of the Church Order.
- c. The denomination is not well served by continual reversal on this issue.

The delegates pause for personal prayer before voting by ballot. The recommendation is

—*Adopted*

The following negative votes are registered:

Cornelius Van De Weert (Atlantic Northeast), Cecil Gosliga (California South), Randal K. Young (California South), Harry H. Sonke (Central California), John G. Klompmaker (Illiana), and Martin A. Van Haaften (Pella).

The following negative votes with statements are registered:

Synod 1996, by not acceding to the overtures which ask for revision of the decision of Synod 1995, promotes continued disunity in our CRC churches. I think we will continue to see an exodus from the CRC by many more members, if not more churches. How can we expect churches to remain in the CRC when we are not obedient to God's holy and inspired Word?

Bernard A. Van Essendelft (Hackensack)

Our failure to accede to overtures which ask for a revision of the decision of Synod 1995 regarding women in office is to say that the Word of God can speak yes and no on the same issue. Such a statement saps the authority of the Scripture and expresses that God can speak out of both sides of his mouth, thereby denying himself.

John A. Vermeer (Heartland)

2. That synod not accede to Overture 22 to modify Regulation f associated with the 1995 declaration on women in office to read, "Synodical agencies (e.g., Home Missions, World Missions, Chaplaincy Ministries, etc.) shall respect local views on women in office in the placement of ministerial personnel."

Ground: Ministry personnel placed by synodical agencies represent the entire denomination. Respect for the consciences of those who oppose women in office demands that we honor the decision of Synod 1995 on this matter.

—*Adopted*

3. That synod not accede to Overture 23 to appoint a committee to receive responses of the church to the decision of 1995 concerning women in office.

Ground: The committee proposed by Overture 23 removes the possibility of direct appeal to synod, a right which the churches cannot be denied.

—*Adopted*

4. That synod not accede to Overture 12 to appoint a committee to provide grounds for only males in office and for both males and females in office.

Ground: The biblical interpretation for such positions is available within the *Agenda for Synod* and *Acts of Synod* 1995, 1994, 1992, 1990, and others. See also *Communication 2, Agenda for Synod 1996*, page 338.

—*Adopted*

5. That synod urge our churches to be in prayer for reconciliation and healing regarding the pain and distress occasioned by decisions regarding women in office and to exercise mutual respect for those with differing views.

Grounds:

- a. This has been a divisive issue for twenty-five years, and efforts to heal the wounds have not been effective.
- b. There is no position that can be taken that will be universally acceptable, and we must learn how to live together in Christian love in spite of our differences.
- c. We share a deep, fundamental unity of salvation in Christ, a love for a Reformed interpretation of and submission to God's Word, and a common allegiance to the Reformed creeds as a true interpretation of the Word. We can build on this unity and promote rather than destroy it.

—*Adopted*

6. That synod declare this to be its answer to Overtures 9-35, 57 (A), and 67 and Communications 2 and 3.

—*Adopted*

President John Van Ryn thanks the delegates for the spirit which prevailed during the deliberation on the women-in-office issue.

ARTICLE 68

Rev. Leslie D. Van Dyke (Classis Muskegon) has replaced delegate Rev. Larry D. Baar. He rises to express agreement with the forms of unity.

Rev. William D. Buursma of the Hospitality Committee introduces Rev. Charles N. Jansz, fraternal delegate from the Dutch Reformed Church in Sri Lanka, who addresses synod. The president of synod responds.

Rev. Buursma introduces Rev. Timothy Mkena, fraternal delegate from the Church of Christ in the Sudan Among the Tiv, who addresses synod. The president of synod responds.

The general secretary introduces two observers from the Reformed Church of Christ in Nigeria, Rev. Musa Manasseh and Rev. Iliya Makadi. He also introduces Rev. Geoffrey Songkok of the Reformed Church of East Africa.

ARTICLE 69

(The report of Advisory Committee 4 is continued from Article 57)

Advisory Committee 4, Publications, Rev. David J. Deters reporting, presents the following:

Gender-sensitive language in the Belgic Confession and the Canons of Dort

A. Materials

1. CRC Publications Report, Appendix, pp. 90-123
2. Overture 78, p. 417
3. Overture 79, pp. 417-18

B. Recommendations

1. That synod, while thanking the CRC Worship Committee for its work to date, not accept the report regarding gender-sensitive language in the Belgic Confession and the Canons of Dort.

Ground: Synod 1994 mandated the CRC Worship Committee to "provide gender-sensitive language to name and describe persons in the translations of the Belgic Confession and Canons of Dort, provided the theological intent is not altered" (*Acts of Synod 1994*, p. 495). In some cases theological intent has been altered.

—Adopted

2. That synod form a new committee consisting of members of the Worship Committee and persons with expertise in the areas of Old and New Testament theology and the Reformed confessions to revise the present proposal by addressing concerns like those listed in Overtures 78 and 79.

Ground: The present proposed translations indicate that this project is not simply an issue of liturgy and publication but also one with confessional and biblical dimensions that must be safeguarded.

—Defeated

It is moved that synod acknowledge that the language of the Belgic Confession and the Canons of Dort is not gender-sensitive language and that because these are historical documents, the language need not be altered.

—Action withheld

3. That synod declare this to be its response to Overtures 78 and 79.

—Adopted

II. Historical Committee

A. *Material:* Historical Committee Report, pp. 182-83

B. Recommendation

That Rev. William Buursma represent the committee when Historical Committee matters come before synod.

—Granted

III. Sermons for Reading Services

A. *Material:* Sermons for Reading Services Report, p. 200

B. Recommendations

1. That synod approve the publication of *The Living Word* for 1997 to provide sermons for reading services for the churches.

—Adopted

2. That synod, through the Sermons for Reading Services Committee, encourage churches and ministers to subscribe to this service for the benefit of churches and individuals.

—*Adopted*

3. That synod advise the Sermons for Reading Services Committee to explore the potential need for reading sermons among the multiethnic groupings within the Christian Reformed Church.

—*Adopted*

ARTICLE 70

(The report of Advisory Committee 2 is continued from Article 35.)

Advisory Committee 2, Missions, Rev. Harlan G. Vanden Einde reporting, presents the following:

Overture 64: Convene a Forum on Cross-Cultural Ministries

A. *Material*: Overture 64, pp. 312-13

B. *Recommendations*

1. That synod accede to Overture 64 of Classis Alberta North and request the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA to convene a forum on cross-cultural ministries which will focus on meeting the challenges of culture and worship. The participants should include but not be limited to leaders and members of Classis Red Mesa, the Korean churches in the CRC, the Race Relations Committee, the Committee for Racial Reconciliation in Canada, the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee, Christian Reformed World Missions, Calvin Theological Seminary, and first-nations peoples of Canada and the United States. Thought should be given to holding forums in various geographical areas of the continent and to developing plans for assisting the denomination in becoming more racially diverse.

Grounds:

- a. These above-listed agencies and communities as well as others continually face the issue of cross-cultural ministries and must grapple with these challenges and opportunities.
- b. Such a forum(s) will resoundingly affirm Christ's power to transform lives in all cultures.
- c. Such a forum(s) will provide an opportunity for clarification, debate, mutual support, and encouragement among our multifaceted ministries.

—*Adopted*

2. That the financing of this forum be referred to the Board of Trustees.

—*Adopted*

ARTICLE 71

(The report of Advisory Committee 8 is continued from Article 50.)

Advisory Committee 8, Diverse Family of God, Rev. Leonard J. Vander Zee reporting, presents the following:

I. Response to Overture 52: Revise the Decision of Synod 1995 Not to Accede to Part B of Overture 44 (cf. *Agenda for Synod 1995*, pp. 410-11, and *Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 656)

A. *Material*: Overture 52, pp. 299-301

B. *Recommendations*

1. That synod adopt Overture 52 (A): "To revise the decision of Synod 1995 not to accede to Part b of Overture 44 (*Agenda for Synod 1995*, pp. 410-11)."

Grounds:

- a. Erroneous information about the existence of a database was given to Synod 1995 when this matter was discussed.
- b. The action of Synod 1995 in appointing a seven-member male committee illustrates the need for such a subcommittee.

—Adopted

2. That synod adopt Overture 52 (B): "To instruct the Board of Trustees to appoint a small subcommittee from its membership to work with boards, agencies, and synod as they appoint committees. This subcommittee shall maintain a database of gifted [and/or trainable] people, concentrating primarily on those who reflect the gender, ethnic, and racial diversity of the denomination[, including those with disabilities,] and are available to serve in a variety of areas. This committee shall be consulted before all committee appointments are approved."

Grounds:

- a. This subcommittee will better ensure that committees appointed to do the work of the denomination reflect its rich diversity.
- b. This subcommittee flows naturally from the Report on Biblical and Theological Principles for the Development of a Racially and Ethnically Diverse Family of God.

—Adopted

3. That this be synod's response to Communication 1 of Classis Lake Erie.

—Adopted

II. Approve the Formation of a Korean-Speaking Classis in California

A. *Material*: Overture 56, pp. 302-07

B. *Background*

The substance of this report was before Synod 1995, and synod withheld action. It also encouraged the classes to come back in 1996 with a clearer strategy for implementation. The present overture is a response to that action. It includes much of the original overture and additional material to answer questions and provide a better framework for implementation.

The advisory committee believes that the issues and questions raised by Synod 1995 have been adequately addressed in the present overture, and therefore we can recommend that this experimental classical structure proceed. We emphasize the experimental and temporary nature of a classis of Korean-

speaking churches and have therefore strengthened the oversight mechanisms and defined its time limit.

C. Recommendations

1. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Rev. John Choi, the Korean-ministry director, and to Rev. John-Taek Kim.
—*Granted*
2. That synod accede to Overture 56, thereby approving the formation of a Classis of Korean-speaking churches out of Classes Greater Los Angeles and California South, to serve southern California, Nevada, and Hawaii, effective September 1996, for a maximum of fifteen years. The following stipulations for monitoring, training, and relationships with the denomination will apply.
 - a. That the Korean-speaking classis will request advisers from at least two neighboring classes for all its meetings during the first three years of its existence. After this initial period, these advisers will be requested to attend once a year for the next two years.
 - b. That synod monitor the development of the Korean-speaking classis every two years through a standing committee comprised of a person appointed by the Ministries Coordinating Council and two members each from the Korean-speaking classis, Classis Greater Los Angeles, and Classis California South. The members of this committee will report to their respective classes and to synod, through the general secretary, on the progress of the new classis and on possible ways to improve its functioning. In the fourth-, eighth-, and twelfth-year reviews the committee shall make recommendations to the classes and to synod on the continuation of the Korean-speaking classis. Guidelines for evaluation are (1) adherence to the Church Order, (2) participation in the work of denominational boards and agencies, (3) contribution of classical and synodical ministry shares, (4) relationship with neighboring classes, and (5) seeking to increase the use of student interns trained at Calvin Theological Seminary.
 - c. Pastors and other church officers will receive long-term training on the Church Order and the Rules for Classical Procedure. This training will be under the leadership of the general secretary, who will use qualified persons to assist him in this work.
 - d. Upon its inception the Korean-speaking classis will sponsor an intensive two-day course on ecclesiology, structure, and Church Order for pastors, elders, and deacons.
 - e. During the first five years of existence of this classis, the *Voice of the Reformed* (Korean CRC periodical) will be urged to include in every issue a section dealing with CRC government.
 - f. The Korean-speaking classis will send delegates to synod and the denominational boards as other classes do.
 - g. The churches of the Korean-speaking classis will contribute their classical and denominational ministry shares.
 - h. The Korean-speaking classis will appoint delegates to the Southern California Race Relations Committee and other interclassical bodies

(CRWRC, California Regional Leaders, etc.) or projects (Multiethnic Celebration, Camp Dunamis, etc.).

- i. The Korean-speaking classis will accept as advisers the regional representatives of CRC agencies.

Grounds:

1. Grounds A through G of Overture 56 (*Agenda for Synod 1996*, pp. 303-04).
2. The time limit ensures that this classis is formed explicitly for the purpose of providing training, orientation, and acclimation of these churches to the CRC in preparation for their full participation in regular CRC structures; the Korean-speaking classis is not intended as a permanent structure.
3. The formation of this special classis is supported by the Korean Council in North America and the Korean-ministry director, and the stipulations are agreed to by the petitioning churches.
4. These stipulations answer the issues and questions brought up by Synod 1995.

(The report of Advisory Committee 8 is continued in Article 74.)

ARTICLE 72

The afternoon session is adjourned; Rev. Jacob A. Quartel leads in closing prayer.

TUESDAY EVENING, June 18, 1996
Fourteenth Session

ARTICLE 73

Elder Benjamin J. Van Houten reads Psalm 96:1-4. He announces *Psalter Hymnal* 253, "Praise to the Lord, the Almighty." He reads from Philippians 2:12-15 and leads in opening prayer. He announces *Psalter Hymnal* 513, "Christian Hearts in Love United."

Elder James A. Rozendal (Classis Florida) is absent for the evening session due to illness.

The general secretary introduces Rev. Paul Kudoyi from the Christian Reformed Church of Eastern Africa.

The executive director of ministries introduces Mr. Peter Vander Meulen, coordinator of world hunger. Mr. Vander Meulen addresses synod, giving a progress report on his work and informing the delegates of plans for the "Free to Serve" rallies being planned for this fall in seven locations throughout North America.

ARTICLE 74

(The report of Advisory Committee 8 is continued from Article 71.)

Advisory Committee 8, Diverse Family of God, Rev. Leonard J. Vander Zee reporting, presents the following:

Approve the Formation of a Korean-Speaking Classis in California

A. *Material*: Overture 56, pp. 302-07

B. *Background*

The substance of this report was before Synod 1995, but synod withheld action. It also encouraged the classes to come back in 1996 with a clearer strategy for implementation. The present overture is a response to that action. It includes much of the original overture and additional material to answer questions and provide a better framework for implementation.

The advisory committee believes that the issues and questions raised by Synod 1995 have been adequately addressed in the present overture, and therefore we can recommend that this experimental classical structure proceed. We emphasize the experimental and temporary nature of a classis of Korean-speaking churches and have therefore strengthened the oversight mechanisms and defined its time limit.

C. *Recommendations* (continued from Art. 71)

2. That synod accede to Overture 56, thereby approving the formation of a Classis of Korean-speaking churches out of Classes Greater Los Angeles and California South, to serve southern California, Nevada, and Hawaii, effective September 1996, for a maximum of fifteen years. The following stipulations for monitoring, training, and relationships with the denomination will apply.
 - a. That the Korean-speaking classis will request advisers from at least two neighboring classes for all its meetings during the first three years of its existence. After this initial period, these advisers will be requested to attend once a year for the next two years.
 - b. That synod monitor the development of the Korean-speaking classis every two years through a standing committee comprised of a person appointed by the Ministries Coordinating Council and two members each from the Korean-speaking classis, Classis Greater Los Angeles, and Classis California South. The members of this committee will report to their respective classes and to synod, through the general secretary, on the progress of the new classis and on possible ways to improve its functioning. In the fourth-, eighth-, and twelfth-year reviews the committee shall make recommendations to the classes and to synod regarding the continuation of the Korean-speaking classis. Guidelines for evaluation are (1) adherence to the Church Order, (2) participation in the work of denominational boards and agencies, (3) contribution of classical and synodical ministry shares, (4) relationship with neighboring classes, and (5) seeking to increase the use of student interns trained at Calvin Theological Seminary.
 - c. Pastors and other church officers will receive long-term training on the Church Order and the Rules for Classical Procedure. This training will be under the leadership of the general secretary, who will use qualified persons to assist him in this work.
 - d. Upon its inception the Korean-speaking classis will sponsor an intensive two-day course on ecclesiology, structure, and the Church Order for pastors, elders, and deacons.

- e. During the first five years of existence of this classis, the *Voice of the Reformed* (Korean CRC periodical) will be urged to include in every issue a section dealing with CRC government.
- f. The Korean-speaking classis will send delegates to synod and to the denominational boards as other classes do.
- g. The churches of the Korean-speaking classis will contribute their classical and denominational ministry shares.
- h. The Korean-speaking classis will appoint delegates to the Southern California Race Relations Committee and to other interclassical bodies (CRWRC, California Regional Leaders, etc.) and projects (Multiethnic Celebration, Camp Dunamis, etc.).
- i. The Korean-speaking classis will accept as advisers the regional representatives of CRC agencies.

Grounds:

1. Grounds A through G of Overture 56 (*Agenda for Synod 1996*, pp. 303-04).
2. The time limit ensures that this classis is formed explicitly for the purpose of providing training, orientation, and acclimation of these churches to the CRC in preparation for their full participation in regular CRC structures; the Korean-speaking classis is not intended as a permanent structure.
3. The formation of this special classis is supported by the Korean Council in North America and the Korean-ministry director, and the stipulations are agreed to by the petitioning churches.
4. These stipulations answer the issues and questions brought up by Synod 1995.

—*Adopted*

ARTICLE 75

(The report of Advisory Committee 3 is continued from Article 56.)

Advisory Committee 3, Education, Rev. Daniel W. De Groot reporting, presents the following:

Calvin Theological Seminary

A. *Material:* Calvin Theological Seminary Supplement, p. 373

B. *Recommendations*

1. That synod declare the following as candidates for the ministry in the Christian Reformed Church, subject to completion of all requirements:

Bierman, Darrell J.
Brower, Jeffrey J.
Fopma, M. Dale
Grift, Richard E.
Janssens, Peter J.
Kim, Manchul
McCune, James H.
Meyer, Anthony J.
Nelesen, Marc A.
Newhouse, Harrison A.
Rhoda, Stephen K.

Stevens, Gary M.
Terpstra, Jr., Richard A.
Vaandrager, Bruce J.
Vander Beek, Peter L.
Vanderhooft, Jeffrey C.
Vander Horst, Everett J.
VanderMolen, Geoffrey A
Visker, Roger J.
Wilczewski, John W.
Zwart, Steven A.

—Adopted

2. That synod declare the following as candidates for the ministry in the Christian Reformed Church, subject to completion of all requirements:

Antonides, Mary S. Hulst
Bouma, Mary-Lee
Hofman, Ruth M.

—Adopted

ARTICLE 76

(The report of Advisory Committee 9 is continued from Article 42.)

Advisory Committee 9, Church Order, Rev. Jack M. Gray reporting, presents the following:

Response to Overtures 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8

A. *Materials*: Overtures 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8, pp. 248-54

B. *Observations*

1. In Overtures 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 the advisory committee senses the struggle of those who deeply desire to stay in the Christian Reformed Church and yet find their consciences bound by their interpretation of Scripture, an interpretation affirmed by Synod 1994. We are sensitive to the deep hurts, and we hope this synod can move toward healing.
2. While it is imperative to seek healing of the hurts and to provide a safe haven for churches wishing to be in a classis where the word "male" in Church Order Article 3 is still operative, there is also an obvious concern about disrupting the ministry of classes.
3. Synod already has a procedure in place for a church to affiliate with a classis more congenial to its congregational temperament than the geographical classis is. Since at least 1922 a church has had the freedom to request transfer to another classis, subject to the approval of synod. Therefore, rather than changing the Church Order, the committee sees as a more effective solution the implementation of existing procedures.

C. *Recommendations*

1. That synod not accede to any of the requests to make a change in Church Order Article 39 (Overtures 4, 6 [3], 7, and 8).

Grounds:

- a. The requested Church Order change is not an answer to the concerns expressed in the overture.
- b. Departing significantly from the principle of geographic proximity may well impair effective ministry.
- c. Classis provides a framework for churches to work together even when they disagree and provides a forum for continuing interaction, which may lead to understanding.

—*Adopted*

2. That synod remind the churches that any request for transfer to another classis may include grounds that go beyond the sole matter of geographic proximity and that synod is at liberty to consider such grounds in its disposition of the request.

Ground: There is ample precedent for such action: *Acts of Synod 1924*, Articles 52 and 57, pages 51-57; *Acts of Synod 1959*, Article 117, page 50; *Acts of Synod 1960*, Article 45, page 17; *Acts of Synod 1976*, Article 29, pages 23-24; *Acts of Synod 1989*, Article 20, pages 438-40; *Acts of Synod 1989*, Article 82, pages 512-13; *Acts of Synod 1993*, Article 27, page 507.

—*Adopted*

3. That synod place the following in Church Order Supplement, Article 39:

Any request for transfer to another classis may include grounds that go beyond the sole matter of geographic proximity; synod is at liberty to consider such grounds in its disposition of the request.

Ground: This serves as a permanent reminder of this decision of synod.

—*Adopted*

4. That synod not accede to Overture 5.

Grounds:

- a. Formation of a classis based on theological affinity should be rejected on the same grounds as C, 1, b and c above.
- b. Formation of a new classis based on theological affinity would lead only to further fragmentation within the denomination.
- c. "It would not be in the best interest of the churches in general, if certain groups of churches would be at liberty to form a new classis whenever a movement in this direction was sponsored, and it would not be advisable if a church could just decide all by itself to change from one classis to another."

(Monsma and Van Dellen, *The New Revised Church Order Commentary*, p. 163)

—*Adopted*

5. That synod declare this to be its answer to Overtures 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8.

—*Adopted*

(The report of Advisory Committee 9 is continued in Article 87)

ARTICLE 77

The evening session is adjourned; Elder Jerry Blom announces *Psalter Hymnal* 508, "Jesus, with Your Church Abide," as the closing prayer.

ARTICLE 78

Rev. John F. Schuurman recites "Beauty, Truth, and Love," a poem by James Studart Kennedy. He announces *Psalter Hymnal* 568, "Love Divine, All Loves Excelling," and reads from Revelation 21:1-5. He leads in opening prayer, which is concluded by the assembly's singing of *Psalter Hymnal* 207, "The Lord's Prayer."

The roll call indicates that Elder James A. Rozendal (Florida) is absent because of illness.

The general secretary introduces Rev. Edwin Zulu and Rev. Peter Nohlovu, fraternal observers from the Reformed Church in Zambia.

The general secretary reads a letter of greeting from the Reformed Church in Argentina.

ARTICLE 79

(The report of Advisory Committee 5 is continued from Article 45)

Advisory Committee 5, Pastoral Ministries, Rev. John A. Ooms reporting, presents the following:

I. Abuse guidelines

A. *Material*: Pastoral Ministries Supplement, pp. 374-81

B. *Background*

1. Synod 1995 approved a set of abuse guidelines "and presented them to the churches as a model for their use and adoption" (*Acts of Synod 1995*, Section VI, p. 672). Synod also authorized the Board of Trustees "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 council to administer discipline" (*Acts of Synod 1995*, Art. 112, p. 767).
2. When the abuse guidelines were published as an appendix to the *Acts of Synod 1995* a note of information reported that "the changes which Synod 1995 authorized the Board of Trustees to insert into these guidelines . . . are found . . . in Section II, B, 2, i-1" (*Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 779). It should be noted by the delegates that the numbering system is retained in the 1996 Pastoral Ministries Supplement and in the advisory committee's edition.
3. After Synod 1995 additional concerns were brought to the attention of the Abuse Prevention division of Pastoral Ministries. The director of this division, Ms. Beth Swagman, in consultation with several others, including legal counsel, presented a revised set of guidelines to the Pastoral Ministries Board. The revised guidelines were approved by the executive committee of the board and subsequently mailed to all synodical delegates.
4. The advisory committee discussed the proposed modifications to the guidelines at length with director Beth Swagman, Rev. Charles Terpstra (chairman of the Pastoral Ministries Board), Mr. Kenneth Hofman (legal

counsel for the denomination), and Rev. George Vander Weit (stated clerk of Classis Lake Erie and delegate to Synod 1996). In light of these discussions the advisory committee is recommending modifications to the guidelines that in some instances are significantly different from those proposed in the Pastoral Ministries Supplement (1996).

