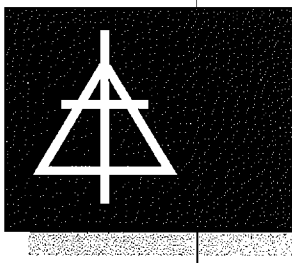
CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA

AGENDA FOR SYNOD



1997

Christian Reformed Church in North America

AGENDA FOR SYNOD

June 14-21, 1997
Fine Arts Center Auditorium
Calvin College
Grand Rapids, Michigan

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PREFACE

Synod 1997 begins its sessions Saturday afternoon, June 14, at 4:00 p.m. in the Fine Arts Center of Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Rev. Michael De Vries, pastor of Pillar CRC, Holland, Michigan, will serve as president pro tem until Synod 1997 is duly constituted and its four officers have been elected.

A service of prayer and praise will be held Sunday afternoon, June 15, 1997, at 4:00 p.m. in Pillar Christian Reformed Church, 57 East 10th Street, Holland, Michigan. Rev. Michael De Vries will be in charge of the service.

The congregations of the Christian Reformed Church in North America are requested to remember the synodical assembly in intercessory prayers on Sunday, June 8. 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. Notes to delegates

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

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

C. Synod provides travel accident insurance for those traveling to and from synod. Synod does not provide health insurance. Canadian delegates may wish to purchase additional health insurance for the time they are at synod (for which reimbursement will be made) if their present policies do not provide adequate insurance outside of Canada.

D. Delegates should bring with them to synod their copies of the *Agenda for Synod 1997* 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. Although the general sessions of synod are recorded, executive sessions are not taped. Delegates to synod are informed at the opening session of synod that all the general sessions are being taped. Synod has designated that the office of the general secretary be responsible for the use and storage of these materials.

III. Confidentiality of the executive sessions of synod

The Board of Trustees calls the matter of confidentiality to the attention of Synod 1997 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 providing 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 1997

Classis	Delegates	Alternates
Alberta North		
Ministers	Cornelius Vriend	Harry Vriend
	Homer G. Samplonius	Martin T. Mobach
Elders	William Wildeboer	John J. Feddes
	Bill Hulsman	Terry E. Visser
Alberta South		
Ministers	Michael Reitsma	William D. Vis
	John R. Huizinga	Alvin Beukema
Elders	Leonard Bouwsma	Fred Bosma
	Durk De Jong	Roy Bil
Arizona		
Ministers	Frank E. Pott	Jonathan D. Westra
	Fred J. Walhof	Jeffrey A. Dykema
Elders	Harry Molling	_____
	Peter Hamstra	_____
Atlantic Northeast		
Ministers	Stanley J. Vander Klay	James R. Van Tholen
	J. George Aupperlee	Karl H. Bratt
Elders	John R. Knoops	Bernard H. Huussen
	Bradley J. Gundlach	_____
B.C. North-West		
Ministers	Jack S. Hielema	William C. Veenstra
	Leonard H. Batterink	James R. Poelman
Elders	Garry Storteboom	William Crofton
	Ken M. Vander Horst	_____
B.C. South-East		
Ministers	Harry C. Salomons	Rudy W. Ouwehand
	James R. Berry	Melle Pool
Elders	Ken Byl	John Bandstra
	John Dykshoorn	Norman Brouwer
California South		
Ministers	Kenneth K. Cho	Randal K. Young
	Randal S. Lankheet	Peter Y. Shin
Elders	Keith A. Vander Pol	James I. Park
	Peter M. Nanninga	Henry G. Luth
Central California		
Ministers	Harold Hiemstra	Peter Yang
	Jack A. Huttinga	Bruce A. Persenaire
Elders	Dirk Hoek	Martin R. Boersma
	Darwin Houtsma	David R. Hollander

Classis	Delegates	Alternates
Chatham		
Ministers	John D. Hellinga	Michael W. Bootsma
	Eric Pennings	Jack M. Van de Hoef
Elders	Ralph Vording	John A. Middel
	Tom Sypkes	Ben Vanderlugt
Chicago South		
Ministers	Paul A. Hansen	Harry J. Weidenaar
	Marvin P. Hoogland	Richard E. Williams
Elders	Don Holwerda	Roger W. Wiers
	Henry W. Washington	Roger W. Van Dellen
Columbia		
Ministers	Alvin J. Machiela	Perry J. Tinklenberg
	Calvin J. Aardsma	D. Vance Hays
Elders	Ivan R. Imig	Floyd J. Antonides
	James W. Piske	_____
Eastern Canada		
Ministers	Norman A. Sennema	Kenneth M. Gehrels
	Henry P. Kranenburg	David H. Kromminga
Elders	Henk Breimer	Bert Schreiber
	H. Mitchell Bell	Kees Van Dieen
Florida		
Ministers	Gianni Gracia	Robert E. Van Hofwegen
	Michael H. Van Hofwegen	Stanley J. Workman
Elders	Josue Abreu	Owen J. Baas
	Donald R. Vande Polder	_____
Georgetown		
Ministers	Marvin W. Heyboer	Terry L. Genzink
	Duane E. Tinklenberg	Allan H. Jongsma
Elders	Jerry Van Solkema	John D. Crans
	Thomas R. Vander Hulst	_____
Grand Rapids East		
Ministers	David H. Beelen	Roger A. Kok
	Jack Roeda	Mark D. Vermaire
Elders	Bert Bratt	Ken Andree
	Robert F. Topp	Roger L. Faber
Grand Rapids North		
Ministers	Edward J. Blankespoor	Peter T. Verhulst
	Fred J. Van Dyk	Douglas A. Warners
Elders	Mark A. Witte	Jay H. Kuiper
	Donald F. Oosterhouse	Harry Vriend
Grand Rapids South		
Ministers	Ronald L. Fynewever	David A. Struyk
	Ronald G. Kool	David M. Doyle
Elders	Dan L. Buist	Donald Oppewal
	Jack Bloem	James B. Dykstra
Grandville		
Ministers	Daniel B. Mouw	Arthur J. Schoonveld
	John P. Gorter	Dale L. Slings
Elders	Marion J. Vos	Jacob Lucas
	Irving H. Poelman	Donald De Koning

Classis	Delegates	Alternates
Greater Los Angeles		
Ministers	Daniel J. Brink	Ministers: Ronald D. Goudzwaard
	John W. De Vries	John Van Schepen
Elders	Edward P. Keller	Elders: Arthur E. De Jong
	Arnold D. Westra	_____
Hackensack		
Ministers	John A. Algera	Ministers: Charles L. Geschiere
	Trevor A. Rubingh	Joel E. Kok
Elders	Edwin Arevalo	Elders: William D. Ribbens
	Charles A. Mast	Ken J. Vander Wall
Hamilton		
Ministers	Peter A. Hoytema	Ministers: Bernard H. De Jonge
	Jacob Kerkhof	Marvin Van Donselaar
Elders	Peter Lenters	Elders: Louis Andela
	Benjamin J. Ponsen	Albert Jagt
Heartland		
Ministers	Randall R. Bergsma	Ministers: Peter J. Mans
	Gary L. Luurtsema	Barry B. Blankers
Elders	Fred Krommendyk	Elders: Stephen H. De Jong
	John Van Ballegooyen	Lowell L. Krediet
Holland		
Ministers	Wayne A. Brouwer	Ministers: Timothy D. Kauffman
	Michael De Vries	Marvin J. Hofman
Elders	Sander De Haan	Elders: Calvin J. Hoogstra
	Eugene D. Westra	William Vogelzang
Hudson		
Ministers	David D. Poolman	Ministers: LeRoy G. Christoffels
	Wesley Van Dyk	John J. Hoogland
Elders	Albert G. De Roo	Elders: Richard J. Zuidema, Jr.
	Bernard W. Tolsma	Jacob Klaasen
Huron		
Ministers	Ronald V. Luchies	Ministers: Nathaniel Elgersma
	Jack De Vries	Jack Westerhof
Elders	Harry H. Sjaarda	Elders: John Middeljans
	Jerry Van Dyk	_____
Iakota		
Ministers	Stanley R. Scripps	Ministers: John L. Witvliet
	Roger W. Sparks	Charles J. De Ridder
Elders	Arnold Feekes	Elders: Ronald D. Rynders
	Albert L. Kuipers	Russell W. Maatman
Illiana		
Ministers	Thomas J. Kok	Ministers: Homer J. Wigboldy
	Herman J. Schutt	Laryn G. Zoerhof
Elders	Vernon J. Boerman	Elders: George Vande Werken
	Donald Dykstra	Simon J. Koopmans, Jr.
Kalamazoo		
Ministers	Kenneth A. Baker	Ministers: Joseph A. Brinks
	Neal R. Rylaarsdam	Duane Nieuwsma
Elders	Leonard D. Klok	Elders: Loren J. Dykstra
	Louis J. Meinema	Joseph H. De Koekkoek

Classis	Delegates	Alternates
Lake Erie		
Ministers	Clayton G. Libolt	Ministers: John G. Zevalking
	Emmett A. Harrison	Paul W. Brink
Elders	Paul R. Bouman	Elders: _____
	_____	_____
Lake Superior (formerly Minnesota North)		
Ministers	Gerrit J. Bomhof	Ministers: James C. Dekker
	Thomas K. Groelsema	William H. Kooienga
Elders	Rob R. Braun	Elders: Alvin J. Koning
	Eric D. Rynders	_____
Minnesota South		
Ministers	Jerry D. Buwalda	Ministers: David E. Den Haan
	Timothy J. Brown	Bruce Leiter
Elders	Marlin D. Van Schepen	Elders: Clarence Van Meekeren
	Darrel Tinklenberg	_____
Muskegon		
Ministers	Larry D. Baar	Ministers: James A. Molenbeek
	Leslie D. Van Dyke	Edward C. Visser
Elders	Al T. Wezeman	Elders: Harry Thomasma
	Jess J. De Young	Harvey Poel
Niagara		
Ministers	Donald W. Cowart	Ministers: Pieter A. Heerema
	Henry Vander Beek	Peter Slofstra
Elders	Brian van Staalduinen	Elders: Syl E. Gerritsma
	Cornelis Van Soelen	Ben Van Hoffen
Northcentral Iowa		
Ministers	Henry Dykema	Ministers: P. Wayne Townsend
	Thomas J. Vos	William G. Brouwers
Elders	Clarence R. Henze	Elders: Mick Vanden Bosch
	Kenneth E. Muyskens	Herbert Mulder
Northern Illinois		
Ministers	John J. Wiegers	Ministers: Daniel L. Jongsma
	Fred A. De Jong	James D. Osterhouse
Elders	Peter Roeters	Elders: Arnold Hoving
	David W. Bakker	_____
Northern Michigan		
Ministers	Thomas A. De Does	Ministers: Jeffrey C. Vanderhooft
	John Rop, Jr.	Gerald L. Essenburg
Elders	Wilfred Hoekwater	Elders: _____
	David D. Westmaas	_____
Pacific Hanmi		
Ministers	Ike Chang	Ministers: David W. Yang
	Moses I. Jeong	Seung Won Yoon
Elders	Sung Goo Kang	Elders: Hyo Won Chang
	Bong Soo Lee	Young Soo Kim
Pacific Northwest		
Ministers	Thomas L. Haan	Ministers: Insung Kim
	Gerard Van Groningen, Jr.	Michael J. Kooy
Elders	Gary L. Van Hulzen	Elders: Harold Terpstra
	Stephen G. Donovan	Tony Van Rooyen

Classis	Delegates		Alternates
Pella			
Ministers	Thomas R. Dykstra	Ministers	John R. Sittema
	Robert J. Timmer		Carl A. Heuss
Elders	Paul E. Vos	Elders	P. Marvin Zylstra
	James P. Jonker		Larry G. Eggink
Quinte			
Ministers	Ed W. Visser	Ministers	William T. Koopmans
	H. Charles Kooger		John Visser
Elders	Lawrence J. Lutgendorf	Elders	John K. Mulder
	Andy Buwalda		Clarence De Vries
Red Mesa			
Ministers	Stanley A. Jim	Ministers	Gary J. Klumpenhower
	W. Keith Bulthuis		Paul H. Redhouse
Elders	Bobby L. Boyd	Elders	Fritz K. Eskeets
	Jack B. Davis		Jack De Groat
Rocky Mountain			
Ministers	Clair Vander Neut	Ministers	Robert L. Westenbroek
	William Verhoef		John D. Van Regenmorter
Elders	John Molegraaf	Elders	David T. Wondergem
	W. Dean Dyk		Allan B. Cok
Thornapple Valley			
Ministers	William J. Renkema	Ministers	Martin Vellekoop
	Norman L. Meyer		Bernard W. Mulder
Elders	Julius Kuiper	Elders	Ralph Cok
	Andrew Tiesenga		Richard J. Vande Kieft
Toronto			
Ministers	Nick C. Overduin	Ministers	Hendrik P. Bruinsma
	John Tenyenhuis		Samuel Cooper
Elders	George Vandervelde	Elders	William Kort
	Jan H. Ottevangers		———
Wisconsin			
Ministers	Larry L. Meyer	Ministers	Larry E. Van Essen
	Martin Toonstra		Daniel J. Roeda
Elders	Steven M. Baas	Elders	Dennis Ribbens
	Robert M. Brenton		Robert N. Duimstra
Yellowstone			
Ministers	Jacob C. Weeda	Ministers	Bernard J. Van Ee
	David Crump		John M. Wanders
Elders	Louis Regnerus	Elders	Leroy E. Logterman
	Leon H. Smit		Arthur R. Koenes
Zeeland			
Ministers	Ronald J. Meyer	Ministers	James Cooper
	James E. De Vries		Daryl E. Kats
Elders	Harry J. Mulder	Elders	David Blauwkamp
	Paul Wagenmaker		Arnold A. Vander Wall

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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 1996 and Synod 1997.

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, which received final approval at Synod 1996 (*Acts of Synod 1996*, pp. 620-33).

The Board has met three times since Synod 1996 (September, December, February) 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 Canadian registered charities 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.

B. Membership

The members of the Michigan Corporation are Rev. Raymond Slim (Far West U.S., Subgroup I); Dr. Tom Van Groningen (Far West U.S., Subgroup II); Rev. Aldon L. Kuiper, Mr. Harold Van Maanen (Great Plains); Mr. Milton H. Kuyers, Mr. William Weidenaar (Central U.S., Subgroup I); Mr. Nelson Gritter (Central U.S., Subgroup II); Dr. Arthur J. Schoonveld, Mr. Howard Johnson (Central U.S., Subgroup III); Mrs. Kathleen Smith, Rev. Duane K. Kelderman (Central U.S., Subgroup IV); Rev. Stanley J. Workman (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.

1. Board officers: president, Dr. A.J. Schoonveld; vice president, Rev. J. Kuipers; secretary, Dr. D.H. Engelhard; treasurer, Mr. N. Gritter.

2. Corporation officers: president, Dr. 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. Kenneth J. Horjus.

3. Polity Committee: Rev. P. Brouwer, Rev. A.L. Kuiper, Rev. G.H. Pols, Dr. C. Rottman, Dr. A.J. Schoonveld, Rev. R. Slim, Mrs. K. Smith, Mr. W. Wildeboer, Rev. S.J. Workman, and Dr. D.H. Engelhard (adviser).

4. Program and Finance Committee: Mr. N. Gritter, Mr. H. Johnson, Rev. D.K. Kelderman, Rev. J. Kuipers, Mr. M.H. Kuyers, Mrs. J. Vander Ploeg, Mr. J.H. Vander Stoep, Dr. T. Van Groningen, Mr. H. Van Maanen, Mr. W. Weidenaar, and Dr. P. Borgdorff (adviser).

5. Executive Committee: Dr. 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.

C. Salary administration and disclosure

Since the formation of the Board of Trustees in 1993, significant attention has been given to developing uniform salary-administration guidelines and procedures. The Board has continued to work with the salary ranges developed by the Hay Group and approved by synod from year to year. The Hay Group also recommends the number of ranges our situation requires, and for many years the CRC's salary grid had ten (10) ranges (3-12, later relabeled 16-25 without change). The Hay Group, in reviewing the 1997 ranges, recommended a reduction in the number of ranges from ten (10) to eight (8). While this change involved some internal adjustment to the ranges, no salaries were adjusted as a result of the change. The Board judged the adjustments to be technical in nature and therefore gave its approval. The salary disclosures contained in all of the

reports to synod are reported according to the new grid, as shown in the graph below.

Each agency has provided salary information in 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)
19	1	3rd quartile
18	2	3rd quartile
15	1	3rd quartile
14	2	3rd quartile

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

THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA
1997 SALARY RANGES

New Levels	Previous Levels	Proposed U.S. 1997 Range Min	Midpoint	Max	Proposed Canadian 1997 Range Min	Midpoint	Max
20	25	$66,306	$82,883	$99,459	$85,828	$107,285	$128,742
19	24	60,328	75,409	90,491	74,458	93,072	111,687
18	23	55,291	69,114	82,936	64,879	81,099	97,319
17	22	51,042	63,803	76,563	56,799	70,999	85,199
16	21	47,486	59,357	71,229	50,036	62,545	75,054
15	20	44,506	55,633	66,759	44,369	55,461	66,553
14	19	39,067	48,833	58,600	39,580	49,474	59,369
13	18	34,505	43,131	51,757	35,558	44,447	53,337

Shaded areas of the scale are not currently in use.

D. Interim appointments

1. Board appointments

Board	Classis	Member	Alternate	Term
Synodical Deputies	Alberta North		Rev. H.G. Samplonius	
	Atlantic Northeast		Rev. S.J. Vander Klay	
	Columbia		Rev. G.P. Hutt	
	Hackensack		Rev. J. Reiffer	
	Illiana		Rev. R.J. Blauw	
	Minnesota North		Rev. W.H. Kooienga	
	Northcentral Iowa		Rev. H. Dykema	
	Toronto		Rev. H.A. Van Hoff	
CRC Publications	Wisconsin	Rev. E.J. Laarman	Rev. R.L. Gelwicks	1999
Home Missions	California South	Rev. R.K. Young		1999
	Grand Rapids East		Mr. J. Witte	
	Hudson	Rev. W. Van Dyk	Rev. D.D. Poolman	2000
	Pacific Hanmi	Rev. I. Chang	Rev. I.C. Kim	1999

World Missions	Chicago South		Mr. Martin Ozinga, Jr.	
	Hudson	Rev. J.G. Keizer	Rev. J.J. Stastny	1999
	Pacific Hanmi	Rev. D.S. Shin	Rev. C.C. Cho	1999
	Pacific NW	Rev. R.J. De Ruiter	Mr. W. Eskes	1999
CRWRC	Chicago South	Mr. Pete Kamp		2000
	Huron		Mr. George Lubberts	
	Red Mesa		Mr. J. Smart	
	Thornapple Valley		Mr. T. Van't Land	

2. Calvin Theological Seminary

   The Board approved the appointment of Dr. Mark S. Khil, Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, as the alternate member for Central U.S., Subgroup II, to fill the position vacated by Rev. Douglas Fauble, who moved out of the region.

3. CRC Publications

   The Board approved the appointment of Mr. Dennis Bergsma to fill an at-large position on the board of CRC Publications.

4. Fund for Smaller Churches

   The Board approved the appointment of Mr. Henry Eizenga to the Fund for Smaller Churches Committee to fill the unexpired term of Mr. James Hofman, who resigned after accepting employment elsewhere.

5. Committee to Examine Routes to Ordained Ministry in the CRC

   The Board approved the following appointments to the Committee to Examine Routes to Ordained Ministry in the CRC (Rev. Alan Breems and Ms. Patricia Tigchelaar declined appointment to the committee by Synod 1996):

   Rev. Bruce Ballast (to replace Rev. Breems)
   Ms. E. Joyce Scholten (to replace Ms. Tigchelaar)

6. Committee to Give Direction about and for Pastoral Care for Homosexual Members

   Membership on the above-named committee was referred by Synod 1996 to the Board of Trustees for appointment. The following members have been appointed to serve on the committee:

   Mrs. Rose Alons
   Ms. Mary-Lee Bouma
   Rev. Cornelius (Corky) De Boer
   Dr. Melvin Hugen, chairman
   Dr. John Kreeft
   Rev. Yong-Ju Oh
   Rev. Herman Van Niejenhuis
   Dr. Robert Van Noord
   Rev. Gerald Zandstra

7. Committee to Study the Structure for Ministry in the U.S.A.

   The Board approved the appointment of Mrs. Mary Jo De Jong to the Committee to Study the Structure for Ministry in the U.S.A. Mrs. De Jong was appointed as a replacement for Dr. Mary Szto who was unable to serve. The Board also appointed Mr. William Weidenaar to the committee as explained in II, A, 3 below.

II. Activities of the Board

A. Polity matters

1. Proposed changes in Church Order Article 38

The committee appointed (see *Agenda for Synod 1996*, pp. 34-35) to prepare a response to Overture 81 (Synod 1995) presented its report to the Board of Trustees in December 1996. The committee presented its recommendations under three main headings: (a) send a letter to the churches, (b) propose changes in Church Order Article 38, and (c) revise the model Articles of Incorporation adopted in 1980 (see *Acts of Synod 1980*, pp. 23, 401-04). A letter was sent to the churches in December 1996 in which many of the proposed changes to Church Order Article 38 were suggested as ways to ease tensions in churches considering disaffiliation from the Christian Reformed Church. The proposed changes to Church Order Article 38 are set forth below. In the following section the new model Articles of Incorporation are presented. The changes constitute the Board's recommendation to synod as the answer to Overture 81 (Synod 1995).

a. The Board of Trustees of the CRCNA recommends that synod adopt the following additions to Church Order Article 38:

38-c: When a council and congregation decide to disband or revert to unorganized status, the approval of classis is required. If any distribution of assets is required, the congregation shall seek the advice of classis.

Grounds:

1) Classis approves the formation of a council as part of the denomination; it is logical it should also be involved in the dissolution of a congregation.
2) A change of status may have an impact upon the classis through ministry shares. The requirement that classis approve of such changes maintains accountability.
3) Assets of a congregation may come from substantial contributions by classis or other denominational agencies. The advice of classis in the distribution of assets will ensure some consideration of denominational agencies that may have provided funding.

38-d: When two or more councils and congregations decide to merge, the approval of classis is required.

Ground: Classis approves the formation of a council; it is logical that classis be involved when the status or realignment of congregations is being considered.

38-e: When a council decides to disaffiliate from the denomination, the set process for disaffiliation adopted by synod shall be followed.

Grounds:

1) Classis approves the formation of a council as part of the denomination; it is logical that classis be involved when a congregation leaves the denomination.

2) The involvement of classis provides an ecclesiastical structure for hearing any disputes that may exist or be created in the disaffiliation. This arrangement is consistent with I Corinthians 6.

b. The Board of Trustees of the CRCNA recommends that synod adopt the following procedure for disaffiliation from the CRC and make it Church Order Supplement, Article 38-e:

A local congregation may disaffiliate from the denomination only according to the following procedure:

1) A church council which adopts a resolution to disaffiliate from the denomination shall inform its classis of its actions, ordinarily at the next scheduled meeting of classis. The council shall provide written grounds for its intention to withdraw.
2) Classis shall appoint representatives to meet with the council to attempt to dissuade the council from such action. Representatives of classis shall have the opportunity to meet in person with the council and to present written rebuttal to the council's grounds. Meetings between the council and classical representatives shall continue no longer than two months unless both parties agree to a continuation.
3) If the council is not dissuaded by the classical representatives and wishes to continue the disaffiliation process, the council shall issue a call for a congregational meeting. It will present together with this call its written grounds for disaffiliation and any written rebuttal presented by the classical representatives.
4) Representatives of classis shall be informed of the time and location of congregational meetings at which a congregation's withdrawal from the denomination is being considered and shall be given opportunity to persuade the congregation to remain within the denomination.
5) At the congregational meeting a preliminary vote may be taken following the discussion. If a majority favors withdrawal, a second meeting to confirm this decision shall be scheduled no earlier than one month and no later than one year following.
6) If the second congregational vote favors disaffiliation and the council follows through on its decision to disaffiliate, classis shall provide for the pastoral care of those members who wish to remain within the denomination.
7) If the congregation wishes to disaffiliate from the denomination, classis (and synod upon appeal) shall settle any disputes between differing factions within the disaffiliating congregation. The separation will be complete when classis (or synod upon appeal) declares it acquiesces in the decision of the congregation to disaffiliate from the denomination.

Grounds:

a) This provides the procedure proposed in Church Order Article 38-e.
b) This procedure is consistent with the teaching of I Corinthians 6 regarding believers' involvement in the settling of disputes.
c) This procedure is consistent with the legal need for structuring relationships involving church property so that the civil courts are

not required to solve church disputes (cf. *Presbyterian Church v. Hull Church*, 393 US 440, 449 [1969]).

2. Proposed changes in the model Articles of Incorporation for member churches

In 1980 a model set of Articles of Incorporation was adopted by synod (*Acts of Synod 1980*, pp. 23, 401-04). These have been used widely in our churches throughout the United States. A promised set of articles for Canada was never produced, but some churches in Canada have incorporated as much of the model as feasible under federal and/or provincial law.

With the exception of the article entitled "Property," the new proposed model is essentially the same as the 1980 model, but the language is more readable in the new version. The complete model is attached to this report as Appendix 1.

Article VII in the current model of the Articles of Incorporation contains the statements regarding ownership of, control over, and distribution of property. That article reads as follows:

> The ownership of all property, real or personal, acquired by this church shall be vested exclusively in this corporation, and title to the same shall be taken in its name alone.
>
> This corporation shall have exclusive control over all of its temporalities, nor shall the exercise of its property rights through the lawful decisions of its council and/or congregation be subject to revision by the classis of which this church is a member or the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
>
> In the event of schism in this church, as defined by Article 153, *Acts of Synod 1970*, if a division of its property becomes necessary, this shall be done according to the scriptural injunction of I Corinthians 6. Every effort shall be made to achieve a just and fair division of property. To this end, counsel, assistance, and advice shall be sought first from the classis and synod, provided that if these ecclesiastical methods do not resolve the controversy, the church may seek the counsel, assistance, and advice of nonecclesiastical advisors and sources.

After studying the concerns presented in Overture 81 (Synod 1995), studying CRC ecclesiology and polity, and reviewing the circumstances and practices associated with some of the disaffiliations from the CRC, the study committee and the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA became convinced that the article regarding property needed rewording. The grounds listed below the recommendation present a rationale for the changes.

The Board of Trustees of the CRCNA recommends

a. That synod adopt the following replacement article concerning "Property":

PROPERTY

A. **Manner in Which Held**

All real and personal property shall be held exclusively in furtherance of the purposes of this church as a member church of the Christian Reformed Church in North America and in furtherance of the principles of doctrine and ecclesiastical government outlined under Articles III and V of these Articles of Incorporation and interpreted by the Classis of which the church is a member (the "classis"), subject to review on appeal by synod, consistent with the Church Order.

B. **In the Event of Dissolution**

In the event of the disbanding of this church and the dissolution of this corporation, the church's remaining assets, if any, after the payment of its debts and expenses, shall be conveyed as the board of trustees [i.e., council] may propose and as the affirmative vote of a majority of the members shall determine, subject to each of the following:

1. The classis must approve the disbanding of this church and the dissolution of this corporation.
2. The board of trustees shall receive the advice of the classis in formulating its proposal for property distribution.
3. The vote of the members shall be in accordance with the provisions of paragraph B of Article VII of these Articles of Incorporation.
4. All remaining assets must be distributed only to one or more organizations which qualify as exempt organizations under Section 501 (c) (3) of the Code.

C. **In the Event of Consensual Division**

In the event that a majority of the members of this church consensually agree to divide this church, with the consent of the classis, into two (2) or more member churches of the Christian Reformed Church in North America, all real and personal property of this corporation shall be distributed as a majority vote of the members determines in accordance with the provisions of paragraph B of Article VII of these Articles of Incorporation and subject to review by classis.

D. **In the Event of Irreconcilable Division**

In the event that the classis (or synod on appeal) determines that an irreconcilable division (schism) has occurred within this church, the confessing members of this church who, according to the exclusive determination of the classis (or synod on appeal), remain true to the purposes of this church as a member church of the Christian Reformed Church in North America and the principles of doctrine and ecclesiastical government outlined under Articles III and V of these Articles of Incorporation shall be the lawful congregation of this church and shall have the exclusive right to hold and enjoy the real and personal property of this church. Nothing in this Article VI shall prevent the classis (or synod on appeal) from determining, in keeping with the scriptural injunction of I Corinthians 6, that more than one group of confessing members of this church are each a lawful congregation and dividing the real and personal property between the groups of members as classis (or synod on appeal) may determine.

Grounds:

The replacement of Article VII in the current model is required for the following reasons:

1) The current Article VII is based on a "congregationalist" principle of church government which posits the absolute autonomy of the local congregation. Its introduction into our current model in 1970 was designed, among other things, to prevent the opposite extreme: a "hierarchical" principle whereby the ownership of a local congregation's assets is held by broader assemblies of a denomination. But neither of these extremes accurately reflects traditional Reformed principles of church government followed by the CRCNA. The latter has always posited a "relative autonomy" of the local congregation whereby the ownership and disposition of assets is indeed held and controlled by its members but the intervention in this area of broader assemblies on appeal or in case of serious difficulties is legitimate and to be honored.

2) The ambiguity in the current Article VII as to exactly who decides how to resolve disputes concerning property distribution upon irreconcilable division (schism) tends to drive the parties in such division in the direction of requesting a resolution from civil courts.
3) The current Article VII, providing as it does a pro rata distribution of property regardless of particular circumstances, has not prevented serious conflicts leading to irreconcilable division (schism) and may well have exacerbated such conflicts by ruling out the possibility of a settlement of disputes concerning distribution of assets by binding arbitration of broader assemblies.
4) The proposed article makes it more likely that church members will follow the directives of I Corinthians 6:1-8 and refrain from asking the civil courts to resolve their disputes.
5) The proposed article more clearly preserves the reasonable expectations of members present and past that their donations have been used and will be used in furtherance of the purposes of the church as a member church of the CRCNA.
6) The proposed article reflects the proposed changes to Article 38 of the Church Order.

b. That synod approve the updated model Articles of Incorporation for the use of our congregations (see Appendix 1).

c. That synod include these revised model Articles of Incorporation in the Church Order as Supplement, Article 32-d.

Grounds:
1) This will make the synodical model more accessible to churches and classical church visitors on a continuing basis.
2) Models, by their very nature, deserve a place in the Supplement rather than in the Church Order itself.

d. That synod instruct classical church visitors to conduct an annual review of the congregations' current articles of incorporation and recommend, where necessary, that congregations adopt articles that faithfully reflect the model contained in Church Order Supplement, Article 32-d.

Grounds:
1) This action is consistent with the decisions of Synod 1961 (*Acts of Synod 1961*, Art. 132) and of Synod 1963 (*Acts of Synod 1963*, Art. 71).
2) This action is consistent with the Reformed system of church government, which allows for direction to local churches by broader assemblies of the denomination and assures that member congregations confront these issues prior to any future division and conflict.

e. That synod insert the following between sections b. 20) and what is now b. 21) of the current Guide for Conducting Church Visiting: "21) Do the current articles of incorporation faithfully reflect the model adopted by synod and contained in Church Order Supplement, Article 32-d?"

Ground: This action ensures that classical church visitors will be reminded to engage congregations in an annual review of the functioning articles of incorporation.

f. That synod require any congregation receiving financial assistance from synodical agencies (e.g., Fund for Smaller Churches, CRC Loan Fund, CR Home Missions) or newly affiliating with the CRC to have and maintain articles of incorporation that faithfully reflect the model adopted by synod and contained in Church Order Supplement, Article 32-d.

Ground: This guarantees that all denominational grants will be used in furtherance of the purposes of the congregation as a member church of the CRCNA.

3. Size and composition of agency boards

Synod 1996 mandated the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA "to explore new strategies for governance, board composition, and communication networks which will advance [the agencies'] ministries" (*Acts of Synod 1996*, p. 476). The same synod appointed a committee to study the structure for ministry in the United States to complement a similar committee studying structure for Canada.

When the Board discussed the appointment of the committee to investigate the size and composition of agency boards, it realized that the mandate of the two committees overlapped and that it would not be wise to have two committees investigating the same issues. Therefore, the Board has assigned the issue of agency board size and composition to the Committee to Study Structure for Ministry in the U.S. and has added one of its members (trustee William Weidenaar) to the structure committee.

4. Rules for Synodical Procedure

With the assistance of the general secretary, the Board of Trustees reviewed the rules for synodical procedure which required revision following the decisions of Synod 1996 regarding the one-week synod. In addition, the clarification of existing rules was considered, and in a few instances changes and/or additions are recommended.

The Board of Trustees of the CRCNA recommends that the following changes in the Rules for Synodical Procedure be adopted (italicized words are the new wording of the rules):

a. Rule I.D.3

The officers of synod shall be chosen *from a slate of nominees* by the delegates from their own number, by ballot, in the following order: president, vice president, first clerk, and second clerk. Whoever receives a majority of the valid votes cast shall be elected. (See *Acts of Synod 1996*, p. 533 re procedure for selecting the slate of nominees.)

b. Rule II.C

1) Delete the second sentence of II.C.1 because the new regulations adopted for the one-week synod render it unnecessary.
2) Add a new II.C.4 and renumber the present C.4 to C.5.

The minutes of each day will be examined and proofread by a small committee appointed by the officers of synod. The edited and proofread minutes will be posted in a public place where they can be read by interested delegates.

c. Rule VI.B.2.a

A second sentence to be added: *An alternate chairperson and an alternate reporter will be appointed for each committee except the Judicial Code Committee.*

Ground for a-c: The proposal adopted by Synod 1996 re a one-week synod included these changes in concept and in some instances in the exact wording of the proposed changes.

d. Rule VI.B.2.d

The second sentence to be replaced by

If there is both a majority and minority report from the committee, each report must be signed by the members who favor it.

The following note is to be added to this regulation:

(Note: Committee members may not speak publicly against their committee's report unless they have submitted a minority report or have received permission from the chair of the committee to voice a minor disagreement.)

Ground: This note codifies what has been a long-standing practice.

e. Rule VI.D.1

The appointment of study committees is usually one of the last acts accomplished by synod each year. Occasionally there is an extended debate about who should or should not be appointed to a committee. The present process does not allow for delegates to suggest names of nominees for proposed committees. The following additional sentence between the two existing sentences of Rule VI.D.1 will help:

Delegates to synod will be given opportunity to suggest nominees to the advisory committee, but no new nominees will be accepted from the floor when a committee is recommended.

Ground: This allows for delegate participation at a stage in the procedure when suggestions can be evaluated and processed.

f. Rule VIII.J

The regulation adopted re the length of time allotted for the discussion of issues at a one-week synod should be inserted as VIII.J.4, and the present numbers 4 and 5 should become 5 and 6. The new regulation reads:

The officers of synod may assign a time limit for debate on issues they think will last 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.

5. Proposed change in Church Order Article 36-a (*Acts of Synod 1996*, p. 580)

Synod 1996 proposed that Church Order Article 36-a be revised 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 other officers.

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

6. Database Committee

Synod 1996 adopted the following mandate for the Board of Trustees:

> . . . to appoint a small committee 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.

The Board has appointed its executive committee together with the general secretary and the executive director of ministries to serve as the Database Committee. Existing databases and database systems are being reviewed to see if some of the information needed is already in the system. Guidelines and procedures will need to be developed so that the process works smoothly and effectively. To date, some progress has been made, but nothing substantial can yet be reported to synod.

7. Letters to President William J. Clinton and the Right Honorable Jean Chrétien

The Reformed Ecumenical Council in session in Grand Rapids, Michigan, in 1996 passed a motion requesting member churches to address a letter to the leaders of their nations requesting that they use their diplomatic power to see that basic services are provided in Nigeria without discrimination and that basic human freedoms are maintained. The Interchurch Relations Committee received the request and referred it to the Board of Trustees, which conducts synod's business between sessions.

The Board approved sending a letter to President William J. Clinton and to the Right Honorable Jean Chrétien, the leaders of our two constituent countries. These letters have been sent, and a brief response has been received from each recipient.

8. 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 following committee was appointed: Dr. David H. Engelhard (chair), Dr. Peter Borgdorff, Mr. Marvin De Vries, Mr. Edward (Ned) Nielsen, and Mr. Jay Timmer.

Synod 1996 was informed of the values and factors which are necessary for such an electronic system (see *Agenda for Synod 1996*, p. 31). To keep the cost from being prohibitive, the committee requested the Engineering Department of Calvin College to assist in this project. Four senior engineering students adopted this as their senior project.

The prototype was available for the delegates of last year's synod to observe and test. Several suggestions for improvement were offered by last

year's delegates. Implementation of the changes and reworking the design were entrusted again to the Engineering Department of Calvin College.

Some of the faculty and students of the Engineering Department have been working diligently on the system with the hope that it would be ready for Synod 1997. In spite of their best efforts, it now seems unlikely that the system will be built and thoroughly tested for use in 1997. The representative of the Engineering Department regrets the time delay, but it is the consequence of relying on volunteer staff and time to provide a product which is affordable. The Engineering Department is to be applauded for its efforts. It is now expected that the system will be ready for Synod 1998.

9. Misrepresentation of the CRC's position on homosexuality

The January issue of the American Family Association's *Journal* carried a brief article in which the CRC's position on homosexuality was misrepresented. That article reported on a study done by Concerned Women of America which linked the CRC position with that of some liberal mainline churches. The article did not comment on or explicate the CRC position but only cast aspersions on our position by categorizing the CRC with churches which the *Journal* thinks have untenable and biblically incorrect positions.

When the general secretary approached the AFA *Journal* to explain itself and to recant its misrepresentation, he was informed that others had also raised criticisms and that some recognition of our response would be made in the March issue with a more complete article in the April issue. More recently, however, the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA has learned that little or nothing will actually appear in print about our concerns.

At first it seemed as though the AFA *Journal* had uncritically carried a report of a study whose sources and data it had not confirmed. Such neglect is bad enough, but more recent correspondence suggests that the *Journal* actually condones the study and shares the misinterpretation of our position. A letter of explanation received from Dr. Donald Wildmon, executive director of AFA, is replete with misinterpretations of and outrageous inferences from our position and impugns the motives for our position.

This matter is brought to the attention of the churches because many members have contacted the general secretary requesting that action be taken. Some action has been taken but without satisfactory results. Furthermore, this is being reported to inform our members that the AFA *Journal* does not understand our position and is not conveying the truth about us.

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

Per 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. Although some of the classes have developed their own regulations regarding the permissibility of women attending classis meetings, the following classes have adopted a decision to declare the word "male" inoperative in Church Order Article 3-a:

Alberta North
British Columbia South-East
Chicago South
Florida
Grand Rapids East
Hackensack
Holland
Huron
Lake Erie
Muskegon
Northern Illinois
Pacific Northwest
Quinte
Red Mesa
Rocky Mountain
Toronto

11. Nominations for Board membership

Synod 1996 changed the rules by which regional members were elected to the Board. The election now takes place in the classes of the respective regions, and synod ratifies the elections. Members-at-large are still elected by synod.

Member-at-large

Mrs. Marti Minnema (alternate incumbent) is a member of First CRC, Visalia, California. She attended Calvin College and received her M.S. degree in special education and in sociology from Western Michigan University. A social worker, she taught sociology at the community college in Kalamazoo and served on the Committee for MasterPlanning (CMP) at Third CRC, Kalamazoo, Michigan, and on the CMP at Battle Creek CRC. She served on various committees at Family and Children Services. With her husband, Rev. Herman Minnema, she served on the Interfaith International Board of Worldwide Marriage Encounter for four years.

Dr. Carol Rottman (incumbent) is a member of East Side CRC, Cleveland, Ohio. She attended Calvin College, received her B.A. from the University of Michigan, her M.A. from Michigan State University, and her Ph.D. from Case Western Reserve University. She is owner of First Draft Consulting and is a professional/technical writer. Her professional experience includes teacher/instructor, project director of Blind Infants, Low-Birthweight, and Prenatal Care. She served as delegate from Classis Lake Erie to the Calvin College and Seminary Board of Trustees for three years and as delegate to the Calvin College Board of Trustees (Central U.S., Subgroup II) for three years. During this time she served as a member of the college's executive committee for two years and as chairperson of its Education Development Committee for three years. She formerly taught catechism at River Terrace CRC, East Lansing, and has served as a deacon at East Side CRC, Cleveland, Ohio.

12. 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 advanced 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 1997 *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.

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 987 active ministries. The return rate for questionnaires was outstanding this year so that the *Yearbook* includes current statistics for 913 ministries.

Dr. Richard R. De Ridder, assisted by Mrs. Adrianna De Ridder, prepared the 1996 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. Mary Broene, 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*. The same hearty gratitude needs to be expressed to our computer staff, Mr. Jim Jonker, Mrs. Judy Flier, and Mrs. Shirley De Vries, who diligently provide the necessary support services for this exacting task.

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 CRC 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 1997 survey will be presented to Synod 1997 for approval and mailed for inclusion in the *Handbook*. It is intended to be a helpful guide in the setting of salaries and other position-related reimbursements. Because the survey is also used by our pension committees, Synod 1988 passed the following recommendation:

> That synod remind the churches that Synod 1982 adopted a recommendation to "require that all ministers complete the salary questionnaire annually to enable the pension committees to accurately calculate the average cash salary as a base for computing ministers' pensions."
>
> (*Acts of Synod 1982*, p. 51; *Acts of Synod 1988*, p. 574)

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

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 sixteen 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, 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 the end of the year. Presently it is approximately two-thirds completed.

f. *Manual for Synodical Deputies*

This manual was prepared by Rev. Leonard J. Hofman and is distributed to synodical deputies and stated clerks of classes. 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.

B. *Legal matters*

1. Designation of legal counsel

The law firm of Miller, Johnson, Snell & 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 and all of the agencies that are incorporated in Canada. The Board is thankful that there is no pending litigation at this time against the CRCNA or any of its agencies.

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

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

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

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

The trademarking process was stalled for several months because a church in Kalamazoo, Michigan, filed an opposition to our exclusive use of the name Christian Reformed Church. Following conversation with that congregation and an offer from our side to permit the continued use of its name (Free Christian Reformed Church), that council has informed us that it is proposing a name change for the congregation and that it has dropped its opposition to our trademark application.

Our U.S. legal counsel informs us that approval for our service marks/trademarks should be completed by the time synod meets.

3. The CRC Foundation

Synod 1996 approved the formation of the Christian Reformed Church in North America Foundation (U.S.A.), and it has since been approved by the Internal Revenue Service as a tax-exempt 501 (c) 3 corporation. That designation permits the foundation to receive tax-deductible cash gifts, bequests, and other forms of property donated in support of the ministries of the Christian Reformed Church or any of its agencies and institutions. A process to establish a similar foundation in Canada has been initiated.

The CRC Foundation board of trustees held its first official meeting and appointed Mr. Jack and Mrs. Rosemary De Vos as its part-time staff. Mr. and Mrs. De Vos will promote the ministries of the CRC, as well as the other goals of the foundation, among the churches and to individuals. The current officers of the CRC Foundation are Mr. Nelson Gritter, chairperson; Mrs. Jane Vander Ploeg, vice chairperson; Dr. David Engelhard, secretary; and Mr. Kenneth Horjus, treasurer.

C. *Program and finance matters*

1. Appointments

a. Appointment of a director of finance and administration

Mr. Robert Van Stright, who served as the director of finance and administration for nearly three years, was provided an unusual business opportunity and therefore resigned from his position with the CRCNA effective December 31, 1996. The Board is grateful for Mr. Van Stright's excellent service and wishes him God's blessing in his further endeavors.

Following a search process conducted by members of the staff with the assistance of Mr. William Waanders of ExecuQuest, the Board ratified the appointment of Mr. Kenneth J. Horjus as the director of finance and administration at its February 1997 meeting. Mr. Horjus served as a senior partner with the Deloitte and Touche accounting and management-consulting firm until 1992. In more recent years Mr. Horjus worked with the Greystone Group in Grand Rapids. Mr. Horjus is a member of LaGrave Avenue CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan, presently serving as an elder and chairman of the church council. Mr. Horjus has served on the CRC Publications Board and in several other capacities within the denomination. While working for Deloitte and Touche, he was involved in the audits of some of synod's agencies. The Board is grateful for Mr. Horjus's qualifi-

cations and churchmanship, and we trust synod will be also. Please welcome him to this his first synod.

b. Appointment of executive director of World Missions

The Christian Reformed World Missions Committee recommended to the Board of Trustees that Rev. Merle Den Bleyker be appointed to the position of executive director, effective April 1, 1997. The Board of Trustees, after conducting an interview at its February 27, 1997, meeting, approved that appointment and, by way of exception as decided by Synod 1996, also ratified that appointment on behalf of synod so that Rev. Den Bleyker could assume his new duties as of April 1, 1997. The Board requests that Synod 1997 note this action and acknowledge Rev. Den Bleyker's appointment in an appropriate manner.

c. Appointment of an editor in chief for CRC Publications' Department of Education, Worship, and Evangelism (EWE)

CRC Publications appointed Rev. Robert De Moor to the editor-in-chief position and requested that the Board of Trustees approve that appointment and recommend to Synod 1997 that the appointment be ratified by synod. The Board, after conducting an interview at its February 27, 1997, meeting, approved the appointment and now recommends that synod ratify Rev. De Moor's appointment.

2. Restructuring of agencies and support services

a. The process of addressing organizational effectiveness and efficiency has continued since Synod 1996. A major result of the process this year is the decision to consolidate the finance functions of all the agencies (except Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary) into a single finance department. This decision was made after two studies (1993 and 1996), careful review by many participants, and a Board commitment to reduce duplication among the agencies. It is anticipated that significant savings can be achieved through the reduction of personnel and other inefficiencies.

b. This year was also the first time that a single multiagency financial audit was accomplished, the fruits of which will be evident to the synodical finance advisory committee as well as to any other synodical delegate who wishes to review the auditor's report.

c. There is increasing ministry activity that is essentially interagency in its planning and implementation. Such coordination and joint planning require much time and effort, but there is a high commitment to it because it is the right approach. Denominational personnel have grown in their appreciation for such joint activity and increasingly think and act consistently in that direction.

d. The consolidation of Personnel Services, under the leadership of Ms. Norma Coleman, has entered its final phase with specific address to incorporating international staff into the denominational administrative structure. It is anticipated that the completion of this process will take considerable time due in part to the complexities involved with missionary staff being located in some thirty (30) countries around the world. Nevertheless, it is expected that substantial progress will be made during this coming year.

e. Program cooperation also continues on such matters and in such places as the following examples indicate:
   - Domestic ministries like Home Missions, The Back to God Hour, and CRWRC are involved in consultation.
   - World Missions and CRWRC continue to cooperate around the world. While such cooperation varies somewhat from place to place, it is happening, at least in some places, in ways that could not have been expected ten (10) years ago. For that we give thanks to God and express appreciation to the members of the mission community who have contributed to this reality.
   - Cooperative work is continuing in Russia. A number of agencies have interests and relationships there. Several denominational staff had the opportunity to spend a week there in March 1997, participating in ministry planning and developing relationships.
   - ServiceLink is a volunteer database that has been developed in, and is administered by, the Burlington, Ontario, denominational offices.
   - In fulfilling a directive from Synod 1993, the agencies jointly are involved in and supportive of the Office of World Hunger and Social Justice, which is ably directed by Mr. Peter Vander Meulen. Much of the work of this office relates to raising ministry awareness in the churches and among the membership of the CRC. The Free to Serve celebrations last fall were part of that effort (more about Free to Serve below).
   - Some experience has now been gained in developing a joint publication called *CRC Source*. Evaluation of the results should be available by the time synod convenes.

3. Vision and Mission Statement

The strategic planning process has continued, most of the work being done by the Ministries Coordinating Council (MCC) and its various committees. Appendix 2 to this report contains the version of the Vision and Mission Statement the Board of Trustees recommends for synod's approval. The specific parts that synod is asked to approve are (a) the vision statement and (b) the mission statement. Synod is asked to give "concept endorsement" to the strategies attached, which the agencies will use to work toward the strategic plan's implementation.

The agencies, with the approval of the Ministries Coordinating Council, have also developed a set of indicators by which to measure the progress made in implementing the proposed strategies. These indicators will be used as a guide, but they are not included in the document for synod's approval or endorsement.

4. Agency presentations at 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 (*Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 690). The following roster for agency presentations is proposed for Synod 1997 on a schedule of synod's choosing:

- The Back to God Hour
- Calvin Theological Seminary
- CRWRC

It is also recommended that synod permit Rev. William Van Tol to address synod with a farewell speech at a time of its choosing.

5. World hunger and social justice (including Free to Serve)

Synod 1993 adopted the recommendations of the Committee to Study World Hunger, which proposed a far-reaching approach to raising the church's awareness about systemic injustice. This responsibility was assigned to the Board of Trustees, the MCC, and the agencies of the church with the understanding that an office would be established and staffed by a full-time person to give leadership to the vision described in the synodical report. Mr. Peter Vander Meulen serves as the coordinator for world hunger and social justice.

MCC approved a plan for raising the church's awareness of how the CRC has already been addressing such issues throughout the world but especially in Sierra Leone. The Free to Serve gatherings became the chosen vehicle to call the church's attention to "what God has done" through the ministries of the CRC. In addition, the Office of World Hunger and Social Justice has given leadership to, and cooperated with, the agencies of the church in planning events with the Free to Serve focus in the weeks between Canadian and U.S. Thanksgiving, participated in discussions on welfare reform in the U.S. and with the Committee for Contact with the Government in Canada, addressed concerns about the conditions prevalent in Nigeria, and dealt with a variety of other issues. Mr. Vander Meulen's ministry, though in many ways low-key, has been well received and is appreciated.

In more recent weeks, especially since the Free to Serve celebrations came to an end, Mr. Vander Meulen has been developing, in consultation with Free to Serve committees in a number of regions, a follow-up plan that will build on the enthusiasm generated through the Free to Serve events during the fall of 1996. Such a three-year plan is now under consideration by MCC and will be presented to the Board of Trustees at its May meeting.

6. Denominational survey

The Social Research Center of Calvin College, under the direction of Dr. Rodger Rice and Ms. Ann Annis, is in the process of conducting a denominational membership survey. Such surveys, which have been conducted every five (5) years, provide valuable information on changing attitudes among the membership of the CRC. The results will not be available until late summer 1997 but will, no doubt, be widely publicized at that time.

7. Financial information

Detailed financial information for all the agencies will be presented to synod in the *Agenda for Synod 1997—Financial and Business 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 1997 meeting of the Board. Synod will be asked to approve the unified budget of the Board (inclusive of all the agencies and institutions of synod) and a ministry-share total that is composed of the total of agencies' requests. The Board of Trustees approved a recommendation of MCC that there be a reallocation of ministry shares as

reflected in the proposed agency budgets and that this reallocation be made effective on July 1, 1997.

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. Kenneth Horjus, 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, 1-7).

C. That synod adopt the proposed changes in Church Order Article 38 (II, A, 1).

D. That synod adopt the proposed changes in the model Articles of Incorporation for member churches (II, A, 2).

E. That synod adopt the proposed changes in the Rules for Synodical Procedure (II, A, 4).

F. That synod adopt the proposed change in Church Order Article 36-a (II, A, 5).

G. That synod approve the Vision and Mission Statement as proposed and give "concept endorsement" to the strategies attached, which the agencies will use to work toward the strategic plan's implementation (II, C, 3).

H. That synod note the Board of Trustees' approval of the appointment of Mr. Kenneth J. Horjus as the director of finance and administration for the Christian Reformed Church in North America and the approval and ratification of the appointment of Rev. Merle Den Bleyker as the executive director of Christian Reformed World Missions (II, C, a-b).

I. That synod ratify the appointment of Rev. Robert De Moor as editor in chief of the Education, Worship, and Evangelism Department of CRC Publications (II, C, 1, c).

J. That synod approve the following roster for agency presentations on a schedule of synod's choosing (II, C, 4):

The Back to God Hour
Calvin Theological Seminary
CRWRC

K. That synod permit Rev. William Van Tol, former CRWM-International director, to address synod with a farewell speech at a time of synod's choosing (II, C, 4).

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

APPENDIX 1

ARTICLES OF INCORPORATION

We, the undersigned, desiring to become incorporated under the provisions of the laws of the state of _____, adopt the following Articles of Incorporation:

ARTICLE I
NAME OF CORPORATION

The name of this corporation (church) is _____
_____.

ARTICLE II
LOCATION

The location of the church shall be in the City of _____, County of _____, State of _____. The street address and mailing address of the registered office of the church shall be _____
_____. The name of the resident agent at the registered office is _____.

ARTICLE III
FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES

This church is a member church of the Christian Reformed Church in North America and recognizes the following as the fundamental principles of doctrine and government: (a) the Bible as the inspired and infallible Word of God and the only rule for faith and life and (b) the formulas of unity of the Christian Reformed Church in North America, namely, the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, the Canons of Dort, and any amendments or additions as the synod of the Christian Reformed Church in North America ("synod") may adopt.

ARTICLE IV
PURPOSES

This church is a nonprofit ecclesiastical corporation organized and operated exclusively for religious purposes within the meaning of Section 501 (c) (3) of the United States Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended (or the corresponding provision of any future United States Internal Revenue law) (the "Code").

The church shall not carry on any activities not permitted to be carried on (a) by a corporation exempt from federal income tax under Section 501 (c) (3) of the Code or (b) by a corporation contributions to which are deductible under Section 170 (c) (2) of the Code. This church has not been formed for pecuniary profit or gain. No part of the assets, income, or profit of the church shall inure to the benefit of its members, council members, or officers. However, the church shall be authorized to pay reasonable compensation for services rendered and

to make payments and distributions in furtherance of the purposes set forth in this Article IV.

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

ARTICLE V
CHURCH GOVERNANCE

The ecclesiastical government of the church shall be conducted in accordance with the Church Order of the Christian Reformed Church in North America (the "Church Order") as synod shall adopt or revise.

The council of this church, as defined under the Church Order, shall constitute the board of trustees and shall have all powers over the temporalities of this church as the Church Order and relevant state law may prescribe.

The pastor(s), if there be one or more, and any persons elected to the office of elder or deacon according to the Church Order must be members of the church. The corporate functions related to an office shall cease on the vacating of the office, but a vacancy in the office of the pastor(s) shall in no way affect the board of trustees.

ARTICLE VI
PROPERTY

A. **Manner in Which Held**

All real and personal property shall be held exclusively in furtherance of the purposes of this church as a member church of the Christian Reformed Church in North America and in furtherance of the principles of doctrine and ecclesiastical government outlined under Articles III and V of these Articles of Incorporation and interpreted by the classis of which the church is a member (the "classis"), subject to review on appeal by synod, consistent with the Church Order.

B. **In the Event of Dissolution**

In the event of the disbanding of this church and the dissolution of this corporation, the church's remaining assets, if any, after the payment of its debts and expenses, shall be conveyed as the board of trustees may propose and as the affirmative vote of a majority of the members shall determine, subject to each of the following:

1. The classis must approve the disbanding of this church and the dissolution of this corporation.

2. The board of trustees shall receive the advice of the classis in formulating its proposal for property distribution.

3. The vote of the members shall be in accordance with the provisions of paragraph B of Article VII of these Articles of Incorporation.

4. All remaining assets must be distributed only to one or more organizations which qualify as exempt organizations under Section 501 (c) (3) of the Code.

C. **In the Event of Consensual Division**

In the event that a majority of the members of this church consensually agree to divide this church, with the consent of the classis, into two (2) or more member churches of the Christian Reformed Church in North America, all real and personal property of this corporation shall be distributed as a majority vote of the members determines in accordance with the provisions of paragraph B of Article VII of these Articles of Incorporation and subject to review by classis.

D. **In the Event of Irreconcilable Division**

In the event that the classis (or synod on appeal) determines that an irreconcilable division (schism) has occurred within this church, the confessing members of this church who, according to the exclusive determination of the classis (or synod on appeal), remain true to the purposes of this church as a member church of the Christian Reformed Church in North America and the principles of doctrine and ecclesiastical government outlined under Articles III and V of these Articles of Incorporation shall be the lawful congregation of this church and shall have the exclusive right to hold and enjoy the real and personal property of this church. Nothing in this Article VI shall prevent the classis (or synod on appeal) from determining, in keeping with the scriptural injunction of I Corinthians 6, that more than one group of confessing members of this church are each a lawful congregation and from dividing the real and personal property between the groups of members as classis (or synod on appeal) may determine.

ARTICLE VII
POWERS OF THE BOARD AND MEMBERSHIP VOTING REQUIREMENTS

A. Except as provided under paragraphs B through D of this Article VII of these Articles of Incorporation, the board of trustees shall have the authority to bargain, sell, convey, mortgage, lease, or release any real estate belonging to the church; to erect and repair church buildings, parsonages, schoolhouses and other buildings for the direct and legitimate use of the church; and to fix the salary of anyone in its employment.

B. No purchase, sale or conveyance, mortgage, lease, or fixing of salaries shall occur under paragraph A of this Article VII of these Articles of Incorporation unless the affirmative vote of a majority of the members of the church shall be first obtained at a meeting of the members present and entitled to vote. This meeting shall be specially called for that purpose by notice given for two successive Sundays at the usual place of meeting.

C. In the event of schism, the provisions of Article VI, D shall control the disposition of any real or personal property, and this Article VII shall not be effective.

D. No sale, mortgage, or conveyance shall be made of any gift, grant, donation, conveyance, or bequest which would be inconsistent with the express terms or plain intent of the grant, donation, gift, conveyance, or bequest.

ARTICLE VIII
AMENDMENTS

The board of trustees may at any time, by the affirmative vote of two-thirds of the trustees, adopt amendments to these Articles of Incorporation. Notwithstanding the preceding provision, the board of trustees shall not adopt any amendments to these Articles of Incorporation which are inconsistent with the provisions of Articles III through VIII unless approved by the classis (or synod on appeal).

Before any such amendment shall become effective, the trustees shall obtain an affirmative vote of at least two-thirds of the members of the church present and entitled to vote at a meeting specially called for that purpose, of which notice has first been given as provided for under paragraph B of Article VII of these Articles of Incorporation.

ARTICLE IX
TERM

The term of this corporation is perpetual.

APPENDIX 2

THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA

OUR VISION

As people called by God, we see

the church as a growing, diverse family
of vibrant congregations
in which thousands
worship God celebratively,
grow in his Word,
and honor the Creator as Lord;

Christ's forgiveness liberating
women and men, boys and girls
in all places and cultures,
shaping the church
to respond with gratitude;

the Spirit releasing gifts to all
for ministries of love, mercy, and justice
—combined with articulate witness—
which change hearts and lives
by proclaiming wholeness in Christ alone.

OUR MISSION

As people called by God,

We gather to praise God, listen to him, and respond.

We nurture each other in faith and obedience to Christ.

We love and care for one another as God's people.

We commit ourselves to serve and to tell others about Jesus.

We pursue God's justice and peace in every area of life.

MISSION STATEMENT: AMPLIFIED

The mission statement is a reflection on Christ's living mandate for his church gathered from every corner of the Christian Reformed Church.* The collaborative mission statement contains five distinct yet interconnected elements, which call all members of the body to a wholistic ministry expressed both individually and communally. It voices our restlessness to be God's obedient people in ways we have only begun to realize. We are propelled toward an unknown future, for which our abiding resources are God's Word and Spirit.

Each center of our life together—congregation, classis, synod, and every specialized ministry we have established—is an integral part of our shared mission in and to God's world. As people redeemed by Christ's blood and commissioned to be servants to hungering people, all of us embrace an urgent personal mission of worship, nurture, caring, discipling, and building Christ's kingdom in our own times and places. United by our historic confessions** and a contemporary testimony (1986), institutions and individuals move forward with a shared mission in response to God's call to "do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God" (Mic. 6:8).

As followers of Jesus Christ living in this world, we declare with joy and trust,

Our world belongs to God!

* The Christian Reformed Church, rooted firmly in the Reformed tradition, is part of the universal Christian church. God's sovereignty and grace move us into the future, focus our vision, and give us a message of hope to proclaim.

** The Heidelberg Catechism (1563), the Belgic Confession (1561), and the Canons of Dort (1618-19).

WORSHIP

We gather to praise God, listen to him, and respond:

Our new life in Christ
is celebrated and nourished
in the fellowship of congregations
where God's name is praised,
his Word proclaimed,
his way taught;
where sins are confessed,
prayers and gifts are offered,
and sacraments are celebrated.

* * * *

[Together we are the church,] a gathering
of forgiven sinners,
called to be holy,
dedicated to service.

* * * *

Apart from grace
we prove each day
that we are guilty sinners.
—*Contemporary Testimony 39, 42, 15*

In the throng of worshipers or where two or three are gathered, we lift hearts and voices in praise of God's holy name. As men and women of all races and nations, ages and abilities, we talk with God, naming the sins that cling to us and expecting to be made right once again. In all of our worship we unite around God's Word proclaimed and heard, which compels us to spread the good news to all. The church is a body joined in the sacraments; we remember God's covenant through all generations and Christ's sacrifice of body and blood for us. Together we lament the evil we do, the evil we think, and the pervasive evil that surrounds us. We bring our firstfruits, our unmasked selves, our pain and shame to God in quiet and jubilant offerings of worship. We sense the Spirit's living presence in us and in our places of worship, renewing, refreshing, and equipping us for service.

> *Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.*
>
> —*Ephesians 3:20-21*

NURTURE

We nurture each other in faith and obedience to Christ:

We rejoice in the goodness of God,
renounce the works of darkness,
and dedicate ourselves to holy living.

* * * *

Jesus stays with us in the Spirit,
who renews our hearts,
moves us to faith,
leads us in the truth,
stands by us in our need,
and makes our obedience free and vibrant.

* * * *

The Spirit's gifts are here to stay
in rich variety. . . .
He gives more than enough
to each believer
for God's praise and our neighbor's welfare.
—Contemporary Testimony 6, 31, 33

All of us pray that our faithful Savior will give us the quiet assurance of belonging as well as guidance at life's crossroads. We meditate on the Word while begging God's Spirit to reveal the truth in personal ways, to give us wisdom to live like Jesus, and to guide us in discerning the Lord's claim on our lives. We prepare for our calling in the kingdom through Christ-centered education, looking back at promises fulfilled and ahead to worlds unknown. Together in our life-long search for knowledge and understanding of God's revelation, we teach and learn in the classroom, in the wilderness, and around the kitchen table. From childhood to old age, we discover each other's abundant spiritual gifts, released for the enrichment of all the body of believers. We beg the Spirit for the transformation of our minds to conform with God's pleasant and perfect will (Rom. 12:1-2).

> *We are not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face. . . . But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.*
>
> *II Corinthians 3:13, 16-18*

CARE

We love and care for one another as God's people:

While justly angry,
God did not turn his back
on a world bent on destruction;
he turned his face to it in love.

* * * *

As God's creatures we are made in his image
to represent him on earth,
and to live in loving communion with him.

* * * *

God reminds and assures us in baptism . . .
that his covenant love saves us,
that he washes away our guilt,
gives us the Spirit,
and expects our love in return.

* * * *

The Spirit empowers each member
to take part in the ministry of all,
so that hurts are healed
and all may rejoice
in the life and growth of the fellowship.

—*Contemporary Testimony 19, 10, 40, 41*

Because God loves us in spite of our sinfulness, we are free to love others. Love is our most tangible gift, shown by personal connections with God's children without regard for their loveliness. Our love resembles that of Christ when it is long-suffering, gentle, modest, polite, unselfish, trusting, hopeful, protective, and persistent. Even love that must correct is kind, without malice; it forgives without grudges. "Silent before the mystery of his love" (Contemporary Testimony 28), we are moved to open our homes to strangers, open our hearts to the lonely, share our food with the hungry, visit men and women in prison, and pray for those who have wronged us. Love opens us all to all people, to receive and to give.

> *There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men. Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good . . . . Love never fails.*
>
> —*I Corinthians 12:4-7; 13:8*

MINISTRY

We commit ourselves to serve and to tell others about Jesus:

He poured out his Spirit
and broadcast the news
that sinners who repent and believe in Jesus
can live
and breathe
and move again
as members of the family of God.

* * * *

Jesus made present in deed and word
the coming rule of God.

* * * *

Following the apostles, the church is sent—
sent with the gospel of the kingdom
to make disciples of all nations,
to feed the hungry,
and to proclaim the assurance that in the name of Christ
there is forgiveness of sin and new life
for all who repent and believe—
to tell the news that our world belongs to God.

—*Contemporary Testimony* 5, 25, 44

The love that never fails gives all and risks all to share the faith. We, who know God's saving love, are directed to care for our sisters and brothers, for our neighbors in their need. Words alone are a mockery to a starving man; food alone will rescue the body but not the soul. Words with deeds force us to touch the hurting person as Christ touched those who came to him. "Repent and be baptized," cried the apostles to men and women who were dying without Christ. Each of us is entrusted with God's Word, shown the way, and ordered to preach and teach as we go into every part of the world.

> *Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interest of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus. . . . [he] made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.*
>
> —*Philippians 2:4, 5*

STEWARDSHIP

We pursue God's justice and peace in every area of life:

But our world,
broken and scarred,
still belongs to God.
He holds it together
and gives us hope.

* * * *

We call on governments to do public justice
and to protect the freedoms and rights
of individuals, groups, and institutions,
so that each may freely do
the tasks God gives.

* * * *

Following the Prince of Peace,
we are called to be peacemakers,
and to promote harmony and order.

* * * *

To follow this Lord is
to serve him everywhere,
without fitting in,
as light in the darkness,
as salt in a spoiling world.

—*Contemporary Testimony 18, 54, 55, 45*

We are asked to claim every area of this earth as the Lord's. In planting the flag for our God, we will always be out of step with those who have claimed the earth and its goods as their own. As gardeners, wardens, and nursemaids of the earth, some of us will be asked to suffer for the assertion of Christ's lordship over life. Where violence, revenge, and selfishness prevail, we will turn the other cheek and thwart the escalation of evil. From earthkeeping to knowledge building, from controversy in workplaces to places of justice, from the open spaces to the polluted places, together we are called to speak God's words of justice and peace. God promises to make us like trees on the banks of a stream, always well fed so we can be fruitful, in harmony with the season.

> *I hate, I despise your religious feasts; I cannot stand your assemblies. Even though you bring me burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them. Though you bring choice fellowship offerings, I will have no regard for them. Away with the noise of your songs! I will not listen to the music of your harps. But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!*
>
> —*Amos 5:21-24*

For

God is present in our world by his Word and Spirit.

The faithfulness of our great Provider gives sense to our days and hope to our years.

The future is secure for

OUR
WORLD
BELONGS
TO
GOD!

A MISSION LITANY

As people called by God,

We gather to praise God, listen to him, and respond.

Sing joyfully to the Lord. . . . Sing to him a new song; play skillfully, and shout for joy. For the word of the Lord is right and true; he is faithful in all he does.

(Psalm 33:1, 3, 4)

We nurture each other in faith and obedience to Christ.

The plans of the Lord stand firm forever, the purposes of his heart through all generations. . . . he who forms the hearts of all, who considers everything they do.

(Psalm 33:11, 15)

We love and care for one another as God's people.

May your unfailing love rest upon us, O Lord, even as we put our hope in you.

(Psalm 33:22)

We commit ourselves to serve and to tell others about Jesus.

The eyes of the Lord are on those who fear him, on those whose hope is in his unfailing love, to deliver them from death and keep them alive in famine.

(Psalm 33:18-19)

We pursue God's justice and peace in every area of life.

The Lord loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of his unfailing love.

(Psalm 33:5)

Therefore,

we wait in hope for the Lord; he is our help and our shield. In him our hearts rejoice, for we trust in his holy name.

(Psalm 33:20-21)

MISSION STATEMENT: WORSHIP

We gather to praise God, listen to him, and respond.

GOALS	AGENCY STRATEGIES	AGENTS
A. To help every Christian Reformed congregation develop a style of worship that is relevant to all its members and to people living in the neighboring community.	To provide workshops/conferences and/or resources: 1. On how better to understand and address the needs of all congregation members (children, youth, single, grieving, celebrating, impaired, troubled, abused, etc.) and/or community people (visitors, seekers, curious, lost, needy, etc.). 2. To aid churches/classes to analyze and apply "Authentic Worship in a Changing Culture" (study-committee report to Synod 1997). 3. To train worship leaders to plan collaboratively, to select elements (music, drama, etc.) that lead to true worship, and to use the gifts and abilities of many church members. 4. To assist churches in making changes that are appropriate and necessary to being God's agents in their communities.	Calvin Seminary, Calvin College Institute of Worship, Home Missions, CRC Publications, Pastoral Ministries
	5. To develop cooperative strategies which address "Authentic Worship in a Changing Culture" (*Agenda for Synod 1997*). 6. To support racial and cultural diversity in worship. 7. To help ensure that worship services are accessible to those with disabilities. 8. To provide training for active devotional life which is culturally appropriate.	Calvin College Institute of Worship, Calvin Seminary, Home Missions, World Missions, CRWRC, Back to God Hour, CRC Publications, Pastoral Ministries
	9. To provide training for seminary students and workshops for pastors that will give instruction and encouragement in the use of a variety of relevant and biblical preaching styles. Mentors will encourage young pastors to have peer-group evaluation and pre-sermon focus groups and to study great communicators, etc.	Pastoral Ministries, Calvin Seminary
B. To help every Christian Reformed household and individual to develop a devotional life that truly encounters God and supports transformed living.	1. *The Banner* should be requested to encourage its readers in developing a devotional life. 2. Additional training and materials that encourage spiritual formation should be developed for small groups. 3. Pastors should be encouraged to promote household devotional practices and the use of appropriate devotional materials. 4. Pastors should be provided resources to train elders and other church leaders to support individual and household devotional life. 5. By 1998 an interagency resource quarterly for congregational leaders will be published to help achieve this and other strategies.	Calvin Seminary, CRC Publications, Pastoral Ministries

MISSION STATEMENT: NURTURE

We nurture each other in faith and obedience to Christ.

GOALS	AGENCY STRATEGIES	AGENTS
A. By 2002, agencies will help 550 CRC congregations provide discipleship training for 50 percent of their worshiping community.	1. Using existing components where possible, the agencies will develop an integrated discipleship church curriculum that uses a variety of approaches (teaching, small groups, mentoring, etc.) to address the needs of — covenant children — seekers — covenant youth — new members — adult members — seniors — people with special challenges *Notes:* a. A complete integrated curriculum will be in place by 2010. b. Discipleship church curriculum will use the talents of people of diverse ethnic backgrounds and diverse levels of ability. c. A mainstreaming approach in the educational curriculum for those with disabilities will be investigated.	Calvin Seminary, CRC Publications, Home Missions, CRWRC, Pastoral Ministries, United Calvinist Youth
	2. Agencies will provide specific resources to encourage and train members in stewardship and use of spiritual gifts.	FirstFruits, Home Missions, CRC Publications, CRWRC
	3. Agencies will provide resources for congregations to implement a program of Christian worldview instruction for students who do not receive it elsewhere.	CRC Publications, Calvin College, Campus Ministry, Denominational Off.
B. By 2002, measures will be taken to help congregations ensure that 50 percent of commissioned CRC congregational leaders receive appropriate training to enable them to perform their tasks effectively.	1. A curriculum and a strategy will be developed to provide such leadership training on the congregational level.	Calvin College, Calvin Seminary, CRC Publications, Home Missions, CRWRC, Pastoral Ministries
	2. At least one yearly event per region will be developed by the agencies in order to train and equip leadership trainers.	Home Missions, CRWRC, CRC Publications, Calvin College, Calvin Seminary, Pastoral Ministries
C. By 2002, all ordained ministers and other minis-try staff serving congre-gations in the CRC will receive continuing train-ing in effective ministry. A curriculum and a strategy will be developed to provide such leadership training on the congregational level.	1. Calvin Theological Seminary, in consultation with the other agencies, will develop and propose a plan for evaluating, approving, offering, monitoring, and certifying required continuing and professional development experiences annually for all CRC ministers and full-time ministry-staff personnel. This plan will be presented via the Board of Trustees to Synod 1998 for approval. (Continuing education/ training opportunities will be provided on a regional basis at least once per year within each region.)	Pastoral Ministries, Calvin Seminary

MISSION STATEMENT: PASTORAL CARE

We love and care for one another as God's people.

GOALS	AGENCY STRATEGIES	AGENTS
A. To help all churches encourage understanding of personal, Christian identity in Christ and to equip believers to lovingly care for one another in their Christian faith and walk, meeting persons at their points of need.	1. Provide leadership training and resources so churches can integrate church members of all ages (adults, youth, and children) into small-group ministry and other forms of caring for one another spiritually.	CRC Publications, Home Missions, United Calvinist Youth, Pastoral Ministries
	2. Provide training and resources so that church members can be trained and supported in intercession ministry for one another and for special situations.	CRC Publications, Home Missions, Pastoral Ministries
	3. Provide training and resources for pastors and other church leaders so they can develop and ensure appropriate pastoral response to weak members.	Calvin Seminary, Pastoral Ministries, CRC Publications
	4. Provide training and resources for leaders and members for cross-cultural experiences and relationships.	Home Missions, Pastoral Ministries, CRC Publications, United Calvinist Youth, CRWRC
	5. Agencies model and encourage classes to ensure meaningful participation of ethnic-minority persons in the life and ministry of the church.	All agencies
	6. Materials and training are provided to assist churches in the enfolding of persons with personal disabilities, economic disadvantages, and other special needs.	CRC Publications, Home Missions, CRWRC, Pastoral Ministries, United Calvinist Youth
	7. Congregations are helped to set up "response team" strategies to meet special needs and circumstances within their membership and community.	Pastoral Ministries, CRWRC, United Calvinist Youth

Note: The above plans, strategies, etc., are based on the premise that this section is primarily about congregational pastoral care and that this focuses on congregations extending loving care and fellowship toward all members and others whom God brings within the purview of each "extended congregational family" (Gal. 6:2, 10).

MISSION STATEMENT: INTERNATIONAL AND NORTH AMERICAN OUTREACH
We commit ourselves to serve others and tell them about Jesus.

GOALS	AGENCY STRATEGIES	AGENTS
A. By 2002, complete a comprehensive ministry-planning process for two linked regions (one overseas and one in North America) which includes participation/ contributions from a majority of members and potential partners. (The plans will include strategies to achieve an annual growth rate in CRC membership and include plans to grow by a certain percent per year in the number of people in poverty achieving sustainable change, both economically and spiritually.)	1. Develop regional strategies for southeast Asia and for one U.S. region, for example. Representatives from all of the groups that have a significant investment in the outcome will come together to plan. Leaders and members of the church in the Philippines, for instance, will help plan the future mission efforts in Asia. The Laotian community in the U.S., now working with Home Missions, will be included in setting the priorities for Laotian work in Asia. 2. Develop strategies by including CRCNA congregations, classes, and representatives from churches with whom the CRCNA partners in other countries.	World Missions, Home Missions, CRWRC, Back to God Hour, Pastoral Ministries, World Literature Ministries Each agency is also asked to designate others that can make a significant contribution. Ownership by as broad a group as possible is the goal.
B. By 2002, energize and develop the CRC community for greater risk taking in serving others.	1. Agencies make age-group-dedicated curricula available to share stories, introduce issues of intercultural evangelism and justice, and enhance culture appreciation. 2. Give established church leaders attractive educational opportunities for international and North American mission experience.	CRC Publications, Pastoral Ministries, CRWRC, Home Missions, World Missions, Calvin Seminary

MISSION STATEMENT: NORTH AMERICAN OUTREACH

GOAL	AGENCY STRATEGIES	AGENTS
A. Agencies assist congregations so that, by 2002, at least 90 percent of members are able to express Christian faith and 50 percent are involved in an intentional and evangelistic relationship with a person who is not a believer.	1. Build awareness and motivation: — video — accountability cards — "be contagious Christian" — send congregational leaders to Willow Creek and other church-training experiences in outreach 2. Mutual accountability between pastors, agency leaders, and councils. 3. Support local-church strategies: — prayer groups — adult education — Congregational MasterPlanning — small groups for outreach — preaching — target ministries 4. Build accountability to classes by asking each congregation to covenant to adopt objectives to achieve these goals: — new attendees — making contacts — prayer	Home Missions, CRC Publications, Calvin Seminary
B. Agencies assist congregations and classes so that, by 2002, 200 new churches are planted, 90 percent of which have some form of parent-church sponsorship.	1. Every new congregation will have as part of its vision to start a new church within three years. 2. New-church-planting goals will be part of each classis' plan. 3. Calvin Theological Seminary and others partner with churches to produce annually at least 40 new qualified church developers through church-based leadership-development programs.	Home Missions, CRWRC, Calvin Seminary, Back to God Hour, Pastoral Ministries

GOAL	AGENCY STRATEGIES	AGENTS
C. Agencies assist congregations so that, by 2002, 70 percent of congregations are involved in at least two community ministries to the poor and/or disadvantaged so they can experience the fullness of God's grace.	1. Classes develop diaconal service ministries as a part of their classical ministry plans. 2. By 2002, 20 church-based community-development organizations will be working to reclaim their communities for Christ. 3. Build new alliances for addressing community needs while assuring church-based spiritual and discipleship ministry. 4. Accountability-development training of 50 persons doing discipling within the context of Christian Community Development ministries: — 50 leaders emerging — spiritual growth and enfolding — self-sufficiency — community justice 5. Develop leaders for Christian Community Development roles - in community: — internships — schooling (including discipleship) — apprenticing 6. Diaconates are key partners.	CRWRC, Home Missions, CRC Publications, World Literature Ministries
D. Agencies will assist so that by 2002, thirty classes will have a visionary outreach ministry plan in place.	1. Utilize classis-wide ministry planning for mobilizing congregations. 2. Classes develop standards for accountability among congregations. 3. Agencies provide an integrated response to classes' plans.	Denominational Office, CRWRC, Home Missions, Calvin Seminary

MISSION STATEMENT: INTERNATIONAL OUTREACH

GOAL	MINISTRY STRATEGIES	AGENTS
A. By the year 2002, partner churches will be assisted so that they report combined annual attendance growth of 60,000 per year.	1. Promote church planting and evangelism as core activities in international ministry.	World Missions, CRC Publications, World Literature Ministries, Back to God Hour
	2. There will be an integrated interagency plan in each country where the CRCNA partners in missions, including steps for nationals to assume full leadership.	CRWRC
	3. On a new or existing field, Ministries Coordinating Council will create a project that is staffed primarily by short-term staff.	World Missions, CRWRC, Back to God Hour, Calvin College, Calvin Seminary
B. By the year 2002, working through local organizations, 120,000 households will be enhanced through community development so that they can experience the fullness of God's grace.	1. Households in the poorest countries will be helped through community development utilizing Christian partners where feasible.	CRWRC
C. By the year 2002, at least one new field or project will be opened each year in a region unreached by the gospel. One field or project will be closed each year as a result of having reached sustainability.	1. Agencies will annually "graduate" and phase over at least 3 percent of their partnership projects. 2. Ministries Coordinating Council will initiate at least one new project which "blurs the line" between Home Missions and World Missions.	Home Missions, World Missions
D. By the year 2002, passion for cross-cultural missions will be enhanced among CRC members so that 90 percent of all mission leadership and service opportunities are staffed.	1. Establish cross-cultural mission committees to empower members for cross-cultural ministry. 2. CRC mission agencies and Calvin College and Calvin Seminary develop cooperative strategy to involve students in international cross-cultural ministry. 3. Establish a classis-subsidized mission-service education program to support work-in-training for a minimum of two years.	Calvin College, Calvin Seminary, World Missions, CRWRC, Home Missions, CRC Publications, World Literature Ministries
E. By 2002, CRC members will commit 1 percent of their gross earnings to international mission outreach.	Strategies to be developed by Advancement Council.	World Missions, CRWRC, Back to God Hour, Barnabas Foundation

MISSION STATEMENT: KINGDOM EXTENSION

GOAL	AGENCY STRATEGIES	AGENTS
A. By the year 2002, the CRC will have developed a deeper understanding of and response to God's claim to obedience in all areas of our lives (business, labor, government, media, health, education, justice, peace, affluence, pursuit of pleasure, earth-keeping, racial relationships, etc.).	The coordinator for social justice and hunger (U.S.) and the Social Justice Committee (Canada) will help equip the churches to address the issue of social injustice from a Reformed perspective and will keep the churches up-to-date on current justice issues by working with other appropriate agencies and by doing the following: — supplying materials to help raise awareness in the churches regarding the three pervasive root causes of poverty, the problem of racial relations, and other social-justice and peace issues. — organizing a denominationally sponsored biannual conference focused on peace and justice issues, inviting participation of all CRC agencies and the affiliated groups involved in justice issues. — training CRC leadership, including pastors, elders, and deacons, to better understand the Reformed perspective regarding the demands of obedience to God in all areas of life.	Board of Trustees, CRWRC, World Missions, Back to God Hour, CRC Publications, Pastoral Ministries, Calvin College, Calvin Seminary

Notes:

1. These goals, strategies, etc., flow from the Vision and Mission Statement (and reflect stated CRCNA ministry values).
2. Funding is critical for the achievement of these goals. Funding issues are to be addressed by the Ministries Coordinating Council and the CRCNA agencies.

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UNIFIED REPORT OF AGENCIES AND SERVICE 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, which became the theme of the celebration rallies held in the fall of 1996. The same theme 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 1997.

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I. Introduction

God is reconciling the world to himself through our Lord Jesus Christ. He calls the church to participate in that mission. The Back to God Hour is a vital component of the church's response to God's passionate call to mission.

The board and staff of The Back to God Hour serve the church and the world in light of the mandate which synod has established. Among other things that mandate calls for The Back to God Hour to

> give leadership in media missions and to supervise the production of denominational radio, television, and other electronic programs, which express the Reformed faith in response to man's need for conversion, edification, and cultural direction . . . and it is required to give leadership to the denomination as a whole and its congregations in the use of available communication media.

The shape of The Back to God Hour ministry at this point in history is reflected in this report to Synod 1997.

II. The board

A. Function

The Back to God Hour is governed by a fourteen-member regionally representative 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. Henry Kranenburg, vice president; Mr. George VandeWerken, secretary; Mr. Keith Oosthoek, treasurer.

C. Nominations for board members

1. District 2 - Far West U.S., Subgroup II (three-year term)

   Rev. Tom Haan is pastor of Second CRC in Lynden, Washington. Ordained in 1984, he previously pastored churches in Madison, Wisconsin, and Ripon, California.

   Rev. Vance Hays (incumbent) is pastor of Parklane CRC in Portland, Oregon. He received his undergraduate degree in broadcast journalism at the University of Oregon and is a graduate of Westminster (Philadelphia) and Calvin seminaries. He worked for nine years for Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship in Utah prior to entering parish ministry in 1989.

2. District 3 - Central U.S., Subgroup I (one-year term)

   Names will be submitted in the supplementary materials.

3. District 4 - Central U.S., Subgroup II (three-year term)

   Names will be submitted in the supplementary materials.

4. District 6 - Central U.S., Subgroup III (three-year term)

   Dr. Robert Huizenga is a member of Hillcrest CRC in Hudsonville, Michigan, where he has served on various committees and is presently serving his third term as elder. Dr. Huizenga is an optometrist in Jenison, Michigan. He has served as chairman of the Hudsonville Christian School capital cam-

paign, on the Hillcrest CRC debt-elimination campaign, and as president of Unity Christian High School Education Foundation board of directors.

Mr. James Roskam is a member of Ivanrest CRC in Grandville, Michigan, where he presently is vice president of the council. He is CEO of the Farmers' Cooperative in western Michigan, with headquarters in Hudsonville. Mr. Roskam was a school teacher and a banker prior to assuming his present position. He has served God's kingdom in a variety of positions.

5. District 8 - Eastern U.S. (three-year term)

Mr. John Bushoven of Hawthorne, New Jersey, is an elder in Midland Park CRC who has always appreciated the work of The Back to God Hour. He is a volunteer in the Friendship Ministry and the Stephen Ministry of his church.

Mrs. Elsie "Peter" Palmer (incumbent) of Wayne, New Jersey, is a graduate of Wellesley College. She served three years in the Signal Corps in Washington, D.C., during World War II. She taught for nineteen years at Eastern Christian School and later served on its board. She is an active member of Preakness CRC and has been a volunteer with "Faith 20" almost since its beginning in New Jersey.

6. District 10 - Eastern Canada, Subgroup II (three-year term)

Rev. B. Bernard Bakker of Whitby, Ontario, was ordained to the ministry in 1976 and has served churches in Stratford, Ontario; Truro, Nova Scotia; and Essex, Ontario. Currently he serves as pastor of Hebron CRC in Whitby, Ontario. Rev. Bakker is regional pastor in Classis Quinte.

Rev. Henry Wildeboer of Oshawa, Ontario, was ordained to the ministry in 1965. He has served churches in Washington, Alberta, and Ontario and presently is pastor at Zion CRC in Oshawa, Ontario. Rev. Wildeboer has served in a variety of classical and denominational positions.

D. Cooperating organizations

1. The Back to God Hour works closely with AdMark, an advertising agency, and RACOM, the public-relations agency dedicated to supporting the ministry of The Back to God Hour.

2. The Back to God Hour also has an agreement with CRC Publications for joint publication of selected materials.

3. The Back to God Hour joined with Christian Reformed Home Missions for pilot ventures in cooperative ministries, including the use of a video format to introduce the ministries of local congregations.

4. The Back to God Hour is an active partner, along with others, including Christian Reformed World Literature Ministries, in the publication of Calvin's *Institutes* in the Russian language.

5. The Back to God Hour works in partnership with Crossroad Bible Institute, a prison ministry which provides a correspondence program as part of a follow-up ministry to our broadcasts.

E. Salary disclosure

The following information is provided to synod as requested:

Job level	Number of positions	Compensation quartile (includes housing allowance)
18	1	3rd
16	1	3rd

Note: Reevaluation of positions under the Hay system took place during 1996.

III. 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 secular stations to air its programs whenever possible.

People respond to the presentation of the gospel. Some object to the claims of Jesus; others want to know more about him and how to serve him. Trained volunteers and staff persons answer the telephone or read the mail which comes from listeners, responding appropriately to questions and suggestions generated by the ministry. Back to God Hour representatives supply literature, help people find a church home, refer people to 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

1. "The Back to God Hour" is a weekly half-hour radio program heard on every continent in the world. Rev. David Feddes continues to proclaim the historic Christian faith to contemporary society.

2. "Faith 20" television program is presently heard daily in the United States and weekly in Canada. Much time and energy were expended in 1996 to evaluate the future of Back to God Hour television ministry. Recommendations will be made to the February 1997 board meeting and will be communicated to synod through the supplemental agenda.

3. "Insight," a four-and-a-half-minute radio commentary heard weekdays on approximately eighty stations, is hosted by Dr. Joel Nederhood, who, although retired, has consented to this assignment.

4. The Voice of Life radio station, located on the island of Dominica, covers the eastern Caribbean islands and carries all our English programs as well as a radio version of "Faith 20."

5. The English-language literature ministry includes the publication of over 400,000 copies of each issue of *Today* (a bimonthly devotional) and over 35,000 printed copies of *The Radio Pulpit*, as well as printed transcripts of "Insight" and "Faith 20."

B. Arabic-language ministry

The Back to God Hour continues to search 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 through undated previously recorded messages. Miss Suesanne Abraham coordinates follow-up and listener contact in this ministry. Listener response is somewhat sporadic, especially from those areas in

which there is much tension and conflict fostered by Islamic fundamentalists or political opportunists.

C. Chinese-language ministry

Back to God Hour broadcasts in Cantonese and in Mandarin cover all twenty-six provinces in China, which is home to over 1.1 billion people. These broadcasts are aired on seven superpower stations located outside the country.

In China, listener follow-up is difficult because of government-imposed restrictions. Presently the Alliance Radio staff in Hong Kong works with The Back to God Hour in follow-up and listener contact. In the summer of 1997, Hong Kong will revert to rule by China. Please pray that the actions taken and alliances formed will be beneficial to ministry during this transition time.

Significant Chinese-language ministry also takes place in major metropolitan areas, such as Toronto, Chicago, New York, San Diego, and Panama City, in which concentrations of Chinese-speaking persons are found. In some of these areas our programming is bilingual.

Please pray for Rev. Jimmy Lin as he gives direction to this crucial ministry.

D. French-language ministry

The Back to God Hour Board made a decision in 1996 to focus the French-language ministry on those large regions of French-speaking Africa in which there is great need and from which we have had the most significant response. Since the retirement of Rev. Aaron Kayayan in mid-1995, the French-language ministry has used undated previously recorded material for broadcast. Literature distributed to listeners who respond helps them 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. In 1996 this ministry was conducted in the context of frequent and open hostility to the gospel by the Muslim majority. These outbursts were reported in the Western press at the time of the presentation of the Nobel Peace Prize. The situation remains unsettled long after the reporters are gone. Those who respond to the gospel are often persecuted for their faith. Literature and personal counseling are important components of this ministry.

Dr. Atmarumeksa has informed the board of his intention to retire within five years. A process is underway, in conjunction with the church in Indonesia, to identify and recruit his successor.

F. Japanese ministry

Rev. Shojiro Ishii of the Reformed Church in Japan directs the Japanese broadcast ministry. Rev. Ishii has informed The Back to God Hour Board of his intent to retire within the next few years.

Radio is an excellent ministry medium among a people who have been resistant to the gospel. Radio allows a person to listen to the gospel in private, without risking the loss of face that a more public listening to the gospel might entail. The Back to God Hour enjoys over a thousand responses per month to the programming in Japan. As the shine of economic success dims and the influence of traditional religion wanes, the opportunities for the gospel grow in this society.

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. This is evidenced in the high number of local congregations who underwrite part of the broadcasting costs or lease telephone equipment to assist in following up on responders to the broadcasts. Varied programming, arising out of a passion to proclaim the gospel, has been blessed by God and used in a powerful way in Brazil. We rejoice with our brothers and sisters in Brazil as they undertake a building project to replace offices and studios which this ministry has outgrown.

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 in this area of the world. To better facilitate cooperation, broadcast strategy has been changed from broadcasting on a national network to broadcasting in six major metropolitan areas. Follow-up can now be coordinated through Christian Reformed World Missions and local ministries with whom alliances have been formed.

In May of 1996 the board approved the appointment of Mr. Serguei Sossedkine as the speaker for the Russian-language broadcast. Mr. Sossedkine, a native of Moscow and a graduate of Reformed Bible College, is presently a student at Calvin Theological Seminary. He translates and adapts sermons written by Rev. David Feddes for broadcast to Russia. Mr. Sossedkine travels to Chicago two or three times a month to record messages for distribution in Russia.

I. Spanish-language ministry

In 1996 nearly three hundred radio stations and thirty television stations carried Back to God Hour Spanish-language programming. This ministry reaches Central, North, and South America, as well as Spain. During the past year an intensive review of the stations carrying our broadcast in Central and South America was conducted, resulting in nearly fifty changes of station outlets. In November 1996 Rev. Guillermo Serrano, who gives leadership to this ministry, visited Bolivia, accompanied by other staff persons. The purpose of this visit was to shoot footage for television programming, conduct interviews with Christian leaders in South America, and consult with persons and organizations with whom we share common ministry concerns.

The Spanish-speaking world continues to be a fertile field for ministry. The Back to God Hour continues to explore ways in which it can best be involved in the work of God's Spirit.

IV. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Rev. John Bylsma, president; Mr. John Kuyers, executive director; and Dr. Calvin L. Bremer, director of ministries, when Back to God Hour matters are discussed.

B. That synod elect board members to serve from the nominations presented (see Section II, C).

The Back to God Hour
John Kuyers, executive director

Note: Recommendations on financial matters will be included in the supplemental report of the CRC Board of Trustees.

I. Introduction

This report reflects information from and actions taken at the October 1996 and the February 1997 Calvin College Board of Trustees meetings.

The officers elected for the 1996-1997 year are Rev. John L. Witvliet, pastor of First Christian Reformed Church, Sioux Center, Iowa (chair); Mrs. Sheri Haan, retired executive director of Christian Schools International (vice chair); Rev. James Cooper, pastor of Third Christian Reformed Church, 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 1996 meeting was the board's participation in the inauguration of Dr. Joel Carpenter as provost of Calvin College. Dr. Carpenter replaces Dr. Gordon Van Harn, who retired after serving fourteen years in administration as dean/provost. Dr. Van Harn has returned to classroom teaching and serves as assistant to the president for special projects.

II. General college matters

A. Staff

1. Because the future shape of higher education will be greatly affected by information technology, the board approved a new administrative position—vice president for information services. Dr. Henry E. De Vries, former director of the Extension Electronic Technology Group at Cornell University, has accepted the position (see Recommendations).

2. The board endorsed two three-year administrative appointments:

   a. C. Stephen Evans, Ph.D., as dean of research and scholarship. Dr. Evans is the first person to hold the William Spoelhof Chair.

   b. David Diephouse, Ph.D., as academic dean for the Division of the Arts, Literature, and Languages and the Division of Social Sciences. Dr. Frank Roberts, currently serving in this position, will return to classroom teaching.

   Dr. Evans and Dr. Diephouse are tenured members of the Philosophy Department and History Department respectively. Their appointments do not require endorsement by synod.

3. Other appointments

   a. Jerry Steele, former deputy chief of police in Grand Rapids, has become director of campus safety.

   b. Frank Gorman of URS Greiner was appointed as the new Campus Master Plan architect. He replaces William Fyfe, who served the college for forty years. As the Knollcrest Campus continues to develop, we must balance the consistency of the existing facilities and grounds with the need to meet changing and expanding requirements. Mr. Gorman will assist the college in maintenance and renovation of the existing facilities and in the design and construction of new facilities.

c. The board endorsed the appointments of four new faculty members and two administrators with faculty status and ratified the reappointments (non-tenured) of nineteen faculty. It also endorsed fourteen sabbatical leaves and twelve Calvin Research Fellowships. Dr. Martin Bolt, professor of psychology, was presented the Presidential Award for Exemplary Teaching.

d. Tenure interviews were the highlight of the February meeting. The board approved nine for reappointment (see Recommendations).

e. Dr. Neal Plantinga, appointed last spring as the first-ever dean of the chapel, brings dynamic and inspiring leadership to faculty and students alike.

4. Resignations

The vice president of administration and finance, Mr. Dale Guikema, has resigned to pursue other opportunities, and the director of the Meeter Center, Dr. Richard Gamble, has resigned to take up a faculty position at Reformed Theological Seminary in Orlando, Florida. Search processes to find replacements for both are underway.

B. Finance

1. In October the board approved the 1996-1997 educational and general budget of approximately $50 million. In February the board approved the 1997-1998 tuition of $12,225, an increase of $570, or 4.9 percent. This is the lowest tuition increase in twenty years. Room and board for 1997-1998 will be $4,340, an increase of $180, or 4.3 percent.

2. The board approved a collaboration with Butterworth Hospital and Blodgett Memorial Medical Center to construct and operate a medical-research facility on the college campus. This facility will occupy the lower level of a proposed life-sciences addition to the Science Building.

C. Development

The scholarship-program and major-gifts aspect of the Development Office continues to build on the momentum generated by the recently completed Campaign for Calvin College, during which 108 new scholarships were established. The Development Office is presently involved in establishing seventeen new scholarships and is responding to an average of one scholarship inquiry per week.

D. Enrollment and financial aid

We are expecting a solid overall enrollment for the fall of 1997. The mid-January report shows 79 more students admitted than last year at this time, and there currently is a total of 1,910 first-time applicants, compared to 1,776 last year at this time.

We are generally pleased with the success of our scholarship and financial-aid program. Students from all economic levels were enabled to attend Calvin with the program we have in place. We have been studying ways that the program can be enhanced to attract more CRC students to consider Calvin and ultimately enroll. As a result, we have restructured our denominational grant program to encourage more youth in the denomination to make Calvin their college choice. The new denominational grant program is simpler than the

previous program and gives increased amounts to every CRC student enrolled at Calvin in the fall of 1997: $750 to those from Michigan, $1,000 to those from states or provinces bordering Michigan, and $1,250 to those from elsewhere. These new grant levels have been communicated broadly and have been well received.

E. Ministry share

The Calvin College Board of Trustees sent a request to the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA that the recommendation of the Ministries Coordinating Council to cut the college's ministry-shares allocation not be implemented.

III. Recommendations

A. That synod ratify the following administrative appointment:

Henry E. De Vries, Ph.D., Vice President for Information Services for two years, with faculty status.

B. That synod ratify the following reappointments with tenure: (Italics indicate promotion to that rank.)

1. Cheryl Kreykes Brandsen, M.S.W., Associate Professor of Sociology and Social Work.
2. Kelly J. Clark, Ph.D., *Professor* of Philosophy.
3. Karen Carlson Muyskens, Ph.D., *Professor* of Chemistry and Biochemistry.
4. Mark A. Muyskens, Ph.D., *Professor* of Chemistry and Biochemistry.
5. Edward Miller, Ph.D., Professor of Spanish.
6. John T. Netland, Ph.D., Associate Professor of English.
7. Allen L. Shoemaker, Ph.D., Professor of Psychology.
8. William R. Stevenson, Ph.D., Professor of Political Science.
9. Yvonne H. Van Ee, Ph.D., Professor of Education.

Calvin College Board of Trustees
James Cooper, secretary

Note: Recommendations on financial matters will be included in the supplemental report of the CRC Board of Trustees.

I. Introduction

The seminary board serves with a deep sense of gratitude to God for Calvin Theological Seminary. We are blessed with an outstanding faculty which is dedicated to the Reformed faith, to excellence in teaching, and to service to the church. As trustees we also thank God for the fine and large student body, which bodes well for our congregations and ministries in the next generation.

II. Board of Trustees

The board's nineteen members include eleven ordained and eight unordained persons; among them are one ethnic-minority member (Korean) and one woman. We are committed to working in structured ways to build a board that is representative of the church's constituencies and balanced with respect to qualifications needed to govern the seminary responsibly. Sixteen members are regional trustees; three are members-at-large.

A complete listing of current trustees and alternates, with the expiration dates of their terms, appears on page 586 of the *Acts of Synod 1996*. Board officers, along with seminary staff and students, are listed on pages 511-14 of *Yearbook 1997*. Regular trustees are also listed on page 2 of each issue of *Calvin Seminary in Focus* and in the seminary catalog.

The nine-member executive committee met in regular session in September, November, January, and April. The full board met on February 13 and 14, 1997. The spring meeting is scheduled for May 15 and 16, 1997.

Board officers are Rev. Joel Boot, chairman; Rev. Gerry Heyboer, vice chairman; and Rev. Calvin Hoogendoorn, secretary. Mr. Philip Vanden Berge serves as chief financial officer of the seminary as well as treasurer of the corporation.

The board's nominating committee again forwarded nominations to the general secretary for distribution to the classes in the regions where elections are required. In most cases these nominations were prepared from names submitted by classes. Synod must elect one at-large trustee from the following nominations submitted by the board (Recommendation B):

A. Mr. Mark Muller is the president of Ben Muller Realty in Grand Rapids, Michigan. He has served for two terms as an alternate trustee, as a member of the seminary's financial advisory committee, as a deacon and elder, on the boards of Sylvan Christian School and Grand Rapids Christian Schools, on CEACA (Committee for Educational Assistance to Churches Abroad; treasurer), and on other Christian and professional boards.

B. Mr. Donald Nydam of Redlands, California, is president and co-owner of Mountain View Care Centers and of New Heights Construction Company. He has served on council (elder, chairman), on Redlands Christian Home board, on Redlands Christian Academy board, and on Redlands Community College board.

We have asked the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA to appoint one candidate (whom we suggested) to fill the unexpired term of an alternate regional trustee who moved out of his region.

The seminary board authorized its chairman and the seminary president to select area retired ministers, as needed, to assist with processing candidates.

These former trustees bring valuable experience to the task and expedite the board's work.

The board's secretary mailed reports of the May 1996 and the February 1997 board meetings to the clerks of all classes and of all congregations.

III. Faculty and staff

The seminary faculty continues to serve the church in numerous ways. Teaching in the six degree programs and setting seminary policy collegially is the core of their responsibilities. They 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 our agencies, and serve in many other noteworthy capacities. Several faculty members published significant books and pamphlets in 1996. The hard, productive work of our faculty is a blessing to our own denomination and to the worldwide church of Jesus Christ.

The board presents a number of reappointments to synod for ratification. These actions are based on a thorough review of the professors' service. An advance in rank is indicated in italics (see Recommendation C).

A. Gary J. Bekker, *Professor* of Church Education and Missiology and Academic Dean, for two years, 1997-1999.

B. Harry Boonstra, Theological Librarian and Assistant Library Director for Seminary-Related Matters, with indefinite tenure.

C. Carl J. Bosma, Associate Professor of Old Testament, for two years, 1997-1999.

D. Ronald J. Feenstra, Heritage Professor of Systematic and Philosophical Theology, with tenure.

E. Arie C. Leder, *Professor* of Old Testament, with tenure.

F. Craig Van Gelder, Professor of Domestic Missiology, for two years, 1997-1999.

G. Jeffrey A.D. Weima, Associate Professor of New Testament, for two years, 1997-1999.

Mr. Philip Vanden Berge was reappointed for two years as chief financial officer and as treasurer of the seminary board. We ask for synodical approval of this action (see Recommendation D).

The board has declared vacancies in the fields of New Testament and pastoral care, effective for the 1998-1999 academic year, due to the announced retirement dates of Dr. David Holwerda and Dr. Melvin Hugen. Congregations and classes will receive a mailing from the seminary administration asking for suggestions of persons to fill these positions.

The seminary trustees are recommending the appointment of Mr. Michael J. Williams to a position in Old Testament. Mr. Williams is completing a two-year lectureship. He has worked out well, and both the faculty and the board are impressed with his Reformed commitment and his skillfulness as a teacher of

Hebrew. Because he has not completed an M.Div. degree, is not ordained, and does not have certain courses that would be helpful in training ministers for the Christian Reformed Church, the board has attached the following stipulations to his appointment to a tenure-track position:

- That he be ordained to the ministry of the Word during his initial three-year appointment, since that is standard policy for seminary faculty.
- That prior to ordination, he be required to complete the equivalent of six months of ministry experience in one of our congregations.
- That prior to ordination he also be required to audit courses in CRC church history, church polity, pastoral care, and preaching.
- That he be licensed to exhort while he is auditing these courses and completing his ministry experience.

The board asks synod to declare that, when Mr. Williams has completed these requirements, he will be eligible for a call as associate pastor for the purpose of serving at Calvin Theological Seminary. We will provide synod's advisory committee for educational matters, and any other synodical delegate who requests it, supporting material for this appointment. A synodical interview will be scheduled through the general secretary's office (see Recommendations E and F).

The board named three new adjunct professors: (1) Rev. Duane Kelderman, preaching; (2) Rev. Jack Roeda, preaching; and (3) Mr. John Witvliet, worship.

The board reviewed and endorsed the action of the executive committee in withdrawing the invitation to Dr. Jan Veenhof to return in the fall of 1997 as distinguished visiting professor.

The position of coordinator of field education was renamed "director of field education," and the nine-year time limit on appointments to this position was eliminated.

IV. Academic policies and programs

A number of new courses were approved. Several of these are in the M.A. program, where subject material will be tailored to the needs of students. The board noted with interest adjustments in Hebrew instruction. The introductory course has been extended and is now taught with the use of computers in the seminary's computerized classroom. On November 5, 1996, Rev. Jean Rajaonarivony of Madagascar became the first student to complete a Ph.D. program at the seminary. His thesis—"Transcendence and History in Karl Barth's Amillennial Eschatology"—is hailed by outside readers as a significant contribution. He has returned to his homeland to resume teaching systematic theology at his seminary, which prepares pastors for the largest Protestant church in Madagascar.

Under review are the possibility of offering a D.Min. degree, the seminary's continuing affiliation with the Seminary Consortium of Urban Pastoral Education, and the feasibility of a Grand Rapids-based urban-studies program. The board accepted the invitation to become an associate school of The Scriptorium, a rich repository of manuscripts and codices that will enrich biblical studies at and through Calvin Seminary.

V. General institutional matters

The board approved the purchase of thirty-two (32) apartments to alleviate acute housing shortages for seminarians and their families. If the seminary is successful in raising designated gifts to pay off these housing units by the summer of 1997, we will be able to reduce the rental fees substantially for Canadian students. This financial incentive, a form of student aid, is being presented to Canadian churches to encourage their increased ministry-share giving to Calvin Theological Seminary.

The tragic death of Mr. Young Soo Kim, a very fine Th.M. student from Korea, saddened the seminary community in December. Mr. Kim was killed in an automobile accident while returning to Grand Rapids from Chicago. Students and staff rallied to the support of Mrs. Kim and her daughter, who have since returned to Korea.

An encouraging number of new, named scholarships were approved during the past year. The board provisionally had approved a 1997-1998 operating budget, portions of which are funded by various restricted funds. The budget includes a ministry-share increase approved by the synodical Board of Trustees (and subject to synod's approval), a 10 percent tuition increase, and a 2.5 percent increase in the salary base. Constraints on the budget are ministry-share giving at less than the synodically approved levels and substantially increased "pass-through charges" to the seminary from the college and from the Synodical Office.

As in previous years, the board requests synodical approval for above-ministry-share offerings for seminary operations and for the seminary Revolving Loan Fund (see Recommendation G).

VI. Conclusion

The board is grateful for the churches' interest in and support of the seminary. For the churches, support of the seminary is a privilege as well as a solemn obligation. As trustees, we 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, and Rev. Calvin Hoogendoorn, secretary, be given the privilege of the floor when seminary matters are presented.

B. That synod elect an at-large trustee for Calvin Theological Seminary from the nominations presented and designate the person not elected as the alternate trustee.

C. That the faculty reappointments be approved as presented in this report.

D. That the staff reappointment be approved as presented in this report.

E. That the appointment of Mr. Michael J. Williams as assistant professor of Old Testament for three years, 1997-2000, be approved.

F. That synod declare that, upon completion of the preparation stipulated by the seminary board, Mr. Williams will be eligible for call as associate pastor for the purpose of serving as a faculty member at Calvin Theological Seminary.

G. That synod approve above-ministry-share offerings for seminary operations

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

Given the trends facing our denomination and our society, CRC Publications faces ongoing challenges in carrying out this mission in a cost-effective manner. For example, the increasing heterogeneity of the denomination makes it increasingly difficult to publish curriculum materials and worship resources that will be acceptable by most churches. That same trend makes it difficult to publish a denominational periodical that meets the needs of and ministers to a significant number of CRC members. As another example, the increasing dependence on other forms of communication, particularly electronic communication, calls for some significant strategic thinking about the future of Christian publishing and our role in it. In this report delegates to synod will find various responses that our agency is making to these and other significant trends.

Among the key developments within our agency during the past year are the following:

A. The refocusing of World Literature Ministries to become a service agency to the mission agencies.

B. The appointment of Rev. Robert De Moor as editor in chief of the Education, Worship, and Evangelism Department.

C. The decision of our board that *The Banner* should become a biweekly publication.

D. The publication of *CRC Source*.

E. Our participation in the development of interagency strategic plans in support of the denominational vision/mission statement.

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 can be enhanced.

II. Board organization, membership, and governance matters

A. Organization

CRC Publications is governed by a board of fifty delegates, one nominated by each of the forty-seven 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 1997 are as follows: Rev. Stanley Mast, president; Mr. Fred Herfst, vice president; Mr. James Lipscomb, secretary; and Mr. Dennis Bergsma, treasurer.

C. At-large board member

Last year synod elected Ms. Julie Hamstra-Voskuil to fill the open at-large board position requiring financial expertise. Soon after that, Ms. Hamstra found that she would spend the next two years in Europe, so she could not serve. Accordingly, the Board of Trustees agreed with the CRC Publications Board's proposal to appoint Mr. Dennis Bergsma to a one-year interim term.

The CRC Publications Board now recommends that Mr. Dennis Bergsma be elected to a full three-year term as at-large member of the CRC Publications Board.

Grounds:

1. During the past year Mr. Bergsma has served the CRC Publications Board well in an interim capacity.
2. It would not be a wise use of denominational volunteer resources to make a change in this position after only one year.
3. As the biographical information below shows, Mr. Bergsma is well qualified for this appointment. His qualifications for this position are as follows: shareholder of Van Popering & Bergsma, P.C., a CPA firm in Grandville, Michigan; current member of Westview CRC, Grand Rapids; present chairman of education committee for Calvin Christian School Board and treasurer of West Side Christian School Education Foundation; former chairman and treasurer of deacons at Walker CRC; chairman of the finance committee for West Side Christian School; and treasurer of both West Side Christian School Board and Ambucs.

D. Long-range planning

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

E. Relationships with other CRC agencies

The decision of synod a few years ago to create structures to help enhance agency coordination continues to impact CRC Publications. The CRC Publications Board supports effective means to help the agencies work more closely together. The area of focus with probably the most significant long-term effect this past year has been the development of interagency strategies for carrying out the denomination's vision and mission. These strategies should increasingly lead to integration of agency program efforts, where appropriate, for maximum benefit to the denomination as a whole. Other areas of coordination this past year included a common salary structure and the production of *CRC Source*.

Areas of focus during the coming year will include centralizing financial services, discussions with the denominational structure committee, and more work on the interagency strategies.

In addition to the general work mentioned above, CRC Publications works closely with a number of agencies on specific projects. For example, since taking over the Home Missions' publishing function several years ago, we have worked closely with that agency to ensure that our publications serve its needs. Other specific cooperative projects have developed with the CRC Historical Committee, Pastoral Ministries, and CRWRC. Also, World Literature Ministries is working at developing a partnership with all the mission agencies, starting with World Missions, to work out a relationship whereby it serves the publishing needs of these agencies.

F. Relationships with other organizations

In addition to partnering with CRC agencies, CRC Publications has also initiated discussions with a number of other organizations, both denominational and nondenominational, with the intent of working with these organizations to expand CRC Publications' ministry. Some of the results of these discussions are listed below:

- Eerdmans Publishing has agreed to publish two, perhaps three, books with us. These agreements usually result in a doubling of our print runs in addition to royalty payments, so they are financially beneficial to us; in addition, our ministry is enhanced as a result of these agreements.
- The Assemblies of God denomination is carrying two of our products (*The Praying Church Sourcebook* and *Patterns for Prayer*). It continues to consider carrying the Friendship Series in its catalog.
- The Church of God (Warner Press) will be carrying the Friendship Series in its catalog.
- Augsburg Fortress is promoting the Friendship Series to its churches and is considering carrying Open Door Books in its catalog.
- The Literacy Volunteers of America organization carries Open Door Books in its catalog. Also, the Laubach organization has made its mailing list available to us to promote Open Door Books.
- Christian Schools International has agreed to allow us to use its membership list to promote our products; CSI also will promote our products to its other customers. We have agreed that we should meet semiannually to review development plans and discuss possible cooperative projects.
- Youth Unlimited and the Reformed Church in America are cooperating with us on our extensive research project on youth.

G. Recycling

At its 1990 meeting the CRC Publications Board adopted a report of the Task Force on CRC Publications and the Environment. That report contained several goals regarding CRC Publications' use of recycled paper. Because of reductions in the price difference between recycled and nonrecycled paper, Publications is now essentially achieving the goals of that report. About 90 percent of CRC Publications' materials was printed on recycled paper stock during 1996. Both *The Banner* and the LiFE curriculum are printed on recycled paper. Staff will continue to monitor pricing changes in the future and will make appropriate decisions based on these changes and on the guidelines adopted by the board.

H. Ethnic-minority and disability concerns

Several years ago the board adopted personnel policies and goals related to ethnic-minority persons and persons with disabilities. Substantial progress has been made since that time. Currently, 7 percent of our employees are ethnic-minority persons. The goal for 2000 is 13 percent. Six percent of CRC Publications' board members are from ethnic-minority groups.

I. World Wide Web

After months of planning and discussion, CRC Publications went on the World Wide Web with its own home page starting in February of this year. We are starting with a very simple page, which contains some basic information about our agency and covers only a few of our product/program areas: *The Banner*, *Reformed Worship*, Men's Life, Friendship Series, and World Literature Ministries.

J. Product rationalization

As a result of two developments (an unacceptably high inventory and the discovery that some of our product lines are not covering costs), CRC Publications staff has been engaged in a process of examining the agency's various product lines and series and making some strategic decisions. Among them are the following:

- For several series we have ceased adding new products until we can show increased sales from marketing or can show other reasons to believe that the cost-recovery prospect will change. These series include devotionals, adult-issues series, and Open Door Books.
- For other series we are cutting back on the number of products in the series.
- We will be marketing certain series more aggressively in the future (e.g., the Inspirit series).
- We will be doing more research to help ensure that we are responding to the needs of our churches.

K. Salary disclosure

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

Job level	Number of positions	Compensation quartile (includes housing allowance)
17	1	3rd
16	3	1st
14	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, although the rate of decline has slowed. As of January 1, 1997, the number of subscribers was 31,440, which is down from 32,079 at the same time in 1996 and 34,941 in 1995.

When a survey was done in early 1996 of those who stopped subscribing, the results showed the following:

– Don't have time to read:	26%
– It costs too much:	22%
– It comes too often:	33%
– Unhappy with CRC and *Banner* direction:	31%

In general, *The Banner* is well received by its readers. The number of appreciative comments we get from a variety of sources is heartwarming. A survey of *Banner* readers last fall revealed that the most popular columns (in order) were the following: CRC News, Q & A, Letters to the Editor, Editorial, Cabbages and Kings. The least popular (in order) were Kidstuff, poems, Classifieds, Family Matters, and Hindsight. Based on the less-than-positive reactions to the Family Matters column, a change has been made in that column. Rev. Brian Bosscher and Mrs. Mae Drost are writing this column on alternate weeks.

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. During the past year *The Banner* ran eight news features: on pastors over 50, small churches, CRC ministers in Promise Keepers, what to do about our young people, worship battles in the church, the hoops seminarians must jump through to become candidates, children and the Lord's Supper, and why we can't get more elders and deacons. These news features have become popular with *Banner* readers.

As part of his duties, *Banner* editor Rev. John Suk visits CRC churches all over North America in order to learn more about the many different kinds of ministries that our denomination sponsors. Such visits also allow Rev. Suk to "keep his ear to the ground" and in that way stay in touch with the denominational membership.

The *Banner* staff has responded to some criticism that, in an attempt to appeal to a younger audience who are more interested in practical, life-related articles, *The Banner* has had too few articles of significant depth dealing with biblical or theological issues. Many have expressed appreciation for this change. At about the time of synod, for example, a special issue will contain five articles on the theme "Why Theology Is Relevant."

During the past year the staff and executive committee have spent a great deal of time exploring whether *The Banner* should remain a weekly publication. A number of surveys in recent years (see the results of one above) have shown that *Banner* readers and nonreaders believe that *The Banner* either costs too much or comes too often. When Rev. Suk asked readers (in a Hindsight column) to write in about their preferences, they indicated by a wide margin (at least 5-1) that they preferred a biweekly *Banner*.

As the concept of a biweekly *Banner* was explored, staff and board realized that a change to a biweekly, slightly larger magazine would also enable each issue to contain a greater variety of editorial copy so that *The Banner* could better respond to an increasingly diverse readership. Rev. Suk would plan, for example, to seek six contributing editors who would, on a rotating basis,

write longer, more theologically or philosophically challenging articles for each issue.

Based on all the above, the board approved a motion that *The Banner* will move from a weekly to a biweekly publication beginning September 15, 1997. This means that, rather than publishing a thirty-two-page issue forty-five times per year, *The Banner* will now publish a forty-page issue twenty-six times per year.

2. *Voice of the Reformed*

For the past several years synod has helped fund the *Voice of the Reformed*, a monthly periodical published by the Korean CRC community through a ministry-share allocation to CRC Publications. During the past two years this periodical has experienced a greater degree of stability than at any previous time. Rev. James Hyun has served as editor in chief for these two years 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 the *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 the *Voice of the Reformed* will be completely phased out of CRC Publications' budget after seven years. The Korean Council is a bit concerned that support from the Korean churches may not be sufficient to pick up all costs.

3. *CRC Source*

Starting in January 1996 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. The intent of this publication was to replace *Mission Courier* and other means of communication used by the agencies to communicate their ministries.

The editor of this publication is Ms. Rachel Boehm Van Harmelen, who works out of the Canadian CRC office. Early this year a telephone survey was done of a sample of CRC members to see how this publication is perceived and how it might be improved.

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

During 1996 this department published over one hundred new products, an all-time high. A key reason for this number was the number of products that were waiting in the pipeline in recent years because of the focus on developing the LiFE curriculum.

Several key staff changes will dramatically influence the work of this department in coming years. After serving almost twenty years, first as theological editor and then as editor in chief, Dr. Harvey Smit decided to retire at the end of 1996. Dr. Smit's impact on the work of this department, and thus on the entire church, has been very significant. He is greatly respected by the board and staff of CRC Publications and by other agencies for his knowledge of theology and the church, his wisdom, and his overall leadership abilities. He

will be greatly missed. Rev. Robert De Moor has assumed the position of interim editor in chief. His appointment as the permanent replacement for Dr. Smit awaits synodical ratification.

Ms. Cele Mereness, long-time director of training and consultancy and director of Friendship Ministries, retired at the end of January 1997. Ms. Mereness has also been a respected and dedicated member of CRC Publications' staff for a number of years. Mrs. Nella Uitvlugt has been appointed to fill the Friendship Ministries position, effective February 1, 1997.

The work of the Education, Worship, and Evangelism 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 be the major activity of this department.

A new strategic direction for this office that came partially out of the denominational vision/mission process is currently being explored. The board spent some time discussing a concept for a unified church curriculum that will build on and go beyond existing components to meet the needs of all God's people—infants through seniors, seekers through seasoned church leaders. While still providing choices and flexibility, the curriculum would include recurring, age-sensitive training in discipleship. Subjects such as stewardship, racial reconciliation, confessing one's faith, and relating and witnessing to unchurched people would include experiential components as well as reflection. Such a curriculum might build on the success of our LiFE curriculum. It would be developed in cooperation with the other agencies and with church educators from a broad range of congregations.

a. For younger students

Reactions to the LiFE curriculum continue to be very positive. Most of the evaluations have expressed appreciation for the emphases of this curriculum: faith modeling, faith nurture, "wondering," as well as an emphasis on the content of our faith. Staff has begun a newsletter, *LiFE Support*, to support the curriculum.

Work has begun on making the necessary corrections and revisions on the curriculum, based on input from the teachers. This is a multiyear project.

For the youngest children staff has decided to replace the present *Threes* course. The replacement will include storybooks for two- and three-year-olds.

In connection with the Coffee Break program CRC Publications will also develop a revision of the Story Hour program for four- to six-year olds.

Sales of the BIBLE WAY curriculum continue to drop as anticipated. However, sales continue to bring in several hundred thousand dollars in revenue; many churches still use the curriculum with very positive results. Nevertheless, the board realizes that at some point costs for carrying this curriculum may be excessive. At its meeting in February the board decided to continue to publish and sell the BIBLE WAY curriculum until it reaches the financial break-even point, considering all costs.

b. For junior-high students

The curriculum that serves the needs of junior-high students is called Crossroads. Two new courses have been added to this series, one a study of relationships, the other a study of the book of Acts. Staff will also revise or replace *The Church Cares* and *The Church Serves.*

c. For senior-high students

Sales are steady for our doctrinally based courses (e.g., *Landmarks* [a study of the Heidelberg Catechism] and *A Sure Thing*) and for *Decisions*, a basic course in ethics. Sales in our two other series, Prime Time (Bible studies) and LifeWise (practical life issues), are going less well. Several titles were added to each of the latter two series during the past year.

Due to disappointing sales such as those mentioned above, staff engaged a consultant to do a major research study regarding what the churches are doing in youth ministry and what kind of support they need from other organizations. This study involved focus groups, written surveys, and telephone conversations with "cutting edge" churches. Youth Unlimited, the Reformed Church in America, and the synodically appointed denominational Youth-Ministry Committee cooperated in this survey. As a result of this survey, we hope to develop materials that are needed and will be used by our churches.

A product that we produced for the Youth-Ministry Committee is *Walk with Me: A Model for Youth Ministry.* It was sent free of charge to every CRC last October. A telephone survey of churches revealed that about one-third of the churches are studying or implementing the model.

d. For adults

The adult curriculum falls into four general categories: Bible study, church and doctrine, Christian living, and spiritual growth. A number of products have been developed in each area.

Sales of the Revelation Series of Bible studies have grown in recent years. Two courses have been added in the Fresh Look Bible-study series, a series that provides new approaches to Bible interpretation. Studies on the Day of the Lord and on miracles are forthcoming.

In the church-and-doctrine category we published two titles, including *Speaking of God: A User's Guide to the Contemporary Testimony.* We have stopped publishing additional studies in the Issues in Christian Living series because of declining sales.

In our newest category, spiritual development, we have added several titles, including *Guiding the Faith Journey* and *Finding Our Way to God* (a product designed for church leaders). We also published a new book by Rev. Donald Postema, called *Catch Your Breath*. We are revising Rev. Postema's best-seller, *Space for God.*

Finally, it should be noted that we are developing most of the materials for adults in a format usable for small-group study. The series especially developed for that purpose, the Acts 2 series, is selling well.

e. For people with mental impairments

The Friendship Ministries Board, an entity set up to support spiritual development for people with mental impairments, has committed to publishing at least two new courses each year to add to our curriculum offerings in this category. The basic curriculum remains the Friendship Series curriculum.

Although an exciting new product in this area was actually developed by our World Literature Ministries Department, it should be mentioned here. Based on a grant from the Friendship Ministries Board, we have now translated one year of the Friendship Series curriculum into Spanish. As far as we know, this is the first Spanish-language curriculum for people with mental impairments ever developed.

f. For people with visual impairments

We continue to expand the list of curriculum materials available in braille, working with a ministry in Minneapolis. All the LiFE curriculum is now available in braille. A small ministry share is allocated for this work.

g. For minority groups

By next fall a new five-session course for children in grades 3-6 will be available called *Hand in Hand: Helping Children Celebrate Diversity*. A multicultural team from the RCA is writing this publication. A small ministry share is also allocated for this work.

2. Music and Liturgy Office

a. *Reformed Worship*

In the tenth year of its existence, *Reformed Worship* again came out with four issues of practical resources to support worship planning. Dr. Emily Brink continues to serve as editor of this publication. Circulation remains just below four thousand; many of the subscribers to the magazine are from other denominations.

b. Other projects

In a new series entitled So You've Been Asked To . . ., this office produced six helpful pamphlets intended to help congregation members to lead in worship. Titles included *Lead in Prayer, Read Scripture, Give the Children's Message*.

A major project finally nearing completion is the *Psalter Hymnal Handbook*, which contains backgrounds on all the songs in the *Psalter Hymnal*. This publication should be out by next winter.

In anticipation of synod's response to the study report on worship entitled "Authentic Worship," we are proceeding with a separate publication of an expanded version that can be used as a basis for discussions in the churches. A new project that we will pilot is a set of comprehensive devotionals for Advent/ Christmas. These are intended to be used with service and sermon planning guides in *Reformed Worship*. Also, a series of Scripture-based dramas is planned for publication during the next year.

Finally, discussions have begun on a successor(s) to the *Psalter Hymnal*. Given the rapid changes in hymnody in churches today, it's probably not too early to do so. The board spent considerable time discussing the possibility of a substantial supplement (approximately two hundred

songs) to the *Psalter Hymnal*. This would be an interim step between major editions and would probably include many contemporary songs. Discussions are also taking place with the RCA on this supplement.

c. CRC Worship Committee

The current (1996-1997) members of this committee are Dr. Thomas Dykstra, Ms. Fern E. Pruiksma, Mrs. Geri Schelhaas, Rev. Peter Slofstra, Rev. John Terpstra, and Rev. Richard E. Williams.

The CRC Publications Board elected Rev. Jack Reiffer and Mr. John D. Witvliet to second one-year terms. It also elected Rev. Ruth Hofman to a first three-year term.

1) "Authentic Worship": Report to Synod 1997

A major project of the Worship Committee this past year was to oversee the completion of the report going to Synod 1997 entitled "Authentic Worship." The report benefited greatly from a schedule and process which invited input and responses from many different groups. The CRC Publications Board saw an early draft at its 1996 meeting. As mentioned above, a separate expanded publication is already in preparation, ready to be published as soon as synod acts on this report. The interest in this report seems high, due in no small part to its pastoral tone and balanced approach.

The report was prepared by a seven-member subcommittee of the Worship Committee, including two members of the Worship Committee: Rev. Wayne Brouwer (chair) and Mr. John D. Witvliet. The other five members were Ms. Edith Bajema, Dr. David Diephouse (reporter), Rev. Duane Kelderman (primary author), Ms. Lynn Likkel, and Rev. Len Vander Zee.

The full report is contained in the appendix to this report. The Worship Committee's recommendations to synod regarding this report are contained in the report.

2) Request by Synod 1996 to study the New King James Version of the Bible

The Classis of the Heartland asked synod to "declare the New King James Version [NKJV] of the English Bible acceptable for use in worship" (Overture 63, *Agenda for Synod 1996*, p. 312). Synod 1996 gave this assignment to CRC Publications "for study (in consultation with experts in Old and New Testament) and recommendation" (*Acts of Synod 1996*, p. 535).

The Worship Committee was responsible for preparing a similar study of the New Revised Standard Version, reporting to Synod 1994. For the 1994 study, three Old Testament and three New Testament scholars prepared the report; the subcommittee was convened by the current chair of the Worship Committee. Since that approach worked well, we approached the same people for the study of the NKJV, and all readily agreed to serve. The subcommittee will include the following:

Old Testament: Dr. Barry Bandstra, Hope College
Dr. David Englehard, general secretary
Rev. John Stek, Calvin Theological Seminary (emeritus)

New Testament: Dr. Willis De Boer, Calvin College (emeritus)
Dr. David Holwerda, Calvin Theological Seminary
Dr. Bastiaan Van Elderen, Calvin Theological Seminary

Convener and reporter: Rev. Jack Reiffer, Washington, DC, CRC.

3. Church Development Resources (CDR) Office

The resources of the CDR 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 are the primary materials for the Coffee Break and Men's Life programs respectively. One or two products are normally added to each of these series each year. Staff continues to attempt to work with the Promise Keepers organization to try to integrate these materials with that organization's work.

b. Other products

Among the other products released or planned in the past year are the following:

- A revised *Discover Your Gifts* course was released last fall. This program continues to be very popular with the churches,
- Several new products in the Inspirit series were published. They were intended to be used with people who have little or no knowledge of the Bible. This excellent series needs additional exposure in our churches. Development of additional courses may be halted unless sales increase.
- *The Praying Church Sourcebook* will be revised.
- Development of several Coffee Break training videos has begun.

4. Training and Consultancies Office

The work of this office is closely related to our curriculum in that it provides the essential training and advice of a network of church-education consultants (CECs) for those in the churches who are using our curriculum. Ms. Sherry Ten Clay, former CRC Publications Board president, has assumed staff responsibility for this office. The work of this department falls into several areas:

a. LiFE curriculum support

Our CECs lead workshops to help church-education leaders teach the curriculum. However, only a small percentage of our churches take advantage of this service each year. Accordingly, the board decided that a video should be produced that will enable churches to obtain this training another way. The video is called *Here's LiFE*.

b. Small-group support

The CECs are also now trained (as are the Home Missions small-group ministry representatives) to help churches who wish to start small-group ministries. A new workshop is particularly geared to the Acts 2 small-group materials.

c. Children's worship

This office also provides training and consulting support for churches with children's worship programs.

5. General Publications Office

This office serves as a catchall. It is assigned everything that doesn't fit in any of the other offices. Some of the product categories are the following:

a. Open Door Books

These are materials for new readers. National literacy councils of both Canada and the U.S. support these materials in various ways, so sales are picking up somewhat. It is still unclear whether this product line will become profitable. CRC Publications and the RCA are cooperating on holding training events for churches wishing to develop programs for new readers.

b. Devotionals

Devotional books are another area in which we have cut back publishing because of disappointing sales. We are currently planning to experiment with a series of four family devotional books that will follow and supplement the overview study of the Bible found in the LiFE curriculum. We will also pilot the concept of comprehensive household devotional books mentioned earlier.

During the past year we worked with CRWRC to develop a handbook for deacons; we plan to develop a similar book for elders this next year. We worked with the Barnabas Foundation on *Becoming a FirstFruits Congregation* and are working with the CRC Historical Committee on a book on CRC history. A new pamphlet called *What the CRC Believes* has become a good seller.

C. *World Literature Ministries*

1. Purpose and membership

The World Literature Ministries Committee (WLMC) coordinates the efforts of the various CRC agencies in publishing and distributing biblical Christian literature in seven major languages. The 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 to assist the WLMC in this ministry. Serving on the WLMC are Rev. Robert De Moor, Rev. Merle Den Bleyker (chair), Dr. Arie C. Leder (secretary), Ms. Karen Ophoff, Rev. Guillermo Serrano, Mr. Gary Teja (vice chair), Ms. Susan Van Lopik (treasurer), and Rev. Herman Van Niejenhuis.

Financial realities, the need for a more efficient structure and process, and the desire on the denominational level to develop more coordination among CRC mission agencies prompted the World Literature Ministries Committee (WLMC) to engage in a year-long review and reevaluation of its role and structure. This reevaluation caused a major shift in our perception of how the committee conducts its work. Its role has changed from giving primary oversight to the ministry to advising staff on the direction it should go.

While the original structure of World Literature Ministries Committee seemed right in the sense that it gave the various agencies a place of involve-

ment, the agencies didn't become the primary stakeholders in the ministry as we had hoped they would. WLM's language subcommittees experienced the same lack of agency buy-in. As a result, the WLMC decided to disband three of its four language subcommittees and temporarily suspend most activity in these areas.

Staff members of various CRC agencies expressed concern about how this decision would affect their ministries. World Missions conveyed the greatest concern. They wondered how they would and could meet their needs for non-English-language materials in the future. Last spring, we began to discuss with them how we could meet these needs together. A partnership arrangement came out of those discussions. It seems this arrangement is the most mutually advantageous approach, and discussions continue regarding implementation.

Through partnerships with the various agencies, we hope to establish interagency literature teams that will primarily focus on what and where appropriate non-English-language materials will be published. We expect these teams to respond more efficiently to the literature needs identified on the various fields by agency personnel or national partners. We also expect the partnerships to address adequately the need for agencies to commit to a fair share of the financial support needed for projects.

2. Language-projects overview

The scope of the work of this department diminished significantly during this past year when the three language committees were disbanded. Staff was also reduced by the elimination of one position and the reduction of hours for two other positions.

a. Korean literature

The primary work in this area continues to be translation of materials for the Coffee Break program. Two additional products were completed during the past year.

b. Russian literature

The most significant project of this office is certainly the translation of Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion* into the Russian language. Books one and two have been published (20,000 copies). Completion of the remainder of the project will proceed as funding is available. A quotation from a letter from Dr. Konstantin Ivanov, a leading reform-minded thinker in the Russian Orthodox Church, is instructive:

> Thank you and your associates on behalf of many of us and on behalf of Russian Christians for the great work of Calvin that you have translated into Russian. . . . *The Institutes* teach us to consider the Word of God with care and reverence, embracing its full and at the same time concrete sense through every word of the Bible. . . . Calvin's book is beyond comparison.

In March 1997 a strategic-planning meeting of staff members from a number of agencies and people from Russia was held in Russia. A cooperative strategic plan will be developed based on this meeting.

c. Spanish literature

This aspect of the work of WLM remains, by far, the most significant. Because of the merger with The Evangelical Literature League and

increased marketing efforts, sales grew substantially in the past year. Twenty-four projects were completed during the year.

d. Finances

Depressed economic conditions in most of the nations in which WLM publishes literature continue to hinder sales and to limit WLM's ability to recover costs. Accordingly, WLM needs to subsidize its operations from other sources. Part of this subsidy comes from ministry share. During the past few years, WLM staff spent considerable time in fund-raising activities in an attempt to raise additional funds. Given the new arrangement for partnering with the mission agencies, it is hoped that much future funding will come from the mission agencies whose programs WLM will support with literature.

D. Marketing Department

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

The board remains cautiously optimistic about sales of the LiFE curriculum. Unit sales are up a bit from the prior year. Although over two-thirds of CRC churches use the LiFE curriculum, over 250 CRC churches do not use either of our core curricula. Many of them are ethnic-minority churches, but not all are. Staff will be surveying those who do not purchase curriculum from us to determine why not.

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	938	17	1,458,773	42
Other	3,838	71	1,678,828	48
Bookstores/schools/ distributors	632	12	364,438	10
TOTAL	5,408	100	3,502,039	100

As mentioned earlier in this report, sales in a number of other product areas are down from past years. The Marketing Department has conducted and will be conducting a number of research projects to help determine the cause of this downturn and, it is hoped, to provide information that will help reverse it.

For most CRC Publications products, the primary vehicles for marketing are the CRC Publications catalog, direct mail announcing new products to the churches, mini catalogs based on categories of products, and advertising in *The Banner*. During the past year we have implemented a system for evaluating the results of each of these efforts. We will use that data to help develop better promotional strategies. We believe that there is still a significant problem in getting information about our products into the hands of the right persons in the churches. Among the new strategies we are considering are the following:

- A representative system in each church, one person to promote *The Banner* and another to promote products from the Education, Worship, and Evangelism Department.
- E-mail newsletter to those interested.
- A "bookmobile" within each congregation.

The Marketing Department also provides support to World Literature Ministries and the Periodicals Departments. A significant campaign will be undertaken during the next year to promote the "new" biweekly *Banner*.

E. Personnel matters

The CRC Publications staff 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*); Rev. Robert De Moor, EWE Department; Mr. John De Jager, World Literature Ministries Department; Ms. Lana Hasper, Marketing Department and sales; and Mr. Michael Dykema, Finance Department.

As mentioned in the report about the Education, Worship, and Evangelism Department, Dr. Harvey Smit retired as editor in chief of that department during the past year. Since that time, Rev. Robert De Moor has served as the department's interim editor in chief. At its meeting in February, the CRC Publications Board appointed Rev. De Moor to the position of editor in chief of the Education, Worship, and Evangelism Department, effective upon approval of this appointment by the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA and ratification by synod. The Board of Trustees has approved the appointment, and the CRC Publications Board now asks synod to ratify it.

Grounds:

1. During the time that he has served as associate theological editor, Rev. De Moor has demonstrated that he has the potential to assume capably the responsibilities of this position.
2. During the twenty years that he has served as pastor and by his work on a number of denominational boards and synodical study committees, Rev. De Moor has earned the confidence of the church as a wise theologian and a capable church leader.

Grounds for only one nominee:

1. To move into a position this complex, it is helpful for someone to have had experience within the organization. (All prior editors in chief were promoted from within the department).
2. All those who expressed interest in the associate-theological-editor position were told about Dr. Harvey Smit's coming retirement and about the possibility that the person selected for the associate-theological-editor position would move into the editor-in-chief position.

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 1997 constitutes only 3.3 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 1996 budget showed a gain of $148,000. However, the actual was a $66,000 loss. Our cash position is very tight. A related problem is the size of our inventory; we are analyzing this long-range problem and developing plans to solve it.

The services presently provided by CRC Publications' Finance Department will be assumed by the denominational office starting sometime within the next year. CRC Publications has been assured that responsive services will be provided.

CRC Publications submits for synod's information audited financial statements for the fiscal year that ended June 30, 1996, and budgets for the fiscal years 1997 and 1998. These reports have been submitted to the director of finance and administration for placement in the *Agenda for Synod 1997—Financial and Business Supplement*.

The CRC Publications Board formally requests synod to recommend Friendship Ministries (United States) and Friendship Charities (Canada) to the churches for financial support in 1997.

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
- Rev. Stanley Mast, president
- Mr. Fred Herfst, vice president
- Mr. Gary Mulder, executive director

For *The Banner*
- Rev. John Suk, editor in chief

For Education, Worship, and Evangelism
- Rev. Robert De Moor, interim editor in chief

For the Worship Committee
- Dr. Emily Brink
- Rev. Duane Kelderman
- Rev. Wayne Brouwer and any other member of the committee present when the "Authentic Worship" report is discussed.

B. That synod elect Mr. Dennis Bergsma to a full three-year term as at-large member of the CRC Publications Board.

C. That synod ratify the appointment of Rev. Robert De Moor as editor in chief of the Education, Worship, and Evangelism Department, as recommended by the Board of Trustees and with the grounds stated in III, E, above.

D. That synod approve the recommendations of the Worship Committee regarding and contained in its report entitled "Authentic Worship."

E. That synod recommend Friendship Ministries (United States) and Friendship Charities (Canada) to the churches for financial support in 1997.

CRC Publications
Gary Mulder, executive director

Note: Recommendations on financial matters will be included in the supplemental report of the CRC Board of Trustees.

Appendix

Committee to Study Worship

Authentic Worship in a Changing Culture

I. Background and introduction

The CRC Worship Committee pointed out to Synod 1994 that the last extensive denominational study on public worship was the 1968 report of the Liturgical Committee, published in the *Acts of Synod 1968*. Since that time, the Worship Committee went on to note, there have been dramatic changes in Christian Reformed worship services. Those changes have raised questions not specifically addressed in the 1968 report:

- What are the essentials of public Christian worship? What is nonnegotiable in a Reformed setting? How do the Reformed confessions and our expression of our faith determine our approach to worship?
- How do the various cultural realities come to expression with the diversity now current in the church?
- How are the four motifs identified in the 1968 report (biblical, catholic, confessional, pastoral) expressed in our worship? Can an emphasis on the pastoral motif become so dominant that the other three motifs are ignored?
- How does the church maintain its biblical and Reformed character in the current climate?
- For whom is worship intended—the believer? the seeker? both? Can sound principles of worship guide the church in providing worship that glorifies God, that expresses the heartfelt covenantal commitment of God's people, and that draws others into the circle of faith?

(*Acts of Synod 1994*, pp. 526-27)

Synod 1994 responded by requesting the CRC Worship Committee, in consultation with others, to study these questions regarding worship and to prepare a report for synod that answers the questions according to the principles of Reformed worship, Scripture, the Reformed confessions, and the 1968 report of the Liturgical Committee, citing the following grounds:

1. Scripture consistently teaches that all conduct, including our communal acts of worship, is to be regulated by the principles of the Word of God.
2. The doctrine of the sovereignty of God and of his covenant taught in the Reformed confessions requires a clear and focused understanding of fitting and appropriate worship that glorifies God (see Lord's Day 35).

3. The increasing diversity of worship practices in the church raises many issues and questions that must be addressed in light of Scripture and the Reformed tradition. These issues have not been addressed since 1968.
4. This task falls within the current mandate of the Worship Committee.

(*Acts of Synod 1994*, p. 527)

In light of synod's mandate, it may be helpful to clarify for Synod 1997 what our report is not.

First, it is not an exhaustive biblical-theological study of Christian worship. Synod clearly identified the 1968 report as the accepted biblical-theological framework and beginning point for the committee's reflections. While we will certainly offer many biblical and theological insights, we have not attempted to produce an exhaustive biblical-theological study of Christian worship.

Second, neither is this report a "how to" manual for preparing worship services. Such public-worship resources abound. *Reformed Worship, Lift Up Your Hearts, Developing Dynamic Worship*, and the pamphlet series for worship leaders So You've Been Asked to . . . are examples of such resources produced by CRC Publications, and the 1968 report concludes with various examples of how worship services employing the principles of that report might look. Today pastors and worship planners regularly create services of worship. Giving "how to" advice is not what synod asked for in the mandate of this study committee.

The heart of this report is theological reflection upon the cultural situation in which we worship today. Nearly every question raised by Synod 1994 calls for an analysis of the dynamics in our culture today that give rise to the various changes in worship. Our task in this report is to identify and explain some of the cultural forces at work in the church in North America today and then to reflect theologically upon those forces and the changes in worship they have brought about. Our goal is to equip church leaders with perspectives and insights that will help them make decisions regarding worship that are biblically and theologically informed and culturally discerning.

To reach this goal, we offer this report, which includes the following sections:

I. Background and introduction 93
II. A summary of the 1968 report of the LiturgicalCommittee. 95
III. Contemporary forces affecting worship 97
A. Recent history of Protestant worship in North America 97
B. Cultural analysis. 99
IV. Theological reflection 106
A. The enduring themes of biblical worship. 106
B. The contemporary dynamics of biblical worship 112
C. Reformed worship 126
V. Questions and answers 127
A. General issues 127
B. Particular parts of the liturgy 138

We see the audience of this report as being not only the delegates of Synod 1997 but also all thoughtful church members who have responsibility for the worship ministry of the church, from pastors to elders to worship-committee members to worship-planning teams to musicians. Though we are aware that some of the material below uses somewhat technical biblical, historical, and theological language, we have tried to write the report so it is widely accessible to all thoughtful church members.

Finally, we want to make clear at the outset that we see the central thrust of this report as a unifying one. We are aware of the "worship wars" in most churches in North America, including the CRC. Too often *traditional* and *contemporary* are labels that polarize the church and caricatures that misrepresent the sincere attempts of fellow believers to worship God. In this report we seek to articulate a biblical-theological center to worship that resists simplistic either/or choices regarding worship and that embraces the strengths and critiques the weaknesses of worship at every point of the worship continuum today.

II. Summary of the 1968 report of the Liturgical Committee

Like all synodical reports, the 1968 report on worship was written in a particular context. Foundational questions about the nature of Christian worship, concerns that public worship in the CRC was too clergy dominated, concerns that the rigidity of CRC worship was more a matter of denominational tradition than biblical requirement, and the simple fact that individual churches were experimenting more and more with variations in worship—these were just some of the factors that formed the backdrop of the 1968 report on worship.

The central thesis of the 1968 report is that Christian worship is a *dialogue* between God and his people. The rhythm of worship is one in which God moves toward his people in revelation and God's people move toward him in response. God comes to us in grace, and we respond in grateful obedience. The story is told, and God's people say thanks.

> This is the shape of the liturgy, simple, perhaps austere, but joining all of the elements of the worship of God's people since the time of the Exodus. God speaks and people listen. People speak with the assurance that God listens.
>
> (*Acts of Synod 1968*, p. 78)

The 1968 report used this concept of dialogue to examine Old Testament and New Testament materials on worship as well as the historical development of worship, especially within the Reformed tradition.

The dialogue metaphor, quite frequently used in discussions of worship in the twentieth century, provided in 1968 and still provides today a helpful conceptual framework for evaluating worship in general and for correcting a persisting imbalance in Christian worship, namely, over passivity on the part of the worshiper and domination on the part of the leader (usually the minister). For all the changes in worship in the last thirty years, a continuing weakness in worship is the tendency of worshipers to see themselves as passive spectators watching something happen in front of them and not as vital participants participating in a dialogue between God and themselves.

The dialogue metaphor also offers corrective for imbalance in the opposite direction, namely, the people dominating the dialogue. Though we will suggest below that it might be more helpful to speak of worship as "engagement" rather than as dialogue and to speak of the "covenantal" character rather than the dialogic character of worship, we see the basic thrust of the 1968 report as clear, valid, and very relevant to today's concerns regarding public worship.

The report quickly shifts its focus from Christian worship in general to liturgy in particular. It concludes with some detailed analysis of various components of the liturgy and then offers some actual "orders of worship" that are still used with great blessing in many CRC worship services today.

Tucked in the middle of the report is a list of four motifs (from the 1965 Synod of the Gereformeerde Kerken) intended to guide the church in any review and reform of its liturgy. We find these motifs to be as valid today as they were in 1968 and to be very relevant criteria for an evaluation of contemporary worship. They are (1) the biblical motif, (2) the catholic motif, (3) the confessional motif, and (4) the pastoral motif. These are criteria that call for (1) the Word of God, (2) the history of the church, (3) the faith of the church, and (4) the contemporary needs of the people of God to be primary in all the church's judgments regarding worship and liturgy. Below is a brief expansion of each motif.

A. The biblical motif (the Word of God)

Although the Bible does not prescribe an order of worship, the Bible is the church's basic orientation and authority for worship. The Bible commands worship, reveals the God we worship and the kingdom established by the crucified and risen Christ, shows us the Christian community at worship, gives us prayers and songs of people at worship, and in its totality gives us the raw material for making certain theological claims regarding worship.

B. The catholic motif (the history of the church)

The church at worship is organically connected with the body of Christ that has gone before and the universal body of Christ in the present. The catholic motif requires that the local congregation always see its worship as connected to that broader, living church. This motif takes the history and tradition of the church seriously. While tradition by itself is not normative and is in fact itself under judgment, this motif reminds us that the liturgy of the church is not first of all "ours" to do with as we please but is "the church's." Respect for the enduring structure of Christian worship and liturgy is a guard against individualism and gimmickry. It also helps us distinguish between what is essential and what is peripheral. History gives us an appreciation for not only what should be stable in worship but also what should be flexible and fluid.

C. The confessional motif (the faith of the church)

Every church that gathers for worship believes certain things and articulates those beliefs in certain ways. Reformed churches have a long confessional history and strong confessional identity. The formal creeds and doctrinal confessions may not be explicit in worship, but there should be integrity between what the church believes and how it worships. The church at worship expresses what it believes, directly and indirectly. The more self-conscious the church is about this connection, the stronger its worship and its beliefs will be.

D. The pastoral motif (the contemporary needs of the people of God)

The church never worships in a vacuum. A congregation worships as specific people here and now. This motif calls worship leaders to ask, "Who are these people worshiping here today? What are their needs? What are the idols that compete for their allegiance? How do they hear what is being said?" This is the motif that is born of love, as the others are born of faith and memory. This motif expresses the need for flexibility, whereas the others emphasize the need for stability.

In summary, the basic thrust of the 1968 report is its assertion that worship is a dialogue between God and his people. We appreciate the way that metaphor is used in synthesizing the biblical material and in analyzing the historical

development of worship. We will propose some refinements of the concept of worship as dialogue, but our proposals do not conflict with the fundamental thrust of the 1968 report. We are especially grateful for the four motifs regarding worship, which continue to be valid and helpful.

III. Contemporary forces affecting worship

In the last thirty years the CRC has witnessed unprecedented changes in its public worship. Although the 1968 report of the Liturgical Committee was written to respond to increasing diversity in worship practices in the church at that time, that report could assume significant uniformity in CRC worship practices. Today that uniformity no longer exists.

The question in this section is What happened? What are some of the historical, ecclesiastical, and cultural forces that have led to marked changes in worship in the last thirty years? We have chosen to answer this complex question at two levels. First, we offer a brief recent history of Protestant worship in North America. Second, we offer some analysis of our contemporary cultural situation.

A. Recent history of Protestant worship in North America

The 1968 report began with a brief history of Christian worship, a helpful outline of the major patterns of Christian worship with particular attention to worship in the Reformed tradition. Since 1968 four major forces have served as catalysts for change in Protestant worship generally and CRC worship in particular.

The first catalyst for change has been the influence of the worldwide ecumenical liturgical movement of the last fifty years, which has involved scholars and church leaders across many denominations in an effort to promote worship renewal based on examples from the early church (second through fourth centuries). In fact, the 1968 report already reflects this influence—with its call for congregational participation, the unity of Word and Table, and the recovery of the ancient pattern of thanksgiving at the Lord's Supper. This movement, which should not be confused with "high church" worship, upheld the following goals: (1) to open up the riches of the gospel in worship, with particular attention to the death and resurrection of Christ; (2) to encourage the "full, conscious, and active" participation of the congregation in worship; and (3) to recover the ancient pattern of Word and Table as the normal pattern for Sunday worship.

Out of these goals have reemerged the following worship practices: the Christian year as an annual narrative recalling of events in salvation history; the *Common Lectionary* as a way of promoting the reading of significant portions of Scripture in worship and in preaching the "whole counsel of God"; an emphasis on expository sermons; and the recovery of the ancient prayer of thanksgiving as part of the liturgy of the Lord's Supper. These liturgical reforms have been widely adopted, though in varying degrees, throughout Protestant and Roman Catholic churches. The official published worship resources of many Episcopal, Lutheran, Methodist, and Presbyterian denominations all have in varying degrees reflected these practices, often borrowing liturgical texts, hymns, and patterns from each other. For the CRC, some of these priorities, such as expository preaching, are not new. Others, like the use of the full prayer of thanksgiving at the Lord's Supper, are a recovery of practices of the early church but are essentially new to the experience of most CRC congregations.

Second, worship in nearly every Christian tradition has been influenced by the charismatic movement. A series of revivals in the late 1960s, which resembled the earlier Pentecostal outpourings at the beginning of the twentieth century, soon led to important changes in weekly congregational worship. Like the liturgical movement, the charismatic movement has emphasized the active participation of all people in worship through active use of the body. Particularly characteristic of the charismatic movement has been the use of both contemplative and exuberant songs of praise and prayer, services of healing, times for ministry and prayer among small groups of worshipers, and—in some settings—speaking in tongues.

Closely related to (and perhaps a second generation of) the charismatic movement is the praise-and-worship movement, which emphasizes exuberant praise as one of the most important acts of worship. It is marked by the use of several simple Scripture songs or praise choruses, a sequence of actions that leads the congregation from more exuberant praise to more contemplative worship, and the use of a team of lay worship leaders.

Third, there has been a growing movement to consider public worship to be a primary vehicle for evangelism, to promote what is called "front door evangelism." Only in the last fifteen years have many churches thought of worship as strategic in the evangelistic task. In the 1990s, however, the weekly public gathering of the church has been considered by more and more churches as one of the primary opportunities for evangelism (a new strategy for many congregations but not new for most evangelical congregations). Particularly influential in this movement have been church-growth experts Carl George and Donald McGavran, market analysts George Barna and Lyle Schaller, and pastors Bill Hybels and Robert Schuller. This broad movement has encouraged congregations both to make worship services more accessible to non-Christians and to plan events specifically to address the needs and concerns of non-Christians. This movement has used the resources of sociological analysis to identify the particular shape of North American culture. As a result, an entirely new terminology for worship has been developed: seeker-sensitive worship, seeker-driven worship, boomer worship, buster worship, and so on.

Fourth, cultural diversity has enriched worship for Christians of all backgrounds and traditions. Following the pattern of most denominations, the CRC has experienced growth in cultural diversity both in the denomination as a whole and within individual congregations. Worship in the CRC in North America is now offered in twelve languages each week. Diversity has led to the sharing of musical and textual resources among cultural traditions, exemplified by the fact that nearly every hymnal published in the past decade contains music from six continents and many North American cultures.

Importantly, all four of these movements have been reflected in and shaped by the market forces of the publishing industry. Through the first two-thirds of this century, many Christians relied almost solely on denominationally approved texts and materials provided by the denominational publishing ministries. Now congregations look for worship materials—including prayer texts, songs, hymns, and dramatic scripts—from large independent publishing companies as well as from denominational sources. At one level, this is an ecumenical movement of sorts. CRC congregations now learn from and are enriched by the contributions of a wide range of other Reformed, mainline, and evangelical churches and movements. On another level, this has meant that

CRC congregations are subject to the influence of an aggressive, market-driven publishing industry.

Certainly none of these developments is completely isolated from the others. Worship in a particular congregation may reflect the influence of several of them. The congregation may use praise choruses, celebrate the Christian year, and sing hymns from Africa and Asia. In fact, when historians look at most churches of our day, they may identify eclecticism, or what Robert Webber has called "convergence worship," as the central feature of much public worship at the end of the twentieth century among North American Protestants.