C. *Recommendations* (of the advisory committee)

1. That synod approve the modifications to the abuse guidelines as presented by the advisory committee.

Ground: The modifications address the concerns specified by the denomination's legal counsel regarding the guidelines approved in 1995 and his concerns regarding the modifications presented in the Pastoral Ministries Supplement (1996).

—*Tabled*

The vice president assumes the chair.

It is moved by the officers of synod

1. That synod provisionally approve the modified guidelines (see below) presented by the advisory committee to Synod 1996.

—*Adopted*

2. That synod recommit the provisionally approved guidelines to the Pastoral Ministries Board for refinement, with the intention that the Pastoral Ministries Board present a final set of proposed guidelines to the churches by November 1, 1996, for study and response to Synod 1997 by means of overtures.

Grounds:

- a. The present document arrived late, in the Supplemental Report of Pastoral Ministries.
- b. Major last minute changes have been made by the advisory committee, changes difficult for synod to process at this point.
- c. Some legal questions remain.

—*Adopted*

3. That synod declare this to be its answer to Overture 70.

—*Adopted*

Note: It is understood by Synod 1996 that the director of Abuse Prevention is authorized to use the provisionally approved guidelines for her work.

The president of synod resumes the chair, and the assembly continues its consideration of *recommendations from the advisory committee*.

2. That synod request the Abuse Prevention division of Pastoral Ministries to study the matter of neglect, emotional abuse, and spiritual abuse with a view to producing material that will help the churches understand, identify, and deal with these forms of abuse.

Ground: The abuse guidelines in the Pastoral Ministries Supplement included neglect, emotional abuse, and spiritual abuse in the list of definitions. Since there is much discussion about what constitutes neglect, emotional abuse,

and spiritual abuse and how to deal with them, further study with a view to producing material that will assist the churches is warranted.

—Adopted

Note 1: The numbering system of the modified guidelines below follows the synodically approved guidelines which appear in *Acts of Synod 1995*, pages 783-88. Strikeouts indicate material deleted from the approved guidelines; italics indicate the new material which was added by either the Pastoral Ministries Board (see Pastoral Ministries Supplement, pp. 374-81) or the synodical advisory committee.

Note 2: The provisionally approved guidelines can be found in their most recently edited form in Appendix III (pp. 634-42).

II. Procedures and Guidelines for Handling Abuse Allegations Against a Church Leader

B. Guidelines

Member churches and classes should be allowed some discretion for defining "church leader." A member church or classis may define "church leader" consistently with its general liability policy or other insurance coverage.

1. Definitions

The Canadian provinces and each of the fifty states have legal definitions of child abuse, child sexual abuse and exploitation, and physical abuse as well as a host of definitions of crimes committed against adults, including assault and battery, rape, and sexual harassment. Ecclesiastical procedures such as those outlined in sections 2 and 3 below cannot measure a person's guilt by a legal standard; only civil authorities are entitled to hold a person accountable for violation of a civil or criminal code. For that reason, an ecclesiastical procedure cannot judge a person to be guilty of child abuse or rape as defined by law. An ecclesiastical procedure can, however, judge someone to be guilty of ungodly conduct, misuse of power, misuse of spiritual authority, sexually inappropriate behavior, and neglect and abuse of office. These behaviors are not violations of civil or criminal code and therefore not subject to criminal prosecution or civil redress. They are, instead, behaviors that violate the trust and well-being of individuals and the community of believers and taint the office held by the offender.

The following definitions are given to further assist the churches in understanding the types of behaviors which might constitute ungodly conduct, misuse of power, sexually inappropriate behavior, etc.:

- 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. Sexual abuse is exploitation of a person regardless of age or circumstance for the sexual gratification of another.

There are various ~~two possible~~ procedures to consider ~~be followed~~ when allegations of abuse are made against a church leader. The age of the alleged victim, local laws, and the nature of the allegation help to determine which ~~of the two~~ procedures to follow. The following ~~three~~ procedures envision the consistory/council acting as an adjudicatory body from the outset in abuse allegations:

One alternative is for the alleged victim and alleged offender to meet before witnesses (consistory) to discuss the alleged abuse incident. Another alternative is following the Judicial Code as outlined in Article 30-c of the Supplement to the Church Order. In the Judicial Code procedure, the alleged victim and the alleged offender (each with the assistance of a representative) and their witnesses give testimony before consistory/council regarding the alleged abuse incident.

A third alternative is the formal hearing also described in Article 30-c of the Supplement to the Church Order. Again, the consistory/council hears the testimony presented by the alleged victim and the alleged offender and their witnesses regarding the alleged abuse incident.

Two additional alternatives may be considered when the allegations are of sexual abuse or physical abuse and/or when a face-to-face meeting between the alleged victim and alleged offender would be materially detrimental to the alleged victim. The age of the alleged victim determines which one of these procedures to follow. Before the allegations can be adjudicated by consistory/council, the alleged offender has the right to meet the accuser and to receive the specific charges in writing.

2. Suggested procedures and guidelines when the abuse victim is an adult

The guidelines in this section describe the process to be followed (a) when the alleged victim is an adult or (b) when the alleged victim comes forward as an adult with an allegation of abuse that took place during the victim's childhood or adolescence.

The guidelines for handling abuse allegations by an adult against a church leader 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:

Note: Provisions that specify the time necessary to convene a meeting or the place of that meeting are only guidelines and are not requirements of the procedure.

- a. The alleged victim or his/her representative ~~should contact a member of the executive committee (or its equivalent) the pastor, president of the council, 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 ~~should contact one of the remaining two person(s) not implicated by the alleged victim.~~
- b. ~~The executive committee (or its equivalent) The pastor and president or vice president,~~ after consultation with one another (no one of those consulting may be implicated by the victim), ~~should 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~~ *should be* convened within fifteen days after the allegation is presented to a member of the executive committee or its equivalent. ~~the pastor, president, or vice president of council.~~
- c. A representative of the advisory panel ~~should contact~~ 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~~ *should be* made by the panel members, the pastor, the president or vice president of council, or the accuser.

- d. When the advisory panel is convened, a chairperson ~~is~~ *should be* 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~~ *should also be confidential*, as is any report of the advisory panel.
- e. The advisory panel *should* 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 *should* contacts the accused person and notifies him/her that a hearing has taken place. The accused person ~~is~~ *should then be* 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~~ *should be* conducted within seven days after the hearing of the accuser. At the time the accused is notified, he/she ~~is~~ *should be* 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~~ *must be* presented in writing ~~if requested~~.
- g. The advisory panel *should* 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 *should* convenes to consider the gravity and the probable veracity of the allegations as quickly as possible. A summary of its findings ~~is~~ *should be* 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 *should* reports the panel's summary to the executive committee of the council of the alleged abuser's church. This meeting ~~is~~ *should be* convened within forty-eight hours of the advisory panel's formulation of its summary. Members of the advisory panel *should* 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 ~~should~~ *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 *should* notify the accused person within twenty-four hours that allegations of abuse have been lodged against him/her. The designees *should* also indicate to the accused the specific charges and the names of those making the charges. These charges ~~are~~ *should be* given in writing. Also, within twenty-four hours, the accuser(s) ~~is~~ *should be* notified by two members of the consistory that charges of abuse have been accepted against the accused person and that he/she/~~they~~ *is are* being notified of such charges. A summary of the consistory's deliberations ~~is~~ *should be* given in writing if requested. The accused person/s may acknowledge or deny his/her/~~their~~ *guilt* at the notification meeting. Such acknowledgment or denial ~~is~~ *should be* confirmed by the two consistory members present. This acknowledgment or denial ~~is~~ *should be* brought to a full council meeting to be scheduled within seven days after the notification meeting.

1. If the accused person denies the allegations made against him/her, the consistory has the responsibility to conduct a formal hearing to determine the likelihood of 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. *The accused has the right to receive the specific charges in writing and to meet the accuser in the hearing. If a face-to-face meeting between accuser and accused would be materially detrimental to the accuser, then alternate arrangements might be made for the accuser to be available but out of the sight or presence of the accused. Both the accused and the accuser should meet separately with the consistory.* A tape recording of the testimony should be made.

The consistory *should* convene 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~~ *should be* notified of the consistory's deliberations. If the accused is found guilty, the council ~~shall~~ *should* 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~~ *should be* 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~~ *should be* 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 should inform the congregation *in writing* 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 describe~~ the process to be followed (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 most ~~Canadian~~ provinces a child is defined as a person 16 years ~~old~~ or younger.

~~The guidelines for handling allegations of~~ *Allegations of potentially illegal emotional abuse, physical abuse and neglect, and sexual abuse* against a church leader by a minor child should ~~include an investigation by an~~ *be reported to an appropriate* agency outside the church, such as Child Protective 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~~ *should contact* 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 *should* contact 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 ~~may be a violation of is against~~ the law in many states and provinces. The person contacted should know which authorities to notify *when that may be necessary*. In many instances the relationship between the child and the alleged abuser will determine whether Child Protective Services or the local police officials are to be notified. *In case of any uncertainty about legal reporting requirements, an attorney with expertise in the area should be consulted.*

- c. At any point in the process, if the alleged abuser admits wrongdoing against the alleged victim, the admission of guilt ~~is~~ *should be* brought to the attention of the consistory, which *should* deliberate and disposes of the matter according to Church Order Articles 81-83.

~~The~~ *Subject to the best interests of the abused child, 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. Such disclosure should not exceed the scope of the admission and should be factual and pastoral. Such disclosure should not attempt to state any legal conclusions about guilt or innocence of any crime.

- d. The person contacted by the alleged victim *should* request 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 attempt* to 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~~ *should notify* his /her counterpart (unless that person is implicated in the allegations) in the other church, and both *should* become contact persons for the matter.
- e. Before formal *legal* 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/they ~~should notify~~ *should notify* the ~~executive committee~~ *consistory* of the ~~council~~ *church* of the alleged abuser.
 - 2) ~~Within twenty-four hours of the executive committee's being notified,~~ The consistory ~~is convened and~~ *should be* presented with 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.)
 - 3) *The consistory shall give the accused an opportunity to confront and respond to the allegations, according to the following procedure:*
The accused shall be given the charges in writing. The accused shall have an opportunity to confront and respond to the evidence presented by or on behalf of the accuser. The accused should also have opportunity to present evidence in support of the defense. Caution should be exercised to safeguard the well-being of a minor child asked to present oral testimony. Fear of the alleged offender and/or an inability to discern the consequences of the hearing for either the alleged victim or the alleged offender could be reasons to reject a request for the accuser and accused to meet before the consistory. In place of oral testimony by a minor, the alleged offender must be given a detailed written report of the allegations to which he/she can respond. This written report should serve to protect the interests of the minor without interfering with other legal proceedings.
 - 4) In light of the information presented, the consistory *should* 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~~ *should be* carried out with full pay (for paid staff) and without prejudice.
- 5) ~~Within one week of the consistory meeting,~~ The full council ~~should~~ *should* considers the recommendations of the consistory and ~~implements~~ *take* make its decision regarding appropriate action. Suspension of an office-bearer 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. In the case of suspension, a council member is should be~~ 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. As noted above, such disclosure must not include any legal conclusions.~~
- f. After ~~criminal~~ formal legal 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/they ~~should~~ *should* notifies the ~~executive committee consistory of the council church of the alleged abuser.~~
 - 2) ~~Within twenty four hours of the executive committee's being notified,~~ The consistory ~~is convened and~~ *should be* presented with a written document ~~from the executive committee~~ specifying the nature of the allegations and the information known at this point.
 - 3) *The consistory should give the accused an opportunity to confront and respond to the allegations, according to the following procedure:*
The accused should be given the charges in writing. The accused shall have an opportunity to confront and respond to the evidence presented by or on behalf of the accuser. The accused shall also have opportunity to present evidence in support of the defense. Caution should be exercised to safeguard the well-being of a minor child asked to present oral testimony. Fear of the alleged offender and/or an inability to discern the consequences of the hearing for either the alleged victim or the alleged offender could be reasons to reject a request for the accuser and accused to meet before the consistory. In place of oral testimony by a minor, the alleged offender must be given a detailed written report of the allegations to which he/she can respond. This written report protects the interests of the minor without interfering with other legal proceedings.
 - 4) In light of the information presented, the consistory ~~should~~ *should* recommends one of the following options to the full council:
 - a) *Take no action at this time.*
 - b) Limit the accused from contact with children or limit the conditions under which this contact is to take place, pending further information.
 - c) Suspend the accused from office, position, or duty. Suspension ~~is~~ *should be* carried out with full pay (for paid staff) and without prejudice.
 - 5) ~~Within one week of the consistory meeting,~~ The full council ~~should~~ *should* considers the recommendations of the consistory and ~~implements~~ *take* appropriate action. Suspension of officebearers ~~is~~ *should be* 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. In case of suspension, a council member ~~is~~ should be appointed to disclose to the congregation only the facts known at the time; this council member ~~may~~ should not convey any of the particulars relating to the alleged victim's allegations.

g. Once criminal proceedings have concluded, the council should promptly revisit the matter. This should occur whether the result is conviction, acquittal, or dropped charges. In the event the criminal charges are dropped or prosecution does not result in conviction, the council ~~should~~ decides whether or not to rescind its earlier action and/or take additional action. ~~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 who has been suspended ~~is~~ not be 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. In the event of prosecution resulting in conviction, the abuser may be subject to further suspension, deposition (as provided in Church Order Articles 82-83), employment termination, or denial of reinstatement to a volunteer position. In the event the accused should request to meet with the council, the council is advised to consult with professionals knowledgeable about treatment of offenders and to read the preface to the guidelines (Acts of Synod 1995, pp. 781-83), which raises the issue of danger in "forgiving too quickly."~~

4. ~~Two~~ ~~Three~~ ~~Five~~ important footnotes regarding both sets of guidelines

a. These guidelines are suggested guidelines. The circumstances of abuse may dictate that church officials deviate from them. 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 *with expertise in the area* to define the legal standards relevant to ~~the~~ a 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 *disclose and/or* 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 *those* expressly described under these guidelines or ~~as may be~~ required by law.

Accuracy is of the utmost importance in the disclosure of allegations or surrounding circumstances to those individuals or entities named in these guidelines. Wrongful or inaccurate dissemination of *information* can ~~potentially~~ lead to adverse legal consequences.

- c. *Whenever a disclosure of allegations of child abuse or assault is warranted, the disclosure must include the language of the criminal code along with the indication that criminal authorities have made the charges and will follow them up to the full extent of their capabilities. When the allegations are ungodly conduct, abuse of office, etc., then the disclosure must include the language of the Church Order along with the indication that church officials will follow up to the full extent of their capabilities. After a judgment on the matter is rendered, subsequent disclosure must include the language of the Church Order; an explanation of the violation(s) can be given with care so as to protect the identity of the victim. Failure to explain the nature of the violation enables the offender to continue a pattern of denial or minimization and promotes the perception that the matter is being covered up somehow.*
- d. *Member churches and classes that adopt these guidelines should first check with their own legal counsel about potential liability that arises from the guidelines. By adopting the guidelines, the member church and its classis may be assuming legal obligations not dictated under the laws of its jurisdiction. The liability of the advisory panel that serves the member church or classis should also be discussed with legal counsel. A classis that forms an abuse-response team and advisory panel should be incorporated and should obtain legal protection for the volunteers serving on each. Finally, member churches and classes that adopt the guidelines should follow the procedures specified. An independent basis for potential liability could be the negligent failure to follow the guidelines as adopted.*
- e. *Denominational personnel may act as neutral consultants and advisers to an abuse-response team and advisory panel, but they should not serve on either a team or a panel.*

III. Response to Overture 59

A. *Material*: Overture 59, pp. 309-10

B. *Recommendations*

1. That synod appoint a study committee to give direction about and for pastoral care of homosexual members in a manner consistent with the decisions of Synod 1973 (*Acts of Synod 1973, Report 42*).

Grounds:

- a. Since the recommendations of Report 42 are now a generation old, it is time to review how effectively they encourage the churches in providing ministry to their homosexual members.
- b. Christian homosexuals are beginning to turn away from their isolation, despair, and practice (homosexuality) and are beginning to turn to the church for a sense of community. Many ministries to homosexuals have developed in the years since the 1973 report on homosexuality was written. The churches of our denomination would be well served by a study to evaluate these ministries and give direction to our churches on the subject of homosexuality.
- c. This study could help us to understand to what degree the pastoral recommendations of Report 42 of Synod 1973 have been effectively carried out and to uncover reasons why this may or may not be so.
- d. This issue is too big for any of our churches or classes to deal with individually. Several classes and congregations have conducted such

studies (e.g., Classes Alberta North, Grand Rapids East, and Toronto and the Council of First CRC, London, Ontario). But these local studies have not exhaustively studied all the available ministry possibilities.

—Adopted

2. That synod declare this to be its response to Overture 59 of Classis Chatham.

—Adopted

IV. Response to Overture 44

A. *Material*: Overture 44, p. 288

B. *Observation*

The Christian Reformed Church has clearly stated its position that "Homosexualism—as explicit homosexual practice—must be condemned as incompatible with obedience to the will of God as revealed in Holy Scripture" (*Acts of Synod 1973*, p. 52). This statement applies also to the homosexual activity of a couple that seek to live in a loving monogamous relationship. The overture wants the church to speak prophetically in our present context on this matter, and the churches are well served to be reminded of our prophetic role. However, an avenue other than the one requested would be more appropriate.

C. *Recommendation*

That synod not accede to Overture 44.

Grounds:

1. Adequate provisions for dealing with denial of biblical teachings are made in Articles 65 and 78-83 of the Church Order.
2. Ground 1 of the overture ("Some in the church today. . .") does not present sufficient evidence to demonstrate that the extent of the contemplated disobedience warrants a specific synodical declaration.
3. Even though it is important that the sin of homosexuality not be minimized and that the teachings of the Bible on this matter not be denied, pastoral and educational avenues pursued by local church councils are more appropriate than a specific synodical declaration.

—Adopted

(The report of Advisory Committee 5 is continued in Article 84.)

ARTICLE 80

The morning session is adjourned; Elder Hilbrent Vander Heide leads in closing prayer.

WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON, June 19, 1996 Sixteenth Session

ARTICLE 81

Rev. Emmett A. Harrison announces *Psalter Hymnal* 502, "The Church's One Foundation." He reads from Romans 12:9-16 and 21 and leads in opening prayer.

He announces *Psalter Hymnal* 543, "Guide Me, O My Great Redeemer," and *Psalter Hymnal* 548, "When We Walk with the Lord."

ARTICLE 82

Dr. James A. De Jong, president of Calvin Theological Seminary, addresses synod. He introduces the men and women (together with their families) who were declared candidates for the ministry of the Word on Tuesday evening, June 18, 1996.

President Van Ryn congratulates the candidates and their spouses and families. He addresses the candidates from II Corinthians 2:14: "But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him." He challenges the candidates to "Keep your head in all situations. Do the work of an evangelist—that is what the ministry is all about." He wishes them God's blessing and says, "We look forward to the good things God is doing through you."

ARTICLE 83

The clerks report that the minutes of Monday morning, afternoon, and evening, June 17, 1996, and Tuesday morning and afternoon, June 18, 1996, are accurate and in good order.

ARTICLE 84

(The report of Advisory Committee 5 is continued from Article 79.)

Advisory Committee 5, Pastoral Ministries, Rev. John A. Ooms reporting, presents the following:

I. Response to Overture 45

A. *Material*: Overture 45, p. 289

B. *Observation*

There are sections of this overture that are valuable for reminding the churches in their ministry with homosexual persons of the need for teaching a proper view of sexual sins, exercising humble compassion, issuing calls to repentance, presenting the hope of deliverance, and giving patient encouragement. However, as the advisory committee's grounds indicate, there are reasons for not acceding to the overture.

C. *Recommendation*

That synod not accede to Overture 45.

Grounds:

1. Synod has repeatedly affirmed the strength of Report 42 and the resulting decisions of Synod 1973 which deal with the concerns of this overture, and this overture does not demonstrate how Report 42 is inadequate so as to warrant additional synodical action.
2. While the concern for pastoral care is appreciated, with respect to sexual orientation the overture does not seem consistent with the position of the Christian Reformed Church articulated in Report 42 of Synod 1973.

—Adopted

ARTICLE 85

(The report of Advisory Committee 1 is continued from Article 61.)

Advisory Committee 1, Synodical Services, Rev. Laryn G. Zoerhof reporting, presents the following:

I. Interim Report of the Committee to Study Structure for Ministry in Canada—Phase 3 (continued)

A. *Material*: Interim Report of the Committee to Study Structure for Ministry in Canada—Phase 3

B. *Recommendations (continued)*

3. That synod adopt the recommendation of the Board of Trustees that the process of organizational reflection begin on the U.S. side of our binational denomination (*Agenda for Synod 1996*, p. 39, c, 3).

—*Adopted*

4. That synod appoint a committee to study the structure for ministry in the U.S., to work under the mandate stated below, as a complement to the Committee to Study Structure for Ministry in Canada.

The Committee to Study Structure for Ministry in the U.S. is to present to Synod 1998 or 1999 a proposal for an effective structure for enhancing the ministry of our churches (including agency structure for achieving effective ministry in the U.S.). It is understood that the committee will work in direct consultation with U.S. classes in the development of its proposals.

Ground: The Committee to Study Structure for Ministry in Canada has presented models which could affect the ministries of the denomination as a whole.

—*Adopted*

5. That this committee of eleven include three members of the previous committee (one Canadian, two U.S.) and that this committee work in consultation with the Canadian committee.

—*Adopted*

6. That the general secretary and the executive director of ministries function as advisers. It is understood that the Canadian committee will proceed with preparing its report for consideration by Synod 1997.

—*Adopted*

II. Response to Overture 50: Amend the Mission and Vision Statement

A. *Material*: Overture 50, pp. 296-98

B. *Recommendations*

1. That synod refer this overture to the Mission and Vision Statement revision committee of the Ministries Coordinating Council for consideration as it continues work on the Mission and Vision Statement.

Ground: Churches and classes have until August 1, 1996, to respond with their suggestions and recommendations to the committee working on the Mission and Vision Statement.

—*Adopted*

2. That this be synod's answer to Overture 50.

—*Adopted*

III. Response to Overture 61: Appoint a Committee to Review the Bylaws of the Joint-Ministries Management Committee

A. *Material:* Overture 61, pp. 310-11

B. *Recommendation*

1. That synod not accede to Overture 61.

Grounds:

- a. The Board of Trustees of the CRC, with input from the agencies, recently completed a thorough review of the Constitution and Bylaws of the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
- b. The advisory committee reviewed the Constitution and Bylaws of the Christian Reformed Church in North America and is recommending their adoption.

—*Adopted*

2. That this be synod's answer to Overture 61.

—*Adopted*

IV. Response to Overture 68: Ensure That Reports Recommending Changes Affecting the Life of Congregations and Classes Be Submitted to the Churches by November 1

A. *Material:* Overture 68, pp. 318-19

B. *Recommendations*

1. That synod not accede to Overture 68.

Grounds:

- a. The Rules for Synodical Procedure already require 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" (Rules for Synodical Procedure, V, B, 10).
- b. Synod 1995 decided "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" (*Acts of Synod 1995*, pp. 752-53).

—*Adopted*

2. That this be synod's answer to Overture 68.

—*Adopted*

V. Response to Overture 74: Appoint Study Committee to Provide an Appropriate Way to Appeal Ministry Decisions Made by Denominational Agencies

A. *Material*: Overture 74, pp. 330-31

B. *Recommendations*

1. That synod not accede to Overture 74.

Grounds:

- a. The Challenge Resolution Policy recently adopted by the Board of Trustees (see text of policy below) provides classes with an avenue for the swift hearing of appeals on ministry decisions made by synodical boards, committees, and staff employed by those boards and committees.
- b. The Board of Trustees will reword this policy to make it clear that this Challenge Resolution Policy refers to church councils as well as to classes.

—Adopted

Challenge Resolution Policy

When the policy of an agency and the decision of a classis conflict and when that conflict cannot be resolved through subsequent discussion, a classis may challenge the agency decision by addressing the executive director of ministries (EDM) and the Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church to seek a resolution of the conflict:

- a) The classis shall direct its communication to the office of the EDM. The EDM shall review the matter with the agency involved and, if need be, with representatives of the classis submitting the appeal. The EDM may submit his recommendation to the agency board involved to seek resolution. If the dispute is resolved at this point, no further action will be required.
- b) If resolution is not achieved in the process outlined in a) above, the EDM will forward his findings to the next meeting of the Board of Trustees with a recommendation for the disposition of the dispute. The Board of Trustees' decision shall be binding on the agency involved and advisory to the classis. If the classis is not satisfied with the outcome of this process, an appeal may be filed with synod.
- c) Because classis and Board of Trustees meetings occur infrequently, it may take longer to resolve these issues than is desirable. However, every effort will be made by the agency involved and by the office of the EDM to respond in a timely fashion.

—Adopted

2. That this be synod's answer to Overture 74.

—Adopted

VI. Council of the Christian Reformed Churches in Canada

A. *Material*: Communication 4, pp. 346-49

B. *Recommendation*

That synod note with gratitude to God the communication from the Council of the Christian Reformed Churches in Canada which outlines the activities of the Council.

—Adopted

VII. Denominational day of prayer (recommitted)

A. *Material*: Board of Trustees Supplement, p. 355

Having heard the discussion of the delegates with regard to the recommendation of the Board of Trustees (see Art. 18, I, B, 11), the advisory committee brings the following revised recommendation.

B. *Recommendation*

That the Christian Reformed Church continue the tradition of holding a denominational Annual Day of Prayer for crops and industry on the second Wednesday in March.

Ground: Synod 1970 declared that "those churches which judge that the observance of the Annual Day of Prayer can be more meaningful for them if it is observed in conjunction with the National Day of Prayer (U.S.A.) have the right to change the date of the service." This same principle continues to apply. Churches preferring to hold services on the National Day of Prayer (U.S.A.) are free to do so.

—Adopted

ARTICLE 86

(The report of Advisory Committee 6 is continued from Article 45)

Advisory Committee 6, Financial Matters, Elder Warren T. Faber reporting, presents the following:

Response to Overture 77: Instruct the Pastoral Ministries Board to Provide Guidelines in Certain Ministerial Matters

A. *Material*: Overture 77, pp. 332-33

B. *Recommendations*

1. That synod instruct the Pastoral Ministries Board to prepare guidelines for congregations which are considering separation from their ministers under Church Order Articles 14, 16, and 17.

Grounds:

- a. Such guidelines have not been established.
- b. Councils need guidance with matters such as the specific terms of a leave of absence under Article 16; salary, housing, and benefits during the process of separation under Articles 16 and 17; and the proper channels by which to communicate with the congregation.
- c. Pastors in need of admonition, counsel, and correction are sometimes separated under Church Order Article 14-a, and unresolved problems are not communicated to the next congregation.
- d. During the time of vacancy, congregations could benefit from guidelines that help them examine unhealthy dynamics in their fellowship that may have contributed to the separation from their minister.
- e. The ministry of church visitors and regional pastors would benefit from additional, specific guidelines.
- f. This is consistent with the mandate of the Pastoral Ministries Board.

—Adopted

2. That synod instruct the Pastoral Ministries Board to develop guidelines for attending to the ongoing physical and spiritual needs of ministers suspended and or/depoused under Church Order Articles 82-84.

Grounds:

- a. Such guidelines have not been established.
- b. The number of suspensions and depositions has increased in recent years.
- c. Church visitors and regional pastors would benefit from specific guidelines.
- d. Councils need guidance on spiritual and financial arrangements during the suspension and after the deposition of their minister, including guidance on severance pay and payment of insurance and pension.
- e. Often little is done to follow up on the ongoing needs of depoused ministers and their families.
- f. This is consistent with the mandate of the Pastoral Ministries Board.

—*Adopted*

3. That this be synod's response to Overture 77.

—*Adopted*

ARTICLE 87

(The report of Advisory Committee 9 is continued from Article 77)

Advisory Committee 9, Church Order, Rev. Jack M. Gray reporting, presents the following:

I. Response to Overture 55: Change Church Order Article 43 by Deleting the Clause re "Urgent Need"

A. *Material:* Overture 55, p. 302

B. Recommendation

That synod not accede to Overture 55.

Grounds:

1. The current restrictions in Church Order Article 43 regarding "urgent need" express the conviction, evident in other articles (6-11, 24, 53, 54), that the proclamation of the Word of God must be reserved as much as possible for those who are appropriately trained and officially ordained as ministers of the Word and as evangelists.
2. The fact that license to exhort has a time limit indicates circumstances of need, since gifts remain constant.
3. The overture stresses gifts, but the need within the church is of equal importance. The fact that certain individuals possess gifts for exhorting does not obligate the church to license them as exhorters.
4. The adoption of this overture potentially opens the door to lay preaching. If the church wishes to go in that direction, appropriate overtures should be brought to synod.

—*Adopted*

II. Response to Overture 58: Change Article 36-a of the Church Order

A. *Material*: Overture 58, pp. 308-09

B. *Background*

1. Presently Article 36-a reads,

The council, consistory, and diaconate shall meet at least once a month at a time and place announced to the congregation. 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.

2. When Synod 1973 inserted the word "ordinarily," it gave the following grounds:

- a. The offices of minister and elder as rulers are equal.
- b. There are experienced elders who are quite capable of chairing meetings of council.
- c. In crucial times, such as when a congregation is without a pastor, elders preside over the meetings and have proven themselves capable to do so quite adequately.

3. In many CRC churches it is common practice, not the exception, to have elders chair council and consistory.

C. *Recommendations*

1. That synod accede to Overture 58 and propose the following change of Article 36-a of the Church Order: The council, consistory, and diaconate shall meet at least once a month at a time and place announced to the congregation. Each body shall select its own president and other officers.

Grounds:

- a. The proposed wording retains the important concepts of regular and orderly meetings.
- b. Officers of councils should be chosen on the basis of gifts, talents, and abilities.

—Adopted

2. That synod judge this proposed change a "substantial alteration" to be submitted for adoption to Synod 1997.

—Adopted

III. Response to Overture 66: Change Church Order Supplement, Article 7 (Section A, 1)

A. *Material*: Overture 66 (Section A, 1), p. 316

B. *Background*:

The Church Order requires far fewer documents from people applying to be ordained via Church Order Article 7 than it does from any other persons pursuing ordination. Article 7 and its Supplement require only that the petitioner "apply to his council and then to the classis" and that "classis shall first of all examine the written credentials of the council concerning required qualifications as stated in Article 7. . . ."

Church Order Supplement, Article 8 requires of ministers from other denominations who desire admittance to the Christian Reformed ministry that “the classis shall receive from the minister a statement of health, appropriate diplomas, and the evaluated psychological report prior to beginning the determination of need” (8, D, 4) in addition to “a testimonial from his council or classis or presbytery, concerning his purity of doctrine and sanctity of life” (8, D, 8).

A health certificate is also required of all seminary graduates applying for candidacy, and a psychological report is required of all seminary students.

C. Recommendations

1. That synod accede to Overture 66 with the following (italicized) editorial changes:

If anyone wishes to be admitted to the ministry of the Word in accordance with Article 7, he should apply to his council and after that to the classis. *The classis shall receive from the petitioner a statement of health, an evaluated psychological report, and a written recommendation from the council.* Together with the synodical deputies, the classis shall first of all examine the written credentials concerning the required qualifications as stated in Article 7, and thereupon the classis itself shall proceed to examine him to ascertain whether these qualifications be present. If the preliminary judgment is favorable, the petitioner is to be given the right, for some time, to exhort in vacant churches within the classis. He shall also exhort a few times in churches that are not vacant in the presence of the respective ministers of these churches. The length of this period of probation is to be determined by classis.

Grounds:

- a. A statement of health and an evaluated psychological report are already required of seminary students and of ministers from other denominations who are seeking ordination in the CRC. This change would bring the requirements for Article 7 into conformity with those for Article 8.
- b. This change would ensure that applicants under Article 7 are given equal treatment in all classes.

—Adopted

2. That synod instruct the general secretary to change in Article 2, Supplement 7 “aforesaid delegates for examination” to “synodical deputies” in future publications of *Church Order and Rules for Synodical Procedure*.

Ground: “Delegates for examination” is a cumbersome translation from the Dutch for those we now know as synodical deputies.

—Adopted

3. That synod instruct the general secretary to add to the references in parentheses at the end of Article 7 Supplement, Section A, the following: “amended, *Acts of Synod 1996*, p. 581.”

—Adopted

ARTICLE 88

It is moved that synod approve the following members for the Committee to Examine Routes Being Used to Enter the Ordained Ministry in the CRC:

Mr. Ernest Benally, Dr. John Bolt, Rev. Alan Breems, Mr. Robert den Dulk, Dr. Edna Greenway, Rev. Emmett Harrison, Rev. John T. Kim, Rev. Ricardo Orellana, Mrs. Patricia Tigchelaar, Dr. Willis Van Groningen; Dr. David H. Engelhard and Dr. James A. De Jong, ex officio members.

—*Adopted*

It is moved that synod approve the following members for the Committee to Give Direction about and for Pastoral Care for Homosexual Members:

Mr. Donald Bergman, Rev. Cornelius De Boer, Mrs. Annette Dekker, Rev. Peter Hogeterp, Dr. Melvin Hugen, Rev. Yong-Ju Oh, Mrs. Elaine Postema, Rev. Fred Witteveen, and Rev. Gerald Zandstra; alternates: Dr. Heather Looy and Rev. Herman Van Niejenhuis.

—*Defeated*

It is moved that synod refer the composition of the Committee to Give Direction about and for Pastoral Care for Homosexual Members to the Board of Trustees in consultation with the officers of synod.

Ground: The sensitive nature of this matter requires that we give careful consideration to the formation of this committee.

—*Adopted*

It is moved that synod approve the following members for the Committee to Study Structure for Ministry in the United States:

Rev. Brent A. Averill, Mr. Jack De Groat, Mr. Ray Elgersma, Dr. Roger Greenway, Mr. John Kuyers, Rev. Henry Numan, Rev. Manuel Ortiz, Dr. Shirley Roels, Dr. Mary Szto, Mr. William Terpstra, and Mr. Frank Velzen; Dr. Peter Borgdorff and Dr. David H. Engelhard, advisers.

—*Adopted*

ARTICLE 89

The afternoon session is adjourned; Rev. Case Admiraal leads in closing prayer. Synod will reconvene at 7 p.m.

WEDNESDAY EVENING, June 19, 1996

Seventeenth Session

ARTICLE 90

Elder John Kamerman announces *Psalter Hymnal* 46, "God Is Our Refuge and Our Strength," and reads Psalm 46. He leads in opening prayer and announces *Psalter Hymnal* 544, "Lead Me, Guide Me."

Elder Martin LaMaire (Northern Illinois) is absent for the evening session because of illness.

ARTICLE 91

With respect to the formation of the Korean Classis, the officers, in consultation with the delegates of Classis Greater Los Angeles, recommend that synod ask the classical interim committees of Classes California South and Greater Los

Angeles to appoint their two representatives to the monitoring committee (see Art. 75, C, 2, b, above) by July 15 and that these representatives, in consultation with the general secretary, convene the first meeting of the new classis in September 1996.

—Adopted

The officers move that synod reconsider the decision to hold Synod 1998 at Redeemer College. Redeemer College does not have sufficient lodging facilities to accommodate both Synod 1998 and the Multiethnic Conference, which would normally be held in 1998. Rather than postpone the Multiethnic Conference, which Synod 1986 decided should be biennial, the officers propose that synod be held at Redeemer College in 1999.

Grounds:

1. This allows the Multiethnic Conference to continue its biennial meeting schedule.
2. Redeemer College is available and willing to host synod in 1999.
3. The convening church (Immanuel CRC, Hamilton, Ontario) is amenable to this change.

—Adopted

ARTICLE 92

I. Officials, functionaries, and appointments

A. Offices

1. General secretary: Dr. David Engelhard
2. Executive director of ministries: Dr. Peter Borgdorff
3. Director of finance and administration: Mr. Robert Van Stright

B. Functionaries

Arrangements for synod: Mr. Donald Boender and Mr. Jeff Stob

II. Synodical deputies

Classis	Deputy	Alternate	Term Expires
Alberta North	Rev. C. Vriend	Rev. N. Cornelisse	1997
Alberta South	Rev. J. Corvers	Rev. A. Beukema	1999
Arizona	Rev. G.J. Kamps	Rev. F.J. Walhof	1998
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	Rev. J. Boonstra	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. D.J. Van Loo		1999
Columbia	Rev. J. Hofman, Jr.	Rev. D.L. Recker	1997
Eastern Canada	Rev. H.G. Gunnink		1998
Florida	Rev. R.G. Baker	Rev. M.A. Davies	1999
Georgetown	Rev. D. Tinklenberg	Rev. C. Bolt	1997
Grand Rapids East	Rev. S.E. Hoezee	Rev. R. Opperwall	1997
Grand Rapids North	Rev. D.J. Van Beek	Rev. F.J. Van Dyk	1999
Grand Rapids South	Rev. C.D. Vander Meyden	Rev. D.A. Struyk	1997

Classis	Deputy	Alternate	Term Expires
Grandville	Rev. J. Gorter	Rev. K.L. Havert	1998
Greater Los Angeles	Dr. J. Van Schepen	Rev. D.R. Koll	1997
Hackensack	Rev. P.A. Apol	Rev. S.R. Steenstra	1999
Hamilton	Rev. H.R. De Bolster	Rev. M. Van Donselaar	1998
Heartland	Rev. A.L. Kuiper	Rev. J.M. Gray	1999
Holland	Rev. J.H. Scholten	Rev. J.S. Meyer	1996
Hudson	Rev. J.J. Hoogland	Rev. J.G. Keizer	1998
Huron	Rev. R. Koops	Rev. H.J. Bierman	1999
lakota	Rev. D.W. De Groot	Rev. C.E. Fennema	1997
Illiana	Rev. G.H. Stoutmeyer	Rev. H.J. Schutt	1997
Kalamazoo	Rev. J.H. Looman	Rev. L.J. Vander Zee	1999
Lake Erie	Rev. W.J. Dykstra	Rev. C. Libolt	1999
Minnesota North	Rev. J.G. Busscher		1999
Minnesota South	Rev. J.D. Buwalda	Rev. N.J. Visser	1997
Muskegon	Rev. J.A. Molenbeek	Rev. D.H. Bratt	1999
Niagara	Dr. H. Vander Plaats	Rev. J. De Jong	1996
Northcentral Iowa	Rev. D.A. Zylstra	Rev. G.E. De Vries	1998
Northern Illinois	Rev. P. De Jong	Rev. H.J. 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	1999
Quinte	Rev. E. Gritter	Dr. Willis 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	1999
Yellowstone	Rev. J. Weeda	Rev. B.J. Van Ee	1999
Zeeland	Rev. J.W. Uitvlugt	Rev. J.L. Alferink	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	Rev. R. Slim	Rev. D.W. Vander Veen	1999
Subgroup II	Dr. T. Van Groningen	Mrs. P. Medema	1999
Great Plains	Rev. A.L. Kuiper	Rev. D.A. Kamper	1998
	Mr. H. Van Maanen	Mrs. B. Ackerman	1999
Central U.S.			
Subgroup I	Mr. M.H. Kuyers	Mr. D. Hoebeke	1998
	Mr. W. Weidenaar	Rev. L.G. Zoerhof	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. G.L. Dykstra	Rev. D.L. Kelderman	1999
Eastern U.S.	Rev. S.J. Workman	Rev. B.A. Averill	1999
Western Canada	Rev. P. Brouwer	Rev. A. Beukema	1997
Eastern Canada			
Subgroup I	Rev. J. Kuipers	Rev. E. Den Haan	1999
Subgroup II	Rev. G.H. Pols	Rev. G. Ringnalda	1998
	Mr. J.H. Vander Stoep	Mr. A. Schaafsma	1998

District	Member	Alternate	Term Expires
At-large	Dr. C.J. Rottman	Mrs. M. Minnema	1997
	Mrs. J. Vander Ploeg	Mrs. S. Gronsmann	1998
	Mr. W. Wildeboer	Mr. D. De Jong	1999
Ex officio	Dr. David H. Engelhard, general secretary Dr. Peter Borgdorff, executive director of ministries		

B. Back to God Hour

Member	Area	Term Expires
Wisconsin	Rev. J. Bylsma	1997
Eastern United States	Mrs. E. Palmer	1997
Chicago	Mr. M. Ozinga III	1997
Iowa	Rev. D. Sarkipato	1997
Florida	Mr. J. Fernandez	1997
Washington	Rev. D.V. Hays	1997
Western Canada	Rev. J. Kerssies	1998
Eastern Canada	Mr. C.K. Oosthoek	1998
Chicagoland	Mr. G. Vande Werken	1998
Rocky Mountain/Red Mesa	Rev. A. Begay	1999
California	Mr. A. Marcus	1999
Michigan	Rev. H.G. Vanden Einde	1999
Michigan	Dr. E. Greenway	1999
Eastern Canada	Rev. H.P. Kranenburg	1999

C. Board of Trustees - Calvin College

Region	Member	Alternate	Term Expires	
Far West U.S.	Rev. J. Dykema	Dr. J. Van Schepen	1998	
			Mr. D. Van Andel	1999
			Mr. R. Polinder	1997
Subgroup II	Mr. R. Vander Laan	Mrs. C. Ackerman	1998	
Central U.S.	Dr. J. De Roos	Mrs. J. Van Dyke	1999	
			Mr. R. Buikema	1998
Subgroup II	Mrs. Miriam Schaafsma	Rev. Kenneth A. Baker	1997	
			Rev. J. Cooper	1997
Subgroup III	Mr. B. Woltjer	Dr. P. De Young	1998	
			Rev. M.N. Greidanus	1997
Subgroup IV	Mr. R. Alderink	Rev. D.J. Van Beek	1999	
			Rev. C.J. De Vos	1999
Eastern U.S.	Dr. G. Gabrielse	Dr. E. Wierenga	1999	
			1998	
Eastern Canada	Dr. J. Vriend	Mr. R. Datema	1998	
			Mr. N. van Duyvendyk	1997
Western Canada	Dr. N. Terpstra	Dr. J. Hielema	1999	
Alumni	Dr. Mary Appel-Kooy	Mrs. Shirley Vogelzang	1997	
			Hoogstra	1998
			Dr. Tom R. DeMeester	1999

Region	Member	Alternate	Term Expires
At-large	Mrs. Grace Achterhof		1999
	Rev. Jason Chen		1997
	Mrs. Sheri Haan		1999
	Mr. Preston Kool		1998
	Mr. Milton Kuyers		1999
	Mr. Jay Morren		1997
	Mr. Thomas Page		1999
	Mrs. Elsa Prince		1998
	Dr. John Van Engen		1999
	Dr. Willis Van Groningen		1998
	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
	Dr. D. Deppe	Rev. R.D. Kramer	1997
Central U.S.			
Subgroup I	Rev. C.R. Hoogendoorn	Rev. C.E. Bajema	1998
Subgroup II	Rev. Y.J. Oh	Rev. S.J. Kang	1999
Subgroup III	Rev. J.R. Boot	Rev. M.J. Hofman	1999
	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	Mr. J. Steen	1999
Eastern Canada			
Subgroup I	Rev. J.J. Hoytema	Rev. J.W. Jongsma	1997
Subgroup II	Rev. B.P. Velthuisen	Rev. D.H. Kromminga	1998
	Rev. W. Dykstra	Rev. J.B. Vos	1999
Western Canada	Mr. J. Leder	Mr. P. Byl	1998
	Mr. H. Kielstra	Mr. D. Danielson	1999
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. Tiernstra	1999
Alberta South	Ms. P. De Boer	Ms. G. Heinen	1999
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	1999
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	Mr. K. Knight	Rev. J.W. Jongsma	1999
Chicago South	Rev. W.R. Lenters	Mr. J. Hamilton	1999

Classis	Delegate	Alternate	Term Expires
Columbia	Mrs. S. Imig	Mrs. C. Bosch	1997
Eastern Canada	Mrs. I. Neutel	Mr. E. Geertsema	1998
Florida	Miss D. De Boer		1999
Georgetown	Mrs. K. Ophoff	Ms. P. Dornbush	1998
Grand Rapids East	Ms. G. Goris-Stronks	Ms. J. Timmer	1997
Grand Rapids North	Dr. C.T. Mulder	Mr. D. Day	1999
Grand Rapids South	Rev. S. Mast	Rev. C.D. Vander Meyden	1999
Grandville	Rev. G.D. Postema	Ms. M. Bantjes	1998
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	1999
Hudson	Mrs. S. Jost	Mr. D. Holwerda	1998
Huron	Mrs. M. Herfst	Mrs. J. Van Der Velden	1997
Iakota	Mrs. S. Matheis	Dr. M. Vanden Bosch	1998
Illiana	Mr. J. De Vries	Rev. B.J. Haan, Jr.	1998
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. Baar	1997
Niagara	Mr. C. Van Soelen	Rev. E. Groot-Nibbelink	1997
Northcentral Iowa	Ms. R. Verbrugge		1998
Northern Illinois	Ms. M. Sytsma	Dr. G. Lubben	1999
Northern Michigan	Mr. E. Meyering	Mrs. B. Verbrugge	1997
Pacific Northwest	Mr. S. Van Mersbergen	Rev. G.A. Terpstra	1999
Pella	Ms. K. Evenhouse	Mr. H.J. Vande Voort	1999
Quinte	Mrs. J. Wildeboer	Mr. H. Nieuwstraten	1997
Red Mesa	Mrs. T. Rottschaffer	Mr. R. Sliim	1997
Rocky Mountain	Mr. M. Newton	Rev. R. De Young	1999
Thornapple Valley	Mrs. S. Phillips	Mrs. D. Bloem	1999
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. W. Renkema	Rev. S.R. Sytsma	1997
At-large (with expertise in finance and law)			
	Mr. Cecil Jenkins		1998
	Mr. Robert L. De Jong		1999
	Ms. Julie Hamstra-Voskuil		1999
Fraternal delegate	Mr. Jeffrey Japinga (RCA)		1999