Worship in the CRC reflects the influence of all of these movements. Indeed, there has been greatly increased attention to public worship as a central activity of the denomination. The past thirty years have witnessed the publication of a new *Psalter Hymnal* and the launching of *Reformed Worship*—both of which are widely used and respected well beyond the CRC—as well as a flurry of synodically approved liturgical forms (new forms were approved by synods of 1971, 1976, 1978, 1981, 1982, 1986, 1991, 1994) and yearly conferences on worship-related issues sponsored by denominational agencies and educational institutions. Particular changes in CRC worship include (1) increased involvement of laity in planning and leading worship, (2) growing adaptation or even abandonment of synodically approved liturgical forms, and (3) increasing diversity in musical styles.

B. Cultural analysis

As we have reflected upon the contemporary cultural situation, we noted six characteristics of that culture that are particularly significant in their impact on worship: as participants in North American culture, we fit; we buy; we change; we watch; we feel; we hurt. (Sometimes in what follows "we" refers to ourselves as members of the CRC; other times "we" refers to ourselves as members of North American society as a whole.)

As the committee reflected upon the CRC in the North American cultural setting, it judged the following observations to be significant:

1. We fit

   In the past fifty years, a historically Dutch CRC has rapidly become culturally assimilated. Typical CRC members in the 1940s were very aware that they were Dutch, and they found their identity in a Dutch subculture that had considerable depth. Today that Dutch subculture is virtually gone in many places and is considerably less pronounced than before in other parts of the CRC. The wooden shoes were burned on the cover of *The Banner* in 1980. Some cheered. Some cried.

   Many factors have contributed to the process of cultural assimilation: the barriers of language are gone; many CRC members have participated in "the American dream" of material prosperity; many CRC members have advanced to leadership positions in business, government, and community; many CRC members have married persons from other denominations; many CRC people have dispersed widely from insulated ethnic pockets out into the North American mainstream; CRC membership has become culturally and ethnically more diverse through evangelism and transfer from other denominations. The result of these changes has been a much wider exposure to society as a whole and to other Christians and their worship. Though various ethnic groups within the CRC are at different stages of the process,

this overall movement toward assimilation applies in varying degrees to most ethnic groups in the CRC.

Another reason why the CRC "fits" more comfortably in the North American church scene today than it did at an earlier time has to do with a broad shift in North American Christianity toward deemphasizing differences among churches. In the past, most members of a particular Protestant denomination in North America were capable of articulating what was theologically and/or historically distinctive about their denomination. No longer is that true. At its best, this shift is due to greater humility on the part of particular denominations and deeper recognition that the body of Christ is one (John 17). Energies are now spent on strengthening what unites us, not on accentuating what distinguishes us.

However, other forces are also at work. For reasons examined below, many North American church members (including members of the CRC) are less biblically and theologically literate today than thirty years ago. People today often are unclear about what they believe. Today's society values tolerance and open-mindedness more than it values discriminating thought. In this environment, most Christians are less interested in and less capable of articulating what they believe and of identifying what distinguishes them from other traditions than Christians were before the 1960s.

Curiously, at the same time that we observe this homogenizing tendency in North American culture and its effect on worship, we also observe a growing balkanizing or fragmenting tendency. At both the congregational and denominational levels, churches increasingly "do their own thing," with little sense of belonging to a broader, universal church. It used to be that churches were more like than unlike each other. That is less true today. At its best, this tendency is due to churches taking their mission seriously, identifying their "market niche" narrowly, and shaping everything in their ministry to reach a particular group of people. At its worst, this tendency illustrates the local church's loss of identification with the broader, catholic church (recall "the catholic motif" in the 1968 report that calls the church always to see its worship as connected to the broader, historic church).

The important point to be made here is that, for better or for worse, the CRC now "fits" quite well into the North American church context. Fewer and fewer people take the *Yearbook* on vacation to find the CRCs along the way. Even old theological enemies aren't quite the threat they used to be, and with that new open-minded attitude has come far greater exposure to other Christians and other ways of worshiping.

2. We buy

We are part of a consumer culture. The shopping mall may be the most apt metaphor for North American society. Here is the grand meeting between consumers, who have a dizzying number of options, and sellers, who wield their sophisticated marketing research and advertising to influence consumer choices. Fully two-thirds of the American economy is driven by consumer purchases. At a profound level one can say the heartbeat of North American culture is buying and selling. As one person has observed, people in North America spend most of their lives making and spending money.

The consumer culture goes beyond just an exchange of goods. People buy and sell experiences, entertainment, dreams, and pleasures. Also, the marketing model permeates our society far beyond the shopping mall. Politicians determine their political convictions by listening to focus groups. Networks and radio stations determine programming by doing audience surveys. Even colleges and universities increasingly view their students as consumers.

In this environment it should not be surprising that churches employ the marketing model. Churches are urged to think of themselves as shopping malls. Just as consumers prefer choices at the mall, so they prefer choices at church—in matters ranging from worship times to the variety of support groups available for various needs. Market sensitivity to what the consumer wants extends to public worship as well. Extensive research is conducted to find out what baby boomers or baby busters like (or don't like). Beyond being merely descriptive, these market analyses often become prescriptive as well: if baby boomers don't like to dress up for church, then we must quit dressing up, the logic seems to suggest. A newsletter by Lyle Schaller that goes to all CRC leaders often subtly blurs the descriptive (70 percent of people don't like to hear the word *sin*) and the prescriptive (we shouldn't say *sin*).

At its best, of course, the marketing model applied to the church reminds us as congregations that we must know those we are seeking to reach and be intentional about reaching them. At its best, this is only a new wrinkle in the basic missiological principle that we must establish a "point of contact" with those we seek to reach.

At its worst, however, the church stands in danger of capitulating to a consumer culture by allowing consumer preferences to displace biblical or historical principles as the primary determinants of the shape of the church's ministry and worship. Moreover, an exaggerated consumer orientation to ministry and worship can be both the result and the cause of the church's losing confidence in its message and feeling inappropriately apologetic for being distinctive and different.

3. We change

It is difficult to comprehend the rate and magnitude of change in North American culture. Technology has produced profound social change in the twentieth century. Our oldest living citizens can still remember a time when there were no automobiles or airplanes, not to mention telephones, televisions, or computers. That same technology, now driven by the computer, promises an even faster rate of change in the immediate future.

North American culture has a bias toward change. Deep in our psyche is the notion that change and progress go hand in hand. And reality hasn't tempered cultural optimism. We are always ready to try something new. Consequently, institutions rarely stand still and continually are defining and redefining themselves and their goals.

The North American penchant for change is accelerated by the mobility of our society. People move frequently, from neighborhood to neighborhood, from province to province. Traditions and rituals do not have time to take root and develop.

Moreover, North American suburbia does not foster a sense of place. Our place is every place. Put another way, we do not live locally. McDonald's, not

the local butcher and baker, gives us our sense of place. Strip malls and subdivisions are more like than unlike each other in suburban Seattle and Sarasota.

In this environment of exponential change, combined with a loss of the traditional texture and depth of local communities, churches face profound questions about what it means to be a community of shared memory. How does the church build and nurture memory and continuity? In most churches, the pressure to change worship is at least as strong as the pressure to leave things the same. And the pressure to change what has been changed seems to increase with every change.

Certainly there is nothing inherently wrong with change. In fact, we will see later that change is an essential characteristic of the church as a living organism. And no doubt CRC worship has often been unnecessarily rigid and inflexible. Yet healthy churches, like healthy individuals, also are able to take the long view of their lives and identify some level of narrative unity and coherence in their lives. If Jaroslav Pelikan's distinction between traditionalism and tradition is valid, namely, that "traditionalism is the dead faith of the living, but tradition is the living faith of the dead," the question becomes How can we build positive, healthy traditions when we as churches seemingly never do the same thing twice with the same group of people? These are pressing questions in a culture that is ever changing.

4. We watch

Here we have in mind the impact of television and the electronic media on society as a whole and on public worship in particular.

It is true that people have "watched" for centuries. Dramas and plays and games have long been with us. But the watching that takes place through electronic media, especially television, presents unique challenges and dangers. (As a committee we realize that there is a wide variety of television programming. When we speak of television and its profound impact on society and worship, we are thinking primarily of prime-time television programming and advertising.)

There are the obvious influences of television on Christian character: the godless values of advertising and programming pollute values and distort beliefs. Advertisers understand that sex, money, and power are the three great gods of culture and spend millions to get television viewers to bend the knee. The overt and subtle messages of television pound away at the character of children of the kingdom of God.

Another way in which television affects Christians is that it subtly changes their way of perceiving and receiving stimuli and thereby changes their expectations about worship. With its continually changing barrage of images, television shortens our attention span. Television raises our performance standards for worship. Before we heard Amy Grant, we thought Aunt Millie had a nice voice. Before we heard polished television preachers, we accepted the fact that preachers got a little lost in their thoughts from time to time. Television makes worshipers even more visually oriented than they are by nature. Consequently, propositions are out; dramatic sketches are in. Television conditions people to listen more intently when worship leaders touch upon a felt need in their lives and less intently when they don't. Television tends to make worshipers into watchers rather than participants.

In his book *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, Neil Postman takes this analysis a step further and argues persuasively that television and video media are part of a cultural revolution that is changing the very way people think and relate to one another. Postman argues that our culture is changing from a word-centered culture to an image-centered culture, from a reading culture to a watching culture. Reading involves analyzing, classifying, distinguishing, connecting. Reading is sequential, logical. Reading lends itself to discourse—the exchange of ideas. As Postman notes, it is very difficult to say nothing in a written sentence. Words carry meaning. The same cannot be said about watching, especially the watching that goes on with the electronic media. Pictures and images electronically manipulated "lack syntax." A picture offers no assertions to be refuted; it is not refutable. Images make an impression on the watcher. But an impression and persuasion are two very different things.

The shift from reading to watching, Postman asserts, has changed our way of communicating in modern culture—from discourse to entertainment, from substance to image, from real relationships with real people to pseudo-relationships with TV personages, from ideas to information, from wisdom to facts.

This shift in ways of communicating—from discourse to entertainment—may help to explain a decline in biblical and theological literacy in our culture. This decline in literacy hasn't happened just because church members don't brush up on the catechism enough. It has happened because we think less analytically than we used to. In line with this change, analysts of public worship today note that people nowadays are less interested in ideas about God and more interested in experiencing God. The question for the worshiper in the nineties is not primarily Was that true? but Did I experience God?

It can be argued that the trends outlined above are in line with some much-needed correctives in the Christian church. After all, don't we need greater balance between a purely cognitive, analytical approach to truth and a more visual, narrative approach to truth? Between left brain and right brain? Don't we need a greater balance between head and heart, between Word and sacrament, between hearing and touching?

Indeed, those correctives are needed and, happily, are taking place in much of the Christian church, but the changes being wrought by the video revolution go beyond those correctives and challenge the very way we think about religion and reality. Ultimately Christians are people of the Book, people who believe in the power of words and ideas. Christians put their faith in one called the Word, and they believe that Christ transforms not only their hearts and wills but also their minds.

5. We feel

It may seem odd to mention feeling as a significant cultural development. After all, people always have had feelings. Psychologically we know that feelings are an important part of a healthy and whole personality. In faith and worship, too, feelings are important and are minimized at our peril.

What we are referring to in this section is not feelings per se but our culture's absolutizing of self-fulfillment as the chief end of humanity. North American culture has evolved into what many have called a therapeutic

culture: we are obsessed with feeling good about ourselves and about life. Increasingly we talk about issues in psychological terms. As evidence of this shift, witness the proliferation of books in what is usually called the "self-help" section of any general bookstore. Notice a parallel proliferation of books of this variety in Christian bookstores. The same shift can be noticed in what we call "news" today. The evening news used to report on things like a speech by the president or prime minister, actions by congress or parliament, and natural disasters. Now the evening news is much more oriented to the self-fulfillment concerns of its listeners. Regular segments such as "To Your Health," "Your Personal Finances," and "Retiring Happy" address the felt needs of the audience in compelling ways. While there is nothing wrong with these things in themselves, the cumulative impact of all these changes is to narrow the way people see life to psychological, therapeutic categories.

There is a powerful connection between our being a video culture (we watch) and our being a therapeutic culture (we feel): television programming is little more than the manipulation, captivation, and delivery of audiences to advertisers. Television networks exist to capture audiences. Their marketing experts spend millions of dollars to understand how audiences feel and what they respond to. Television producers know that North Americans are anxious, empty people. All programs, from the news to sitcoms to prime-time shows, engage people's feelings at levels far deeper than they realize.

The relationship of this therapeutic milieu to Christian worship is obvious. People who come to public worship on Sunday have had their felt needs addressed all week long by TV, radio, and print media. These media have addressed these needs with breathtaking sophistication. Worship leaders can learn from these other media the importance of addressing people's felt needs. The danger is that Christian worship leaders will buy into our secular culture's preoccupation with feelings and self-fulfillment and will reduce the gospel to the self-fulfillment and therapeutic categories of that secular culture.

Of course, the gospel does promise self-fulfillment. But it is radically different from the self-fulfillment secular culture seeks. Jesus says we find our life when we lose it for him and his kingdom; we live when we die to self. This message has been "foolish" in every age. It is especially foolish in a therapeutic culture like the secular culture all around us.

6. We hurt

By global standards of wealth and health, it may seem odd, if not offensive, to characterize North America as a place where people hurt and suffer. Certainly people in every place and time have suffered. The issue here is not whether people in North America hurt more or less than people elsewhere; the issue here is the specific cultural character of suffering in North America in the nineties. The following observations regarding suffering in North American culture are worth making:

a. A prosperous society creates its own kind of anxiety, the anxiety of getting, of keeping, of spending. It has already been noted that North Americans use most of their time making and spending money. Activity so alien to how God made us leaves us empty and anxious. In terms of Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs, the primary locus of need in a prosperous society shifts from the need for basic security to the need for

meaning, which, when not satisfied, creates psychic pain. Repeated studies of North American attitudes and life-styles show that North Americans are not particularly happy or content.

b. The breakdown of marriage and family has resulted in an increased number of people experiencing traumatic pain and brokenness within their own families. The broader erosion of community identity leaves individuals with fewer and fewer communal resources to deal with more and more personal and familial brokenness.

c. We are an addictive society. Substance abuse, eating disorders, gambling addiction, compulsive behaviors like workaholism—these are just some of the evidences of an addictive quality to much of life in North America. The craving to be "filled" with something, anything, testifies to an emptiness, a vacuum of meaning.

d. We are busy and tired. Often both parents in a family work outside the home. There aren't enough hours and taxicabs to go around. Our technology leaves us no downtime. We have cell phones, pagers, fax machines, answering machines, and e-mail. We are an instant culture. High levels of stress are accepted as the way of life in a technological society.

e. We are violent. An epidemic of street murders afflicts all of North America. More and more North Americans, particularly in large cities, grow ever more numb to the violence that besieges society. But there is also violence within homes and families. The violence of domestic abuse crosses not only national boundaries but also all boundaries of race, class, and religion.

What does all of this have to do with worship? When people come to worship, they bring with them all of these burdens. Our culture's permission (and encouragement) to feel our pain translates into people's wanting and needing to share their pain. In this environment churches rightly affirm the decision of many people to take their burdens to church. People come to church in search of healing and meaningful answers. They come to be lifted up and energized. Robert Schuller is helpful when he suggests that pastors and worship leaders should think of Sunday-morning worship as more like an emergency room, where people come bleeding and injured, seeking healing, than like a lecture hall, where people come for cognitive adjustment.

Cultural analysis of the sort we have just engaged in tends to be overly one-sided—either too critical or too affirming of culture and its impact on the church. We realize that our cultural analysis above is primarily critical and cautionary and that it raises serious concerns about the effects of North American culture on Christian worship. At the same time, we have tried to avoid overgeneralization and to point out in each section ways in which these same cultural trends have not necessarily been negative. Our attempts to be balanced and fair are important not only for a constructive cultural analysis but also for the way we must talk about Christian worship.

The preceding historical and cultural analysis is helpful but inadequate by itself. We now turn to biblical and theological reflection upon the preceding matters and upon Christian worship.

IV. Theological reflection

In this section we will first set forth some of the enduring themes of biblical worship. Scripture is the foundation of all theological reflection upon worship. All conduct, including our communal acts of worship, is to be regulated by the principles of the Word of God. As the themes of biblical worship are developed, it will become apparent that our approach to Scripture does not focus only on those isolated passages of Scripture which speak explicitly of worship practices. Rather, our approach is a broad redemptive-historical one which seeks to discern how the worship of the church is shaped and informed by the mighty acts of God as a whole as those acts of God are revealed in Scripture.

After we have set forth the enduring themes of biblical worship, we will seek, in line with our mandate, to address those themes to our contemporary cultural situation. Our discussion of the contemporary dynamics of biblical worship will be organized under the following four rubrics: worship and the heart, worship and community, worship and diversity, and worship and evangelism. We will suggest that the order of these four rubrics is important. Worship is first all of a matter of the heart. When God's people worship (1) with pure hearts and (2) in authentic community and (3) when that community is ever renewing and being renewed in its worship, then (4) effective evangelism, i.e., the proclamation of the good news of Jesus Christ to those outside the community of faith, is the natural outgrowth.

Finally, we will address the question of Reformed worship. Synod specifically mandated this committee to identify the "nonnegotiables" of Reformed worship and to suggest ways the CRC can retain (or recover) the "Reformed character" of worship. The question of what Reformed worship is will be briefly explored.

A. *The enduring themes of biblical worship*

1. We were made to worship

   All human beings are worshipers. Though it is true that not all people show up at church on Sunday morning, all people do have the capacity and the tendency to acknowledge that someone or something else is greater than they—worth more—and to praise and submit to it. When people worship in this most general sense, they not only express the worth of the other; they acknowledge their own dependency and need: I am unworthy; you are worthy. I am small; you are great. I am not complete in myself and desire you, the one I worship, to the point of giving myself to you. This is the dynamic, the rhythm, of worship in its most generic sense.

   As Christians, we believe that the triune God, revealed in Scripture, is alone worthy of worship. Further, we believe that God has created us in his image, thereby making communication and relationship with this God possible and natural. We were made to worship.

2. Sin misdirects worship

   Our fall into sin did not take away our urge to worship or destroy our sense of dependency. But it did misdirect our worship. We still bow down and surrender ourselves, but now we surrender ourselves to things and beings less than God. And whereas perfect surrender to the true God gives perfect freedom to the worshiper, surrender to anything less than God enslaves and diminishes the worshiper. As Harold Best puts it in *Music*

Through the Eyes of Faith, when we worship the creature instead of the creator, slavery replaces adoration, addiction replaces hunger, blindness replaces sight, and works replace faith.

3. Life as worship and public worship

   The Bible often speaks of worship as the total life response of the Christian. Our whole life is a sacrifice of praise and worship to God for what he has done in Jesus Christ. As Reformed Christians, who emphasize the Lordship of Christ over all of life, we appreciate the senses in which worship is not limited to a couple of hours on Sunday. But the Bible also speaks more narrowly of what we might call the official, public worship of the gathered community, and it is in this latter sense that we discuss worship in this report. *Liturgy* is a term used to describe the more formal, corporate, public worship of the church.

4. Christian worship and the Trinity

   Christian worship is rooted in the triune God. The trinitarian character of worship has been understood in various ways: worship as offered to the Father through the Son and in the Spirit; or to the Father, to the Son, and to the Spirit; or to the one triune God. Beyond these differences in formulation is the truth that God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are all vitally involved in Christian worship. It is through Christ that we have access to the Father by one Spirit (Eph. 2:18). In Romans 8 Paul speaks of Christ, who prays for us at the right hand of the Father (v. 34), and the Spirit, who intercedes for us when we don't know what to pray (vv. 26-27). Only the Spirit enables us to know God as Father (Gal. 4:6) and to confess Jesus as Lord (I Cor. 12:3). Christian worship engages us with the triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

5. Worship as dialogue

   Along with the 1968 liturgical report, we as a committee affirm the dialogical character of Christian worship. Indeed, Christian worship takes place in the context of a dialogue between God and his people. However, we are aware of at least two ways in which the concept of worship as dialogue has been misunderstood. The first is to understand dialogue too literally. Saying that worship is dialogue doesn't mean that one can take each sentence uttered in a worship service and categorize it as either God speaking to his people or his people speaking to God. Such a schema becomes even more problematic when we try to assign roles to the minister and the people. The fact is that sometimes the minister speaks for God, other times for the people. Sometimes the people utter the Word of God; other times they are responding to that Word. Worship is not merely a script with only two parties speaking. To avoid this misunderstanding, we will in this report speak of worship as "engagement with God."

   A second way in which the concept of worship as dialogue has been misunderstood is in the underemphasis on the horizontal, communal dimension of Christian worship. In characterizing worship as dialogue between God and his people, it has become common to underemphasize the communal character of Christian worship. Worship is the activity of a gathered community organically united in Christ by the Spirit. The joy of Christian fellowship and the expression of Christian love within the body

are not distractions from worship; they are integral to worship. Christian worship is rooted in covenant, a rich communion of relationships and commitments—the relationships within the Godhead, the relationships between God and his people, and the relationships among God's people.

6. The larger contexts of worship

It's important to place worship in its larger contexts. Worship is an event that takes place at ten o'clock on Sunday morning on the corner of Main and Central. But it is also part of a larger mosaic of addresses and times. We demean worship, we damage and impoverish it, if we do not see worship on Main and Central as organically connected to worship in storefronts and cathedrals, straw huts and underground houses; and do not see the worship of all Christian worshipers as organically connected to God's dealings with Abraham and Sarah, Rahab and the spies, David and Jonathan, Jesus and the woman at the well, Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch; and do not see that worship as organically connected with the worship of Augustine and Anselm and Aquinas and with angels and saints gathered around the throne of God, past, present, and future. We worship as part of "the holy catholic church." We believe in "the communion of saints." Christian worship is not merely something Christians go to on Sunday; it is a much larger reality that is truly breathtaking in its scope.

7. The narrative quality of worship

All of this is to say that Christian worship is highly narrative and dramatic. In Christian worship we participate in the broad redemptive story God is writing. The structure of the church year (Advent-Christmas-Epiphany-Lent-Eastertide-Pentecost) is narrative in orientation: it simply tells the story of the mighty acts of God in Jesus Christ. The sacraments also have a highly narrative quality to them. Baptism and Holy Communion dramatically present Christ to us, not so much by "pointing back to" but by effectively "making present" the saving acts of God (specifically, the dying and rising of Christ). In this way the sacraments re-present Christ to us. Finally, the broad story of which Christian worship is a part also has future dimensions. In our worship we practice for eternity, anticipating that great banquet and the worship of the triune God that will take place around the throne of God.

8. Worship, sacraments, and sacramental worship

The worship of the church is sacramental. That is, certain elements from the stuff of creation make God and his saving work present to us in worship in ways which go beyond the spoken or written word. Calvin emphasized that in sacramental worship God stoops to human weakness. When Christians eat and drink at the Lord's table and when they pour the baptismal water, God bends to human senses in order to make his salvation present and real. Our confessions (Heidelberg Catechism Lord's Days 25-30 and Belgic Confession Articles 33-35) clearly call us to an understanding of the sacraments as both sign and seal.

> For they are visible signs and seals of something internal and invisible, by means of which God works in us through the power of the Holy Spirit. So they are not empty and hollow signs to fool and deceive us, for their truth is Jesus Christ, without whom they would be nothing.
>
> (Belgic Confession, Art. 33)

What is enacted and sealed in the sacraments is union with Christ in his dying and rising and all the benefits of union with Christ. Christians receive these benefits by faith and through the Holy Spirit. In the Reformed tradition, sacraments are not mere ordinances, something Christ told his people to do, but the powerful means through which God works his grace in human hearts, through faith. In other words, worshipers do not bring meaning to the sacraments by their thoughtful faith; rather, God works directly through the sacraments, and faith receives what God has to give in them. Put another way, sacraments are not merely symbols or ways of remembering what Christ did. Although as Reformed Christians we do not believe that the signs are transformed into supernatural substances, we do certainly believe that they, by the Holy Spirit, convey to us the reality of Christ's body and blood so that we can say, for example, that we do eat and drink the body and blood of Christ.

In the Reformed tradition preaching also has this sacramental character. Preaching as proclamation of the Word of God is a Spirit-charged encounter with God, not mere lecture or instruction. Just as bread and wine become identity-shaping vehicles of grace, so too do the human words of the sermon, so that in listening we expect to hear God speaking.

Walter Wangerin illustrates the sacramental character of preaching in a delightful story he tells about an elderly woman in the inner-city congregation he served. Each Sunday morning she greeted him at the door after the worship service. Sometimes she would say, "Pastor, thanks for your teachin' today." Other times she would say, "Pastor, thanks for your preachin' today." For years Wangerin wondered why this woman called some of his sermons "teaching" and others "preaching." When he finally asked her about it, she replied, "Pastor, when you teach, I learn something; when you preach, I meet God."

There is a need to reemphasize the sacramental nature of worship. Many CRC members are not aware of the sacramental riches of their heritage and as a result tend to see sacraments merely as fitting symbols for what is declared already in the Word, a helpful way of remembering what Christ did. With this limited understanding of the role of the sacraments in worship, it is no wonder that in many places, sacraments are more and more marginalized. Most CRC members probably would be surprised to know that John Calvin actually favored a weekly celebration of the Lord's Supper. We are convinced that, as we grow in our appreciation of the Reformed heritage of sacraments in worship and of sacramental worship, we will also grow in our desire to celebrate the sacraments more frequently and more joyously.

9. What (who) makes worship happen?

A number of questions run through the preceding discussion of worship: Who makes worship happen? Who is the primary actor or agent in worship, God or the worshiper? Is worship primarily an activity of God or an activity of the worshiper?

It is tempting to think of the people, the worshipers, as the ones who make worship happen. Certainly the people are active in worship. But biblical worship also gives due weight to God as the agent of worship. God is the one who always has initiated the relationship between God and his

people. God's sovereign kingdom is the basis of our relationship with him. God has done everything necessary for salvation and shalom. Jesus says, "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him" (John 6:44). In the Word and sacraments, God is spiritually present in the worshiping community. In all of these senses God is the effective agent in worship. It is to this prior and primal activity of God that the people of God respond in thanksgiving and praise.

Put another way, worship is not just something people do on Sunday in the same way they work on Friday and play ball at the park on Saturday. The worship service is a divine engagement, a meeting in which God is doing before his people are doing and as they are doing. Acceptable worship is something made possible by God. As Reformed Christians, we see this dramatically in the proclamation of the Word and the celebration of the sacraments, where God is spiritually present and working. This emphasis upon God as an active agent in worship leads David Peterson to define worship this way: "Worship is an engagement with God on the terms that he proposes and in the way that he alone makes possible" (*Engaging with God: A Biblical Theology of Worship*, p. 20).

Understanding the transcendent and active role of God in worship clarifies the nature of Christian worship and corrects a tendency of Christians to reduce worship to a human performance to be evaluated. Worship is not first of all a matter of how good the sermon was or how moving the praise band or choir was. Worship is not a performance to be evaluated. Worship is a living drama in which Christians are active participants, a meeting of God and his people, of heaven and earth. A person is either "in" the drama or not. Hockey and football thrive on spectators. Not so with worship.

10. An enduring structure to worship

These theological emphases are not mere abstractions; they exert very specific influence on the form and order of worship. As in any act of communication or work of art, the *content* of worship inevitably is reflected in and shaped by the *form* of worship. We are not talking here about specific texts, such as the forms for the Lord's Supper. Rather, we are talking about the overall pattern of worship. Importantly, every congregation has some structure or liturgy for worship, whether traditional or contemporary, high church or seeker driven, whether printed out or not. Particularly influential in North America among congregations that often think they do not have a liturgy for worship has been the pattern enacted first in evangelistic revivals: preliminaries such as music, drama, and testimonies; evangelistic sermon; harvest/altar call. Seeker-services in many ways follow this pattern, replacing the overt altar call with a low-pressure invitation to return for worship or to join a small group.

A study of Christian worship throughout the history of the church and in many cultures reveals a striking, recurring pattern in the structure of Christian worship. This pattern, which in recent years has been adopted by most major North American denominations, reflects the worship of the earliest Christians in North Africa, Asia Minor, and Palestine. It has been adopted and transformed by worshipers in Central American barrios, small African villages, and large European cathedrals. It is also reflected in the

sample services that accompany the 1968 liturgical report. More importantly, this pattern of worship flows directly out of the nature of the church as Christ's body, a living organism brought into being by Christ's death and resurrection and sustained by his Word and Spirit.

This pattern is simple: gathering as a covenant community, proclaiming the Word, celebrating the Lord's Supper, leaving for service in the world. Notice the essential activities in each section.

a. Gathering for worship

The purpose of the opening of worship is to establish the relationships that public worship enacts and portrays. The most important is the relationship between God and the worshiping community. This is established through a biblical call to worship, the opening greeting, hearty praise of God, the heartfelt confession of sins, and the subsequent announcement of God's grace in Christ. Second and also significant are relationships among those who make up the body of Christ. These relationships are established through the very act of gathering in Christ's name and also through liturgical gestures such as the passing of the peace and/or mutual greetings. Prayers for the congregation and the world are often included in this part of worship.

b. Proclaiming the Word

In this part of worship, reading and preaching the Word are central. A prayer for illumination—a Reformed contribution—often precedes the reading and preaching of the Word. The reading of Scripture is in itself a significant act of worship. The sermon amplifies, extends, and applies the message of the gospel to a particular time and place. Appropriate responses—the recitation of a creed, a prayer of confession and intercession, a song of commitment—follow the reading and preaching of the Word.

c. Celebrating the Lord's Supper

The Lord's Supper is celebrated with joyful thanksgiving for God's saving work in Christ, with fervent prayers for the presence of the Holy Spirit, and with meditation on the work of God in Christ, past, present, and future. Often such meditation is focused on the biblical themes central to a particular sermon or season.

d. Going out to serve

The final acts of worship focus on leaving the worship service for service in God's world. The service concludes with acts of dedication to the ministry of the church (including offerings of money and announcements regarding congregational ministries) and with the assurance of Christ's blessing for life in the world.

The Christian Reformed Church has never dictated a particular order or pattern for worship, nor are we doing so in this report. But this pattern historically and theologically recommends itself as a simple but powerful way to portray each week the fullness of the gospel of Christ and to elicit the full, conscious, and active participation of all worshipers. It is also a helpful standard for evaluating worship in local congregations: comparing the worship of a local congregation to this broad pattern quickly identifies which aspects of worship are particularly weak or strong in the local church.

As congregations continue to strive for spiritually vital public worship, we recommend this historic pattern for use. It embodies each of the emphases in the theology of worship presented in this report. It is biblically, historically, and confessionally sound, and it allows for pastoral sensitivity to the needs of local congregations. In short, it meets the four criteria for worship described in the 1968 report and reiterated above. Finally, this pattern should not be seen as stifling creativity in worship. Quite the contrary. Just as in jazz free expression depends upon structure before freedom can emerge, so it is with this fourfold pattern of worship. The fourfold pattern provides the structure within which freedom and creativity can emerge.

11. Worship space

All the dimensions of worship that we have been discussing should be reflected in the worship space, the place where worship takes place. The physical setup in which we worship can be an enhancement to or a distraction from Christian worship. The central and elevated location of the pulpit in most Christian Reformed churches communicates the centrality of the Word and of preaching in worship. The Communion table and baptismal font communicate the prominent role of sacraments in worship. Seasonal decorations and liturgical colors are important ingredients in shaping and defining worship. Open areas in the front of the church for lay participation in worship reflect an expansion of congregational space (not performance space) and corresponding expansion of the understanding of the role of the whole body of Christ in worship leadership and participation. Decisions regarding the acoustics of a sanctuary reflect various values and priorities. Flexible worship-space seating which lends itself to fellowship and interaction among believers reflects an increasing emphasis upon that covenantal dimension of worship. We are heartened by what we perceive to be heightened sensitivity in many CRCs to the significance of worship space for defining and shaping Christian worship.

B. *The contemporary dynamics of biblical worship*

How does one go about evaluating Christian worship today? What is right worship? What kind of worship does God love?

1. Worship and the heart

Right worship is first of all a matter of the heart. In Christian worship God seeks people who love him with all their heart and love one another as they love themselves. Put negatively, God rejects worship of people who live divided lives. There must be integration between one's worship on Sunday and one's life on Monday through Saturday. Only then can worship have any integrity.

The prophet Amos ministered to people who had technically beautiful worship. They had been to all the latest conferences on public worship and could pull off breathtaking worship events every Sabbath. But after leaving services where they had sung of justice, they swindled poor people; after singing "not a mite would I withhold," they spent all their money on themselves to live in luxury; after saying they hated evil and loved the good, they actually sought evil and hated the good. God gives his evaluation of such people's worship in Amos 5:21-24:

I hate, I despise your religious feasts;
I cannot stand your assemblies.
Even though you bring me burnt offerings and grain offerings,
I will not accept them.
Though you bring choice fellowship offerings,
I will have no regard for them.
Away with the noise of your songs!
I will not listen to the music of your harps.
But let justice roll on like a river,
righteousness like a never-failing stream!

It is interesting that God goes into such detail in his description of Israel's worship. The rich and varied features of Israel's liturgy were not lost on God. But he rejected it all because there was no integrity, no consistency between what was expressed in worship and what happened outside of worship. In their worship they had the form of godliness but no power (II Tim. 3:5).

When we as members of the CRC evaluate worship, we are tempted to focus first of all upon the quality of the sermon or the music. But God looks first of all for people who, having died and risen with Christ, are seeking to lay down their lives for the gospel, to serve God and not money, to love each other with deep kindness, people who come to worship expecting to meet God and leave worship determined anew to obey God. Nothing else matters if the worshiper does not approach worship with a heart truly seeking God.

Rev. Jan Overduin, a Dutch pastor, tells the story of his imprisonment in Dachau during the Second World War. In this concentration camp inmates were not allowed to assemble in groups of more than three people. Public Christian worship was thereby forbidden. But the Christians there were not stopped. In groups of three, the Christians in Dachau would casually leave the barracks and trudge through the snow out into the woods. Standing in a small circle in the falling snow, they would first recite to one another as much Scripture as they knew, and then they would offer prayers to God. In later years Rev. Overduin called this "the church in its purest form." We could alter that slightly and say that this was the church at worship in its purest form. Christian worship will almost always be more detailed than what took place in Dachau in the snow. But it should never be less spiritually authentic.

This principle of worship and the heart applies not only to worship but also to discussions of worship. We deplore the fact that *worship wars* too often accurately describes how the church today talks about worship. We propose that no fruitful discussion of worship can take place if people's hearts are not right. When our hearts are right, we will refuse to be controlled by caricatures of the worship of those with whom we disagree. We will resist labels like *traditional* and *contemporary* when they are used to put down others. We will quit trashing denominational hymnals and traditions and quit using highly judgmental words like *ditties* and *schlock* to describe more contemporary music. We will not come to church looking for things with which we disagree in worship, but we will come to worship, regardless of what happens "up front" in a particular worship service.

This call to Christian love does not mean that there is no need to exercise discernment and judgment in matters of worship. Indeed, much of what follows in this report is intended to help the church become more discerning, more discriminating. But we as a committee are convinced from our own experience that when Christians' hearts are right, discernment and discus-

sion among people of diverse worship orientations do not have to be destructive but can be enriching and can enhance the worship of the church.

2. Worship and community

Public Christian worship is an act of the Christian community. The church as community is not an intellectual abstraction. It is real people in a specific time and place and with a unique history. Worship happens in the particulars of a gathered congregation with all its joys and sorrows. Biblical worship is always local.

By "community" we have in mind more than fellowship. Certainly fellowship—people knowing one another intimately and caring for one another deeply—is an important feature of the body of Christ and of Christian community. But by community we have in mind something deeper. Christian community is the shared identity we have with others in a particular time and place because of shared beliefs, shared meanings, shared values, and shared purposes.

Healthy worship and healthy community go together. Conversely, when the church as a community is weak, so is the church's worship. Put another way, strong worship both builds and reflects strong community.

a. The challenges to community

Many things in our contemporary culture assault the church as a community. We have already examined some of them in our cultural analysis. Consider the following cultural factors that weaken community in general and Christian community in particular.

1) We are a mobile society. Most adults do not live in the neighborhood and belong to the church in which they grew up. Church communities experience high rates of turnover in church membership. This contributes to a loss of shared memory, memory that gives depth and breadth to Christian worship. (It is also true that a congregation primarily composed of people without deep roots and extended family connections in a local community often experiences richer and deeper community because its members have lost those other community connections.)

2) We live segmented lives. In a technological society, it is possible to live separate lives in several different worlds. For example, we have our world of church, our world of work, and our world of neighborhood, and there is virtually no overlap between them. People at work may not even know where their fellow workers live or where they go to church, much less be a part of those other worlds. Consequently, no one knows anyone else fully. We tend to know and be known in fragments. In community, in its fullest sense, we know and are known by each other as whole persons.

3) The breakdown of marriage and family is itself a profound breakdown of community and almost always leads to further isolation and alienation from communities that humanize and nurture us.

4) The rapid rate of change in North American culture has a tendency to cut people off from meaningful traditions that give identity and fiber to community in general and to the worshiping community in particular. In decades past, churches occasionally changed the call to worship or the offertory prayer. Today churches tend to change many things and

to change them frequently. In the past the pressure to remain the same was greater than the pressure to change. Today it is often the other way around.

5) Worship in a pervasively therapeutic culture (see III, B, 5, "We feel," in our cultural analysis) puts tremendous pressure on the church to focus upon the felt needs of the worshiper. At its best, this is good inductive communication—begin where the worshiper is. The problem of the inductive model, when coupled with a highly therapeutic and narcissistic culture, is that worship often ends where it begins—with individuals and their needs as they define them. Worship comes out to the individual, but the individual is not drawn into the community.

To be sure, some congregations are not sensitive enough to the felt needs of worshipers. In these congregations, worshipers have to travel the full distance between their world and the world of the church. Congregations that don't help worshipers in this journey simply lose them. Worshipers don't come back because they see the church as boring and irrelevant.

An equal and peculiarly modern danger is that the church seeks to travel the full distance between the worshiper's world and the world of the church, and as a consequence the worshiper never moves, is never transformed by the gospel. As William Willimon has said so eloquently, the gospel doesn't just come to my world and meet my needs as I understand them. The gospel creates its own new world, and it radically redefines my needs. For example, I think my need is for more money, but the gospel exposes my real need: to be set free from the bondage of consumerism. The danger in a therapeutic culture is that we make people's perceived needs sovereign. A church that does so soon loses its faith in the power of the gospel to draw people out of their world into the new world of faith and the church.

In today's therapeutic milieu, people have little interest in and regard for the traditions of a worshiping community that have developed over time, traditions that give depth and fiber to community. The reasoning goes something like this: if I can't see how a particular liturgical act meets my needs today, then the liturgical act is worthless and should be discarded. But such a view of what makes a liturgical act valuable and important is narrow and superficial. Worship is bigger than my felt needs, and the impact of worship is more subtle than can be measured by my reaction to a given service. It's also worth noting here that we rarely get rid of liturgy. We usually merely replace one liturgy with another.

b. The formation of community

One of the formidable challenges facing the church of Jesus Christ in our day is the challenge of building genuine Christian community—the fellowship of shared meanings, shared joys and sufferings, and shared purposes that has its unity in baptism into Christ's death and resurrection, made possible by God the Father through the Spirit.

Beyond techniques and programs the church must live fully out of the biblical vision of the body of Christ, where the church is not merely a human organization but is a divine organism, a living reality with Jesus

Christ as its living head. The church must identify the ways in which consumerism and hedonism have so infected the church's life that the power of the church as a countercultural community, a community that stands over against these godless idolatries, has been dissipated. The church must hear anew the call of the gospel to leave all and follow Christ. The church must continually recommit itself to its mission, in which losing its life for Christ is the way it finds its life. The community that is forged in the suffering that comes from self-giving will produce a worship with strength and depth.

The church also must understand anew the strategic role of worship in forming community. The church is a community of shared memory and shared meanings, shared stories, shared beliefs, shared ways of praying and worshiping. As congregations contemplate changes in worship, they must do so within their broad historical picture. Churches that do so will also keep before them the community-forming and community-sustaining power of the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper. Even when a church radically changes its worship, it must still seek a unity with its past and with the essential activities that constitute biblical worship.

Eugene Peterson talks about the crucial role of memory in a church's life. Unlike nostalgia, merely living in the past, memory is the capacity of the human spirit to connect the experience of last year with the one of yesterday and at the same time to anticipate next week and next year. The healthy church, just like a healthy person, has a rich memory and maintains some level of narrative unity and coherence in its own tradition even as it makes meaningful and sometimes radical changes in worship. Walter Brueggemann has said that the church in our culture is the antidote to amnesia. In an age when memory is not highly valued and in which the Christian church is increasingly losing its memory, the cultivation of memory is a formidable challenge but one worth heroic effort.

3. Worship and diversity

The order in which we are discussing worship in this section of our report is significant, for only when our hearts are right and only when we are worshiping in genuine Christian community can we talk meaningfully about diversity, growth, and change in worship. "Growth and change" in worship becomes a code phrase for conflict if this order is violated. But when growth and change take place among people whose hearts are right and who are in Christian community, God is praised in ever-expanding and ever-deeper ways.

a. Creation and diversity

The starting point for this discussion is an appreciation of just how much God loves variety and diversity. The world God created is marvelously varied, with thousands of different flowers and leaves, stars and planets, mountains and meadows, fish and fowl. Variety and differences are not bad; they enrich the world as God created it. Variety is not to be feared but to be appreciated as a gift from a rich and generous God.

In his insightful book *Music Through the Eyes of Faith*, Harold Best reflects upon the diversity of God's creation and wonders how the same God could think up things as varied as a hippopotamus and an orchid, call both of them beautiful, and still maintain some internal integrity and

unity. It's obvious, Best concludes, that God's sense of rightness and beauty is so large and all-encompassing that it can embrace objects and creatures of his handiwork that seem too varied and different to be classified together as beautiful.

In the same way, all Christians must begin any discussion of diversity and change in worship by acknowledging the staggering variety of ways in which God is worshiped. God's people gather in cathedrals and in straw huts, in storefronts and in underground houses. Musical instruments and the sounds and songs they produce vary greatly around the world and through the ages. The fact is that God is honored and worshiped in a multitude of different ways. The worldwide church itself is the strongest argument against and antidote for provincialism in worship.

At Pentecost God showed the breadth of his vision for the church as he gathered people from different nations into one body, crossing lines of ethnicity and race that had previously been thought uncrossable. In so doing, he made clear his plan for the ages: "to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ" (Eph. 1:12). In God's plan the church is the showcase of unity and diversity. The church is as culturally and ethnically and aesthetically varied as the human family itself, but it is nevertheless one, organically united in Christ. All things hold together in Christ (Col. 1:17).

Christians do not need to fear diversity in worship. Living in the Spirit of Pentecost, they will seek out and welcome variety in the way they worship God. We can be enriched by and can grow through our exposure to the richness and variety of the church's worship.

b. Rootedness

The call to seek diversity and growth in the worship life of the church is not a call to erase a particular worship identity or, worse, to apologize for having a strong worship identity. Best suggests that "centeredness—our sense of home and place—is the only legitimate context for pluralism." That is, churches must know who they are, and even love who they are, if they are to have the perspective and freedom they need to look lovingly into the worship ways of others and be nurtured by them. If they don't know and love themselves before they begin to reach out, they will tend to be either too uncritical or too judgmental of other ways of worshiping.

In this regard it is worth noting a discovery of many churches in urban areas. Churches in urban areas of America tend to be older churches with a strong worship tradition. They also tend to be churches that now seek to minister to people of various racial and ethnic backgrounds. At first glance one might think that churches in this situation would do best to deemphasize their own worship tradition and find the common denominators between their own worship tradition and the traditions of the people to whom they are ministering. But in fact there is growing evidence that this is the wrong approach. There is growing evidence that the churches that minister most effectively in urban environments are churches that know and appreciate their own history, have a strong "center" of worship identity, and expand that worship identity carefully and integratively.

There is a vast difference between embracing diversity and trying everything that comes along. Churches must understand why they do what they do and then carefully decide whether, when, and how they will alter what they do. Churches must see themselves as ships, not motorboats. The direction of a motorboat can easily be changed, but the danger is that a motorboat will quickly get off course. The direction of a ship can be changed only gradually, but when it is changed, its new direction is clear and stable. Exercising caution and care in worship change is not evidence of a lack of faith or a lack of vision or a fear of change. It is simply wise, because it takes the long view of how a church's worship identity evolves.

c. Worship in the world but not of the world

A difficult issue that arises in any discussion of change and diversity in worship is the relationship of the church to the surrounding culture. The church's worship is inevitably affected by the broader culture in which it worships. Should this be? Shouldn't the church transform culture and not the other way around? Why should church people bring guitars and drums into the church? Why don't they instead bring Bach into the shopping mall? These are good questions in any age, but especially in our age, when the secularizing forces of culture are very pervasive and powerful.

The simple answer to all these questions is that the church should not and need not be apologetic for ways in which Christian worship is different from the broader culture and must not accommodate to cultural pressures to change worship simply because accommodation is easier than resistance to those pressures. Indeed, the church is a radically countercultural and culture-transforming community. The church calls people into a new world when it calls people to new life in Christ. That new world includes new ways of worshiping, singing, and seeing all of life.

Having said that, we must also make some other observations about the relationship of the church and the world. These observations are not meant to undercut the unequivocal call of the gospel to transform the world; they are meant to deepen understanding of the relationship between the church and the world.

First, as Reformed Christians we should be sensitive to ways in which the dichotomy between the church and the world can be overstated. Indeed, the questions posed above assume a clear demarcation, but the line between the church and the world is not neat and clean. As Reformed Christians we take creation seriously. All the world is God's. God himself took on human form in the incarnation. Not only moral laws but also musical laws, artistic laws, and aesthetic laws have been created by God for all people to obey and benefit from. We use the term *common grace* to explain how the unregenerate as well as the regenerate can tap into truth and beauty in endeavors ranging from art to music to science.

The fact is that when Christians seek these laws referred to in the previous paragraph to exercise creativity in worship (for example, in art and music), they are doing so *in the world*, which is exactly what they are supposed to do. Since Christians work in the world, it is only natural that

our ways of creating music in the church, for example, will be influenced by broader forces in the world in which we find ourselves. We do not create music in a vacuum. All music, including the music whose primary context is the church at worship, is created in multiple contexts, because composers live in multiple communities: ecclesiastic, economic, sociological, political, cultural, familial, geographic, and technological. Again, music is not created in a vacuum.

In summary, the point here is that there are ways in which music that does not have explicitly Christian contexts nevertheless influences Christians' taste in music—what they like or dislike, what does and doesn't move them—because the church exists in the world.

Second, the questions above assume that history is static and that musical contexts are set in stone. But history is not a painting on a wall, where everything has stopped. It is a drama, where things continue to move and develop.

Consider the contrast between the use of guitars and the use of the organ in worship services. Today, as opposed to thirty years ago, the musical associations for most worshipers are not as neat as "Bach equals church" and "guitars and drums equals sixties counterculture." Several generations of people have grown up in mainline churches where the gospel has been muted by liberalism and cultural accommodation and where the music of Bach says more about the socioeconomic and cultural strata of the worshipers than it does about their hearts. For those generations, "Bach equals the symphony and upper-middle-class culture," not "Bach equals church." Those generations have come to associate Bach with cultural Christianity, not genuine Christianity.

In the same way, guitars and drums do not so clearly equal the sixties counterculture. The sixties generation has grown up in an electronic age in which they have been exposed to a multitude of musical forms and contexts of meanings. There are nuances and differences within the musical forms. The simple equation "band equals sixties counterculture" has long broken down. Following a long tradition, Christian artists have attached Christian lyrics to musical forms also derived from rock bands of the sixties so that for many people today, especially those who are younger, a band with guitars and drums may have stronger associations with Christian worship than the organ does.

In summary, musical contexts, and therefore the meanings people attach to particular kinds of music, are always changing.

Third, the questions above do not adequately grapple with the evangelistic calling of the church. We will deal with the question of worship and evangelism more in depth in the next part of this report. It is sufficient to point out here that while the task of bridge building between the Christian and non-Christian world is a very difficult one and is fraught with peril for the Christian church, especially in a radically secularized culture, nevertheless, churches that take their evangelistic task seriously must struggle with the issues of worship and musical forms in an attempt to reach nonbelievers for Christ. Later in the report we will discuss more thoroughly what this does and does not mean.

d. Old and new

What does all of this mean, concretely, for change in worship? It calls for balance. We must sing both the old and the new, love the tradition, and heartily embrace meaningful change.

In music, the church must sing its old songs without apology. Even though the surrounding non-Christian culture may not appreciate the musical forms of the church's song, the church must sing those older songs with fervor, for they help define the church. Not to sing them is to deny who the church is.

On this subject, it's important to remind ourselves that the church's most powerful songs have always been the songs rising from its own experience (not those produced by religious publishers) and born out of the church's tears. *Soul* is a term some use to describe the quality of songs that were born in the midst of the church's suffering. The African American church tradition is not the only tradition to have such songs. Every tradition has songs and sounds that are distinctively its own and that took on unique power in suffering. This brings us back once again to the importance of community if the church is to have a vital and vibrant song. As Paul Westermeyer has said, "The song of our worship grows out of a vision of community that transcends our brokenness and in a remarkable way takes sounding from among us as healing balm" (*The Hymn*, Jan. 1995).

The church must continue to sing its own songs and sing them with power and passion.

Second, the church must not fear changes in musical expression and in fact must embrace changes—carefully, integratively, and pastorally. As we have seen, we live in the world. Musical sounds of the culture in which we live are part of the air we breathe, especially in an electronic age when music can be transported everywhere we go. Christians who live in the world cannot help singing and creating music that reflects the musical sounds and forms around them.

But Christians must create their new songs carefully and integratively. Associations are born and die hard. We must be vigilant that we are indeed recontextualizing musical forms and not merely pasting Christian words on musical forms that are still so contextualized in anti-Christian settings that the music and the message are dissonant if not contradictory. We must create our new song gradually. Too many churches have introduced music changes violently instead of gradually. There is no excuse for inflicting musical violence on a congregation with a rich musical identity. Such musical violence is musically foolish because it does not help build the kind of narrative unity in the church's worship that is our ideal. It is also pastorally foolish. Worship leaders must remind themselves that people come before musical agendas. Worship leaders can be sensitive to the congregations they serve and still introduce meaningful, even if gradual, musical change. Large doses of wisdom, patience, and love go a long way to change worship wars into worship adventures.

e. Worship and children

As we seek meaningful growth and change in worship, we will do well to look at our own children in worship. Many churches across the United

States and Canada have developed strong children's worship programs in recent years. The genius of these programs has been the way they have tapped into the natural rhythms of worship that children so beautifully express. Tapping into the rhythms of children has, in turn, awakened many of those same rhythms in adults. Children's worship has taught the church the following:

1) Worship can be full of wonder and awe. Worship centers seek to create an atmosphere of reverence for worship of a holy and transcendent God. Silence and disciplined rituals of gathering are important parts of creating this atmosphere. It is ironic that children's worship is moving in the direction of increased reverence and awe in worship at a time when many congregational worship leaders are doing everything to remove all hints of transcendence and awe.
2) Worship is visual and sensory. Children's worship centers are filled with boxes and banners, candles and pictures, color and texture. One specific example of these sensory stimulants is the telling of the Christmas story with the use of the five candles of the Advent wreath and little wooden characters who represent all the characters in the Christmas story. Congregations that have watched the dramatic telling of this story on Christmas morning have been moved not only by the vividness of the story but also by the way their children and grandchildren are almost miraculously drawn into the story. Children today teach us that worship is enriched as we seek to involve all the senses God has given us.

   At the same time, we are seeing an increase in sensitivity to visual and artistic dimensions of congregational worship. Artists and banner committees work hard to express carefully the meanings of the seasons of worship through banners, sculptures, and other artistic creations. Drama teams and liturgical dance teams seek to create experiences of worship that give multisensory expression to truths being taught or sung.
3) Worship is centered in story. Children's worship centers know the power of story. Children's worship leaders take the biblical stories seriously as stories. That is, the goal in children's worship is not to elicit moral lessons from the biblical story (be kind, don't push, share your cookies) but to draw children into the story, which has its own transforming power. This is a thoroughly Reformed insight into the nature of Scripture and into the way the gospel transforms people. Corresponding to this development in children's worship, many congregational worship leaders are more sensitive today to the variety of ways in which God's Word can be read and communicated (see Heidelberg Catechism Q. and A. 26).
4) Worship involves the whole body, not just the mind. What adult is not moved when children in a circle in front of church sing a song with hand motions and body movements that give beautiful physical expression to the words of the song. The psalms have many references to our whole bodies being involved in worship. We kneel in humility before God. We lift our hands in exaltation. *Dance* rather than *dialogue* may be the biblical word to capture the rhythm of Christian worship. (This emphasis upon physicality in worship reminds us of the nature

and importance of the sacraments as well. Children may have a purer appreciation of the sacraments themselves and the sacramental nature of worship as a whole than adults, who have overstressed the cognitive dimensions of worship.)

There is a lot we don't know about heaven. But one thing we can be fairly certain of from the psalms and the Revelation of John (Ps. 95:6; Ps. 150; Rev. 19:11) is that our worship will be more physically animated in heaven than it has been in most CRC congregations here on earth. In heaven we will no doubt wonder how we were able to stay so still in our worship of God. We can reduce the distance between our worship now and our worship in heaven by watching and learning from the physical animation of our children in worship.

Reformed Christians, with a rich view of creation, have core theological reasons to embrace heartily developments that take seriously the multisensory nature of worship and that seek to create a balance in worship between the cerebral and the full-bodied, the abstract and the concrete.

4. Worship and evangelism

When God's people worship with pure hearts and in authentic community and when that community is ever renewing its worship, then effective evangelism, that is, the proclamation of the good news of Jesus Christ to those outside the community of faith, will be an organic part of the church's life. Evangelism is not a program tacked onto the church's life; it is an integral part of vital Christian community and worship.

We make the following assumptions when we talk about evangelism:

a. Biblical evangelism is communal. Biblical evangelism emphasizes the key role of the body of Christ. We come to know Christ in community. To belong to Christ is to belong to those who belong to Christ. The church's goal is to bring unbelievers not just to Jesus Christ but to full life and service in the body of Christ. This principle is important in a very individualistic culture and corrects a fundamentalist tendency to reduce conversion to a single decisional point with little regard for incorporation into a new community.

b. Biblical evangelism is personal. Saying that evangelism is communal does not in any way diminish the importance of each church member's taking seriously his or her calling to personally witness for Christ. Evangelism almost always begins in personal relationships between non-Christians and Christians who are intentional in their efforts to lead a particular person into encounter with Christ.

c. Biblical evangelism is rooted in the heart of God. No program of evangelism or tinkering with worship will succeed if people in the church do not have a genuine passion to reach the lost, growing out of God's passion to bring all of his children home. If we do not hurt for those who are perishing, love specific people who are lost, and pray without ceasing for God's Spirit to give new birth, all evangelistic efforts will fall flat.

Many churches today are experiencing frustration in the area of worship and evangelism because they are not putting first things first. If a church does not first have a genuine heart for the lost, then any change in

worship designed to make it seem more visitor friendly will be controversial, not to mention ineffective. If a church does not genuinely embody Christian community, then the worship of the church really has little to invite people into. If the worship of a congregation is lifeless and hollow, nonbelievers will not be moved toward God.

When churches do pay attention to first things first, many things about worship and evangelism fall naturally into place. When people have heart, a heart for God in worship and a heart for those who are lost, when the church is a living community of Christ and not just an audience that gathers for a worship performance, and when the church is organically growing in its worship, the church will grow evangelistically.

d. Principles regarding worship and evangelism

Assuming the order of things set forth above, we go on to suggest several principles to guide churches as they think about worship and evangelism.

1) Communal Christian worship is primarily the activity of believers. Sometimes lost in the discussion of worship and evangelism is the fundamental point that Christian worship is first of all the activity of the believing community. Certainly, we expect that nonbelievers will be present in Christian worship. And, certainly, although the church does not gather in worship primarily for evangelism, the church must worship in ways that call people to faith and life in Christ. But the fact remains that the church of Jesus Christ that gathers for worship is a believing community that is clearly differentiated from the world.

2) We must expect some of Christian worship to seem strange, even unintelligible, to people who do not know Christ. Certainly, all people are worshipers by nature; the impulse to worship is universal. But Christian worship is the worship of those who have died and risen again to a brand-new life and way of living. In this new community where Christ is head, things are different. Here people are less concerned with finding their life than with losing it for Christ. Here meekness, not muscle, is the mark of greatness. If the church is not radically different from the world, something is radically wrong. To be salt and light in the world implies a marked contrast between the way of life in the world and the way of life in the church. Peter says that Christians are "aliens and strangers in the world" (I Pet. 2:11). It follows, then, that Christian worship will have its peculiarities.

We disagree with those who suggest that one of the marks of an evangelistically committed church is that people who come to worship there will feel as "at home" in the church as they would in, say, a shopping mall (a recurring image in church-growth circles). The fact is that the church is not a shopping mall, and we should not expect to reduce all distance between the world of the church and the world of the unbeliever. Attempts to erase the differences between the church and the world will harm, not enhance, the church's mission. As Os

Guinness has said, "The fastest way to irrelevance is to be obsessed with relevance."*

3) Churches must seek to be as visitor friendly and seeker friendly as possible and to eliminate all unnecessary barriers to communication with visitors and seekers. The key word here is "unnecessary." As we saw in Principle d, 2) above, there is an irreducible distance or chasm between the church and the world that only the Holy Spirit can bridge. Below we address those barriers between the church and nonbelievers that are simply a matter of careless communication and that can be reduced or removed. Often the church, in its worship, through acts of omission or commission, unnecessarily erects barriers between itself and the seeker. Consider some of the simple things a church can do to eliminate barriers:
   a) Avoid or explain in-house references. Not everyone knows what *NIV* or *CRC* or *CRWRC* means.
   b) Clarify what is happening in worship. Brief explanations at critical points in worship can help all worshipers, not just visitors and seekers, understand what is happening, and they need not detract from the flow of worship.
   c) Produce the church bulletin with the visitor and seeker in mind. Replace the liturgical terms *salutation* with *God's greeting* and *benediction* with *God's blessing*. Be specific about where children meet for children's worship.
   d) Explicitly express to visitors and seekers your joy that they are with you in worship. (Do this only if it's true. The test, of course, is what visitors experience after worship in terms of greeting and fellowship and after Sunday in terms of community.)
   e) Design the content of services with visitors and seekers in mind. The prayers, the sermon, the introductions to songs must be sensitive to the full spiritual range of people who are present.
4) Changes in worship should be organic, from the inside out, not imposed, from the outside in. We have argued above that the best changes in worship, especially in music, are changes that proceed from a strong "centeredness" and changes that proceed carefully, integratively, and pastorally. Worship changes that violate these principles in the name of evangelism and the hope of reaching people who are not yet present in worship services do violence to the church's worship, will be destructive of the church community, and will fail to attract the very people the church wants to attract.

   For example, instead of asking what music is needed to attract a nameless, faceless person who has not yet even come to worship, it would be more helpful to ask what music will enable all members who are already present to worship God more fully. In nearly every

*Authorities on worship as varied as Marva J. Dawn (*Reaching Out Without Dumbing Down: A Theology of Worship for the Turn-of-the-Century Culture*) and Sally Morgenthaler (*Worship Evangelism: Inviting Unbelievers into the Presence of God*), whose book titles indicate how differently they approach worship, nevertheless strongly agree with Guinness's point.

congregation there are children and young people, persons who have joined from other church backgrounds, and people who have joined through conversion. In every congregation people are already present who challenge the church to think creatively about changes in worship. As we change worship to connect with them, we also will be changing worship in ways that will connect more effectively with seekers.

This principle of changing from the inside out addresses the very common practice today of borrowing from or copying worship practices that other churches are using. In an age when many churches market themselves as models to be imitated and in an age when many of our church members worship in other churches and experience new things in worship, local churches are constantly bombarded with new things to try in worship.

Certainly, churches learn from one another. Each church has particular strengths, and other churches can learn from those strengths. The body of Christ has ears and hands and feet, and we need all those parts to make the body whole. The issue is not whether there should be giving and receiving, a cross-fertilization of ideas and experiences, among churches. The issue is how a local church should incorporate into its own church community practices that another church is using. The point here is that churches must do so from the inside out—carefully, integratively, and pastorally.

One of the biggest church-leadership conferences in North America right now is the conference at Willowcreek Community Church near Chicago. Pastor Bill Hybels uses the image of a thumbprint to emphasize the importance of churches changing from within. Each person has a unique thumbprint. So does each church. Each church is unique in terms of place, time, congregation, community, history, resources, and so forth. An idea cannot be applied in exactly the same way in any two churches. An idea or a principle has to be digested by a church and applied in ways that are appropriate for that particular church. There is no "one size fits all" when it comes to the ministry and worship of the church.

5) Worship leaders must remember that there is a little lostness in all of us. It is easy for pastors and worship leaders to draw a firm line between believers and nonbelievers and to assume that all members of the church are believers. As worship leaders, we would do well to remind ourselves of Jesus' parable of the wheat and the weeds (Matt. 13:24-30), where Jesus teaches that believers and nonbelievers are not so easily separated. The asterisk by a person's name in the church directory indicating that person's church membership does not guarantee that that name is written in the Book of Life. Second, even as true believers we must remind ourselves that the most mature saint in the church needs to be called home, called to faith, and called anew to the cross. The gospel call to faith and commitment is a call that Christians must hear and say yes to again and again.

Therefore, pastors and worship leaders should not feel that parts of worship that are specifically geared to the nonbeliever have no relevance or positive spiritual value for believers. Just as nonbelievers can be blessed as they overhear the encounter between God and his

people, so believers can be blessed as they hear the worship leader call nonbelievers to faith and commitment.

C. *Reformed worship*

Finally, we address the question of *Reformed* worship. Is there such a thing as Reformed worship? Or is there only Christian worship? What are the "nonnegotiables" of Reformed worship that synod mandated its committee to identify? What is the Reformed character of worship?

Our committee seriously wrestled with these important questions. We concluded that it was not particularly helpful to talk about the nonnegotiables of Reformed worship as though Reformed worship were something totally distinct from (and superior to) Christian worship and something which we must feverishly defend and protect lest it be forever lost. Rather, we concluded that it was more helpful and honest to talk about *Christian* worship and then to acknowledge that, like every other worship tradition, the Reformed worship tradition has both received gifts from and given gifts to Christian worship and that what it has given has arisen out of what it has first received. In that spirit we note some of the gifts to Christian worship that the Reformed tradition has made over the centuries and encourage the continued cultivation of these gifts. Most of these gifts noted below have already been explored in our preceding theological reflection.

With gratitude to God we note the following as some of the particular gifts that the Reformed tradition has made to Christian worship:

1. A redemptive-historical perspective on worship (a) that takes seriously the rich communion of relationships in worship—from the relationships within the holy Trinity, to the relationships between God and his people, to the relationships among God's people (here and now and throughout history—from Abraham to the saints around the throne) and (b) that takes seriously the intimate connection between service and love of God and service and love of neighbor and the need for integrity of these two. Also implicit in this rich redemptive-historical perspective is an understanding of the relationship of church and kingdom that keeps Christian worship always directed out beyond itself into service in every dimension of life in God's world.

2. A fully trinitiarian emphasis in worship that seeks balanced attention to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

3. An understanding that preaching is proclamation of the Word of God that results in a Spirit-charged encounter with God, not mere lecture or instruction. In this connection, it is significant that in Reformed worship the Holy Spirit is traditionally invoked not only in the context of the sacraments but also in the context of the reading and preaching of the Word (the prayer for illumination).

4. An emphasis upon doctrinal preaching (most clearly exemplified by catechism preaching).

5. Calvin's sacramental theology that emphasizes the real presence of Christ in the sacraments (over against a view of the sacraments as mere symbols).

6. A conviction that congregational singing is at the heart of worship music, integrated into every part of worship, and a corresponding caution that

congregational singing should not be minimized and/or swallowed up by other forms of worship music.

7. A strong appreciation of the Old Testament in general and of psalm singing in particular as part of public worship. (Much of the Reformed emphasis upon the psalms and the Old Testament is related to the redemptive-historical theology set forth in 1 above.)

8. A particular emphasis upon the acts of worship which arise out of a view of worship as true encounter with God. These include the salutation, the declaration of pardon, the prayer for illumination, and the benediction.

   Although churches in the Reformed tradition may not be the only churches that have appreciated these elements of worship, we see these as eight gifts that Reformed worship has given to worship in the Christian church. We also see them as gifts that we should continue to emphasize and cultivate in the Christian Reformed Church.

V. Questions and answers

In this section our goal is to apply our cultural analysis and theological reflection to specific issues in Christian worship today. This is the most difficult section of the report—for at least two reasons. First, it's possible to agree on certain cultural analyses and theological principles but to disagree on how they apply to a specific matter of worship. Second, each congregation is unique and must take into account its own particular situation as it relates these insights to its worship. Each congregation is unique in many ways: its history, its geographical and demographic context, its members and the particular gifts they possess, its pastor, its specific goals. While certain biblical-theological principles are the same in every congregation, how those principles apply will vary greatly from situation to situation.

The format we are using is a question-and-answer format. Although we cannot deal with all the issues, we have tried to select real questions that congregations are struggling with today. We realize that some of the questions we pose may be quickly dated.

We are less concerned that readers agree with every answer we give and more concerned that readers notice two things: first, how the cultural analyses and theological reflections of the previous two sections inform the way we address these difficult questions; second, how discernment and wisdom are as important as expertise in culture and worship when it comes to dealing with many of the controversial matters in worship today.

We have divided the questions into two broad categories: general issues and particular parts of the liturgy.

A. General issues

1. **We have been trying to change some things in our worship service, but many people in our church dismiss everything we want to do as "turning worship into entertainment." Sometimes I see what they mean, but other times it just seems like a discussion stopper. Help!**

   The problem with the "e" word is that five different people who use it mean five different things by it. Some would call "entertainment" whatever aims at people's feelings. That's too simplistic, since all worship should

touch us at the feeling level. And we agree that just giving something a label or epithet doesn't get us anywhere. People must explain what they mean when they use terms like "entertainment."

Having said that, we also agree that entertainment does refer to tendencies in worship today that we would regard as troubling. We would share your fellow church members' concern about worship services becoming entertainment when worship increasingly displays the following tendencies:

a. Worship services that focus upon the feeling response of the worshiper to the exclusion of other important responses (e.g., the response of the intellect and the will). In a therapeutic culture, where my felt needs and my self-fulfillment are all-important, it is easy for the sole criterion of worship to be how worship makes me feel. Worship becomes very self-centered, even infantile, concerned only with what worship does for me. Self-gratification becomes the unacknowledged purpose of worship.

   At the risk of sounding harsh, we would say that if someone lives in a town with twenty-five churches and asserts that none of them is good enough to meet his or her spiritual needs, that person is saying more about him- or herself than about those churches. And what that person is criticizing probably involves a misunderstanding of what worship is supposed to "do" for the worshiper and an excessive concern with how worship makes a person feel.

b. Worship services that are easy. A current tendency in worship is to make worship easy—easy to move into, easy to move out of. The worshiper can just sit back and watch. Worship leaders (musicians, pastors, and liturgists) take responsibility for the worship experience. They perform for the "audience." Few demands are put on the worshiper.

   As Calvin M. Johansson (*Music and Ministry: A Biblical Counterpoint*) says, the fundamental posture of worship is not "sitting back"; it is "leaning forward." Worship is active, not passive. And worship both creates and relieves tension. Worship disturbs and comforts. In worship we die and rise with Christ. Genuine worship is hard spiritual work.

   Of course, one must distinguish here between Christian worship and an evangelistic event. Easy access may be appropriate for services that are planned as evangelistic events, but not for services planned as Christian worship.

c. Worship services that are excessive. The secular entertainment model thrives on making the entertainment experience (and the entertainer) seem larger than life. Not every solo (or organ accompaniment) must bring us to a new level of ecstasy. To worship God, we should not need million-dollar smiles from attractive model-like worship leaders, and we must absolutely renounce strategies that deliberately seek to cultivate a celebrity-like aura around a church's senior pastor. When every worship service must be a ten on a scale of one to ten in terms of impact on the worshiper, worship leaders soon get exhausted, and worshipers feel like Johnny who ate all the candy—bloated and empty at the same time. An increasingly "soloistic" and celebrity-oriented approach to worship and music is leaving less and less room in worship for the simple, unadorned song of God's people.

This is not a defense of mediocrity and laziness in worship leadership. Certainly the worship services of some churches must be called what they are: boring. But in an entertainment culture, the charge of "boring" is overused and too often employs a standard for evaluating worship that comes more from Hollywood than from the Sermon on the Mount. Blessed are the meek. Blessed are churches that can sing and worship with great simplicity and say, "It was good to have been here."

2. **But all three of the things you mention describe the people we're trying to reach. We may not like it, but the fact is that people in our culture are self-absorbed, they demand instant gratification, and they are addicted to overstimulation. How else are we going to reach these people except to move worship in precisely the direction you call entertainment?**

Certainly we must realize that these are the culturally induced spiritual handicaps that people bring to worship. And our challenge as worship leaders is to create worship that communicates to and engages people who have these handicaps. Unfortunately, there is a very fine line between engaging these people and capitulating to their handicaps. We must help each other walk that line. For example, it's fine to shorten a Scripture reading from fifty-three verses to thirteen verses out of sensitivity to the attention span of the contemporary worshiper, but to quit reading Scripture in worship because the worshiper thinks Scripture reading is boring is capitulation, not sensitivity.

Our goal as worship leaders is to exercise wisdom and discernment *that flow out of a strong faith in the power of the gospel.* We must believe that when worship is directed to God through Jesus Christ and in the power of the Holy Spirit and when worship is from the heart, done in authentic Christian community, and is ever renewing and being renewed by the Spirit, then God will bless that worship.

3. **Our congregation is hopelessly divided on worship style. We are seriously thinking about going to two morning services—one contemporary and one traditional. Any advice?**

Yes. Talk to congregations that have made this move. Some congregations have done it with great blessing, especially where there were unique things about their outreach mission that drove the decision. However, many congregations have experienced two alternative worship services as trading the demons they did know for the demons they didn't know.

A few things to consider:

a. If the congregation still has a well-attended evening service, the struggle between these two worship styles simply shifts to the evening service.

b. A congregation must seriously weigh its motivation for having alternative worship services. If the primary motivation is to resolve conflict, it probably will not succeed. The conflict probably will only intensify. The motivation should be positive and should flow from the church's mission and purpose.

c. Each group is impoverished by not having elements from the worship of the other. Each of these two worship styles has strengths, and the best worship incorporates the strengths of both.

d. A church must carefully "count the cost" of two alternative services in terms of additional resources demanded by two different services. Those resources include more time spent by pastors, musicans, dramatists, and liturgists in planning entirely different services.

e. Though some churches (particularly Roman Catholic churches) have very different worship styles within the same congregation and maintain a clear sense of identity, most Christian Reformed churches are so centrally defined by their style of worship that the introduction of two styles of worship into one congregation essentially creates two congregations.

You might reassess just how hopeless your situation is. We are aware of a congregation in your church's situation that seriously considered, but rejected, the alternative-services approach. Instead it recommitted itself to worship that incorporated the best of both traditional and contemporary worship. In its mission statement the congregation committed itself to balance in worship, describing balanced worship as worship that is

> sensitive to the "seeker" as well as the long-time worshiper,
> warm and personal as well as ordered and dignified,
> flexible and varied as well as predictable and stable.

Hard work toward that kind of balance has paid off in terms of a congregation that is once again united in its worship.

Again, in some situations, two services may be the best solution. We would recommend caution and extensive conversation with churches where alternative services have been positive and with churches where they have been negative.

4. **Why do people get so bothered when we use taped background music to accompany our soloists? Our church doesn't have very good piano players. It seems like a good alternative.**

This question raises a broader issue: the use of spiritual gifts. One can oppose taped background music because it sounds contrived or because it plays into the "bigger than life" syndrome we discussed above. Or one can support taped background music because it gives the soloist flawless accompaniment and adds emotional impact to the solo. But those arguments are peripheral to a much larger issue, namely, what do we believe about spiritual gifts?

Healthy worship renewal takes seriously the spiritual gifts God has given his people for use in worship. If we believe that God has given spiritual gifts for leadership in worship, that suggests the following principle or guideline regarding electronic substitutes in worship: we will seek to discover, cultivate, and use the gifts of God's people who are present in worship rather than relying on electronic substitutes. Churches that are following this principle are discovering gifts they never realized were present in their congregations. It's hard work, but it will pay off in the end.

(We must recognize that the line between these two choices is fuzzier than it might first appear. How should we categorize the person playing the synthesizer with preprogrammed background chords?)

5. **As we use a greater variety of songs in our worship, some of the music types in our church say that a service must have musical integrity. By that they mean we should do only one type of music in a given service. So if we want to do gospel music, the whole service should be gospel. But we should not sing contemporary and gospel and traditional in the same service. What about that?**

It's good to ask the question of integrity: What is the thread that holds the service together? What gives it unity? One way to answer that question as it relates to music is to say, as you suggest in your question, that all the music of a particular service should be of the same musical genre (gospel, traditional, praise and worship). Congregations tend to go this route when they are quite unfamiliar with a new genre of music. It seems too dissonant and jerky to move from "Precious Lord, Take My Hand" to "Jerusalem the Golden."

But when a congregation becomes more comfortable with new songs, it moves more easily between genres of music. At that point it is helpful to see an alternative for defining integrity of a service. Instead of defining the integrity of a service by musical genre, we suggest you define the integrity (unity, cohesiveness) in terms of the theme of a particular service (thematically, both "Precious Lord, Take My Hand" and "Jerusalem the Golden" fit a service dealing with the comfort of Christ's return).

6. **I'm a Hispanic member of the Christian Reformed Church and worship in a Spanish-speaking congregation. Our worship services seem very different from worship services in some of the large, established CRCs I've visited. Whose worship is this report dealing with? Does this report apply to our congregation's worship?**

Yes, it does. At the level of style, worship services may seem very different from each other. But the underlying structure should still be the same. In this report we have argued for a basic structure to worship. But within that structure are tremendous freedom and variety. You are right to point out the enormous variety of worship styles just within the CRC, not to mention the entire Christian church. We have tried to address worship not at the level of one particular style or cultural orientation but at the level of the enduring structure of worship that crosses cultural lines. This concept of "freedom within structure" is an exciting concept for churches from different cultural backgrounds that are seeking to affirm their unity with one another in Christ.

7. **Our church is considering the formation of a worship team, a team of four to eight people who will lead some of the singing in worship. Is this a good idea?**

Worship teams can be very helpful in worship, particularly when you are trying to teach the congregation new songs. Confident leadership from the worship team gives the congregation guidance and confidence.

Some churches that have a big band and a worship team that lead an extended set of songs at the beginning of the service have discovered that the congregation is not singing or not singing very well. Several factors may be at work here: (a) the congregation includes many unchurched people

who are not used to singing; (b) the volume of the accompaniment (often a band) and singers (usually miked) is so overpowering that people can't hear themselves sing, and so they quit singing; (c) the singing goes on too long, and people get tired and quit. A good test of congregational singing is what happens when the accompaniment and leadership drop out. The congregation, not the leaders, should be carrying the congregational song.

Most worship teams that we are familiar with are sensitive to these concerns and see themselves not as performers but as leaders of the congregation.