F. Christian Reformed Board of Home Missions

Classis	Delegate	Alternate	Term Expires
Alberta North	Rev. P. Stiel	Rev. R.J. Graff	1999
Alberta South	Rev. M. Reitsma	Rev. J.R. Huizinga	1997
Arizona	Mr. R. Hugen	Mr. H. Jansen	1997
Atlantic Northeast	Rev. A. Gelder	Rev. V.G. Van Ee	1999
B.C. North-West	Rev. P.F. Reinders	Rev. W. Brouwer	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	1999
Chatham	Rev. K.R. Ritsema	Rev. D.R. Tigchelaar	1997
Chicago South	Rev. K. Wong	Rev. D.A. Crushshon, Sr.	1999

Classis	Delegate	Alternate	Term Expires
Columbia	Rev. C. Leep	Mrs. M. Geelhood	1998
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. W. Vanden Bosch		1999
Grand Rapids North	Mr. T. de Vries	Ms. C. Vogel	1998
Grand Rapids South	Rev. M.L. De Young	Rev. R. Smith	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. Hoyterma	Mrs. D. Proper	1999
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		1997
Huron	Rev. W. De Ruitter	Mr. V. Vandermolen	1997
Iakota	Rev. A.J. Van Dellen		1999
Illiana	Mr. A. Vanden Bosch		1999
Kalamazoo	Rev. P.R. Hoekstra	Mr. J. Schaap	1997
Lake Erie	Rev. E.A. Harrison	Rev. W.C. De Vries	1998
Minnesota North		Rev. E.S.H. Busink	1999
Minnesota South	Rev. H.J. Westra	Mr. W. Sankey	1997
Muskegon	Rev. L.D. Van Dyke	Rev. C. Uken	1998
Niagara	Rev. P. Slofstra	Rev. E. Groot-Nibbelink	1997
Northcentral Iowa	Dr. J. Handorf	Mr. B. Ruter	1997
Northern Illinois	Rev. T.H. Douma	Rev. L.L. Schemper	1998
Northern Michigan	Rev. K.J. Nydam	Mr. M. Mortenson	1999
Pacific Northwest	Rev. I. Kim	Mr. R. Bode	1998
Pella	Mr. N. Nikkel	Mr. I. Mulder	1999
Quinte	Rev. K.J. House	Mr. C. Reitsma	1998
Red Mesa	Mr. J. De Groat	Rev. D. Byker	1998
Rocky Mountain	Rev. S. Sikkema	Mr. 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. C. Abee	1999
Zeeland	Dr. J.E. De Vries	Rev. D.A. Gritter	1999
At-large			
Finance	Mr. L. De Lange	Mr. E. Berends, Jr.	1997
Advancement	Mr. H. Rozema		1997

G. World Missions Committee

Classis	Delegate	Alternate	Term Expires
Alberta North	Mrs. S. Mobach	Rev. J.A. Ooms	1999
Alberta South	Rev. J.R. Huizinga	Rev. A.G. Vander Leek	1998
Arizona	Rev. F.E. Pott	Rev. R. Yeo	1998
Atlantic Northeast	Rev. W.G. Vis	Rev. R.D. Steen	1999
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. Klompfen	1998
Chatham	Mr. P. Kapteyn	Mrs. M. Yselstein	1997
Chicago South	Rev. A. Van Zanten	Rev. A.J. Machiela	1999
Columbia	Rev. S.A. Drenth	Rev. T. Vander Ziel	1998

Classis	Delegate	Alternate	Term Expires
Eastern Canada	Mrs. W. Runia	Mr. M. Van Wyk	1998
Florida	Rev. M.H. Van Hofwegen	Rev. D.L. Aldrink	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.L. Fynewever	1997
Grandville	Rev. L. Van Drunen	Mr. M. Geerlings	1998
Greater Los Angeles	Rev. R.B. Harris	Rev. A. Helder	1997
Hackensack	Dr. W. Scott	Rev. E.N. Romero	1999
Hamilton	Rev. A.C. Geleynde	Mr. T. Vande Putte	1998
Heartland	Mr. H. Haarsma	Mr. J. Kooiker	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
Iakota	Rev. D.J. Boogerd	Rev. L.A. Lobdell	1997
Illiana	Rev. B.M. Madary	Rev. L.W. Van Essen	1997
Kalamazoo	Rev. G.D. Nieuwsma	Mr. D. Selles	1999
Lake Erie	Dr. G. Hettinger	Mrs. C. Versluys	1998
Minnesota North	Rev. R. Sprik	Rev. J.G. Busscher	1998
Minnesota South	Mr. G. Kuik	Rev. B. Den Herder	1997
Muskegon	Rev. L.P. Troast	Rev. D.H. Bratt	1999
Niagara	Rev. P.A. Heerema	Rev. D.W. Cowart	1998
Northcentral Iowa	Mr. P. Eekhoff	Mr. B. Drenth	1997
Northern Illinois	Rev. L.R. Smits		1998
Northern Michigan	Rev. G.L. Essenburg	Mr. C. De Kam	1998
Pacific Northwest	Mr. G. Gonzales		1997
Pella	Rev. T.R. Dykstra	Rev. C.A. Heuss	1999
Quinte	Rev. H. Mennega	Rev. E.W. Visser	1997
Red Mesa	Mr. R. Van Dyken	Rev. R.L. Jipping	1997
Rocky Mountain	Mr. W. Lemke	Rev. H. de Jong	1999
Thornapple Valley	Rev. W.J. Renkema	Mr. T. Van't Land	1998
Toronto	Rev. H.D. Praamsma	Rev. J. Tenyenhuis	1999
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	1999
Alberta South	Mr. R. Winkelaar	Ms. D. Van Galen	1997
Arizona	Mr. J. Ten Elshof	Mr. G. Andringa	1997
Atlantic Northeast	Mr. T. Woodnorth	Ms. R. Ruiter	1998
B.C. North-West	Mr. G. Apperloo	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	Dr. C. Schoenheer	Mr. R. Van Dellin	1999
Columbia	Ms. K. Haley	Mr. H. Apol	1997
Eastern Canada	Mr. N. Van Dyk	Mr. T. Hogeterp	1996
Florida	Mr. J. Boldenow		1999
Georgetown	Mr. M. Dykema	Mr. G. Hartger	1998
Grand Rapids East	Ms. K. Yoder	Ms. M. Dengerink	1998
Grand Rapids North	Mr. B. Haven	Mr. R. Ruiter	1999

Classis	Delegate	Alternate	Term Expires
Grand Rapids South	Mrs. M. Hooyer	Mrs. A. Ezinga	1999
Grandville	Mr. J. Holsem	Mr. P. Wassink	1998
Greater Los Angeles	Rev. G. Varela		1997
	Mr. S. Cole		1997
Hackensack	Mrs. C. Van Ess-Dykema		1999
Hamilton	Mr. F. Bennink	Mr. J. De Groot	1997
Heartland	Mr. M. Noteboom	Mr. G. Geels	1999
Holland	Mr. C. Hulst	Mr. C. Prins	1997
Hudson	Mr. R. Wynja		1998
Huron	Mr. C. Zondag		1996
lakota	Mr. D. Postma	Mr. L. Nyhof	1999
Illiana	Mr. H. Bykerk	Mr. D. Lyzenga	1999
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
Minnesota North, U.S.	Ms. M. Buss	Rev. P. Sausser	1998
Minnesota South	Mr. D. Wieberdink	Mr. H. Klumper	1999
Muskegon	Mr. J. Heermann	Mr. D. Drew	1998
Niagara	Mr. L. De Graaf	Ms. S. Vandenberg	1997
Northcentral Iowa	Mr. P. Christians	Mr. E. Olthof	1997
Northern Illinois	Ms. R. Strodman	Ms. D. Flores	1999
Northern Michigan	Mr. A. Diemer	Mr. L. Stahl	1999
Pacific Northwest	Mr. E. Kok	Mr. C. Deelstra	1997
Pella	Mr. M. Blom	Mr. T. Franje	1997
Quinte	Mr. W. Bylsma	Mr. F. Verwoerd	1997
Red Mesa	Mr. B. Hardy		1998
Rocky Mountain	Mr. J. Kok, Jr.	Ms. S. Velzen	1997
Thornapple Valley	Mr. W. Scheringa	Mr. J. Zomerleij	1998
Toronto	Mr. H. Wieringa	Ms. M. Spoelstra	1996
Wisconsin	Mr. P. LaMaire	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	Mrs. B. Clayton	Mr. H. Washington	1999
Attorney	Mr. T. Geelhoed	Mr. P. Kladder III	1999
At-large (Canada)			
Pastoral adviser	Ms. A. Dekker	Ms. G. De Groot	1999
	Mr. P. Bulthuis	Ms. B. Hoekstra	1999
	Rev. J. Posthuma	Rev. J. Koster	1999

I. Pastoral Ministries Board

Member	Alternate	Term Expires
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

Member	Alternate	Term Expires
Mr. J. Wilson	Ms. M. Van't Land	1998
Mr. D.J. De Witt	Rev. E. Gritter	1999
Rev. E.J. Tamminga	Rev. N. Vander Kwaak	1999
Rev. C. Terpstra	Rev. V. Vander Zee	1999
Rev. S.E. Ver Heul	Mr. G. Thaxton	1999
Mr. J. te Linde	Mr. B. Zwiers	1999

IV. Service committees

A. *Christian Reformed Church Loan Fund, Inc., U.S.*

Mr. G. Van Wyke (1997), Mr. J. Feikens (1997), Rev. G.L. Dykstra (1998), Ms. J. Admiraal (1998), Mr. G.J. Borst (1999), Ms. A. Joseph (1999). Ex officio members: Mr. J. Heinen, Mr. H.J. Vander Meer.

B. *Fund for Smaller Churches*

Mr. J.A. Evenhouse (1997), Mr. J.W. Hofman (1998), Rev. L. Sikkema (1998), Mr. A. Ruitter (1999), Rev. L.W. Van Essen (1999).

C. *Historical Committee*

Rev. W.D. Buursma (1997), Dr. H. Zwaanstra (1997), Ms. S. Harger (1998), Dr. J. Bratt (1999).

D. *Interchurch Relations Committee*

Rev. P.W. Brouwer (1997), Rev. L.J. Hofman (1997), Ms. C. Roelofs (1997), Ms. C. Elgersma (1998), Rev. R.J. Haven (1998), Dr. H. Zwaanstra (1998), Dr. L. Bierma (1999), Rev. J. Chen (1999), Rev. E.A. Van Baak (1999); ex officio member: Dr. D.H. Engelhard; administrative secretary: Rev. L.J. Hofman.

E. *Judicial Code Committee*

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), Mr. R. Bouma (1999), Mr. W. Posthumus (1999), Rev. J.G. Van Ryn (1999).

F. *Ministers' Pension Funds*

Canadian Board of Trustees of Pensions and Insurance

Rev. J. Kuntz (1997), Mr. A. Van Weelden (1998), Mr. J. Woudstra (1998), Mr. A. de Jong (1999), Mr. H. Schep (1999).

U.S. Board of Pensions and Insurance

Mr. S. Geelhood (1997), Mr. T. Verhage (1997), Mr. D. Vander Ploeg (1998), Rev. L. Van Drunen (1999), Mr. A. Walters (1999).

G. *Sermons for Reading Services*

Rev. H.A. Vander Windt (1997), Rev. F. Heslinga (1998), Rev. P.D. Stadt (1999); Rev. A.C. Geleyse (1999), alternate; Mr. R. Vander Ploeg (1999), treasurer.

H. *Youth-Ministry Committee*

Mr. R. Nanninga (1997), Mr. P. Duyst (1998), Mrs. J. Meyer (1998), Ms. W. Waller (1998), Mr. G. Bosma (Cadets) (1999), Ms. M. De Groot (1999), Mrs. J. De Heer (1999), Mr. R. Grussing (CRASM) (1999), Ms. G. Tamming (1999), Mrs. K. Wilk (1999), Dr. R. Keeley (1999); 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

A. *Committee to Study Inclusive Language for God*

Dr. J.W. Cooper (chair) 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.

B. *Committee to Study Ordination and "Official Acts of Ministry"* (Church Order Art. 53-b)

Dr. R.C. De Vries (chair), Mr. H. De Ruyter, Rev. R. Hofman, Dr. D.E. Holwerda, Rev. S.A. Jim, Rev. J.B. Vos; Dr. D.H. Engelhard, adviser.

C. *Committee to Study Structure for Ministry in Canada—Phase 3*

Rev. G.H. Pols (chair), Rev. G. Bomhof, Rev. N. de Koning, Mr. R. Elgersma, Mr. L. Hollaar, Mrs. R. Krabbe, Mrs. S. Roels, Mr. W. Terpstra, Mr. E. Vander Veer, Mr. B. Vandezande, Mr. J. Westerhof; Dr. P. Borgdorff, adviser.

D. *Committee to Study Structure for Ministry in the U.S.*

Rev. B.A. Averill, Mr. J. De Groat, Mr. R. Elgersma, Dr. R.S. Greenway, Mr. J. Kuyers, Rev. H. Numan, Rev. M. Ortiz, Dr. S. Roels, Dr. M. Szto, Mr. W. Terpstra, Mr. F. Velzen; advisers: Dr. P. Borgdorff, Dr. D.H. Engelhard.

E. *Committee to Examine Routes Being Used to Enter the Ordained Ministry in the CRC*

Mr. E. Benally, Dr. J. Bolt, Rev. A. Breems, Mr. R. den Dulk, Dr. E. Greenway, Rev. E.A. Harrison, Rev. J.T. Kim, Rev. R.E. Orellana, Mrs. P. Tigchelaar, Dr. W. Van Groningen; ex officio members: Dr. J.A. De Jong, Dr. D.H. Engelhard.

F. *Committee to Give Direction about and for Pastoral Care for Homosexual Members* (Members to be appointed by the Board of Trustees.)

It is moved that synod approve the membership list of the boards and committees.

—Adopted

ARTICLE 93

It is moved that synod approve the request of one of the delegates for a copy of the tape of the sessions dealing with women in office for limited use in his congregation.

—Adopted

ARTICLE 94

The president expresses thanks to his fellow officers—Rev. Gordon H. Pols, vice president; Rev. Kenneth D. Koeman, first clerk; Rev. Henry Admiraal, 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 1996.

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. Nelvina Ilbrink, Mrs. Marlene Oosterhouse, and Mrs. Thelma Schutt. He also expresses thanks to the synod newsroom persons—Mrs. Rachel Boehm Van Harmelen and Dr. Robert De Moor.

He expresses appreciation to Mr. Bruce Klanderman, who served as organist for synod, and to the three delegates who served as the committee to examine the minutes of synod—Mr. Dick Van Weerthuisen, Mr. Donald Holwerda, and Mr. Hilbert Rumph.

ARTICLE 95

The vice president expresses deep appreciation to the president, Rev. John G. Van Ryn, for his excellent leadership.

The president acknowledges his wife, Margaret, and he addresses the assembly.

He begins by saying that, in retrospect, God had prepared him for his task by bringing before him Bible passages underscoring the need for peace within the body of Christ. He emphasizes that we are a family. In a family there are both joys and tensions. We have made difficult decisions. We spoke about healing and abuse, we dealt with the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland issue; we dealt with the women-in-office issue. Speaking about the discussion and decision on women in office, he thanks God for the attitude shown after the vote was taken. Recognizing the disappointment some of the delegates feel about the outcome of this issue, he nevertheless pleads with the delegates to stay within the CRC. He reads Philippians 1:15-18 and challenges all assembled to proclaim Christ. That is the highest calling.

The delegates sing *Psalter Hymnal* 555, "Lead On, O King Eternal," and Rev. Van Ryn offers closing prayer.

Synod 1996 adjourns at 8:15 p.m.

John G. Van Ryn, president
Gordon H. Pols, vice president
Kenneth D. Koeman, first clerk
Henry Admiraal, second clerk

Attested a true copy
David H. Engelhard, general secretary

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APPENDIX I

Committee to Articulate Biblical and Theological Principles for the Development of a Racially and Ethnically Diverse Family of God

I. Mandate

At the request of participants in the Multiethnic Conference of 1992, Synod 1992 adopted the following recommendation:

That Synod 1992 appoint a study committee to engage in a comprehensive review and articulation of the biblical and theological principles regarding the development of a racially and ethnically diverse family of God.

The study is to include, but not be limited to, the following:

- a. The biblical basis for the development and use of multiethnic leadership.
- b. An assessment of the present criteria for leadership in the life of the CRCNA.
- c. Biblical guidelines for church-planting principles to be used in the development of a racially and ethnically diverse family of God.

Grounds:

- a. The CRC does not have at the present time a clear biblical and theological basis for its multicultural vision.
- b. The CRC's past and present responses to multiculturalism have been based on sociological factors more than on a well-developed biblical articulation.
- c. Racism negates the redemptive intent of the cross, and the presently growing racial tension must be addressed through Jesus Christ and his Word.
- d. The Multiethnic Conference requests this action.

(Acts of Synod 1992, pp. 720-21)

II. Background

A. Brief overview of past synodical declarations on race

1. Synod 1959, in response to declarations of the Reformed Ecumenical Synod of 1958 (Potchefstroom, South Africa), adopted as its own the declarations of that synod (*Acts of Synod 1959*, pp. 82-84).
2. Synod 1968, in the context of unprecedented racial strife in America's cities, called for a day of prayer for racial reconciliation and adopted a declaration affirming the call of the gospel to racial reconciliation (*Acts of Synod 1968*, pp. 18-20).
3. Synods 1969 and 1977 affirmed Resolutions on Race Relations, which were originally adopted by the Reformed Ecumenical Synod of 1968 (Amsterdam) and were subsequently revised at the Reformed Ecumenical Synods of 1972 (Australia) and 1976 (Cape Town, South Africa) (*Acts of Synod 1969*, pp. 50-52; *Acts of Synod 1977*, p. 34).

B. Brief overview of racial and ethnic diversity in the CRCNA

From the time of its birth in western Michigan in 1857 and for nearly one hundred years to follow, the congregations and members of the Christian Reformed Church in North America remained almost exclusively ethnic Dutch American—except for the few German-American congregations. Although the CRC sent its sons and daughters as missionaries to people of other races and

cultures in other lands, for the most part, the task of its "home missionaries" was to gather the sheep of Dutch descent who had scattered beyond the reach of already-established congregations in Canada and the United States.

The earliest notable exception was the denomination's mission efforts to Native Americans, especially the CRC's sustained outreach to the Navajo and Zuni nations in Arizona and New Mexico, which began with two missionary couples in 1896. Efforts at urban outreach to non-Dutch neighbors in Grand Rapids and Chicago were initiated as early as the 1920s, although the "converted" generally were kept at a distance—worshiping in chapels, often pastored by unordained men and women, sometimes even steered toward membership in English-speaking congregations from other denominations.

It took an entire century for the church to grant equal status to non-Dutch groups of believers. Prompted by the organization of the believers' group in Gallup, New Mexico, in late 1956, Synod 1958 advised the classis that this all-Navajo congregation be upgraded from associate-church to full-church status. The 1950s also saw increasing debate over the separate, lesser status of the neighborhood chapels. At this same time, however, the CRC was crossing several other racial and ethnic boundaries as well. Jewish and Chinese ministries were started in Chicago and New York, and African-American pastors were credentialed in Grand Rapids and New York. In the 1960s and following, Hispanic ministry was launched in New Jersey and Florida, Korean churches affiliated in Chicago and Los Angeles, ministries were started among Southeast Asian immigrant groups, and breakthroughs were seen in the forming of multiethnic congregations.

Synod 1959 adopted the Reformed Ecumenical Synod's twelve-point Declarations on Race, which initially seemed to have little bearing on the life of the denomination. By the mid-1960s, however, as cities burned and national leaders were assassinated, the CRC was forced to deal with race relations head-on. When a group of Black children from Lawndale CRC were denied admission to Timothy Christian School on Chicago's west side, the matter was brought to synod. The result was the formation of the Race Commission under the auspices of Christian Reformed Home Missions.

Synod 1971 replaced the Race Commission with the Synodical Committee on Race Relations (SCORR). SCORR was provided full-time staff and was mandated to work toward the eradication of racism in the church and in society. Synod also affirmed equality of opportunity for persons from ethnic-minority groups (see note below) and urged the agencies and institutions of the denomination to promote social justice in their policies and practices. Through broad-based partnership with the churches and agencies, SCORR has consistently supported the development of ethnic-minority leadership in the CRCNA. SCORR also has been unequivocal in its advocacy of racial and ethnic diversity and equality within the CRCNA as a denomination and in relationship to its neighbors—whether in South Africa, south Chicago, or south Grand Rapids.

Note: Though it is recognized that all persons are ethnic, i.e., of a national origin and may be in minority in certain contexts or environments, in this report the term *ethnic minority* refers to non-Anglo or non-Caucasian persons and groups.

How racially and ethnically diverse is the Christian Reformed Church? At the writing of this report, the total number of ethnic-minority members is estimated at 15,000 persons, or 5 percent of the denomination's 300,000 members

(compared to national averages between 20 percent and 25 percent) in approximately 150 ethnic-minority or multiethnic congregations. This 5 percent includes 7,000 members in the fifty or more Korean congregations and an estimated 8,000 members in predominantly African-American, Chinese, Hispanic, Native American, Southeast Asian, and multiethnic congregations.

Much of this growing diversity has been facilitated by Christian Reformed Home Missions—in partnership with growth-oriented churches, classes, and other agencies. By means of locally based *leadership training programs* and *apprenticeship positions* (formerly called Multiethnic Recruitment), scores of ethnic-minority persons are being further trained for ministry leadership in the CRC. Of all the 150 new and emerging churches receiving CRHM funding annually, more than half are predominantly ethnic-minority or multiethnic, most of which also are led by ethnic-minority pastors. Home Missions' *ethnic-ministry directors* are key resource persons for their respective churches, leaders, and planning groups as well as for their dominant-culture partners. The ethnic-ministry directors oversee the development of contextualized resource and training materials, have a voice in shaping church-development policy, and support the development of ethnic-minority leadership on the CRHM board and in other strategic positions.