8. **Our congregation's choir is on the rocks. We just can't get enough people to commit themselves to the time it takes to practice. What should we do?**

You are not alone. Many churches in your situation are going to seasonal choirs to give people the option of shorter commitments. For example, you might have an Advent choir for four weeks, a Lenten/Easter choir for six weeks, a men's chorus for three weeks, a women's chorus for three weeks. Each choir probably will have the same core of people, but another group of people in the church will probably be willing to make more limited commitments to one or two such choirs.

Many churches are being forced to rethink the purpose of the choir. Is it to give accomplished performances of difficult, sophisticated music, or is it to lead the congregation in worship? As congregations are seeking greater diversity in their worship, many churches are coming to see the role of the choir less as performance and more as leader of the congregation. We think that is the right direction, especially for churches with limited resources in this area.

In this regard it is significant that church choirs and worship teams are both moving the church in the same direction—away from the performance of a few to the singing of the congregation as a whole.

9. **I think we care more about preserving our own style of worship than we do about reaching unbelievers. Isn't it possible to be too concerned with little things in Christian worship and not concerned enough about people who might be there searching for Christ?**

You have put your finger on a great problem in many discussions of Christian worship. Let's be honest. Many of us don't care much about nonbelievers. We're more concerned with our own comfort zones in worship than with people going to hell.

In this regard, we suggest you sensitively give this test to someone who truly doesn't seem to care about unbelievers. Or imagine that you have a daughter who marries an unbeliever. Of course we hope and pray that never happens. But it does happen all the time. Your son-in-law, the father of your grandchildren, never comes to church. But now, for some reason, he has started coming. How do you see worship as you view it through the eyes of your son-in-law? Are there unnecessary obstacles and barriers in worship?

The point of the test is this: if we loved the stranger, the one lost sheep, as much as we love our own families, no doubt we would look at some things in worship differently. As we say in the worship and evangelism section above, there is no substitute for heartfelt love for the unbeliever.

The test above cuts both ways. You don't want unnecessary barriers for

your son-in-law. But you also don't want anything less than authentic Christian worship. You've gained little if the son-in-law comes to church but finds there something other than authentic worship of God the Father through Jesus Christ in the power of the Spirit.

Nevertheless, your point is exactly right. We must first love the unbeliever as we love our own children. And then we must make decisions about Christian worship.

10. **What's a seeker service?**

It's important to distinguish between seeker-driven and seeker-sensitive worship services. Seeker-sensitive worship simply refers to worship services which are friendly and intelligible to the outsider. Worship planners and leaders should always be striving to make worship seeker sensitive. It's important to remind ourselves that the widespread decline in biblical-theological literacy in effect makes seekers out of many of the church's own members.

The seeker-driven service goes one step further and refers more to an evangelistic strategy than to a worship service. The seeker-driven service focuses on the person the church wants to reach and designs every part of the service in light of that person's perceptions, experiences, and needs. Designers of seeker-driven services are unapologetic in making the audience and the goal of communicating the gospel to that audience the shaping forces of the service and don't concern themselves much with historic patterns of worship. A seeker-driven service is not intended to be a substitute for Christian worship and is usually offered in addition to a more traditional worship service.

More resources on the seeker-driven service are available from Willowcreek Association, a ministry arm of Willowcreek Community Church.

11. **People in our church come back from conferences talking about worship for baby boomers and worship for baby busters. I'm not convinced. Did Paul have a buster church?**

No, but Paul was very aware of his specific audience. Books have been written on Paul's sermons in the book of Acts specifically analyzing how carefully he crafted each sermon to connect with the specific audience to whom he was preaching. At one level our talk today about worship for boomers or busters is only a new version of the time-tested mission principle that we must establish a point of contact with those to whom we minister. Pastors and worship leaders must work hard to understand different segments of the church and society to whom they seek to minister.

As a committee, we do have questions about the wisdom of defining a congregation's mission solely in terms of a single generation. One of the wonderful things about the church throughout its history has been its multigenerational character. We see great wisdom in keeping the church that way and not overspecializing in worship. In fact, though we support the developments in children's worship and believe that younger children benefit greatly from a combination of worship with the whole congregation and children's worship, we also feel strongly that children must become fully integrated into the worship of the whole congregation as soon as

possible. Worship leaders must take children into account in planning worship. But we must also realize that worship has a positive impact on children even though they may not fully comprehend everything that is going on. In defending the idea that children should be part of worship at young ages, one church leader even said, "Some of my greatest childhood memories of church are falling asleep during the sermon snuggled up against my mom."

12. **We're from a small rural congregation. When we go to worship conferences and see what different churches are doing, we just get depressed because we don't have the resources—money and people—that many other churches have. Any suggestions?**

Yes, and they apply to virtually every church. Virtually every church must fight the tendency to compare itself negatively to churches that have many more resources for worship. God does not call a church to be like some other church. God calls a church to do the very best with the resources God has given it. Many churches look silly as they seek to be something they are not. Thank God for what your church has and build upon it; don't waste your time pining about what some other church has that you don't have.

13. **Why don't we let the Spirit lead more in worship? Why does everything need to be so planned out all the time?**

We need to be sensitive to the Holy Spirit in each worship service. And we must be willing to follow where the Spirit leads. But we shouldn't link the Holy Spirit with less planning or less formality. The Holy Spirit can be powerfully present in a very highly structured, liturgical service and can be absent in a service with little structure. Beyond style and level of formality, the question always before us is this: Does this act of worship bring praise to God through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit? The answer to that question can be yes in many different styles of worship.

14. **Aren't there certain basic elements that must be in a worship service for it even to be a worship service—like the confession of sin, a sermon, and an offering?**

A good question, but we prefer to get at this from a little different angle. Instead of asking what the mandatory elements of a worship service are, we prefer to ask a couple of other questions: What happens when people worship God? What are the constants, the universals, the enduring components to worship that can be observed as we "watch" God's people worship over the continents and centuries? This descriptive rather than prescriptive approach avoids legalistic wranglings about whether a particular worship service was "true worship" because of some liturgical variation in that service and still addresses the important concern we sense in the question, namely, are there certain enduring components to worship that we as a worshiping community ignore at our own peril? The answer to the latter question is yes. Confession of sin, affirmation of faith in the triune God, proclamation of God's Word, responding in thanksgiving through presenta-

tion of offerings—these are enduring components of Christian worship that should be part of every worship service and absent only by exception and with strong rationale.

We fear that the pendulum often swings wildly from one extreme to the other. One extreme is a wooden uniformity that allows for no local freedom and creativity. The other extreme is local creativity that totally cuts itself off from the mainstream of Christian worship. We think the concept of "freedom within structure" that we have argued for in this report avoids the problems of both extremes.

A particular example of this swinging pendulum is evident in the use of sacramental forms. One extreme is to allow for no flexibility in how the liturgical forms for the sacraments are used in a particular worship service. The other extreme is for a local congregation simply to throw out the forms and do whatever it pleases. Churches that do so need to be reminded that the liturgy of Holy Communion does not belong to one local congregation; it belongs to the whole church. Again, we hope that the concept of freedom within structure that we have set forth in this report will restrain the wild swings of the pendulum from total inflexibility to total flexibility.

15. **As a worship leader I have noticed that conferences on worship seem to ignore preaching and conferences on preaching seem to ignore worship? Conferences on worship seem to be poorly attended by pastors. Aren't preaching and worship integrally related?**

Yes. In this report we have purposely avoided talking about preaching and worship as though they were two separate things. Preaching is an integral part of worship, and worship is the vital context of preaching. Neither can be separated from the other. We are encouraged by increasing emphasis in seminaries on all the dimensions of public worship, including preaching and the sacraments. Seminaries that hope to equip future pastors need professors of worship as well as professors of preaching.

16. **Some people in our church think applause is wrong because it praises the performer instead of praising God. What's so bad about doing both?**

It depends. Here is one of those issues that require great doses of wisdom and common sense. We cannot come up with rules for applause. Consider the following examples of where applause might be a spontaneous and totally appropriate way for a congregation to express its joy or appreciation or love: the recognition of a couple who have been married fifty years, the recognition of the members of the second-grade Sunday-school class who have been presented their Bibles, the announcement that a mother who has been in the hospital for three months has safely delivered triplets, the announcement that a beloved pastor has declined a call. Spontaneous applause that expresses joy and thanksgiving is not alien to the spirit and purpose of worship.

Applause becomes more problematic when, in essence, it is something programmed. To give applause every time someone sings a solo in church, regardless of whether the solo moved you or not, quickly becomes programmed applause. Such applause is also arbitrary. Why applaud soloists only? Why not applaud a great sermon or a great offertory by the organist?

Applause is one way in our culture that we express joy, appreciation,

honor, and thanksgiving. ("Amen" is a form of "verbal applause" that serves the same function in some churches.) The challenge is to keep applause from being predictable and, in fact, cut off from genuine feelings of joy, appreciation, honor, and thanksgiving. When applause genuinely expresses those feelings in the context of our relationship with one another in Christ, let it happen.

17. **What is the place of humor in worship?**

Laughter is one of God's great gifts. People in strong community know how to cry together and laugh together. So much of the light that God's Word sheds on life leads us to laugh—at ourselves and with others who laugh at themselves. Of course, we are not suggesting that laughter is the goal of worship. We are not advocating a spot in the liturgy called "joke of the week." But there is nothing unspiritual or even unworshipful about the community of God's people laughing together. The opposite could probably be argued: wholesome laughter is in fact a mark of healthy Christian community.

18. **It seems that we laugh more in church than we used to, but it also seems that we cry more in church. What's going on here?**

It's probably fair to say that in the past Christians (at least Christian Reformed Christians) have tried to separate their worship from their personal pain and brokenness. That is, they left their problems at home when they came to worship. Both cultural factors (see "We hurt") and other influences on worship (particularly the charismatic influence) have changed that for more and more people. Today we tend to take our brokenness with us to church and offer it up as part of the broken self that worships.

For the most part, this is a positive development. The psalms are filled with examples of worship in the middle of brokenness, not worship walled off from brokenness. How wonderful that Christians can share the burdens they have with child raising, or mental illness, or alcoholism, or marital strife and can do so in the context of worship and community in such a way that all members of the body are strengthened and blessed.

Many churches actually design services around the expression of such brokenness. Services of lament focus upon our collective brokenness. Services of healing and prayer offer people the opportunity to bring their brokenness to the Christian community and receive prayer and healing mercy from God.

Often worship leaders must be sensitive to the presence of children in worship as they decide how to deal with certain crises. For example, if a congregation is shaken by the attempted suicide of one of its young people, there is a way to worship that fully takes into account our pain and brokenness and still respects the rights of parents to decide how best to deal with such sensitive issues with their own young children. Obviously, pastors must be very sensitive to the privacy rights of people and make the personal brokenness of a member or members a matter of public worship only when the member or members agree and when doing so will be edifying and upbuilding for the whole body.

19. **What is the role of silence in worship?**

Silence can be very meaningful in worship. The Old Testament psalmists and prophets often called the people to be silent so they could hear God speaking. A time of silence for individual confession of sin, silence during the passing of the elements of Communion, leaving the sanctuary in silence after a Good Friday service—these are examples of silence as a meaningful and dramatic part of worship.

It's important to think through these things in planning the service. It's also important, at first anyway, to make clear to the congregation the purpose and goal of a particular time of silence. In North American culture we are addicted to noise. We tend to be very uncomfortable with silence. In order for silence in worship to be meaningful and not distracting, we must be explicit and clear. A simple statement will do: "During the passing of the cup, we meditate in silence upon the love of Christ for us."

20. **I'm not a stick-in-the-mud when it comes to innovations in worship, but I tire of coming to church each Sunday and wondering what is going to happen. I like surprises on my birthday, not when I go to church.**

You put your finger on a problem in many churches today. People have a need for innovation and freshness and vitality in worship. They also have a need for stability and predictability. Worship leaders must remember both of these needs as they plan worship. Often churches that have experienced "innovation burnout" discipline themselves by some of the following guidelines:

a. Don't change something in worship for just one week. If it's worth doing once, it should be worth doing with some regularity so that people can get used to it. For example, it's fine to experiment with more meaningful ways to celebrate Communion. But don't change every time. Try something and stick with it for a while.

b. Limit yourself to a certain number of new songs. Rather than singing a new song three times over a six-week period and then moving on to another new song and then to yet another, begin the year with a specific list of songs and close the list to new songs for that year. Each year, once a year, open the list and consider adding some new songs. This practice keeps churches from going through new songs like peppermints and disciplines worship planners to be thoughtful about what songs they are using in worship.

c. Take the "five small steps forward" approach and avoid the violence (and folly) of the "one giant step forward, three steps backward, one small step forward" approach, which in the end leaves a congregation one step behind where it was when it began making changes.

Change is difficult for all of us. Be wise, and change can be meaningful and significant.

21. **Our church has just started mutual greetings, where we turn to greet each other early in the worship service. Some people call it a distraction. They say they came to worship God, not to greet Joe. Is a time of greeting one another so bad?**

No. We worship as the body of Christ. A time of greeting one another, welcoming visitors, interacting between adults and children can only enrich worship that is the worship of the body of Christ.

Sometimes people oppose the exchange of mutual greetings because it seems to be part of a broader package of changes, the unspoken goal of which seems to be to remove all vestiges of reverence and dignity from worship. That, of course, is a different matter. But on the narrow question of mutual greetings, our hunch is that when the early church "devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer" (Acts 2:42), Joe got not only greetings but also hugs of joy and sorrow.

22. **Our previous pastor always prayed the prayer of confession and the congregational prayer spontaneously. Our current pastor always has these prayers fully written out ahead of time. Which is the better way to do it?**

God wants prayers that are from the heart. Both spontaneous prayers and written prayers can be equally genuine and edifying. Both can also be heartless. The danger of using prayers written out ahead of time is that they may sound as if they are being read, not prayed. The danger of spontaneous prayers is that they can easily become mindlessly repetitious week after week. Our hunch is that churches where prayer is a powerful part of the worship service probably have some combination of both prepared and spontaneous prayers.

23. **Who is allowed to do the congregational prayer?**

This question is part of the broader question of unordained leadership in worship. Traditionally, we have considered as "official acts of ministry" (those acts of ministry reserved for ordained clergy) these four parts of worship: the salutation, the benediction, the sermon, and the administration of the sacraments. Synod is currently studying the concept of official acts of ministry. It seems safe to say that the general direction is away from the question Who is allowed to lead in worship? to the question Who is gifted to lead in worship?

Even traditionally the congregational prayer has never been considered an official act of ministry that can be performed only by clergy. Some churches expand the number of those who lead in this prayer to include elders in addition to the pastor. The biblical principle here is to use people who have gifts to lead in this important part of worship. In addition, elders are called to spiritual leadership and prayer. Those who lead the prayers of the people should be spiritually mature, fervent, discerning as to the needs of the congregation and the world, thoroughly familiar with the congregation, and spiritually respected by the congregation.

24. **We hear of a lot of churches that are using minidramas in their worship services. Where does this come from? Should we be doing it?**

Willowcreek Community Church in suburban Chicago has popularized the use of minidramas in worship services. The Willowcreek Association offers mountains of resources for congregations trying to do minidramas for worship. Typically, minidramas, like good sermon introductions, serve to uncover a need that the gospel addresses.

Congregations must do what God has called and gifted them to do. We have already referred to Pastor Bill Hybels's concept of the congregational thumbprint. As each congregation has a unique thumbprint, so also each congregation has unique gifts and opportunities for ministry. If your congregation has the gifts to carry on this particular kind of ministry, that's great. If not, that's fine too.

As congregations experiment with these things, it's important that they keep straight what they are doing. These various forms of worship should all be ways of more effectively communicating, hearing, and responding to God's Word. In this regard it's also helpful to expand our understanding of drama in worship. Baptism and Communion are dramas. The reading of Scripture, if not a drama in itself, should be dramatic. The history of salvation is a drama. The liturgical church year is a drama built around the life of Christ. Each Christmas and Good Friday and Easter and Ascension Day and Pentecost we reenact the drama. One of the contributions of minidramas to Christian worship has been to open our eyes to many dramatic features of Christian worship and to strengthen the dramatic power of all worship.

25. **Our pastor talks about Scripture readings from the "common lectionary." What is the lectionary anyway?**

The *Revised Common Lectionary* is a three-year schedule of Scripture readings to be used each Sunday in worship. Each Sunday has a reading from the Old Testament, the Gospels, and the Epistles. A psalm is also listed for each Sunday.

This question leads to the larger question of how ministers and worship leaders decide upon texts for preaching. Christian Reformed churches already have one "lectionary" in place: the Heidelberg Catechism. Regular preaching of the catechism gives doctrinal balance and breadth to the preaching ministry of the church in the same way that lectionary preaching seeks to give balance and breadth in terms of biblical material.

Another method of text selection is the use of a particular book of the Bible. A pastor can preach a series of sermons on the book of Romans that runs for two weeks or two years. This method of text selection has the advantage of giving listeners in-depth insight into one particular book of the Bible.

All three of these methods of text selection are helpful for worship-planning committees and musicians, who need to know the texts and themes of worship services far in advance for planning purposes. They also guard against the imbalances in preaching that can result when the pastor alone chooses every preaching text. Ideally, a combination of the selection

methods above will enable the church to receive a balanced diet of God's Word.

26. **What are some things we can do to make the public reading of Scripture more meaningful?**

One of the exciting developments in worship in the CRC is an increased emphasis upon careful preparation for the public reading of Scripture. The Reformed tradition has a high view of Scripture as the inspired Word of God. How fitting that we carefully prepare for the public reading of Scripture! This applies not only to the reading of Scripture before the sermon but also to all reading of Scripture. Some suggestions:

a. Encourage your pastor or others who read the Scripture to read the passage aloud several times. Oral reading shows the reader where decisions have to be made about what a verse actually means, who is saying what, which words to emphasize, where to pause, and so forth.

b. Identify one person in your congregation who has the gift of reading Scripture effectively and who can identify and cultivate that same gift in others. Through this person, develop a list of five to twenty readers. Use people who do a good job of reading. Seek to use people in this way who not only have the potential but also are not involved in worship leadership in any other ways. (If Marilyn already sings solos, don't ask her to read.) Scripture reading is one way young people can be meaningfully used in worship on a regular basis instead of just in an annual youth service.

c. Use different people to represent different characters in the passage being read. Consider John 21:15-25, where Jesus reinstates Peter after Peter's denial of Jesus, asking Peter three times, "Do you love me?" Having three people read this Scripture (narrator, Jesus, Peter) can make this Scripture reading a powerful experience. (See *The Dramatized New Testament* [NIV] and *The Dramatized Old Testament* [NIV] [2 volumes], edited by Michael Perry. These volumes present most of Scripture in parts for such readings.)

d. Memorize Scripture. All by itself, reciting Scripture from memory does not guarantee effective communication of Scripture. But when committing Scripture to memory is combined with these other ways of preparing for the presentation of Scripture, we can expect the Holy Spirit to use such diligent work in mighty ways.

27. **Recently I worshiped in a church where baptism took place after the sermon. That was new to me. Should baptism be celebrated before or after the sermon? Does it make any difference?**

Liturgical arguments can be made for either placement. Like Holy Communion, baptism can be understood as a response to the proclaimed Word of God and placed after the sermon. It can also be argued that the dying and rising in Christ that are signified in baptism very naturally are linked to the service of confession of sin and assurance of pardon earlier in the service. The goal here should not be to declare one place in the liturgy to be the only appropriate place for baptism. The goal rather is to think

through the placement. Different services may even call for different placements.

Very practical concerns also come into play in these kinds of decisions. For example, in the case of infant baptism, parents would probably prefer to have the baptism before the sermon so they don't have to worry about their baby squawking and squealing all the way through the sermon. But an adult baptism may fit very beautifully after the sermon. Another consideration is whether the church wants other children from the congregation to be present for baptism. Many congregations with children's worship programs prefer to do the baptism service before the younger children leave for children's worship so that the children can witness the baptism. These may seem like mundane considerations to one who is concerned only about liturgical arguments. But liturgy and worship involve real people, and it is fitting that all of these things be weighed when such liturgical decisions are made.

28. **We realize that the mood of Holy Communion should be one of celebration, not mourning. What suggestions do you have for helping us accomplish that?**

First, worship leaders and the church as a whole must truly believe that God intends for Communion to be a celebration. Beyond that, the leaders of the Communion liturgy must lead with vitality and enthusiasm. Pastors must be reminded to lead the Communion liturgy as though it were the first and last Communion liturgy they will ever lead.

Second, churches should strongly consider the revised liturgical forms for Communion, which are less didactic and more celebrative and participatory than earlier forms (see *Agenda of Synod 1994*, pp. 166-91; forms are also available on computer disk from CRC Publications).

Third, worship leaders should not necessarily aim for every Communion service to have the same mood. Communion takes place in the larger context of worship. Communion on Easter Sunday should have a different mood than Communion on New Year's Eve does. Especially as congregations celebrate Communion more frequently, they must strive to make each celebration of Communion fit in a particular service and season of worship. Music selection within the Communion liturgy is probably the biggest variable in making a particular Communion service fit into the broader worship service of which it is a part.

29. **As elders we have been discussing how often we should celebrate Holy Communion. Some say the Bible teaches that Communion was celebrated weekly. Others say that's not so. How often should we celebrate Communion?**

There is good biblical and historical support for Communion's being a more regular part of Christian worship than it has been in the CRC. Most CRC congregations celebrate Communion between four and twelve times a year. It's probably safe to say that most churches that have changed the frequency of Communion have increased its frequency. Certainly, the argument that more frequent Communion diminishes its impact is a weak argument. That seems to be an argument against weekly preaching and even against worship itself.

We advise you to talk with churches that have gone to more frequent Communion. You will gain a lot of wisdom and insight from churches that already have struggled with these issues. It seems fair to generalize that churches that have moved toward more frequent Communion have done so with great blessing and have seldom returned to a pattern of less frequency.

Sometimes worship leaders contend that there is a conflict between frequent celebration of Holy Communion and sensitivity to seekers at worship. There is certainly an inherent "otherness" to Holy Communion, if for no other reason than the fact that only those who are part of the body of Christ may participate in the celebration. Holy Communion accentuates the wall between belief and unbelief, between being part and not being part of the body of Christ. Yet, for these very reasons, there is also something powerfully evangelistic about Holy Communion. In Holy Communion, the gospel message becomes visible in powerful ways. We would prefer to think of the relationship between frequent celebrations of Holy Communion and sensitivity to the seeker at worship not as one of conflict but of creative tension.

30. **Our pastor is really up tight about making too many announcements in church. What can we do to help him relax about this?**

Don't give him so many announcements. Announcements are not worship. People don't come to church to hear about the Building Committee meeting Monday night. They come to worship God. Your pastor dislikes announcements for good reasons.

It would be nice if announcements were not necessary, but they are. And sometimes they even communicate things about the broader ministry and community life of the church that indirectly give worship a fuller ministry context. Even so, the following rules should govern announcements: (a) don't repeat what's already in the bulletin; (b) make sure it's necessary to make an announcement. (In an age of telephones, the meeting of a committee that has only four members should not have to be announced.); (c) carefully think through when you want to make announcements. Some congregations prefer to do all the announcements at one time in the service, probably before the pastoral prayer, when some pastoral concerns may also be announced. Other congregations make congregational announcements toward the end of the service as part of the offertory—emphasizing the offering of one's life to God through the activities of the community; (d) be concise. (For a more extensive discussion of announcements in worship, we refer to you *Lift Up Your Hearts*, p. 72.)

VI. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Duane Kelderman, Wayne Brouwer, and any other member of the committee present when this report is discussed.

B. That synod endorse the following principles, discussed earlier in the report, and commend them to the churches, along with the practical suggestions found in Section V ("Questions and answers"), as guidelines for evaluating worship.

1. A biblical-theological approach to worship must embrace strengths and critique weaknesses in worship at every point on the contemporary worship continuum; it will resist simplistic either/or choices and will reject the use of labels that polarize the church and caricatures that misrepresent the sincere attempts of fellow believers to worship.

2. A biblical-theological approach to worship demands discerning analysis of the powerful cultural forces that presently affect the church's life and worship:

   a. Cultural assimilation brings greater exposure to other Christian traditions and a declining interest in preserving specific beliefs and customs that have distinguished one tradition from another.

   b. A pervasive consumer culture increases the church's awareness of the various needs and expectations of those it desires to reach with the gospel, but a consumer culture may also tempt the church to accept consumer preferences rather than biblical or historical principles as primary determinants of its ministry and worship.

   c. Rapid change in all areas of life makes it increasingly difficult for the church to develop the positive, healthy traditions essential to shaping Christian community identity.

   d. The shift from a culture of discourse to a culture of entertainment, especially as promoted by television, calls into question many of the ways in which the church has historically understood and communicated the Word.

   e. A widespread emphasis on felt needs and on self-fulfillment as the highest human good carries with it a temptation to reduce the message of the gospel to therapeutic categories.

   f. The prevalence of economic anxieties, family breakdown, addiction, stress, and violence in contemporary society means that many people now come to church primarily in search of healing for pain and meaningful answers to pressing personal concerns.

3. A biblical-theological approach to worship underscores the following general norms:

   a. There is a basic biblical dynamic of worship: when God's people worship with pure hearts and in authentic community and when that community is ever renewing and being renewed in its worship, then effective evangelism, i.e., the proclamation of the good news of Jesus Christ to those outside the community of faith, is the natural outgrowth.

   b. There is a recurring, community-constituting basic pattern to Christian worship: gathering as a covenant community, proclamation of the Word, celebration of the Lord's Supper, going out for service in the world.

   c. Worship has an intrinsically sacramental character: in worship, certain elements from the stuff of creation—water, bread and wine, the human words of the sermon—become Spirit-charged, identity-shaping vehicles of God's grace.

d. Christians do not need to fear diversity in worship: people of diverse backgrounds enrich one another when they come together in Christ, and when growth and change take place among people whose hearts are right and who are in Christian community, God is praised in ever-expanding and ever-deeper ways.

e. Worship cannot be separated from evangelism: evangelism is not a program tacked onto the church's life but an integral part of vital Christian community and worship.

f. "Reformed" worship is not a unique form of Christian worship: rather than speaking of "nonnegotiables," it is more useful to speak of historic strengths in the worship of the Reformed community that deserve continuing cultivation. Examples include a redemptive-historical perspective that takes seriously the rich communion of relationships involved in worship, a healthy trinitarian balance within worship, the Calvinist theology of preaching and the sacraments, a strong appreciation for the psalms and the Old Testament in general, and an emphasis on the importance of congregational singing.

C. That synod disseminate this report as widely as possible among the churches for study and discussion by

1. Directing CRC Publications to publish the report separately from the *Acts of Synod* for distribution to church councils and worship committees.

2. Directing CRC Publications to develop supplementary educational materials based on the report and to promote discussion of its conclusions by means of workshops throughout North America.

3. Authorize appropriate funding for these purposes.

D. That synod direct the CRC Worship Committee to consult with Calvin Theological Seminary, CRC Home Missions, Race Relations, and CRC Publications with a view to assessing how the worship principles of this report are reflected in the programs of these agencies and to report on their work to Synod 2000.

E. That the work of this committee be declared completed and the committee be discharged.

Committee to Study Worship
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John D. Witvliet

I. Introduction

Gathering God's Growing Family: Seeking the lost and discipling the found . . . all for God's glory. This is the purpose of Christian Reformed Home Missions. Referred to as *Gathering*, this dynamic vision for church development invites Christian Reformed people, churches, and classes to be active in evangelizing and discipling.

A. *The purpose of* 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, italics added)

Building on this scriptural and confessional foundation, Home Missions holds up the vision of the church, effectively *Gathering God's Growing Family: Seeking the lost and discipling the found . . . all for God's glory.* Linking 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 searching, wandering, and lost persons in Canada and the United States.

B. *The core values of* Gathering

1. Care: We care passionately for the salvation and discipling of lost people, as God calls us to do.
2. Prayer: Prayer is essential to fulfilling God's mission to lost people.
3. It's the church: The local church is the primary agent for carrying out God's mission in the great harvest field of North America.
4. Growth: The increasing growth and diversity of the Christian Reformed Church is essential to the effectiveness of this mission.
5. Flow: Wherever and whenever we, God's people, exercise vision and faith, God provides resources for his work.

C. *Home Missions'* Gathering *goals*

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*.

These *Gathering* goals give expression to the core *Gathering* values, adopted by Christian Reformed Home Missions in 1993.

D. Gathering *at work: Guiding Principles for New/Emerging-Church Development*

Home Missions' three main development thrusts involve new churches, established churches, and other evangelistic ministries. While referring directly to *new churches, emerging churches*, and *other evangelistic ministries*, these Guiding Principles* exemplify the principles and standards which apply to all the work of *Gathering* (see also III, A, 2, below).

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 integrity with 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.

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

c. Home Missions develops and resources key reproducible support systems in strategic locations throughout the CRC.

4. Partnership

a. Home Missions, in collaboration with other agencies and partners, 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.

c. Emerging churches participate as full partners in denominational life in ways appropriate to their respective stages 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 to 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 is 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, parenting churches, 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 1996*

By God's grace, in the last nine years, growth through evangelism in the CRC has totaled 25,500 persons. In the 1996 reporting period, 2,846 persons (com-

pared to 3,170 persons in 1995) were added through evangelism—the second largest annual number in our history. Of continuing concern to the whole church is the fact that as of September 1, 1996, total CRC membership is reported as 285,846 members, nearly 6,000 fewer than last year. The number of congregations decreased from 991 to 987.

Since 1988, new congregations accounted for 6,204 persons added through evangelism. In 1996 alone, 795 people were added through evangelism in new and emerging churches.

II. Board and executive committee

A. 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 fifty members. Forty-seven members are chosen by their respective classes; three are board members-at-large who have special expertise. Eleven board members are from Canada and thirty-nine from the United States. Since 1994, the Board of Home Missions has held its annual meeting in late April rather than in February, as was formerly the custom, in order to respond more quickly to proposals for new ministries.

B. Board officers

The officers of the Board of Home Missions are Rev. Shawn Sikkema, 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 DeLange, assistant treasurer.

The officers of the Christian Reformed Board of Home Missions of Canada are Rev. Peter Slofstra, president; Rev. Mike Reitsma, vice president; Ms. Mary Buteyn, secretary; Mr. John Kamerman, treasurer; Rev. Kenneth Ritsema, recording secretary; and Rev. Peter Hoytema, assistant treasurer.

C. Executive committee

The executive committee meets in September, December, and February. It is made up of elected delegates from the following regions.

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, Pacific Hanmi, 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 approved salary ranges.

Job level	Number of positions	Compensation quartile (includes housing allowance)
17	3	2nd, 3rd quartile
16	2	1st, 3rd quartile

III. Home Missions' ministries

A. Established-church development

1. CRHM's ministry with established churches takes many forms, but all of it is designed to help churches, individual members, and the classes to which they belong be more effective in reaching out to those who are not yet part of the household of God, reaching out to those who want to begin to put their trust in God.

   CRHM works to increase the number and effectiveness of churches, classes, and individual members who are shaped by the mission of God to call people from darkness into God's kingdom of light, built by Jesus in his saving work of redemption. The more that vision and call are in the central part of our life and ministry and not in an "optional" category, the more God will be glorified.

2. Ministry with established churches is accomplished through

   a. Assisting and encouraging churches in praying (as a foundational element in *Gathering*) that the CRCNA may be increasingly and effectively used by God to reach the lost and to disciple the found.

   b. Planning and consulting with local churches and classes so that they are mission-shaped churches and classes which effectively seek the lost and disciple the found.

   c. Networking for pastors and church leaders that provides supportive learning environments so that they grow in their ability to lead *Gathering* churches and classes.

   d. Small-group evangelizing so that local churches are assisted in their work with small-group, life-changing *Gathering* ministries.

   e. Training and resourcing that motivate and equip church leaders so that they are effective leaders of *Gathering* churches (e.g., grants, materials, conferences, etc.).

3. The results prayerfully envisioned and worked for in established churches are

   a. A praying church: All the members, churches, and classes mobilized in prayer for the Spirit's blessing on the witness and efforts of the CRCNA to bring an increasing number of people to faith in Jesus and to disciple them as fruitful followers of Jesus.

   b. A growing church: Healthy established churches growing in all ways—including size—and effectively ministering where God has placed them.

c. A thriving people
   1) Who once were in darkness are now part of God's new family and citizens of the kingdom of light created by God in Christ Jesus.
   2) Who are being discipled to live obediently to God's Word and the Spirit's leading.
   3) Who minister according to their spiritual gifts in keeping with their own God-given personal temperaments and passions.

4. The strategies used in working for these results range from the general to the more specific:

   a. General strategies

      Note: Some of these are designed to help the whole CRCNA, others to help individual local churches, and still others to help individuals become (better) witnesses for Jesus.

      1) *Mobilizing prayers for the lost:* Implementing a comprehensive plan of congregational and classical prayer coordinators to encourage churches, classes, and denominational agencies to pray for effective *Gathering*.
      2) *Enabling classical ministry planning:* Assisting classes through the classical home-missions (ministry) committees in doing ministry planning (through the CRWRC/CRHM task force on The Role of Classes in the Twenty-First Century). On October 19, 1996, a pilot regional version of the conference held in Glen Eyrie, Colorado, October 27-29, 1995, was sponsored to determine how best to carry forward the benefits of that conference for all the classes.

         Note: Samples of the plans made by Classes Lake Erie and Greater Los Angeles are available.
      3) *Promoting ethnic (non-Anglo) ministries:* Working with CRHM's New-Church Development Department and four intercultural ministry directors to help the CRCNA grow in its multicultural character and ministry.
      4) *Gathering through campus ministries:* Working 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 CRCNA's outreaching and discipling ministry.
      5) *Teaching one Calvin Theological Seminary core course* on issues in evangelism.
      6) *Publishing nine new evangelistic resources (with CRC Publications)*:

         Discover Your Bible: *Easter*
         Discover Your Bible: *Gift of Christmas*
         Discover Life: *Jesus: His Powerful Life*
         Discover Life: *Jesus: Triumph . . . Death*
         Core Values: *Little Ones Need Jesus*
         Core Values: *Leading with Love*
         Inspirit : *Where Do I Go to Trade?*
         Healthy Church Series: *New Designs for Ministry*
         Discover Your Gifts

7) *Providing youth volunteers*—Summer Workshop in Ministries (SWIM): Cooperating with Youth Unlimited to provide 136 SWIMmers for thirty-four new and established churches in the summer of 1996.

b. More-specific strategies

1) *Focusing Church Networks in the Chicagoland area and Congregational MasterPlanning:*
   - Developed a three-phase pilot for a Focusing Church Network strategy and are reproducing these in ten additional areas.
   - Since our Synod 1996 report, CRHM began twenty new Congregational MasterPlanning contracts.
2) *Piloting small-group evangelism strategies/ministries and providing resources:* These help local churches more effectively use a variety of small groups (including ones for which Home Missions has provided leadership, e.g., Coffee Break, Men's Life, etc.) as an integrated part of their own local outreach strategy.
3) *Sponsoring* Gathering *conferences in connection with the Willow Creek Community Church Leadership Conferences:* Sponsored a sixth *Gathering* conference in connection with Willow Creek Community Church's Church Leadership Conference in October 1996 with 208 persons attending, representing forty-eight churches. Plans are being made to sponsor a seventh conference October 21-26, 1997.

   Note: So far, 1,250 pastors and church leaders have attended, representing 238 churches (38 churches have sent additional teams). This means 24 percent of all CRC congregations have sent representatives to the Willow Creek conference.
4) *Assisting churches in parenting new churches:* Working with CRHM's New-Church Development Department to teach the concept of churches parenting other churches in order to develop a network that provides continuing support for the parenting churches so that the parent church and the new church stay healthy in the process.
5) *Making partnership-assistance grants*: Providing grants for fifty-one established churches and campus ministries for a total of $606,000.

5. Summary

All the work Home Missions does with established churches is carried out for two main purposes:

- To further *empower* local **established churches** in partnership with other churches in their classes and area to be vital, growing churches who reach out.
- To further *empower* **classes** as communities of churches to enable their member churches to be more effective in *Gathering, seeking the lost, and discipling the found—all for God's glory!*

In all of this, there is a prayerful anticipation and expectation that God will continue to add to his church those whom the Spirit is bringing to a living faith in Christ and will set them free to minister as members of God's new community, of which they are part, in keeping with the spiritual gift(s) the Spirit has given them.

B. *New-church development*

1. Partnering with new and emerging churches

From 1988 to the present, Home Missions' stated ***goal*** for new-church development is to encourage and equip Christian Reformed churches and classes to prayerfully plan and develop new churches as disciple-making communities which continually *seek the lost and disciple the found . . . all for God's glory.* As of January 1, 1997, Home Missions was partnering financially with 132 new and emerging churches, 15 new church proposals, various in-training positions, and four full- or part-time positions focusing on the development of future church planters. The primary ***strategies*** for encouraging and equipping these churches and local ministry partners are helping to develop and maintain local ministry relationships through prayer and financial support, new-church "incubators" and networks, and mentoring and coaching relationships.

Our ***prayer*** is that by partnering with new churches and their local partners and by depending on God's blessing, we will see the following results:

From 1988 through 2000

240 new churches are started in partnership with Home Missions.
30,000 persons are added to the CRC through new/emerging churches.

During ministry year 1997

3,000 persons are added to the CRC through new/emerging churches.
1,500 of these persons are received into membership through evangelism.
25 new churches are started in partnership with Home Missions.

2. Key objectives for new-church development

The first objective is to empower new-church-development ministry for *Gathering* by providing overall leadership in *vision, planning,* and *research.* This includes the development and implementation of annual work plans both for the department, for the nine Home Missions regions, and for various culture-specific strategies under the leadership of intercultural ministry directors (formerly called ethnic ministry directors). The New-Church Development Department also is supportive of long-range planning by classes as they consider God's call for reaching out by starting more new churches.

A foundational objective is to *mobilize for prayer*, encouraging and equipping individuals and churches to pray fervently for the evangelizing and discipling of lost and searching people through NCD ministry. Home Missions encourages the "parent" churches to raise up intercessor teams, the missionary pastor(s) to identify intercessors, and the new churches themselves to develop intercession ministries as soon as possible.

Another key objective is to help to *provide disciple-making leaders* for the new churches. Potential leaders are recruited from among seminary-trained ministers and candidates, from graduates of other evangelical seminaries, and, increasingly, through "evangelist training" networks and programs. Prior to being recommended for placement in new-church-development ministry, prospective leaders are assessed by way of an Assessment Center or behavioral interview or both. New-church pastors also are expected to attend "bootcamp" training, which is now available in English and Spanish.

A fourth key objective is to *resource the new churches* themselves as well as their parent churches and classes. Emerging and established churches who desire to parent a new church are provided training and materials or can join a Parenting-Church Network. Home Missions provides financial assistance for the new and emerging churches, initially through the parent church and later to the church itself. In addition to the guidance of regional and intercultural directors, new churches are encouraged to participate in a New-Church Incubator (NCI) and New-Church Network (NCN), which include individual mentoring and coaching.

3. Harvest vision for 1998 through 2002

The need has become evident to be thinking and praying specifically regarding God's will for new-church development in the CRCNA from 1998 to 2002. From 1988 to 1996, CRHM assisted in 158 CRC new-church starts, for a new-starts rate of approximately 2 percent per year (see 4 below for chart). In *Tattered Trust*, Lyle Schaller writes,

> . . . a modest goal would be to launch each year a number equivalent to one percent of the present number of congregations in your denomination. . . . This would offset the natural annual death rate of seven to eight per 1000 congregations. An aggressive growth strategy calls for two percent annually. Several Protestant denominations are now averaging three to four percent annually.
> (Abingdon Press, 1996, p. 70)

The director of Southern Baptist Home Missions reports an annual new-starts rate of 3 percent but also observes that this is barely keeping up with the increase in the population and falls far short of the challenge of the "harvest."

A critical issue in meeting the harvest challenge is that of raising up more disciple-making leaders for the harvest. In reflecting on Jesus' compassion for the crowds and his requests that his disciples pray for more harvest workers (Matt. 9:37-38), Dr. Bob Logan observes that "the only limiting factor to the advancement of the kingdom of God is leadership." This observation is confirmed by the realities in the Christian Reformed Church today. Of 160 CRC new-church starts from 1988 to the present, sixty-seven were led by graduates of Calvin Seminary; the balance of the leaders were from other sources. In ministry year 1997, the number of new starts is sharply reduced. Approximately fifteen locations are approved for opening, potential parents are eager to partner, and funding is available, but new-church leaders are in short supply. The church's capacity for training more disciple-making leaders must be multiplied. Our hope is that much of this need will be met through a growing number of qualified leaders from Calvin Theological Seminary. We also are praying that harvest leaders will be raised up through creative partnering with visionary missionary congregations and other *Gathering* partners.

Gathering an abundant harvest requires abundant prayer mobilization. The fulfillment of a faith-stretching vision is dependent on God's doing "immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us" (Eph. 3:20). Whatever faith-stretching vision the CRC adopts, it is to be based on the challenge of the harvest and the conviction that God expects us to be increasingly effective for the harvest. Whatever the size and shape of the related goals, whatever people we seek to reach, it is

crucial to undergird these goals with intercession strategies that protect and empower the missionary pastors we send and the new churches God builds under their leadership.

4. Projected/actual new-church starts 1988-2000

Year	Projected Starts	Projected Cumulative	Actual Starts	Actual Cumulative
1988	14	14	13	13
1989	15	29	14	27
1990	17	46	20	47
1991*	17	63	10*	57
1992	18	81	13	70
1993	19	100	20	90
1994	21	121	20	110
1995	21	142	27	137
1996	22	164	18	155
1997	24	188	5	160
1998	25	213		
1999	27	240		
2000	240	240		

*1991 was calculated as an eight-month year.

5. Listing of new-church starts

a. Starts from September 1995 to August 1996

Location/Name	Personnel	Began
Allendale, MI/Friendship Chapel	Steve Wunderink	9/95
Anchorage, AK/Korean	Kyng Soo Jho	9/95
Arcadia, CA/Kyung Myung	Peter Lee	9/95
Atlanta, GA/Shalom Korean	Charles Jeon	9/95
Bay Area, CA/Filipino	Fernanco Del Rosario	9/95
Boulder, CO/Korean	Youchan Kim	9/95
Durango, CO/Sunrise Community	Doug Hunderman	8/96
Forest Hills, MI/Keystone Community	Gene DeJong	9/95
Fullerton, CA/Orange "daughter"	Seung-Hee Lee	4/96
Garden Grove, CA/Orange Hanmin	Seung Won Yoon	9/95
Hampton, NH/New Covenant	Brent Averill	9/95
N. Miami Beach, FL/Hispanic Min.	Milton Villaneuva	5/96
New Lenox, IL/Residency & NCD	Jul Medenblik	9/95
Orange, CA/Christ Reformed	Kim Riddleberger	10/95
Pella, IA/Grace Fellowship	Peter Kelder	9/95
South Holland, MI/Mision Hispana Paz	Ildefonso Torres	9/95
St. Petersburg, FI/Lao Community	Ranong Silakhorn	1/96
St. Thomas, ON/Fellowship Evangelical	Ath Sem	1/96
Surrey, BC/Hope Life Net 21	Jim Heuving	9/95

b. Starts from September 1996 to December 1997

Location/Name	Personnel	Began
Albuquerque, NM/Galilee Korean	Sung H. Chung	9/96
Calgary, AB/New Hope	John Van Sloten	12/96
Mission, BC/New Church	Andrew Turkstra	9/96
Seattle, WA/ConneXion	Lynn/Eric Likkel	9/96
Toronto, ON/St. Barnabas	Tim Berends	9/96

6. Funding "conclusions" from September 1995 through August 1996

Location/Name	Personnel	Began
Dearborn, MI/Peace Arab American	Stephen Kelley	9/89
Fontana, CA/Friendship Community	Randal Young	7/89
Hacienda Hgts, CA/Eastern United	Young Dae Kim	9/93
Houston, TX/Peace Community	Robert Westenbroek	5/90
Hudsonville, MI/Evergreen Ministries	Larry Doornbos	9/94
Jacksonville, FL/Atlantic Community	Jonathan Huizenga	9/87
Los Angeles, CA/Galilee CRC	David Yang	9/93
Missouri City, TX/Community Life	Michael Johnson	9/90
Missouri City, TX/NCD Residency	Rich DeRuiter	12/94
Moreno Valley, CA/Oasis Community	Alan Breems	6/90
Morton Grove, IL/Eden's CRC	Kyusik H. Hong	11/90
Northridge, CA/Mission of Love	Hyung-Ju Park	9/93
Norwalk, CA/Rok Won Korean	Peter Hangkeel Kim	9/91
Oceanside, CA/First Union Korean	Jonathan Kim	9/93
Salt Lake City, UT/Cambodian CRC	Chenglee Phim	9/80
Sepulveda, CA/Valley Dongsan	Chong Dae Yoon	9/93
Sheboygan, WI/Hmong Coordinator	Houa Yang	9/93
Wilsonville, OR/Christ's Community	Virgil Michael	9/89

C. *Other evangelistic ministries*

The Home Missions' executive committee approved the following rewording of the Home Missions' mandate, to give emphasis to *other evangelistic ministries:*

(1) Encourage and assist churches and classes in their work of evangelism.
(2) Initiate, support, and guide new church development in cooperation with local churches and classes.
(3) Initiate, support, and guide *other evangelistic ministries* in cooperation with local churches and classes.

1. Campus ministries

The Christian Reformed Home Missions board approved a new position, director of campus ministries. The person in this position will be responsible for implementing the recommendations in "To Pursue the Mission," the CRCMA task force report, as endorsed by the Home Missions board.

Approving this position reflects the significance given to "other evangelistic ministries" in the revised mandate and moves campus ministries to a secure place of effective ministry.

2. Red Mesa Christian schools

Home Missions continues to partner with the Crownpoint, Rehoboth, and Zuni Christian schools in the western New Mexico area of Classis Red Mesa. Along with supporting and assisting the school administrators and boards, in keeping with annual partnership agreements, Home Missions directors for new-church development and for finance work collaboratively with the

school administrators and boards. The overall objective is to guide and assist the schools in ways that increase their effectiveness in educating, evangelizing, and discipling their students; that promote local vision and stewardship for these ministries; and that encourage the progress of the schools toward financial independence.

As of January 1997, the New Mexico schools and Classis Red Mesa are considering the approval of articles of incorporation and bylaws for a proposed Rehoboth-Red Mesa Foundation. The purpose of the foundation is to function as an arm of the Red Mesa schools and churches in developing financial resources for the schools and churches that will supplement and eventually replace denominational subsidies. This will include potential income-generating uses of the Rehoboth campus and adjacent property, nearly nine hundred acres. It is Home Missions' desire and intent, once the foundation board is established and operational, that the Rehoboth campus and surrounding land—which is in the name of Christian Reformed Home Missions—be deeded over to this foundation. It is our hope that this will occur in calendar year 1997.

D. *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 1996. Total gift income was equal to 1995, and the ministry was able to fund all programs as planned. Ministry-share receipts increased 1 percent from the previous year while total above-ministry-share gifts from churches and individuals declined 3.6 percent from 1995. Total expenses were managed below budget without curtailment of ministry programs and with a balanced budget. In light of denominational finance issues, the 1997 ministry-share request did not increase from the 1996 request.

b. Personnel resources

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 (Classis Northern Illinois is a specific example). But gaining prayer and financial support for these ministries is an increasing challenge because these missionary pastors are not yet well known in the CRC. Churches are encouraged to establish a support partnership with an ethnic missionary pastor. Ninety-two congregations are currently partnering with an ethnic

ministry through Home Missions support and are enjoying the enriching blessings of such partnerships.

d. Information resources

This year for the second time Home Missions offered Reformation Day bulletins, which were used by 443 churches. Nearly half of these churches took special offerings for the cause of Home Missions. We also again offered Easter bulletins and devotional materials, which were requested by 582 churches. Approximately 414 congregations 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 the churches with news about the ministries they support. We continue to work cooperatively in projects such as *Prayer Guide, Intermission*, Barnabas, 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 1996, Home Missions assisted the Lao Community CRC of Holland, Michigan, in the purchase of a site for a future church building. 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 1996, Home Missions had over $5.3 million outstanding loans to sixty-three churches.

b. The Advancement Department provided stewardship advice and promotional and fund-raising assistance to eight new churches embarking on building projects.

3. Fiscal-year 1996 financial report

A detailed, audited financial report for the twelve-month fiscal year ended June 30, 1996, the 1997 budget, and the proposed 1998 budget will be presented to synod in the *Agenda for Synod 1997—Financial and Business Supplement*. A summary report for the fiscal year ended June 30, 1996, is shown below:

Source of income	Income (0000s)	Percent of total
Ministry share	$5,667	68.4
Missionary support	823	9.9
Above-ministry-share gifts	799	9.7
Conferences, consulting	330	4.0
Interest and other	661	8.0
Total income	$8,280	100.0

Use of funds	Disbursements ($0000s)	Percent of total
New-church development	$4,991	61.0
Established-church development	2,095	25.6
Administration	609	7.4
Advancement	485	6.0
Total disbursements	$8,180	100.0

IV. Recommendations

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

B. That synod encourage all Christian Reformed churches to recognize Easter Sunday as a significant opportunity to take an offering for Christian Reformed Home Missions.

Home Missions is blessed, privileged, and profoundly challenged in serving the Lord and the church through *Gathering*.

Christian Reformed Board of Home Missions
John A. Rozeboom, executive director

Note: Recommendations on financial matters will be included in the supplemental report of the CRC 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 1996 CRWM gave support to twenty-nine 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 fifty thousand adherents in 1997.

CRWM missionaries, including 106 long-term missionaries and 90 missionary spouses, were active in thirty countries. There were also 91 partner and associate missionaries (most of whom were teachers in various places), 19 other short-term missionary volunteers, and 30 summer mission volunteers of college age. Thus, we had a total of 336 active missionaries during 1996, accompanied by 180 missionary children.

II. Report on mission fields and projects

CRWM divides its missions into fields and projects. At the close of each fiscal year, field and project leaders are requested to complete an Annual Statistical Report. Not all leaders are able to submit a complete report because some national churches and other partners do not keep or provide statistics. We estimate that the combined ministries of CRWM and our partner churches were used to add about fifty thousand believers to the church of Christ in 1996.

A. Africa

1. *Guinea*. Over two million nonnomadic Muslim Fulbe live in Guinea. They are considered one of the major unreached peoples of the world. Ten years ago CRWM committed itself to a thirty- to fifty-year effort to grow a church among them. Eight missionaries are involved in evangelism, Bible translation, literacy, literature production, discipleship, and leadership training. Permission has been granted for weekly radio programs and public showings of the *Jesus* film. About one hundred of these Fulbe are Christians. Another ten people are preparing themselves for baptism.

2. *Hospital Christian Fellowship (HCF)*. HCF gives Christian African medical workers training in evangelism and discipleship. One CRWM missionary on loan to HCF supports one hundred HCF groups in ten East African countries through leadership training and literature development.

3. *Liberia*. Missionaries were withdrawn six years ago due to civil war. Recently, however, the twelfth peace agreement was signed. Most of the infrastructure in the country has been destroyed, and life is anarchic. CRWM supports the development of the church among the 200,000 Bassa people through a partnership with the Christian Education Foundation of Liberia (CEFL). The CEFL was able to carry on limited ministry in periods when the fighting subsided. The Bassa translation team, based in Ivory Coast, completed

another 10 percent of the Bible last year. About 20 percent of the Old Testament remains to be finished (completion expected in 1998) as does revision of the New Testament translation. One missionary serves as a consultant for this work. Two Bassa leaders are receiving further training in the United States.

4. *Mali*. Nearly 1.2 million nomadic Muslim Fulbe live in Mali. They are considered one of the primary unreached peoples of the world. Ten years ago CRWM committed itself to a thirty- to fifty-year effort to build a substantial church among them. Six missionaries are involved in evangelism, literacy, literature production, discipleship, and leadership training. Occasional permission for public presentation of the gospel is given. Currently missionaries are concentrating on gospel presentation in about twelve of the more receptive villages and in Bamako, the capital city. About twenty-five Fulbe in Mali are Christians. Another five people are preparing themselves for baptism.

5. *Nigeria*. CRWM has five projects in Nigeria, supported by twenty-seven long-term missionaries. Among the three million Tiv people in Benue State, The Church of Christ Among the Tiv (NKST), which had about 35,000 attenders in 1956, reports 900,000 attenders in 1996. CRWM has now withdrawn all long-term missionaries but continues short-term support and provides financial grants for three leadership-training institutions, a scholarship program, and the NKST mission board.

   Among the Jukun-related peoples in Gongola State the Christian Reformed Church of Nigeria (CRCN), which had about 5,000 attenders in 1956, reports 300,000 attenders in 1996. CRWM loans five missionaries to the CRCN to support leadership training at six leadership-training institutions. The number of pastors is expected to increase from eighty to eighty-five and the number of evangelists to increase from 335 to 365 this year. Another five missionaries support the evangelizing efforts of the CRCN Mission Board, especially among the Daka and the Fulani and in major Nigerian cities.

   Among the 500,000 Kuteb people the Reformed Church of Christ in Nigeria (RCCN), which split from the CRCN in 1973, now reports about 50,000 attenders with growth rates exceeding 10 percent per annum. CRWM supports this church with grants for leadership training.

   Among the 100,000 Kambari people five missionaries are involved in culture and language learning, evangelism, literacy, literature production, medical care, rural and water development, discipleship, and leadership training. In the past three years seven churches with average Sunday attendance of six hundred have been developed. Five books of the Bible have been translated, and literacy classes are being taught for church attenders. This mission is also being extended to Fulani who live in the area of the Kambari.

   In urban centers such as Jos and Abuja two missionaries are enabling urban churches to serve the urban poor. Two hundred poor families were served by these ministries.

   Research has been done among the Maguzawa and Isa peoples of northern Nigeria to explore the possibility of a new church-development project. Conclusions will be drawn and recommendations made during fiscal year 1997-1998.

6. *Sierra Leone*. Although the country has been disrupted by civil war, the number of regular worshipers among the Kuranko now exceeds 950. Two missionaries give support to a growing group of Kuranko evangelists, pastors, and community developers. In the last four years 225 people were baptized. The number of village worship groups now exceeds twenty-five.

7. *Zambia*. CRWM is phasing out of an agreement with the Reformed Church of Zambia to support the development of its seminary. A missionary professor has concluded service, and CRWM will provide a financial grant for library and textbook development for two more years.

B. *Asia*

1. *Chinese ministries*. On the mainland and in Mongolia twenty-two CRC teachers supported by CRWM provided nurture to more than one hundred young, recently converted intellectuals on campuses and witnessed to over five thousand non-Christian students in classrooms and through literature distribution.

   On Taiwan three missionary families seek to invigorate the Reformed Presbyterian Church through youth ministry and both formal and informal leadership training. (The RPC of Taiwan has twenty-three congregations.) These missionaries also prepare literature for distribution on both Taiwan and the mainland. A growing number of opportunities to teach seminars or courses at mainland state-sponsored seminaries are being seized (one was attended by four hundred).

2. *Guam/Micronesia*. CRWM provides Guam and Micronesia with three services. Faith Church became a fully grown church and now fully supports the CRWM missionary pastor loaned to it. Faith Bookstore, with annual sales of $900,000, is self-supporting and nearly self-managing. In partnership with the Liebenzell Mission, one CRWM missionary supports the development of the Pacific Islands Bible College, through which over two hundred Guam and Micronesian church leaders receive preparatory and continuing education.

3. *Japan*. CRWM partners with the Reformed Church in Japan (RCJ), which has 140 congregations in five presbyteries. In a side-by-side relationship, CRWM has developed about fifty of these congregations. The church has about 9,250 members in a country where 1 percent of the population is Christian. CRWM's six church developers, teamed with eleven Japanese evangelists employed by the mission, are currently developing eleven congregations. Last year average worship attendance in these eleven congregations increased by 3 percent, and the number of communicant members increased by 9 percent. CRWM seeks to organize a congregation and turn it over to the RCJ within seven years and to begin new congregations as others are turned over.

4. *Pakistan*. CRWM loans one missionary to the mission of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church in Pakistan. This missionary has Bible-translation and church-planting responsibilities among a responsive animistic tribe where church growth exceeds 10 percent per year. CRWM plans to conclude this partnership in 1998-1999.

5. *Philippines.* CRWM partners with the Christian Reformed Church of the Philippines, which has about ninety congregations, of which fifty are emerging congregations, with membership of about 5,500. Twelve CRWM missionaries focus on leadership training for this church and on evangelism alongside and within this church. Over two hundred Christian Reformed Church of the Philippines leaders are receiving preparatory and continuing education through three theological institutions supported by CRWM. Fifteen emerging congregations are either staffed or supported by CRWM. Average attendance at these emerging congregations increased by over 8 percent last year.

C. *Europe*

1. *France.* Through an agreement with the Faculté Libre de Théologie Réformée, CRWM provides one teacher to help train present and future leaders for the Reformed Churches of France and Francophone Africa. About twenty students graduate each year.

2. *Hungarian ministries.* For the past five years CRWM has assisted with the redevelopment of the Reformed seminary in Sarospatak, Hungary, where 150 ministerial students are in training. The first graduation in forty years, including twenty-three students, occurred this year. CRWM also supports with seven teachers the redevelopment of youth ministries and Christian schools among Hungarian Reformed churches in the Ukraine, Romania, and Hungary. Over five hundred youth attend worship services and Bible studies designed for them.

3. *Russia/Eastern Europe.* More than two hundred Muscovites are registered at two Christian reading rooms. Four hundred students at Moscow University are taught by CRWM-supported teachers. Church planters are trained in Eastern Europe through an agreement with The Bible League. Small grants have stimulated involvement in evangelism efforts by four selected Reformed and Russian Orthodox parishes.

D. *Latin America*

1. *Central America.* The core of this mission is the development of the Christian Reformed Church of Honduras, which has grown to forty churches and over two thousand members during the last years. The greatest growth is in the rural Olancho area. Growth creates organizational tension and a threat of schism as rural churches challenge control exercised by urban churches. Six long-term missionaries support evangelism and leadership-training efforts. The church in Costa Rica is small. The report of an assessment team may change the direction of this mission soon. Two missionaries have reentered Nicaragua and El Salvador to support the small but growing denominations (thirteen and fourteen churches respectively). Two missionaries support the training of evangelical Latin American missionaries through institutions called IMDELA and ESEPA.

2. *International Fellowship of Evangelical Students (IFES).* CRWM supports one missionary family that works for this Latin American branch of Inter-Varsity. The missionary family produces basic resources to serve the Latin America region for periodic leadership training and for prayer and informational

bulletins. One resource produced last year is a manual and video set for Christian outreach.

3. *CITE (Cooperative International Theological Education).* Until two years ago CITE produced theological books in Spanish and provided continuing education for Latin American church leaders. The production part of CITE has been turned over to CRC Publications. One consultant continues to provide workshops and seminars in Cuba, Mexico, and the Central American countries. About four hundred leaders attended these meetings in the last year.

4. *Cuba.* CRWM provides annual grants for literature and church reconstructions as well as for short visits for purposes of continuing education. Thirteen churches and worship groups continue their ministry and witness in Cuba as the Christian Reformed Church. CRWM has not had missionaries resident on the island since the revolution in 1960. There are three ordained Cuban pastors involved full-time in the work and more than twenty others involved in part-time evangelistic activity. The churches now have about five thousand regular attenders, and grew at a rate of more than 7 percent last year.

5. *Dominican Republic.* Membership in the Christian Reformed Church of the Dominican Republic has reached a plateau at about 10,500 members with eighty-five pastors tending 80 churches and 120 emerging churches. The past year saw the continuing shift of expatriate missionaries into more specialized ministries as the national leadership assumed greater responsibility in the basic training and work of the churches. Phaseover to total indigenous control is anticipated within eight years. The Christian day-school program has twenty-seven growing schools with nearly four thousand students.

6. *Haiti.* CRWM sponsors an interdenominational training program which provides continuing education to the leaders of independent churches. Each week 261 students study in sixteen different centers; 83 graduated this year. CRWM provides leadership training for Christian-school teachers through monthly seminars in two locations. This year 145 teachers participated, representing thirty-three schools and 5,109 students. CRWM's Discover the Light project distributed Bible correspondence courses to 9,695 participants, a sevenfold increase over the previous year. Twenty-three small churches in Haiti have affiliated with the CRC of the Dominican Republic.

7. *Mexico.* CRWM supports the development of the Reformed Presbyterian Church (RPC) and the National Presbyterian Church (NPC) in three locations: Mexico City, Yucatan, and Tijuana. The RPC is the primary focus. It has 135 congregations and worship centers with average attendance of 15,000. The NPC has 3,250 churches and 350,000 attenders. Annual church growth in both churches exceeds 6 percent. Seven CRWM missionaries do evangelism, teach in seminaries, and distribute literature.

8. *Puerto Rico.* CRWM has no long-term missionaries in Puerto Rico but does support the CRC of Puerto Rico with three financial grants, which support evangelism, leadership training, and church development. The four organized churches and three daughter missions begun this year have had a per annum growth rate of at least 5 percent over the last few years, with one church as high as 17 percent.

III. Personnel matters

Approximately twelve long-term missionaries and most of the short-term missionaries are recruited and prepared for service each year by the Personnel Department of CRWM.

	FY1995-1996 Actual	FY1996-1997 Plan	FY1997-1998 Plan
Long-term			
Missionaries	106.5	106.5	98
Missionary spouses	90	90	84
Total	196.5	196.5	182
Short-term			
Partner missionaries	64	65	58
Summer mission program	37	30	34
Volunteers	11	15	12
Seminary interns	1	4	4
Associate missionaries	28	26	34
Total (including spouses)	141	140	142
Grand total:	337.5	336.5	324

It costs just under $65,000 to send and keep a long-term missionary family overseas for one year. About one-half of this support comes from denominational ministry shares. An average of eleven sending and supporting churches supply most of the other half with faith-promise or above-ministry-share support. Some individuals also support missionaries directly rather than through their local churches. Short-term partner missionaries, associate missionaries, and summer mission participants serve for periods of time ranging from one to twenty-four months and do not receive salaries from CRWM. They raise their support (travel costs and living allowance) from churches and friends, support themselves, or, in the case of many partner missionaries, are supported by a job in the country to which they go.

In all of their evangelism efforts CRWM missionaries work with or give support to groups of national evangelists and pastors. CRWM concentrates on the development of local leadership within the countries of its missions so that national leaders within these lands assume responsibility for the growing church as soon as possible.

Most of CRWM's missionaries are now connected to the Internet. This makes it easier for them to communicate with supporting churches and administrative staff. The CRC now has a home page on the Internet, which includes, among other things, the e-mail addresses of missionaries and churches. It can be visited at http://www.crcna.org.

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

Each year we give tribute to missionaries who are celebrating significant anniversaries of service. During 1996 we honored the following for twenty or more years of service with CRWM:

Mrs. Faith Bosserman (Nigeria and Personnel Office) 25 years
Mr. John and Mrs. Jerre De Young (Mexico) 25 years
Mr. Dick and Mrs. Margaret Seinen (Nigeria) 25 years

Mrs. Tina Van Staalduinen Ipema (Nigeria and archives) 30 years
Miss Fran Karnemaat (Nigeria and home office as Great Lakes regional representative) 30 years
Rev. Gerrit and Mrs. Ruth Koedoot (Japan and Philippines) 30 years
Rev. William Van Tol (Nigeria and home office as Africa director and executive director) 30 years

Three missionary couples retired from service in 1996: Rev. Raymond and Mrs. Gladys Brinks, who served in Argentina and the Dominican Republic for thirty-eight years; Mr. Vincente and Mrs. Lucy Apostol, who served in the Philippines for thirty-five years; and Dr. James and Mrs. Mary De Young, who served in the Philippines for the last eight years of their ministry.

IV. 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 also 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.

V. Matters related to governance and administration

A. Meetings

CRWM held its annual meetings in Grand Rapids, Michigan, on February 17-19, 1997, at which time the committees of CRWM-Canada and CRWM-U.S.A. met separately to attend to mission matters specific 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 met jointly and separately in May, September, and December 1996.

Next year CRWM plans to begin holding its annual meeting in May rather than in February to shorten the time used for preparation of the annual plan and budget.

B. CRWM-International executive director

Rev. William Van Tol concludes his service as CRWM-International executive director on or about April 1, 1997. He has held this position since 1985, when he replaced Dr. Eugene Rubingh, first on an interim basis and then by synodical appointment in 1986. His transfer back to missionary service was delayed one year because of a prolonged search for a new leader.

The CRWM Committee has appointed Rev. Merle Den Bleyker to replace Rev. Van Tol and has requested the Board of Trustees to approve this appointment. Synod 1996 granted the BOT power, by way of exception, to ratify this appointment on behalf of synod because it is anticipated that the transition from Rev. Van Tol to Rev. Den Bleyker will occur on April 1, 1997, before Synod 1997 meets.

Rev. Den Bleyker served as a missionary to Puerto Rico with CRWM from 1972 to 1981, as pastor of a CRC church from 1982 to 1987, and as an international program director for CRWM from 1987 to the present.

Rev. Van Tol, at his own request, is transferring back to missionary service with CRWM and has accepted a church-development and leadership-training position in Mexico.

C. Consolidation of services

The BOT has approved consolidating many of the financial and personnel services that CRWM and other agencies have been doing for themselves because it is believed that these will be done more effectively and efficiently if the agencies consolidate them. The CRWM Committee instructed its executive committee to provide an annual evaluation and report regarding the adequacy of the support provided by the consolidated service group of the CRCNA in order to be assured that the effectiveness and efficiency of future services are at least equal to those now provided by dedicated services. The CRWM Committee also instructed its officers and administration to consult with the BOT and its representatives to ensure that, during this period of transition, appropriate legal or agency agreements are in place between the corporations of the CRCNA and CRWM so that the CRWM trustees do not fail to carry out their corporate responsibilities by way of default.

VI. CRWM-U.S.A. and CRWM-Canada reports

Because of government regulations CRWM has separate offices in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and Burlington, Ontario, which focus on church and donor relations in the U.S.A. and Canada respectively and jointly support all of the mission fields and projects administered under CRWM—International. A positive working relationship continues to exist between the Burlington and Grand Rapids offices. Through a joint-venture agreement the two give administrative support to one world-mission outreach. In addition, an agency agreement between the two enables CRWM-U.S.A. to provide CRWM-Canada with various media, promotional, and church-relations services so that special ministries are not duplicated.

During the 1995-1996 fiscal year, which ended June 30, 1996, CRWM expended $12,405,000 and received $12,407,000, resulting in a net surplus of $2,000. CRWM also transferred $189,000 from its foundation to its operating fund to increase its operating cash reserves. In 1996-1997 we anticipate expenditures of $12,879,000 and project income of $12,473,000. We plan to transfer an additional $220,000 from our foundation to help meet this deficit in income. We anticipate that continuing reductions in the size of our missionary force will be necessary as dollars that were formerly given in support of CRWM and its missionaries are diverted to local causes, to missionaries of other CRC agencies, or to missionaries of non-CRC 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. There are indications of renewed interest and dedication in the church toward its world missionaries, and many missionaries have appreciated a substantial increase in designated support from churches and individuals.

VII. Long-Range Plan and fiscal 1997-1998 plan

Copies of World Missions' Long-Range Plan are available on request. It describes our vision, mission, purpose, values, mission task, design of fields and

projects, deployment guidelines and plans, strategic issues for effective mission, and the force for mission provided by the CRCNA. This plan was updated this year and is being used to give shape to our three-year plan as well as to our annual plan and budget.

With its proposed budget for 1997-1998 CRWM will support 98 missionaries (and 84 spouses who volunteer much time to ministry) and 142 short-term missionaries (including spouses) for a total of 324 active missionaries, accompanied by at least 180 children. They will be supported by a North American administration of twenty-two positions, based in Grand Rapids and Burlington. The budget from July 1, 1997, to June 30, 1998, will be $12,731,000. North American administrative and promotion expenses will be 12.6 percent of budget. Budget details will be provided in the *Agenda for Synod 1997—Financial and Business Supplement*.

The amount of income received from ministry shares will be 40.3 percent of the total CRWM income. We are not seeking an increase in ministry share for 1998. We are asking for $114.93 per family, or $49.51 per member, the same amounts that synod approved for 1997. Recommendations of the Ministries Coordinating Council and the Board of Trustees may reduce the CRWM ministry share by 2.8 percent, to $111.81 and $48.17.

VIII. Salary information

CRWM provides the following information about missionary salaries. In fiscal 1996-1997 the base salary for single missionaries is $19,937, and the base for married couples is $25,918. In addition each missionary receives 1.1 percent of single base salary for each year of applicable prior service (1.4 percent of base salary for each year of CRWM service). Education allowances in the amount of 2.3 percent of single base salary for an M.A., 3.4 percent of single base salary for an M.Div., and 4.5 percent of single base salary for a Ph.D. are provided. Children's allowance has been phased out. CRWM provides assistance for educational costs of children. CRWM also provides U.S. Social Security payment or allowance and Canada pension payment; payments to denominational pension plans, which include 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 where applicable.

Job level	Number of positions	Compensation quartile (includes housing allowance)
18	1	3rd quartile
17	3	2nd and 3rd quartile
16	2	2nd and 3rd quartile
15	1	3rd quartile

IX. Recommendations

CRWM-Canada and CRWM-U.S.A. respectfully recommend the following:

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. Merle Den Bleyker, 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 express the appreciation of the church for the twelve years of service given by Rev. William Van Tol as the CRWM-International executive director.

C. That synod encourage all Christian Reformed churches to recognize Pentecost Sunday as a significant opportunity to take an offering for Christian Reformed World Missions.

D. That synod permit Rev. William Van Tol, who will have concluded his service as CRWM-International executive director, to address synod briefly and Rev. Merle Den Bleyker, the new executive director, to present to synod missionary personnel who are on home service.

Christian Reformed World Missions
William Van Tol, CRWM-International
executive director

Note: Recommendations on financial matters will be included in the supplemental report of the CRC Board of Trustees.

I. Introduction

The year 1996 was a year of intense reflection and rapid change for CRWRC. It began with a review of structure, culture, and function at the February 1996 board of delegates meeting, where the plan for a CRWRC Assembly of Worldwide Partners was conceived. The idea was to bring together a wide and representative sampling of CRWRC staff, delegates, and partners to discuss the way in which CRWRC carries out the Lord's work. The goal was to describe and define an organization in which all stakeholders could participate freely and equally, in a way that makes the best use of their many and diverse gifts.

The 1996 assembly turned out to be a great success. Over two hundred people participated in a broad and open discussion of vision, culture, procedure, structure, and ministries. A dozen workshops focused on specific subjects and tasks. The outcome of the assembly was a volume of observations, ideas, suggestions, and recommendations which were broadly and democratically based and which deserve to be given careful attention. The board of delegates approved the output of the assembly as a body of knowledge and information to be kept intact and to be acted upon without compromising the integrity of CRWRC.

CRWRC established its former management system almost fifteen years ago, and it has served the agency well. However, we now believe we have found a better way of management, one which emphasizes collaboration and integration and builds on our strengths while de-emphasizing individual territory, competitiveness, and problem solving.

The basic administrative units of the new CRWRC structure are teams, which are organized in an interfacing arrangement. The team structure allows team members to participate fully in the mission of the organization and to use and develop their gifts to the fullest. The interfacing structure ensures that teams are well coordinated and connected to each other as well as to the poor whom we serve and to the CRC membership, whom we also serve.

There are several types of teams in the new structure. **Geographic ministry teams** directly carry out the work of CRWRC, showing God's love to people in physical and spiritual need. They do so by facilitating a direct connection between our supporting membership and the poor in order to channel the interest, love, prayers, and support of those who are in a position to transmit such blessings. At the same time, they channel—in the other direction—the learning and the love that come from working with our partners. The five (5) geographic ministry teams are "on the ground," working intimately with partners in North America, Latin America, West Africa, East Africa, and Asia, building and nurturing collaborative and supportive relationships that help those we serve to grow, attain a better standard of living, and ultimately become self-sufficient.

Geographic ministry teams are coordinated and supported in various functions by the home-office-based **functional teams.** These teams provide direction and consistency in the areas of program, administration, and public relations. Each geographic ministry team, in addition to its "resident" (in-the-field) team members, also includes representatives from each functional team, and each functional team has team members representing each geographic

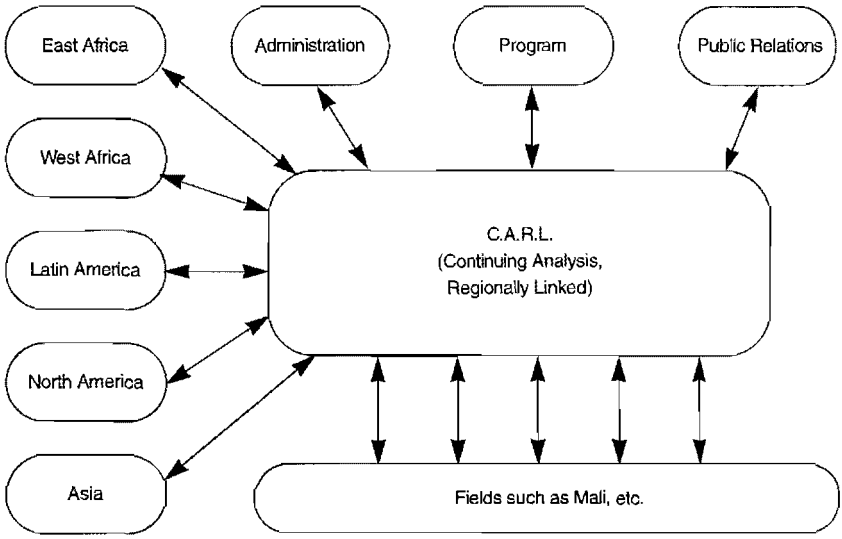
ministry team. The functional teams provide specialized coordination and support in broad areas that affect and are of concern to all geographic ministry teams, to ensure that these areas are dealt with consistently and efficiently, in concert with the overall CRWRC plan.

The efforts of the geographic ministry teams and the functional teams are facilitated and integrated by the **Facilitation and Integration Team.** The Facilitation and Integration Team is composed of the codirectors and representatives of the various teams, who meet together to ensure that all activities are in harmony and that the overall objectives of the organization are being realized. The **Extended Facilitation and Integration Team** is a broader group (the Facilitation and Integration Team plus geographic-ministry-team representatives and delegates) which will meet at least twice a year for purposes of long-range planning and assembly planning.

The Facilitation and Integration Team is responsible for implementing the decisions of the board of delegates with maximum integrity and for making recommendations to the Delegate/Administration Team.

The Delegate/Administration Team consists of the board presidents (Canadian and U.S.), the executive directors of CRWRC (Canadian and U.S.), and the CRC executive director of ministries (EDM). The Delegate/Administration Team serves as the bridge between the delegates and the administration and is responsible for ensuring the integrity of CRWRC decisions insofar as they concern the direction, boundaries, and standards of performance of CRWRC.

Inherent in this proposed new structure is an increased delegation of decision making and authority to the level where the quality and quantity of available information best enables a sound and timely decision. To avoid compromising governance, however, we are simultaneously seeking to strengthen accountability. Team leaders are selected by the teams themselves and approved by the Delegate/Administration Team. Information will be channeled and focused so that each person gets the information necessary for his or her own work or monitoring activities. The following diagram visually presents the new management structure.



II. Board and executive–committee matters

As part of CRWRC's reorganization and with the encouragement of the CRC's Board of Trustees, CRWRC is searching for ways to increase the effectiveness of its board of delegates. Our current thinking is that it would be helpful for us to view the governing body of the organization as something similar to a church council (somewhat similar to our former executive committee) and to see the classical delegates as representing the congregational members.

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 composed 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
Ms. Shirley DeBoer, vice president
Ms. Thea Leunk, secretary
Mr. Barry Haven, treasurer

C. *Vision*

CRWRC's vision is to enable and empower people to cooperate—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.

III. CRWRC's programs and ministries

A. *Development regions*

1. North America

a. Canada

Local diaconates and classical/regional conferences carry out most ministry activity in Canada. CRWRC collaborates with diaconal 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 setting up a responsive network throughout Canada.

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 play a role among various agencies confronting international poverty issues. The CRWRC-Canada director is involved with 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

The development of strong diaconal and community-development partner groups, in the context of a CRC presence, continues to be the focus of programs in the United States. In the past year CRWRC worked closely with twenty-four diaconal conferences and continued its close working relationships with fifteen community-development groups. Because of budget constraints, there is no projected growth in the number of partner groups. New partner groups are being added as old ones phase out. There is also an increased effort on the part of the U.S.A. program staff to develop intermediary organizations. These organizations can take the models CRWRC has been working on and help create even more organizations at the grass-roots level to accomplish effective development work in a church context.

During 1997-1998, CRWRC hopes to see the lives of 30,000 people touched through the work of our partner groups. We hope to see 5,358 of those people achieve sustainable change and 500 enfolded into Christ's church.

The strategy for our regional ministry continued to focus on three major areas: diaconal leadership development, collaborative planning with classes and agencies, and partner-group development in high-need areas.

Summary: Goals for persons achieving sustainable change

REGION	1994/95	1995/96	1996/97	1997/98
Eastern US	215	445	500	500
West Michigan	1419	1597	1280	1575
Midwest	500	451	640	1050
Farmbelt / SW	1170	972	1369	1008
Red Mesa	50	182	70	125
S. California	200	321	300	300
Western U.S.	112	496	300	300
Disaster sites	350	1000	350	350
Community Service	5	5	150	150
TOTAL	4021 (actual)	5559 (actual)	4959 (projected)	5358 (projected)

2. Asia, East Africa, Latin America, West Africa

CRWRC overseas programs are bringing positive, permanent change to thousands of families. Our wholistic development approach helps families attain a measure of economic self-sufficiency, better health for their children, and education (basic reading and writing skills) for the adults.

We want to continue to realize short-term goals, such as hungry people having enough to eat now, but also long-range transformational goals. This requires a balance between short time frames to accomplish the urgent goals and longer time frames for the more important transformations—discipleship, shared learning, and justice for the poor. We increasingly focus on new challenges: wholistic ministry, interdependence, and phase over with sustainability.

Many of the poorest of the poor are in southern Asia. Asia contains more of the poor living in greater squalor than any other region on earth does. But as an agency we must carefully target the populations and carefully construct programs so that oppressive systems do not cancel out our efforts to help.

World Bank figures show that another great cause for concern is in sub-Saharan Africa, where people are no richer today than they were in 1960. Sub-Saharan Africa was growing a bit more prosperous until the late 1970s, but since then a steady decline has undercut all of those gains.

What are our results? Fiscal year 1995-1996 year-end results showed that we had assisted nearly 84,000 families. The 1996-1997 goal is 107,546. Our 1997-1998 plans show that CRWRC overseas development programs—in twenty-four countries—have a goal of reaching 114,466 families.

Region	1996-1997		1997-1998	
	Families	Units	Families	Units
Asia	16,218	24,944	15,032	23,472
East Africa	54,419	66,808	68,710	81,660
Latin America	25,301	35,207	13,865	23,929
West Africa	11,608	12,280	16,859	18,538
TOTAL	107,546	139,239	114,466	147,599

Current staffing for CRWRC's overseas programs includes thirty-two full-time-equivalent expatriate staff positions, nine service and training positions, and one long-term volunteer. By mid-1997 the number of expatriate full-time-equivalent positions will decrease when the Central America Zone director position will end, expatriate positions in the Philippines will go from two to one, positions in Uganda will go from four to three, and the AIDS consultant position in Senegal will conclude.

CRWRC's plans for 1997-1998 include no new partner organizations but a few pilot projects. The Asia staff proposes three pilot programs: Taherpur in Bangladesh and area pilot projects in Cambodia and Laos. The Laos and Cambodia projects were approved in 1996. The West Africa team proposes to test two pilot programs: the Wadata project in Niger and RECON in Nigeria.

B. Education

The education program is responsible for integrating development awareness into the communication efforts of CRWRC, for developing a network of people to develop educational/advocacy networks in their region, for generating information on advocacy issues related to poverty, and for creating appropriate responses.

We are excited about

- A collaborative effort with Bread for the World
- Kids' Pages series (lesson packages for church schools and schools)
- Plans for Poverty Education Network (PEN)
- Collaborative follow-up with the denominational Free to Serve effort
- Beginning to build Bearing Witness initiatives

C. Relief

In 1996 volunteers were busy in the area of disaster response. In 1995-1996 702 volunteers donated 69,312 hours on 272 homes, while completing 2,251 assessments. Sites this past year included wrap-up on Hurricane Andrew in Florida; Pacific Northwest floods, Los Angeles earthquake; Alexandria, Missouri, flood; northern California floods; Albany, Georgia, floods; and Caribbean hurricane response.

As of January 2, 1997, volunteers are active in Fort Smith, Arkansas, and once again on standby for the Pacific Northwest.

A summary of goals for persons achieving sustainable change through CRWRC disaster-relief programs:

	1994-1995	1995-1996	1996-1997	1997-1998
Persons	350	1000	350	350

D. Canadian Foodgrains Bank

As one of thirteen church-based partner members of the Canadian Foodgrains Bank (CFGB), CRWRC annually commits $250,000 (Canadian) to its account at the CFGB.

Projects initiated by CRWRC-Canada in the 1995-1996 budget year had a total value of $1,677,000 (Canadian) with a total CRWRC contribution of $207,000 (Canadian). This represents a 7:1 match from CFGB general funds and Canadian government funds. As a result, relief projects and food-security projects were initiated in Cuba, Bangladesh, Korea, Burundi, Ethiopia, Kenya, and North Guinea.

CRWRC's involvement in the CFGB enjoys strong support from CRC members, the Canadian Reformed Church, 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 grain-growing projects is increasing.

E. Community Service

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.

In the U.S.A. during 1995-1996 1,192 volunteers saw service as a result of our Community Service unit. That trend is continuing in the current fiscal year. In 1997-1998 Community Service will continue to put increased emphasis on linking volunteers in longer-term programs. The intention is to have more people experience solid community development and to find out more about the learning that volunteers acquire. Putting volunteers into longer programs may decrease the number of volunteers CRWRC can use. With better orienta-

tion and training we hope volunteers will apply development principles in their home communities and churches, as well as on volunteer assignments for our agency.

Volunteers overseas will continue to assist CRWRC in reaching goals and objectives in 1997. CRWRC-International has been able to place volunteers in Indonesia, Indochina (Cambodia), the Philippines, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Guinea, Mali, and Senegal in calendar year 1996.

A summary of goals for persons achieving sustainable change through CRWRC Community Service programs:

	1994-1995	1995-1996	1996-1997	1997-1998
Persons	5	5	150	150

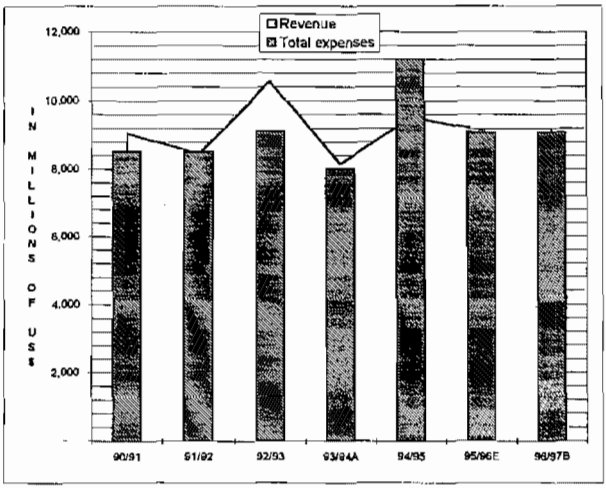
IV. Finance

A. 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
International	5,498	5,354	5,432	4,312	5,977	5,325	5,303
Diaconal	708	594	611	917	1,317	1,066	1,058
Dis. Resp. Serv.	1,055	954	1,457	1,288	1,849	695	708
Resource Devel.	552	813	762	743	1,086	1,009	1,018
Administration	719	820	840	751	987	977	996
Total 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



B. Salary disclosure

Job level	Number of positions	Compensation quartile (includes housing allowance)
17	2	2nd through 4th
16	2	3rd through 4th
15	3	1st through 4th

V. Resource development

CRWRC separates its various forms of income into four main categories: grants, disaster, program, and estates/term endowments. The category that fluctuates the most is disaster income, which has gone from a high of $2,427,000 in 1993-1994 to a low of $623,000 last year due to the lack of major disasters.

CRWRC-Canada has enjoyed a long-standing relationship with the various branches of the Canadian International Development Agency. Indeed, during the past eleven years the total income from this source has been approximately $27 million. Income from the Canadian International Development Agency for regular programming amounted to $1.25 million last year. In addition, resources for CRWRC from the Canadian Foodgrains Bank exceed $1 million per year.

CRWRC-U.S.A. is expecting to receive almost $460,000 from the United States Agency for International Development for regular program expenses. In addition we have been awarded $75,000 for development education this year and will also receive $650,000 to provide disaster relief in Rwanda before the end of the year. However, the greatest percentage of funds comes from the voluntary contributions of churches and members. In 1995-1996 this was 93 percent of total gift revenue. We are grateful for this outstanding response. We ask synod to urge churches again to schedule at least four offerings per year to support CRWRC in lieu of ministry share.

After experiencing a significant drop in income for our regular development program since 1993, CRWRC experienced an increase during this past year, receiving $6,516,000 as compared to $6,085,000 the year before.

Estate giving is our last major category of income. Like distaster income, this category is subject to wide variations from year to year. During the past year the CRWRC board of delegates approved a new policy, which will enable us to stabilize the income in this category by putting these funds in escrow and bringing 15 percent of those gifts into income each year.

CRWRC is recommending a total budget of $9,325,000 for the 1997-1998 year as compared to $9,250,000 last year and $9,513,000 the year before that.

VI. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Mr. Calvin Hulst, president of CRWRC-U.S.A.; Mr. Marvin De Vries, president of CRWRC-Canada; Mr. John De Haan, director of CRWRC-U.S.A.; and Mr. Wayne deJong, director of CRWRC-Canada, when CRWRC matters are discussed.

B. That CRWRC missionaries who are presently in North America be presented to and acknowledged by synod.

C. That synod commend the work of mercy carried on by CRWRC and urge the churches to take at least four offerings per year in lieu of ministry-share support.

Christian Reformed World Relief Committee
John De Haan, CRWRC-U.S.A. Director
Wayne deJong, CRWRC-Canada director

Note: Recommendations on financial matters will be included in the supplemental report of the CRC 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 Mr. Jon Feikens and Mr. Gerald W. Van Wyke expire on June 30, 1997. Both Mr. Feikens and Mr. Van Wyke are eligible to serve second three-year terms. 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 June 30, 2000

Mr. Jon Feikens (incumbent) is a member of North Hills CRC, Troy, Michigan, where he has served on church council as elder. He is a senior partner with the law firm of Feikens, Vander Male, Stevens, Bellamy, and Gilchrist (Detroit, Michigan).

Mr. James E. Vander Molen is a member of Church of the Servant CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan, where he has served as chair of the building committe, co-chair of the art committee, and consultant to the facility committee. He is a project manager for Progressive Architecture Engineering Planning.

B. Position 2 - select one for a three-year term through June 30, 2000

Mr. Gerald W. Van Wyke (incumbent) is a member of North Hills CRC, Troy, Michigan, where he has served on the church council as elder. He is a partner with the law firm of Feikens, Vander Male, Stevens, Bellamy, and Gilchrist (Detroit, Michigan).

Mr. Curtis R. Witte is a member of Mayfair CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan, where he has served as chair of the deacons, chair of the mission committee, member of the finance committee, and chair of Mayfair Christian Daycare board of directors. He is a partner with the law firm of Oosterhouse, Kravitz, and Witte (Grand Rapids, Michigan).

The remaining members of the board of directors are Ms. Jany Admiraal-Nykamp (1998), Rev. Gerard Dykstra (1998), Mr. Gerard Borst (1999), and Ms. Arlissa Joseph (1999).

III. Growth of operations

A. The Loan Fund is qualified to sell notes to investors in twenty-eight states and the District of Columbia: Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Colorado, Connecticut, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Iowa, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, Ohio, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Texas, Vermont, and Washington. In November 1996, after extensive efforts, we were also qualified to

offer securities to residents of the state of California. Efforts continue to add other states with CRC populations if cost of registration is reasonable.

B. As of the close of the fiscal year—June 30, 1996—a total of $7,597,047 of interest-bearing notes held by investors was outstanding. Maturities range from one year to eight years, and interest rates vary from 4.75 percent to 8.25 percent, with a time-weighted average of 6.54 percent. The variances in interest rates reflect market conditions at the time the notes were issued.

C. To date nearly three hundred requests for loan information have been received from various Christian Reformed churches in the United States; nearly eighty loan applications have been approved. As of June 30, 1996, a total of $10,110,000 (U.S.) was outstanding. Loan delinquencies do occur from time to time, but they are monitored and minimal.

D. Growth of operations is also reflected in the following data (U.S. and Canada consolidated):

	1994	1995	1996
Cash and equivalents	$357,431	$824,394	$839,611
Loans and accounts receivable	$8,502,209	$9,340,295	$9,835,476
Total assets	$8,859,640	$10,164,689	$10,675,087
Notes and accounts payable	$5,994,238	$7,151,333	$7,597,047
Net assets	$2,865,402	$3,013,356	$3,078,040
Total liabilities and net assets	$8,859,640	$10,164,689	$10,675,087

E. An audited financial report as of June 30, 1996, appears in the *Agenda for Synod 1997—Financial and Business Supplement*.

IV. Sources of funding

Funds for the Loan Fund operations are derived from the following sources:

A. The sale of notes in those states where legal approval to offer has been obtained.

B. The gradual liquidation of non-interest-bearing notes of the former Christian Reformed Church Help Committee, which was dissolved December 31, 1983. The balance of these notes as June 30, 1996, was $72,553 (U.S.).

C. Gifts and bequests made to the corporation.

D. Bank loans and interagency borrowing so long as these are consistent with the corporation's articles of incorporation and bylaws.

V. Change in leadership

Mr. Harry Vander Meer has served as executive director of the Loan Fund on a part-time basis since 1994, when he retired as the denominational financial coordinator. Mr. Vander Meer, retiring for the second time, left the Loan Fund on February 28, 1997. As Mr. Vander Meer served the CRC in various capacities for many years, he also served the Loan Fund with distinction, outstanding enthusiasm, and excellence. "Harry," as he is affectionately known, deserves the gratitude of synod for the dedication with which he has offered his person, his

talents, and his devotion. Those of us who worked with him know that he did it "as unto the Lord."

Mr. Jack Heinen, presently the director of finance for Christian Reformed Home Missions, has assumed responsibility for providing (interim) leadership to the Loan Fund in addition to his Home Missions' responsibilities. This combination of duties is possible because of the interagency financial reorganization currently being implemented. Whether this interim arrangement can become permanent will depend on the lessons we learn over the course of the next few months. The Board of Trustees and the Loan Fund board will review this arrangement at a later date.

Mr. Heinen is excellently qualified for providing the leadership the Loan Fund needs because he has been providing a similar service to Home Missions for several years. Mrs. Ethel Schierbeek, who has been providing administrative assistance in the Loan Fund office, will continue to provide that service.

VI. Recommendations

A. That synod take note of the retirement of Mr. Harry J. Vander Meer on February 28, 1997, and the appointment of Mr. Jack Heinen as interim executive director along with his duties as director of finance for Christian Reformed Home Missions.

B. That Mr. Jack Heinen, interim 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.

C. 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.

Christian Reformed Church Loan Fund,
Inc., U.S.
Harry J. Vander Meer, immediate-past executive director
Jack Heinen, interim executive director

I. Organization

The Fund for Smaller Churches (FSC) Committee is composed of three laypeople and two ministers, in keeping with previous synodical decisions. The present membership is as follows: Mr. Arthur Ruiter (1999), president; Rev. Lambert J. Sikkema (1998), secretary; Mr. Henry F. Eizenga (1998) (filling out the unexpired term of Mr. James Hofman); Mr. James Evenhouse (1997), treasurer; and Rev. Lester Van Essen (1999).

Mr. James Hofman, president of the committee, resigned his position because of a job transfer to North Dakota. We wish to thank Mr. Hofman for his leadership and guidance over the past four years. The appointment of Mr. Henry F. Eizenga was recommended by the committee and approved by the Board of Trustees.

II. Work of the committee

Statistics for calendar year 1996

Applications processed	87* (105 in 1995)
Assistance granted	87 (some provisionally)
Average size of congregation	30.4 families (United States) 36 families (Canada) (32.04 combined in 1995)
Education allowances granted	21 (21 in 1995)

III. Changes in Grant Application Form

During the past several years a number of congregations and individuals have been asking about the meaning and intent of the "retained ministry share" grant reduction, which previously appeared on line 6 on the FSC Grant Application Form. Because this question was not well understood, some congregations reported their total contribution to ministry shares, whereas other congregations ignored this question entirely (see form, p. 184).

After much discussion and analysis, the Fund for Smaller Churches Committee has decided to eliminate line 6 from its Grant Application Form. The committee decided that including the information on ministry shares in calculating the net grant amount was unfair to the churches receiving FSC assistance. The FSC Committee came to the conclusion that a provision designed to avoid the transfer of dollars (in a financial-accounting sense) within the denominational structure created unintended inequities. It has become apparent that the smaller churches were being forced to pay ministry shares in a way non-FSC churches were not. What started as an attempt to avoid having "checks pass in the mail" turned out to be a program of forced ministry-share payments via "retained ministry share" deductions from grant requests.

As it now stands, the agencies and institutions of the denomination will have to make the same case for ministry-share participation with each of the

*Several of the larger churches receiving grants from FSC in the past have decided not to apply for grants in the coming year. Because such larger churches received relatively small grants, the percentage drop in the number of approved grants is not reflected in a corresponding decrease in the FSC budget.

"smaller" congregations as they do with all the other churches. The FSC Committee is making this adjustment in the interest of fair treatment for all churches of the denomination.

IV. Proposed FSC compensation (including changes) for 1998

The FSC Committee recommends the following compensation adjustments for 1998:

A. That the minimum salary for ministers serving U.S. churches receiving assistance from FSC be set at $28,800 ($27,700 for 1997) and that the Canadian minimum salary be set at $31,680 ($28,800 x 110%) ($30,470 for 1997). See J below.

B. That the annual service increment be adjusted from a flat $100 per year (for up to thirty years) to the following scale: $100 per year of service for years 1-10; $150 per year of service for years 11-20; and $200 per year of service for years 21 and more.

C. 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).

D. That automobile expenses be reimbursed at the rate of 31.5 cents a mile (31.5 cents per kilometer in Canada).

E. That, instead of the 20 percent of salary allowance previously granted to recipient churches, an allowance of $4,000 be granted each congregation which provides its minister with health/dental/life insurance. Insurance coverage of the pastor and family is mandatory for congregations receiving FSC assistance.

F. That salary allowance for stated supply be increased from $350 (1997) to $365 per week, effective January 1, 1998.

G. That the contribution toward the minister's salary in congregations receiving assistance from FSC be increased so that it is not less, and if possible more, than $365 per communicant member for 1998.

H. That congregations in the U.S. receiving assistance from FSC increase the payment of the Social Security/Medicare offset to their pastor from $2,630 to at least $2,675, effective January 1, 1998.

I. That FSC churches in the U.S. be assisted in the Social Security/Medicare offset with an increase from 10 percent of salary subsidy to a flat $2,000 for 1998.

J. 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 communicant member contribution rate established for the U.S. churches for 1998 ($365 x 110% = $401.50 per member).

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.

K. That the continuing-education allowance for pastors in smaller churches remain at $350 for 1998. 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.

L. That the Christian-education allowance be increased from $600 to $800 for each dependent child attending a Christian school, grades K-12, in 1998.

M. That the 1998 ministry share for the Fund for Smaller Churches be set at $7.20 per communicant member.

V. Nominations

The FSC Committee recommends that the following nominees be considered for appointment to the position being vacated by Mr. James Evenhouse, who has finished his second three-year term and is not eligible for another term of service:

Mr. Jack Folkerts is a self-employed C.P.A. and financial planner. He is a member of Elmhurst CRC, Elmhurst, Illinois.

Mr. David Meyer is a C.P.A. and a partner with John Evenhouse and Company. He is a member of Lombard CRC, Lombard, Illinois.

VI. Recommendations

A. The FSC Committee requests that the secretary and treasurer of FSC be consulted on matters pertaining to FSC when considered by synod and its advisory committee. In the absence of either, it requests that the same privilege be granted to other members of the committee present at synod.

B. That synod approve the financial recommendations contained in Section IV of this report.

C. That synod elect a member for the FSC Committee from the nominations provided in Section V of this report.

Fund for Smaller Churches Committee
Rev. Lambert J. Sikkema, secretary

GRANT APPLICATION FORM
FUND FOR SMALLER CHURCHES, CRCNA
DUE BY NOVEMBER 1, 1997

Date of Application ____/___/_____

Church_____ Classis _____

Address_____

Telephone ( ) _____ Best time to call_____

Number of families _____ Current pastor_____ Since _____
Number of communicant members (18 years or older) _____
(If these numbers are different from those recorded in the CRC *Yearbook*, please explain.)

Request for pastor's salary subsidy:

1. Pastor's base salary for 1998 (Do not include additional allowances here.) $_____
   (minimum set by Synod 1997, $28,800 U.S.; $31,680 Canada)

2. We request the following additional allowances:
   a. Children's allowance: no. of children_____ at $600 = $_____
      ($660 in Canada)
   b. Christian-school allowance: no. of children_____ at $800 = $_____
      ($880 in Canada)
   c. Service allowance: no. of years of service_____ at $100 = $_____ for first 10 years
      ($110 in Canada)
      no. of years of service _____ at $150 = $_____ for years 11-20
      ($165 in Canada)
      no. of years of service _____ at $200 = $_____ for years 21 and up
      ($220 in Canada)

   d. Social Security allowance: $2,000.00

   e. Health-and-life-insurance-premium allowance: $4,000.00
      TOTAL ALLOWANCES $_____

3. Total of base salary plus allowances (add fines 1 and 2) $_____

4. Toward this salary we will contribute $365 per communicant member ($401 Canadian)

   U. S. no. of communicant members over the age of 18 _____ x 365 = $_____
   Canadian no. of communicant members over the age of 18 _____ x 401 = $_____

5. TOTAL AMOUNT REQUESTED (subtract line 4 from line 3) $_____

6. FSC grant amount (The FSC committee will adjust this amount according to the guidelines set by Synod 1995.)
   $_____

Please Note: Any exceptions requested must be accompanied by an attached explanation and must be endorsed by your local classis.

PLEASE CHECK YOUR CALCULATIONS.....THANKS!!

I. Introduction

Pastoral Ministries as a Christian Reformed Church agency is engaged in a growing mission. While the agency continues to explore areas of commonality between its ministries and those of the other agencies of the Christian Reformed Church, it is also discovering how its various divisions can carry out its mission to the churches. The mandate of Pastoral Ministries directs the agency to design programs which will help Christian Reformed congregations to be more unified and better equipped to serve the communities surrounding them. Concerns for healthy congregational life compels Pastoral Ministries to be an agency of advocacy, resources, and responsiveness. As it has been exploring areas of ministry, Pastoral Ministries has come to see that both existing programs and new programs will need to be made more inclusive of a growing number of people within the congregations and within communities who need advocacy, resources, and responsiveness from the church.

II. The Pastoral Ministries Board

A. *Members, meetings, nominations*

The board, composed of fifteen members, has met twice since Synod 1996, in September 1996 and February 1997. 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, a finance committee, and the Canadian chaplain committee. The executive committee also functions as a personnel committee.

Five persons are finishing their first terms on the board: Mr. Gerry Bosma, Mrs. Mary Bouwma, Mrs. Barbara Heerspink, Rev. Robert Heerspink, and Rev. Peter Nicolai. The alternates whose terms are expiring are Mr. Henry Bosch, Ms. Sharon Hulst, Ms. Ruth Oosterhof, Mr. Harold Postma, and Mr. Eugene Westra. Of the retiring members, Mrs. Heerspink chose not to be nominated for a second term as a board member.

Five positions need to be filled on the Pastoral Ministries Board. Three nominations are presented for each position with the understanding that in each of the three cases synodical delegates will, on a first ballot, elect one of the first two persons listed below to be a regular member and on a later ballot will elect an alternate from the remaining two names.

1. *Mrs. Mary Bouwma* (incumbent) is director of education and youth at Seymour CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan. She was a member of the Pastor-Church Relations Committee (beginning in 1992) and later became part of the Pastoral Ministries Board. She is also active on the Pastor-Church Relations Functional Group for Unordained Church Professionals.

   Ms. Sharon Hulst (alternate incumbent) is director of ministry at Holland Heights CRC, Holland, Michigan. She is currently serving as chairperson of the Pastor-Church Relations Functional Group for Unordained Church Professionals.

   Rev. Jochem Vugteveen is a pastor of Unity CRC in Prospect Park, New Jersey. Rev. Vugteveen has served four other congregations of the CRC

(Birnamwood, Wisconsin; Winfield, Illinois; Strathroy, Ontario; and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania).

2. *Rev. Peter Nicolai* (incumbent) was the chairperson of the Synodical Committee to Study Abuse from 1989 to 1992. In his former pastorates at Houston CRC in Houston, British Columbia; Fellowship CRC in Toronto, Ontario; Second CRC in Brampton, Ontario; Emmanuel CRC in Calgary, Alberta, and currently at Grace CRC in Chatham, Ontario, Rev. Nicolai has provided leadership to the denomination in responding to the needs of victims of abuse.

   Mr. Henry Bosch (alternate incumbent) is the staff person for Classis Alberta North's Diaconal Conference and has broad experience in all forms of ministry to people with special needs. Mr. Bosch lives in Edmonton, Alberta.

   Ms. Flo Slomp lives in Edmonton, Alberta, and has been active in a wide range of church-related activities.

3. *Mr. Gerry Bosma* (incumbent) has served on the Synodical Committee on Race Relations Board since 1990 and was a member of its executive and leadership-development committees. Mr. Bosma is director of finance for the Manitoba Provincial Department of Social Services and is a member of Covenant CRC of Winnipeg, Manitoba. He has had fifteen years of service on the executive board for the National Committee for Ministry among Indians in Canada.

   Mr. Eugene Westra (alternate incumbent) is a retired teacher (Holland Christian Middle School) and a member of Classis Holland's Multiethnic Task Force. He has served as a board member of SCORR (1992-1995) and has served as an alternate member on the Pastoral Ministries Board since 1995.

   Ms. Joyce Gill is a member of Madison Avenue CRC in Paterson, New Jersey, where she is currently the director of the Christian Child Care Center. She has served on various local and regional boards and committees such as the Youth Ministries Board and Vision 2000 Committee.

4. *Rev. Robert Heerspink* (incumbent) currently serves as pastor of Cottonwood Heights CRC in Jenison, Michigan. He served on the Chaplain Committee from September 1992 until the Pastoral Ministries Board was established. He now serves the Pastoral Ministries Board as vice president.

   Mr. Harold Postma (alternate incumbent) owns his own accounting service in Grandville, Michigan. He is a member of Ridgewood CRC in Jenison, Michigan. Mr. Postma served on the Chaplain Committee from September 1988 until the Pastoral Ministries Board was established. He now serves as an alternate member of the Pastoral Ministries Board.

   Rev. Dean Dyk has been a minister in the CRC since 1979, serving churches in Calgary, Alberta, and Honolulu, Hawaii. He has been the director of pastoral care at Behavioral Health in Denver since 1990 and presently serves as a member of the Abuse Response Team for Classis Rocky Mountain.

5. *Mrs. Mary Hollebeek* is a member of Madison Square CRC in Grand Rapids, Michigan. She has served on various church and community boards, including Jubilee Jobs and Hospice.

   Mr. Cornelius Vogel is a junior-high teacher and a member of Princeton CRC, in Grand Rapids, Michigan. He has served on the church council and on the

boards of Christian Learning Center, Association for Retarded Citizens, and Pine Rest Christian Mental Health Services.

Ms. Ruth Oosterhof (alternate incumbent) is a special-education teacher and a member of Calvin CRC in Muskegon, Michigan. She presently serves as an alternate member on the Pastoral Ministries Board.

B. Executive director of Pastoral Ministries

Synod 1996 confirmed the appointment of Ms. Beth Swagman as executive director of Pastoral Ministries, a responsibility she assumed in addition to her primary responsibility as director of Abuse Prevention (time commitment of 20/80 percent respectively).

The real challenge for the Pastoral Ministries staff and director is 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)
17	1	2nd quartile
15	4	2nd quartile

III. The programs of Pastoral Ministries

A. Abuse Prevention (Ms. Beth A. Swagman, director)

1. Work accomplished during the past year

The division of Abuse Prevention has completed two full years of operation. The activities of the past year include the following:

- Planning for the publication of a booklet on domestic violence for use by the churches.
- Conducting seminars, training, and conferences in/for Ottawa, Toronto, Classis Florida (twice), Detroit, Welland (for churches in Classis Niagara), Vancouver, Edmonton, Grand Rapids (for churches in Classis GR North), Ministers' Institute, Multiethnic Conference, Calvinette Convention, Cadet Convention, Calvin College secondary-education students, Brampton (twice), Smithers, Lacombe (for churches in Classis Alberta North).
- Consulting with twenty churches in Michigan and the Midwest about the implementation of child-abuse-prevention policies.
- Training four classical abuse-response teams (Pacific Northwest, Chatham, Georgetown, and Rocky Mountain).
- Refining guidelines for handling abuse allegations against a church leader.
- Consulting with pastors, councils, classes representatives, Christian-school board members and faculty, and denominational agencies when allegations of abuse surfaced within a church, school, organization, agency, or institution.

- Supporting and advising survivors of abuse, their family members, perpetrators of abuse, and others connected to incidents of abuse that recently occurred or occurred in the past.

2. Challenges to the ministry

Abuse is an act that can be observed and recorded. Although most abusive incidents take place in a private place and away from public scrutiny, it still remains an event that, if done in front of others, can be recognized. It is this transparent nature of the act which causes perpetrators of it to be secretive. Despite the vileness of the activity, many perpetrators often bemoan the fact that they were caught, but not so much the fact that the act itself is wrong and harmful.

The Bible forbids acts of violence and abuse against children or adults. In 1994, in response to the report of the Synodical Committee on Abuse, synod declared abuse to be a sin. Such a declaration, although supportive of the work of the committee, does not stop abuse. Neither is there a way at this point to know whether education and other preventive steps have resulted in fewer incidents of abuse. Two factors are probably the strongest indicators that abuse is continuing. First, if a perpetrator has abused more than once, he/she will likely continue to abuse. Regardless of what anyone thinks or declares, words don't stop very many perpetrators. The second factor is the cultural norms and systemic attitudes that encourage, justify, rationalize, or minimize abuse. In addition to the progress being made in educating and training members of the denomination in abuse awareness, the challenge at this time is to expose the cultural norms and attitudes that underlie and support abusive behavior.

3. Revision of Abuse Guidelines

The guidelines for handling allegations of abuse against a church leader were provisionally approved by Synod 1996 with a request for refinement of the guidelines by the Pastoral Ministries Board. The revised guidelines were sent to all CRC congregations in November 1996; suggested changes to the guidelines are to be made by overture to Synod 1997. The revised guidelines are attached to this report as an appendix.

Since 1995, when the guidelines were first approved, seven persons have indicated a desire to pursue the advisory-panel process outlined in the guidelines. In some cases persons were denied access to the process (according to their own report). Others withdrew their request for the process when details of the process became known to them. One advisory-panel process was requested by Synod 1995. Another was initiated by the request of the alleged victim; allegations subsequently were not pursued with the then-alleged offender.

B. Chaplaincy Ministries (Rev. Jacob P. Heerema, director; Rev. Siebert Van Houten, Canadian director)

The mandate of Chaplaincy Ministries is to bring spiritual resources to human needs by promoting and supporting Christian ministry in specialized settings and by endorsing, monitoring, and nurturing chaplains for these ministries. Chaplains are ministers of the church who serve in specialized settings around the world. There are now eighty-nine full-time and sixteen part-time chaplains. Chaplains bring the message of hope, mercy, and reconciliation

to those burdened by fear and despair; they serve as agents of the church in the coming of the kingdom.

1. The activities of Chaplaincy Ministries
   - Endorsing eligible candidates for chaplaincy.
   - Providing pastoral support to chaplains and their families through phone calls, correspondence, and visits.
   - Publishing *Internos* (a newsletter sent mainly to CRC chaplains and some friends of chaplains—published three times per year).
   - Consulting with chaplains about their ministry and supervising their performance in partnership with their employing agency and calling church.
   - Organizing the annual Chaplains' Conference.
   - Serving as the employing agency in terms of pension arrangements.
   - Providing salary subsidy for chaplains whose employers cannot meet minimum salary standards.
   - Performing administrative functions as required by governmental agencies.
   - Promoting chaplaincy ministry in the denomination by informing the churches of the challenges of chaplaincy ministry.
   - Representing the denomination as official agent on governmental boards and in educational organizations.
   - Developing a response to synod's request for strategies for the supervision of ministers in specialized settings.

2. Challenges to Chaplaincy Ministries

   As society is becoming more secular and institutions are downsizing, chaplaincy positions are more and more threatened by downsizing and even by elimination. In order to continue its ministry in institutions, the church may need to become more active in support of chaplaincy positions. There is an important mission field in the institutions of society.

   A number of persons, though not seeking ordination, are nevertheless interested in serving in chaplaincy positions. Chaplaincy Ministries will be actively engaged in developing a policy regarding and guidelines for endorsement of such persons.

   Many volunteers are giving of their time and energy to serve Christ in institutions. The challenge is to provide ways to support and encourage them. While Chaplaincy Ministries primarily deals with pastors, there is a tremendous opportunity for involvement with laypersons.

   An additional challenge is to bring chaplaincy ministry closer to classes and congregations. Chaplaincy Ministries is exploring ways to do so because the promotion of chaplains is an important activity. However, one significant challenge in this endeavor is limited funds.

   Synod has mandated the Pastoral Ministries Board to provide pension benefits for chaplains. These pension premiums are presently funded through ministry shares. The Pastoral Ministries' budget and programs are significantly impacted by this pension obligation in the face of shrinking ministry-share revenues. The Pastoral Ministries Board is presently reviewing the manner in which the chaplains' pension premiums are being funded, and alternatives are being explored.

C. Disability Concerns (Dr. James L. Vanderlaan, director)

1. Accessability of churches

Disability Concerns is responsible to synod for monitoring denominational progress in making all church buildings, services, and activities fully accessible to people with disabilities. The CRC *Yearbook* questionnaires, sent annually by the general secretary to all councils, have been adapted to provide these data. The results this year compared to last year are as follows:

Categories	Number of Churches in 1995	Number of Churches in 1996
Barrier-free access	517	394
Partially accessible	307	435
Signing for deaf	30	32
Aids for hearing impaired	428	455
Aids for visually impaired	210	305
Special program	218	245
Transportation	139	276

These figures indicate a modest gain in all special categories of access for people with disabilities. The decline in the number of churches with completely barrier-free access and the increase in the number of churches with partial access must indicate a growing concern of the churches to be accurate in self-examination. That is to say, churches are surely not constructing new barriers.

The *Yearbook* questionnaire also asks whether people with disabilities serve in church positions. Though the answers to that question are not indicated in the *Yearbook*, the answers help us track denominational progress in bringing people with disabilities into church life. The question this year asked for more detail than it did last year, and this may have suggested ways of participating which were overlooked before. So comparison with last year is not exact. Nevertheless, the statistics for 1996 show the following:

Participation (members with disabilities serve in staff or volunteer positions in the congregation):

Paid staff	14	
Officebearer	28	
Church-school teacher	24	
Usher/greeter	81	
Committee member	57	
Other	56	
Total	260	congregations
Participation in 1995:	83	congregations

2. Activities of Disability Concerns

Disability Concerns has carried on the following programs during 1996, grouped according to headings found in Disability Concerns' mandate. These programs may be described as follows:

a. To disseminate information on services available to people with disabilities and their families by printing and distributing
   1) A directory of CRC-related agencies helping people with developmental disabilities (biannually).

2) A disability resource guide, "Opening Doors to All God's People," as part of council handbooks.
3) To deacons, a list of the resources and services Disability Concerns offers (semiannually).
4) In "Breaking Barriers," a list of books on disabilities, recommended for church libraries (annually).
5) Mailings of material useful to people in the CRC Mental Illness Network (periodically).

b. To increase constituency awareness of needs people with disabilities have by
1) Publishing "Breaking Barriers," life stories of Christian Reformed people with disabilities.
2) Promoting articles in *The Banner*, the *CRC Source*, etc., on disability issues.
3) Preaching and speaking in churches, schools, and other gatherings.
4) Planning conferences for professionals, church leaders, and people and families with disabilities.

c. To assist churches in identifying and eliminating disability barriers by
1) Offering church-evaluation checklists, disability ministry guidelines, Bible-study outlines, etc.
2) Providing councils and congregations with on-site services.
3) Conducting workshops for diaconal conferences, councils, and congregations.
4) Encouraging and assisting in the development of support groups and respite services.
5) Supporting, advising, and advocating for people with disabilities and their families.
6) Helping churches and individuals locate any specialized disability services they may require.

3. Challenges to Disability Concerns

Certain needs people with disabilities have continue to demand attention, and Disability Concerns seeks ways to impress the CRC with its responsibility to help meet these needs.

a. The first challenge is caring for the spiritual needs of people in group homes. Persons with developmental and mental impairments no longer live in large institutions but in community homes and apartments. Since they are no longer served by chaplains, they need local churches to give them spiritual nurture and community. Thus, local Christian Reformed churches must reach out to such people in their surrounding areas with the gospel message and with Christian affection. Disability Concerns has the challenge of motivating the churches to provide this care.

b. A second challenge is securing jobs. Despite their eagerness to work and their well-developed level of skill, only a third of working-age people with disabilities have work. Many CRC members are positioned to help such people find work, and the church should assist in organizing these efforts. Disability Concerns must formulate strategies to meet this challenge.

c. A third challenge is securing the monitary assistance many people with disabilities, including many elderly, must have for such basic necessities as housing, medical services, and personal-care attendants. Pending reduction in government assistance means that other sources must be found. The church should be active in forming a just public policy on these matters and in giving diaconal ministry to those who are in distress. Disability Concerns has the challenge of calling the attention of the churches to these issues.

d. A fourth challenge is meeting the financial and program demands of the Disability Concerns' ministry. Its 1997-1998 budget has been reduced by 17 percent, and the position of the Disability Concerns program developer has been terminated. The Disability Concerns director cannot possibly pick up all the work of the developer in addition to his own work, and in the future he will have to spend even more of his time raising funds for the division than heretofore. Consequently, Disability Concerns must begin relying much more heavily on volunteer help to carry on the ministry. Thus, it has the challenge of recruiting and organizing this volunteer help.

D. Pastor-Church Relations (Rev. Duane A. Visser, director)

1. Activities

Synod 1988 restated the mandate of Pastor-Church Relations to emphasize the areas of *prevention* and *healing* as it serves congregations and pastors. In 1996 its efforts have been concerned more with healing than with prevention. The director and regional pastors (RP) have been active in consultation and intervention in many conflict situations, and they continue to respond to requests for information and support.

Pastor-Church Relations continues to respond with the following activities:

- There is at least one regional pastor in each classis. These pastors pastor fellow pastors and unordained ministry persons within their classes. They often serve as mediators when there are difficulties in congregations. The number of regional pastors has been increased where distances are great or workload is excessive. In some classes unordained church professionals are continuing to serve as regional pastors.
- Mentors are assigned to each new pastor transferring into the CRC ministry. These are experienced pastors who can assist others in the transition to pastoring in the CRC.
- The Ministerial Information Service continues to be an active part of the PCR task. The number of vacant churches is currently approximately 125, fewer than one year ago. There continue to be many requests for pastor and church profiles. Search committees are attempting to be thorough in their approach to the calling process. Therefore it takes longer than in the past. During 1996, 2,311 ministerial profiles were processed at the request of pastors and churches. Ninety-seven pastors accepted calls.

2. Challenges

One person has remarked that with all the changes taking place in our church and culture, the church becomes a "moving target" when it comes to

developing programs to respond to the various needs. The ongoing changes in church and culture have resulted in the following challenges for Pastor-Church Relations:

- Regional pastors need assistance in, and probably redefinition of, their tasks.
- We are exploring the possibilities of trained "mediation teams" to assist congregations and pastors in need of conciliation services.
- A task force is at work developing guidelines for severance packages and support for pastors and congregations who are separated. This action is a response to a request from Synod 1996.
- Mentors must be given more specific guidelines and authority as they work with new pastors.
- The Ministerial Information Service responds as a clearing house for ministerial and congregational profiles, but there is increasing dissatisfaction with our current calling process. There is a need to rework the system and to look at intentional interim ministry for vacant churches and at methods of calling. There are increasing questions about whether we should consider term calls with a thorough evaluation process, some form of a denominational personnel committee, and requiring continuing education for clergy.

E. Race Relations (Rev. Alfred S. Luke, director; Mrs. Yvonne Rayburn-Beckley, regional director [Chicago]; Rev. Norberto Wolf, regional director [Los Angeles])

"Racism is an evil weed sown in the garden of humanity. It has grown wildly, entangling the healthy plants and covering the pathways, creating a maze, a labyrinth with twists and turns that have led humanity astray. Racism has entwined and entrapped us all" (*Dismantling Racism*, Joseph Barndt). In both the U.S. and Canada, efforts are being made to loosen the trap of racism. In Canada, the voluminous report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, entitled "People to People, Nation to Nation," attempts to rectify past discriminations. In the United States a scandal over racial slurs forces the oil giant Texaco to rethink and remake its corporate identity. The Christian Reformed Church's report "God's Diverse and Unified Family" prophetically declares "that to be in Christ is in principle to be reconciled as a community of racially and ethnically diverse people and to ignore his calling to turn this principle into experienced reality is sinful according to God's Word and the Reformed confessions" (*Acts of Synod 1996*, p. 617).

The all-encompassing mandate of Pastoral Ministries' division of Race Relations is "to design, organize, and implement programs which the denomination, churches, and members can effectively use to eliminate racism, both the causes and effects, within the body of believers and throughout the world."

The strategy Race Relations utilizes to dismantle racism is a four-pronged approach: education, consultation, leadership development, and advocacy.

1. Activities of the past year
   - Piloting a workshop for high-school students in Canada entitled "Racism: What Is the Role of Christian Youth?" The workshop was developed by Joel Kleine for the Committee for Racial Reconciliation.
   - Publishing, in partnership with the general secretary's office, "God's Diverse and Unified Family" into a booklet to facilitate discussion groups at churches and classes.

- Piloting the Institutes for the Healing of Racism in western Michigan. The intended result is to train more facilitators and provide opportunities to build allies in the effort to combat racism.
- Building multiracial kingdom leadership. Praise God that over five hundred congregations celebrated All Nations Heritage Week in 1996.
- Developing multicultural leaders and encouraging cross-cultural ministries through leadership-development grants and a scholarship program. Scholarships totaled $21,000, and grants totaled $26,000. Students receiving grants and scholarships represent various ethnicities: Korean, Cambodian, Chinese, African American, Native American, Hispanic, and Mexican American. The following seven ministries are supported by grant funding:
  Friendship Community (Downsview, Ontario)
  Grace and Peace Fellowship (Chicago, Illinois)
  Coit Community Church (Grand Rapids, Michigan)
  Vietnamese New Hope CRC (Winfield, Illinois)
  Sunshine Community Church (El Paso, Texas)
  His Place (Grand Rapids, Michigan)
  Sun Valley Community CRC (Denver, Colorado).
- Consulting with churches within Classis Greater Los Angeles and the Chicago-area classes to enhance communication and increase cooperation in ministry.

2. Our thanks

   Race Relations expresses its gratitude to the council of Pullman CRC for providing office space to Mrs. Rayburn-Beckley, regional director of the Chicago office.

3. Challenges

   a. Race Relations urges the churches to provide more opportunities for members to listen to the stories and the struggles of people of color. Our goal is to learn to listen actively—not judge, debate, defend, solve, or critique.

   b. Race Relations cautions that members need to move beyond polite and empty words, beyond slogans and accusations, beyond the hurts and fears that close us off from each other. Rather, we must be willing to learn from people of color. We must be willing to examine some of the messages, images, and cues we receive as children.

   c. In the present sociopolitical environment, both in the U.S. and Canada, people tend to view cultural and racial diversity as a problem to be solved rather than to embrace it as a gift to be cherished. Race Relations implores members to move along the continuum from uninformed to informed, from informed to concerned, and from concerned to active.

      Since people of color understand the power differential inherent in the three manifestations of racism—personal, cultural, and institutional—we need to actively pursue their advice. Also, they view racism not as an individual issue but as a systemic problem. So, by listening, learning, and acting, together we can dismantle racism.

d. Race Relations calls on churches and classes to ensure the equitable representation and meaningful pariticipation of ethnic-minority persons in leadership and other roles of influence at all levels of denominational life.

IV. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Rev. Charles Terpstra, chairman, and Ms. Beth Swagman, executive director, when Pastoral Ministries matters are discussed.

B. That synod approve the revised Guidelines for Handling Allegations of Abuse Against a Church Leader.

C. That synod encourage churches to celebrate All Nations Heritage Week from September 28 through October 4, 1998.

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 but especially as they celebrate Worldwide Communion 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.

D. That synod elect members and alternates for the Pastoral Ministries Board from the nominations provided (see Section II, A).

Pastoral Ministries
Beth A. Swagman, executive director

Note: Recommendations on financial matters will be included in the supplemental report of the CRC Board of Trustees.

Appendix

Abuse Guidelines

I. Background

The report of the Committee on Abuse Prevention introduced to Synod 1994 the concept of an independent body of people to review allegations of abuse against church leaders and explained in detail some of the important elements of the concept. For example, the report indicated that the body reviewing abuse allegations should be composed of church members who belong to churches other than the church or churches of the alleged victim and alleged offender so as to avoid the emotional stress of hearing allegations against or by persons known to the body. The report also suggested that the body be composed of both men and women because exclusively male membership could create an atmosphere of intimidation for some female victims. The committee's intent was to introduce a pastoral approach for responding to victims of abuse in the Christian Reformed Church. This approach was admittedly designed to make it

easier for victims to come forward with their allegations of abuse because previous attempts through other ecclesiastical bodies had been unsuccessful or revictimizing.

Synod 1994 recognized that the concept had some weaknesses but also accepted the committee's conclusion that other ecclesiastical bodies and procedures had not been as pastoral as victims of abuse need if the church is to hear their stories. Therefore, Synod 1994 recommended the concept to the churches for study and suggestions, which were to be submitted to the incoming director of Abuse Prevention for revision.

The director of Abuse Prevention had roughly two months to gather and sift through the suggestions that were offered. Though fewer than 10 percent of the churches responded, the responses nonetheless were helpful—and quite diverse. Some councils argued for an independent committee made up of males and females. Some councils argued for better training of (exclusively) male consistory members to hear complaints of abuse and against independent committees to "do the work of the consistory."

Consultation was arranged with Dr. David Engelhard, general secretary of the CRCNA, and with Dr. Henry De Moor, professor of church polity at Calvin Theological Seminary. The language of the study committee's report was changed extensively, and the relationship between the body recommended by the committee and bodies recognized by the Church Order was thoroughly reviewed. Attorneys in the United States and in Canada were consulted, and some of their suggestions were incorporated into a revised version of the document, which appeared in the *Agenda for Synod 1995*. After considerable debate on the floor of synod, the document was approved for use in the churches. Synod also passed a recommendation that the council/consistory should be responsible for adjudication in cases of abuse allegations and another recommendation that the newly named advisory panel function only in an advisory capacity to the ecclesiastical body to which it should report.

Following Synod 1995, legal counsel in both the United States and Canada were still concerned that the concept of due process had not been clearly delineated and protected in the document and recommended that the document be revised for Synod 1996. In fact, the document was substantively revised according to the suggestions of legal counsel and appeared in the supplementary materials for Synod 1996 (see *Acts of Synod 1996*, pp. 374-81). The late submission of the revised document could not be avoided because extensive conversations with legal counsel were ongoing past the deadline for the printed agenda.

At Synod 1996, the advisory committee which was assigned the task of reviewing the Guidelines for Handling Abuse Allegations Against a Church Leader spent considerable time on the document. The committee also interviewed various parties who were concerned about the document and the way the guidelines were formulated. The advisory committee made several minor changes in the document to reflect the suggestions/criticisms it had heard during several hours of review and reflection. When the document appeared in yet another revised form on the floor of synod, the matter was judged too complex for the delegates to resolve in the time available. The document was provisionally approved, and the director of Abuse Prevention was authorized to use the provisionally approved guidelines for her work.

However, the document was recommitted to the Pastoral Ministries Board for further refinement. The executive committee of the board and later the full

Pastoral Ministries Board revised the document into its present form. Throughout the whole process some disagreement has existed between the office of Abuse Prevention and legal counsel as to whether the document details essentially an ecclesiastical process or essentially a judicial process which should mirror civil law.

The churches are being asked to review the document once again and to offer any necessary changes by way of overtures to Synod 1997.

II. Procedures and guidelines for handling abuse allegations against a church leader

A. Why a procedure for handling abuse allegations is necessary

1. Many allegations of child abuse surface after a child reaches adulthood. This happens when an adult survivor of child abuse becomes separated from a familial abuser in adulthood. Sometimes in adulthood the adult survivor comes to recognize the behavior done to him/her as abusive.

2. Sadly, because some church leaders have been unaware of child-abuse reporting laws and procedures, some victims have been placed at risk, some abusers have gone unnoticed, and some have not been reported to local authorities.

3. Insurance companies that handle liability policies for churches may require reasonable policies and procedures that could reduce the risk of abuse and the costly civil litigation that can, and often does, result.

4. Costly civil litigation also results in an enormous toll on the emotional well-being of the litigants and the churches they attend. Church members are often divided in their support of litigants, and they may be uncertain how to respond with Christian concern toward litigants.

5. Because abuse committed by a church leader is always an abuse of authority, the church, as Christ's representative, must move swiftly to protect innocent and vulnerable persons from such unconscionable attacks.

In the development and implemention of a procedure to handle abuse allegations, two great tensions exist. First, tension exists because the church wants to respond to the horror contained in the allegations and at the same time wants to protect the character, office, and family of someone who may be accused of abuse, falsely or not. Second, tension exists when the church wants its members to stay out of civil court and to resolve disputes in an ecclesiastical manner. Because the church procedure is not perceived as essentially different from civil court procedure, nor as more sensitive to the survivors, and because it is perceived by some to be biased in favor of the accused, survivors continue to choose silence or the civil courts for redress.

The absence of a procedure for handling abuse allegations has discouraged abuse victims from coming forward. Some who did come forward were reminded that forgetting is good and forgiving is better. Some were told that proceedings would follow Matthew 18:15-17. The victim and another person would confront the alleged abuser. If the accused spoke of his need for forgiveness, then the victim should be reconciled to the accused, and each would go his/her own way. If the victim could not confront the alleged abuser face to face,

usually out of fear of the abuser, then the accused person would be judged "not guilty" on the basis of the fact that the victim would not come forward to press his/her claim against the alleged abuser.

Dealing in such a way with the abused often exacerbated the problem rather than bringing justice. Requiring the abused to forget and forgive often revictimized them because now they struggled with the guilt of not easily being able to forgive such a heinous crime. Furthermore, sometimes they were required to forgive even though the perpetrator had not repented nor confessed the sin. The accused, on the other hand, were not always required to confess their sin or ask for forgiveness, and they were sometimes not even held accountable for their actions and the consequences of those actions. Often the accused went on to abuse again.

The threefold steps of action detailed in Matthew 18:15-17 have been foundational for Christian discipline since New Testament times. These steps, however, assume a parity of relationship between the accused and the accuser, which is seldom true in the case of abuse. Furthermore, Matthew 18 seems to suggest that witnesses will readily be able to acknowledge the accusation, probably on the basis of some public, observable data, even though there may be some disagreement about how to resolve the matter. Accusations of abuse, however, usually identify sins committed in secret, without witnesses and observable data, and often with direct threats of harm if the secret is revealed.

The procedures of Matthew 18 require the accuser and the accused to meet face to face. An abused person is seldom able to encounter an abuser in this way. When the abused is forced to face one who has dealt so cruelly with him/her, the abused person feels like a victim once again. Therefore, abused people have been unwilling to come forward with their stories even though their silence meant that an abusive spiritual leader would continue to serve in a position of authority.

Stories are told that some abusers who were dealt with according to Matthew 18 readily admitted their sins and were just as readily forgiven and restored to positions of responsibility and trust in the church. Even when it seemed wise to remove the abuser from office, it was argued by some that the failure to accept the confession and to forgive the sinner and restore to office would be contrary to the spirit of Scripture. The truthfulness of the confession of any sinner is difficult to discern, but this is especially true for the confessions of abusers. When forgiveness is granted in order to smooth things over in a congregation, it is an abomination to God, who holds forgiveness perfectly and the same for all.

In situations of easy repentance and forgiveness, victims often continue in brokenness, and so do abusers. Nowadays, it is the survivors who pursue the effort to bring healing and restoration to their lives, to the church, and to their abusers.

The guidelines below are intended to provide a process by which the church takes seriously the claims of abuse, evaluates specific allegations of misconduct, establishes a forum for meting out justice, aggressively seeks repentance from those who are guilty, and removes such persons from entrusted office or function within the church.

Note: The above section was approved by Synod 1995 (see *Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 672) and is included again in this document to provide a complete set of guidelines.

B. Guidelines

Note: The numbering system of the modified guidelines below follows the numbering of the guidelines which appear in *Acts of Synod 1995*, pages 783-88, and *Acts of Synod 1996*, pages 634-42. This version of the guidelines is being presented by the Pastoral Ministries Board for adoption by Synod 1997.

Member churches and classes should be allowed some freedom in defining *church leader*. A member church or classis may use the definition of *church leader* that is consistent 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, and so forth:

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.

c. *Emotional/psychological abuse* is harm or threatened harm to a person's welfare or well-being by a chronic or intentional pattern of deprivation; manipulative threats, words or actions; harassment; or unneccesary and excessive attempts to control a person's behavior or thoughts. The term *spiritual abuse* may be understood as emotional/psychological abuse committed by a recognized spiritual leader who causes harm or threatens harm to a person's spiritual welfare or well-being by a chronic or intentional pattern of behavior ordinarily contrary to the role expectations of the spiritual leader's office.

Various procedures may 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 procedure to follow. The following three procedures envision the consistory/council acting as an adjudicatory body 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 to follow the Judicial Code as outlined in Church Order Supplement, Article 30-c. 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 described in Church Order Supplement, Article 30-c. Here, too, 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 allegations of abuse arise and 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, however, 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. (See Footnote 4, a for important information.) The executive committee (or its equivalent), after consulting with one another (no one of those consulting may be implicated by the victim) and reviewing the alternatives, could notify the classical abuse-response team to convene an advisory panel (composed 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 an advisory panel meeting will be held. The advisory panel chooses the location and the time for the meeting. The accuser and witnesses should be available for the meeting. No public mention of the meeting 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 well as any report of the advisory panel.

e. The advisory panel should receive all the information presented to it by the accuser, 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 an advisory-panel meeting 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 accused should appear before the panel within seven days after the accuser does. 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 (or its equivalent) 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 the panel's findings.

j. The executive committee (or its equivalent) 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 congregation 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 abuse against a church leader by a minor child should be reported to an appropriate agency outside the church, such as Child Protective Services, Children's Aid, or the local police authorities. The appropriate police 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. Church leaders should be aware of the child-abuse reporting laws in their locality.

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. The primary reason for denying a face-to-face meeting should be that such a meeting would be materially detrimental to the minor. 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 actions 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 his/her own 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. The primary reason for denying a face-to-face meeting should be that such a meeting would be materially detrimental to the minor. 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 actions 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 such 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. When criminal proceedings have concluded, the council should promptly revisit the matter. This should occur whether the result is conviction, acquittal, or dropped charges. If 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.

If prosecution results 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 and restoration of offenders.

4. Five important footnotes regarding both sets of guidelines

a. These 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. If the allegations are ungodly conduct, abuse of office, and so forth, 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) may be given but only 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 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 their 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. Negligent failure to follow the guidelines as adopted could be a basis for potential liability.

e. Denominational personnel should not serve on either an abuse-response team or an advisory panel.

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-recognized organizations. These programs, including communication, enrollment, and record keeping, are administered by the denomination's personnel office. Accounting, control, and investment management are administered by the denominational financial office.

II. Board governance

The ministers' pension plans and the employees' retirement plans are governed by the U.S. Board of Pensions and Insurance and the Canadian Pension Trustees. These boards meet individually as needed 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 return on investments. The U.S. board also monitors the results of the U.S. Consolidated Group Insurance (CGI) program.

III. Benefit-program activities

A. Consolidated Group Insurance

Consolidated Group Insurance (CGI) is a denominational plan which offers life, health, and dental coverage in the United States and Canada. It is available to all ministers and unordained employees of the agencies and congregations. Currently there are 1,231 persons in the program (378 employees of denominational agencies and 853 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. The premiums assessed are based on overall expectations of claims and administrative expenses. Medical and dental expenses paid (cash basis) in 1996 were $3,836,000, 29 percent under 1995. As of December 31, 1996, the CGI trust which is used as a reserve for claims was at $2,378,000. However, there is a large claim-payment backlog with our preferred provider organization (PPO) of an as-yet-undetermined amount.

The transition in 1995 to a new third-party administrator was difficult, but much progress was made in 1996. If the favorable trends continue, a premium reduction may be possible for 1998.

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.

Individual participants direct the 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 investments are currently managed by the First Chicago NBD Corp., which also serves as custodian of the plan's assets. The investments of the Canadian participants are managed by Perigee Investment Counsel, Inc.

C. *Ministers' pension plans*

1. Participants

The ministers' pension plans are defined-benefit plans (U.S. and Canada) designed to provide retirement income and disability benefits to ordained ministers and their dependents within the Christian Reformed Church. As of December 31, 1996, there were 1,529 participants in the ministers' pension plans, classified as follows:

	U.S.	Canada	Total
Active ministers	726	203	929
Retired ministers	357	85	442
Widows and dependents	133	25	158
Total participants	1,216	313	1,529

2. Actuarial results

Periodically, independent actuaries are employed to do a complete assessment of the factors which make up the cost of the plans. The most recent report by the U.S. actuary, Watson Wyatt Worldwide, was prepared as of June 1, 1996. The latest report by the Canadian actuary, MLH +A Inc., was prepared as of December 31, 1996. Some of the significant figures are as follows:

	U.S.$	Canada $
Total annual cost per active minister	$ 3,073	$ 3,796
Average cash salary	29,699	32,181
Actuarial accrued liability	66,104,200	17,945,400
Actuarial value of assets	64,232,700	16,528,600
Unfunded liability	1,871,500	1,416,800
Total annual cost of the plan	2,483,100	823,813

3. Investments

With gratitude to God, we can report another good year of investment results. The returns have been as follows:

	1996	3 years	5 years
Canadian plan	18.1%	11.4%	11.8%
U.S. plan	14.5%	12.4%	12.0%

The professional money managers used by the boards and investment committees are Ambs Investment Counsel, Inc.; Brinson Partners, Inc.; First Chicago NBD Corp.; Loomis, Sayles & Company, L.P.; and, in Canada, Perigee Investment Counsel, Inc.

IV. Funding strategy

Since the start of the present ministers' pension plans in 1970, they have been funded by a combination of ministry share (formerly quota) and direct assessments. Ministry shares pay for the pension benefits for ministers serving churches (one pastor only, in the case of churches having multiple-staff ministries). The underlying concept has been that ministers serve several congregations during their careers and in so doing are serving the entire CRC. The cost of pension benefits for these ministers is spread among all the members (formerly families) of the CRC. Regardless of whether one attends a large church or a small church, the pension cost to be paid by each member is the same.

Since 1970, each ministry which employs a minister as a missionary, professor, teacher, chaplain, or in any other capacity other than as its "first/only" pastor has paid an annual assessment for the future pensions to be paid to such ministers. Approximately one-third of all ministers covered by the plan are on the assessment basis. The assessment is paid quarterly directly to the ministers' pension funds.

Since the inception of the plan in 1970, actuaries have been employed to advise the committees as to the amount of money which will be required in the future to pay the pension benefits to plan participants and their beneficiaries. These detailed studies are done every three years and are based on records maintained and continually updated by the ministers' pension funds financial staff. Information such as the dates of birth of every participant, years of service, projected years of service, and present and projected average cash salaries of ministers is furnished to the actuaries. The committee, in consultation with the actuaries, also makes certain assumptions, such as the estimated earnings from the investments, life expectancies, mortality rates, and disability rates. Some of these assumptions are based upon standard studies and tables developed by the insurance industry covering the general population. All of this information is then analyzed and computed to produce the estimated costs of the plans per participant. Each three-year study also takes into account the actual experience of the fund as to investment performance and certain other factors which may differ from the assumptions determined by the committee and the actuaries.

Plan benefits which will be payable to each participant are based on years of service and average cash salaries. This means that each year of service for each participant increases the future liability. Payments made each year to each retired minister reduce the liability for future payments to them. However, the time horizon of the ministers' pension funds committees has to be at least seventy years because many ministers enter the ministry in their mid-twenties and some are still beneficiaries in their nineties.

In the early years of the pension plans, ministry-share (quota) receipt provided nearly 100 percent of the amounts set annually by synod. But in recent years we have been faced with less-than-anticipated receipts from ministry shares. Since we are dealing with long-term liabilities to ministers in various stages of their twenty- to ninety-year life spans, we have to do something.

The pension committees have studied this situation carefully for the past several years and have considered the following alternatives:

A. Reduce benefits to the level which actual ministry-share receipts would support.

Response - Reducing benefits was judged unacceptable.

B. Change from a defined-benefit plan to a defined-contribution plan.

Response - This was rejected because it would shift the investment risk from the churches to the ministers and would result in variations in benefits based upon individual salaries of ministers.

C. Credit service to the minister proportionately to the percentage of ministry share paid by the church.

Response - Since ministry shares are paid to classical treasurers, the administration of such a system would be cumbersome.

D. Change from ministry-share funding to a direct-payment system by churches.

Response - After much discussion and prayer, this is the choice of the pension committees.

The joint Board of Pensions and Insurance believes that the direct-payment method is the best solution to the problem of having a dependable and adequate revenue source for funding the promised future benefits. It clearly treats pension costs as part of the minister's compensation package since these costs will be paid by churches along with the costs of the health and life insurance provided to our ministers. The system for handling the direct payment of pension costs is already in place since most of our U.S. ministers are enrolled in the health-insurance program.

The proposed change leaves intact all of the benefits of the system we have followed since 1970. Under the new arrangements, pension benefits to ministers would continue to be based on years of service and final average salaries without being linked to the salary of a particular minister. The pension costs would continue to be shared equally by all professing members 18 and over of the CRC regardless of whether they happen to be members of a large church or a small church. The costs for 1998—billed by the denominational office—would be lower than the 1997 ministry share for the ministers' pension funds billed by the classical treasurers.

In view of the foregoing, the Board of Pensions and Insurance requests that synod approve the following resolutions:

A. That the annual funding requirement for the ministers' pension plans be determined by the full actuarial cost as identified by the three-year actuarial studies for both the U.S. and the Canadian plans.

B. That the funding for all participants other than the first pastor of an organized or emerging CRC church will be equal to the full actuarially determined cost per participant and will be billed quarterly to the employing agency, church, or other organization.

C. That the required funding for the first pastors of organized or emerging CRC congregations will be shared by all members of the CRC and directly paid pursuant to a quarterly billing.

D. That the direct-payment method will be effective January 1, 1998, and evaluation of the success of this new funding method will be made after two years of experience.

Grounds:

1. Direct payment better reflects the fact that pensions are part of total compensation. This system puts responsibility for funding pensions back on congregations, which have the responsibility for funding all other components of ministers' compensation.
2. The cost sharing among all members of CRC churches is retained to alleviate the burden on small churches.
3. Direct payment will provide a more dependable source of funding for pension obligations than does the present ministry-share method. Costs will be lower for churches which presently are paying their ministry shares. Those churches not paying their ministry shares will be obligated to meet their responsibility for the sake of their pastors' pension accounts.
4. Direct payment provides greater recognition of the legal and contractual obligation involved in the ministers' pension plans than the present ministry-share payment does.

V. Response to Synod 1996

Synod 1996 instructed the U.S. Board of Pensions and Insurance and the Canadian Pension Trustees to consider including the average cash value of housing in the final average salaries used for calculating pensions of retired ministers and to report to Synod 1997.

The Joint Committee on Pensions, meeting on September 13, 1996, noted that the pension plan in its definition of final average salary excludes "allowances such as a housing allowance." A motion was made and carried that a change to include housing allowances not be considered, on the following grounds:

1. The cost of providing such a benefit is very high. It was calculated by the U.S. plan actuary to be over $12 million just for active participants and estimated at over $3 million in the Canadian plan. In light of the current underfunding of the pension plans, it is not reasonable to consider such significant additions.

2. A very significant addition to benefits of the plan cannot be considered apart from a full review of the plan, including a review of the total level of benefits provided.

VI. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to members of the Canadian Pension Trustees and the U.S. Board of Pensions and Insurance 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 1997 and 1998 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 1998, synod designate the assessment rate for participants in the ministers' pension plans who are not the only or first pastor in a CRC congregation as the amount determined by the independent actuary to be the "average annual cost per active minister." For ministers in Canada, this amount in 1998 is $3,896, and for ministers in the United States it is $3,157.

D. That for 1998, synod approve the change in funding for participants in the ministers' pension plans who are the only or first pastor in a CRC congregation. *Note*: The total cost for all ministers, computed separately for each country, is the total actuarial annual cost determined by the actuary. From that figure, an amount is subtracted equal to the amount assessed in paragraph C above. The remainder is assessed equally per professing member to the congregations with an only or first pastor. The amount per professing member for 1998 is $14.00 in both Canada and the United States.

E. That synod elect two members to the U.S. Board of Pensions and Insurance from the following four nominations, for three-year terms beginning July 1, 1997:

1. *Mr. Lloyd Bierma*, from Sioux Center, Iowa, is a member of First CRC of Sioux Center, where he is currently president of the council. From 1985 to 1991 he served on the U.S. Board of Pensions and Insurance and its investment advisory committee. A practicing attorney, he has been on the boards of Sioux Center Christian School, Calvin College, and Dordt College.

2. *Mr. Melvin Vander Brug*, from Bloomfield Township, Michigan, is a member of North Hills CRC, Troy, Michigan. He has served many years on the investment subcommittee of the U.S. Ministers' Pension Fund and is currently its chairman. His company is a supplier for the automotive industry.

3. *Mr. Scott Van Popering*, from Grandville, Michigan, is a member of Ivanrest CRC, where he has served as deacon and treasurer. He has also been in key positions with the local Christian-school boards and their foundations and with Christian Schools International. In the business world he serves as a managing partner of a Grandville C.P.A. firm.

4. *Mr. Wilbert Venema*, from Hudsonville, Michigan, is a member of Twelfth Avenue CRC, Jenison, Michigan, where he has served as elder. He has also served six years on the Ministers' Pension Committee in the 1960s and five years subsequently on the World Missions board. He is currently chairman of the board of Pine Rest Christian Mental Health Services.

F. That synod elect one member to the Canadian Pension Trustees for a three-year term beginning July 1, 1997:

1. *Rev. Jacob Kuntz* (incumbent) is a retired minister who served churches in Ontario and British Columbia. He is currently serving part-time as a chaplain in the Holland Christian Homes of Brampton, Ontario. He has served on many CRC boards and has been a delegate to synod several times.

2. *Rev. John Jongsma* is the pastor of Second CRC, Sarnia, Ontario. He has previously served churches in Alberta, British Columbia, and Ontario. He has also served on the boards of CRC Publications and The Back to God Hour and has been a delegate to synod a number of times.

Pensions and Insurance
Stewart S. Geelhood, interim administrator

I. Introduction

This brief report gives a taste of the youth ministry that took place in the denomination in 1996 and provides a sampling of how the Youth-Ministry Committee (YMC) is supporting, encouraging, and improving the way the denomination ministers to youth. Our primary focus is to embrace, affirm, and monitor the work of the four ministry divisions of United Calvinist Youth (UCY). These divisions are Cadets, GEMS, Early Teen Ministry, and Youth Unlimited.

II. Youth-ministry model survey

A professional surveyor assessed the influence of the youth-ministry model that went to the churches in video, booklet, and poster form. The results of the survey of one hundred (100) churches indicate that thirty-two (32) churches are implementing the model, seventeen (17) are already using a similar relational model, twenty-three (23) are studying the model, nineteen (19) have no plans to use the model but reacted favorably, and nine (9) churches have no plans to use the model and had negative comments (or no opinion at all). The model's purpose is to serve as a training tool for volunteer leadership. The model gives direction and focus to local youth ministry.

III. United Calvinist Youth membership

The division directors of United Calvinist Youth (UCY) informed the YMC that significant numbers of Christian Reformed churches do not use one or more of the United Calvinist Youth divisions. This is a concern for our committee. We believe that our churches could benefit greatly from participation in UCY programs and resources. Since UCY has been endorsed as the denominationally related youth-ministry resource, YMC will begin to promote the work of these divisions.

IV. The work of the Youth-Ministry Committee

We give thanks for the work of the four divisions of UCY. These divisions are built upon a large base of volunteers who have a heart for ministering to youth. A few staff members serve each division by carrying out the goals of their respective board/congress. Decisions about ministry direction are overseen by the board/congress of each division with ultimate accountability for division harmony overseen by the UCY board. This system has worked well to encourage volunteer involvement and has allowed flexibility for the boards to respond quickly to ministry needs.

The Youth-Ministry Committee encourages the congregations of the CRC to give strong consideration to scheduling offerings for the divisions. There is currently much financial strain throughout the UCY divisions.

V. Future direction for YMC

With completion of the Relational Model for Youth Ministry, the committee will begin other large projects, including the development of tools for the evaluation of local churches' youth-ministry programs, studying and promoting intergenerational ministry, and exploring the concept of a mentor program for youth pastors.

VI. Nominations for Youth-Ministry Committee

The committee places in nomination the following persons for service on the YMC:

Eastern Canada

Mr. Richard Mast is a member of Second Brampton CRC, Brampton, Ontario, and serves as its youth director.

Mr. Pieter Pereboom is a member of the First CRC, London, Ontario. He is a media expert and is involved in youth ministry.

Eastern United States

Rev. David Poolman is pastor of Cedar Hill CRC in Wyckoff, New Jersey. David has served one term on the Youth-Ministry Committee.

Rev. James Kelvin Jackson is pastor of education, evangelism, and youth in Madison Avenue CRC, Paterson, New Jersey.

D. That synod select two nominees for member-at-large positions.

Mr. Syd Hielema is a member of Covenant CRC, Sioux Center, Iowa. He has a variety of youth-ministry experiences, including teaching English in a Christian school, writing monthly music reviews, and leading retreats and workshops. He currently teaches theology at Dordt College.

Mr. Kirk Vander Pol is a member of Roseland CRC, Chicago, Illinois, and works at the Roseland Christian Ministry Center, doing youth work in an inner-city context. He also has participated in a number of youth work projects.

Mr. Jamie Vanden Heuvel is a member of Second CRC in Grand Haven, Michigan, and has worked as a youth leader, a Young Life volunteer, and at Camp Miniwanca for the Oceana County Juvenile Court. Currently he serves four Christian Reformed churches in the Grand Haven, Michigan, area as administrative director for the Tri-Cities Christian Youth Ministries.

Ms. Tricia Borgdorff is a member of Sunshine Community Church and has been the director of children's ministries there since 1989. She has served on the United Calvinist Youth board.

VII. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to the Youth-Ministry Committee chairperson, Rev. Jacob Heerema, and the secretary, Rev. Joel Zuidema.

B. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to United Calvinist Youth division directors: Mrs. Jan Boone, GEMS Girls' Clubs director; Mr. Richard Broene, Cadet Corp director; Mr. Nate Vander Stelt, Early Teen Ministry director; and Rev. Brian Bosscher, Youth Unlimited director.

C. That synod select one of the nominees for Eastern Canada representative and one for Eastern United States representative to three-year terms on the YMC.

D. That the four divisions of UCY—Cadets, GEMS, Early Teen Ministry, and Youth Unlimited—be placed on the recommended-causes list.

Youth-Ministry Committee
Jacob Heerema, chairperson
Joel Zuidema, secretary

UNITED CALVINIST YOUTH: GEMS Girls' Clubs/Calvinettes

Throughout the last thirty-nine years, the ministry of Calvinettes has faithfully served Christian Reformed churches by offering a dynamic, relationship-building program. This program for girls in first through eighth/ninth grades now serves some twenty thousand girls throughout North America.

Over the last eighteen months the ministry has undergone many exciting developments—new curriculum for both the oldest and youngest age groups, a new praise-and-worship song tape for use in club, a total redesign of *Touch* magazine, and the adoption of a new program name, GEMS Girls' Clubs (*Girls Everywhere Meeting the Savior*). In each of these new developments, the motivation was the same—to reach more girls with the love of Christ and to teach them how to know him better and how to walk with him every day.

God has blessed the work that has gone into these new developments: many tell of their heightened enthusiasm and passion for the ministry. In addition, many, many accounts of rapid, dramatic club growth have been shared. For this we are truly grateful to him.

One of the key responsibilities of our ministry is to provide leadership training to the women serving as counselors in our 775 churches. This past year over 90 percent of the five thousand counselors now serving attended at least one training event specifically designed to help them be more successful in their important role as counselors.

Our annual counselors' convention, held on the campus of Calvin College last July, was attended by nearly eight hundred enthusiastic, dedicated women who love the Lord and are grateful for the opportunity to serve him through the GEMS/Calvinette ministry. Our regional and local training events were attended by thousands more women who set aside significant amounts of time each year to receive training that helps them minister more effectively to the girls in their clubs and helps them in their own personal faith walk.

The annual theme, "Filled Up . . . and Running Over," based on Philippians 4:8-9, taught that whatever we fill our minds with will run over into our actions. If our thoughts are noble, right, lovely, pure, true, admirable, excellent, and praiseworthy, then our actions will be likewise. This theme was warmly embraced by both counselors and girls.

GEMS Girls' Clubs
Jan Boone, executive director

UNITED CALVINIST YOUTH: Calvinist Cadet Corps

The 1996 International Camporee seems to be old news in some respects, but it took place since the last meeting of synod and certainly deserves mention. It was the largest ever, drawing more than 1,800 men and boys from all over North America to the majestic Canadian Rocky Mountains near Banff, Alberta. Those registrants took part in a wilderness experience that lasted for eight days, offering physical and spiritual challenges to everyone. God truly blessed the people there, and they found a greater appreciation for God's world and his work in their lives.

There will be no camporee in 1997 (they occur only once each three years), but there is plenty happening. The leadership-training program is undergoing

great enhancement, with volunteer men filling strategic new positions as staff and regional training coordinators. Through a process of improved selection, training, and accountability for our leadership trainers, we trust that ultimately, the counselor will be better equipped to minister to his small cadre of boys and that the effectiveness of the ministry will grow.

Some of that training will take place, as it does each year, at the annual counselors' convention. The convention this year is scheduled to be held July 24-26 at the Amway Grand Plaza Hotel in Grand Rapids, Michigan. The theme, "Building to the Lord's Code," will be carried out in the coming year at the convention, through the *Crusader* magazine for boys, and during Cadet Week 1998. The Cadet Corps strives to build men and boys according to the Lord's code and gratefully accepts his blessings in this its forty-fifth year.