The CRC's commitment to multiethnic leadership is reflected in other denominational contexts as well. The commitment of the CRCNA Board of Trustees to racial inclusiveness is demonstrated, among other ways, by its appointment of an African-American director of personnel. The Council of the Christian Reformed Churches in Canada has committed itself to addressing the needs and concerns of Indians and Metis in Canada and in recent years also has explored and worked toward ameliorating the causes and impact of racism in Canada with the assistance of a nationwide conference. CRWRC has shown special concern for issues of race and ethnicity, as illustrated by its hiring of ethnic-minority persons on central and regional staff and by its community-development programming. CRC Publications has worked intentionally to recruit and retain ethnic-minority employees and board members, to improve curriculum sensitivity to multicultural readers, and to obtain ethnic-minority vendors and writers.

Among the denomination's educational institutions, Calvin College employs numerous strategies to encourage multicultural leadership development, including a Minority Concerns Task Force, the president's Multicultural Advisory Council, Minority Fellowship programs for potential new faculty, filling various specialized staff positions with ethnic-minority persons, mentoring services for ethnic-minority students, and a MOSAIC 2000 endowment program to provide special scholarship assistance to ten ethnic-minority students annually. Calvin Theological Seminary regrets that it has yet to recruit its first non-Caucasian faculty appointee. At the same time, it has instituted a number of ethnic-minority training programs, conducts an orientation program for ethnic-minority leaders, has a non-Caucasian student population of about 30 percent, and employs ethnic-minority support staff and special lecturers.

Notwithstanding laudatory goals and the long road the CRC has already traveled in race relations, the process and progress have been slow—and there still are many miles to go, on various fronts. For example:

- Ethnic-minority persons working within the agencies, although growing in number, serve primarily in support roles. The ethnic-minority community also remains underrepresented in executive and faculty positions, on denominational boards and committees, and as delegates to synod.
- A disproportionate number of the ethnic-minority pastors receive their training in nontraditional ways, such as through Bible colleges, local training programs, and other seminaries. Credentialing also tends to follow nontraditional paths—admission to ministry on the basis of special need and gifts, or by way of doctrinal conversations, or by ordination as evangelists. (The point is not that nontraditional routes should be discouraged but rather that traditional routes should be reexamined in light of the changing needs of a changing church.)
- Generally speaking, ethnic-minority pastors are compensated at lower levels than Anglo pastors are. This fact can be explained in part by the smaller size of their congregations (100 members on average, compared to 315 denomination-wide), the comparatively high number of evangelists and bivocational leaders among them, and the economic realities of the communities they serve. At the same time, it is necessary to review extant CRC policies and practices regarding personnel benefits and related matters.
- At all levels of denominational life persons of color struggle with a sense of *belonging*. Ethnic-minority members from multiethnic or predominantly Anglo congregations often are expected to stretch their comfort zones far more than their ethnic-majority brothers and sisters are expected to do so. Leaders of ethnic-minority congregations wonder who made the rules, and they tend to occupy the back seats in many denominational settings. Too many persons from ethnic-minority groups have left the CRC—not because of its Reformed world and life view but because of the lack of full acceptance at the family table.

As the CRC nears the threshold of the third millennium, it is important for us to be increasingly aware of the rapid demographic shifts in North America and of the dramatic reality that in little more than one generation the present majority culture of Canada and the United States will cease to be the majority. This change in the ethnic balance will give us the wonderful opportunity to experience profound new understandings of becoming the new people of God—of becoming a more inclusive church that more faithfully reflects the racial and cultural diversity of the nations among which God has planted us. This is a truly exciting challenge for the CRCNA, which in God's sovereign grace already is becoming a diverse, multiracial, and multiethnic family of God. It is our prayer that what we slowly and painfully learned in our not-so-distant past will instruct us to go far beyond ourselves and that our struggle to be a sign of the city that is to come will bring much glory to our diversity-loving God.

III. Biblical and theological principles

A. Introduction

Inasmuch as our mandate calls for “a comprehensive review and articulation of the biblical and theological principles regarding the development of a racially and ethnically diverse family of God,” we set forth twelve principles below.

Three introductory comments:

1. We have chosen the framework of creation, fall, and new creation within which to articulate these biblical principles. *New creation* is an inclusive term referring to the one re-creating, reconciling work of Christ, beginning with his earthly ministry, death, and resurrection and fully realized in the new heavens and the new earth.
2. A common thread in many of the principles articulated below is the reality of “the one and the many.” There is “oneness,” and there is “manyness” in God’s world, or unity and diversity. We see this reality in God himself in his trinity. We see unity and diversity functioning in perfect harmony in the world as God created it. We see how Christ in his saving work creates a single new body, united in him but diverse and inclusive beyond our imagination. The two verses below capture both notes of this song that permeates the Scriptures:

... for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live. (1 Cor. 8:6)

After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. (Rev. 7:9)

Having studied Scripture and sought to hear its message anew, the committee judges the following to be a simple but foundational statement of the biblical message with respect to racial and ethnic diversity, a statement that rests centrally upon the unity/diversity theme in Scripture:

To be in Christ is to be reconciled with one another as a community of racially and ethnically diverse people of God.

We see this statement as both declaration and judgment, indicative and imperative. It is a statement of the way things are in God’s program; it is also a prophetic call to “become who we already are” in Christ.

3. Below are working definitions of terms that arise in the subsequent discussion of these matters.

Race - a term used to describe men and women who share biologically transmitted traits that are defined as socially significant.

Ethnicity - a term used to describe men and women who usually share a common place of ancestral origin, a traditional language, and a historical religion, which together confer a distinctive social identity. Including a reference to “a historical religion” in this definition of ethnicity does not mean that we celebrate or affirm any non-Christian religions as elements in our oneness in Christ.

Culture - the values and beliefs that are institutionalized in a people's collective life; the outward discipline in which inherited meanings and morality, beliefs and ways of behaving are preserved.

Prejudice - a negative attitude or assumption about others on the basis of their identification with a certain group of people.

Racism - a prejudicial attitude and/or behavior directed against persons on the basis of their race. Racism may manifest itself interpersonally as well as institutionally.

Ethnocentrism - the tendency to assume that one's own ethnic and cultural values and preferences are everyone's or to believe that they should be.

Stereotype - an oversimplified opinion or uncritical judgment which unfairly categorizes persons or groups.

B. Biblical and theological principles for a racially and ethnically diverse family of God

CREATION

1. The world as God created it is rich and God glorifying in its diversity.

The creation account (Gen. 1) explodes with myriads of divisions—light from darkness, water below from the vapors above, land from water. The world God creates is marvelously varied, with thousands of different flowers and leaves, stars and planets, mountains and meadows, fish and fowl. God loves diversity. Variety and differences are not bad things but are enriching things in the world as God created it.

The crown of this varied creation is the human person, God's image-bearer. As God's imagebearers all human beings without exception are endowed with royal dignity and share in dominion over all creation. As God blesses them with fruitfulness, all their descendants without any exception also share equally in this royal dignity. Human beings also image God in their capacity for loving relationships with God and with each other in righteousness and holiness.

Human beings are diverse in that each human person is unique—no two people are alike. More profoundly, human beings exhibit this deep principle of unity and diversity in their maleness and femaleness. Human beings, in their maleness and femaleness, are a kind of model of the way diversity functions in the good creation. The differences between male and female are a cause for celebration and joy (Gen. 2:23). The differences between male and female make for attraction, complementarity, and deep communion. Diversity is enriching; it releases creative energies that in turn increase diversity. Again, variety and differences within the human family are not bad; they enrich the world as God created it.

2. The created world, with all its diversity, has its unity in the one God, who created it through Jesus Christ.

The fact that God created the world is clearly attested throughout Scripture. The New Testament elaborates upon the presence and role of Jesus Christ in the creation of the world. Three specific passages deserve mention in this regard:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. (John 1:1-3)

He [Christ] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things and in him all things hold together. (Col. 1:15-17)

In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things and through whom he made the universe. (Heb. 1:1-2)

From these three passages, which set forth foundational truths, we learn that

- a. Jesus Christ was present with God the Father already at creation.
- b. Jesus Christ's role at creation involved "all things." The Greek word for "all things" (*panta*) is used in all the passages to define the scope of Christ's involvement in creation, a scope that is all-inclusive. John further underscores this by stating that without Christ "nothing was made that has been made."
- c. The Greek prepositions used in these passages underscore the rich, even mysterious, involvement of Christ in all things as they were created. All things were created *in* (*en*) him (translated "by" in the NIV), *through* (*dia*) him, and *for* (*eis*) him. Somehow Christ himself is the source (*en*) of creation, the mediator (*dia*) of creation, and the purpose (*eis*) of creation.
- d. Christ the creator holds all things together. Paul says that "in him all things hold together" (Col. 1:17). There is a coherence, a unity, in all things as they were created by Christ.

This teaching of Scripture is significant for the purposes of our study for at least three reasons.

First, when we seek unity among different peoples and different things, we are not seeking something alien to the nature of things, just as, when people put a puzzle together, they assume that all the pieces were cut in such a way that they do fit together. The puzzle was designed that way. Conversely, a puzzle that consists of pieces thrown together from ten different puzzles will never fit together. The former, not the latter, is the picture of our world as God created it. When we seek the unity of diverse peoples and things, we are not seeking something alien to the nature of things and to the goal of God for creation.

Second, applied more narrowly to the human race, this truth of the unity of all things in Christ implies a radical unity and equality of all people. In the biblical picture, all humanity has been created in God's image and has its source not only in Christ but in Adam and Eve, our first parents. Referring to Adam, Paul says, "From one ancestor he made all nations to inhabit the whole earth" (Acts 17:26, NRSV). And, according to Genesis 3, Eve is "the mother of all living" (v. 20). All human beings of all races are related to one another through their common origins in our first parents. The Christian faith allows no room for holding that other human beings are fundamen-

tally different from “us” or somehow less truly made in God’s image than “we” are.

Third, the unity that Jesus Christ died and rose again to bring into being is not a new unity created for the first time, unknown and untested; it is a primal unity restored, a unity re-created. When the world is reconciled through Jesus Christ, it is going back to being a world that has already been and to the one by whom and in whom and through whom all things were created and existed in unity. This gives Christians hope and direction in their work.

3. The unity and diversity of the human race and of created reality reflect the unity and diversity of the triune God (namely, his oneness and threeness).

In the classical formulation of the Trinity of God, the church has spoken of God as *one in being* and *three in person*. Students of the Trinity have developed this basic Trinity doctrine as a model for human society. “Social Trinity” is a particular emphasis in trinitarian theology that asserts that the unity and community of the human family are rooted in the very nature of God.

God reveals himself in a community of triunity already in Genesis 1:26: “Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, in our likeness.’” In John’s Gospel, the Father is in the Son, and the Son is in the Father (John 10:38; 14:11). The Father loves the Son and shows him all that he does (John 5:20). The Father knows the Son, and the Son knows the Father (John 10:15). When the Son returns to the Father, the Father will send another Counselor, the Spirit of truth (John 14:16-18). The Son prays that his followers will be one just “as we [the Father and the Son] are one” (John 17:11).

The triune God, in the mutual giving and receiving of intratrinitarian fellowship, is the first model for human society. In God’s oneness God calls us to unity. In God’s threeness God affirms our diversity. The communion in which God created us and to which God calls us is already displayed in the triune God.

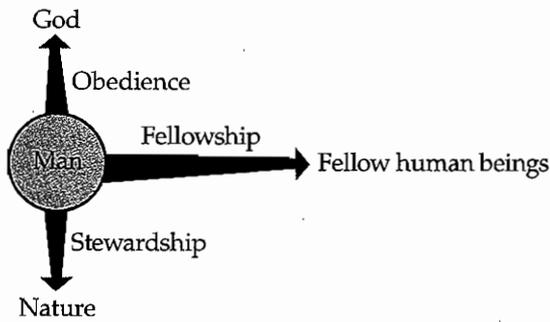
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4. A fundamental effect of sin is the breakdown of community.

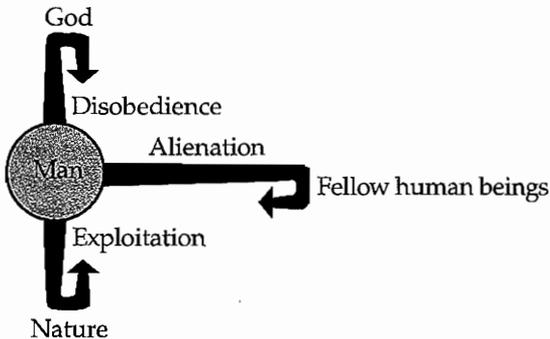
a. The image of God and relationships

Human beings were created in the image of God. To be an image-bearer of God means many things, but central to *any* description of what it means to be an imagebearer of God is *the capacity for relationship* with which God has endowed human beings. We are relational beings. Giving and receiving, loving and being loved, working with others in creative and upbuilding ways, building community—these are activities at the heart of being human and of human community.

The late Dr. Anthony Hoekema, professor of systematic theology at Calvin Theological Seminary, often spoke of the threefold relationship into which human beings were created—in relationship to God, to one another, and to nature. Before sin entered the world, these were relationships of obedience, fellowship, and stewardship.



Sin perverts these relationships. In our relationship with God we are now disobedient, in our relationships with one another we are now alienated, and in our relationships with nature we now tend to exploit nature instead of acting as its steward.



Although the effect of sin upon any one of these relationships cannot be separated from its effect upon all of them, our primary interest in this report is sin's effect upon our relationships with one another.

b. What sin does to human relationships

In our biblical study of the effect of sin upon human relationships, we discern the following biblical principle: *sin tends to be most insidious and destructive of human community at those precise points that God intended human community to be most enriching and expressive of his image in us.*

1) The principle applied to the male-female relationship

Genesis 3 is a kind of foundational case study for understanding what sin does to our relationships with one another. After Adam and Eve fell into sin, the Lord cursed the serpent and then announced the effects of Adam and Eve's sin upon their lives. Of particular interest to us here is the effect of sin upon their relationship with each other. Genesis 3:16 summarizes the effect of sin upon the relationship of Adam and Eve when God says to Eve, "Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you" (Gen. 3:16). The exact meaning of this verse is a matter of debate among students of the Bible. Whatever one's interpretation, this much is clear: sin takes a healthy relationship between male and female, husband and wife, and distorts it, resulting in alienation and harm to fellowship and community. Sin takes a

relationship that was intended to be most expressive of the image of God in us and significantly damages and distorts it.

2) The principle applied to other relationships

Again, the principle under discussion is this: *sin tends to be most insidious and destructive of human community at those precise points that God intended human community to be most enriching and expressive of his image in us.* Marriage is that relationship within which we develop and express much of our “God-likeness”: giving and receiving, making and keeping commitments, procreation, enjoyment. We have seen how deeply our fall into sin harms marriage.

This principle is illustrated further in the Cain and Abel story (Gen. 4). Brotherly love has much richness and beauty (David loved Jonathan like a brother [II Sam. 1:26]). But this very relationship becomes the setting within which the worst imaginable envy, hatred, and violence take place.

To illustrate this principle further, it can be argued that the tongue and our human sexuality are two aspects of humanity that give expression to the image of God in us. The tongue is a marvelous means for language, communication, the expression of ideas, and the articulation of truth—all activities at the heart of how we image God. But in the fall, the tongue became a key weapon of destruction of human community (James 3:1-12). Human sexuality is that marvelous means by which husband and wife give to and receive from one another and express God-giving and God-imaging love. But in the fall, human sexuality became perverted in a host of ways (Lev. 18).

Extending this more general principle to the subject of this report, we observe that racial and ethnic diversity also can be the occasion for mutual appreciation, greater self-understanding through seeing how other people live and think and relate, and the glorification of God for the rich variety in human communities and cultures. All of these activities are centrally expressive of the image of God in us. But in the fall, sin turns the very diversity that God intended to be deeply humanizing and enriching into lines along which deep alienation takes form. The alienation of Jew and gentile in the Bible is indicative of broader alienation along racial and ethnic lines. Regrettably, the primary story line of recorded human history is the alienation of peoples along racial and ethnic lines.

c. Two misunderstood texts

Two biblical texts deserve mention in this discussion of the effects of sin upon the racial and ethnic diversity of the human community. The point here is to indicate what they do *not* have to say about racial and ethnic diversity.

1) The curse of Ham

Genesis 9-10 gives us the account of Noah’s sons in which Canaan is cursed because of the sin of his father, Ham, whereas Shem and Japheth are given blessings and promises of prosperity. Canaan will be the lowest of slaves to his brothers (Gen. 9:25). This verse has sometimes been used to justify the enslavement of Blacks, since the descendants of Ham eventually did settle, among other places, in

northeast Africa. However, this argument fails to take into account the simple historical fact that those cursed here were Canaanites, who were Caucasian, and the important exegetical fact that the purpose of the Genesis 9-10 narrative (Gen. 10 goes on to list "The Table of Nations") is not to justify human oppression, but to set up the redemptive line from the post-flood peoples to Abraham, a line established in Shem. Our primary reason for including these clarifications on this somewhat obscure passage in Genesis is not that the interpretation refuted above is so strong and plausible that it requires extensive refutation. Rather, we include it to observe how the Bible can be misused by one group seeking to justify the exploitation of another group and to observe that, regrettably, even erroneous biblical interpretations such as this one have a way of persisting in the minds of some Christians long after their exegetical basis has been refuted.

2) The Tower of Babel

Another biblical narrative that has often been misunderstood is the Tower of Babel narrative in Genesis 11. The purpose of the Tower of Babel narrative is to demonstrate the futility of human attempts to build community without God. God's confusion of language at Babel was a tool of God's judgment against human pride and not a sign that there is any inherent sinfulness in diverse languages. Human beings cannot build community without God. It doesn't work. The positive significance of Babel for our subject will be further elucidated below when we look at the Pentecost event.

d. The root of alienation: fear

Behind alienation, whatever the lines along which that alienation takes place, lie fear, insecurity, and a loss of identity that are a result of our separation from God.

Instructive here (again) is the story of humanity's fall into sin as recorded in Genesis 3. When Adam and Even disobey God, they are immediately afraid. They sew fig leaves to hide from each other (Gen. 3:7), and they hide from God among the trees of the garden (Gen. 3:8). In our alienation from God, we lose our proper self-understanding. As John Calvin points out at the beginning of the *Institutes*, our knowledge of God and knowledge of self are interrelated. If we don't know God, we don't know ourselves. We lose our bearings as to who we are.

This loss of proper self-understanding creates fear and anxiety. In this crisis of self-understanding, we often turn to racial, ethnic, or cultural forms of self-confirmation and self-understanding. At the very least, these forms of self-confirmation are incomplete and distorting. They quickly become idolatrous. We re-create God in our own image. These forms of self-confirmation often become the means by which we harm others who are different from ourselves. As differences between individuals or groups increase, so does fear, and the cycle of fear and differentiation spirals in intensity. The effect upon the community is pain, misery, and brokenness.

John says, "There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear . . ." (I John 4:18). This statement follows John's declaration that "God is love" and "whoever lives in love lives in God and God in him" (I John 4:16).

Only love, the perfect love of God, can give people a renewed identity that casts out fear and anxiety and gives them the courage to relinquish these incomplete and harmful ways of identifying themselves. Only love, the perfect love of God, can create new hearts in people which cause them to see the world and others in new ways. To that redemptive love of God we now turn.

NEW CREATION

Paul says, "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come" (II Cor. 5:17). In Christ, God comes to create a new world. In the reflections below, we will see that reconciliation across racial and ethnic lines is not just some tangential goal that gets tacked onto the saving work of Christ; rather, it is at the heart of God's plan to create a new heaven and a new earth.

5. The uniting of all things in Jesus Christ is at the heart of God's eternal plan for the ages.

In the first three chapters of Ephesians, Paul seeks to place the work of Christ into the broader perspective of God's plan for the ages. One important Greek word that recurs in those chapters is *oikonomia*, variously translated "management, administration, or plan."

- a. In Ephesians 1:9-10, in the middle of Paul's opening doxology of praise to God for his great work of salvation, a work that is the unfolding of his eternal will, Paul says that

he [God] has made known to us in all wisdom and insight the mystery of his will, according to his purpose which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. (Eph. 1:9-10, RSV)

What is the plan of God set forth already in Christ? To unite all things in Christ. Notice how Paul grasps for the most inclusive language he can ("all things, things in heaven and things on earth") when he describes the scope of God's plan. And the purpose of God in his saving work is to unite all things in Christ, indeed, to bring all things back to that unity they had in Christ from the beginning.

- b. In Ephesians 3:2 Paul again refers to the *oikonomia* of God when he says, "Surely you have heard about the *administration* of God's grace that was given to me for you, that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation . . ." In verse 6 Paul spells out the mystery:

This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.

The grand plan of God brings together Jew and gentile. The Greek prefix *sun* ("with") occurs three times in verse 6 (literally "heirs with," "body with," and "sharers with"), underscoring the unifying thrust of God's work.

- c. Finally, in Ephesians 3:8-10, Paul says,

. . . this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make plain to everyone the *administration* of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things. His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom

of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Again, the plan of God is to proclaim the unsearchable riches of Christ to *everyone*—Jew and gentile. And this has been God's plan from the beginning.

6. Reconciliation with God and reconciliation with one another are inseparable in God's saving work.

Although the New Testament term *reconciliation* (*katallasso*) is not a frequently used term, it occurs at very strategic points in Paul's writings and is integral to the biblical vision of a racially and ethnically diverse family of God. For our purposes in this report, we look at four important passages.

a. Romans 5:10-11

For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved by his life! Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

It's important to notice, first, that reconciliation is God's program, not ours. In non-Christian religions, people attempt to be reconciled to God through their own actions. In the Christian religion, God is the initiator of reconciliation. Second, sin in this passage, as in all the reconciliation passages, is specifically described not so much as "guilt," though that may be involved, nor "pollution," but as our alienation from God. Sin manifests itself in the breakdown of relationship and community. Third, here in Romans 5, in distinction from the passages to be considered next, "believers" are the "object" of God's reconciliation.

b. II Corinthians 5:18-21 (NIV, with modification in v. 19)

All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, by not counting men's sins against them, and by having given to us the ministry of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that we might become the righteousness of God.

First, notice that in this passage the "object" of God's reconciliation program is "the world." The world is obviously thought of primarily as the world of human beings in contrast to the whole of God's created world (visible and invisible). The world here is not limited to those who have already believed but includes also those who must yet respond in faith to the message of reconciliation, thus giving God's program of reconciliation a strong missiological character—which leads to the second observation: Notice the strategic role God gives the church in this work of reconciliation. Two different times in this passage (vv. 18 and 19) Paul says that God has given us (the church) this ministry of reconciliation. Paul places his own ministry of reconciliation alongside God's work of reconciliation. The church's ministry of reconciliation is not just some human idea or political agenda but an integral part of God's program of reconciliation.

c. Colossians 1:19-22

For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood shed on the cross. Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight

Interpretation of these verses is made difficult by the fact that the biblical genre changed within these verses: Verses 15-20 are almost certainly an early Christian hymn; they are followed by Paul's application of the truth in that hymn to the Colossian situation (v. 21 ff.).

Nevertheless, it is clear that in this passage the "object" of God's reconciliation program is not "believers," as in Romans 5, but "all things" (*ta panta*), explicitly including "the things on earth" and "the things in heaven." God's program of reconciliation is thus as broad as creation. Just as the creation of the world was "in," "through," and "unto" Christ (*en, dia, eis*), so the work of reconciliation is "in" him, where all the fullness was pleased to dwell, and "through" him, and "unto" him.