Calvinist Cadet Corps
G. Richard Broene, executive director

UNITED CALVINIST YOUTH: Youth Unlimited

Youth Unlimited is grateful for another year of very active service to the church. For the 585 member churches who used the programs and resources, it was an exciting time of service, spiritual growth, and close fellowship in Christ.

Through regional and local training events, over three thousand adult and student leaders received equipping for youth ministry. A growing network of league trainers is being developed so that experienced youth-ministry personnel are accessible to every congregation. Youth Unlimited intends eventually to provide every league with two specially trained individuals to provide encouragement and direction for churches as they minister to and with their youth.

The annual convention was held in San Diego, California, with 3,850 in attendance. Through the music of Ken Medema and the inspiring messages of several speakers, lives were changed, and people were challenged to live life fully for Jesus Christ. Another great convention has been planned for 1997, to be held at Purdue University in West Lafayette, Indiana.

Teens and adults in record numbers went out to serve in the name of Christ through the three service programs of Youth Unlimited. SERVE projects, SWIM, and Project Bridge together had 1,200 participants. They presented the gospel in word and deed in cities throughout North and Central America. Plans for 1997 will open up even more opportunities, including a first-ever SWIM team to Australia.

During 1996 Youth Unlimited also spent time in strategic planning in an effort to discuss the Lord's path for the next few years. It is our desire and prayer that the results of these plans will be an ever greater service to the local church in its mission to challenge teens to follow Christ and transform their world for him.

Youth Unlimited
Brian Bosscher, executive director

UNITED CALVINIST YOUTH: Early Teen Ministry

As of March 13, 1997, Early Teen Ministry (ETM) will be two years old. This newest ministry of United Calvinist Youth has experienced success in many parts of North America. But as we fix our eyes on the future, we see that we still have a great deal of work ahead of us.

As we have carefully listened to the expressed needs of our members over the past two years, three major areas have surfaced in which churches are looking for help from ETM. These areas are (1) more printed, audio, and video resources which new and veteran leaders can use for their ministry; (2) more hands-on leadership training from experienced leaders; and (3) more opportunities to participate in local special events with their youth.

Here's how ETM is responding to each need.

First, for churches that have never had a coed ministry for early teens, ETM has developed a Starter Packet to help leaders get started. This resource has been helpful because it contains several books which cover the basics of early teen ministry and can be used for each new leader coming into the group. ETM has also developed a Booster Packet, a resource designed to help leaders beyond their first year in the ministry. Both the Starter and Booster Packets have been valuable to leaders across the United States and Canada. In the future ETM hopes to offer its members more junior-high books and audio and video tapes of top youth speakers.

Second, over the past year, ETM has offered leadership training in Chicago, Illinois; Kalamazoo, Michigan; San Diego, California; Grand Rapids, Michigan; Minneapolis, Minnesota; Pella, Iowa; Inwood, Iowa; and Brampton, Ontario. Many ETM leaders attended these training seminars and left with fresh ideas which they could take back to their ministry.

Looking into the future, ETM realizes that a crucial next step is to put into place regional representatives who can organize leadership training, offer resource suggestions, help ETM churches network with each other, and provide encouragement to the leaders. With only two paid full-time people working on staff at the present time, it is imperative to establish a goal to have an ETM regional representative in each region across North America by the end of 1997. If you know of any individuals who may be interested in filling this position, have them contact ETM.

Third, in 1996, nearly four thousand early teens and leaders across North America participated in ETM special events. From evening rallies, one-day "main events," and mini service projects through Random Acts of Kindness Everywhere (R.A.K.E.) Week, ETM events were successful wherever offered.

But as we look toward the future for ETM special events, we can say that we've only just begun. Between January and April 1997, ETM expects close to six thousand teens and leaders to attend ETM special events in Chicago, Illinois; Lynden, Washington; Sarnia, Ontario; Minneapolis, Minnesota; Grand Rapids, Michigan; and Orlando, Florida. By this fall ETM hopes to have offered special events in Colorado, Washington, southern California, northern California, Alberta, Ontario, Illinois, Iowa, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Michigan, and Massachusetts.

Finally, ETM faces two main hurdles at the present time: a significant deficit ($30,000) and a lack of personnel to carry out our vision.

In light of these realities, I wish to petition the Youth-Ministries Committee to partner enthusiastically with ETM in solicitation of new members within the CRC and to urgently request financial assistance from non-ETM-member Christian Reformed churches via a special ETM offering. (*Note*: One of the main reasons our debt exists is the high cost of starting a ministry. Concrete plans are in place to ensure this type of deficit does not occur in the future, but financial assistance is needed in the short term.)

We praise God for the successes ETM has experienced thus far. The Lord has placed ETM in the unique position to minister to early teens in a way that few, if any, organizations in North America have done before. As we look toward the future, your patience, prayers, feedback, and support are very important.

May the Lord bless the Christian Reformed Church with wisdom and insight as it continues to serve young people both within and outside the churches.

Early Teen Ministry
Nate Vander Stelt, 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 1996

During the past year the archivists

A. Maintained at forty-one (41) the number of classes with designated regional representatives (contact persons). Five classes (British Columbia North-West, Georgetown, Hackensack, Quinte, and Red Mesa) do not currently have such representatives.

B. Published its sixteenth annual newsletter (January 1997), which was sent to all regional representatives, classical stated clerks, the Dutch-American Historical Commission, editors of appropriate magazines, and other denominational leaders.

C. Sent a complete updated inventory of archival holdings of CRC congregations to the stated clerk and regional representative of each classis. This inventory includes the dates of the minutes microfilmed and stored in the vault as well as other materials on file from individual churches, such as anniversary materials and lists of charter members.

D. Acquired historical records from sixty-one Christian Reformed congregations and one Christian school, anniversary materials from seventeen churches, and newsletters, directories, and bulletins from various churches.

E. Microfilmed minutes and reports of various classes, as received; processed materials from five CRC agencies/committees and from ten individuals or families associated with the CRC ministry, congregations, Calvin College, or Calvin Theological Seminary.

III. Publications

In cooperation with CRC Publications, the committee has commissioned Dr. James Schaap to write a history of the CRC aimed at the general reader, designed to give an honest, accessible account of the main tracks of the denomination's development, and intended to provide the membership with a solid, encouraging sense of historical identity. The committee is also exploring ways of raising an endowment to cover start-up costs of future publications and of identifying donors interested in contributing to specific projects. It welcomes suggestions on either or both of these initiatives.

IV. Reminders

A. The archival inventory sent to the clerk of every classis (II, C above) includes a list of churches in each classis that have passed significant anniversary dates but have not submitted commemorative materials of same (booklets, historical sketches, etc.) to the archives. The committee urges congregations that have observed or soon will observe a twenty-fifth, fiftieth, seventy-fifth, or centennial anniversary to attend to this means of preserving a vital historical record and asks clerks to consult their inventories to remind the churches in question.

B. The CRC will mark its sesquicentennial in ten years. The committee will gladly receive suggestions as to the best ways this anniversary can be observed.

V. Recommendations

A. That Dr. Henry Zwaanstra represent the committee when matters pertaining to its mandate come before synod.

B. That one candidate from each of the following pairs be elected to the committee for a three-year term:

1. *Dr. Harry Boonstra*, theological librarian at Calvin Theological Seminary, is a member of Neland Avenue Christian Reformed Church, Grand Rapids, Michigan.
   Dr. Henry Zwaanstra (incumbent), professor of church history at Calvin Theological Seminary, is a member of Woodlawn Christian Reformed Church, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

2. *Rev. William D. Buursma* (incumbent) is a retired pastor and a member of Woodlawn Christian Reformed Church, Grand Rapids, Michigan.
   Rev. Gerald L. Zandstra is pastor of Seymour Christian Reformed Church, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

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 Dr. Lyle Bierma (1999); Rev. Peter W. Brouwer (1997); Rev. Jason Chen (1999); Ms. Claire Elgersma (1998); Rev. Robert J. Haven (1998); Rev. Leonard J. Hofman, administrative secretary (1997); Ms. Cynthia Roelofs (1997); Rev. Edward Van Baak, president (1999); Dr. Henry Zwaanstra, vice president (1998); and the general secretary, Dr. David H. Engelhard (ex officio). Nominations for members to replace those whose terms expire this year are submitted below.

II. Information regarding ecumenical relations

A. Fraternal delegates

In 1996 the IRC appointed the following 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 Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church, meeting at Bonclarken, Flat Rock, North Carolina, June 10-12, 1996, Rev. Charles L. Geschiere.
2. To the general assembly of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, meeting in Englewood, Colorado, June 20-22, 1996, Dr. John Van Regenmorter.
3. To the general assembly of the Korean American Presbyterian Church, meeting in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, June 18-21, 1996, Rev. Terry Lapinsky.
4. To the general assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, meeting at Geneva College, Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania, June 6-13, Rev. Robert J. Haven.
5. To the general assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America, meeting in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, June 18-21, 1996, Rev. Douglas L. Aldrink.
6. To the general synod of the Reformed Church in America, meeting in Orange City, Iowa, June 8-14, 1996, Rev. Aldon L. Kuiper.
7. To the general synod of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland), meeting April 22-24, 1996, Drs. John B. Hulst, David H. Engelhard, and Henry Zwaanstra.
8. To the fifty-first general assembly of the Reformed Church of Japan, meeting October 7-10, 1996, Rev. Richard E. Systma.

B. Representatives and observers to ecumenical organizations

In accordance with 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 chairman of the NAE board of directors. The Lord willing, he will serve as chairman of the board until March 1998. In that capacity he also serves as a member of the

board of NAE's World Relief Corporation. The IRC has appointed Rev. Leonard J. Hofman and Dr. David H. Engelhard as voting members to the NAE convention in Orlando, Florida, in March 1997.

2. Dr. George Vandervelde serves as the IRC observer on the Faith and Order Commission of the National Council of Churches. The Faith and Order Commission is divided into three subgroups: Mission in This Pluralistic World, Christian Identity and Formation, and Ecclesiology. Dr. Vandervelde is a part of the subgroup focusing on ecclesiology. In the October 1996 meeting this subgroup dealt primarily with two topics: approaches to holiness and similarities and differences of worship among various religious traditions.

3. Dr. Henry Zwaanstra serves as the IRC observer to the Theological Commission of the Caribbean and North American Area Council (CANAAC) of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC). At its meeting held September 27-30, 1996, at Crieff Conference Center, Guelph, Ontario, discussions centered on the place of CANAAC within the general structure of WARC. The continuing need for WARC as a global and ecumenical instrument through which the churches can work together and be assisted was affirmed.

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 cultivating such relationships with churches. Currently the list includes the Christian Reformed Church of Myanmar; the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian, Nkhoma Synod (in Malawi); and the Christian Reformed Church in the Philippines.

Although no new denominations have been enrolled as churches in corresponding fellowship, a number of churches have expressed an interest in establishing an ecumenical relationship with the CRCNA. This is currently being pursued with the Dutch Reformed Church of South Africa (Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk), the Reformed Church of Christ in Nigeria, the Reformed Church of Zambia, and the Reformed Church of Quebec (L'Eglise Reformee Du Quebec).

III. Ecumenical organizations

A. North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC)

The twenty-second annual meeting of NAPARC was held in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, November 19-20, 1996, and was hosted by the Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America. All member churches were represented. Our delegates were Dr. David H. Engelhard, Rev. Leonard J. Hofman, Rev. Edward A. Van Baak, and Dr. Henry Zwaanstra. Dr. Engelhard represents the CRCNA on the Interim Committee of NAPARC.

The following items of interest emerged from the NAPARC meetings.

1. Amendment to the constitution

Although Synod 1996 of the CRCNA did not approve of the proposed change in Article V, Section 3, of the constitution of NAPARC, five of the seven member churches did approve the change. Because at least two-thirds of the member churches voted to pass the amendment to the constitution, as

is required by the constitution, the proposed change was declared carried. Article V, Section 3, of the constitution of NAPARC now reads as follows:

> Admission to, suspension from, restoration to (after suspension), and termination of membership shall be proposed by the Council to the member churches by two-thirds of the ballots cast; this proposal must then be approved within three years by 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.

2. Standing rules for NAPARC and its Interim Committee

   In keeping with suggestions submitted by the CRCNA in October 1995 and recommendations from an ad hoc committee, standing rules for NAPARC were adopted regarding its Interim Committee, agenda deadlines, financial matters, time of meeting, and docket (agenda). The bylaws were amended to implement these changes.

3. Membership of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC)

   The request of the EPC to be admitted to membership in NAPARC was first submitted in 1988. During the following years various issues relating to the EPC, a church in ecclesiastical fellowship with the CRCNA, were discussed. Each year representatives of the EPC were present at NAPARC as observers. Action on a motion to receive the EPC into NAPARC membership was postponed until 1996. The CRCNA delegates expressed disappointment to NAPARC regarding its postponement of favorable action on the EPC's application for membership. In November 1996 the council considered the recommendation "that NAPARC approve the application of the EPC for membership." Following a time of discussion the recommendation failed by a unit-rule vote of the member denominations, 3 (yes) to 4 (no).

4. CRCNA membership in NAPARC

   Late in the session of NAPARC the delegation of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) brought up the matter of initiating the process to suspend CRCNA membership in NAPARC. A hastily sketched and unsigned motion, read once, was placed before the house. For procedural reasons a unit-rule vote was called for to determine whether or not the motion should be considered. The result of the unit-rule vote was 5 (yes) to 2 (no).

   The following was moved:

> It is with deep regret and heartfelt concern that the PCA delegation presents the following motion to NAPARC:
>
> Whereas the 23rd General Assembly of the PCA in June 1995 instructed the IRC "to use all due process afforded to them to remove the CRC from membership in NAPARC, if the CRC does not repent of and rescind the action of the 1995 Synod at its 1996 Synod;"
>
> Whereas this action was reported to the 21st meeting of NAPARC on November 28-29, 1995 together with a copy of a letter sent to the CRCNA Synod;
>
> Whereas the CRCNA, through its Stated Clerk, has reported (*Acts of Synod 1996*, pp. 524f.) that the denomination has no reason to "repent and rescind" the actions in question;

> Whereas the constitution of NAPARC has been amended to suspend, restore and terminate membership in NAPARC, which action may be "initiated only by a major assembly of a member church;"
>
> Therefore, be it resolved that NAPARC initiate the process to suspend the CRCNA from its membership.

The council decided to refer the motion to its Interim Committee with a view to its consideration at the 1997 council meeting.

The IRC sent a letter to the Interim Committee of NAPARC expressing disappointment with the way in which the motion of the PCA delegation came to and was accepted by NAPARC. The letter also traced the struggle experienced in the CRCNA relating to the issue of admitting women to ecclesiastical offices and conveyed considerations that led to the decision of Synod 1995, identifying matters that brought the CRCNA to its decision.

The IRC requested the NAPARC Interim Committee to deal with the motion of the PCA in a timely fashion so that the CRCNA can be advised of the committee's recommendations to NAPARC prior to NAPARC's meeting in November 1997.

The IRC also sent a letter to the stated clerk of the PCA expressing disappointment with the irregular procedure followed by NAPARC in processing the motion of the PCA delegation relating to the CRCNA's membership in NAPARC. The same letter registered the IRC's observation that it seems inconsistent for the PCA delegation to NAPARC to vote for the motion to admit the Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC) to NAPARC membership while raising questions about the CRCNA's membership, reminding the PCA that the EPC constitutionally grants its local churches the right in perpetuity to ordain women ministers and/or elders. Furthermore, the letter reminded the PCA that, although Synod 1996 responded to a PCA letter dated September 15, 1995, advising the CRCNA of the decision of the PCA general assembly instructing its Interchurch Relations Committee to initiate action "to remove the CRC from membership in NAPARC if the CRC does not repent of and rescind the action at the [1995] synod," no effort was made to contact our IRC with a view to discussing matters of concern.

5. Officers

   The officers of NAPARC for 1996-1997 are Jack C. Wytock, chairman (ARPC); Gordon J. Keddie, vice chairman (RPCNA); Donald J. Duff, secretary (OPC); Robert A. Henning, treasurer (RPCNA).

6. The next meeting of NAPARC will be hosted by the Presbyterian Church in America in Atlanta, Georgia, on November 18 and 19, 1997.

B. *Reformed Ecumenical Council*

1. The REC assembly

   The assembly met in June 1996 on the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the Reformed Ecumenical Synod, now Reformed Ecumenical Council (REC), in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Sixty-seven official delegates from twenty-nine member churches in twenty countries attended the assembly; five observers and fraternal delegates from other churches and organizations were also present. Five new member churches were added during the assembly.

Representing the CRCNA were the following: Dr. Harvey Bratt, Rev. Jason Chen, Ms. Claire Elgersma, Dr. Nick Kroeze, Dr. Carl Kromminga, Rev. Alfred Luke, Ms. Eunice Vanderlaan, Rev. Arie Van Eek, and Dr. Henry Zwaanstra. Congratulations are in order for Ms. Elgersma, a member of our IRC, who was elected first clerk of the REC, the first woman ever to be elected to the executive committee (moderamen) of the REC.

The officers are Prof. Henk De Waard of Australia, moderator; Dr. Douwe Visser of the Netherlands, vice moderator; and Ms. Claire Elgersma of Canada, Rev. Charles Jansz of Sri Lanka, and Dr. Kadarmanto Hardjowasito of Indonesia, first, second, and third clerks. These five serve as the REC Interim Committee until the next assembly.

The genuinely Christian, Reformed, and international character of the assembly was evident in all its work and activity. REC Grand Rapids was characterized by unity and harmony. The activities of the council are summarized in the June/July 1996 REC *News Exchange*. Council decisions calling for action by member churches are being communicated to the interchurch relations committees of the appropriate churches.

2. *The Just Stewardship of Land and Creation*

A letter from the REC to our IRC conveyed two recommendations pertaining to a book-length report on stewardship of our environment called *The Just Stewardship of Land and Creation*:

> First, the assembly commends the report to our member churches and asks them to encourage the use of this report in local churches. Member churches are asked to report to our next [REC] assembly in A.D. 2000 on the use and usefulness of this report in their own context.
>
> Second, the members of the assembly agree to carry the concerns and urging of this report to their churches and to urge such actions by their churches that will promote the just stewardship of land and creation.

In response to the above recommendations the IRC recommends that synod

a. Alert the churches to the existence of the book-length report entitled *The Just Stewardship of Land and Creation*.

b. Review and recommend Section IX, "Guidelines for Ecclesiastical Action," and Section X, "Guidelines for Congregational Reaction," to the churches as material for study, reflection, and implementation.

c. Make Sections IX and X available to the churches and urge the churches to respond (see Appendix of this report for a brief summary and review of the report and for Sections IX and X).

3. Political and social conditions in Nigeria

Material received by the IRC from the REC relating to political and social conditions in Nigeria was referred to the CRCNA Board of Trustees because it was addressed to "REC Member Churches" and requested that they in turn contact their publications agencies and their local churches.

The IRC presented letters to the general secretaries of the Church of Christ in the Sudan Among the Tiv and the Christian Reformed Church of Nigeria, assuring them of our concern and our prayers and informing them of our readiness to be of further support in response to their request as we are brought to a clear understanding of their needs.

C. National Association of Evangelicals

The fifty-fifth annual convention of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) is scheduled to meet in Orlando, Florida, on March 3-6. 1997. The theme of the convention is "Our Shared Vision: Reaching America." Rev. Leonard J. Hofman and Dr. David H. Engelhard will represent the CRCNA at this convention. Rev. Hofman is serving the first of a two-year term as chairman of the NAE board of directors. He presides over regular meetings of the executive committee of NAE and its officers. He also serves as a member of the board of the World Relief Corporation (WRC) of NAE, its wholly owned subsidiary.

The convention will be attended by representatives of NAE's forty-seven member denominations, individual congregations from twenty-six additional denominations, several hundred independent churches, and 245 parachurch ministries and educational institutions. Reports will be received from its WRC subsidiary, eight commissions, and five affiliates.

The NAE has adopted the following Statement of Mission:

> The mission of the National Association of Evangelicals (USA) is to extend the kingdom of God through a fellowship of member denominations, churches, organizations, institutions, and individuals, demonstrating the unity of the body of Christ by standing for biblical truth, speaking with a representative voice, and serving the evangelical community through united action, cooperative ministry, and strategic planning.

The NAE has also issued an Evangelical Manifesto and a Statement of Conscience concerning worldwide religious persecution. Dr. Donald Argue, president of NAE, was recently selected to serve as a member of the White House Advisory Committee on Religious Freedom Abroad.

IV. Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (RCN) (Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland) (GKN)

Although Synod 1996 decided to further restrict its ecclesiastical fellowship with the GKN for a minimum of two years, the IRC was mandated "to intensify its pursuit of the two remaining provisions of ecclesiastical fellowship with the GKN, namely,

> a. "[C]ommunication on major issues of joint concern."
> b. "[The] exercise of mutual concern and admonition with a view to promoting the fundamentals of Christian unity."
>
> (*Acts of Synod 1996*, pp. 520-21)

The IRC was also 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.

At its September 1996 meeting the IRC decided to implement the mandate given it by Synod 1996 by proposing an exchange of delegates in the following way:

A. That a delegation representing the RCN/GKN be invited to meet with members of the IRC and others in the United States.

B. That the IRC specify that the discussion include

1. The Reformed Ecumenical Council document *Hermeneutics and Ethics*. The 1996 CRC delegation to the GKN reported that the GKN has adopted the

REC document *Hermeneutics and Ethics*, altering its position on Scripture, and that this document supersedes *God met Ons (God with Us)* and its *Sequel* (see *Acts of Synod 1996*, p. 396).

2. A report of the RCN/GKN on its process of federation.

C. That additional agenda items be worked out with GKN input.

D. That a core committee make arrangements for the meeting, participate in the discussions, and make use of persons with expertise in areas related to the discussions—selected by the core committee.

E. That a report to Synod 1997 on what is accomplished by the discussions, processed via the IRC, be prepared by the core committee.

F. That the core committee consist of Dr. Lyle Bierma, Dr. David H. Engelhard, and Dr. Henry Zwaanstra.

G. That a second consultation take place with the RCN/GKN in the Netherlands. The above proposal has been communicated to the RCN/GKN. The IRC is awaiting a reply.

V. Reformed Churches in South Africa (RCSA) (Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid Afrika) (GKSA)

Synod 1996 adopted the following recommendations relative to the relationship of the CRCNA and the RCSA:

> 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 [their] family of churches (*Acts of Synod 1996*, p. 386).
> 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.
>
> 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.
>
> (*Acts of Synod 1996*, p. 527)

The RCSA were informed of this decision by the general secretary. At its September 1996 meeting the IRC decided to send a letter to the RCSA suggesting that the RCSA invite a delegation from the IRC of the CRCNA to attend their synod meeting January 6-15, 1997.

The following reply was received on November 20, 1996:

> Thank you for your letters dated July 19, 1996 and August 22, 1996.
>
> We took note of the decision of your synod of 1996 to lift the suspension of ecclesiastical fellowship which has been in force since 1989. We are pleased that from your side stumbling blocks in our relationship have been overcome. We are always praying for and seeking the unity of all true believers and churches, and are

thus thankful for every step in that direction. We shall report this decision of yours to our synod which will D.V. be held from the 6th until the 15th of January, 1997.

Our synod will now have to decide—inter alia in the light of this unexpected development—whether we can resume unhindered ties with you, or not. We hope that we receive your answers on the questions posed in our letter of 20th January, 1996 (p. 3) before our synod, as the issues raised there will certainly be an important facet of the decision which we have to take.

But before a decision in this regard has been made by our synod, we as deputies don't have a mandate to invite you as fraternal delegates to our synod. We hope that you will understand our position.

(signed) M. J. du Plessis, chairman
S. D. Snyman, secretary

Because of the above communication, a delegation hoping to meet with representatives of the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa, the Dutch Reformed Church of South Africa, and the RCSA was not sent.

At its December 1996 meeting the IRC decided to send a response to the letter of the RCSA Deputies for Correspondence with Churches in Foreign Countries, addressing the questions conveyed in their letter of January 1996, pertaining to the relationship of the CRCNA and the GKN, the CRCNA's decision to admit women to ecclesiastical offices, and their understanding that "there are serving ministers in the CRC with openly critical viewpoints on the Reformed articles of faith about the authority of Scripture" (RCSA letter of January 20, 1996).

To date no reply has been received from the RCSA.

VI. Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa (DRC) Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid Afrika (NGK)

In response to their request that fraternal relations be established between the CRCNA and the Dutch Reformed Church (*Agenda for Synod 1996*, p. 190), the DRC delegates to the Reformed Ecumenical Council (REC) meeting in Grand Rapids, June 1996, were invited to meet with members of the IRC.

Six members of the DRC met with members of the IRC. They provided the IRC with an update on developments in connection with the process of church unification in the family of Dutch Reformed churches in South Africa, with recent statements and decisions on the issue of apartheid, and with a brief report on the DRC's involvement in the process of dismantling apartheid. They were enthusiastic about establishing ecclesiastical fellowship with the CRCNA. Since then there has been a cordial exchange of correspondence with Dr. W.J. Botha, director of ecumenical affairs and information for the DRC.

VII. Ecumenical conversations

During the sessions of Synod 1996 and the REC meetings in Grand Rapids, members of the IRC were privileged to meet with representatives of the following churches: the Presbyterian Church in America; the Orthodox Presbyterian Church; the Christian Church of Sumba (Indonesia); the Church of Christ in the Sudan Among the Tiv; the Christian Reformed Church of Nigeria; the Reformed Church of Christ in Nigeria; the Christian Reformed Church in the Netherlands; the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands; the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa; the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian, Nkhoma Synod (Malawi); the Reformed Church of Zambia; the Reformed

Churches of Australia; and the Reformed Church of Japan. In October 1996 a conversation was held with Dr. G.D. Cloete of the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa.

VIII. Reformed Churches of New Zealand (RCNZ)

In a letter dated 19 December 1995 Rev. Michael A. Flinn, secretary of the Interchurch Relations Committee of the RCNZ, informed our IRC that their synod, on October 6, 1995, "decided, with sadness, to suspend ties with the CRCNA." The action of the twenty-first synod of the RCNZ was recorded as follows: "After considerable [word missing] synod decided to suspend formal relations with the Christian Reformed Churches [*sic*] of North America" (*Acts of the 21st Synod of the RCNZ*, Art. 96.4).

In his letter Rev. Flinn provided the following rationale for the action taken:

> 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 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.

In a report to the RCNZ synod, the RCNZ Interchurch Relations Committee recommended that "unless we see during the intersynodical period a significant change by the CRC/NA in a Scriptural and reforming direction, we shall be forced to discontinue our sister-church relations with them at our 1998 Synod" (*Acts of the 21st Synod of the RCNZ*, Section 4, p. 61).

In its response our IRC has asked the RCNZ to revise their decision relative to suspending ecclesiastical fellowship with the CRCNA and to do so in keeping with accurate information recorded in the CRCNA *Acts of Synod*. The reply of the IRC addressed RCNZ concerns about women in ecclesiastical office, creation and science, interchurch relations, and publications, supplying appropriate references to CRC study-committee reports and synodical actions. The IRC also proposed a consultation in the form of dialogue or a continuing exchange of correspondence on matters of mutual concern.

IX. Churches in ecclesiastical fellowship in North America

A. Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC)

On Monday morning, June 17, 1996, synod acted on a recommendation of the IRC to "respond to the OPC's suggestion that the OPC and the CRCNA mutually discuss women in office, homosexuality, and church discipline" (*Acts of Synod 1996*, pp. 521-22). On Monday afternoon, June 17, 1996, Rev. John Galbraith, fraternal delegate from the OPC, addressed synod. He explained a letter dated June 13, 1996, sent to the CRCNA from the OPC general assembly to suspend the

relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship with the CRCNA. The text of the decision of the OPC general assembly follows:

1. That the Assembly suspend the relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the Christian Reformed Church in North America, in that:
   a. the element of "exchange of fraternal delegates at major assemblies" in our relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the Christian Reformed Church in North America shall be restricted as follows: the 63rd (1996) General Assembly advises the presbyteries of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church that they should no longer assume, by virtue of our previous unrestricted relationship, that the Christian Reformed Church in North America is a church of like practice for the purpose of the seating of corresponding members at presbytery (*Form of Government XIV.9*);
   b. the element of "occasional pulpit fellowship: in our relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the Christian Reformed Church in North America shall be discontinued except at the discretion of the sessions;
   c. the element of "intercommunion" in our relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the Christian Reformed Church in North America shall be restricted as follows: the 63rd (1996) General Assembly advises the lower judicatories of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church that they should no longer assume, by virtue of our previous unrestricted relationship, that the Christian Reformed Church in North America is a church of like practice for purposes of the reception of members (*Book of Discipline II.B.2*), the removal of members (*Book of Discipline II.B.3*), and erasure (*Book of Discipline V.2*).

2. That, unless the 1997 regular general assembly determines that intervening actions of the Christian Reformed Church in North America warrant a reversal of this action or a continuation of the period of suspension, the relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the Christian Reformed Church in North America shall be terminated with the close of that assembly.

It should be noted that the general assembly of the OPC is scheduled to meet June 4-11, 1997, before Synod 1997 of the CRCNA meets. Although the OPC letter promises "to engage in 'the exercise of mutual concern and admonition with a view to promoting the fundamentals of Christian unity,' " no provision was made to meet with our IRC prior to the next OPC general assembly.

In the interest of continuing communication, members of the IRC met in informal conversation with the fraternal delegates of the OPC at Synod 1996. The IRC also arranged a discussion with representatives of the OPC in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, just prior to NAPARC 1996. The NAPARC delegation, consisting of Dr. David Engelhard, Rev. Leonard J. Hofman, Rev. Edward Van Baak, and Dr. Henry Zwaanstra, met for three hours with Mr. Mark Bube, Rev. John Galbraith, Rev. Jack Peterson, and Rev. Tom Tyson to discuss the points at issue between our denominations. A second meeting is scheduled in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, on February 21, 1997. Dr. Andrew Bandstra, Dr. John Cooper, and Dr. David Engelhard will meet with representatives of the OPC to continue discussions in the interest of maintaining ecclesiastical fellowship.

B. Presbyterian Church in America (PCA)

Synod 1996 responded to a September 15, 1995, letter of the PCA (*Acts of Synod 1996*, pp. 525-26). To date no response from the PCA has been received. As noted in Section III, A, 4 (above), the PCA has initiated action toward the removal of the CRCNA from membership in NAPARC.

The IRC sent a letter to the PCA expressing disappointment with the manner in which its motion to remove the CRCNA from membership in NAPARC was presented. This letter also pointed out the inconsistency of the PCA delegates'

voting in favor of receiving the EPC (a denomination that gives its local presbyteries and sessions the right to admit women into the offices of minister and elder) into NAPARC membership while raising questions about the membership in NAPARC of the CRCNA. The IRC has reminded the PCA that no reply has been received to synod's letter and has informed the PCA stated clerk that the IRC stands ready to engage in fraternal discussions.

C. Korean American Presbyterian Church (KAPC)

Although the IRC has not been officially informed of this development, the KAPC, according to a summary submitted to NAPARC of significant actions taken at the KAPC general assembly, meeting in King of Prussia, Pennsylvania, in June 1996, has "unanimously voted to suspend fraternal relation [*sic*] with the Christian Reformed Church in North America until such time that the said church repents of their sin and rescind their position on opening church offices to women" (*Some Significant Actions Taken at the 20th General Assembly of the KAPC*, Nov. 14, 1996).

The KAPC administrative secretary for interchurch relations has been reminded that the CRCNA has not been officially notified.

D. Reformed Church in the United States (RCUS)

The IRC has discussed with the RCUS, received into NAPARC membership in 1995, the possibility of initiating an official relationship between our two churches. The 1996 RCUS synod advised the CRC that "we do appreciate this request but desire to decline the invitation" (Letter of June 6, 1996).

X. The Ecumenical Charter

Synod 1996 noted that the IRC has committed itself to "review the ways in which the basis and principles of the Ecumenical Charter are applied and implemented" (*Acts of Synod 1996*, pp. 387, 527-28).

The IRC has recognized that although "Biblical Principles for Ecumenicity" and "Principles for Ecumenical Practice" as articulated in the charter may not need revision, several matters may have an impact on the implementation of these principles, such as,

A. The relationship of the CRCNA to a single, independent Reformed church in a given geographical area.

B. The relationship of the CRCNA to the GKN in connection with the decisions it may make relative to *Together on the Way* (*Samen op Weg*) (*Acts of Synod 1996*, p. 410).

C. The relationship of the CRCNA to NAPARC.

D. Possible revisions of structure for ministry in Canada and in the United States.

Before the IRC is prepared to recommend specific revisions in the Ecumenical Charter, it will be necessary to gain insight into the developments in the above-mentioned relationships.

XI. Fraternal delegates

The IRC has decided to invite fraternal delegates from North American churches in ecclesiastical fellowship to attend our synod in alternate years, beginning with half of those denominations. The IRC will accept invitations to

send fraternal delegates to the assemblies of those churches in the year following. All overseas churches in ecclesiastical fellowship will be invited to send fraternal delegates to our synod annually.

This action was taken in keeping with the limited time allowed for fraternal delegates in the schedule adopted for a one-calendar-week synod. Other denominations have expressed a preference for exchanging fraternal delegates in alternate years. The policy is being explained to churches in ecclesiastical fellowship, and their cooperative response is being solicited.

XII. Nominations for committee members

The three-year terms of Rev. Peter Brouwer, Rev. Leonard J. Hofman, and Ms. Cynthia Roelofs expire on June 30, 1997. They are all eligible for reelection.

A. For the position presently held by Rev. Peter Brouwer

Rev. Peter Brouwer (incumbent) is a graduate of Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary. Prior to his retirement he served churches in Illinois, California, and Minnesota and on the Board of Home Missions, CRC Publications, and the Synodical Interim Committee (chair for one year). He was delegated to synod sixteen times and served as an officer of synod seven times.

Rev. Charles J. De Ridder is a graduate of Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary. He has served as a member of the Back to God Hour Committee and the Board of Trustees of Calvin College and Seminary (chair for two years). He has been delegated to four synods and has chaired three advisory committees. He currently is pastor of Shalom Christian Reformed Church in Sioux Falls, South Dakota.

B. For the position presently held by Rev. Leonard J. Hofman

Harvey Bratt, M.D., is a graduate of Calvin College and the University of Michigan Medical School. He has served as a member of the Board of Christian Reformed World Missions and volunteers as medical consultant to CRWM. He was a delegate to the Reformed Ecumenical Council in 1996 and is completing his second term as a member of the Judicial Code Committee. Dr. Bratt is a member of Mayfair Christian Reformed Church, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Rev. Leonard J. Hofman (incumbent) is a graduate of Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary. He has served as secretary of the Board of Trustees of Calvin College and Seminary, as chairman of the Synodical Interim Committee, as general secretary of the CRCNA, and as a member ex officio of the IRC. He currently is the administrative secretary of IRC and is chairman of the National Association of Evangelicals' board of directors. Rev. Hofman is a member of Shawnee Park Christian Reformed Church, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

C. For the position presently held by Ms. Cynthia Roelofs

Ms. Thelma Meyer is a graduate of Calvin College. She has taught English and speech at Kalamazoo Christian High School and at South Christian High School, Grand Rapids, Michigan. Since 1980 she has been teaching in adult education. Ms. Meyer served two terms on the IRC and was a member of its RCA/CRC committee. She is a member of Roosevelt Park Christian Reformed Church, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Ms. Cynthia Roelofs (incumbent) is a graduate of the University of Southern California, Fullerton. She has been a junior-high teacher in the Christian-school system and has served as a board member of The Back to God Hour, function-

ing on several of its committees. She is a member of Montello Park Christian Reformed Church, Holland, Michigan.

XIII. Representation at synod

Rev. Edward A. Van Baak (president), Dr. Henry Zwaanstra (vice president), and Rev. Leonard J. Hofman (administrative secretary) have been appointed to represent the IRC at Synod 1997, along with other IRC members as necessary.

XIV. Matters requiring synodical action.

A. IRC representation at synod (see Section XIII)

B. The Just Stewardship of Land and Creation (see Section III, B, 2)

C. Election of committee members (see Section XII)

Interchurch Relations Committee
Lyle Bierma
Peter W. Brouwer
Jason Chen
Claire Elgersma
David H. Engelhard (ex officio)
Robert J. Haven
Leonard J. Hofman, administrative secretary
Cynthia Roelofs
Edward A. Van Baak, president
Henry Zwaanstra, vice president

APPENDIX

Salient Points from Sections 1-8 of *The Just Stewardship of Land and Creation* by Dr. Calvin B. DeWitt, ed., and others. Grand Rapids: Reformed Ecumenical Council, 1996.

A. "[A]cross the globe, humankind is violating its God-given mandate to care for Creation. Driven by systems people create to fuel desire and get ever more from the earth, human beings are degrading Creation." But God loves his creation (cosmos). At the Flood and at Babel, God checked human arrogance and preserved the lineages of the animals, reestablished the rhythms of the seasons, and reinstated the culture of the land. He sent his Son, Jesus Christ, to redeem the cosmos and to reaffirm his covenant. Those who destroy the earth will be destroyed (Rev. 11:18; Rom. 8:18-25; Col. 1:15-20) (pp. iii, 34).

B. We echo the psalmist's praise to God for his provisions for us within creation: for solar-energy exchange, ecosystem cycles, soil fertility, fruitfulness, global water and air circulation, and the human ability to learn from creation. John Calvin reminded us that this ability must make us frugal custodians of the land before we hand it on to posterity (pp. 4, 21).

C. However, we humans have violated God's love and care for the world. We are guilty of the following violations of creation:

1. Alteration of Earth's energy exchange, which has resulted in global warming and ozone depletion.

2. Land abuse through chemical overuse, erosion, and development ("Woe to you who add house to house and field to field until there is no more room" —Isaiah 5:8).

3. Water-quality abuse ("is it not enough for you . . . to drink of clear water, that you must foul the rest with your feet?—Ezek. 34:18).

4. Deforestation causing massive habitat loss and climate change.

5. Species extinction ("Because of this the land mourns, and all who live in it waste away; the beasts of the field and the birds of the air and the fish of the sea are dying" —Hosea 4:3).

6. Waste generation and global toxification ("I brought you into a plentiful land . . . but you defiled my land" — Jer. 2:7).

7. Human and cultural abuse causing extinction of peoples and loss of their knowledge (pp. 72-87).

D. The market economy affects the way we value, use, and preserve the creation. The market is a *private property price system* which conveys the right to use, enjoy, destroy, and transfer the things people own. It determines value by the price a purchaser is willing to pay. Because money alone determines whether views are to be taken seriously, the poor and all nonhuman species are left out. Important as they are, complex ecosystems (air, water, and soil) and unpaid labor are not assigned market values. But in Christ's economy, empty hospital beds are a positive indicator of the health of people, not a negative indicator of the health of the health-care industry, as counted in the GNP (pp. 63-65).

E. "Primitive, undeveloped" cultures, which often have a more wholistic view of land and people than highly developed cultures do, have been the victims of "developed" Western/Northern cultural colonization both in the past, politically, and in the present, economically. The Western/Northern notion that land has only utilitarian value is at the heart of the unjust exploitation of people, creatures, and creation. This view has little concern for long-term conservation. It condones taking subsistence farmland from the poor and converting it to chemically intensive export-crop plantations. As a result of this view, food becomes a commodity for stock-market betting, and hunger is institutionalized. Most consumers are totally ignorant of these conditions (pp. 40-49).

F. Another stewardship issue which needs attention is the power of transnational corporations, which have larger budgets than many countries. Because they emphasize short-term profits, they have minimal loyalty to people or to the conservation of places. Presently they operate under few trade restrictions, to the detriment of small local enterprises. The foreign-debt crisis—which requires money-poor countries to "structurally adjust" their economies in order to meet large payments, at the expense of domestic basic-needs programs—and the effects of war and weapons trading (positive for the GNP, negative in God's economy) (p. 134) also need to be thought of as stewardship concerns.

G. We contribute directly to these violations of creation when we "look out for number 1" instead of "The Number One," seeking first ourselves, expecting the kingdom to be added. We have redefined greed as "market-force demand," and we see it as something virtuous even while it is degrading the environment (p. 63). The result is cumulative and collective. As we serve our gods, we are transformed into images of our gods; we then project our gods into our work as corporate loyalty and into society as an obsession with growth (p. 140).

H. What then must we do? We must seek truth in the literature we read. We must expose the corruption of truth by special interests (e.g., the attempts by chemical manufacturers to discredit Rachel Carson [p. 84]). We must be prophetic, with an alternative vision. Three steps will help us counter the current alienation from creation and the impoverishment of peoples:

1. Awareness: taking off the blinders to both beauty and abuse.
2. Appreciation-respect: valuing natural systems and indigenous knowledge.
3. Stewardship-sustainability: restoration from abuse, serving (pp. 100-04).

I. Technology is a gift from God, but it has been distorted by sin to such a degree that it has become a source of "religious" confidence, of wrongful pride, of degradation to others. Because every application of technology has consequences, appropriateness of technological interventions must be carefully evaluated. In an agrarian society where there is an overabundance of labor and a shortage of land, hoes and cultivators are appropriate, whereas labor-saving machinery is not (p. 143). Technology must promote sustainability by restoring the natural capacity of ecosystems to renew themselves (p. 128).

J. Decentralization of economics and power and the reallocation of land for local people to grow local food would support covenantal justice to the poor, the land, and the animal and plant life (biota) it supports.

K. Some indigenous agricultural species are being threatened with elimination by agribusinesses which are seeking uniformity in export crops. In addition, many wild species are being economically exploited with no questions asked about who really should have ownership of these species and how they are important within the indigenous culture. Does Northern/Western science have the right to claim ownership when, through selective planting and breeding, it "discovers" something the indigenous culture has known for generations? We must learn respect for some practices which we presently discount as backward or uncivilized (pp. 45-46).

L. The means of restoring the groaning creation reside in God and, by his assignment, also in people. Whether we choose to save or destroy is a matter of the heart. Our motivation is God's love for the world, which we must reflect. But we do not always do what we know we should do. The following stumbling blocks, pitfalls, and barriers often keep us from earthkeeping (p. 90):

1. Some Christians are too committed to the sentiment expressed in the old gospel song: "This world is not my home; I'm just passing through. (Translation: Since we are headed for heaven anyway, why take care of creation?) See Revelation 11:18.

2. Caring for creation gets us too close to the New Age movement. (Translation: Isn't concern for the environment and working for a better world what the New Age movement is all about? I don't want people to think I'm a New Ager.) Remember: God delegated earthkeeping responsibility to his human creatures (Gen. 1:27-30).

3. Respecting creation gets too close to pantheism. (Translation: If you care for plants and animals, and especially if you value protecting endangered species, you are close to worshiping them as gods.) See Rom. 1:25 and Acts 14:14-18.

4. We need to avoid anything that looks like political correctness. (Translation: Being politically correct these days means being pro-abortion and pro-environment, and I'll have nothing to do with that.) Response: Do we stop using crosses because the KKK uses them? Do we give up the original symbolism of the rainbow just because the New Age movement uses rainbow symbols?

5. There are too many worldly people out there doing environmental things. (Translation: If people who don't share my beliefs in God and Jesus Christ are working to save the earth, I know it can't be right for me.) See Isaiah 45.

6. Caring for creation will lead to world government. (Translation: If we try to tackle global environmental problems, we'll have to cooperate with other nations. Won't that help set the stage for world government?) Response: We could focus our efforts on the cooperation of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) instead.

7. Before you know it, we'll have to support abortion. (Translation: Because of the relationship between environmental abuse and growing human population, we will soon find ourselves having to accept abortion as a solution to environmental abuse.) Response: Abortion isn't the only answer. We can work on other solutions.

8. I don't want to be an alarmist or extremist. (Translation: I want to be considered normal and not some kind of prophet of gloom and doom.) Response: Be motivated by gratitude instead, but remember that the present situation is urgent.

9. The term *dominion* means what it says—oppressive domination. (Translation: I think that the Bible says we have the right to destroy things that get in our way. We may do what we want to with creation.) Response: Jesus humbled himself to become a servant (Phil. 2:6-8).

10. People are more important than the environment. (Translation: I'm for people, and that means that people are more important than saving species of plants and animals. If anything is endangered, it is people, not furbished louseworts or snail darters.) Response: Noah took more than just his family into the ark (Gen. 6-9).

M. All of society's institutions have responsibilities in the stewardship of creation: government policies should promote justice; the international monetary organizations should promote egalitarian distribution; the legal profession should provide incentives for the dispersal of wealth to meet societal needs;

families should promote conservation of that which they are managing in trust from God by decreasing energy demands, promoting green space, doing community service, and avoiding waste; the church should question the economic urge to "develop, modernize, and make efficient" to the detriment of local cultures, should equip the poor for self-sufficiency, and should discourage adverse attitudes such as exclusive love of family and taste for ostentation; the poor should tell how they are bringing in the kingdom and the lessons they have learned; consumers should consider the ramifications of buying the cheapest product, which often doesn't reflect the "hidden" costs of injustice and environmental damage incurred in manufacture (pp. 150-69).

N. Romans 8 tells us that the whole of creation, groaning as it is, waits eagerly, with neck outstretched, on tiptoes, looking for the coming out of the children of God. When we go out into the world, will creation be disappointed? Will it cringe at our coming? Or will it announce, "Aha! Here they come! Here come the children of God!"

The Just Stewardship of Land and Creation

Calvin B. DeWitt, editor

with contributions from

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A report of the Reformed Ecumenical Council prepared for the Grand Rapids Assembly 1996

Section IX.

GUIDELINES FOR ECCLESIASTICAL ACTION AND GUIDELINES FOR INTERACTION AMONG MEMBERS OF THE REC

If you do away with the yoke of oppression . . . and expend yourselves in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will shine in the darkness, and your night shall become like the noonday.

—Isaiah 58:9b-10

A. Ecclesiastical Action

The role of the Church.—The Church has long celebrated the Lord's Supper, using the fruits of the land in sacramental fashion. While acknowledging that the Old Testament rites and sacrifices are now obviated with the coming of Christ, we must not thereby believe that we can discard the responsibilities for Creation and Creation's fruitfulness that were celebrated by God's people. Our freedom in Jesus Christ has not given us license to disregard acknowledging

our blessing and task of stewardship in the assembly. Worship of our Creator for his remarkable provisions in Creation is appropriate when each year Creation breaks forth with fruitfulness. It is appropriate that celebration of "first fruits" be re-established, helping us incorporate Creation-stewardship into our thanksgiving to God. While we still praise God for giving rain in season and food to the creatures (Psalm 104) and thank God by entering his courts with thanksgiving and praise (Psalm 100), the Church often has neglected the earthy means God uses in dispensing His providence and administering His grace to us and all creatures.

The Church must be refreshed by proclaiming the good news for all of Creation; the Church must advocate and practice stewardship of the land and all God's creatures; the Church must embrace poor and marginalized human beings as our own; the Church must, with Noah, protect and provide for all God's creatures. The Church's biblically informed, covenantal land ethic stands in serious need of refreshment and renewal. The Church's teachings on Creation stewardship and Creation accountability call for revitalization and commitment. And the Church must lead in accomplishing all this.

The role of seminaries.—Seminaries, as "seed beds," must become seminal in planting the Word of the Lord today. Seminaries must disseminate the Good News for all Creation, not constricting or denying Creation stewardship by too narrow a view of John 3:16. God loves the *cosmos*, not merely *anthropos*. Seminaries must therefore provide seminal leadership in responding to the groaning Creation and showing the way toward its reconciliation. Seminaries must size up these times in which we bear the witness of the Gospel—these times of environmental and human degradation—in the context of the hope of the coming of the kingdom of God. Seminaries should be developing shepherds and pastors that can help their flocks drink without muddying the waters and feed without trampling the pastures (cf. Ezekiel 34:18). Seminaries need to assume a leadership role in the preparation of leaders who will pursue with knowledge and enthusiasm the just stewardship of God's Creation.

Proclamation and preaching the Word.—In preaching and proclamation of the Word, we must no longer neglect our responsibility under God to care for and keep the Garden—our responsibility to be earthkeepers. And this must be preached with power and efficacy. The Gnostic teaching that would have us elevate the soul and eschew God's material world must be confronted squarely. "Soul saving" must not be divorced from "earthkeeping." We must reject teachings that would remove our incarnate Savior from coming in the flesh bringing Good News to all creatures, thereby vindicating God's Creation. The power of John 1:1 and Colossians 1:15-20 must be brought forth in the churches, inspiring our life and work in the world. We must learn to follow the One through whom the whole world was made, by whom all things (*ta panta*) are held together, and through whom all things (*ta panta*) are reconciled.

The role of Christian education.—Schools and colleges have an extremely important contribution to make toward achieving a just stewardship of Creation. These institutions have the capacity to engage in and convey ecological science, theology, sociology and practice, and the other fields of study that are basic to understanding and implementing a just stewardship of Creation. Beyond the contributions from the disciplines within these institutions, they

also have the capacity to engage in the integrative scholarship that is necessary for addressing the issues and complexities in putting belief into practice. We described earlier how the disciplines that should have strong linkages under concern for the same *oeconomia* have been isolated from each other through what has become the traditional disciplinary structure of the universities. Thus, remarkably economics, ecology, and theology do not share in their scholarly work, have faculty reward systems that discourage integrative scholarship, and thus may perceive their own discipline as adequate for addressing fully the nature and stewardship of God's *oeconomia*. Moreover, many of those who benefit from environmental degradation and injustice for the poor increasingly are putting forth vigorous efforts to preserve ignorance about God's economy and have committed themselves to distort the truth as necessary to meet their own immediate ends. Thus, all of us who seek the truth on these matters need to be on guard that we engage in careful discernment in our time. All of us must hone our abilities to perceive vested interests and discern truths from half-truths. Our schools and colleges have a particular role of seeking the truth, preserving the truth, and conveying the truth to those they teach. They are the principal institutions for engaging in the scholarship of integration. They are the principal institutions for preserving and teaching the scientific, ethical, and practical knowledge required for engaging truthfully in just stewardship of Creation.

Church land holdings, and facilities.—In stewarding and keeping of its own lands, the Church must be exemplary—a light to the world. The Church must make its awareness of Creation clearly evident, and especially those aspects of Creation it directly affects and with which it interacts. The Church must demonstrate awareness of what has been marginalized among God's creatures, including threatened creatures, but particularly the poor. And all of this awareness must result in serving and keeping—in just stewardship of Creation. Knowledge must be put into practice, and practice must be evident so that it shines as a beacon to light a darkened world—in its holdings, lands, buildings, programs, fellowship, liturgies, hymnody, sermons, and community service.

The Church's missions.—The Church's missions must continually reform their policies and practices in bringing healing to lands and people. The Church and its missions must responsibly define its work as reconciliation of *all things*, and therefore must question the unquestioned urge to develop, modernize, become efficient, and replace cultures. Instead, it must always be a salting salt that seeks to transform lives, calling people to acknowledge their Creator, and to serve and keep God's Creation. People, serving the Garden, are served by the Garden of God—*conservice* between people and the land, under God who loves the world. It is not our task to be emissaries for Western or any other culture or ideology, but for the transforming work of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Thus, while bringing the gospel as our service, we in turn will be served by its recipients by learning of their renewed and reformed stewardship that might be forthcoming from their incorporation of the gospel of Jesus Christ into their own practice. Missions thus foster conservice between people and the land, conservice between the bringers and recipients of the Gospel, under God.[95]

[95]Cf. DeWitt, Calvin B. and Ghillean T. Prance. *Missionary Earthkeeping.* Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1992.

The Church as advocate.—The Church must be the compassionate advocate for the poor, the fatherless and landless. The Church must be the advocate for safeguarding God's Creation. Thus, while it deals directly with the poor and Creation, it necessarily must also relate to other institutions and to governments in pursuing its task in Creation and its serving the poor. Thus, the Church is an advocate in relief, appropriate development, aid, environmental organizations and NGOs to be a transforming influence to care for Creation and serve the needs of the poor. Since it is to governments that God has given the task of the promotion of justice, the Church must also be an advocate to governments. It is governments that must step in where economic powers are inadequate to serve the needs of people and the rest of Creation. It is governments that must intervene where economic powers oppress the rest of society. The advocacy of the Church to governments, corporately and through individual members, must assure safeguarding the whole Creation and attending to the needs and vitalization of the poor. For the poor, such advocacy will include assuring provision of land, assuring the means for the production or purchase of the necessities of life, and assuring authentic opportunity to be responsible stewards over their own lives and some part of God's Creation. Since it is governments, rather than the Church, that are vested with the authority and legal frameworks to assure these provisions, means, and opportunities, the Church must serve as a moral and ethical conscience to governments on these matters.[96] The Church must see to it that governments exercise their capacity to allow and protect varied and free expression in organizations whose purpose is doing good. The Church must persist in holding governments to their obligation to see that things are done fairly, with each person receiving their due. Thus, the Church is the reminder of governments of these responsibilities, as it speaks for God's Creation and the poor.

Reformed theology.—Creation is vital to covenant theology. It must not be neglected or diminished. The framework for Reformed theology, Creation, Fall, Redemption, begins with a world and creatures God repeatedly declares "good" and concludes with a world and creatures reconciled to their Maker through the work of Jesus Christ (Colossians 1:15-20). Christ's coming in the flesh, dying in the flesh, and rising in the flesh is vindication of Creation. In this regard, the statement of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches is important to heed: " . . . The Creation has never really been fully incorporated into covenant theology; or rather, Reformed Christians historically have regarded Creation as merely the 'stage' on which the drama of the divine-human covenant is played out, a role which over time became strictly utilitarian. That is, Reformed covenant theology has been bound up with a social or political vision; it has not contained an ecological or environmental vision. That omission needs urgent correction by Reformed Christians in our age."[97]

[96]Cf. Goudzwaard, Bob. "Economics, Sin and the Way to Justice," *One World*, No. 176 (June 1992) 15-17.

[97]World Alliance of Reformed Churches. 1989. *Seoul 1989. Proceedings of the 22nd General Council.* Section III, Part I, "Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation." Geneva: WARC, p. 5.

In Reformed theology flesh matters; matter matters. And so does human work in the world. We as followers of the Reconciler, move and work in the world to transform it according to the will of our faithful Savior, Jesus Christ, to Whom we belong body and soul.

The Church as witness.—Finally, the Reformed churches world wide must increasingly present themselves and the Good News as a holistic witness to God's love for the world. As human beings are imagers of God's love for the world, so is the Church. The Church announces and brightly exemplifies the biblical vision of shalom, peace, justice and righteousness. The Church is witness. The Church is the visible living out of our Lord's prayer: "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done. **On earth . . .**

The concern that is expressed in our work for Just Stewardship of Creation is not confined to the Reformed Churches but is very wide spread. As environmental degradation becomes more apparent to everyone, along with increasing visibility and extent of the plight of the poor, various denominations, councils, and communions have worked to address the role of the church in addressing the issues.

Among the efforts Christians have been making on Just Stewardship of Creation, is "An Evangelical Declaration of the Care of Creation," a statement that has received very wide support among evangelical leaders, including many of the Reformed churches. It is reproduced here for our information, study, and reflection. In view of its concord with most of what we have written here, it can provide us encouragement and serve as a helpful resource. It is not a proprietary document and thus may be used in whole or in part by any people, communions, or denominations who confess Jesus Christ and are committed to bringing the Good News to all Creation.

B. An Evangelical Declaration on the Care of Creation

As followers of Jesus Christ, committed to the full authority of the Scriptures, and aware of the ways we have degraded Creation, we believe that biblical faith is essential to the solution of our ecological problems.[98]

* Because we worship and honor the Creator, we seek to cherish and care for the Creation.

* Because we have sinned, we have failed in our stewardship of Creation. Therefore we repent of the way we have polluted, distorted, or destroyed so much of the Creator's work.

* Because in Christ God has healed our alienation from God and extended to us the first fruits of the reconciliation of all things, we commit ourselves to working

[98]An Evangelical Declaration on the Care of Creation. This declaration is presented here as guidelines for ecclesiastical response in the Reformed Churches of the Reformed Ecumenical Council. No doubt that improvements and refinements can be made here. Nevertheless, this declaration, based as it is on the same and similar considerations covered in this report, provides a fine starting point for ecclesiastical action. Copies can be obtained from the Evangelical Environment Network, 10 East Lancaster Avenue, Wynnewood, Pennsylvania 19096-3495, USA.

in the power of the Holy Spirit to share the Good News of Christ in word and deed, to work for the reconciliation of all people in Christ, and to extend Christ's healing to suffering Creation.

* Because we await the time when even the groaning Creation will be restored to wholeness, we commit ourselves to work vigorously to protect and heal that Creation for the honor and glory of the Creator—whom we know dimly through Creation, but meet fully through Scripture and in Christ.

We and our children face a growing crisis in the health of the Creation in which we are embedded, and through which, by God's grace, we are sustained. Yet we continue to degrade that Creation.

* These degradations of Creation can be summed up as 1) land degradation; 2) deforestation; 3) species extinction; 4) water degradation; 5) global toxification; 6) the alteration of atmosphere; 7) human and cultural degradation.

* Many of these degradations are signs that we are pressing against the finite limits God has set for Creation. With continued population growth, these degradations will become more severe. Our responsibility is not only to bear and nurture children, but to nurture their home on earth. We respect the institution of marriage as the way God has given to insure thoughtful proCreation of children and their nurture to the glory of God.

* We recognize that human poverty is both a cause and a consequence of environmental degradation.

Many concerned people, convinced that environmental problems are more spiritual than technological, are exploring the world's ideologies and religions in search of non-Christian spiritual resources for the healing of the earth. As followers of Jesus Christ, we believe that the Bible calls us to respond in four ways:

* First, God calls us to confess and repent of attitudes which devalue Creation, and which twist or ignore biblical revelation to support our misuse of it. Forgetting that "the earth is the Lord's," we have often simply used Creation and forgotten our responsibility to care for it.

* Second, our actions and attitudes toward the earth need to proceed from the center of our faith, and be rooted in the fullness of God's revelation in Christ and the Scriptures. We resist both ideologies which would presume the Gospel has nothing to do with the care of nonhuman Creation and also ideologies which would reduce the Gospel to nothing more than the care of that Creation.

* Third, we seek carefully to learn all that the Bible tells us about the Creator, Creation, and the human task. In our life and words we declare that full good news for all Creation which is still waiting "in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed" (Romans 8:19).

* Fourth, we seek to understand what Creation reveals about God's divinity, sustaining presence, and everlasting power, and what Creation teaches us of its God-given order and the principles by which it works.

Thus we call on all those who are committed to the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to affirm the following principles of biblical faith, and to seek ways of living out these principles in our personal lives, our churches, and society.

* The cosmos, in all its beauty, wildness, and life-giving bounty, is the work of our personal and loving Creator.

* Our creating God is prior to and other than Creation, yet intimately involved with it, upholding each thing in its freedom, and all things in relationships of intricate complexity. God is *transcendent*, while lovingly sustaining each creature; and *immanent*, while wholly other than Creation and not to be confused with it.

* God the Creator is relational in very nature, revealed as three persons in One. Likewise, the Creation which God intended is a symphony of individual creatures in harmonious relationship.

* The Creator's concern is for all creatures. God declares all Creation "good" (Genesis 1:31); promises care in a covenant with all creatures (Genesis 9:9-17); delights in creatures which have no human apparent usefulness (Job 39-41); and wills, in Christ, "to reconcile to himself all things" (Colossians 1:20).

* Men, women, and children, have a unique responsibility to the Creator; at the same time we are *creatures*, shaped by the same processes and embedded in the same systems of physical, chemical, and biological interconnections which sustain other creatures.

* Men, women, and children, created in God's image, also have a unique responsibility for Creation. Our actions should both sustain Creation's fruitfulness and preserve Creation's powerful testimony to its Creator.

* Our God-given, stewardly talents have often been warped from their intended purpose: that we know, name, keep and delight in God's creatures; that we nourish civilization in love, creativity and obedience to God; and that we offer Creation and civilization back in praise to the Creator. We have ignored our creaturely limits and have used the earth with greed, rather than care.

* The earthly result of human sin has been a perverted stewardship, a patchwork of garden and wasteland in which the waste is increasing. "There is no faithfulness, no love, no acknowledgement of God in the land. . . . Because of this the land mourns, and all who live in it waste away; the beasts of the field and the birds of the air and the fish of the sea are dying" (Hosea 4:lb, 3). Thus, one consequence of our misuse of the earth is an unjust denial of God's created bounty to other human beings, both now and in the future.

* God's purpose in Christ is to heal and bring to wholeness not only persons but the entire created order. "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" (Colossians 1:19-20).

* In Jesus Christ, believers are forgiven, transformed and brought into God's kingdom. ". . . if anyone is in Christ, he is a new Creation" (2 Corinthians 5:17). The presence of the kingdom of God is marked not only by renewed fellowship with God, but also by renewed harmony and justice between people, and by renewed harmony and justice between people and the rest of the created world. "You will go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and the hills will burst into song before you, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands" (Isaiah 55:12). We believe that in Christ there is hope, not only for men,

women and children, but also for the rest of Creation which is suffering from the consequences of human sin.

* Therefore we call upon all Christians to reaffirm that all Creation is God's; that God created it good; and that God is renewing it in Christ.

* We encourage deeper reflection on the substantial biblical and theological teaching which speaks of God's work of redemption in terms of the renewal and completion of God's purpose in Creation.

* We seek a deeper reflection on the wonders of God's Creation and the principles by which Creation works. We also urge a careful consideration of how our corporate and individual actions respect and comply with God's ordinances for Creation.

* We encourage Christians to incorporate the extravagant creativity of God into their lives by increasing the nurturing [of the] role of beauty and the arts in their personal, ecclesiastical, and social patterns.

* We urge individual Christians and churches to be centers of Creation's care and renewal, both delighting in Creation as God's gift, and enjoying it as God's provision, in ways which sustain and heal the damaged fabric of the Creation which God has entrusted to us.

* We recall Jesus' words that our lives do not consist in the abundance of our possessions, and therefore we urge followers of Jesus to resist the allure of wastefulness and overconsumption—by making personal lifestyle choices that express humility, forbearance, self restraint and frugality.

* We call on all Christians to work for godly, just, and sustainable economies which reflect God's sovereign economy and enable men, women and children to flourish along with all the diversity of Creation. We recognize that poverty forces people to degrade Creation in order to survive; therefore we support the development of just, free economies which empower the poor and create abundance without diminishing Creation's bounty.

* We commit ourselves to work for responsible public policies which embody the principles of biblical stewardship of Creation.

* We invite Christians—individuals, congregations and organizations—to join with us in this evangelical declaration on the environment, becoming a covenant people in an ever-widening circle of biblical care for Creation.

* We call upon Christians to listen to and work with all those who are concerned about the healing of Creation, with an eagerness both to learn from them and also to share with them our conviction that the God whom all people sense in Creation (Acts 17:27) is known fully only in the Word made flesh in Christ the living God who made and sustains all things.

* We make this declaration knowing that until Christ returns to reconcile all things, we are called to be faithful stewards of God's good garden, our earthly home.

Section X.

GUIDELINES FOR CONGREGATIONAL ACTION

For I regard the troubles that befall us in the present time as trivial when compared with the magnificent goodness of God that is to be manifested in us. For the created order awaits, in eager longing, with neck outstretched, the full manifestation of the children of God. . . for the Creation itself has something to look forward to . . . The Creation itself is to share in the freedom, in the glorious and undying goodness, of the children of God.

—paraphrase from Romans by Metropolitan, Paulos Mar Gregorios, Delhi, 1987.[99]

This study provides insight from which we can develop and implement concrete actions in our churches. However, in moving ahead toward putting ideas into practice we need to remind ourselves that just stewardship of Creation is not so much a set of guidelines or prescribed actions as much as it is a way of life. Thus, the material we present here is to prime our thinking about what can and must be done at the congregational level. What is appropriate in one congregation may be inappropriate in another. And what needs to be accomplished this year might be different from what was necessary last year.

Thus while our grounding in Scripture stands firm through the generations, our response as stewards of our Lord's Creation will vary from time to time and from place to place. We live in different places, cultures, and climes. While an energy audit of a church building may make sense for a congregation high in the North Temperate Zone, it may not for one in the tropics. Similarly, tree-planting may make sense in the Sahel of Africa, but perhaps not for some residents of the forests of the Amazon. However, no matter where we are, we must take God's Word seriously and must live our lives as psalms to our triune God, acting justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly with our God in our Lord's Creation. The measure of our just stewardship is not the number of check-marks we can place on lists of things we should do, as much as it is a continual living under the eye of God as just stewards of God's Creation.

Nonetheless, in this final section we put forth some ideas, not as prescriptions, but as primers for thinking. Therefore, please take these guidelines as discussion-starters and idea-generators as together we pursue the privilege and responsibility of being just stewards of Creation.

A. What We Can Do for Just Stewardship

1. Church Program

a. We can assure that God's care for Creation and our just stewardship of Creation is reflected in preaching, hymnody, and worship.

[99]Romans 8:18-21 paraphrase by Paulos Mar Gregorios, "New Testament foundations for understanding the Creation," in Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, *Caring for Creation: Essays on the Gospel and the Earth*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987, p. 84.

b. We can develop and implement means for increasing knowledge about Creation, God's provisions for its proper functioning, God's justice for people and Creation, and the privilege of stewardship.

c. We can find out about the relations between our church and its members with the wider Creation, so we can better appreciate God's provisions and so we can correct things that have gone wrong.

d. We can assure that our church is a witness for just stewardship of Creation to the community and region it serves, including its worship, programs, land, facilities and people, and the other creatures under its care.

e. We can consider whether and how our church can become an information source for practicing just stewardship of Creation.

2. Knowing Our Place in Creation

a. We can determine the ecosystem type within which our church is situated and learn of its members and functioning, in the context of God's provisions for Creation.

b. We can conduct field studies out of doors to learn about Creation, Creation's care and abuse, and the relationships of environmental issues with justice.

c. We can discover the differences in response needed in different settings (tropical vs. temperate, urban vs. rural, forested vs. deforested, etc.) to generate understanding and respect for differences in response among various churches.

d. We can provide the opportunity for pastors and teachers to expand their knowledge of just stewardship of Creation.

3. Taking Action in the Community

a. We can take responsibility for a particular part of Creation in our region to assure social and ecological integrity.

b. We can work to reclaim or restore a degraded part of Creation in the context of just stewardship.

c. We can commit ourselves as a congregation to live out our faith through caring for that part of God's Creation in which we live. Examples are caring for the watershed of which we are a part or adopting an endangered species.

d. We can encourage members to make their homes and work places Creation Covenant Centers.

4. Providing Leadership

a. We can be leaders in society in speaking out for just stewardship of Creation.

b. We can be sponsors of environmental improvement and just stewardship projects in the community.

c. We can lead in providing the knowledge base in just stewardship needed for effective action.

5. Working with Other Churches

a. We can invite some other churches to join us in our efforts on just stewardship of Creation.

b. We can glean from other churches the best ideas and approaches for just stewardship of Creation.

c. We can organize a regional meeting on just stewardship of Creation with concrete projects and examples demonstrated.

B. Some Very Specific Ideas

In working to care for Creation we can make, do, or arrange the following: roof-top gardens, ground-level gardens, fish ponds with fluorescent night light for insect feeding, edible cultivars, edible flowers (Nasturtiums), rotational grazing, regenerative gardening, native plant restoration, indigenous gardening and forest garden techniques, seed and tree distribution, church lawn conversion, liturgical expression, signing of gardens and woods and fields to describe their contributions to the atmosphere, establishment of walking trails, provide for substantial window box support in building design to allow even for the growth of small trees and shrubs, restore habitats around houses to provide for a large diversity of creatures, do an audit of energy and materials used in the church, implement some ecological principle so that it is visible to the community, define and develop missionary earthkeeping, assist on a farm, buy the beef you eat on the hoof and have it processed, do a Creation-hymn search through older editions of church hymnbooks, define what is meant by ecclesiastical earth-keeping, make your church a center for distribution of native flower, tree, and vegetable seeds, identify a member of your congregation as an environmental stewardship coordinator, teach children the principles of seed germination and plant nurture, make bird guides readily available to all who can use them, conduct a food-source awareness dinner at church, conduct a hunger awareness dinner at church, discuss the difference between tree planting and forest restoration and follow it with a restoration project, buy a worn-out piece of land and redeem it, arrange for an astronomy night to make Psalm 19 come alive.

C. Ideas for Creating Stewardship Opportunity

In working for justice for the hungry we can work cooperatively between congregations and denominations to understand and shape international food policy and become informed on the politics of "food aid." We can become informed on legislation and transactions of our own countries in the global marketplace. We can question legislation, request explanations, and ask for improvements. We can work to assure that our governments have in place the means of rescuing those who are caught in economic injustices and threatened with hunger and nutrition problems. We can encourage the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank to move more and more toward economic and environmental policies that effectively address the system that produces poverty, hunger and degradation of Creation.

We can work to set aside national rivalries between North and South and strive for solutions to the problem of inequitable distributions of wealth. We can work on removing obstacles that prevent many countries from engaging in sound

and stewardly economies. Most importantly, we can start by looking carefully at ourselves and taking corrective action. As we become more aware of our own place in God's economy and the human economy, we can become more proficient at addressing the regional and national questions about how to provide for the stewardship of land and life for the poor.

D. Encouraging a Critique of Self

In everything we do we can recognize that over-consumption in the industrialized North has a debilitating impact on countries of the nonindustrialized South. Degradation of Creation and world hunger are major scandals of our world today. The widespread poverty we experience is an embarrassment to advanced civilization. And waste, as an unwanted byproduct of luxury is also an embarrassment. These realities of our time call into question the ways and means we have employed to achieve "progress," "development," and "modernization." To the extent that the power and promise of our technological, industrial, and post-industrial age fails to address and alleviate the growing holocaust in Creation and society, it will increasingly expose and encounter its own corruption, decadence, blind-sightedness. The Church has much to say and do here.

When we pray for God's will to be done on earth we must realize that the weakest of the weak, the marginalized, and the poor are not in a position to change, bring about change, or articulate succinctly the alternatives and options. Others must empower and re-empower them to provide local leadership and stewards of land and life. The knowledge they may have of their own environment often exceeds that of itinerant experts. So too does their interest and ability to engage in responsible stewardship. But they must have the freedom to use that knowledge and act on their God-assigned stewardship of some part of Creation. The Church has much to say and do here as well.

"Salt and Light" is a mark of the Reformed heritage. Through our prayerful resolve and determined action we can make a powerful contribution to the church universal. As we proceed, we and other Christians must urge the proclamation of the full gospel. The church must preach the kingdom of God so that the world may be brought to acknowledge and to live under God as king of the whole of life. Creation, and not only we ourselves, is the recipient of God's salvation. Christ's redeeming work envelops us all.

Remembering and honoring our Creator, following our Savior as Maker, Sustainer, and Reconciler of all things, responding to the testimony of the Holy Spirit in our hearts, we seek to live lives of responsible and just stewardship. We seek to so behave on earth that heaven will not be a shock to us!

Section XI.

A BIBLIOGRAPHY OF SUGGESTED READINGS

. . . my people are destroyed from lack of knowledge. "Because you have rejected knowledge, I also reject you as my priests; because you have ignored the law of your God, I also will ignore your children."

—the Jewish prophet Hosea, about 750 years before Christ.[100]

The wide array of literature available has been comprehensively reviewed by Joseph Sheldon on Christian environmental stewardship and by Peter Bakken, et al. on eco-justice (see below). Of particular importance in developing a biblical and reformed perspective are the following:

Bakken, Peter W., Joan Gibb Engel and J. Ronald Engel. 1995. *Ecology, Justice, and Christian Faith: A Critical Guide to the Literature*. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press.

Barbour, Ian. 1993. *Ethics in an Age of Technology: The Gifford Lectures, Volume 2*. New York: HarperCollins.

Berry, Wendell. 1981. *The Gift of Good Land: Further Essays, Cultural and Agricultural*. San Francisco: North Point Press.

[100]Hosea 4:6

I. Brief overview

In 1996 the Sermons for Reading Services Committee served some 170 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.

Synod 1996 advised the Sermons for Reading Services Committee "to explore the potential need for reading sermons among multiethnic groupings within the Christian Reformed Church" (*Acts of Synod 1996*, p. 554). A number of letters of inquiry were sent to multiethnic groups by chairman Rev. Harry A. Vander Windt. This matter is still being pursued, but at this time there is no reportable progress.

The committee consists of Rev. Harry Vander Windt (1997), chairman; Mr. Ray Vander Ploeg (1999), secretary-treasurer; Rev. Fred Heslinga (1998); Rev. Paul Stadt (1999); and Rev. Carel Geleynse, alternate. Chairman Rev. Harry Vander Windt has completed his term but has indicated his willingness to serve a second term.

Subscription rates will remain unchanged at $75.00 (Can.) or $60.00 (U.S.).

II. Recommendations

A. That synod approve the publication of *The Living Word* for 1998 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. Harry Vander Windt*, pastor of Fruitland Christian Reformed Church, Stoney Creek, Ontario.
2. *Rev. Gerald Hogeterp*, pastor of Covenant Christian Reformed Church, Woodstock, Ontario.

Sermons for Reading Services Committee
Carel Geleynse, alternate
Fred Heslinga
Paul D. Stadt
Ray Vander Ploeg, secretary-treasurer
Harry A. Vander Windt, chairman

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DENOMINATIONALLY RELATED AGENCIES

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Dordt College

Dordt College began the 1996-1997 academic year with a record enrollment of 1,269, a 5 percent gain over the previous year and the fifth enrollment increase in a row. While Dordt's student body is still largely Christian Reformed (75 percent) and recent enrollment increases reflect greater numbers of CRC students, the college enjoys growing visibility in the broader evangelical community and is seeing yearly increases in the number of non-CRC students seeking the distinctively Reformed, high-quality Christian education available at Dordt. Canadian-student enrollment also remains high (13 percent), and the number of students from other countries continues to grow.

About 85 percent of Dordt's students live on campus, so college personnel have spent the past year developing plans for a new two-hundred-bed residence hall, to be available in the fall of 1998. Groundbreaking will take place in June 1997 at about the same time as a $6.8 million recreation center, now under construction, is completed. Campus expansion is being funded in part by the $16 million Dordt 2000 campaign, which in December 1996 passed the $12 million mark.

The Dordt College community is grateful to the members of the Christian Reformed Church for their faithful and generous support of the college. In 1995-1996 total amounts received from ministry shares and church offerings rose for the first time in five years. In order to better maintain its strong and vital relationship with Christian Reformed and other churches, in 1996 the college created a new position which includes responsibilities for church relations. As director of alumni and church relations, Judy Hagey will strive to nurture the mutually supportive relationship between Dordt College and the churches it serves.

Additions and replacements to the faculty required the hiring of six new faculty members in 1996. Ten positions need to be filled in 1997. Also during 1996 Dr. Carl E. Zylstra was inaugurated as the third president in the college's forty-one-year history, replacing Dr. John B. Hulst, who retired after fourteen years as president. Stressing the theme of constancy in the midst of change, Dr. Zylstra chose for his inaugural address the topic "Living the Vision," encouraging the college community to continue faithfully unfolding the biblical vision upon which Dordt College was founded.

Dordt College was pleased to host the CRC Free to Serve rally for the upper Midwest in November 1996. Enthusiastic crowds filled the B.J. Haan Auditorium for performances on both Friday and Saturday nights. During the day on Saturday about six hundred people attended the Ministries Festival in the Dordt gymnasium, where they enjoyed music, food, and the chance to browse the booths of some twenty agencies and institutions supported by members of the Christian Reformed Church.

The Free to Serve celebration was a wonderful opportunity for all of us who have been blessed by God in and through the CRC to give thanks. Dordt College was founded by members of the CRC and continues to serve large numbers of CRC students. It shares with the CRC a common purpose—equipping God's people for lives of kingdom service.

Dordt College
Carl E. Zylstra, president

I. A fruitful year

The Institute for Christian Studies experienced many blessings and challenges in the 1995-1996 academic year. In the rhythm of academic life, our senior members (professors) taught junior members (students) from across North America and around the world and continued researching and publishing in their respective fields. A number of young university graduates became ICS junior members, and others graduated with Master of Philosophical Foundations or Master of Worldview Studies degrees.

II. Shaping a living tradition

All of this teaching, research, and writing happens at ICS with faithful prayer and financial support from predominantly Christian Reformed Church members. ICS stands in the tradition of scholarly inquiry which affirms Jesus Christ as the one by whom all things were created, in whom all things hold together, and through whom all things are reconciled to God (Col. 1:16-20). ICS scholars translate this confession into a persistent emphasis on the inner renewal of scholarship, that is, the pursuit of scholarship which finds its basis, orientation, and guidance in the worldview rooted in the Scriptures. Members of the ICS faculty receive the scholarly heritage of this tradition as a gift and believe that it has resources to fruitfully assist and guide efforts to gain reliable insight into reality. ICS is grateful to its supporters for helping its scholars stay rooted in the rich soil of the faith tradition, while at the same time joyfully encouraging the creativity and change which are the blood and bones of the scholarly task.

III. Scholarly benefits

Someone you know may already have benefited from Christ-centered graduate-level academic study at ICS.

- ICS scholars have written many books, articles, and papers which seek to fulfill the above mandate and which have received extensive reading in the Christian Reformed and wider Christian community.
- Many current professors at Reformed universities and colleges (as well as many other Christian colleges, seminaries, and secular universities) have received their master's or doctor's degrees through ICS and have grown in their ability to ground their teaching in a biblical worldview.
- Conferences and seminars at ICS offer the wider community opportunities to engage the issues they face with the assistance of faculty and colleagues who search out the deeper roots and implications of the issues. Correspondence courses and summer school put continuing education within reach of people from a wide range of academic and vocational backgrounds.

IV. Students at work

ICS continues to draw students who want to pursue graduate education at a place where their commitment to God is respected and expected to permeate their academic work. ICS offers students master's programs with specializations

in worldview studies, philosophy of science and technology, education, systematic theology, history of philosophy, political theory, philosophical aesthetics, systematic theology, philosophical theology, and biblical studies and hermeneutics as well as doctoral programs with specializations in all of these areas except worldview studies.

V. New faculty, new possibilities

This past year, ICS welcomed Dr. Carroll Guen Hart as director of the Worldview Studies Program. Dr. Guen Hart achieved her master's and doctorate through ICS and had already been teaching worldview-studies classes. ICS looks forward to her innovative plans for the Worldview Studies Program, particularly those which feature study of the issues of Christian faith and vocation. Dr. Vaden House also joined the faculty in the field of philosophy of science and technology.

VI. Financial possibilities

ICS supporters have again been a blessing through their faithfulness. On behalf of ICS I would like to express appreciation to churches that have continued to support Christian scholarship at ICS through annual offerings. I also encourage other Christian Reformed congregations to consider supporting the Institute's unique mission in Christian graduate education with scheduled offerings.

Institute for Christian Studies
Harry Fernhout, president

The King's University College

The King's University College is pleased to have the opportunity to submit this report to Synod 1997. During the past year the college has continued to experience God's faithfulness. Though our young institution faces many challenges, we are encouraged by progress in many areas and by the continued support for our institution from numerous people who believe in the importance of Christian higher education in western Canada.

In an environment where the competition for students has increased dramatically over the past few years, we are thankful for having maintained an enrollment of just over five hundred. With increased program offerings we had hoped for a sizable increase in enrollment, but that proved to be very difficult to achieve. In light of the fact that the other privately operated university colleges in Alberta faced decreasing enrollments, we were pleased at least to maintain ours. The college has taken steps to make more prospective students aware of the distinctively Christian character of our institution so that more students can benefit from Christian university education as it is offered at King's. Our efforts in this regard are particularly targeted at Christian students attending public high schools.

The college's new degree program in education is going well. Though we could serve a larger enrollment in this area as well, we are grateful to be able to grant bachelor of education degrees to twenty-one students this spring. These graduates will be the first in Canada to receive education degrees and the associated teacher certification from an independently operated institution. We praise God for the opportunities we now have to educate Christian teachers. We also expect to grant degrees to approximately eighty graduates in the arts and science program.

In spite of enrollment challenges, the college's new four-year program in environmental studies is fully subscribed. The integrated Christian approach to environmental issues which is the hallmark of this program has created much enthusiasm among our students. We were pleased to make a new faculty appointment in economics this past year to serve this program.

Because our enrollment was less than estimated in the budget, the college is faced with some financial challenges. We expect an operating deficit. Yet we are grateful for continued financial support from many donors. The support that the college receives in the form of ministry shares for the area college from Christian Reformed congregations in western Canada continues to be very welcome and much appreciated. Without this support it would be very difficult to meet our obligations. It allows us to continue to serve hundreds of CRC students with quality Christian education at an affordable tuition.

We trust that the Lord will bless our efforts as we continue to work at fulfilling our stated mission of providing Christian higher education to our students. The prayerful support of members of the Christian Reformed Church will continue to be an important element in the ability of the college to achieve this goal.

The King's University College
Henk Van Andel, president

As we approach the end of our fifteenth academic year, students and faculty at Redeemer College are busy focusing on their course work. Even as the college community feels the pressures of coming to grips with the financial challenges of the past year, we are energized by the faithful support of the churches and our supporting community.

Redeemer College experienced a drop in enrollment during the 1996-1997 academic year. A similar situation seems to have occurred at many universities across Canada, but for a young institution like Redeemer College, the setback has had serious repercussions. Our response to the challenge before us has been twofold. To avoid a large deficit, employees were required to accept an unpaid leave of four weeks, a number of employee contracts were reduced, and some positions were eliminated. To generate additional income, we are also developing new initiatives and exploring new opportunities: in continuing education, recruitment, fund raising, planned giving, ancillary services, and restructuring of the administration. Please pray that the Lord will bless these efforts to find new ways to enable the college to move forward in accomplishing its mission.

In the area of research, Redeemer College has been pleased to announce the Pascal Centre's recent release of *Facets of Faith and Science*, a four-volume publication which examines the interaction between the natural sciences and the Christian faith. Additionally, the Dooyeweerd Centre has signed a publishing contract with Edwin Mellen Press to publish the translated works of philosopher Herman Dooyeweerd. The first volume, entitled *Christian Philosophy and the Meaning of History*, has just been completed.

With sincere gratitude we acknowledge increased support from the churches during the past year. By the grace of God, Redeemer College has been blessed with the task of equipping students for lives of leadership and service under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Please continue to support us in this task through your prayers and gifts.

Redeemer College
Justin D. Cooper, president

Reformed Bible College

God is good, and we at Reformed Bible College (RBC) count it a blessing to be part of his work and witness in this world. Since RBC's founding in 1939, over 2,400 alumni have gone forth in mission, church-staff, and Christian social-work careers. In 1996, 43 percent of our graduates went on to seminary studies. These people are witnesses on your behalf as part of the body of Christ. Thank you for the support, prayer, and encouragement you give them and the college as we serve together in the building of God's kingdom.

The experiences seen at RBC this year continue to underscore the beauty, grace, love, and blessedness which come to us from God. God proves himself faithful to us time and time again as we see his hand at work—not only in our effort to carry out the mission of RBC but also in the way he has touched individual lives at a deep level as they have been part of this community. We are thrilled to see increased enrollment and gift giving, but most of all we are thrilled to witness how the hearts of many have been energized to render life-committed service to him.

A special dynamic of RBC this year is the impact foreign students have had on campus. Since this past summer, when a group of South Koreans took special courses, through the fall enrollment, which brought us 198 students from fourteen different countries, our eyes have been opened in new ways to the global character of God's church and the particular way RBC might provide service and training to a global community.

The college is currently reviewing its mission statement and formulating its "Vision 2020"—a direction-setting effort through which we are striving to assure that the church and ministry students we train are well-prepared to exercise leadership and witness in what we anticipate will be a very different society, with unique challenges. The opportunities associated with "Vision 2020" bring much excitement and energy, but we must be careful to keep our efforts true to our mission statement.

Our degree-completion program, EXCEL, which grants a bachelor of religious education degree, continues to attract students in the west Michigan area. The expectation was that we would have four or five groups, "cohorts," starting every year, but it looks more like we will have three to four cohorts in a typical year. Each cohort is composed of about twelve students.

The program we have, the opportunities we consider, and the emphasis we place before the church all focus on one purpose for RBC: to locate, train, and place as many people as possible in full-time kingdom service. The need for pastors, youth workers, counselors, and leaders in church education is increasing. The fact of the matter is that we, as Christ's body in general and the college in particular, are not presently able to fill all the open positions in our churches and ministry organizations. Our response to this need must be immediate; we see RBC as very instrumental in the church's response.

Reformed Bible College
Dr. Nicholas V. Kroeze, president

Dr. Kenneth Bootsma, who had served as president for twelve years, left Trinity Christian College on June 30, 1996, after having given notice to the trustees in the fall of 1995. After a nationwide search, Dr. A.J. Anglin became the sixth president of the college on July 1, 1996. Dr. Anglin had previously served at four other private colleges, three of them members of the Coalition of Christian Colleges and Universities. His most recent position was provost of Azusa Pacific University in southern California, where he served for five years. He and his wife, Florence, have become members of Palos Heights Christian Reformed Church.

Trinity's fall enrollment of 619 was down slightly from the previous year's record high of 636 students. The percentage of students attending Trinity who are members of the Christian Reformed Church has remained between 51 and 55 percent for the past ten years. The percentage of students who come from various Reformed denominations has remained between 66 and 71 during this same period. Enrollments from California and Michigan have increased significantly during the last five years.

Assisting men and women in learning, from a Reformed perspective, how to work and live and serve continues to be the primary focus of the educational process at Trinity Christian College. Although the college seeks a diverse student audience, commitment of the faculty and administration to a Reformed Christian worldview remains essential in filling our mission and purpose.

Trinity Christian College was recognized in the September issue of *Money* magazine for the value and quality that its students receive by being named one of the "hundred best buys in American higher education." The college was ranked seventy-fifth nationally and twenty-first in the Midwest.

The financial support from churches continues to be significant in providing affordable Christian higher education to our covenant youth. Colleges are increasingly faced with the difficult challenge of keeping tuition increases as small as possible yet providing students with quality learning experiences. In fiscal year 1996, contributions from churches totaled $164,706, compared to $151,913 in 1995. I appeal to you not only to maintain this level of giving but also to increase your support. It indeed makes a significant difference.

Our covenant call to serve the Lord Jesus Christ faithfully at Trinity Christian College and to follow God's direction every day can be accomplished if you will continue to pray for me, my leadership team, and the outstanding faculty and staff. Together we can partner to train Christian men and women who will make a difference in a lost and hurting world.

Trinity Christian College
A.J. Anglin, president

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STUDY COMMITTEES

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I. Introduction

A. Mandate

Synod 1994 appointed a committee "to study the use of inclusive language for God" with the mandate "to examine the biblical, confessional, theological, cultural, and pastoral dimensions of the use of inclusive language for God. The study should be sensitive to the linguistic and literary issues involved. The results of the study should provide clear advice to the church concerning the significance and limits of inclusive language for God" (*Acts of Synod 1994*, pp. 496-97).

The committee is made up of men and women and includes ministers; scholars in the fields of biblical studies, theology, philosophy, linguistics, and English; a native speaker of Korean; and a family counselor.

B. History of the mandate

The question of inclusive language for God first arose formally in the CRC when the CRC Publications Board formulated inclusive-language guidelines for the LiFE curriculum. These guidelines, reported to Synod 1991, were as follows:

> *A.* Make no changes in Scripture or in the scriptural language and imagery for God. When Scripture is being used that contains masculine pronouns or imagery, continue these in the discussion about that Scripture.
> *B.* In other places and contexts, show sensitivity to unnecessary gender descriptions or designations of God.
> *C.* In line with Scripture, broaden the imagery by which we conceive of God.
> (*Acts of Synod 1991*, p. 786)

Synod 1991 instructed CRC Publications to clarify and amplify these guidelines and report to Synod 1992.

In addition to the revised guidelines, Synod 1992 received an overture from Classis Hudson to "declare that Scripture and the creeds forbid feminine language for God" (*Agenda for Synod 1992*, pp. 485-86). Synod adopted the guidelines proposed by CRC Publications with the addition of the italicized words in Guideline 3:

> *Guideline 1*
> Make no changes in Scripture or in the scriptural language and imagery for God. When Scripture is being used that contains masculine pronouns or imagery, continue these in the discussion about that Scripture.
>
> *Guideline 2*
> Reflect the rich range of imagery Scripture uses in speaking of God.
>
> *Guideline 3*
> In cases where gender descriptions or designations of God arise out of common English usage, prevalent social patterns, or traditional theological language rather than out of Scripture, take care not to offend readers needlessly by using inappropriate images, overusing masculine pronouns, *and/or naming God with feminine nouns or pronouns.*
>
> *Guideline 4*
> Always use language that fully reflects the personal nature of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

Synod communicated these guidelines to the churches and recommended them as pastoral advice (*Acts of Synod 1992*, pp. 615-16).

However, the council of Newton CRC, Newton, New Jersey (not Iowa, as stated in *Agenda for Synod 1993*), overtured Synod 1993 to make a further declaration about referring to God with feminine nouns or pronouns (*Agenda for Synod 1993*, pp. 319-20). This overture, which had not been adopted by classis, was occasioned by reports that persons associated with agencies of the CRC had used feminine names and pronouns for God.

In response Synod 1993 recognized the importance of the use of feminine language for God and recommended careful consideration of its linguistic and doctrinal implications. But it judged that the guidelines of 1992 were adequate safeguards and again called them to the churches' attention (*Acts of Synod 1993*, pp. 600-01).

Synod 1994 received overtures from Classis Hudson and Classis of the Heartland that called for further strengthening and clarifying the guidelines of 1992. Both presented biblical, confessional, and theological arguments against inclusive language for God and expressed concern about the use of inclusive language by persons connected with agencies of the CRC (*Agenda for Synod 1994*, pp. 254-67).

In response to these overtures Synod 1994 appointed the present study committee with the mandate quoted above. Also adopted were two additional recommendations:

> That synod, as an interim measure, urge the CRC and [instruct] its agencies to adhere to the guidelines of 1992 until the study is completed. [*Note*: The word "instruct" is not printed in the *Acts of Synod 1994*, but it is the correct reading, as indicated in a memo issued by Rev. L.J. Hofman, general secretary, on August 23, 1994.]
>
> That synod, in pastoral concern, recognizing that some people have difficulty with the "masculine" language for God in Scripture because of abuse, neglect, and sexism in our culture, urge that the churches deal sensitively with such people in verbally communicating God and his grace. Synod also warns the churches against adopting ways of speaking about God which legitimize or promote the assumption that the predominantly "masculine" way in which Scripture represents God is sexist, oppressive, distorted, or in any way unhealthful for our understanding of God and ourselves.
>
> (*Acts of Synod 1994*, pp. 504-05)

The foregoing history of actions regarding inclusive language for God is the background for the work of the study committee.

C. *Analysis of the mandate*

1. Orientation: open question or guided study?

The committee's first problem in understanding its mandate was to discern the nature of synod's question about inclusive language for God. Did synod request that inclusive language be studied as an open question, as though it was uncertain whether its previous guidelines were correct and naming God *Mother* might turn out to be acceptable after all? Or did synod already have a fairly clear and broadly held position, on the basis of which it was requesting a guided study of, a fuller analysis of, and an articulated rationale for its position on inclusive language?

It is clear from the history of the mandate that synod has consistently moved away from feminine language for God, explicitly rejecting it in the

guidelines of 1992 and speaking of a "consensus" against it in 1994 as well as "warning" the churches against it and "instructing" the agencies to comply with the guidelines. It is apparent, therefore, that Synod 1994 was not mandating a neutral study of inclusive language for God as an open question.

At the same time the rationale for the mandate recognizes that this is a very complex question which deserves "more extensive study." In fact, the biblical, hermeneutical, exegetical, theological, and pastoral rationale for the guidelines had never been spelled out by synod. The mandate asks the present committee to study all these matters and provide the church with "clear advice concerning the significance and limits of inclusive language for God." Thus synod did not merely request a justification of the current guidelines. It mandated a thorough study which might result in changes and refinements of the guidelines and might yield a statement that is broader and more extensive than the guidelines. In this sense synod was open to reconsideration of the whole issue. The study committee has approached its mandate in this open yet guided manner.

2. Content

a. Definition of "inclusive language for God"

To proceed, the committee needed to define "inclusive language for God," for this term does not always mean the same thing.

Some people use it merely to mean the full use of biblical language for God. For example, it is sometimes alleged that the ordinary Christian vocabulary for the deity is too limited, including only *God, Lord*, and *Father*, whereas Scripture has a much richer vocabulary, including *eagle, rock, shepherd, helper*, and so forth. More inclusive language for God here would mean including more of "the rich range of imagery Scripture uses in speaking of God" (Guideline 2) rather than just a few of the terms for God.

But that is not what "inclusive language for God" means in current mainstream academic and ecclesiastical discussions. There it has the same meaning as "inclusive language for humans." When used of humans, *inclusive language* means language that attempts to avoid all implied discrimination, ranking, or other allegedly pejorative connotations with respect to race, culture, class, religion, handicap, gender, or sexual orientation. *Inclusive language for God* in most contemporary discussions has precisely the same antidiscriminatory intent. It is scrupulously egalitarian in its representations of God, seeking complete equality of terminology.

Thus *gender*-inclusive language is language that avoids using vocabulary and speech patterns that feature one gender more prominently than the other. It avoids the appearance of promoting the primacy, preference, superiority, or normativity of one gender over the other. It seeks to reflect and promote gender equality.

Gender-inclusive language in contemporary culture is achieved by a combination of two strategies. One is the balanced use of masculine and feminine terms—for example, *he and she* or *king and queen*. The other is the use of gender-neutral terms—for example, *chairperson, monarch*, or *they* as a singular pronoun. Gender-inclusive language aims at portraying and promoting equality among human beings irrespective of their gender. By some people this gender-inclusive aim is extended to language for God.

The history of the committee's mandate shows that *gender*-inclusive language for God is the primary issue for the CRC. It is thus a major focus of our study. Gender-inclusive language for God in this report is understood in the broad sense that has currency in academic and ecclesiastical debate. It is language that seeks to eliminate the impression that God is primarily masculine by the balanced, equal use of both masculine and feminine terms for God—for example, *Father and Mother* or *he/she*—and by the use of gender-neutral terms for God—for example, *Creator, Redeemer*, and *Sanctifier* instead of *Father, Son*, and *Holy Spirit* and avoidance of (masculine) pronouns for God. An example of the use of this sort of inclusive language for God is found in the *Inclusive Language Lectionary* (Knox/Pilgrim/Westminster, 1983-1985). A similar approach is taken in *The New Testament and Psalms: A New Inclusive Translation* (Oxford, 1995). It translates *Father* (referring to God) either gender-inclusively as "Father-Mother" or gender-neutrally as "God," but not simply as "Father." *The New Century Hymnal* (Pilgrim, 1995), endorsed by the United Church of Christ, provides other recent examples.

In summary, by *inclusive language for God* the study committee understands the broad gender-egalitarian/gender-neutral approach advocated in mainstream academic and ecclesiastical discussions. We refer to people who take this position as "inclusivists."

But inclusive language is only part of what we were asked to investigate and evaluate. We use the term "gendered language for God" more broadly to include all language for God that is gendered, including the language of the Bible (Sections VI and VII below). And we make a clear distinction between gendered language for God as found in Scripture and mainstream inclusive language for God, for there are significant differences between them. This report affirms gendered language for God as found in Scripture, including feminine imagery for God. But it rejects inclusive language for God in its standard contemporary forms.

b. Multiple dimensions

The scope of the committee's mandate is broad and multidimensional: "to examine the biblical, confessional, theological, cultural, and pastoral dimensions of the use of inclusive language for God" and be "sensitive to the linguistic and literary issues involved." Although the mandate makes the assignment daunting, this breadth is necessary because the matter of inclusive language for God is not simple, but complex and multifaceted. It is not simply a matter of Scripture and the confessions. The complexity is evident not only in current scholarly ecumenical debates but also in the CRC's own discussions. Synodical guidelines and overtures to synod have raised questions in all the categories specified by the mandate.

The denomination's position is surely not to be determined by linguistic, pastoral, and cultural considerations alone. We must also understand how linguistic, cultural, and pastoral factors can influence our understanding and application of Scripture and the confessions. However, what is obedient and disobedient in culture and what is helpful and harmful pastorally are finally to be determined in terms of what Scripture teaches.

D. The approach of this study

Proceeding from this understanding of its mandate, the committee has attempted to produce a report that is faithful to Scripture and the confessional standards of the Christian Reformed Church; that intelligently, honestly, and sensitively engages the debate about gendered language for God; and that the churches find educationally and pastorally useful. The complexity of the issues involved, the quantity of material written about them, the heat with which they are often debated, and the variety of incompatible conclusions drawn all make the mandate a truly daunting challenge.

Of great help to the committee were our common affirmation of the nature and content of the Bible as understood in the confessional standards of the CRC and our appreciation of the theological tradition which gave rise to and has grown from that perspective. Indeed, much of the current diversity of opinion about inclusive language for God arises from the absence of a shared perspective on Scripture and what it teaches. But where there is a shared commitment to a high view of Scripture and the historic confessions of the Christian church, even ecumenically across the lines of denominations and ecclesiastical traditions, there is also consensus about gendered language for God. In our discussions of this subject, it has been helpful that we have common confession.

The greatest challenges to the study were the complexity of the topic and the huge amount of material written about every aspect of it. Obviously it was not possible to deal with most of that material. The committee therefore attempted to identify the crucial issues by reflecting on a representative selection of the most significant academic and ecclesiastical works on inclusive language for God written from various perspectives and reaching different conclusions. Once we identified the basic issues and different positions, we analyzed them to determine the extent to which they are hermeneutical, exegetical, theological, philosophical, linguistic, pastoral, and/or cultural. Then began the task of developing a coherent account of gendered language for God that is faithful to Scripture and the Reformed confessions, academically sound, not too difficult to read, and pastorally helpful to the church.

The report attempts to identify those issues in gendered language for God that are spiritually, biblically, and theologically nonnegotiable and to distinguish them from exegetical, theological, philosophical, linguistic, and cultural issues about which there can be legitimate disagreement. The report also incorporates examples and illustrations of acceptable and problematic uses of gendered language for God in the worship and ministry of the church.

The complexity of the topic and breadth of the mandate have resulted in a long and sometimes technical report. Readers who wish an initial orientation may read the introductions, summaries, and conclusions of the major sections and subsections before reading the report in its entirety. In addition, we offer the following overview.

E. Overview of the report and its conclusions

The report has three major parts. The first part, which includes Sections II-IV, presents contemporary inclusive language for God and its rationale. The second part, Sections V-VIII, articulates a biblically based position on gendered language for God. The third part, Sections IX-XI, applies the biblically based position to contemporary inclusive language for God, the pastoral ministry of the church, and the proper use of gendered language for God. (See the outline in F below.)

The first major part, which presents inclusive language for God, begins in Section II with a summary of the problems that affect our understanding of human gender and the ways males and females relate to each other in society and culture—problems such as gender stereotyping, the demeaning of women, injustice, abuse, and neglect. It then identifies the ways in which these problems cause difficulties in how people relate to the God of the Bible, who is presented in predominantly masculine terms.

Section III introduces inclusive language for God as a strategy for solving the spiritual and gender-relation problems identified in Section II. In order to aid understanding of the contemporary trend toward inclusive language for God, Section III briefly surveys various kinds of feminism and feminist theology and identifies different views of Scripture employed in defending inclusive language for God. It shows that some arguments for the new practice are incompatible with the Christian faith, whereas others raise valid issues.

Section IV considers the trend toward inclusive language for God in relation to the dynamics and values of contemporary culture—values such as egalitarianism, relativism, the new spirituality, and conservatism. It attempts to identify what is consistent and inconsistent with the will of God in each of these values. It concludes that some arguments for inclusive language for God reflect cultural trends that conflict with God's will but that others do not. The inclusive-language movement is too complex to be dismissed simply as the result of anti-Christian feminism or perverse cultural trends. In sum, the first part of the report urges that we openly and honestly "test the spirits" according to the Word of God in evaluating inclusive language for God.

The second major part of the report sets forth the biblical-confessional perspective on gendered language for God. Section V reviews the Reformed understanding of revelation in creation, in Jesus Christ, and in Scripture as that bears on our knowledge of and language for God. It concludes that the presentation of God in Scripture is the standard for interpreting all of God's revelation and all human speech in relation to God.

Section VI addresses two difficult questions about language for God. The first is how mere creaturely language can express the truth about the Creator God, who is beyond creaturely categories, and how we should interpret language that speaks of God in creaturely categories. The second question addresses the gendered linguistic structures that the Bible uses in speaking of God, such as names, titles, nouns, pronouns, figures of speech, and grammatical constructions.

Section VII is the most important part of the report, for it analyzes the Bible's use of gendered language for God. It examines the feminine references to God and shows that they are figures of speech. It surveys Scripture's masculine language for God, including its use of names, titles, pronouns, and grammatical constructions, and demonstrates that the Bible pervasively presents God as a masculine person. This section confirms that the biblical pattern of language for God is the standard for all language for God by considering "the name of the Lord" and the act of naming as understood in Scripture.

Section VIII sets out the confessional, theological, and spiritual dimensions of gendered language for God. It identifies tensions between some approaches to inclusive language for God and the Reformed view of Scripture. It points out that traditional Christian theology claims that Scripture's presentation of God does not imply that God in himself is masculine. It identifies tensions between

the God of inclusive language and the confessional view of the Creator-creature relation, the doctrine of the Trinity, the doctrine of Christ, and the doctrine of the church. Section VIII concludes by noting the spiritual dangers of apostasy, idolatry, and misuse of the name of God associated with some approaches to inclusive language for God.

The third part of the report applies the biblical pattern of language for God in several ways. Section IX summarizes the biblical pattern, evaluates contemporary inclusive language for God in the light of the biblical pattern, and finds it wanting. Section X addresses pastoral concerns, both the challenges to biblical Christianity raised by inclusive language for God and the challenges to biblical Christians caused by unhealthy, dysfunctional, and sinful relations between males and females in family, church, and society. This section suggests ways in which the church can use appropriate gendered language for God in its ministry of worship, teaching, counseling, evangelism, and promotion of social reform. It concludes by offering pastoral advice regarding gendered language for God.

Section XI presents a detailed policy for the use of gendered language for God as well as examples of appropriate and inappropriate use. In brief, the policy advocates speaking of God as Scripture does. This means speaking of God as a masculine person, using the standard biblical names, titles, and other designations for God and the masculine pronouns that they require. It also means speaking of God with the gender-neutral terminology and feminine imagery that the Bible uses. However, since Scripture does not speak of God as a feminine person and does not use feminine titles, names, and pronouns, neither should we. Finally, the extrabiblical language for God we use in theology, poetry, and ordinary language should conform to the biblical pattern and not undermine it.

Section XII consists of recommendations to synod.

F. Outline of the report

I. Introduction
   A. Mandate
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XII. Recommendations for synodical action

II. Gender-relation problems

A. The problems

Theologians and church leaders who call for inclusive language for God are motivated by a deep concern to address problems which arise because of improper attitudes and relations between the genders.* These leaders believe that the harm done to women and children by men make it necessary to avoid speaking of God as an exclusively masculine person.

This report will briefly consider five prominent problems of gender relations which can hinder a person's positive feelings for God: (1) gender stereotyping, (2) subordination that demeans and excludes women, (3) injustice, (4) abuse, and (5) neglect. These dynamics characterize almost all human societies, even those that have made some effort to correct them. They are consequences of the fall and harm men as well as women.

1. Gender stereotyping

   Gender stereotyping is a form of sexism, that is, inappropriate classification and evaluation of people on the basis of their sex. Sin distorts creational differences between males and females when people construe gender more narrowly and rigidly than God intended. It can be hurtful to persons of both sexes. For example, the idea that men are supposed to be tough, assertive, "left-brained," and unexpressive of tender emotions can cause men to feel inadequate, unable to deal with certain emotions, or incapable of relating intimately. Similarly, the expectation that women ought to be dependent, emotional, and intuitive can bring difficulties to their self-image and relationships. Gender stereotypes, often associated with traditional gender roles, can easily restrict and hurt both men and women. Respectful and healthfully flexible relationships between men and women within God's good order become skewed by sexist preconceptions of one another.

2. Subordination that demeans and excludes women

   Sinful subordination of women has usually accompanied gender stereotyping. (This statement does not imply that all forms of subordination, for example, honoring headship in marriage, are sinful or demeaning.) The characteristics of men are believed to suit men for exercising leadership in family and society, whereas women's nature is believed to equip women best for domestic activities and helping roles in society. In other words, gender stereotypes reinforce distinct gender roles. Some claim that this gender-role

*In most current discussions *sex* refers to biological maleness and femaleness, whereas *gender* refers to the psychological, social, and cultural characteristics associated with males and females—masculinity and femininity. The report follows this usage.

distinction does not involve viewing men as better or more fully human than women are, but it does demean and exclude women in at least two ways.

First, women are demeaned because they are seen as less gifted than men in important human capacities, such as intelligence and fortitude. Women have often been considered less competent than men to provide leadership in most areas of public life: politics, business, the arts, technology, academics, and religion. (They may have been considered more competent than men at nurturing and domestic activities.) Further, the masculine approach is assumed to be the right way to engage in public activities. The idea that masculine characteristics are the standard is currently called *androcentrism*.

Second, women are functionally excluded. Instead of being welcomed to participate in public life and perhaps even to provide leadership, they are expected to marry and produce children or, if they enter public life, to become nurses, secretaries, or teachers supervised by men. The current term for a social-cultural system in which men enjoy a privileged position of power is *patriarchalism*. Many women who find that they have all the abilities that men do resent the fact that they have been considered inferior and have been hindered in public life. Men are harmed by a false sense of superiority and by not benefiting from the contributions of women.

3. Injustice

   Devalued and excluded, women often live in public and private environments in which others practice injustice against them. Constitutions that do not give women the same basic rights as men, laws that bar women from access to property they have helped to acquire, and unequal pay for equal work are formal and public injustices in contemporary developed societies. In the private sphere men often expect their female partners to do all the work of maintaining a household, while they keep most of the available leisure time and disposable income for themselves. These common injustices create despair and anger in many women.

4. Abuse

   Abuse is the violation of someone's body and/or spirit, robbing the person of self-worth and replacing it with fear, self-depreciation, and anger. Abuse may be verbal, physical, and/or sexual. It always damages the victim's emotional, relational, and spiritual capacities. Both women and men abuse, and their victims are usually members of their own families. However, most sexual abuse is perpetrated by males. Survivors often generalize their experiences and see all males as potential abusers.

5. Neglect

   Neglect harms a person by failing to provide what that person needs. Abandonment is its extreme form, but most often neglect is emotional absence and lack of personal affirmation. No love, attention, support, or guidance is given. Males are more frequently guilty of this sin than females are, especially in marital and family relations. The neglected person develops a weak self-concept and is impaired in his or her ability to trust. Strong negative attitudes toward all persons of the neglecting person's gender may develop.

B. Gender-relation problems and spiritual problems

The negative feelings and false images generated by the harmful gender relations described above can impede healthy spirituality. The victims' sense of worthlessness and anger toward those who have the power to victimize often adversely affects their religious life. This is also true of many people who are not themselves victims but who care about those who are. The God of the Bible can easily become the target of all this negativity, for as Father and King he seems to be masculine, the gender of most victimizers. The masculine representation of God can be a significant obstacle to the development and practice of a healthy Christian spirituality. Consider the following ways in particular.

Gender stereotyping may cause a masculine God to be seen as big, smart, and powerful—really in control of things. But he may not be experienced as warm, personal, intimate, and nurturing. This perception can easily impede a warm, close, and positive personal relationship with God.

Gender injustice and subordination of women can likewise hinder a positive relationship with a "patriarchal" God. Women who internalize subordination as inferiority may feel unworthy to relate to God and to use their gifts. Other women, aware that they are capable, find their way to God blocked by resentment, for they see him as the Creator and Preserver of the social order that demeans and perpetuates injustice against women. Some men share these feelings.

Abuse and neglect can seriously distort one's concept of God the Father. Neglect victims may have no known experience of God: he is absent; he is a vacuum, emptiness. Even worse, they may feel abandoned. One man who was an elder in the church and who as a child had been abandoned by his father admitted that all his life he struggled with feelings of resentment and guilt about a sense of distance from God. Only through counseling did he realize the connection and find some healing. Abuse victims experience tragic conflicts: a woman reported that whenever she shut her eyes and prayed to "Our Father," she saw her molesting father's face and felt the pressure of his body against her. Consequently, she could not pray to our Father even though she desperately wanted to. There are many people both in the church and outside it who are spiritually alienated as a result of being abused and neglected.

In summary, it is not difficult to understand that those who are hurt and angered by sinful, dysfunctional relations between the genders may transfer negative feelings and assumptions to a God who is presented as masculine. The following section explains how many feminist theologians and church leaders promote inclusive language for God as a partial remedy for these spiritual problems and the distorted gender relations which cause them.

III. Inclusive language for God: part of a feminist response to these problems

A. Introduction

If thinking and speaking of God exclusively as a masculine being make it difficult for some people to relate to God, then an obvious solution is to stop considering God as exclusively masculine. Instead, some argue, we ought to be inclusive, speaking of God as both masculine and feminine or neither masculine nor feminine. The difficulty some people have with an exclusively masculine god is, in short, an important part of the rationale for inclusive language for God.

But in order to understand this rationale in its entirety, it is necessary to see how the argument for inclusive language for God is generated by feminist theology, which itself grew out of contemporary feminism. Feminism and feminist theology are not single, uniform perspectives. They come in a variety of forms. Thus we first survey the main kinds of feminism and feminist theology.

B. Varieties of feminism

1. Introduction

The basic principle of feminism is usually defined as "advocacy of the full rights of women" or "promotion of the full humanity of women." This principle is straightforward and surprisingly noncontroversial at first glance. Both conservative and progressive Christians want to promote women's humanity and full rights. But problems arise when people make more specific statements about (a) what women's rights and full humanity are, (b) what is impeding their realization, (c) who is responsible for the problems, and (d) what solutions must be implemented. Christians disagree among themselves about these issues. And so do feminists, for, as noted above, feminism is not a uniform movement with a single, unified vision. Consider the following kinds of diversity among feminists.

2. Political diversity

A common classification identifies three distinct political perspectives within contemporary feminism—liberal, socialist, and romantic (as in Romanticism) feminism. Liberal and socialistic feminism both embrace the idea (taken from Christianity and modified by the Enlightenment) that men and women, because they share a common human nature, are basically the same in spite of biological differences. Therefore, they deserve the same rights and opportunities in public and private life. Liberal feminism strives to gain for women the same rights and opportunities that men receive within existing socioeconomic-political structures. Socialist feminism aims to replace or restructure current systems, for it believes that male domination and the oppression of women are built into them.

In contrast to liberal and socialist feminism, romantic feminism stresses the differences between men and women. Because they have different natures, romantic feminism would say, men and women need to be given different, though equitable, rights and opportunities in order to achieve justice. To do so may involve significant changes in the social order. Though most romantic feminists envision complementarity and harmony between the genders, those labeled "radicals" regard gender differences as ultimately antagonistic and irreconcilable, a conflict between the good feminine principle and the evil masculine principle. For radical feminists, either all people must become "feminized," or women must build community among themselves, remaining in a permanent state of conflict with men.

3. Diversity of religious worldviews

Adding to the complexity, feminists differ not only in political perspectives, but also in basic worldviews. Many feminists embrace a secular, humanistic vision of life; many others are committed to spiritual perspectives. Some feminists are adherents of traditional religions such as Christianity, Judaism, Islam, or Buddhism. Some of these, in turn, are "conservative," working for women's rights within the traditional doctrines of

their religions. Others are "liberal," working for women's rights in terms of modernistic reinterpretations of their religious traditions. Still other feminists have left the traditional religions altogether, usually because these are judged to be "irremediably patriarchal," and have embraced contemporary forms of spirituality that tend to view nature and the divine as feminine. They may worship the Goddess, Gaia ("Mother Nature"), or the feminine life force as proclaimed in the New Age Movement, Wicca, or some other kind of neo-pagan pantheism.

4. Social program or worldview/ideology?

Feminists also differ among themselves over the extent to which basic worldview issues are involved in the quest for women's rights. Some see feminism not as a worldview but merely as a movement for social reform that is compatible with various worldviews. Others think feminism is a full-blown ideology or worldview which not only promotes women's rights but also is irreconcilably opposed to all patriarchal ideologies and worldviews.

Liberal feminism is an example of feminism as a program of social reform. As children of the Enlightenment, most liberals are inclined to think that religious worldviews are a private matter. Full humanity for women can be achieved within the current social system and its assumptions, which are public and can be affirmed by all people of good will irrespective of their religious beliefs. According to this perspective, Christian, Jewish, and secular feminists can all share the same general goals for women's rights.

But the feminism of others is deeper and more basic—an ideology, worldview, or religion with its own assumptions, values, and implications for all of life. It views beliefs about women and their place in society as the basic category of all other ideologies and worldviews. Thus male domination is not considered to be mere cultural chauvinism or a social pattern. It too is a worldview—patriarchalism, an ideology with its own implications for all of life. According to ideological feminism, patriarchalism has permeated the personal, social, economic, intellectual, and religious systems of the various cultures. Sexism has become deeply embedded in human subjectivity, pervasively determining our perception and behavior. Just and healthy social relations are not possible until androcentrism and patriarchalism are eradicated from our basic outlook and replaced by feminism. For ideological feminists, it is necessary to reorder everything—religion, philosophy, ethics, politics, social relations, and language—from a feminist point of view. Religious language and theology too must be reconstructed. Here we have encountered the strongest, most basic way of connecting feminism and inclusive language for God.

C. *Feminist theology*

Although there are historical antecedents, what we currently refer to as feminist Christian theology has developed with the contemporary feminist movement. Not surprisingly, feminist theology manifests some of the same diversity as feminism in general. Among feminist theologians are Roman Catholics and Protestants of every major tradition. Some are theologically conservative, affirming the equality of women within the framework of historic Christianity. Others are more modernistic, adopting views of Scripture, tradition, and doctrine embraced by higher criticism and modern theology. A few radical theologians attempt to synthesize Christianity with other forms of the

new feminist spirituality. In summary, feminist theologians understand the Christian faith and its normative sources in very different ways.

They also differ in the scope of what they are attempting to achieve. Some limit themselves to reforming gender relations in home, society, and church. They attempt to show that the biblical pictures of women as subordinates and victims reveal human sin and not God's intention. They develop theological arguments for the full inclusion and equality of women in social, cultural, and ecclesiastical life. They do not, however, attempt to revise the church's doctrine or language for God.

But most feminist theologians believe that the liberation of women from the effects of sin requires revision of basic theological ideas. We have already identified one reason: a masculine, patriarchal God is emotionally troubling to people who have suffered from gender biases, injustice, abuse, or neglect. Language for God must be changed out of pastoral concern for these people.

A second reason is the belief that the exclusive concept of the Father God is incompatible with the full humanity of women. Patriarchalism is treated as an ideology and social hierarchy in which male power and masculine characteristics are dominant and normative. It is considered the root cause of the devaluation and oppression of women. Because its Scripture writers and theologians were male, traditional Christianity's God is represented as the Patriarch *par excellence*—a sovereign Father—who has created and maintains the patriarchal character of human society. Mary Daly's oft-quoted aphorism sums up the problem: "If God is male, then the male is God." The call for a new theology is a cry for liberation from or at least for significant deemphasis of God as Father, the foundational symbol of a basic evil in human history.

Full liberation also requires a change in the view of God's nature and relation to creation. The deity can no longer be seen as a transcendent (male) person with absolute sovereignty over creatures. Instead God is the life-giving womb within which we live and flourish (cf. Ruether's God/ess, the Primal Matrix, i.e., Mother). Or God is our Lover, Friend, and Fellow-traveler (Sally McFague). Or the world is God's body, and God is the soul of the world (McFague; Grace Jantzen).

Much feminist theology not only revises the doctrine of God but also the doctrines of creation, sin, Christ, salvation, the church, and the last things (cf. Rosemary Ruether's *Sexism and God-Talk: Toward a Feminist Theology* for a new approach to all these topics of theology). One feminist version of the doctrine of the atonement, for example, sees the crucifixion of Jesus as the Father's punishing the Son with death for the sin of others. It elevates patriarchal child abuse to an essential theological paradigm. "No wonder Christian fathers abuse their children!" such feminists exclaim.

D. Inclusive language for God

1. The contemporary movement

The motivation for inclusive language for God is now apparent: change in language for God is necessary if we are to change our ideas about God, for language and ideas cannot be separated. Language pictures reality and shapes our attitudes and feelings about it. Using exclusively masculine language leaves the overwhelming impression that God is male—"the Man upstairs"—and that men are more like God than women are. It is meaningless and perverse, feminist theologians say, to claim that God is neither

masculine nor feminine, that both male and female humans are made in the image of God, and then to refer to God in exclusively masculine terms. Inclusive language for God and the well-being of women cannot be separated. Of course, most feminists are aware that changing language does not automatically change attitudes and behavior, but they regard change in language as an important part of a larger strategy.

Given the variety of feminist theologies, inclusive language for God is moderate and egalitarian. It is not a radical program that eliminates masculine language for God and completely replaces it with feminine language. Genuinely inclusive language for God is egalitarian. It employs the twin strategies identified in Section I: using both masculine and feminine language and gender-neutral language. Thus God is either "Father-Mother" or "Parent," but not just "Father." We are calling advocates of this approach inclusivists. This term also refers to the many theologians and church leaders who do not identify themselves primarily as feminists but who have become advocates for inclusive language for God.

In summary, advocates of inclusive language for God give two main reasons for promoting it: (a) so that those people negatively affected by the abuse of male power can relate to God positively and (b) so that all people can experience gender justice and full humanity in all areas of life. Inclusivists link gender justice to inclusive language for God in three ways: (a) it extends the justice of gender equality desired in all of life to language for God; (b) since God is seen as the foundation of the human social order, an inclusive view of God promotes an inclusive, egalitarian view of men and women in human society; and (c) justice requires that the voices of women, including those who desire inclusive language for God, be heard in Scripture interpretation, theology, and liturgy, from which they have traditionally been excluded.

2. Feminine language for God in Christian tradition

Although inclusive language for God is strongly associated with the contemporary women's movement, it would be a mistake to suppose that feminine language for God was never used until the twentieth century. In fact, it can be found in the works of such great Christians as Augustine, Bonaventure, and Aquinas. In the fourteenth century Dame Julian of Norwich used maternal language for God and Jesus frequently in her meditational work *Revelations of Divine Love*. Even John Calvin had no qualms about maternal imagery for God, as is evident from his *Commentary on the Book of Isaiah*, 46:3:

> *Who are carried from the womb.* This is a very expressive metaphor, by which God compares himself to a mother who carries a child in her womb. . . . If it be objected that God is everywhere called "a Father," and that this title is more appropriate to him, I reply, that no figures of speech can describe God's extraordinary affection toward us. . . . In a word, the intention of the Prophet is to shew . . . that God, who has manifested himself to be both their Father and their Mother, will always assist them. . . .
>
> (Pringle translation, III, pp. 436-37)

The use of feminine language for God by famous Christians in history, including John Calvin, does not necessarily make such usage right. It remains to be seen to what extent this practice can be justified from Scripture. And we have not yet determined whether contemporary inclu-

sivists use feminine language for God the same way that it has been used in Christian tradition. But it would be a mistake simply to dismiss all feminine language for God as the invention of contemporary feminist theology.

E. The role of Scripture in theological arguments for inclusive language for God

The diversity that we have noted among feminist theologians is again apparent in the specific arguments contemporary inclusivists advance for changing the church's ways of thinking and speaking about God. In what follows, we classify these theological strategies according to their views of Scripture as a norm for language for God, and we conclude with a brief preliminary evaluation.

1. Three general positions

   a. Religious experience as normative; the canon within the canon of Scripture

   Many inclusivist theologians, following Schleiermacher and liberalism, consider religious experience to be the locus of divine revelation. The Bible, they say, mediates revelation in that it contains expressions of the religious experiences of Israelite and Christian men, written in the patriarchal categories of their time. But it is not the exclusive or definitive source of knowledge of God, for God is continually revealed in human religious experience. God transcends all human language. No particular vocabulary gives us privileged access to God. We should be inclusive of all religious experience, including the experience of women, who have the same right as anyone to express God in ways which are authentic and redemptive for them. Those parts of the Bible which resonate with (women's) liberating experiences of God are judged to be truly revelatory. Those parts which portray God oppressively in the patriarchal categories of ancient culture are not truly revelatory. According to this approach, religious experience is used as the norm for determining the true canon within the canon of Scripture. Rosemary Ruether, Elizabeth Schussler-Fiorenza, and Sallie McFague are prominent proponents of this strategy for changing our language for God.

   b. The message of Scripture is normative, but its language is not

   Other inclusivist theologians affirm the revelatory character of the whole Bible but distinguish its normative content from the language and categories in which that content is expressed. They believe that God did specially reveal himself to Israel and supremely in Jesus Christ, and they affirm that the Bible truly preserves the historical memory of these encounters. But they also hold that Scripture was written in the fallible language of the patriarchal cultures within which it emerged and that this patriarchal language is not essential to what the Bible proclaims. Of course Scripture speaks of God as King and Lord and Father, they say, because these were titles of the most important and powerful figures in those cultures. But what the Bible teaches is God's love, power, justice, redemption, and faithfulness to his people, not that he is King and Father. Religious language always reflects its culture. Since our culture is egalitarian (an idea rooted in the biblical doctrines of the image of God and unity in Christ), they argue, we should speak of God's love, power, justice, and redemption in egalitarian language. Calling God *Father-Mother* or *Parent* does not distort or change what Scripture proclaims. According to

this approach, inclusive language for God is not only permitted by Scripture but is actually required by the biblical concepts of the image of God, justice, and community. Brian Wren takes this position in *What Language Shall I Borrow?*

c. The language of Scripture is normative and justifies inclusive language

A third group of theologians argue for inclusive language directly from the text of the Bible. They affirm the normativity of the language of Scripture for revealing God. They recognize that the vast majority of biblical references to God are masculine, presumably reflecting patriarchal culture. But they point out that there are a number of terms for God that are gender neutral (e.g., *rock, fortress, light*) and some that are feminine. Since Scripture itself uses masculine, feminine, and gender-neutral language for God, they reason, modern believers should do likewise. The one modification these theologians insist on has to do with proportions: contemporary Christians should replace the one-sided masculinity of biblical language with an inclusive balance of masculine, feminine, and gender-neutral terms. Prominent among those adopting this strategy are Virginia Mollenkott in *The Divine Feminine* and the editors of the Oxford inclusive-language *New Testament and Psalms*.

2. Preliminary evaluation

It is worth pausing briefly to assess the validity of these approaches, even though the normative position will not be developed until later sections. Though the first two are obviously incompatible with what the Christian Reformed Church confesses about Scripture (cf. Sections V, D and VIII, B), the third approach appears more acceptable. If that is so, then not all arguments for inclusive language involve faulty views of Scripture.

The first strategy for justifying inclusive language for God is obviously modernistic and unacceptable in the Christian Reformed Church. We do not view Scripture as a merely human product of "inspired" religious and cultural experience, even though the Bible reflects and engages the cultures in which it was written. And we do not consider religious experience to be on a par with or above the Bible so that it can judge what is the real canon within the canon.

The second approach is also unacceptable, because it denies the doctrine of the plenary, verbal inspiration of Scripture when it distinguishes the divinely inspired message from the merely human words. Reformed hermeneutics recognizes the human and cultural character of the biblical text and the need for properly interpreting that text in other cultural contexts (cf. V, D, 3, b). For example, we no longer reckon the age of the earth or the structure of the cosmos the way the biblical writers did. But we begin by confessing that all the language of Scripture is inspired by God and infallibly communicates what he intends. The Bible's language for God should not be relativized by the assertion that it is human, culture bound, and fallible.

However, it might be possible to begin with the assumption of a verbally inspired Bible and still to argue for changing our language for God as follows. Reformed hermeneutics does distinguish in Scripture between what is intended as universal truth (principle) and what is culturally specific (application of principle). For example, we hold that God's allowance of divorce, slavery, and polygamy in the Bible is an accommodation to sinful

culture, not a universal principle willed by God. So one could ask whether the same is true for its heavily masculine language for God. Are *Father, King,* and *Lord* accommodations to patriarchal culture, whereas the abiding biblical teachings are that God's nature is neither male nor female and that the image of God is both male and female? And if patriarchal language is a cultural accommodation, why may we not modify it as long as the universal doctrines of Scripture are maintained? These are questions that Christian Reformed people may ask without necessarily presupposing a heretical view of biblical revelation. (They are answered in Section VII, D, 3.)

The third strategy does not appear to proceed from a false doctrine of revelation since it appeals to the very words of Scripture. The key question about this approach is whether the language of Scripture is really inclusive in the contemporary sense. That is, are masculine and feminine terms for God used in the same ways so that the only difference is one of quantity (frequency of use) and not quality or kind of use? And are the gender-neutral terms in the Bible equivalent in status and meaning to the masculine terms inclusive language intends them to replace? The question about this approach concerns the soundness of its exegesis and theological reasoning, not its view of Scripture. (It is answered in Section VII, D, 3.)

Before beginning to set forth a biblically and theologically sound account of gendered language for God, we must consider inclusive language for God in its contemporary cultural context.

IV. Inclusive language for God in contemporary culture

A. *Introduction*

The mandate for our study directs us to consider inclusive language for God in the context of contemporary culture. Constraints of space prevent us from analyzing all the influences of Christianity, modernity, and postmodernity on North American society and culture. Instead, we briefly describe and evaluate some important values and dynamics of contemporary culture and suggest how they are connected to feminism and inclusive language for God. The topics we cover are (1) improvement in the status of women; (2) egalitarianism and inclusivism; (3) individual autonomy and liberation; (4) subjectivism, pluralism, and relativism; (5) pragmatism and ideology; (6) the new spirituality; and (7) conservatism and traditionalism.

B. *Improvement in the status of women*

1. The cultural trend

Feminism and inclusive language for God are hardly thinkable apart from the general awareness of the problems faced by women and the improvements in the status of women which have developed in many societies in the twentieth century. Birth control, health care, changes in custom and law, increasing recognition of women's rights and abilities, new educational opportunities, and other factors have combined to give many women access to productive and responsible roles in public life, increased economic and political power, more equality with men, and greater control over their lives. At the same time it remains true that many women continue to suffer from the gender-relation problems identified in Section II, especially in some parts of the world.

Feminism has both promoted these social developments and been supported by them. The women's movement has grown dramatically as more and more women have gained power in social, economic, political, academic, and cultural roles. In addition, women have become members of the clergy, Bible scholars, theologians, and liturgists. They have promoted their understanding of the rights and full humanity of women in the realm of the church as well as in home and society. Promotion of inclusive language for God is one result of the general improvement in the status of women in our society.

2. Christian evaluation

Christians do not always agree among themselves in their judgments about which of these developments conform to the will of God and which transgress against his intentions for women. Christians disagree about birth control, the meaning of headship, the proper relationship between parenthood and employment outside the home, and the ordination of women.

However, most Christians generally agree about modern changes in the status of women, welcoming some and rejecting others. Most Christians agree that the political, educational, economic, and legal opportunities available to women can be pursued in ways that are obedient to God. And most agree that abortion on demand, repudiation of marriage as oppressive, and failure to recognize creational differences between women and men are incompatible with the Christian faith.

On closer examination, then, the question is not whether women's rights and full humanity are values to be embraced but how they should be understood and promoted. Are they affirmed and pursued in ways compatible with the Christian faith? Or are they advanced from perspectives and for motives that are contrary to the gospel? Human rights and fulfillment are always understood in terms of larger frameworks. In addition, a question of interest to us is how these basic perspectives on humanity and gender relate to the arguments for inclusive language for God. To approach these questions, we briefly consider a number of cultural values that color and shape perspectives on recent changes in the status of women.

C. *Egalitarianism and inclusivism*

1. The cultural trend

Egalitarianism is one of modern culture's basic values. Rooted in Christianity and the Enlightenment, it is the view that all people have the same basic rights because they share a common human nature. Therefore, basic equality and just social relations among people must not be overridden by considerations of birth, social class, economic status, race, religion, or gender. A society characterized by justice and equality is inclusive of all kinds of people. The egalitarian ideal was a motive in the French and American revolutions, the social upheavals of nineteenth-century Europe, and the liberation movements of recent decades. Most feminists embrace egalitarianism and inclusivism in demanding equal rights and humanity for women.

2. Christian evaluation

From a Christian perspective we find both good and evil associated with the ideals of equality and inclusion. They are good in their legitimate demands for equal justice and equal recognition of basic human rights for all

God's imagebearers. They are right in their call to include people whose voices have been suppressed and whose lives have been marginalized. Social and political reforms which counter the evils of sexism, racism, and nationalism are manifestations of God's gracious providence. But some forms of egalitarianism have absolutized and distorted the ideal of equality, undermining legitimate authority and standards of morality and truth. Since parents, teachers, and police are considered their equals, some children, students, and citizens do not wish to submit to these authority figures. And if all people are equal, some people reason, then all beliefs, value systems, and lifestyles must be equally valid. At this extreme, egalitarianism and inclusivism degenerate into relativism, according to which all people, beliefs, and values are equally good except those that challenge egalitarianism and inclusivism.

Many people, including Christians, have properly advocated basic equality and justice between the genders and women's rights to full humanity. But those who use the ideals of equality and inclusion to reject all God-ordained standards and all relationships of authority as oppressive or patriarchal pervert the truth. A very serious example of this sin is the demand that the Bible's language for God and God himself be subject to gender egalitarianism and inclusivism. Another abuse of the ideals of equality and inclusion is the argument that inclusive theology and liturgy are just as valid as traditional theology and liturgy because the gifts of women are equal and women's voices must be included.

D. Individual autonomy and liberation

1. The cultural trend

Another prevalent social value is autonomy, or self-determination. This means that people should have the final choice of and responsibility for what they believe and do. Others do not have the right to manipulate or coerce individuals without their consent, depriving them of the freedom to live their own lives. Beyond the minimal social-moral-legal order required for the freedom of all, the individual is autonomous. Autonomy implies the goal of liberation, for people ought to be liberated from everything that keeps them from exercising their self-determination. The strong emphasis here is on the individual.

2. Christian evaluation

As with egalitarianism, Christians will see both good and evil in contemporary views of autonomy and liberation. The ideal of autonomy is good when it moves people to take responsibility for themselves and to resist manipulation and illegitimate domination by other people, traditions, laws, or ideologies. Such freedoms as the freedoms of religion, expression, and assembly, which are recognized in many modern constitutions, are explicit or implicit recognitions of God's order of justice. God has created each human being to be a responsible individual.

But autonomy and liberation are perverted when they lead to the assertion of self over against legitimate authorities and standards, whether those be cognitive, social, moral, legal, religious, or divine. "Neither God nor master" was a rallying cry of the French Revolution, which sought liberation from all authority beyond the will of the individual. When persons assert

themselves and their own rights over against their responsibilities to others and to the community, then individuality has become perverted into individualism.

So we must recognize that many liberation movements legitimately challenge those persons and structures which exclude and belittle people, including women, and deprive them of what God intends for them to be and do. The dignity, rights, and gifts of women as individual human beings ought to be recognized and enabled. Christian feminists have a right to raise questions about traditional interpretations of Scripture and ecclesiastical practices that seem unjust or unjustified from Scripture. Further, women have the right to interpret Scripture, to worship God, and to study theology themselves.

However, when feminists reject marriage as oppressive or assert the rights of women to abort their unwanted babies, their exercise of individual autonomy becomes rebellion against God's good order for life. And when people reject what the Bible teaches and accept an autonomous definition of the full humanity of women in order to justify inclusive language for God, they sin against God. Then women's liberation becomes the sort of liberation from God our first parents sought in the Garden of Eden.

E. Subjectivism, pluralism, and relativism

1. The cultural trends

Subjectivism, pluralism, and relativism are related characteristics of current culture. Subjectivism is the idea that reality as we know it is constituted by the perceptions, intellectual categories, or language of human beings. Experience does not engage and grasp a meaningful reality independent of our minds; on the contrary, the world as we understand it is largely the product of our minds or cultural categories. Such notions are widespread on university campuses and in popular culture, expressed in the maxim that "each of us lives in his or her own world." Subjectivism is sometimes also called *projectionism* or *constructivism*, because people supposedly project or construct the reality they experience out of their own subjectivities.

One result of subjectivism has been pluralism. While subjectivist philosophers such as Kant believed that all people share the same mental framework and that therefore the experienced world is basically the same for everyone, later thinkers stressed that different cultures and different individuals experience the world in markedly different ways. They have argued that reality is not shaped by universal categories of rationality but by the different languages, value systems, and worldviews of various societies and cultures. Thus, they concluded, there is no single shared reality for all human beings but an irreducible pluralism of perspectives and worldviews, many of which are quite diverse and incompatible.

It has been a short step from subjectivism and pluralism to relativism. Relativism denies that there is one standard of truth for all people and affirms that each worldview has its own truth. If worldviews are embedded in social, cultural, and language systems and there are many of these systems, then there will be many different truth claims about the world, human life, morality, and religion. Each notion of what is true is relative to its own worldview. There is no standpoint above culture from which to judge which assertions are true in the sense of accurately giving account of the

reality beyond all perceptions. No one can say what the truth really is, so people should not use their own beliefs and values to judge those of other people. "That may be true for you, but it's not true for me" is a popular expression of relativism.

2. Christian evaluation

In evaluating these concepts, we must acknowledge that people's perception of the world is colored and shaped by deeply held beliefs, allegiances, and expectations. Reformed Christians emphasize how worldviews are shaped by basic religious commitments. We recognize that psychological, social, and cultural factors also influence how we perceive and understand the world. But there is a critical difference between acknowledging this and supposing that the reality we experience is wholly or largely constituted and determined by these factors. Subjectivity and subjectivism are two different things.

The same is true for pluralism and relativism: each makes a false principle of a valid observation. Of course there is a plurality of worldviews: religious, cultural, and sometimes even individual (as in cases of mental illness). But plurality is not pluralism, which affirms an irreducible diversity of perspectives and denies that a universal framework and common reality exist. And of course people's perceptions of the world and judgments about truth are relative to their basic perspectives. But relativity becomes relativism when a common reality and universally binding standards of truth are denied.

3. Subjectivism, pluralism, relativism, and inclusive language for God

Subjectivism, pluralism, and relativism have infected some kinds of feminism and inclusive-language theology. There are those, for example, who follow Schleiermacher and liberal theology in identifying revelation with a deeply subjective feeling of relationship with God. They view the various words and ideas used to express this feeling as products of social and cultural patterns, most of which have been male dominated. The Bible's language for God is not a perfect standard, they conclude; it has presented a distorted picture of God. Thus a more inclusive vision is necessary. Some feminist theologians emphasize the subjectivity and relativity of gender so strongly that gender becomes the basis of distinct worldviews or ideologies. They believe that men and women are so different in how they think, feel, and relate that they have significantly different experiences of God and even "live in different worlds." The uniqueness of women's experience is made the basis for feminist theory, theology, spirituality, and language for God. A final example of subjectivism in feminism combines the ideas that language "projects" reality and that gender values are deeply embedded in language. If we use sexist language, according to this view, all of life will be "projected" in sexist categories and structures. In the same way, a nonsexist, egalitarian world requires gender-inclusive language, even for God. Egalitarian language is not just a concession to political correctness; it is essential for creating a just and inclusive world.

We must also recognize that much inclusive-language theology is not subjectivistic, pluralistic, and relativistic. It assumes that we can truly know the world, objective moral standards, and even God. It argues that the truth about God, although it is apprehended in diverse religious experiences, is universal and most accurately stated in inclusive language. It believes that

the rights of women are required by the objective moral order. And it considers the evils of patriarchalism to be an undeniable fact. In addition, many proponents of inclusive-language theology recognize that subjectivism, pluralism, and relativism are self-defeating for their position. For if inclusivism is just one subjective perspective among many, it can make no claim on those who do not share its "truths." Sexist males and patriarchal Christians can dismiss or oppose inclusivism as "true for you but not true for us." Most inclusivist theologians claim that everyone should recognize the truth of their position. They are not relativists.

In summary, subjectivism, pluralism, and relativism are distortions of genuine characteristics of human experience and worldviews. These distortions warp some kinds of feminism and inclusive-language theology. Others do not seem to be tainted by them.

F. Pragmatism and ideology

1. Pragmatism and a Christian evaluation

North Americans tend to be very practical and outcome oriented. They dislike academic discussions and prefer effective action. "It works for me" is a popular expression of approval. The same emphasis is at the heart of the philosophy called pragmatism, which makes results its criterion for truth. According to pragmatism, if holding a scientific, moral, or religious belief solves problems and brings good results for human life, we may consider that belief to be true. If it doesn't, we should reject it as false.

Undoubtedly there is a connection between truth and good results in God's blueprint for the world. And often we have little but results to appeal to when we try to decide which ideas and proposals are correct, at least when we have no other information about their truth. So pragmatism is in touch with something significant. Yet truth ought not to be defined as "what works." We must acknowledge that our beliefs are true only if they affirm how things really are, even if we cannot always tell how they really are.

2. Ideology and a Christian evaluation

Taking a pragmatic view of knowledge can have a dark side. Marx, Nietzsche, and others have viewed human thought systems or ideologies not as attempts to describe reality accurately but as instruments of social domination. In their view, life is a struggle for power in order to survive and thrive, and the dominant ideology of a culture is the system of beliefs and values promoted by the people in power in order to advance their own interests. For thinkers such as Marx and Nietzsche, the variety of perspectives in a diverse culture do not reflect a happy, tolerant pluralism; they are weapons in the struggle to see who will dominate.

It is certainly true that we sinful human beings often seek to promote our own interests at the expense of others and that we tend to embrace ideas that help us do so. Yet it is too cynical to conclude that worldviews are nothing more than the ideologies of interest groups. Such might be the case if there were no universal truth or no reason to seek it. But Reformed Christians, who affirm not only total depravity but also God's continuing preservation of creation and the image of God in human beings, cannot take this position. We believe that by God's grace there is some integrity in the human search for truth, sinful though it is. Further, we must recognize the difference between

those worldviews that deny basic human rights to people who disagree with them and those worldviews that honor human rights or tolerate dissent. It is not true that all worldviews are simply the instruments of social manipulation and oppression.

3. Pragmatism, ideology, and inclusive language for God

Some feminists and inclusivist theologians are pragmatists. They believe that their positions are valid because these positions have as their goal the promotion of the rights and humanity of women. They reject traditional theology because they judge that it does not advance the rights and humanity of women. So, too, many inclusivists regard higher critical and demythologizing methods of reading Scripture as valid because these approaches support inclusivist conclusions. Traditional methods do not justify inclusivism, so they are rejected as invalid. This pragmatistic view of truth, often unstated, permeates much inclusivist theology.

Furthermore, a significant number of feminists do view the whole debate as a sheer ideological power struggle. They say that men have used power throughout history to construct ideologies and social systems that are patriarchal, designed to keep women serving male interests. Now, they argue, women (and inclusive men) must use their power to change social structures, break the male monopoly on power, and promote the fulfillment of women. According to this view, the fact that traditional worship and theology use masculine language for God is really a manifestation of the male attempt, clothed in pious language, to dominate women. As part of their own struggle for survival and fulfillment, women must therefore fight for feminist and inclusivist ideas of God. The dark shadow of Nietzsche hovers over this kind of feminist theology.

However, many kinds of feminism and inclusive-language theology embrace neither pragmatism nor ideology. Although they insist that outcomes and power issues are significant aspects of human interactions, they believe in objective truth and common standards. They argue that all people—men and women—should recognize the historical reality of sexism and the biblical, theological, and moral case in favor of an egalitarian society and an inclusive doctrine of God. And they recognize that, if pragmatism is true, then people can legitimately reject inclusivism if "it doesn't work for them." And if feminism is only an ideological power grab, then nonfeminists can legitimately oppose it in the struggle for power. Some feminists and inclusive-language theologians, therefore, avoid and resist pragmatistic and ideological definitions of truth, but others clearly assume, employ, and endorse them.

G. *The new spirituality*

1. The trend

Since the 1960s, many new spiritualities have grown up in Western culture. These include new religions and cults, such as the New Age Movement and Scientology, as well as new versions of old religions, such as Hinduism, Buddhism, and the nature worship of paganism.

As noted above, some feminists have become neo-spiritualists, adopting New Age or Wiccan doctrines. These doctrines emphasize the close links between women, nature, and the life force that joins and animates all things.

God is the life force and is feminine, the womb within which all of life is generated and nurtured. God is not thought of as a personal being above and distinct from the world. That is the masculine concept of God. These religions reject the Christian Creator-creature distinction in favor of a more pagan, pantheistic view of divinity as the deepest power of nature.

Some Christian feminists link up with feminist spirituality at this point, seeking common ground. One example of this effort occurred at the infamous Reimagining God conference in 1993. Some who identified themselves as Christians argued explicitly for the deity of the feminine life force and rejected the belief that death—the death of Jesus Christ—can bring salvation.

2. Panentheism in theology

A major theme in contemporary theology helps feminists associate the creative force in the universe with "the female principle." This theme is a doctrine of God and his relation to the world called *panentheism*, which, like neo-paganism, deemphasizes the difference between Creator and creature. *Panentheism* literally means "all in God" and "God in all." Panentheism is not full pantheism, which views the world in its entirety as divine. Instead, panentheism holds that God and the world, although distinct, are integrated to the point of becoming part of each other. They need, empower, and enrich one another. God and the world are like the holistic unity of body and soul (if one assumes that body and soul cannot exist without each other). God is basic and most powerful, in the world as the soul is in the body. And the world has a spiritual source of energy and direction just as the body has a soul. Panentheism is found in Plato and especially in theology since Hegel. Contemporary versions are held by process philosophers such as Alfred North Whitehead and Charles Hartshorne; by theologians such as Teilhard de Chardin, Matthew Fox, and Jürgen Moltmann; and by many feminist theologians, including Rosemary Ruether and Sally McFague. Feminist and inclusivist theologians who adopt panentheism do so because its God seems less hierarchical and more immanent, responsive, inclusive, and nurturing than the God of traditional theology. In stereotypical categories, this God seems more feminine and less masculine, manifesting a balance of both. Understandably, these theologians conclude that our language for God ought to reflect the inclusive character of God.

3. Neo-Gnosticism

Another ancient religion that has partially reemerged in some contemporary feminist theology is Gnosticism. It is especially evident in the view that God, although ultimately transcending gender, in another sense is equally masculine and feminine. Historians argue that Gnosticism and Gnostic Christianity were more open to gender equality and female leadership than standard Christianity because they had a gender-inclusive view of God. However, Gnostics also typically located evil in sexuality and in the physical world and believed that salvation and equality were achieved by ascent to the spiritual realm through religious knowledge. Unlike the Gnostics, contemporary feminists usually affirm sexuality and physical existence, although not in their current cultural patterns. Further, most feminists do not seek salvation and unity for women and men on a spiritual plane which transcends the body and society. Inclusivist theology is reminiscent of

ancient Gnosticism in its belief that the divine is equally masculine and feminine and transcends both.

4. The faithful

At the same time we must recognize that there are feminist and inclusivist theologians who do not incorporate pagan spirituality, panentheism, or Gnosticism into their views. There are some who wish to base their case for inclusive language on Scripture and sound theology. Thus it is important to acknowledge the diversity within contemporary feminist theology and to test its spirits carefully. It is not correct to dismiss all who argue for inclusive language for God as heretics or idolaters.

H. Conservatism and traditionalism

1. The cultural trend

The characteristics of contemporary culture considered so far are ones that are usually thought of as "liberal" or "progressive." That is, they demand more freedom for individuals and promote significant changes in the beliefs, values, and social patterns upon which Western culture was traditionally based. It is not surprising, therefore, that people who value traditional culture resist these developments. During the past decades they have advocated strongly for traditional values in religion, morality, social policy, and popular culture. Many evangelical Christians have joined this movement. The tension between progressives and conservatives is so forcefully expressed that people now use terms like *culture war* to describe the struggle for power to shape the public life of nations.

The rights and roles of women are certainly embroiled in this public dispute. That is evident in the debates over the Equal Rights Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, the right to abortion, the participation of women in traditionally male vocations, and the ordination of women in religious institutions. The label *feminism* has a decidedly progressive ring to it, in spite of the fact that feminists claim merely to stand for the full rights and humanity of women. This is so because feminists charge traditional cultural patterns with being sexist and demand change as a necessary condition for the well-being of women. The same dynamic is apparent in religion: feminists press for reforms in worship, theology, and church government, all of which challenge defenders of the status quo. Currently there is a strong conservative movement in religion that has an almost universally negative opinion of feminism.

2. Christian evaluation

Our evaluation of conservativism and traditionalism leads to the same conclusions as we reached for other characteristics of contemporary culture: there is something good in these trends that can become perverted. To the extent that contemporary culture and society are shaped by principles embedded by God in creation and revealed in his Word, we ought to be conservative. Recognizing the religious and moral truth embraced in our tradition, we ought to continue to live in terms of that truth and teach it to future generations. If *liberal* means being free of this obligation and if *progressive* means moving beyond it, then we ought to oppose these cultural movements. Where feminists attempt to subvert God's will for men and women, for marriage, family, and society, there they ought to be opposed.

Further, if inclusivists reconstruct theology with the result that their God is no longer the God of the Bible, if their proposals for inclusive language actually abandon the church's rootedness in Scripture in favor of a merely human way of speaking about God, then we must resist inclusivist theology.

But a legitimate position is perverted when conserving the truth of tradition degenerates into conservativism and traditionalism. Such perversion occurs when defense of the tradition becomes so single-minded and vehement that people no longer critically evaluate it. They become unwilling to accept any change or any suggestion that there might be problems and sins in the tradition. Their response to virtually any criticism of tradition or movement for change is rejection. When such people consider feminist criticisms of the church and attempts to reform language for God, their reaction is typically an angry dismissal of everything said, including the mere suggestion that there might be genuine problems associated with traditional language for God, problems which the church must acknowledge and address. For these people everything about feminist theology and inclusive language is false and perverse. Such reactions are evident among conservative Christians in contemporary culture.

But Reformed Christians must be more wise and faithful than traditionalistic. We know that the antithesis between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of this world runs through time; it does not divide the good past from the evil present. Even if our culture is moving from a largely Christian past to an apparently pagan future, we must recognize whatever is sinful in traditional ideas and patterns of life. We must always be reforming according to the Word of God as we seek to preserve the truth and obedience of the past for the future.

From this Reformed perspective it is possible to ask whether some feminist criticisms of tradition and some feminist observations about theology and liturgical language are valid whereas others are mistaken. Our point here is not to prejudge the conclusions of this study but to affirm that a Reformed perspective is not conservatistic or traditionalistic. Reformed Christians, seeking God's abiding truth and forgiveness, are not afraid to admit the sins of the past and be open to suggested reforms. In sum, we must take an honest look at the issue of inclusive language for God, examining the problems which motivate it and the arguments given in favor of it, especially by those who claim to share our commitment to Scripture, the confessions, and sound theology.

I. Summary and conclusion

Responding to the mandate, we have surveyed a number of important values and dynamics within contemporary culture that influence considerations of inclusive language for God. Most of these values and dynamics press for changing the status quo, thus supporting feminism; a few aim to preserve the status quo and to resist feminism. We have recognized elements of truth in all these values and dynamics in so far as they agree with the will of God as revealed in creation and in Scripture. But we have seen that goodness is perverted when people take these true insights out of context and press them beyond their rightful place in God's good order. Then, for example, the result is subjectivism, relativism, or traditionalism instead of a proper recognition of subjectivity, relativity, and the value of tradition.

Some claims of feminists, some calls for the correction of Christian tradition, and some arguments for inclusive language for God are valid. However, many kinds of feminism and arguments for inclusive language for God are entangled with the spiritually rebellious, disobedient, and perverted motives of our culture. It is our responsibility as Christians to evaluate all positions honestly and fairly before coming to conclusions. At this point we begin systematic consideration of inclusive language for God from a Reformed perspective.

V. Revelation: how we know God

A. Introduction

The Christian Reformed Church possesses a clearly defined doctrine of revelation and Scripture and a well-articulated hermeneutical practice based on that doctrine. The CRC's view of revelation and Scripture goes back to Scripture itself and finds confessional expression in Articles II-VII of the Belgic Confession. The CRC's hermeneutical practice has been shaped by the interpretation of Scripture which developed in the Reformed tradition, especially in the nineteenth-century revival of Calvinism in the Netherlands. A formulation of the hermeneutics of this Reformed tradition in response to modern challenges was articulated by Louis Berkhof (*Principles of Biblical Interpretation*, 1950) and widely accepted in the CRC. More recently, two synodical studies—"Infallibility and Inspiration in the Light of Scripture and the Creeds" (1961) and Report 44, "The Nature and Extent of Biblical Authority" (1972)—have responded to trends in twentieth-century hermeneutics. *Our World Belongs to God* (A Contemporary Testimony), paragraphs 34-36, reiterates the Christian Reformed view of revelation. This view of Scripture and its interpretation has been reaffirmed and applied during the denomination's debates about the ordination of women, especially in the 1978 report "Hermeneutical Principles Concerning Women in Ecclesiastical Office," as well as in the report "Creation and Science" (1991).

If we are to be united on anything in the denomination, including language for God, we must proceed from consensus on these foundational matters. What follows is an attempt to state clearly and concisely how we understand revelation and Scripture in the Christian Reformed Church and how this position compares with views that ground various arguments for inclusive language for God. This summary of the Reformed doctrine of revelation will provide the basis for subsequent statements about how to understand Scripture's language for God.

B. The necessity of revelation

We can speak properly and truly about God only if we know who he is and what he is like. And we can know God only if and only as he makes himself known to us. It is possible for humans to misinterpret God's revelation. But revelation, properly understood, is the only access we have to God and is therefore the only standard for our concepts and language about God. The linguistic expressions of the authentic Christian faith are not projections of human feelings and ideas about the hidden and indescribable Transcendent, as some gender-inclusive theologians suppose. They are faithful responses to the self-revealing God.

How does God reveal himself? The Belgic Confession, Article 2, states that we know God through the creation and governance of the universe and through his Word. Thus in the Reformed tradition we distinguish general revelation from special revelation.

C. *General revelation*

General revelation is God's presence to all people by means of his creation. His eternal deity and power can be seen in what he has made (Rom. 1). The heavens tell his glory (Ps. 19). The dependence, magnificent design, and orderly functioning of the entire cosmos point to God and his attributes as Creator. Of all creatures, human beings reveal God most fully, for we were created in the very image and likeness of God (Gen. 1). In humans the personal and ethical characteristics of God receive eloquent testimony. From human nature he is seen to be a God of purpose, beauty, love, goodness, truth, and justice. Experience of creation therefore makes a general knowledge of God and his nature available to us.