(Note: The fact that verses 15-20 are a hymn is probably important in understanding the universalistic statements in verse 20. The statements of the hymn should not be made to provide grist for theological analysis. [It is believed by some that the universalism of church father Origin may be grounded in this verse.] It is probably better to see that the hymn is *not* trying to specify the extent of salvation but to acclaim who is the "mediator of creation and redemption." Thus the "reconciling to himself all things" in verse 20 is best understood to mean that "Christ is the Redeemer/Reconciler of everything in heaven and on earth that is to be reconciled." The point is that the Colossian Christians do not need to seek any means of reconciliation outside of Christ.)

d. Ephesians 2:14-16

For he is our peace, who has made the two [gentile and Jew] one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in his one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility.

In this passage the single biggest new factor, not explicitly present in the other passages, is that God's program of reconciliation is not simply vertical (reconciling believers/the world/all things to himself) but also horizontal (reconciling Jew and gentile, "uncircumcised" and "circumcised," v. 11). What has separated them is the dividing wall, identified as "the enmity," and thus, correctly, the NIV translation "the dividing wall of hostility." Christ "destroyed" that dividing wall of hostility by in his flesh "abolishing" (rendering ineffective) "the law with its commandments and regulations."

Paul does not say how Christ rendered ineffective (abolished) the law with its commandments and regulations. From what Paul says in other places, we may suggest that Christ did so by fulfilling the law, both by his active and passive obedience. That is, he fulfilled the law by actively

obeying it and by passively taking on himself its curse against mankind's sins. Since the law has thus been completely fulfilled, it can never become a source of "enmity" between Jew and gentile—especially in regard to what the Jews had quite specifically identified as their "identity markers," especially circumcision, clean and unclean foods, and feast days (preeminently the sabbath). God thus created in Christ out of the two, the "circumcised" and the "uncircumcised," "one new man." Here the "one new man" must be understood in its corporate sense and almost identified with the church. Thus Christ "is our peace" (Eph. 2:14), "thus making peace" (Eph. 2:15), and he "preached peace to you who were far away [gentiles] and to those who were near [Jews]" (Eph. 2:17).

Whereas humans often divide people according to race or nationality, God ever made only one division among human beings, namely, Israel and the nations, or Jew and gentile. The breathtaking news of this passage is that God has now removed the only division he ever made in the human family. The point for us is clear: If God himself took away the only division that he had ever made within the human family, how much more have all other "man-made" divisions within the human family been taken away.

7. Already in the old covenant the scope of God's mission is racially and ethnically inclusive.

A common misunderstanding of the mission of God is the belief that in the Old Testament, before Christ, the scope of God's mission is only ethnic Israel and that only in the New Testament, with the coming of Christ, does that scope extend to all nations. In the old covenant, Israel is the redemptive focus of God's mission. The movement is always toward Jerusalem and toward the king. In the new covenant, Pentecost turns the movement of God's mission outward. Instead of people having to come to Jerusalem, the Spirit goes out to people everywhere. The "energy flow" of God's mission changes from centripetal to centrifugal. However, it is important not to confuse these dramatic *developments within* the mission of God and the universal *scope* of God's mission. The scope of God's mission always was and remains racially and ethnically inclusive.

All nations are in view from the beginning of God's saving work. Already with Abraham God promised, "Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation and all nations on earth will be blessed through him" (Gen. 18:18) and "I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and will give them all these lands, and through your offspring all the nations on earth will be blessed" (Gen. 26:4). Isaiah sees the day coming when all nations will stream to the temple of the Lord (Isa. 2:2), "for my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations" (Isa. 56:7). And when he cries, "Arise, shine, for your light has come and the glory of the Lord rises upon you" (Isa. 60:1), the vision that follows is a chapter-long vision of all peoples coming to the throne of God: "Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn" (Isa. 60:3).

The Old Testament prophets made it clear that ethnic identity was subordinate to spiritual identity. Ethnicity is always penultimate to the kingship of Yahweh. Jerusalem is significant because Yahweh is there. Physical circumcision is never enough for a person to be a part of God's people. Moses and Jeremiah call the people to circumcise their hearts (Deut.

10:16; Jer. 4:4). Israel does not result from Israel's own biological ability (Sarah is sterile). God even inverts the normal inheritance protocol (Esau, the older, will serve Jacob, the younger). The book of Jonah is a judgment against ethnocentrism and the mistaken identification of God's mission with ethnic Israel alone. The psalms are filled with references to all people and all nations praising the name of the Lord. The family tree of Jesus (Matt. 1:1-17), with its mention of the likes of Rahab and Ruth, reveals the way the scope of God's mission reaches beyond ethnic Israel already in the old covenant.

Again, the purpose in stating this principle is not to downplay the dramatic developments within the mission of God. It is rather to head off mistaken notions regarding changes in the scope of God's mission which can lead to mistaken notions regarding the unchanging purposes of God and the role of ethnicity in the mission of God.

8. In Pentecost, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the church, God gives new power to the church, power to break down walls of separation and create a community that transcends divisions of race, ethnicity, and culture.

Just before Jesus ascended into heaven, he told his disciples, "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). This prediction of a worldwide mission follows Jesus' command in Matthew 28:19-20 to "go and make disciples of all nations." When God's Spirit is poured out upon the church on the day of Pentecost, people from every nation under heaven (Acts 2:5) hear the apostles (who were Galileans) speaking in their native language. This is the day of the Lord foretold by the prophet Joel (Acts 2:17-21). Now "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" (Acts 2:21).

In the biblical drama, the blessing of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost stands in bold contrast to the curse of Babel. In the confusion of language at Babel, God declares that his people cannot build human community without him. At Pentecost God creates a new community where, in the Spirit, people have a unity that transcends their own particular language. The significance of Pentecost is not that everyone who believes in Christ now speaks one language. People still speak in a multitude of languages. But in the Spirit, God creates a unity that transcends the barriers of language. Racial, ethnic, and cultural differences are not erased; they are subordinated to the new unity believers have in the Spirit.

In Acts 10, God shows Peter what the church looks like in this age of the Spirit. Through a vision, God reveals to Peter that the old divisions of clean and unclean, Jew and gentile, have been demolished (Acts 10:15). Then Peter goes to the house of Cornelius to tell the people there of God's new ways. He announces that God no longer calls anyone impure or unclean (Acts 10:28). "God does not show favoritism but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right" (Acts 10:34-35).

Paul sees this new unity as transcending every human division, even the division between Abraham's seed and the rest of humanity: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Gal. 3:28-29).

9. The church, in its unity and diversity, is God's strategic vehicle for bringing into being his new creation.

The church is strategic in God's plan to effect this new oneness. In Ephesians 3 Paul discloses God's plan to unite all things in Christ. In verses 8-10 he explains the role of the church in that plan:

His [God's] intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The church, Christ's gathered body in the world, is the means by which God intends to reveal himself, to proclaim the good news, and to unite all things in Christ.

In John 17, Jesus is more precise as to how the church reveals God. Jesus prays that all the people who believe in him "may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you" (John 17:20-21). Why does he want them to be one? "May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me . . . May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me" (John 17:21, 23). When the church is one, people see God. The power of the church's witness lies precisely in her new oneness in Christ, a oneness of believers that transcends external differences.

The church will be effective in the mission God has given her only when she understands and lives out of a vision of the church that appreciates both its unity and diversity in Christ. The church is one in Christ (I Cor. 1:10-17; 12:12-13). Christ is the one foundation of the church (I Cor. 3:11) and the one head of the body (Eph. 1:22-23). "There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope when you were called—one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all" (Eph. 4:4-6). But the church is also marvelously diverse. Just as the body has feet and hands and eyes and ears and is incomplete without all those parts, so the body of Christ is made up of many parts. In I Corinthians 12 Paul teaches that each part of the body is necessary to make the body function with complete effectiveness, and all parts have equal dignity, regardless of size or function. The gifts of the Spirit to the church are marvelously diverse (I Cor. 12:27-31; Eph. 4:11-13; Rom. 12:3-8).

This teaching on the unity and diversity of the church is extremely important as we think about matters of racial and ethnic diversity in the church. On the one hand, Scripture calls us to be one in Christ. This is not just some theoretical oneness. It is a visible, actual unity of people with one another because they share in the common source of life—Jesus Christ. This unity is so real that the world comes to know God through it (John 17:23). This scriptural call to unity judges the church in her lack of unity.

But unity does not obliterate differences. To be whole, the body needs each part. In terms of racial and ethnic differences, the goal in the church is not to rub out those differences and try to make everyone the same. Each of us has a particular race, ethnicity, and culture. We do not cease to be Korean or Kenyan or American when we become part of the body. Rather, each particular person (and community) plays a part in making the body whole. Each person and community brings unique gifts and makes unique

contributions. In the Spirit, diversity is no longer threatening, but enriching. And unity and diversity together confirm that indeed the church is the Lord's work, not our own.

In our work as a committee we have encountered the confusion that comes when the unity and diversity of the church are not clearly distinguished. On the one hand, we sometimes speak of leaving our culture behind when we come to Christ. On the other hand, we speak of affirming and respecting each person's culture. Often we say these two things in the same breath. The fact is, we don't simply leave our culture behind when we become Christian. Such a statement betrays a superficial understanding of the profound senses in which we are cultural beings. The person who was Italian before she became a Christian is still Italian. When the Chinese brother becomes a Christian, his tastes in food do not suddenly get transformed into some universal diet. When the Native American becomes a Christian, her tastes in music do not suddenly get transformed into some universal musical style. Race, ethnicity, and culture are profoundly important for personal and communal self-identification. They are important before and after someone becomes a Christian.

But when we become Christian, our identity in Christ judges and transforms those old and incomplete ways of knowing ourselves. The Cuban who becomes a Christian is still Cuban. But now her being a Christian shapes her being a Cuban. We never cease to be of a certain race, ethnic group, and culture. But in Christ, those ways of identifying ourselves are no longer definitive of who we are. Christ is definitive for personal and communal self-understanding. Christ is ultimate; race, ethnicity, and culture are penultimate for self-identification and self-understanding.

Having said all of that, we still must acknowledge difficulties in this area. When we become Christians, God requires that we leave behind those aspects of our culture that are incompatible with his kingdom. The difficulty comes in that the new Christian invariably adopts new cultural patterns, and these are often not specifically Christian but simply patterns formed by other cultural groups.

The point here is that, as Christians of different backgrounds work through these complex issues, it is crucial that, among other things, they keep the unity and diversity of the church in proper balance. Stressing the unity of the church at the expense of its diversity can lead to excesses in which we imagine that becoming a Christian erases all cultural differences among Christians. Stressing the diversity of the church at the expense of its unity can lead to excesses in which we give an importance, even an idolatrous autonomy, to race, ethnicity, and culture—an importance that Christ eliminated on the cross.

Our confessions articulate the unity and diversity of the church. Belgic Confession Article 27 speaks of "one single catholic or universal church," which, though it is "spread and dispersed throughout the entire world," is "still joined and united in heart and will in one and the same Spirit, by the power of faith." Concerning "the holy catholic church," Lord's Day 21 of the Heidelberg Catechism states,

I believe that the Son of God through his Spirit and Word, out of the entire human race, from the beginning of the world to its end, gathers, protects, and

preserves for himself a community chosen for eternal life and united in true faith. And of this community I am and always will be a living member.

The church is as diverse as the human race and as singular as Christ.

10. God calls Christians to find their deepest identity in union with and in the service of Christ.

Unfortunately, it is possible to seize upon this acknowledgment of racial, ethnic, and cultural differences in the church (set forth in Principle 6) and seek to justify attitudes, practices, and behaviors that, in fact, are sinful in that they unnecessarily create barriers and walls between people and add to the separation that Christ came to remove. Put another way, there is often a fine line between healthy ethnic and cultural self-identification, which enriches community, and ethnocentrism, which fractures community.

The call of the gospel is radical and clear: Love God above all and love your neighbor as yourself (Matt. 22:37-40). Jesus says that anyone who loves his father or mother or son or daughter more than him is not worthy of him (Matt. 10:37). We finally find our life when we lose it (Matt. 10:39). Jesus calls us to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us (Matt. 5:44). It's no remarkable achievement to love people who love you, Jesus says. (We could paraphrase that as "It's no big deal to love people who are like us.") Even pagans do that. The call of the gospel is to love those who do not love you. Paul says that we should look out not just for our own interests but also for the interests of others (Phil. 2:4) and that we should develop attitudes toward ourselves and others that model Christ's self-effacing, self-denying life (Phil. 2:6-11).

Jesus certainly modeled this kind of behavior in his commitment to minister to all types of people. Jesus actually enjoyed being with people the religious establishment considered "sinners" (Luke 15:2; Luke 7:36-50). He had good news for, of all people, a Samaritan woman (John 4:1-26). He responded to the Roman centurion's faith and healed this gentile's son (Luke 7:1-10). In the parable of the good Samaritan, Jesus told of the love of Christ at work in a person (the Samaritan) whom others, through ethnocentric eyes, saw as inferior and unworthy of grace. Jesus' social world and world of ministry were not defined along lines of race, gender, ethnicity, culture, or social standing. He looked past those external characteristics of people and saw instead people as imagebearers of God.

As significant as race, ethnicity, and culture are for self-identification, Christians find their deepest identity in union with and in the service of Christ. The rhythm of the gospel is not one of self-justification and self-preservation. It is certainly not one that seeks to build up self by defining ourselves favorably over against others who are different from us. There is no room in the kingdom for attitudes that foster pride toward self or resentment toward others. Rather, in the security we have because we know ourselves to be children of our Father in heaven and to be loved by Christ, Christians become "self-forgetful." The love of Christ casts out our fear. In Christ we have the courage and commitment voluntarily to step across and seek to break down those barriers that have been erected by race, ethnicity, and culture and to repudiate the ways of self-identification and self-confirmation that have become unhealthy or even idolatrous.

11. Obedience in matters of racial reconciliation calls us individually and corporately to continually repent, to strive for justice, and to battle the powers of evil.

We must be forthright in acknowledging that racism is sin. Racism is more than just bad manners; indeed, any attitudes, words, or deeds of omission or commission that inflict harm upon others and break down community constitute sin against God and sin against God's children. Racism is a disgrace to a civil society. But it is a much greater disgrace in the church, for racism sends exactly the opposite message from the message Christ sends in his reconciling work on the cross.

In its penetrating analysis of the sixth and ninth commandments, the Heidelberg Catechism shows how racism is diametrically opposed to the will of God. In its teaching on the sixth commandment, the catechism says that

I am not to belittle, insult, hate, or kill my neighbor—not by my thoughts, my words, my look or gesture, and certainly not by actual deeds—and I am not to be party to this in others

(Q and A. 105)

And in its teaching on the ninth commandment, the catechism says,

God's will is that I never give false testimony against anyone, twist no one's words, not gossip or slander, nor join in condemning anyone without a hearing or without a just cause. Rather, in court and everywhere else, I should avoid lying and deceit of every kind; these are devices the devil himself uses, and they would call down on me God's intense anger. I should love the truth, speak it candidly, and openly acknowledge it. And I should do what I can to guard and advance my neighbor's good name.

(Q and A. 112)

When Paul analyzes our fallen nature, he sees "envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice" at the heart of our brokenness. People alienated from God are "gossips, slanderers, god-haters, insolent, arrogant, and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless" (Rom. 1:29-31).

Indeed, racism is a glaring manifestation of our sinful condition, which Christ died to eradicate and which, when it is not eradicated, opposes Christ's reconciling work on the cross.

Furthermore, repentance from this sin, as from all sin, must be radical. It begins at the foot of the cross in confession and self-denial. Indeed, to repent of sin, according to the catechism, is "to be genuinely sorry for sin, to hate it more and more, and to run away from it" (A. 89).

Such repentance calls for fervent prayer on the part of the Christian community. In as much as our prayers reveal our deepest concerns, the Christian community must engage in regular prayers of confession for sins of racism and regular intercessory prayer for racial reconciliation and healing.

Further still, those who have found their identity in Christ not only should have no part of behavior that causes alienation along racial and ethnic lines; they should be on the front lines of working for racial reconciliation. The deafening silence of the church in matters of racial reconciliation must be broken. A legitimate test of discipleship in this racially polarized

world is whether our life and witness for Christ are building racial reconciliation and understanding and breaking down walls of alienation.

Ephesians 3:9 and 10 says that "through the church the wisdom of God in its rich variety might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in heavenly places." In Ephesians 6:12 Paul reminds us that these same rulers and authorities are also pitted against us in a cosmic spiritual battle. The church needs to be deeply aware that racial and ethnic division is so deep, demonic, and pervasive that opposition to it will involve us in all-out spiritual warfare. In the church's struggle to realize God's will for reconciliation, the powers of evil will seek to divide us anew and destroy our every effort toward unity. Only in the might of God's Spirit, the truth of God's Word, and persistent prayer will we prevail.

—Adopted

12. Christians live and work in the hope that one day the reconciliation of all things will be fully realized.

In the beginning of this biblical study we explained that in its major divisions of creation, fall, and new creation, *new creation* refers to the one re-creating, reconciling work of Christ as that begins with his earthly ministry, death, and resurrection and is completed in the new heaven and the new earth.

There is certainly a difference between the present world and the new heaven and new earth Christ will usher in upon his return. But from the biblical perspective, the work of Christ at his first coming is the decisive moment in history. According to the writer of Hebrews (1:2), the "last days," of which the prophets spoke, are here. The promise of the Holy Spirit (Joel 2:28) has been fulfilled in the outpouring of Pentecost. "If anyone is in Christ," says Paul, "he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come" (II Cor. 5:17). The decisive turning point of history is the death and resurrection of Christ. All that lies ahead is simply the realization of what Christ has already accomplished.

Yet there is a tension in the New Testament between the "already" and the "not yet" of the kingdom. Christ's new creation is already being made manifest to us, but it is also not yet fully realized. Christians long for the full realization of Christ's rule. We know there is a difference between the brokenness of our world and the day when there will be "no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away" (Rev. 21:4). We live by faith, not by sight (II Cor. 5:7). We eagerly await the Savior (Phil. 3:20).

Central to the biblical vision of the new heaven and the new earth is the perfect unity in Christ of all the peoples of the earth. As John gazes at the people of God, he sees "a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people, and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb" (Rev. 7:9-10). The angels sing a new song: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth" (Rev. 5:9-10). The reconciliation of all nations and all things in Christ is our fervent hope.

This vision gives Christians encouragement, especially those who suffer

because of the racial and ethnic divisions in our world. "Lord, come quickly" is the cry of those who see little of this new unity of all things and who suffer because of walls of separation Christ came to abolish. The fact that one day God will set things right is the deepest hope for many who have tasted little of the shalom and righteousness of the kingdom.

This vision also gives Christians confidence. It is possible to look around us and be dismayed. But we know that Christ rules. We know where things are going. We know and live with full confidence that one day

every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill made low; the rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain. And the glory of the Lord will be revealed, and all mankind together will see it. (Isa. 40:4)

IV. Recommendations

The following recommendations were adopted by Synod 1996 regarding the above report:

- A. That synod recommend the revised report to the churches for study.
- B. That synod adopt the following biblical and theological principles regarding the development of a racially and ethnically diverse and unified family of God:

Biblical and Theological Principles for the Development of a Racially and Ethnically Diverse and Unified Family of God

Creation

1. *The world as God created it is rich and God glorifying in its diversity.*
2. *The created world with all its diversity has its unity in the one God, who created it through Jesus Christ.*
3. *The unity and diversity of the human race and of created reality reflect the unity and diversity of the triune God (nameh, his oneness and threeness).*

Fall

4. *A fundamental effect of sin is the breakdown of community.*

New Creation

5. *The uniting of all things in Jesus Christ is at the heart of God's eternal plan for the ages.*
6. *Reconciliation with God and reconciliation with one another are inseparable in God's saving work.*
7. *Already in the old covenant the scope of God's mission is racially and ethnically inclusive.*
8. *In Pentecost, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the church, God gives new power to the church, power to break down walls of separation and create a community that transcends divisions of race, ethnicity, and culture.*
9. *The church is God's strategic vehicle for embodying, proclaiming, and promoting the unity and diversity of the new creation.*

10. *God calls Christians to find their deepest identity in union with and in the service of Jesus Christ.*
11. *Obedience in matters of racial reconciliation calls us, individually and corporately, to continually repent, to strive for justice, and to battle the forces of evil.*
12. *Christians live and work in the hope that one day the reconciliation of all things will be fully realized.*

C. That synod, on the basis of the above principles, declare that to be in Christ is in principle to be reconciled as a community of racially and ethnically diverse people and that to ignore his calling to turn this principle into experienced reality is sinful according to God's Word and the Reformed confessions.

Grounds:

1. The above report demonstrates that the Bible declares this reconciled community to be God's will.
2. The confessions declare that the catholicity of the church means that Christ "gathers, protects, and preserves" the church "out of the whole human race" (Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 21).

D. That synod call the **whole church**—individual members, congregations, assemblies, agencies, and other ministries of the CRCNA—to respond to the biblical and theological principles regarding the development of a racially and ethnically diverse and united family of God by committing themselves

1. To pray and work for the increased enfolding of ethnic-minority persons into the CRCNA in order to reflect more fully the racial and ethnic diversity of Canada and the United States.
2. To ensure the equitable representation and meaningful participation of ethnic-minority persons in leadership and other roles of influence at all levels of denominational life.

Note: The total estimated ethnic-minority membership of 5 percent in the CRCNA compares to an ethnic-minority population of approximately 20 percent in Canada and the United States.

E. That synod call the **churches**

1. To articulate the biblical vision for a racially and ethnically diverse and united family of God by means of the preaching, teaching, and study of the above biblical and theological principles.
2. To evaluate their life and ministry with regard to their racial and ethnic composition, the social factors contributing to their composition, the selecting and training of their leaders, their worship style, and their ministry to congregational members and to their community in light of their sense of God's vision and call for them as congregations.
3. To develop racially and ethnically diverse congregations by all appropriate models and strategies, such as
 - a. Established churches becoming more inclusive ethnically and culturally.
 - b. Planting and developing multiethnic congregations.

- c. Sponsoring new congregations that are ethnically and culturally different from the parent congregation, in the same or separate facilities.
 - d. Developing relationships (e.g., joint worship, workshops, and work projects) with congregations from other ethnic and cultural backgrounds.
 - e. Supporting persons and programs at home or abroad that are committed to racial reconciliation.
4. To witness publicly *against* racism, prejudice, and related unemployment, poverty, and injustices and *in defense* of all people as imagebearers of God.
 5. To call individual members to promote and establish interracial and cross-cultural relationships in their neighborhoods, workplaces, and communities.
- F. That synod request the **classes**, with the assistance of the CRCNA offices and agencies,
1. To arrange during the next twelve months for the careful classis-wide study of this report and its implications for the churches and their ministries.
 2. To provide to the churches and ministries of classis guidance in support of racial and ethnic diversity (and unity) by means of public forums and learning events, multicongregational worship celebrations, and joint cross-cultural ministry ventures.
 3. To assist the churches in developing and supporting new churches and other outreach ministries that are committed to ethnic diversity and racial reconciliation.
 4. To recruit and assist persons from ethnic-minority groups to participate in the ministries of classis, including representation to synod, agency boards, and other ministries of the CRCNA.
- G. That synod mandate the **Board of Trustees**, under the leadership of its CRCNA staff and with the assistance of the Race Relations division of Pastoral Ministries and other CRCNA agencies,
1. To coordinate and monitor the role and response of the agencies in providing guidance and assistance to the churches and classes in support of ethnic diversity and racial reconciliation as outlined above.
 2. To serve Synod 1998 with advice and recommendations for ensuring the equitable representation and meaningful participation of ethnic-minority persons in leadership and other roles of influence with the classes and synod, the Board of Trustees, denominational agencies, and other ministries of the CRCNA. The recommendations should include transitional and long-term strategies, training and support needs, financial implications, and periodic reporting to synod on efforts and progress.
 3. To continue to explore ways whereby the biennial Multiethnic Conference can assist the churches, classes, and synod to respond more completely to God's call for ethnic diversity and racial reconciliation in the CRCNA.
 4. To review CRCNA policies and practices in relation to the training, credentialing, and compensating of ethnic-minority pastors and to give recommendations and advice as indicated.

H. That synod respectfully urge **future synods**

1. To include in their worship times the articulation and celebration of the biblical vision for a racially and ethnically diverse and unified family of God.
2. To encourage the development of specific recommendations and specific practical guidelines for supporting ethnic diversity in all aspects of denominational life, including interchurch relations in general and ministries of the Reformed Ecumenical Council in particular.
3. That denominational response to the above decisions be reviewed by Synod 1998 on the basis of an interim progress report by the Board of Trustees.

I. That denominational response to the above decisions be reviewed by Synod 2000 in the light of another progress report with advice and recommendations by the Board of Trustees to Synod 2000.

J. That synod recommend that the Board of Trustees ask representatives of various language groups in the denomination to translate the document into the languages of their groups.

K. That synod ask Calvin Theological Seminary's Morren Conference Committee to consider organizing a conference on "racial and ethnic reconciliation with repentance and justice" to explore the theological meaning of racial reconciliation and the implications for ministry, pastoral care, ecclesiology, and social justice.

Grounds:

1. Racial reconciliation with repentance is urgent in the light of the above report.
2. Reformed theologians are well positioned historically and theologically to address this issue.
3. The Reformed churches of South Africa are presently experiencing such a process.

CONSTITUTION
of the
BOARD OF TRUSTEES
of the
CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA

Note: Terms and designations are important in this constitution and its accompanying bylaws. The terms "agency" and "agencies" exclude committees and educational institutions unless specifically stated to the contrary.

Preamble

Our Lord, Jesus Christ, upon his ascension into heaven, entrusted the proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom to his disciples and commanded them to be his witnesses, teaching all nations to obey everything he had commanded.

As followers of Jesus Christ, the church corporately and each of its members individually, led by the Holy Spirit, are called to share this gospel of the kingdom within the fellowship of the church and with people throughout the world by proclaiming God's Word and giving God the worship and honor that are his due, in the confidence that Christ is building up the church and is establishing the signs of the kingdom.

In fulfillment of this calling, the members of the Christian Reformed Church in North America unite their efforts in a worldwide mission of proclaiming and living the Lordship of Jesus Christ. To carry out this mission, the synod of the Christian Reformed Church in North America (hereinafter "synod") has created the Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church in North America and such agencies, committees, and institutions as are listed in its bylaws. These agencies, committees, and institutions function primarily within Canada and the United States, where the Christian Reformed Church is committed to being a binational denomination. Each organizational entity and each national expression of the Christian Reformed Church in North America makes its own unique contribution to God's mission in the world as the whole denomination strives to live the fullness of the gospel.

Article I
Name

The name of this organization is the Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church in North America (hereinafter "the Board").

Article II
Purposes

The purposes of the Board are to transact all matters assigned to it by synod; to supervise the management of the agencies and committees established by synod and designated in the bylaws of the Board, including the planning, coordinating, and integrating of their work; and to cooperate with the educational institutions affiliated with the denomination toward integrating the

respective missions of those institutions into the denominational ministry program. To fulfill its purposes the Board will

- A. Lead in developing and implementing the denominational ministries plan for the agencies, committees, and educational institutions established by synod.
- B. Assure collaboration among agencies, committees, and educational institutions established by synod.
- C. Exercise general oversight and authority when necessary in the manner stated in the bylaws of the Board.

Nothing contained herein shall interfere with the authority of the Board of Trustees of Calvin College and the Board of Trustees of Calvin Theological Seminary to govern their respective institutions and to manage their personnel, facilities, educational programs, libraries, and finances according to their respective articles of incorporation and bylaws.

Article III Functions

The functions described in this article are carried out by the Board under the authority of the synod of the Christian Reformed Church in North America and by virtue of the Board's legal status in accordance with applicable laws in Canada and the United States.

To achieve the purposes described in Article II hereof, the Board shall carry out the following functions:

- A. Implementing all matters committed to it by the specific instruction of synod, carrying out all necessary interim functions on behalf of synod, and executing all synodical matters which cannot be postponed until the next synod.
- B. Leading in the development and implementation of a denominational ministries plan which reflects the biblical and Reformed mission commitment of the Christian Reformed Church and provides a basis for the Board's management of coordination and integration among the agencies and committees and for the integration of the respective missions of the denomination's educational institutions into the denominational ministry program.
- C. Presenting to synod a unified report of all the agencies, committees, and educational institutions, as well as a unified budget inclusive of all agencies, committees, and educational institutions.
- D. Serving synod with analyses, reviews, and recommendations with respect to the programs and resources of the denomination. In its discharge of this responsibility, the Board shall require reports from all the agencies, committees, and educational institutions.
- E. Adjudicating appeals placed before it by the agency boards and committees. Such appeals shall be processed in accordance with the bylaws of the Board and the provisions of the Church Order. Appeals which deal with an action of the Board may be submitted to synod for adjudication.

- F. Discharging all responsibilities incumbent upon directors of the Christian Reformed Church in North America, a Michigan not-for-profit corporation (CRCNA-Michigan), and the Christian Reformed Church in North America, a registered charity organized under the laws of the Province of Ontario (CRCNA-Ontario).
- G. Serving as the Joint-Ministries Management Committee (JMMC), which is responsible for any joint-venture agreements existing between the CRCNA-Michigan and CRCNA-Ontario. Members of the Board also serving as trustees of CRCNA-Ontario are responsible for joint-venture agreements existing between CRCNA-Ontario and the agencies and committees of the denomination which are not registered as Canadian charities.
- H. Approving all joint-ministry agreements existing between or among agencies and committees.

Article IV Membership

A. Elected members

The elected regular membership of the Board shall consist of not more than nineteen (19) persons, each of whom shall be a member in good standing of a Christian Reformed church. Sixteen (16) members shall each represent a designated geographic area, and three (3) members shall be members-at-large. The membership shall be divided into two (2) classes of six (6) persons each, and one class of seven (7) persons. At each annual meeting of synod, a class of members shall be elected by synod from nominees prepared in accordance with the provisions of Article V below for a term of office to expire on the first day of the month following the third annual meeting of synod after their election.

As far as is reasonably practical, members of the Board who are not members-at-large shall represent, in number, the regions designated from time to time by synod.

All the members appointed by synod to serve on the Board of Trustees from both the United States and Canada shall serve as the directors of CRCNA-Michigan. The members who are from Canada shall also serve as directors of CRCNA-Ontario.

B. Elected alternate members

For each elected regular member of the Board, an alternate member shall be elected in the same manner to represent the same area as the regular member. Alternate members shall take the places of regular members who move outside of their area of representation or who otherwise fail to serve. The terms of regular members and alternate members shall coincide.

C. Ex officio members

By virtue of their respective offices, the General Secretary and the Executive Director of Ministries shall be nonvoting, ex officio members of the Board.

Article V

Election of Members

Members of the Board shall be selected by the synod of the Christian Reformed Church in North America in the manner described below.

Promptly after each synod the general secretary shall notify each classis within all synodical regions that have regular and alternate members whose terms expire at the following synod. This notice shall inform each classis in the region of such expirations and ask it to nominate one or more persons to fill each vacancy on the Board and to submit its nomination(s) to the general secretary by November 1.

If the procedure described above does not produce a sufficient number of nominees who in the judgment of the Board are qualified to serve as either regular or alternate members, the Board may then add other names to the list of nominations submitted.

When the Board has prepared a slate of two nominees for each vacant position, it shall be sent, by January 1, to the classes in each region for which a regular and alternate member must be elected. Each classis shall vote and shall report to the office of the general secretary the number of votes for each nominee. In each region the nominee receiving the majority of votes from the classes shall become the regular member, and the nominee receiving fewer votes shall become the alternate member. Regular members and alternate members so elected shall be ratified by synod to become members of the Board.

The procedure outlined above shall not apply to the election of members-at-large. The Board itself shall nominate, and synod itself shall elect, such regular and alternate members-at-large as are needed from time to time.

In preparing nominations, the Board shall

- A. Adhere to the synodical policy that no more than one-half the members of the Board shall be ministers of the Word.
- B. Take into account applicable synodical policies that may be adopted from time to time, including, but not limited to, policies with respect to diversity, age, gender, ethnic representation, and specific expertise.
- C. Develop and implement rotation cycles for the regions so that, as much as possible, fair representation is achieved.

Article VI

Term

Regular members and alternate members shall serve three-year (3-year) terms. Regular members who have served two (2) consecutive three-year terms shall not be eligible for reelection to a third consecutive term. No person shall serve as a regular member for more than six (6) consecutive years.

Article VII
Officers, Meetings, and Committees

A. Officers

The Board shall elect its own officers except that the General Secretary shall function as secretary of the Board and of the CRCNA-Michigan corporation.

B. Meetings

The Board shall meet as often as it deems necessary to fulfill its purpose but no fewer than three (3) times annually.

C. Committees

The Board shall designate its own subcommittees.

Article VIII
Amendments

This constitution may be amended by synod upon the recommendation of the Board or by way of an overture to synod. Proposed amendments to the constitution brought to synod by overture need not first be considered by the Board.

When a proposed amendment is to be considered by the Board, this procedure shall be followed: Any recommended amendment to any provision of this constitution shall be considered for adoption by the Board only after written notice thereof and any reasonably required explanation thereof are forwarded to each regular and each alternate member within such time as is reasonably necessary for an understanding of the proposed amendment. No such amendment shall be effective unless ratified by the next synod following the adoption thereof by the Board.

BYLAWS
of the
BOARD OF TRUSTEES
of the
CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA

I. Introduction

The Bylaws of the Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church in North America (hereinafter "the Board" and "CRCNA") are designed to implement the provisions of the constitution. Should a conflict exist between the provisions of these bylaws and the provisions of the constitution, the provisions of the constitution shall prevail.

Note: Terms and designations are important in the constitution and these accompanying bylaws. The terms "agency" or "agencies" exclude the committees and the educational institutions unless specifically stated to the contrary.

II. The Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church in North America

A. The Board shall carry out its work by organizing itself into the following committees:

1. Executive Committee
2. Polity Committee
3. Program and Finance Committee
4. Such other committees as the Board deems necessary

B. To fulfill the functions described in the constitution, the Board shall

1. Lead in the development and implementation of a denominational ministries plan which will serve to guide the agencies, committees, and educational institutions in the fulfillment of their respective mandates and will serve the Board as a basis for managing the coordinating and integrating of the work of the agencies and committees¹ and for integrating the respective missions of Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary into the denominational ministries program. The Board will also amend the denominational ministries plan from time to time as need arises.
2. In developing and implementing this plan, secure the participation of the executive directors of the agencies, the presidents of the educational institutions, and the chairpersons or designated representatives of all agency boards, committees, and educational institutions affected by particular deliberations. Such designated representatives shall be members, preferably officers, of the boards or committees which designate them. On such occasions the executive directors, presidents, and chairpersons or designated representatives shall have the privilege of the floor but not the right to vote.

¹All references in these bylaws to agencies and committees specifically refer to those agencies and committees that generally participate in the coordinating work of the Ministries Coordinating Council. Such references generally exclude synodical study committees, the Judicial Code Committee, the Interchurch Relations Committee, and any other ad hoc committee synod appoints.

3. Serve synod with analyses, reviews, and recommendations with respect to the programs and resources of the denomination. To that end, the Board shall require reports from the boards of agencies, committees, and educational institutions.
4. Require coordination and unity from the agencies, committees, and educational institutions in the fulfillment of their respective mandates in order to achieve stewardly ministries as they carry out the mission of the CRCNA.
5. Require that all synodically commissioned and directed work be done in such a manner that scriptural standards are maintained and the constitution and bylaws of the Board are observed in all aspects of the work.
6. Approve all new ministry directions and major expansions of the agencies and committees in the light of the denominational ministries plan and other denominational priorities.
7. Approve policy and goals for the unified ministry of the Christian Reformed Church as expressed in the denominational ministries plan.
8. Approve interdependency agreements with other churches and ministry agencies, both domestically and internationally.
9. Periodically instruct all agencies, committees, and educational institutions with respect to reviewing their board size, composition, and structure. The Board may also require agencies or committees to combine their activities to achieve greater effectiveness and better stewardship of resources.
10. Adjudicate appeals placed before it by the agencies, committees, and educational institutions. Such appeals shall be processed in accordance with the rules stated in these bylaws and the provisions of the Church Order.
11. Nominate a qualified candidate for the position of General Secretary (GS) and a qualified candidate for the position of Executive Director of Ministries (EDM) and submit these nominations to synod for appointment.
12. Endorse in its report to synod the nominations for the following positions:
 - a. President of Calvin College
 - b. President of Calvin Theological Seminary
 - c. Editor in chief of *The Banner*

In the event the Board does not endorse a nominee, such lack of endorsement and the reasons therefor shall first be communicated to the agency or educational institution involved and, if necessary, to synod.

13. Approve appointments to the following positions and submit them to synod for ratification:
 - a. The executive directors of the agencies (or their title equivalents).
 - b. Position(s) responsible for theological content of CRC Publications' Education, Worship, and Evangelism Department products.
 - c. Any other position as synod may direct.
The search for and nomination of an executive director for an agency shall be primarily the responsibility of that agency's board with assistance from the EDM.

14. Require that periodic standardized performance evaluations be conducted of all persons employed by the agencies. Performance evaluations of agency staff are the responsibility of the executive directors. Performance evaluations of agency executive directors shall be conducted jointly by the officer(s) of the particular agency and the Executive Director of Ministries.²
15. Ratify the appointments of agency staff members whose appointments are not subject to synodical ratification (directors, associate directors, assistant directors, senior administrative staff members, editors, associate editors, etc.).
16. Provide for the establishment of a Ministries Coordinating Council (MCC).
17. Attend to such church-polity issues as need to be addressed and render such advice to study committees as it deems necessary or as requested of it between the meetings of synod.
18. Prepare and distribute the *Agenda for Synod*, the *Acts of Synod*, the *Yearbook*, and such other official publications as synod shall authorize.
19. Make all arrangements related to the convening of synod.
20. Prepare an annually updated survey of ministers' compensation for distribution to all councils for their guidance as a supplement to the *Guidelines for Ministers' Salaries*, adopted by Synod 1970.
21. Administer the denominational address list.
22. Review the program, aims, and goals of any applicant nondenominational organization requesting synodical financial support and provide synod with a recommendation with respect thereto.
23. Enforce the provisions of the constitution, have the power to recommend to synod amendments to the constitution and the bylaws as it deems appropriate, and approve or disapprove amendments to the bylaws of each agency, committee, and educational institution that have been adopted by such agency, committee, or institution.
24. Present to synod a unified report of all the agencies, committees, and educational institutions, as well as a unified budget inclusive of all the agencies, committees, and educational institutions.

C. The Board staff

1. The chief staff officers of the Board shall be the General Secretary (GS) and the Executive Director of Ministries (EDM), both of whom shall be appointed to their respective positions by synod from single nominations provided by the Board.
2. The General Secretary shall be responsible for all ecclesiastical matters and relationships, including the Interchurch Relations Committee, and for advising congregations in matters of church polity and procedures. The

²Such performance evaluations are related to continuing improvement in performance and not to specific terms of service (reappointments). Synod 1995 acknowledged the termination of reappointments in favor of standardized performance evaluations (*Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 677).

qualifications and functions of the General Secretary are more fully described in the position description.

3. The Executive Director of Ministries shall be responsible for the implementation of synodical and Board policy in all of the agencies and administrative committees of synod as described in these bylaws. The qualifications and functions of the Executive Director of Ministries are more fully described in the position description.
4. The Board shall establish guidelines for, supervise, and regularly evaluate the work of the General Secretary and the Executive Director of Ministries and advise them with respect to the discharge of their work.
5. The executive directors of agencies and the presidents of educational institutions have a reporting relationship, through the EDM, to the Board.

D. The accountability of the agency executive directors and presidents of educational institutions shall be exercised as follows:

1. The executive directors of the agencies and presidents of educational institutions are accountable to the boards of the agencies or institutions they serve for all internal matters that pertain to that agency or institution. In such internal matters the EDM and the Board will function only as needed in consultation with the executive director or president in question and only in conjunction with the board of that agency or institution. (An agency board and its executive director have the freedom to fulfill the mandate of the agency in compliance with its mandate and bylaws, but synod and the Board of Trustees, through the EDM, reserve the right to gain access to the administration and governance of an agency as, in their judgment, is needed.)
2. The executive directors of the agencies are accountable for their performance through the EDM to the Board of Trustees and synod for all matters that affect the overall mission of the Christian Reformed Church.

E. The accountability of the Board shall be exercised as follows:

1. It shall present a full report of its actions to each synod.
2. It shall make periodic evaluations of its own programs and goals and shall submit appropriate recommendations to synod.
3. It shall report to synod according to standards and forms adopted for use by all the agencies, committees, and educational institutions.
4. It shall, through its members or on their behalf, present regular reports to the constituent classes of the regions its members represent.

III. Agencies, Committees, and Educational Institutions of the Christian Reformed Church in North America and Their Respective Functions

A. Classification of agencies, committees, and educational institutions

1. Agencies

- a. The Back to God Hour/CRC-TV
- b. Christian Reformed Home Missions

- c. Christian Reformed World Missions
- d. Christian Reformed World Relief
- e. CRC Loan Fund, Inc., U.S.
- f. CRC Publications
- g. Pastoral Ministries
- h. Pensions and Insurance

Note: Some of the agencies are incorporated and registered as charities in both the United States and Canada. For the purposes of this document all are treated here only as synodical agencies.

2. Committees

- a. Fund for Smaller Churches
- b. Historical Committee
- c. Interchurch Relations Committee

The Interchurch Relations Committee will report directly to synod (instead of reporting through the Board) on matters essential to its mandate. That direct reporting relationship to synod will be facilitated by the General Secretary. For matters pertaining to budget and personnel this committee is like all other standing committees of the Board.

- d. Sermons for Reading Services Committee
- e. Youth-Ministry Committee
- f. Such additional committees as synod may appoint

3. Educational institutions

- a. Calvin College
- b. Calvin Theological Seminary

B In order to fulfill the functions described in the constitution, the agencies' boards and the committees shall

1. Be accountable to the synod of the Christian Reformed Church, through the Board, to accomplish their ministries in keeping with the Holy Scriptures, the Reformed confessional standards, and the Church Order.
2. Be organized and function as follows:
 - a. Each agency and committee shall be constituted in a manner described in its bylaws as approved by the Board.
 - b. Each agency board or committee shall meet at least once a year.
 - c. Each agency board or committee shall elect annually from its membership such officers as are required to be elected by the bylaws of that agency or committee.
3. Provide oversight of the agency or committee according to approved synodical policy and budget and in keeping with a denominational ministries plan as approved by the Board. The day-to-day management functions shall be carried out through the appointed administration of the agency or committee.
4. Propose revisions to the agency or committee constitution and bylaws as are needed to establish appropriate agency or committee policy and submit such amendments to the Board for approval. An agency board or committee may also propose amendments to the constitution and bylaws of the Board.

5. Prepare, for the administration of the agency or committee, priorities, guidelines, and other directives according to the agency's or committee's mandate and in keeping with the denominational ministries plan.
 6. Initiate and/or review preliminary planning of new ministry projects appropriate to that agency or committee.
 7. Nominate candidate(s) for positions which require the Boards approval.
 8. Appoint personnel to positions named in the bylaws.
 9. Review and approve the annual budget prepared by the administration of the agency or committee and processed through the Ministries Coordinating Council for recommendation to the Board.
 10. Ensure appropriate fund-raising, communications, and promotional activities.
 11. Ensure activities which appropriately recruit, train, and support the staff.
 12. Supervise, through the agency executive director, the administrative staff of the agency.
 13. Approve intra-agency or intra-committee administrative policy in keeping with Board policy.
 14. Engage in such decision making as will achieve the responsibilities delegated to it by synod and the Board, promote the unity of the mission of the church, enlarge the vision for that mission among the membership of the CRCNA, and fulfill the mandate of that mission.
- C. In order to fulfill the functions described in the constitution, the boards of the educational institutions shall
1. Be responsible to the synod of the Christian Reformed Church, through the Board, to accomplish their educational ministries in keeping with the Holy Scriptures, the Reformed confessional standards, and the Church Order.
 2. Be governed according to the provisions of their respective articles of incorporation and bylaws.
 3. Participate, through collaboration, in interagency efforts.

IV. Ministries Coordinating Council (MCC)

A. Membership

The Ministries Coordinating Council shall be a formally constituted administrative entity comprised of the following persons:

1. The Executive Director of Ministries, who is its chairperson
2. The General Secretary (ex officio, without vote)
3. The president of Calvin College
4. The president of Calvin Theological Seminary
5. The executive director of CRC Publications

6. The executive director of Christian Reformed Home Missions
7. The executive director of Christian Reformed World Missions
8. One of the executive directors of the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee
9. The executive director of The Back to God Hour
10. The executive director of Pastoral Ministries
11. Two executive staff members, selected by the EDM, from among the staff at the Canadian denominational offices

B. Functions

1. Planning, coordinating, and providing information for the agencies, committees, and institutions.
2. Reconciling differences between agencies, committees, and institutions.
3. Giving direction to the concerns which are common to the agencies, committees, and institutions.
4. Making recommendations to the Board on matters of interagency, inter-committee, and interinstitutional interests.
5. Such further functions as directed by the Board.

C. Authority and accountability

1. MCC shall have the authority to make administrative decisions which are binding on the administration of the agencies and committees; these decisions are advisory to the educational institutions.
2. MCC shall have an advisory relationship to the EDM, whose accountability is to the Board.
3. If a decision of MCC is in conflict with a decision of an agency board or committee, or with the position of the EDM, appeal may be made, through the EDM, to the Board.
4. MCC is accountable for all of its actions and decisions, through the EDM, to the Board.
5. Additional rules of procedure governing the functions of MCC shall be contained in *The Manual of Policy and Procedure*, as approved by the Board.

V. General Appeals

A. Appeals submitted by employees of the CRCNA or one of the agencies shall be directed first to the person or board whose decision is being appealed and then, if necessary, to successive levels of administration and authority. When the appeal is filed in the administrative line of authority, the successive levels go up to and include the office of the EDM. No appeal dealing with an administrative decision shall be submitted to an agency board until the administrative channel has been followed. In the event that an appeal is submitted to an agency board, the following regulations shall apply:

1. The decision of an agency board concerning an intra-agency or intra-committee appeal is binding except under the following conditions:
 - a. The matter being appealed has ramifications beyond that agency or committee.
 - b. The matter being appealed concerns the personal performance of directors appointed by the Board or concerns the personal performance of agency appointees whose appointments are ratified by the Board.
 - c. The matter being appealed falls within the provisions of the Grievance Appeal Procedure as approved by the Board.
 - d. The matter being appealed falls within the provisions of the Employment-Termination Appeals Procedure as approved by the Board and synod.
 2. In the event of an involuntary termination of employment, an appeal may be filed only according to the specific provisions of the Employment-Termination Appeals Procedure as identified in five (5) below.
 3. The Board's right to hear and adjudicate appeals notwithstanding, the appeal procedure outlined in one and two (1 and 2) above does not affect any right of appeal provided in Church Order Article 30 and Church Order Supplement, Articles 30-b and 30-c.
 4. The decision of the Board on an appeal dealing with an interagency administrative matter is binding. If the Board judges that an appeal regards a policy matter, the decision of the Board may be appealed to synod for adjudication.
 5. The Board's right to hear and adjudicate appeals notwithstanding, the appeal procedure outlined in four (4) above does not affect any right of appeal provided in Church Order Article 30 and Church Order Supplement, Articles 30-b and 30-c. Furthermore, appeals which deal with the termination of employment shall be dealt with according to the regulations of the Employment-Termination Appeals Procedure, as approved by synod (*Acts of Synod 1995*, pp. 584-87) and as amended from time to time.
- B An appeal submitted by a member of an agency board or by a member of a committee pertaining to actions of his or her own board or committee may be made in the following manner:
1. An agency board member or committee member shall register a negative vote at the time the decision is made by the agency board or committee.
 2. An agency board member or committee member, having registered a negative vote, may appeal in writing to the Board within sixty (60) days on the matter on which the negative vote was recorded.
 3. The Board shall hear the appeal at its next regularly scheduled meeting. If, in the judgment of the officers of the Board, an early adjudication is required, the officers may hear the appeal and render a decision subject to ratification by the Board.
 4. An agency board member or committee member whose appeal has not been sustained by the Board may appeal to synod for adjudication of the matter being appealed.

C. An appeal submitted by a member of an educational-institution board pertaining to actions of his or her own board may be made in the following manner:

1. An educational-institution board member shall register a negative vote at the time the decision is made by the educational-institution board.
2. An educational-institution board member, having registered a negative vote, may appeal in writing to the Board within sixty (60) days on the matter on which the negative vote was recorded.
3. The Board shall hear the appeal at its next regularly scheduled meeting. If, in the judgment of the officers of the Board, an early adjudication is required the officers may hear the appeal and render a decision subject to ratification by the Board.
4. An educational-institution board member whose appeal has not been sustained by the Board may appeal to synod for adjudication of the matter being appealed.

D. An appeal submitted by a board of an agency, committee, or educational institution pertaining to actions of the Board of Trustees may be made in the following manner:

1. The appeal shall be submitted in writing to the synod within sixty (60) days of the Board's decision that is being appealed. The Board shall be notified by the agency, committee, or educational institution that an appeal has been filed, and a copy of that appeal shall be presented to the Board at the time of filing.
2. Unless the matter being appealed falls within the jurisdiction of the Judicial Code Committee, the appeal shall be heard at the time of the first synod following the filing of the appeal.
3. The decision of synod is final and binding on all the agencies, committees, and educational institutions as well as on the Board of Trustees.

VI. Amendments to the Bylaws

These bylaws may be amended by synod upon the recommendation of the Board or by way of an overture to synod. If a proposed revision is to be considered by the Board, the following procedures shall be followed:

- A. Proposed amendments shall be presented to the General Secretary in writing at least sixty (60) days prior to the meeting date of the Board at which the amendments are to be considered. Copies of such proposed amendments shall be mailed to each member of the Board and each agency, committee, and educational institution at least thirty (30) days prior to the meeting.
- B. Representatives from each agency, each committee, each educational institution, and the MCC shall be given an opportunity to present written comments concerning a proposed amendment at the meeting of the Board prior to its vote on the proposed amendment.
- C. Any amendment to these bylaws must be adopted by the Board, which shall then submit such amendment to the next synod for ratification.

APPENDIX III

Note: The numbering system of the modified guidelines below follows the synodically approved guidelines which appear in *Acts of Synod 1995*, pages 783-88. This version of the guidelines includes the new material added by the Pastoral Ministries Board and the advisory committee of Synod 1996.

II. Procedures and guidelines for handling abuse allegations against a church leader

B. Guidelines

Member churches and classes should be allowed some discretion for defining "church leader." A member church or classis may define "church leader" consistently with its general liability policy or other insurance coverage.

1. Definitions

The Canadian provinces and each of the fifty states have legal definitions of child abuse, child sexual abuse and exploitation, and physical abuse as well as a host of definitions of crimes committed against adults, including assault and battery, rape, and sexual harassment. Ecclesiastical procedures such as those outlined in sections 2 and 3 below cannot measure a person's guilt by a legal standard; only civil authorities are entitled to hold a person accountable for violation of a civil or criminal code. For that reason, an ecclesiastical procedure cannot judge a person to be guilty of child abuse or rape as defined by law. An ecclesiastical procedure can, however, judge someone to be guilty of ungodly conduct, misuse of power, misuse of spiritual authority, sexually inappropriate behavior, and neglect and abuse of office. These behaviors are not violations of civil or criminal code and therefore are not subject to criminal prosecution or civil redress. They are, instead, behaviors that violate the trust and well-being of individuals and the community of believers and taint the office held by the offender.

The following definitions are given to further assist the churches in understanding the types of behaviors which might constitute ungodly conduct, misuse of power, sexually inappropriate behavior, etc.:

- 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. Sexual abuse is exploitation of a person regardless of age or circumstance for the sexual gratification of another.

There are various procedures to consider following when allegations of abuse are made against a church leader. The age of the alleged victim, local laws, and the nature of the allegation help to determine which procedure to follow. The following three procedures envision the consistory/council acting as an adjudicatory body from the outset in abuse allegations:

One alternative is for the alleged victim and alleged offender to meet before witnesses (consistory) to discuss the alleged abuse incident.

Another alternative is following the Judicial Code as outlined in Article 30-c of the Supplement to the Church Order. In the Judicial Code procedure, the alleged victim and the alleged offender (each with the assistance of a represen-

tative) and their witnesses give testimony before consistory/council regarding the alleged abuse incident.

A third alternative is the formal hearing also described in Article 30-c of the Supplement to the Church Order. Again, the consistory/council hears the testimony presented by the alleged victim and the alleged offender and their witnesses regarding the alleged abuse incident.

Two additional alternatives may be considered when the allegations are of sexual abuse or physical abuse and/or when a face-to-face meeting between the alleged victim and alleged offender would be materially detrimental to the alleged victim. The age of the alleged victim determines which one of these procedures to follow. Before the allegations can be adjudicated by consistory/council, the alleged offender has the right to meet the accuser and to receive the specific charges in writing.

2. Suggested procedures and guidelines when the abuse victim is an adult

The guidelines in this section describe the process to be followed (a) when the alleged victim is an adult or (b) when the alleged victim comes forward as an adult with an allegation of abuse that took place during the victim's childhood or adolescence.

The guidelines for handling abuse allegations by an adult against a church leader assume the availability 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:

Note: Provisions that specify the time necessary to convene a meeting or the place of that meeting are only guidelines and are not requirements of the procedure.

- a. The alleged victim or his/her representative should contact a member of the executive committee (or its equivalent) of the council of the church of which the alleged abuser is a member, present an allegation of abuse, and identify the alleged abuser. If any member of the executive committee is alleged to be the abuser, the alleged victim or representative should contact the remaining person(s) not implicated by the alleged victim.
- b. The executive committee (or its equivalent), after consultation with one another (no one of those consulting may be implicated by the victim), should 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 should be convened within fifteen days after the allegation is presented to a member of the executive committee or its equivalent.
- c. A representative of the advisory panel should contact 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 should be made by the panel members, the pastor, the president or vice president of council, or the accuser.
- d. When the advisory panel is convened, a chairperson should be 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 should also be confidential, as is any report of the advisory panel.

- e. The advisory panel should receive all the information presented to it, examine the contents of all written materials, question the presenters, and consult 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 should contact the accused person and notify him/her that a hearing has taken place. The accused person should then be 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 should be conducted within seven days after the hearing of the accuser. At the time the accused is notified, he/she should be given information about the charges, including specific incidents, dates of specific incidents when possible, and indication of witnesses or corroborating evidence. The charges must be presented in writing.
- g. The advisory panel should receive all the information presented to it by the accused, examine the contents of all written materials, question the accused and witnesses, and consult 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 should convene to consider the gravity and the probable veracity of the allegations as quickly as possible. A summary of its findings should be 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 should report the panel's summary to the executive committee of the council of the alleged abuser's church. This meeting should be convened within forty-eight hours of the advisory panel's formulation of its summary. Members of the advisory panel should 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. The consistory should notify 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 should notify the accused person within twenty-four hours that allegations of abuse have been lodged against him/her. The designees should also indicate to the accused the specific charges and the names of those making the charges. These charges should be given in writing. Also, within twenty-four hours, the accuser(s) should be notified by two members of the consistory that charges of abuse have been accepted against the accused person and that he/she/they are being notified of such charges. A summary of the consistory's deliberations should be given in writing if requested. The accused person(s) may acknowledge or deny his/her/their guilt at the notification meeting. Such acknowledgment or denial should be confirmed by the two consistory members present. This acknowledgment or denial should be brought to a full council meeting to be scheduled within 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 likelihood of the accused's 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. The accused has the right to receive the specific charges in writing and to meet the accuser in the hearing. If a face-to-face meeting between accuser and accused would be materially detrimental to the accuser, then alternate arrangements might be made for the accuser to be available but out of the sight or presence of the accused. A tape recording of the testimony should be made.

The consistory should convene in executive session to deliberate the truthfulness of the allegation(s) and the accused person's guilt or innocence. If the accused is found innocent, the matter ends, and both the accused and the accuser should be notified of the consistory's deliberations. If the accused is found guilty, the council should 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 should be 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 should be 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 should inform the congrega-

tion in writing at the next scheduled worship service 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 describe the process to be followed (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 define a child as a person under 18 years of age; in most provinces a child is defined as a person 16 years or younger.

Allegations of potentially illegal emotional abuse, physical abuse and neglect, and sexual abuse against a church leader by a minor child should be reported to an appropriate agency outside the church, such as Child Protective 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 should contact 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 should contact 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 may be a violation of the law in many states and provinces. The person contacted should know which authorities to notify when that may be necessary. In many instances the relationship between the child and the alleged abuser will determine whether Child Protective Services or the local police officials are to be notified. In case of any uncertainty about legal reporting requirements, an attorney with expertise in the area should be consulted.

- c. At any point in the process, if the alleged abuser admits wrongdoing against the alleged victim, the admission of guilt should be brought to the attention of the consistory, which should deliberate and dispose of the matter according to Church Order Articles 81-83.

Subject to the best interests of the abused child, the matter of admission of wrongdoing against a child should be disclosed in writing to the congregation by a designee of the consistory. Such disclosure should not exceed the scope of the admission and should be factual and pastoral. Such disclosure should not attempt to state any legal conclusions about the guilt or innocence of any person.

- d. The person contacted by the alleged victim should request 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 attempt to 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 should notify his/her counterpart (unless that person is implicated in the allegations) in the other church, and both should become contact persons for the matter.

e. Before formal legal 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/they should notify the consistory of the church of the alleged abuser.
- 2) The consistory should be presented with a written document 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.)
- 3) The consistory shall give the accused an opportunity to confront and respond to the allegations, according to the following procedure:

The accused shall be given the charges in writing. The accused shall have an opportunity to confront and respond to the evidence presented by or on behalf of the accuser. The accused should also have opportunity to present evidence in support of the defense. Caution should be exercised to safeguard the well-being of a minor child asked to present oral testimony. Fear of the alleged offender and/or an inability to discern the consequences of the hearing for either the alleged victim or the alleged offender could be reasons to reject a request for the accuser and accused to meet before the consistory. In place of oral testimony by a minor, the alleged offender must be given a detailed written report of the allegations to which he/she can respond. This written report should serve to protect the interests of the minor without interfering with other legal proceedings.
- 4) In light of the information presented, the consistory should recommend 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 should be carried out with full pay (for paid staff) and without prejudice.
- 5) The full council should consider the recommendations of the consistory and make its decision regarding appropriate action. Suspension of an officebearer is carried out according to Church Order Articles 82-83. In the case of suspension, a council member should be appointed to disclose to the congregation only the facts as known at the time. As noted above, such disclosure must not include any legal conclusions.

- f. After formal legal 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/they should notify the consistory of the church of the alleged abuser.
 - 2) The consistory should be presented with a written document specifying the nature of the allegations and the information known at this point.
 - 3) The consistory should give the accused an opportunity to confront and respond to the allegations, according to the following procedure:

The accused should be given the charges in writing. The accused shall have an opportunity to confront and respond to the evidence presented by or on behalf of the accuser. The accused shall also have opportunity to present evidence in support of the defense. Caution should be exercised to safeguard the well-being of a minor child asked to present oral testimony. Fear of the alleged offender and/or an inability to discern the consequences of the hearing for either the alleged victim or the alleged offender could be reasons to reject a request for the accuser and accused to meet before the consistory. In place of oral testimony by a minor, the alleged offender must be given a detailed written report of the allegations to which he/she can respond. This written report protects the interests of the minor without interfering with other legal proceedings.
 - 4) In light of the information presented, the consistory should recommend one of the following options to the full council:
 - a) Take no action at this time.
 - b) Limit the accused from contact with children or limit the conditions under which this contact is to take place, pending further information.
 - c) Suspend the accused from office, position, or duty. Suspension should be carried out with full pay (for paid staff) and without prejudice.
 - 5) The full council should consider the recommendations of the consistory and take appropriate action. Suspension of officebearers should be carried out according to Church Order Articles 82-83. In case of suspension, a council member should be appointed to disclose to the congregation only the facts known at the time; this council member should not convey any of the particulars relating to the alleged victim's allegations.
- g. Once criminal proceedings have concluded, the council should promptly revisit the matter. This should occur whether the result is conviction, acquittal, or dropped charges. In the event the criminal charges are dropped or prosecution does not result in conviction, the council should decide whether or not to rescind its earlier action and/or take additional action. Conviction or lack of it is not the only criterion the church uses to discern ungodly conduct. An alleged abuser who has been suspended should not be 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.

In the event of prosecution resulting in conviction, the abuser may be subject to further suspension, deposition (as provided in Church Order Articles 82-83), employment termination, or denial of reinstatement to a volunteer position. In the event the accused should request to meet with the council, the council is advised to consult with professionals knowledgeable about treatment of offenders and to read the preface to the guidelines (*Acts of Synod 1995*, pp. 781-83), which raises the issue of danger in "forgiving too quickly."

4. Five important footnotes regarding both sets of guidelines

- a. These guidelines are suggested guidelines. The circumstances of abuse may dictate that church officials deviate from them. 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 with expertise in the area to define the legal standards relevant to a 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 disclose and/or receive information relating to the allegations should use extensive precautions to ensure that the allegations and surrounding circumstances are not shared with any entities or individuals other than those expressly described under these guidelines or required by law.

Accuracy is of the utmost importance in the disclosure of allegations or surrounding circumstances to those individuals or entities named in these guidelines. Wrongful or inaccurate dissemination of information can lead to adverse legal consequences.

- c. Whenever a disclosure of allegations of child abuse or assault is warranted, the disclosure must include the language of the criminal code along with the indication that criminal authorities have made the charges and will follow them up to the full extent of their capabilities. When the allegations are ungodly conduct, abuse of office, etc., then the disclosure must include the language of the Church Order along with the indication that church officials will follow up to the full extent of their capabilities. After a judgment on the matter is rendered, subsequent disclosure must include the language of the Church Order; an explanation of the violation(s) can be given with care so as to protect the identity of the victim. Failure to explain the nature of the violation enables the offender to continue a pattern of denial or minimization and promotes the perception that the matter is being covered up somehow.
- d. Member churches and classes that adopt these guidelines should first check with their own legal counsel about potential liability that arises from the guidelines. By adopting the guidelines, the member church and its classis may be assuming legal obligations not dictated under the laws of its jurisdiction. The liability of the advisory panel that serves the member church or classis should also be discussed with legal counsel. A

classis that forms an abuse-response team and advisory panel should be incorporated and should obtain legal protection for the volunteers serving on each. Finally, member churches and classes that adopt the guidelines should follow the procedures specified. An independent basis for potential liability could be the negligent failure to follow the guidelines as adopted.

- e. Denominational personnel may act as neutral consultants and advisers to an abuse-response team and advisory panel, but they should not serve on either a team or a panel.

DENOMINATIONAL MINISTRY SHARES AND RECOMMENDED AGENCIES FOR 1997

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DENOMINATIONAL MINISTRY SHARES AND RECOMMENDED AGENCIES FOR 1997

I. Denominational ministry shares

	Per family	Per professing member
Back to God Hour	\$ 73.91	\$31.84
CRC-TV	26.50	11.42
Calvin College*		
	Per family	Per professing member
Area 1—Grand Rapids East, Grand Rapids North, Grand Rapids South, Grandville, Thornapple Valley	\$117.20	\$51.20
Area 2—Cadillac, Georgetown, Holland, Kalamazoo, Lake Erie, Muskegon, Zeeland	88.10	38.20
Area 3—Chicago South, Florida, Illiana, Northern Illinois, Wisconsin	71.10	30.70
Area 4—Heartland, Iakota, Minnesota North, Minnesota South, Northcentral Iowa, Pella... ..	23.20	9.60
Area 5—Atlantic Northeast, Hackensack, Hudson.....	76.80	31.30
Area 6—Arizona, Columbia, California South, Central California, Greater Los Angeles, Pacific Northwest, Red Mesa, Rocky Mountain, Yellowstone.....	48.50	22.30
Area 7—Chatham, Eastern Canada, Hamilton, Huron, Niagara, Quinte, Toronto	27.30	11.80
Area 8—Alberta North, Alberta South, B.C. North-West, B.C. South-East.....	15.60	7.00
Calvin Theological Seminary	44.81	19.39
CRC Publications		
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, \$10.70; Area 3, \$27.70; Area 4, \$75.60; Area 5, \$22.00; Area 6, \$50.30; Area 7, \$71.50; Area 8, \$83.20.

Per professing member

Area 1, -0-; Area 2, \$4.46; Area 3, \$11.96; Area 4, \$33.06; Area 5, \$11.36; Area 6, \$20.36; Area 7, \$30.86; Area 8, \$35.66.

Fund for Smaller Churches (includes quarterly subsidies and continuing-education fund)	1958	844
Home Missions	12064	5247
Ministers' Pension Funds and Special Assistance and Moving Fund for Retired Ministers and Widows	4047	1746
Pastoral Ministries	2590	118
World Missions	11493	4951

II. Agencies recommended for financial support in 1997

A. Denominational agencies recommended for one or more offerings

Canadian registration #

1. Back to God Hour—above-ministry-share needs0347708-39
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. CRC Publications
 - World Literature Ministries—above ministry-share needs.....0590018-49
5. Home Missions—above-ministry-share needs0549022-47
6. World Missions—above-ministry-share needs0435081-47
7. World Relief—one offering per quarter0366443-09
8. Pastoral Ministries—above-ministry-share needs0590018-49
 - a. Abuse Prevention
 - b. Chaplaincy Ministries
 - c. Disability Concerns
 - d. Pastor-Church Relations
 - e. Race Relations
 - 1) Above-ministry-share needs
 - 2) Multiracial Student Scholarship Fund

B. Denominationally related youth agencies recommended for one or more offerings

United Calvinist Youth

1. Calvinettes.....0877563-49
2. Calvinist Cadet Corps0877563-49
3. Early Teen Ministry0877563-49
4. Youth Unlimited /Young Calvinist Federation.....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 regarding the financial support provided by Christian Reformed Churches to these agencies:

... in light of the growing number of agencies seeking recommendation for financial support, [synod] remind[s] the congregations of the synodical decision of 1970 wherein "synod urge[d] all the classes to request their churches to pay denominational causes before making gifts to nondenominational organizations on the synod-approved accredited list.

Grounds: Our denominational causes should have priority in our giving. . . ."

(*Acts of Synod 1992*, p. 707)

Thus, the list of accredited nondenominational agencies is meant to provide guidance to the churches in selecting organizations for support. However, accreditation is not meant to obligate the churches to designate one or more offerings to a cause.

United States agencies

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. Crossroad Bible Institute
3. Faith, Prayer and Tract League
4. Friendship Ministries
5. Gideons International
6. International Bible Society
7. Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship
8. Lord's Day Alliance of the United States
9. Metanoia Ministries
10. Mission 21 India
11. Portable Recording Ministries (PRM) International
12. Seminary Consortium for Urban Pastoral Education (SCUPE)
13. The Bible League
14. Wycliffe Bible Translators

Canadian agencies

A. Benevolent agencies

1. Beginnings Counseling & Adoption Services of Ontario, Inc.

B. Educational agencies

1. Canadian Christian Education Foundation, Inc.
2. Dordt College
3. Institut Farel
4. Institute for Christian Studies
5. Redeemer Reformed Christian College
6. Reformed Bible College
7. The King's University College
8. Trinity Christian College
9. Worldwide Christian Schools of Canada

C. Miscellaneous agencies

1. Canadian Bible Society
2. Evangelical Fellowship of Canada
3. Friendship Groups—Canada
4. Gideons International—Canada
5. International Bible Society—Canada
6. Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship of Canada
7. The Bible League—Canada
8. Work Research Foundation
9. Wycliffe Bible Translators of Canada, Inc.

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INDEX

(Page numbers in **boldface type** refer to the minutes of synod; page numbers in regular type refer to agenda and supplementary material.)

Acronyms in the index refer to the following:

BOT	Board of Trustees
CGKN	Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland
CO	Church Order
CRC	Christian Reformed Church
CRWRC	Christian Reformed World Relief Committee
EWE	Education, Worship, and Evangelism Department (CRC Publications)
GKN	Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland
IRC	Interchurch Relations Committee
JCC	Judicial Code Committee
JMMC	Joint-Ministries Management Committee
NAPARC	North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council
OPC	Orthodox Presbyterian Church
PCA	Presbyterian Church in America
RCN	Reformed Churches in the Netherlands
RCNZ	Reformed Churches in New Zealand
REC	Reformed Ecumenical Council
RPCNA	Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America
SCORR	Synodical Committee on Race Relations
TELL	The Evangelical Literature League

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