But general revelation does not tell us everything about God's nature and relation to his creation. It is general—manifested in the universal order and constant maintenance of things. It does not involve specific actions with particular persons. It does not disclose the particularities of God's will and identity. It does not tell us God's particular names but yields only general references like *the Absolute, the Deity, the Creator*, or *the Great Designer*. And it does not tell us whether God has gender. Is God both male and female because his human creatures are male and female? Or is God neither male nor female? Or is God's personality more like one human gender than another? The mutually contradictory beliefs of the world's religions and philosophies about the distinct characteristics of the deity's identity and nature are conclusive evidence that most questions about God and gendered language for God cannot be answered on the basis of general revelation. For this we need God's special revelation.

D. *Special revelation, especially Scripture*

1. God's acts and communications in history

   Special revelation is broader than Scripture. It includes all the particular ways in which God has shown himself to humans and communicated to them throughout history. His appearances and words to Adam and Eve in the garden, to Noah, Abraham, Moses, and the kings and prophets of his people are all instances of special revelation. So are the occasions when he made himself known in particular acts of salvation, blessing, or punishment. In these special revelations God has shown much more about himself, his identity, and his will than is available in general revelation. If we are to know who God is in a personal sense, what his name is, and how he would like us to address him, he must introduce himself to us. This introduction has occurred in his special revelation.

2. Jesus Christ

   The supreme and definitive special revelation of God is our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the very image of God (Col. 1), God himself incarnate (John 1), God with us ("Emmanuel," Matt. 1). In sending Jesus Christ, God revealed himself specially, both in deed—in the act of sending his Son as a human being—and in word—Jesus Christ is the divine Word made flesh. He is the fulfillment of God's specially revealed promise of a Savior, made at the dawn of history as the remedy for human sin (Gen. 3) and repeated many times to his people. What is revealed in Jesus Christ about the nature, identity, and names of God can never be superseded or improved upon. Our language for God must always reflect that Jesus Christ is the supreme and definitive revelation of God.

3. Scripture

The Christian Reformed Church confesses Scripture to be special revelation—the inspired, infallible, authoritative Word of God, the final norm for faith and life. The purpose of the Bible is not merely to be God's self-revelation or to record his verbal expressions to humans but to proclaim God's mighty acts in creation and in redemption through Jesus Christ, to show his people the way of salvation and new life, and to provide standard accounts of the human response to God, both faithful and disobedient. It is worth stating more fully what this confession means and how it relates to the issues of inclusive language for God.

a. Inspiration and infallibility

The Bible is not just a collection of merely human writings inspired by religious experiences and events in the history of Israel and the early church. It is the revealed Word of God himself, who inspired the human writers by the Holy Spirit to express precisely what he intended to communicate through the culturally embedded language and literary forms they chose to use. Thus divine inspiration of Scripture is plenary and verbal, that is, full and complete, and extends to the entire content of Scripture and to the verbal-literary forms in which the content is expressed. And since God himself guided the writing of Scripture, it is wholly without error in what it teaches and wholly good in what it requires.

This affirmation is incompatible with several views of Scripture assumed in arguments for inclusive language for God (cf. Section III, E above), briefly summarized below.

One is the modern theological view that the Bible is a merely human book, the product of reflection on inspiring spiritual experiences of God within the history of the Judeo-Christian religious traditions. According to this position, the whole Bible, including its masculine language for God, is merely human, culture-bound, and fallible. It is a valuable classic religious resource but not the final norm.

A second approach to the Bible establishes a canon within the canon. It selects from Scripture those parts and teachings that support feminism and inclusivism. These it considers to be divinely inspired and normative and rejects everything that is patriarchal. This approach contradicts the affirmation that all of Scripture is God's inspired Word.

A third view of Scripture affirms that the religious experiences of the human authors were specially inspired by God but that the concepts, words, and literary forms used by the writers to express these genuine divine encounters were left up to them. The masculine terms they used are culturally relative and fallible—the same result as that of the first position. Once again, the patriarchal presentation of God in Scripture can be dismissed as not normative. The plenary verbal inspiration of Scripture is denied.

None of these strategies for undercutting the masculine language for God in the Bible is compatible with the view of Scripture confessed in the CRC.

b. Organic inspiration: the dynamic human dimension

Many inclusivist theologians would dismiss the Reformed view of inspiration as static, mechanical, unhistorical, and conducive to a naive, literalistic reading of Scripture that mistakenly treats everything in it as timelessly true.

But this charge is false. The Reformed view of inspiration is organic, acknowledging the dynamic, natural, historical human processes by which Scripture came to be. It affirms that the Holy Spirit, often without their awareness, providentially employed the minds and personalities of fallible human beings, as well as their social and cultural settings, in order to produce the infallible Bible. Thus the inspiration of Scripture incorporates the languages, personalities, social situations, traditions, and intellectual frameworks of its human authors. In fact, the traditional Reformed grammatical-literary-historical method of interpreting Scripture intentionally studies these human characteristics of the Bible.

However, recognition of the historical particularity of the Bible does not lead Reformed Christians to doubt that its teachings are true and normative for all cultures. Even universal truths of science and mathematics are discovered and stated in particular historical ways. Surely universal truths about God, salvation, and new life in Christ can be made known to all people by a particular historical text.

The Reformed view of Scripture is incompatible with arguments for gender-inclusive theology that reject the universal normativity of the Bible because of the historical particularity of its language or the fallibility of its human authors.

c. Progressive revelation

Recognizing the dynamic, organic character of biblical revelation includes the affirmation that it is progressive over time. Each book contributes to a larger picture that emerged during the history of the formation of the canon. More and more of God's nature and plan for salvation is revealed as we move from the Old Testament to the New Testament, a development that is most clearly seen with respect to the triune nature of God and the identity of the promised Messiah. Crucial to understanding the Bible is seeing how the Old Testament points to the New and how the New Testament appropriates and fulfills the Old.

Proper interpretation of progressive revelation challenges many approaches to Scripture aimed at demasculinizing or feminizing language for God. There are those people, for instance, who argue that we should continue calling God *Yahweh* instead of *Father* because that is his special name. Others stress the feminine images for God in the Old Testament and downplay the New Testament use of *Father* and *Son*. For example, Sophia Christology interprets Jesus primarily as the manifestation of God's wisdom (Greek: *sophia*), which is personified as a woman in Proverbs 8, to offset his standard New Testament designation as Son (cf. Section VIII, D).

But progressive revelation means that the God who introduced himself as Yahweh in the Old Testament is the God who reveals himself as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in the New Testament. To retain the name *Yahweh* as primary or to focus on Old Testament feminine imagery to avoid speaking

of the Father and the Son is to reverse and misinterpret the direction of God's self-revelation.

d. Unity of Scripture

Relating the Old and New Testament raises the larger issue of the unity of Scripture. The doctrine of organic inspiration points to the unity of Scripture that permeates and undergirds the personal, social, linguistic, literary, cultural, and thematic diversity of its individual books. Superintending the many human authors is one divine Author with a single vision and purpose. All the books taken together contribute to this single unfolding, coherent, complex, multidimensional picture. Therefore, Scripture cannot be understood properly if its parts are interpreted apart from their place within the whole. Verses must be interpreted in terms of their literary-structural location in books, and books must be understood within the redemptive-historical message and commentary of the canon as a whole. Belief in inspiration by the Holy Spirit guides the interpreter of Scripture to seek the coherent picture of the whole of God's plan and will.

The organic unity of Scripture is methodologically denied by most higher criticism (modern academic study of the Bible) and by most of the feminist theologians who use it. Higher criticism does not presuppose inspiration by the Holy Spirit and the coherence of the canon which that implies. It interprets Scripture strictly "from below," that is, as a merely human document. It attempts to reconstruct the process of its formation from sources, original bits of revelation that reflect the religious experiences and traditions of ancient Israel and the early church. The aim is to understand these original bits in their historical contexts but not in terms of Scripture as a whole. Most scholars who use this approach conclude that the Bible as a whole artificially combines a variety of diverse and sometimes contradictory views of God, humanity, sin, and salvation. According to such scholars, Scripture is not a coherent whole and cannot be used that way to interpret the theological meaning of specific texts.

Some feminist theologians approach the Bible this way, isolating certain texts from the rest of Scripture and using them to construct feminine views of God. One example is interpreting the feminine personification of God's wisdom in Proverbs 8 as the Old Testament appropriation of the great ancient Near Eastern wisdom goddess. This exegesis makes no sense when the passage is taken with all the other texts that polemicize against worshiping any God but Yahweh, who is explicitly named in Proverbs 8. A similar mistake is made by those who argue that *El Shaddai* means "the Breasted God." They do not interpret *El Shaddai* in relation to the names of God as presented in Scripture but isolate a few verses and read them as appropriations of ancient Near Eastern polytheism (cf. Section VII, B, 3).

Understanding texts in terms of their historical contexts is legitimate and is included in the grammatical-literary-historical method of Reformed hermeneutics. But attempting to argue for inclusive language for God by interpreting individual texts or themes of Scripture apart from their meaning within the canon as a whole is incompatible with the Reformed doctrine of Scripture and Reformed hermeneutics.

e. Continuing special revelation

The Bible is not just a history of past revelation but is continuing revelation, addressing the present and pointing to the future of God's coming kingdom. In and through it God continues to speak to his people, communicating his identity, love, and will.

The importance of this doctrine of Scripture cannot be overstated in relation to the question of inclusive language for God. Many inclusivist theologians, even those who believe that the Holy Spirit inspired Scripture, treat the Bible as a dated record of past revelation, its language largely out of touch with the modern world. Some even rewrite its text in current politically correct language. But if in Scripture God continues to speak infallibly, who are we to correct how he has chosen to do so? Reformed hermeneutics has always recognized that the original meaning of Scripture must be interpreted as we apply it today in a different time and culture. At the same time, we affirm that God is still revealing himself in Scripture with a universally true, cross-cultural message.

f. Definitive interpretation of all revelation

As continuing special revelation, Scripture provides God's definitive interpretation of the rest of his revelation, both general and special. Without the written specificity and rich detail of Scripture, we would have little access to who God is and what he has done in creation, in the history of Israel, and in Jesus Christ. Furthermore, in Scripture we are given the only infallible interpretation of all God's dealings in creation and redemption—in general revelation, in his words and deeds in history, and in Jesus Christ. Thus, although God also continues to be present in creation, in history, and in the lives of his people, these experiences of God must be interpreted according to biblical revelation. They cannot supersede it or be given equal weight with it in specifying the truth about God.

With respect to inclusive language for God, this means that philosophical theology based on general revelation, the world's religions that "bring many names to God," women's experience of oppression and liberation, feminist spirituality, and feminist theology cannot be sources of knowledge of God equal to or greater than Scripture. Scripture itself must provide the framework that we use to interpret human experience and formulate theological categories. We may not read our own experiences, preferences, or intellectual constructions into Scripture or use them to judge whether its teachings are true. Though it is correct that every reading of Scripture is an interpretation, this does not allow us to set aside the normativity of Scripture or to accept every interpretation of it as equally valid.

E. Conclusion

The Reformed doctrine of revelation is very broad, recognizing that God makes himself known in his creation as well as in his historical words and deeds for his people, in Jesus Christ, and in the Bible. But until Christ returns, Holy Scripture in its entirety is our only infallible account and interpretation of who God is and what he is doing with his creation. Any approach to the question of inclusive language for God that is incompatible with this view of the Bible is in conflict with the doctrinal standards of the Christian Reformed Church.

VI. The nature of language for God

A. Introduction

Before considering how Scripture guides us on gendered language for God, however, we must reflect more generally on the nature of all biblical language for God. Two topics are central. One is the adequacy of any human language to express the truth about God, given the limitations of all creaturely language and the transcendence of the Creator. The other topic pertains more specifically to the element of gender in language about God as this is reflected in names, titles, figures of speech, pronouns, and the like. In this section we examine these topics, propose an appropriate strategy for understanding the biblical use of gendered language for God, and evaluate a standard argument for inclusive language for God based on a confusion of these two topics.

B. Language and the Creator-creature difference

1. The problem stated

The theological problem about language for God arises with the recognition that God's nature is far beyond us. He is high and holy and lifted up—perfect and infinitely great in knowledge, being, power, and goodness. God transcends his creation, is very different from his creatures, and is not limited to or defined by human categories and language. Yet human concepts and language are the only means we have of thinking and speaking about God. Even when he comes to us in special revelation, he uses human language and thoughts in speaking about himself, his will, and his mighty deeds for us. Calvin spoke of God "using baby talk," accommodating himself to us in our language.

Yet we confess that God's identity, acts, and will are truly and accurately proclaimed in Scripture, even though we recognize that human thought and language cannot adequately comprehend God's being. In historic, biblical Christianity our language for God is not considered a mere projection of human ideas upon the blank screen of a Transcendent Reality about which we can really know nothing. In fact, the revealed truth content of Scripture is considered crucial precisely because God in himself is so far beyond our grasp.

The problem lies in explaining how we can affirm both that God is beyond all language and that language can proclaim the truth about him—an apparent contradiction.

2. Proposed solutions

Three general solutions to this problem are invoked in discussions of inclusive language for God. The first two are acceptable, but the third is not.

a. Language for God is analogical and can truly describe

The traditional theological solution to this problem is the view that language about God is analogical. When we apply words to God, there is an analogy or similarity between what they mean when used of creatures and what they mean when used of God. If we say "Mary loves Joe" and "God loves Joe," there is an analogy or similarity between what it is for God to love and for Mary to love. *Love* is not exactly the same in meaning (univocal) when attributed to Mary and to God, for God's love is infinite, perfect, and not dependent, whereas Mary's is finite, fallible, and depen-

dent on a variety of things. But *love* is not wholly different in meaning (equivocal) when attributed to Mary and to God. (*Love* as a personal relationship and *love* as a score in tennis are equivocal.) Being created in God's image, Mary has the capacity to love in a creaturely way that reflects or mirrors, and is thus analogous to, God's love.

In asserting that our language for God is analogical, the theological tradition affirms both the Creator-creature difference and the realistic truth content of biblical and theological language. When we say that God loves, creates, judges, and heals or that God is almighty and all-knowing, we attribute the human meanings of these terms to God but without the human limitations of finiteness and fallibility. We thus refer to God and to his attributes and acts that have analogies in human existence. Our minds cannot fathom God in himself. But in our limited way we can know God and speak truly of what he is like. Taking this position, Herman Bavinck concluded, "He can be apprehended; he cannot be comprehended. There is a 'knowledge'; there is no 'comprehension' of God" (*The Doctrine of God*, 32-33). We are confident that biblical language gives us as accurate and true an understanding of God as is possible for creatures like us to have.

An important implication of this position is that, although all our language for God is analogical, it is not all figurative or metaphorical. When we say "God loves me" or "God is our Creator," we mean those statements literally, that is, in the direct, primary sense of ordinary language, at the same time recognizing that they are analogical, that is, that God's love and act of creation are also different from ours. In other words, we can speak literally but not univocally of God. However, when we say "God is our Rock," we are speaking metaphorically, as when we say "Mary is a rock." But this metaphor is also analogical, for the reliability it attributes to the creature Mary and to the Creator God are not the same. In other words, "God is our Rock" is not just a metaphor but an analogical metaphor.

b. Language for God is figurative and can truly describe

Some contemporary theologians propose a slightly different solution to the problem of biblical and theological language for God. They affirm that all language for God is figurative while still defending its truth content. (See, for example, the essays of Roland Frye and Garrett Green, who reject inclusive language for God, in *Speaking the Christian God* [Eerdmans, 1992]). They concede that, because of our creaturely limitations, all language for God is figurative or metaphorical; none is literal. But they point out that figures of speech—metaphors, similes, and other images—attribute to their subjects things that are both like and unlike them. The metaphor "Mary is a rock" means that Mary is like a rock in being steadfast but not like a rock in being alive. Since figurative language works with similarities between things, human words really can tell us who God is and what he is like in spite of their limitations. This position, therefore, comes out in roughly the same place as the traditional approach: our language for God is not precisely the same as language for humans, but it is nevertheless descriptively true; it depicts reality.

Furthermore, most of those who take this position recognize that not all language for God is figurative in the same way. Metaphors identify and

describe who God is by direct predication (for example, "God is our Father"; "Jesus is the Lamb of God"); other figures of speech explicitly compare God to creatures (for example, "God is like an eagle" or "God is like a mother"). Both kinds of figurative language disclose truth about God. But they do not have the same status, meaning, or function, and they should not be confused. (These linguistic categories are defined below.)

Finally, many who hold this position argue that biblical language for God should not be altered, precisely because it is figurative. Modern linguistics asserts that figures of speech capture unique shades of meaning that cannot be fully translated into other terms. So the figurative language of Scripture for God must be retained just as it is to preserve its meaning. Something crucial is lost when assertions like "God is our Father" and Jesus' comparison of himself to a hen gathering her chicks are eliminated or altered.

c. Language for God is figurative and cannot truly describe

Some feminists are among those modern theologians in the tradition of Kant and Tillich who believe that because religious language is entirely figurative, symbolic, or anthropomorphic, it cannot really describe what God is like. They emphasize that God is "wholly other" and therefore unknowable in human words and concepts. With Schleiermacher (and the atheist Feuerbach), they hold that theological language really unpacks human religious experience rather than truly imaging God. Even biblical presentations of God are considered to be projections of creaturely categories upon the blank screen of Transcendent Reality, which, for all we know, is in itself nothing like those presentations.

Sally McFague is the most articulate feminist champion of this position. Since all our language about God is metaphorical, she argues, whatever we say about God amounts to no more than claiming "it is *as if* God is like this" (*Models of God*, 70). We cannot say what God is really like. She then feels free to set aside the Bible's patriarchal language for God, since it does not really describe God and has actually become hurtful. She proposes that we find ungendered and inclusive metaphors and models for God that are not hurtful but redemptive.

Unlike the first two proposals, this account of language for God is inadequate and unacceptable. It recognizes God's transcendence but denies that we can know him. It is in fact a kind of religious and theological agnosticism. It undercuts not only masculine language for God but also most of the truth content of Scripture and the Christian faith. It should be rejected by anyone who affirms the Reformed confessions about God and his revelation.

d. Conclusion

The nature of language for God is a complex issue that has been discussed by scholars for centuries. For orthodox Christians an adequate understanding of language for God must affirm both the possibility and limits of human language for communicating the truth about God—who he is, what he is like, and what he is doing in relation to his creation. This position acknowledges both the Creator-creature difference and God's ability to reveal himself truly to his creatures. Coupling this view of language for God with the doctrine of the plenary inspiration of Scripture

gives us the strongest possible reason for taking Scripture as definitive in how it speaks of God and what it says about speaking of God.

Of the two acceptable positions presented, the terminology of the traditional analogical theory is less likely to be misunderstood. It reserves the word *analogy* for all language that refers to God and uses the word *metaphor* only as a kind of figure of speech. The contemporary theory is potentially confusing because it uses the term *metaphor* both for all language for God and for metaphors as figures of speech. This report strives to maintain clarity in its use of these terms.

C. Gendered language for God

What follows is a discussion of the various ways in which the language of Scripture designates or describes God as masculine or feminine. After an introductory section explaining the relationship between grammatical and personal gender in the biblical languages, we deal first with gendered language for God himself and then with gendered language for his attributes. The examples and illustrations of gendered language for God given here anticipate the fuller analysis of the biblical material provided in Section VII.

1. Grammatical and personal gender

Since the biblical languages, unlike English, have an elaborate system of grammatical gender that comes into play in the Bible's language about God, it is important to understand the difference between grammatical gender and natural, or personal, gender. Natural, or personal, gender refers to the difference between male and female in living things, especially animals and persons. Examples are *bull* and *cow, boy* and *girl*. Since we are speaking of persons, we will use the term *personal gender*. Whereas in English many terms do not specify personal gender (for example *cook, judge, leader*, and *teacher*), in the biblical languages almost all such words do tell us whether the person in question is masculine or feminine.

Many languages grammatically classify nouns (and sometimes also verbs, articles, adjectives, and pronouns) into two gender categories, called "masculine" and "feminine"; some languages also have a third category, called "neuter." Each of these categories has distinct forms and rules of use. A few languages have more than three genders (Swahili has seven). As an example of grammatical gender, the word for *house* is masculine in Hebrew, feminine in Spanish and French, and neuter in German. Some languages, including Korean, Finnish, Turkish, Hungarian, and English, are virtually free of grammatical gender.

The relationship between grammatical and personal gender varies among languages. Languages that are without grammatical gender often indicate natural, or personal, gender by means of specific vocabulary (e.g., *mother, policeman*). In languages such as German, personal gender does not necessarily dictate grammatical gender. For example, the word for *girl* is *Mädchen*, which is neuter. But in the biblical languages Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek, personal gender always determines grammatical gender (except for a few neuter words in Greek, such as *teknion*, "child"). Conversely, in these languages the grammatical gender of nouns designating persons virtually always indicates the personal gender of those referred to. This is usually but not always true of terms for animals. In the biblical languages, therefore,

grammatical gender does reflect and indicate personal gender when referring to persons.

2. Gender and language for God himself

Biblical language for God himself (as distinct from his attributes) involves gender in a number of ways. Not only are there many gender-specific nouns which designate or name him, but there are also many other grammatical elements in the biblical languages that indicate his gender. In addition, there are many gender images or figures of speech that are used to describe him.

a. Gender and personal designators for God

Personal designators are terms that identify persons by naming, entitling, classifying, or directly describing them in the primary meaning of the language. Although they may contain figurative elements, designators are not images or figures of speech (cf. 2, b below). For example, the statement *Bill is a teacher* designates Bill by identifying him literally in terms of his vocation, but *Bill is a workhorse* is a figure of speech, nonliteral and comparative. This distinction is crucial, for a major argument for inclusive language for God assumes that all references to God are figures of speech (cf. E below). In addition, designators refer to persons in distinction from their attributes or powers (cf. C, 3 below). For example, in *Bill's integrity*, "Bill's" designates the person whereas "integrity" refers to an attribute he possesses. Gendered designators are designators that linguistically indicate the gender of persons. Examples are *Bill, king, mother*, and *actress. Father* and *king* are gendered designators that the Bible uses for God. The following are common kinds of personal designators used in Scripture, all of which can indicate personal gender.

Note: The variations in capitalization in the following sections indicate whether a term is being used as a common noun or as a title. In some cases a term is susceptible to either interpretation.

1) Common nouns

Persons are often designated as members of a kind or group who share some attribute, capacity, position, function, or relationship. Such class names or common nouns often indicate gender also when used of God. Examples are "he is a *policeman*," "a *stewardess* welcomed us," "she is a *mother*," and "the Lord is *king*." In Hebrew and Greek such terms always have grammatical gender and, unlike English, almost always convey personal gender. Thus *judge, teacher, redeemer,* and *shepherd* are gendered in the original text of the Bible. When used as personal designators for God in the original languages of Scripture, all such common nouns are masculine. Examples are *creator, judge, avenger, savior, father, lord,* and *king*.

2) Titles

Titles are designators that, through official conferral or convention, have become standard terms of reference and address. They identify persons by reference to a status, relationship, or function that they have. Examples are "*Pastor* Smith," "*Farmer* Jones," "*Queen* Elizabeth," "Defender of the Faith" (title of the English monarch), and "the Messiah." Some titles are epithets, that is, adjectives or adjective phrases, such as "Alfred *the Great*" or "Richard *the Lionhearted*." Kinship

terms, such as *mother, father,* and *aunt*, often function as titles. Many titles designate personal gender. When used as personal designators for God, such titles are regularly masculine throughout Scripture. Examples are *Lord, King of kings and Lord of lords, the Almighty, the Holy One of Israel, the Ancient of Days*, and *the Father*. Even though the English translation does not specify gender, all these divine titles designate God as masculine in the original languages.

3) Proper names

Proper names are standard terms of reference and address that directly and enduringly identify specific individual persons as such and not primarily their positions, functions, or relationships. Names may describe persons, indicate their status, or express other meanings (*Elijah* means "Yahweh is my God," and *Abimelek* means "my father is king"), but that is not their primary function. At heart they are basic terms of reference and address that designate specific persons in distinction from all others. Examples are *William Smith, Sitting Bull, Jesus, Yahweh*. All the proper names of God in Scripture are masculine (cf. VII, C, 5).

The relationship between names and other parts of speech is complex and often misunderstood, for words that sometimes function as other parts of speech can also be used as names. Common nouns can be used as proper names, as when a bear is named *Bear* or a cat is called *Kitty*. A title (including epithets and kinship terms) is a name when it functions as a standard primary identifier of a person and not primarily of his or her position, relationship, or characteristics. Examples are *Junior, Mommy*, the Native American name *Dances with Wolves*, biblical names such as *Jehoshaphat* ("Yahweh judges"), and *007* (numbers *can* function as names). In fact, many titles, as well as relational, vocational, and descriptive terms, have actually become names. Examples are *Carpenter, Prince, Hauptmann* (German: "headman"), *Leroy* (French: "the king"), *Regina* (Latin: "queen"), *Goodman, Johnson*. Even metaphors can function as names (cf. c, 1) below).

In conclusion, whether a particular term such as *king* is a common designator, title, or name cannot be determined apart from how it functions in a given context. It is important to recognize, therefore, that some of Scripture's gendered designators for God may be used in more than one way—as common nouns, as titles, and possibly as names. It is also worth noting at this point that the biblical understanding of "the name of the Lord" is broader than the category of proper names (cf. VII, E).

Regardless of the intricacies of classification, however, it is significant that all personal designators for God in the original text of Scripture—whether common nouns, titles, or proper names—are masculine, even when this is not evident in English translations. We are aware of no exception to this overall pattern.

b. Gender and other grammatical elements referring to God

1) Articles

In Greek the definite article has masculine, feminine, and neuter forms that reflect the gender of the words they specify. Thus articles

which accompany personal designators typically indicate the gender of the persons designated. For example, *the* is feminine in *the mother* and masculine in *the father*. They do not reflect personal gender if the word they specify does not.

Since personal designators for God are grammatically masculine, the accompanying Greek article is always masculine as well. For example, the standard way of saying *God* in the New Testament is *ho theos*, literally, "the [masculine] God." However, when the same word is used to refer to a goddess, it becomes grammatically feminine, and the article changes; see Acts 19:37, where Artemis is called *he theos*, "the [feminine] god."

2) Pronouns (and pronominal suffixes in Hebrew)

Second- and third-person pronouns in Hebrew and Aramaic and third-person pronouns in Greek are gendered, reflecting either the grammatical gender of their antecedents or the personal gender of the persons they refer to. In English and Korean only third-person singular pronouns (*he* and *she*) are gendered. Thus in many places in the Old Testament where God is addressed as *you*, as in "To you I call" (Ps. 28:1), the pronoun specifies that God is masculine.

3) Adjectives

Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek, unlike English, have gendered adjectives, inflected to reflect the grammatical gender (and personal gender, if present) of what they modify. For example, in biblical languages we are able to tell the gender of a person simply by the grammatical form of the word *good* used to describe him or her. If God is the person in question, the same rule holds, as in "You are worthy, our Lord and God" in Revelation 4:11. The Greek word translated as "worthy" is *axios*, the masculine form of the adjective.

4) Verbs

In Hebrew and Aramaic, but not in Greek, second- and third-person verb forms have grammatical gender that is determined by the grammatical gender of their subjects. If the subject is a personal designator, the personal gender of the subject is implied by the verb form. For example, it is immediately apparent from the form of *eat* whether the *you* in *you eat* is male or female (and singular or plural). In Psalm 85:1-3, the form of all the verbs recounting the actions of the Lord—"you showed favor," "you restored," "you forgave," "you covered," "you set aside," and "you turned"—indicates that the person who did these things is masculine.

5) An extended biblical example

We can take Psalm 86 as an example to illustrate the above points. In an English translation of this psalm (e.g., the NIV), there is only the title "Lord" (Hebrew: *adonay*) in verses 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 12, and 15 and the personal name "the Lord" (Hebrew: *Yahweh*) in verses 1, 6, 11, and 17 to indicate that the biblical text here identifies God as masculine. But in the Hebrew text, the masculine identification of God is also indicated by the title *elohim* (translated "God") in verses 2, 10, 12, and 14 and by the common noun *el* (also translated "God") in verse 15. All four of these terms are masculine personal designators in the original. Furthermore, there are no fewer than twenty-nine pronouns in this

psalm (generally corresponding to "you" and "your" in the NIV) which designate God as masculine, as well as eight adjectives (e.g., "compassionate" and "gracious" in v. 15) and twenty verbs (e.g., "hear" and "answer" in v. 1). Altogether there are seventy-three terms and grammatical forms in the Hebrew of this psalm that refer to God as masculine, compared to only eleven instances of "Lord" and "LORD" in English.

Given the highly gendered nature of the biblical languages in comparison to English, it is clear that the masculine designation of God is far more pervasive in the Scriptures than appears from an English translation. We need only consider the fact that the name *Yahweh* occurs 6,639 times in the Old Testament and that it is consistently paired with masculine pronouns, adjectives, and verbs throughout to gain some idea of how overwhelming this aspect of the Bible's presentation of God is. There are literally hundreds of thousands of places in the Bible where God is identified as a "he" and none where he is identified as a "she." (These assertions are elaborated in Section VII.)

c. Gender and imagery describing God

Having considered personal designators and other gendered elements of language for God, we come to a second basic kind of linguistic device by which we refer to God himself—imagery. By *imagery* we mean the different figures of speech, including metaphors and similes. Imagery describes, illustrates, or depicts an aspect of one thing by putting it with something else that bears some kind of similarity to it. Like designators, imagery discloses something about its subject; it is descriptive. But unlike designators, images use language comparatively and indirectly, showing us what something is like rather than stating literally what it is.

Gender imagery is simply imagery that involves something that has gender. "The child is *the father of the man* and "her love is *like mothers' milk*" are gender images. The Bible contains both masculine and feminine imagery for God. Gender imagery does not necessarily connote anything about the personal gender of the subject imaged. *Washington was the father of his country* does reflect personal gender. But *the conference gave birth to an alliance* does not suggest that the conference is a female person. And *Saddam is the mother of all dictators* does not imply that Saddam is female. We must rely on designators and gendered grammatical forms for indications of personal gender.

The flexible connection between personal gender and imagery, which may or may not reflect personal gender, makes cross-gender imagery possible. Cross-gender imagery figuratively links something masculine to a female person or connects something feminine to a male person. Examples are *Jane is as strong as a bull, Bob conceived an idea and gave birth to a book, he is a real prima donna*, and, from Isaiah 60:16 (NRSV), "you shall suck from the breasts of kings." Cross-gender imagery is an important category for understanding the feminine language for God in Scripture, as will become apparent in Section VII, B.

Implied imagery is also a category we must bear in mind, for there are a number of instances in Scripture where a gender metaphor or simile is

not explicitly applied to God but where juxtaposition of God with a gender figure of speech in the context naturally implies that the comparison is being made to God. The parable of the lost coin in Luke 15:8-10 provides an example. It suggests a similarity between the woman and God, but the text does not explicitly link them.

The following are basic kinds of imagery used in Scripture for God.

1) Metaphors

A metaphor highlights certain features of one thing by linguistically identifying it with another thing or by directly attributing characteristics of another thing to it. Thus metaphors, like designators, have the linguistic form of direct assertions and ascriptions. *Bill is a bear* and *the twilight of life* are examples. However, metaphors are not intended to be taken literally and definitively, as designators are. Bill is not literally a bear, and life does not have a literal twilight. Instead, the meaning of the metaphor—the interesting perspective on its subject that it provides—is the shared nuances of meaning brought out by putting the two different things together. Bears are grumpy, and so is Bill. Twilight is the end of the day, and old age is the end of life. Metaphors highlight these qualities, different yet somehow similar, in richly colorful and interesting ways not captured by the literal descriptions that attempt to explain them.

It is important to emphasize that metaphors, unlike designators, are limited and nonliteral in what they attribute to their subjects. To say *Bill is a teacher* (a designation) attributes to Bill everything it means to be a teacher and is true of anyone who is a teacher. However, to say *Bill is a bear* (a metaphor) does not attribute to Bill everything that is true of bears. There are many characteristics of bears that Bill does not have, such as being a hairy animal that hibernates. Understanding the metaphor requires grasping the qualities shared by the things that are compared. This point is important when interpreting gender metaphors. If a pilot says, "This plane is a real lady," he does not intend to assert that his airplane is actually female even though the feminine image may be indispensable for what he does want to express. Gender metaphors for God require the same careful interpretation.

Although metaphors as figures of speech must not be confused with personal designators, there are titles and names that are metaphorical. One of Jesus' titles is *the Lamb of God* (a metaphor); King Richard's surname became Lionheart (which is also a metaphor for bravery). Other examples are *Snow White* and *Sitting Bull*. The crucial point is that the term is a title or name, though it does contain a metaphorical meaning and may have originated as a metaphor. Advocates of inclusive language for God evidence confusion about this relationship between metaphors, names, and titles when, for example, they assert that *Father* is merely a metaphor for God.

2) Personification

Personification is a kind of metaphor. It linguistically but figuratively identifies a thing or quality that is not a person with a person. Examples are the ideal of justice represented as a woman and the United States identified as Uncle Sam. In the book of Proverbs wisdom

and folly are personified as women. The personification of God's wisdom as a female figure in Proverbs 8 is discussed in Section VII.

3) Similes

Similes, like metaphors, compare things that are unlike in order to highlight specific similarities. Unlike metaphors, they do not use the form of linguistic identification or direct attribution. Instead they make the comparison of the different things verbally explicit, often using *as* or *like*. Examples of similes are *hungry as a bear, his face was like the sun, she runs like the wind*, and *though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow*. Scripture uses similes of both genders for God. In Isaiah 42:13-14, for instance, the Lord is said to be "like a mighty man" and "like a woman in childbirth." Like other figures of speech, gender similes do not necessarily indicate or imply anything about the personal gender of their subjects.

3. Linguistic terms referring to attributes of God

Thus far, in considering language for God we have focused on ways of referring to God himself, whether using designators or imagery. We now consider language that speaks about God's powers and attributes in distinction from God himself. Just as Mary's love, intelligence, and intentions are not identical with Mary, even though they cannot be separated from her, so God's love, wisdom, and intentions are not identical with God, even though they cannot be separated from him. (One version of the doctrine of divine simplicity asserts that God is identical with all his attributes and acts, but that is a philosophical conclusion, not the structure of biblical language for God, which is the issue here.) Scripture speaks of God's glory, power, love, wisdom, knowledge, truth, wrath, justice, will, thoughts, intentions, acts, and many other excellences. The terms for the attributes and aspects of God in the biblical languages include words that are grammatically masculine, feminine, and (in Greek) neuter.

Two points are relevant to the debate about inclusive language for God. First, it is important to notice that possessing grammatically gendered attributes does not indicate anything about the personal gender of the one who possesses them. *Wisdom*, for example, is feminine in both Greek and Hebrew. But if Hebrews or Greeks said "The king has wisdom," they did not mean to suggest that the king is somehow female or feminine. Similarly, to attribute grammatically masculine or feminine characteristics to God does not imply that God is personally masculine or feminine. However, many cases for inclusive theology, such as Virginia Mollenkott's *The Divine Feminine*, rely heavily on this association.

Second, the grammatical gender of an attribute in the biblical languages does not usually imply that it is more typical of one personal gender than the other. Wisdom is not a feminine personality characteristic just because it is grammatically feminine. And neither is folly. The same principle is true of attributes with masculine grammatical gender. As another example, there is no hard evidence in the Old Testament that *compassionate* (*rachum* in Hebrew) connotes the quality of maternal love in distinction from paternal love, as Phyllis Trible contends, though it is related to the Hebrew word for *womb*. Compassion is regularly attributed to men and even to God as father in Psalm 103:13 without suggesting that it refers to their "maternal side." Such

attempts to classify personal characteristics as masculine and feminine on the basis of grammatical gender seem more to involve reading our culture's gender stereotypes back into the biblical languages than to rely on solid exegesis.

D. Conclusion: understanding gendered language for God in Scripture

In this section we have reflected on two complex features of biblical language for God: (1) the limits and possibility for human language to speak of God and (2) the variety of linguistic means by which Scripture speaks of God. Both features must be honored in attempting to understand the Bible's gendered language for God, which implies the following two-dimensional strategy.

First, since biblical language for God is exactly the same as it is for humans, we ought to read what Scripture says about God in the very same way that we read what it says about humans. Thus we should linguistically analyze *Yahweh is king* the same as *David is king* and *God is a roaring lion* the same as *Nebuchadnezzar is a roaring lion*. In the first case both Yahweh and David are designated by a masculine term, *king*, which signifies their office and relationship to their people. This designator is literal in the sense of being nonfigurative. In the second case both God and Nebuchadnezzar are metaphorically said to be lions, that is, their fierce, relentless power is highlighted. This case is an image or figure of speech. Gendered language for God works exactly the same as it does for human beings, including the distinctions, relations, and qualifications between personal and grammatical gender identified above. In the Bible, names, titles, metaphors, and other linguistic structures apply to God in the same way that they apply to humans.

Second, since God is Creator and we—with our language—are creatures, we must always recognize that we cannot mean exactly the same things when we speak of God and of people using the same words and linguistic structures. *God loves me, God gave me life*, and *God is king* do not mean exactly the same things as *Mary loves me, my parents gave me life*, and *David is king*. What these words mean in human life is only a finite, fallible reflection of what they refer to in God's dealings with us. Thus our language for God is always analogical, referring to a reality that transcends creaturely limitations (cf. VI, B).

Both points must be kept in mind in order to understand gendered language for God. We must recognize both (1) that linguistically the Bible treats gender in relation to God exactly the same as for human persons and (2) that the Creator-creature distinction requires us to be wary of attributing gender to God in the way we attribute it to humans. To illustrate: in one sense God is literally, i.e., nonfiguratively, our King; yet he is our King analogically, i.e., in a way that is far beyond creaturely kingship.

But this is the key question: Do we attribute gender to God in any sense at all when we say "God is our King"? If so, in what sense? And if we do not attribute gender to God, what is the significance of the Bible's mostly masculine language for God? These theological questions will be addressed in Section VIII, following consideration of the Bible's use of gendered language for God. Before turning to holy Scripture, however, a popular argument based on the nature of language for God must be addressed.

E. Evaluation of a standard argument for inclusive language for God

There is a widely accepted argument for inclusive language for God that is based on a confusion of the two topics addressed in this section of the report.

The argument goes like this: since all of our language for God is creaturely and limited, all biblical references to God are metaphorical, figurative, or imagery. Since all references to God are metaphors, figures of speech, or images, the masculine terms do not have special status. In fact Scripture uses feminine and gender-neutral metaphors, figures of speech, or images for God as well. Thus all ways of referring to God are equal, and our language for God should therefore be inclusive. Influential proponents of this widely used argument are Virginia Mollenkott in *The Divine Feminine*, the editors of *The Inclusive-Language Lectionary*, and Brian Wren in *What Language Shall I Borrow?*

The fallacy in this argument is its equivocation (confusion or change of meaning) of the terms *metaphorical, figurative*, and *imagery*. The argument begins using these terms to indicate the limits of all our language for God because of the difference between Creator and creatures (topic one). But it switches meanings in its conclusion, using these terms in the sense of imagery or figures of speech in distinction from personal designators (topic two). Thus the argument concludes that all biblical references to God are imagery or figures of speech. But this conclusion is false, for names, titles, and other personal designators are not images, figures of speech, or metaphors. This illegitimate switch in meaning leads proponents of this argument to overlook the difference between figures of speech and personal designators such as titles and names. Thus they mistakenly conclude that feminine images are names for God, that maternal figures of speech justify *Mother* as a title or name for God, and that *Father* is just another figure of speech.

VII. The biblical pattern of gendered language for God

A. Introduction

This is the crucial section of the report, for it identifies the biblical pattern of gendered language for God. Because of our basic commitment to Scripture, the results here will ground and shape all subsequent conclusions and recommendations.

This section treats two main topics. The first topic (subsections B, C, and D) is the Bible's gendered language for God, both feminine and masculine. Because of their importance and limited number, we examine and classify all the alleged feminine references to God we could identify. Thereafter we survey the general kinds of masculine language for God. Finally, we compare and contrast the masculine and feminine patterns and draw conclusions. Unless noted, quotations are from the NIV.

The second main topic of this section is the biblical theology of the name of God and naming God (subsection E). It focuses on what the Bible teaches about naming God. It concludes from Scripture whether and to what extent it is permissible for humans to revise or augment "the name of the Lord."

In speaking of "language for God" in this context, we have in mind two different ways in which the language of the Bible refers to God in gendered terms. The first is "gender imagery," which involves masculine or feminine images that are used to describe God. The second is "gendered designation," which has to do with the ways in which grammatical features of a language (like pronouns, nouns, and adjectives) identify the gender of a person, in this case God. For example, a sentence like *God himself is like a mother* includes both kinds of language for God: a feminine image which describes him as tender and

loving and a masculine pronoun ("himself") which identifies him as a "he" rather than a "she." In the following discussion of feminine and masculine language for God in the Bible, it is important to keep this distinction in mind, since gender imagery and gendered designators are often confused in contemporary discussions.

B. Feminine language for God in Scripture

1. Reasonably clear cases

   a. Numbers 11:12: Moses asks God: "Did I conceive all these people? Did I give them birth? Why do you tell me to carry them in my arms, as a nurse carries an infant . . . ?"

      This is a series of rhetorical questions addressed by Moses to God. Moses implies that God, not he, is the one who conceived and gave birth to the people of Israel. It is God, not Moses, who should be their nurse. Thus there is cross-gender imagery (imagery of one gender for a person of the other gender) which occurs on two levels: explicitly of Moses and implicitly of God. Feminine imagery is conveyed by the verb *hara*, "conceive," and perhaps also by *yalad*, "give them birth" (though the latter verb is also used of fathers). However, in the original Hebrew, the grammatical forms of the words translated "you tell me" and "my arms" clearly designate God as masculine. Furthermore, even in the phrase "as a nurse carries," both the noun and the verb are masculine. Thus in this verse God is implicitly compared to a mother, but the grammar continues to designate him as masculine.

   b. Deuteronomy 32:18: "You deserted the Rock, who fathered you; you forgot the God who gave you birth."

      "The God who gave you birth" is another example of cross-gender imagery. The verb is a form of *hil*, sometimes used of a woman giving birth. But God (*El*) is masculine, and thus the grammatical gender of "gave you birth" is masculine as well, as are "Rock" and "fathered." God is presented as a masculine person throughout the chapter (the so-called "Song of Moses"): he is "father" in verse 6, and all the relevant grammatical forms are masculine. Thus "gave you birth" in verse 18 is a feminine metaphor describing a masculine person—an example of cross-gender imagery. In short, this verse presents fathering and giving birth as parallel masculine and feminine images of God bringing his people into being. This point was clearly understood by the translators who were commissioned by the Synod of Dort to produce the Dutch *Statenvertaling* (1635). In their note on this verse they comment, "That is, God, who was as a father and a mother to you, having made you his children, and having treated you with fatherly and motherly affection."

   c. Job 38:8: "Who shut up the sea behind doors when it burst forth from the womb?"

      Clearly "womb" is a feminine metaphor that in this context seems to be applied to God. (However, some commentators see the metaphorical mother as "the deep" of Gen. 1:2.) But it is Yahweh who is speaking (v. 1), and all the verb forms in the passage indicate that the agent of the acts of creation is masculine. If the "womb" here does refer to the womb of God, then it represents another example of cross-gender imagery.

d. Job 38:28-29: "Does the rain have a father? Who fathers the drops of dew? From whose womb comes the ice? Who gives birth to the frost from the heavens . . . ?"

The imagery in verse 28 is obviously paternal, and in verse 29 it seems just as clearly maternal (even though *yalad*, "to procreate," and *beten*, "belly," are also used of males). It appears to refer to God the Creator even though he is not explicitly mentioned. (However, some commentators hold that the metaphorical parents in the series of rhetorical questions are false foreign gods, not Yahweh. In that case there is no gender imagery for God here.) Since the grammatical gender of all verbs, even "gives birth," is masculine, the maternal metaphor in verse 29 is another case of implied cross-gender imagery.

e. Psalm 123:2: "As the eyes of slaves look to the hand of their master, as the eyes of a maid look to the hand of her mistress, so our eyes look to the Lord our God, till he shows us his mercy."

Here is a comparison between the eyes of servants and our eyes and thus an implied comparison between the Lord and both the master and mistress (a woman in a position of authority). The personal designation of God is clearly masculine, however, as indicated by the grammatical gender of "Lord," "God," and the verb "shows mercy." The comparisons of God with a master and mistress are implied similies, "mistress" being another case of cross-gender imagery.

f. Psalm 131:2: "But I have stilled and quieted my soul: like a weaned child with its mother, like a weaned child is my soul within me."

The explicit simile compares the psalmist's soul to a weaned child with its mother, thereby implicitly likening God to a mother. Since verses 1 and 3 explicitly name Yahweh (grammatically and personally masculine) as the referent of the comparison, this is a case of implied cross-gender imagery.

g. Proverbs 8:22-25: "The Lord brought me forth as the first of his works, before his deeds of old; I was appointed from eternity, from the beginning, before the world began. When there were no oceans, I was given birth, when there were no springs abounding with water; before the mountains were settled in place, before the hills, I was given birth."

These verses speak of the Lord (*Yahweh*) "bringing forth" personified Wisdom and of Wisdom's being "given birth." Although the first expression could possibly be translated "possessed" and the second expression does not explicitly name the one who gave birth, it is probable that the imagery of this passage depicts God as giving birth to Wisdom. We thus have another example of a feminine image describing God. However, since the name *Yahweh* and the grammatical forms consistently designate God as masculine, the language used is again an example of cross-gender imagery.

A different kind of issue is raised by the broader context of these verses. Throughout this chapter God's wisdom is personified as a woman, and all the grammatical forms referring to it are feminine. The same is true of the personifications of wisdom in Proverbs 1:20-33 and 31:10-31, because the Hebrew word for wisdom (*hokmah*) is feminine, and the gender of personifications regularly follows the grammatical gender

of the attribute or quality they represent. As gender imagery and designations of the attributes of God were explained in Section VI, C, however, the fact that the wisdom of God (an attribute) is personified as a woman (a figure of speech) tells us nothing about the personal gender of God himself. In fact, it is clear from the name *Yahweh* in Proverbs 8:22 and the grammatical forms of verses 22 and 26-31, which designate God himself and not his wisdom, that he continues to be presented as a masculine person.

There is a long history of theological reflection on Proverbs 8, especially with reference to the question of the relationship between God and personified Wisdom. Many theologians and exegetes, including some of the leading thinkers of the Reformed tradition, have identified the Wisdom of Proverbs 8 with the second person of the Trinity. If this is correct, then personified Wisdom represents the eternal Son of God, and we have a further example of a feminine image describing a masculine person. However, most modern exegetes no longer understand Proverbs 8 in such an explicitly Christological sense. (Proverbs 8 and Christology are discussed further in VIII, D.)

h. Isaiah 42:14: "But now, like a woman in childbirth, I cry out, I gasp and pant."

Although the first-person-singular verb forms in this verse are not gendered, it is the Lord, Yahweh, who is speaking here. In a simile God compares his eager efforts for the salvation of his people to a woman in the exertion of childbirth. This is a clear case of explicit cross-gender imagery.

i. Isaiah 45:10-11: "Woe to him who says to his father, 'What have you begotten?' or to his mother, 'What have you brought to birth?' This is what the Lord says—the Holy One of Israel, and its Maker: Concerning things to come, do you question me about my children, or give me orders about the work of my hands?"

These verses immediately follow the metaphor of God as potter and his people as clay (v. 9), the work of his hands (v. 11). Since his people are also called "my children," the parallelism of imagery in the context suggests that father and mother are metaphorically implied of God in the same way that potter is. However, the name *Yahweh* and title *Holy One of Israel*, with the masculine grammatical forms, indicate that the implied maternal metaphor is cross-gender imagery.

j. Isaiah 49:15: "Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you."

The Lord here compares his own love to the love of a nursing mother for her baby. The difference is that the Lord will never forget his people, although it is conceivable that a mother could forget her child. The first-person verb in this verse does not indicate the gender of the speaker, but the previous verse makes it clear that he is Yahweh and uses masculine grammatical forms. This is an explicit cross-gender image.

k. Isaiah 66:13: "As a mother comforts her child, so will I comfort you; and you will be comforted over Jerusalem."

Once again we have explicit cross-gender imagery. The context makes clear that Yahweh is speaking, although the first-person verb does not indicate gender. In a simile, the Lord directly likens his manner of dealing with his people to that of a mother comforting her child.

l. Hosea 13:8: "Like a bear robbed of her cubs, I will attack them and rip them open."

Although "bear robbed of [its] cubs" is masculine in Hebrew, it can also refer to a female bear, which is suggested by bear behavior (father bears do not care for their cubs). If this reference is correct, then we again have cross-gender imagery: Yahweh's execution of just punishment is likened to the attack of a mother bear. Incidentally, Israel is the object of divine wrath in this simile, not the beloved and protected offspring. Maternal imagery is not always inclusive and affirming.

m. Matthew 23:37 (cf. Luke 13:34): "O Jerusalem . . . , how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing."

This is explicit cross-gender imagery, using a mother chicken to represent Jesus' (not the Father's) protective love. The imagery of protecting wings is found in the Old Testament, where it sometimes suggests mother birds. (See 2, a below regarding eagles.)

n. Luke 15:8-10: "Or suppose a woman has ten silver coins and loses one. Does she not light a lamp, sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it? And when she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost coin.' In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

In this parable there is comparison between the joy of the woman and her friends and neighbors (all feminine in Greek) and that of God and his angels (all masculine). Whereas the cross-gender imagery is explicit between the friends and the angels, it is only implicit between the woman and God, since God is not actually mentioned.

o. I Peter 2:2-3: "Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good."

The explicit simile is between believers and nursing babies. However, milk for babies suggests breastfeeding, and the reference to the Lord probably suggests that he, like a mother or wet-nurse, is the source of that milk. Since "Lord" and "good" are clearly masculine, this is a case of implied (not explicitly stated) cross-gender imagery.

2. Possible but unclear cases

a. Genesis 1:2b: " . . . and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters."

This is the first of many places in the Old Testament where the Hebrew word *ruach* is grammatically feminine and refers to the spirit or Spirit of God. Rather than dealing with each place separately, we will discuss all instances of this usage together in this section.

At first glance, it seems that the issue of the gender of God's Spirit in the Old Testament is fairly straightforward. The Hebrew word for *spirit (ruach)*

is feminine, and the Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity; consequently, the triune God includes a feminine person alongside the Father and the Son. However, what this argument overlooks is that *ruach* is in fact not always feminine (about one in four cases is masculine), and it is not clear whether already in the Old Testament Scripture speaks of the *ruach* of God as a divine person. If we take seriously the Reformed doctrine of progressive revelation, we may well conclude that the biblical teaching concerning the Holy Spirit as the third person of the Trinity does not become clear until the New Testament. If that is the case, then it is no longer possible simply to assert that *ruach* in the Old Testament refers to a divine person.

Traditionally, however, evangelical and Reformed theologians have understood many occurrences of *ruach* in the Old Testament to refer to the Holy Spirit in the New Testament sense. This understanding is reflected in the NIV, where *ruach* is translated with a capital letter as "Spirit" on some seventy-six occasions. In many of these cases it is impossible to tell from the Hebrew whether *ruach* is being used as a masculine or a feminine noun, but of the forty-two cases where the context does allow us to determine the gender of *ruach*, thirty-five are feminine and seven are masculine. In other words, if capitalization in the NIV correctly identifies places in the Old Testament where *ruach* refers to a divine person, then the gender of that person is usually feminine but sometimes masculine. The feminine examples are the following: Genesis 1:2; Numbers 11:26 and 24:2; Judges 3:10, 6:34, 11:29, 13:25, 14:6, 14:19, and 15:14; I Samuel 10:6, 10:10, 11:6, and 16:13-14; II Samuel 19:20 and 23; Isaiah 11:2 and 63:14; Ezekiel 2:2, 3:12, 14, and 24, 8:3, 11:1 and 24, and 43:5; Haggai 2:5; Psalm 143:10; Job 33:4; Nehemiah 9:20; I Chronicles 12:18; II Chronicles 15:1, 20:14, and 24:20. The masculine examples are the following: Genesis 6:3; II Samuel 23:2; I Kings 18:12; II Kings 2:16; Isaiah 32:15 and 34:16; and Micah 2:7.

The major interpretive question is whether the spirit or Spirit is exclusively an attribute of God, that is, the breath, wind, or empowering presence of God, or whether the Hebrew word in question also refers to the person of God himself, either the one God or an incipient Old Testament reference to the third person of the Trinity. If *ruach* is an attribute of God, like his power, glory, and wisdom, then it is not a person, and grammatical gender does not imply personal gender, according to the categories and rules identified in Section VI, C. However, if "Spirit" is a personal designator for God or for the Holy Spirit and not merely an attribute (or the personification of an attribute), then according to linguistic rules, grammatical gender does imply personal gender. In that case the Spirit of God in the Old Testament is strangely both feminine and masculine, usually a "she," but sometimes a "he." What complicates matters even further is the fact that the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament made by Jewish scholars during the last centuries B.C.) regularly translates *ruach* with the Greek word *pneuma*, which is grammatically neuter, and this usage is continued in the New Testament.

Since *ruach* in the Old Testament is both masculine and feminine and perhaps does not clearly refer to a divine person at all, it is best not to draw from it any firm conclusions concerning the gender of God. We therefore classify this evidence as uncertain.

b. Deuteronomy 32:10b-11: "He [the Lord] shielded him and cared for him; he guarded him as the apple of his eye, like an eagle that stirs up its nest and hovers over its young, that spreads its wings to catch them and carries them on its pinions."

Some promoters of inclusive language claim that the eagle in this simile is a mother and even criticize translations which fail to make that explicit. However, the Hebrew word for *eagle (neser)* is masculine, and so are all the verb forms and pronominal endings in these verses. Since this word stands for eagles of both sexes, it could be a mother. But since both eagle parents care for the young, it may also be the father. The gender of the eagle is unclear here and has no bearing on the meaning of the simile. This cannot be claimed as a clear example of feminine imagery for God.

This same point must therefore be made with respect to Exodus 19:4 and any other passages where God is likened to an eagle caring for its young. The grammatical gender is entirely masculine, and there is nothing in the context to suggest that the eagle is female.

c. Ruth 2:12b: "May you be richly rewarded by the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge."

In this metaphor God is said to have wings. Some advocates of a gender-inclusive view of God believe that this is a feminine metaphor because protective wings suggest nesting birds, and nesting birds are female. A related claim is that hovering wings are associated with the "brooding" of the (feminine) Spirit of God over creation in Genesis 1:2. While it is true that some biblical examples of protective wings and nesting are definitely feminine (Jesus as a mother hen in Matt. 23), it is not true that all are. The eagle, discussed above, proves that. Furthermore, birds are not the only beings associated with wings in the Bible. Angels are also presented as winged (cf. Isa. 6) and, incidentally, as masculine in gender and male when given human form. Thus the imagery of wings might be interpreted as maternal by a series of possible associations. But it is simply unwarranted to claim that this reference to wings is definitely or probably feminine imagery for God. Moreover, the gender of the wing-bearer makes no difference to the textual meaning of this simile. The same point holds for Psalm 91:4 and all other wing imagery for God in the Bible unless the gender of the winged being is explicitly identified.

d. Psalm 22:9-10: "Yet you brought me out of the womb; you made me trust in you even at my mother's breast. From birth I was cast upon you; from my mother's womb you have been my God."

This passage in the psalm quoted by Jesus on the cross is often identified as a midwife metaphor for God, since God is presented as assisting the psalmist's birth. (God is not being compared to the mother here.) While this may be a midwife metaphor, there are two major problems with that interpretation. First, all the pronouns and verb forms are masculine, which suggests that whoever is metaphorically attending the birth is not female. While midwives customarily attended birth, male figures also did so upon occasion (Joseph at the birth of Jesus). So if this is a metaphor of a human being assisting a birth, it may be the father and not a midwife at all. There is nothing explicitly feminine in the passage. If a midwife is in the picture, however, we have another case of cross-gender

imagery. The second, more basic issue is whether there is any metaphor or figure of speech whatsoever in this passage. Scripture often speaks without imagery about God helping his people. *God shepherds his people* is metaphorical. *God cares for his people* seems more literal (though analogical, as explained above). This passage in Psalm 22 may simply be stating, without figurative language, that God brought the psalmist from the womb and gave him faith. It is possible that this passage uses a midwife metaphor for God but just as possible that it does not.

e. Isaiah 46:3b-4a: "Listen to me, O house of Jacob, all you who remain of the house of Israel, you whom I have upheld since you were conceived, and have carried since your birth. Even to your old age and grey hairs I am he, I am he who will sustain you."

This text is sometimes claimed as a maternal image, since it speaks of conception and birth. That is surely possible, since there is other maternal imagery in Isaiah. In fact John Calvin interprets the text that way (cf. III, D). However, the whole picture moves from birth to old age, from cradle to grave, and does not suggest a relationship with one's mother. Moreover, it is not clear that the text contains a figure of speech. As with Psalm 22, it might be that God is simply asserting his lifelong faithfulness without using imagery. Finally, if there is maternal language here, we have a striking example of cross-gender imagery, for in addition to the usual grammatically masculine gender of the language in the context, God asserts, "I am he" (masculine pronoun *hu*). Possibly this text is a maternal image for Yahweh, but nothing stronger than that.

f. Isaiah 66:7-9: " 'Before she [Zion] goes into labor, she gives birth; before the pains come upon her, she delivers a son. Who has ever seen such things? Can a country be born in a day or a nation be brought forth in a moment? Yet no sooner is Zion in labor than she gives birth to her children. Do I bring to the moment of birth and not give delivery?' says the Lord. 'Do I close up the womb when I bring to delivery?' says your God."

This passage may be indirectly and metaphorically representing God as a midwife attending a birth. If so, we have a case of cross-gender imagery, for "Lord," "God," and all the relevant verb forms are masculine. However, as with Psalm 22 and Isaiah 46, God's role in the birth of his people might be spoken of straightforwardly, that is, nonfiguratively, and the only figure of speech here may be the depiction of Jerusalem as a mother giving birth. A midwife image would fail to illustrate the main point, since midwives do not have the power to cause delivery or close the womb, as the Lord has. It is uncertain whether this passage presents a midwife metaphor for God.

g. Matthew 13:33 (cf. Luke 13:20-21): "The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into a large amount of flour until it worked all through the dough."

This parable is a simile that explicitly compares the kingdom to yeast. No interpretation of the woman is given. If we ask by implication whom she represents, the answer is unclear. It may be God. But it could also be the angels or the Son of Man (Jesus), since they are explicitly identified as agents in interpretations of parallel parables in this chapter, whereas God

is the one who sends the agents. Although we cannot be sure, the woman in this parable is probably not a feminine image for God.

h. John 1:13: "... children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God."

Since spiritual rebirth is here spoken of in terms of natural birth, this expression could be a maternal metaphor for God. However, the Greek word for *born* is a form of *gennao*, which means "begetting" either as fathering or mothering. Since the husband's will is mentioned and there is nothing explicitly feminine in the passage, there is more in favor of a fathering metaphor if gender is in view at all. But given the fact that this verse aims to contrast spiritual rebirth by God and natural human birth, not to stress their similarity, human gender roles in procreation are not the focus. Thus while there are possible maternal metaphorical connotations in the background, this text is unlikely as a case of feminine imagery for God.

i. John 3:4-5: "'How can a man be born when he is old?' Nicodemus asked. 'Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born!' Jesus answered, 'I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit.'"

This passage has a strong initial claim to presenting a maternal metaphor for God's Spirit, since a human mother's womb is explicitly mentioned. Being born of the Spirit can be seen as alluding directly to being born from one's mother. And there is the Old Testament background of the Spirit as feminine. If this is a maternal metaphor, it is an example of cross-gender imagery, for *God* is masculine and *Spirit* is neuter, not feminine. However, although the term for *birth* or *begetting* is retained (from *gennao*), the point, as in John 1, is to contrast regeneration by the Spirit with human procreation as such. It is not natural. Neither mothers' wombs nor fathers are involved. Water and the Spirit are. Nevertheless, although this example is debatable, it is possible and plausible as a maternal birth metaphor for regeneration by the Holy Spirit.

j. I John 4:7b: "Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God." I John 5:1, 4, and 18 also use the phrase "born of God."

While the English term *born* suggests birth, which is the effort of mothers, the Greek is a form of *gennao*, which is used of both the male and female roles in procreation (cf. John 1 and 3 above). There is nothing in the context of these verses in I John to suggest that a distinctly male or female role is envisioned. The generic term *begotten* is wholly adequate. So probably this is not a case of distinctly maternal imagery for God. Perhaps both paternal and maternal metaphors are implied. If there is maternal imagery here, it is clearly cross-gender because *God* is masculine.

3. Incorrectly identified cases

a. Genesis 17:1 and throughout the Old Testament: Shaddai, El Shaddai

This divine name, usually translated as "God Almighty," is understood by some to be a feminine name for God. They argue that *Shaddai* derives from *sad*, which means "female breast." So *Shaddai* really means "Breasted One" and *El Shaddai* means "Breasted God." This interpretation is highly problematic, for several reasons.

First, it is doubtful that *Shaddai* is derived from the Hebrew word for breast. Many scholars believe that it comes from *shad*, "mountain," since El was God of the mountains in the ancient Near East. Others hold that it comes from *shadad*, "to be very strong" or "to destroy," signifying God's almighty power or judgment. Its origin is uncertain, and the translation "breast" is the least likely candidate, given the meaning of this name of God in the Old Testament.

But, second, even if the words were originally connected—perhaps "mountain" and "breast" came from a common root which suggested "rounded protuberance," a connotation of both words—even then there is no evidence that it still had this meaning when the Old Testament was written. The linguistic connection to breast, if there ever was one, would predate the Old Testament by more than a thousand years. No scholar claims that *El Shaddai* was understood as "Breasted God" by the writers and readers of the Old Testament. It is a fallacy (the etymological fallacy) to define the meaning of a word solely on the basis of its historical origin and not its actual use in language. *El Shaddai* in the Old Testament is never used to suggest anything maternal about God, even when connected with the blessing of female fertility (cf. Gen. 49:25-26, where there is wordplay between "breast" and "mountain"). Even when the name *Shaddai* occurs without *El*, it is always grammatically masculine.

Third, there are serious hermeneutical problems in this understanding of *El Shaddai*, which we mention here to illustrate the flaws in some of the biblical scholarship offered in support of gender-inclusive language for God. It takes a lot of explaining to make the case that *El Shaddai* implicitly means "Breasted God" in the Old Testament in spite of all the evidence on the other side. One significant hypothesis goes like this: The priestly redactors (editors and revisers of parts of the Old Testament), attempting to promote Yahweh as the only true God among the Israelites, assimilated Asherah, the mother goddess whom some Israelites worshiped, into Shaddai, who is assumed to be the ancient mother goddess, and then assimilated Shaddai into El, the ancient father god, who was in turn identified as Yahweh. As a result of this theological creativity on the part of the priestly editors of the Old Testament, Yahweh, like the God of the later Gnostics, came to be thought of as both male and female (see David Biale, "The God with Breasts: El Shaddai in the Bible," *History of Religions*, Feb. 1982, pp. 240-56). In addition to being based entirely on speculation, this conclusion contradicts the explicit Old Testament polemic against accommodating false deities. And the history-of-religions approach used to generate this hypothesis is incompatible with the Reformed view of Scripture and Reformed hermeneutics.

For all these reasons it is mistaken to claim that El Shaddai is a feminine title or name for God.

b. Hosea 11:1-4: "When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son. . . . It was I who taught Ephraim to walk, taking them by the arms. . . . I led them. . . . I lifted the yoke from their neck and bent down to feed them."

This text is claimed to contain maternal imagery for God because God is presented in the role of a caregiver to very small children, a role, it is

argued, that was virtually always a mother's in Israel. Mothers were the ones who taught children to walk and bent down to feed them. But this interpretation is almost surely mistaken, for several reasons.

First, it is based on gender-role stereotyping. It is not the case in Israel or in Scripture that only mothers care for children. Jesus asks, "Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake?" (Luke 11:12). Fathers cared for children too, even if child care was primarily mothers' work. So the imagery is not necessarily maternal.

Second, the central imagery throughout Hosea is of God as husband and father. Hosea marries a prostitute and fathers children to illustrate prophetically God's relationship with his people. In the absence of anything explicit in the text, it seems wholly arbitrary to suggest that the parenting imagery of Hosea 11:1-4 is maternal, given the central paternal theme of the book.

Third, other texts confirm this imagery as fatherly. "Out of Egypt I called my son" refers back to Exodus 4:22-23, where God calls the Israelites his firstborn son and gives Pharaoh an ultimatum: let my son go or I will kill your son. Although God does not explicitly call himself Israel's father here, it is quite clear that the royal father-son relation is invoked: Yahweh is the royal father of his son just as Pharaoh is the royal father of his son. In addition, Jeremiah 31:9 renders explicit what is implicit in Hosea 11:3: "I am a father to Israel and Ephraim is my first-born." This parallel text adds substantial weight to the claim that in Hosea 11 God is the father of Israel and Ephraim. There is no evidence at all that the imagery is distinctly maternal.

For these reasons it is almost impossible to claim feminine imagery for God in Hosea 11.

c. Acts 17:28: " 'For in him we live and move and have our being.' As some of your own poets have said, 'We are his offspring.'"

These sentences from Paul's sermon to the philosophers on the Areopagus are interpreted as maternal imagery for God. Being in and moving in God suggest the image of a baby in its mother's womb. And the second quotation does explicitly speak of "offspring," that is, being the child of a parent. So it is argued that God is our metaphorical mother here.

If this interpretation is correct, it is another example of cross-gender imagery, since the words "him" and "his" clearly identify God as masculine. However, it is most unlikely that the imagery here is feminine. We need to bear in mind that Paul is quoting from two passages in pagan literature, both of which in their original context explicitly refer to the patriarchal Greek god, Zeus. It is much more likely that the image of humans moving and being "in" God refers to divine omnipresence and that the term "offspring" suggests God as father, not mother.

4. Conclusions about feminine language for God in Scripture

a. There are about fifteen clear cases of feminine language for God in the Bible and another dozen that are possible but unclear or doubtful. More feminine references are found in the Old Testament than in the New.

b. There are no feminine personal designators or forms of address for God in Scripture. No feminine names, titles, kinship terms, epithets, nouns, pronouns, or any other elements of language that attribute gender to persons are ever used in a way that attributes personal gender to God. One possible but unclear exception might be "Spirit of God" in the Old Testament.

c. All feminine language for God in Scripture is figurative—similes, metaphors, personifications. In fact almost all of it is cross-gender imagery, where feminine characteristics are figuratively attributed to a masculine person. And most of this imagery is implicit, not explicit. That is, the figure of speech implies the feminine comparison with God but does not explicitly state it. Nowhere is God ever linguistically identified as a feminine person, even metaphorically (as in "God is a mother"). One possible but unclear exception might be "Spirit of God" in the Old Testament.

C. *Masculine language for God in Scripture*

1. Grammatical and personal gender

As indicated in Section VI, in Hebrew and Greek, grammatical gender indicates personal gender when language is about persons. In Hebrew there are two grammatical genders, masculine and feminine, and most nouns, pronouns, adjectives, and inflected verb forms are either masculine or feminine. All grammatical forms in language personally designating God (in distinction from "Spirit") are masculine, overwhelmingly implying the personal masculinity of God. (Whether masculinity is really an attribute of God is considered in Section VIII, C.) In fact, there are many times more linguistic indicators of God's masculinity in the Hebrew Bible than in English translations, which are sometimes charged with being too arbitrarily masculine. For example, the English sentence "God is good and loves God's people" can be read without suggesting God's gender (provided "God" is seen as genderless and not the counterpart of "Goddess"). But in Hebrew, "God," "is," "good," "loves," and "God's" are all masculine. The use of masculine pronouns for God in English translations is faithful to the sense of the original languages, not a sexist distortion.

Greek has three genders: masculine, feminine, and neuter. Nouns, adjectives, articles, and pronouns are gender marked. In the New Testament the grammatical forms for God are always masculine (except for "Spirit," which is neuter, as stated below). According to the linguistic principles identified in Section VI, C, the Greek of the New Testament strongly and consistently implies the masculine personal gender of God, much more strongly than English translations do.

2. Imagery

Some masculine references to God, like the feminine ones, are imagery or figures of speech. We have seen examples earlier that parallel feminine imagery. Isaiah 45:10 compares God to a father and a mother. And in Deuteronomy 32:18 God is "the Rock" who fathers Israel—a double, mixed metaphor. God is a (masculine) nurse in Numbers 11:12. Job 38:28 contains an implied metaphor of God fathering the rain. In Isaiah 42:13 God uses a simile to liken himself to a mighty man and a warrior. He is a gardener in

John 15:1. These and dozens of other biblical images for God are masculine. Some terms such as *father* and *shepherd*, which are also titles of God in Scripture, are sometimes used figuratively (the "shepherd" of Ps. 23). Masculine figurative language, like feminine figurative language, does not implicitly attribute personal gender when applied to God.

3. Nouns that are personal designators

But masculine terms, even those that are sometimes used figuratively, are also used in Scripture in a way that feminine terms never are—as common nouns directly designating the person of God. Scripture repeatedly asserts that God is king, father, creator, redeemer, savior, judge, and many other personal designators that are masculine common nouns. There are also a number of epithets for God that are perhaps not used frequently enough to be titles but that use masculine designators to describe God: *the mighty one, the God who sees (el ro'i,* Gen. 16:13), *the holy one of Israel, the keeper of Israel, the ancient of days*. Juxtaposed with the masculine names and titles for God, these nouns and epithets strongly and consistently present God as a masculine person in the biblical text. (Again we note that VIII, C discusses whether masculinity is an attribute of God.) No feminine term is ever used this way in Scripture. That is, no designator (or even any direct metaphor) ever asserts that God *is* mother, queen, nurse, midwife, or mistress of servants.

4. Titles

When personal designators are used regularly or officially as terms of identification and address, they function as titles. When the psalmist writes "O Lord Almighty, my King and my God" (Ps. 84:3b) or "Hear us, O Shepherd of Israel" (Ps. 80:1a), "King" and "Shepherd" function as divine titles. They are terms identifying specific aspects of God's relation to his people that have become standard designators for God and thus terms of address. In the Old Testament the kinship term *father* begins to develop toward being a term of address (Jer. 3:19) and becomes central in the New Testament (see below). The New Testament continues to use many Old Testament titles. Perhaps the best known example (besides "father," cf. below) is "King of kings and Lord of lords" in the Book of Revelation and celebrated in Handel's *Messiah*. There are no feminine titles for God in Scripture.

Lord is a term that requires some explanation. In English translations of the Old Testament, "Lord" typically translates both *Yahweh* and *Adonai*. (Some translations, e.g., RSV and NIV, distinguish between *Yahweh* as "LORD" and *Adonai* as "Lord.") But *Yahweh* is not a title; it is a proper name (see next section). *Adonai* is a title formed from the masculine word *adon*, "lord" or "master" and the suffix for "my." The English word *Lord* translates both *Yahweh* and *Adonai* because this translation conforms to the New Testament. And the New Testament follows the Septuagint, which renders both *Yahweh* and *Adonai* as *Kurios*. The translators of the Septuagint probably wanted to avoid (mis)using the special name *Yahweh*. Centuries later this tradition developed the term *Jehovah*, which combines the consonants of *Yahweh* with the vowels of *Adonai* to coin a new name, and incorporated it into the Hebrew (Masoretic) text of the Old Testament. In any case, the New Testament follows the Septuagint. It never uses the name *Yahweh* but frequently calls God and Jesus *Kurios*, a term which retains the connotations of both *Yahweh* and *Adonai*.

The Septuagint and the New Testament preserve the grammatical and personal masculinity of *Lord*.

5. Names

According to linguistic categories, terms such as *El* and *Yahweh* are not merely titles for God; they are names. They are sometimes combined with titles and epithets, as in *Yahweh Elohe Sebaoth* (Lord God of Hosts).

El is the proper name of the high God in the ancient Near East of Abraham. Clearly a masculine figure grammatically and personally, he was known to Melchizedek (Gen. 14:18-20) and to the ancestors of the Israelites before revealing himself as Yahweh (Ex. 3:6, 6:3). *El* is also combined with epithets to form complex names. *El Elyon* (God Most High) and *El Shaddai* (God Almighty) are examples. All such complex names are masculine.

El is related to *elohim*, a masculine plural term for God that has several meanings. It is sometimes used generically to refer to "the gods" or in the singular to "a god." When used of the true God, it can be a term of designation that is more like a title than a proper name. For example, *Yahweh elohenu* means "Yahweh our God." "God" (*elohim*) here states who or what sort of being Yahweh is but may not be a proper name (compare "Yahweh our King/Judge"). But when it simply stands for the true God, it is a proper name, *Elohim*, connoting the transcendent God of creation and functioning grammatically as masculine singular.

The Septuagint, followed in this pattern by the New Testament, preserves the personal masculinity of *El* and *Elohim*, using the grammatically masculine form *theos* (as opposed to feminine or neuter forms of this word) to translate it hundreds of times. Retention of the masculine is also characteristic of its complex forms. "Lord God Almighty" (Rev. 4:8) is *kurios ho theos ho pantokrator*. "Of the Most High God" (Heb. 7:1 quoting the Septuagint Genesis about Melchizedek) is *tou theou tou hupsistou*.

There is no doubt that the original biblical words translated as "God" often function as names for God and are explicit designators of personal masculinity. (Recall that gender as an attribute of God has not yet been discussed.)

Yahweh has a special status as a divine name in the Old Testament. It was revealed to Moses at the burning bush (Ex. 3), where the God who would deliver his people, Israel, from Egypt identified himself as the God of their ancestors, who had been previously known by the names *Elohim* or *El Shaddai* (cf. Ex. 6:3). The Lord gave his name as "I am that I am" or "I will be as I will be" (*ehyeh-asher-ehyeh*), emphasizing the dependability of his character as their covenant partner. While its origin is not wholly clear, most scholars believe that this name is the first-person singular of an archaic form of the verb *hayah*, "to be." The first-person form does not have grammatical gender. But there is almost complete scholarly consensus that *Yahweh* is the third-person masculine singular form of the same verb as "I Am,"—that is, "He Is." Thus *Yahweh*, the specially revealed name of God in the Old Testament, is a masculine term implying personal, not just grammatical, gender. (This fact directly contradicts the thesis of Elizabeth Johnson, whose translation of *Yahweh* is stated in the title of her book *She Who Is*.) It is not surprising, then, that the thousands of occurrences of *Yahweh* in the Old Testament without exception take masculine grammatical forms—verbs, adjectives, pronouns.

The same is true of the complex forms of the name, such as *Yahweh Sebaoth* (Lord of Hosts).

In sum, the proper names of God in the original languages of Scripture are all exclusively masculine in grammatical gender. And all the grammatical forms that agree with them are masculine as well. There are no feminine names for God in Scripture. This pattern leaves the overwhelming impression that, on the level of the biblical text, God is presented as a masculine person.

6. Note: the organic unity of biblical language for God

Some defenders of inclusive language for God treat the various ways Scripture speaks of God as relatively discrete and isolated from each other. They seem to assume that the different authors of Scripture thought about God in unique and different ways so that the Bible as a whole presents us with a hodgepodge of terms and images for God. Some texts present God as king, others as father, others as mother, others as rock, eagle, or fire. There is no inherent order or structure among them, and thus they do not modify each other's meaning or have priority one over another. The cumulative picture is accidental, something the reader of the Bible constructs. All these different "images" are equal and parallel glimpses at the unnameable God. The eventual conclusion of this piecemeal approach is that the masculine terms are no more important or "privileged" than the feminine or neuter ones.

But many biblical scholars urge that there is a common (though dynamic) understanding of God presented by the human authors of Scripture. There is a structural relationship of meaning among the various terms and images for God, a whole which ought to be considered in interpreting each of the individual parts. This whole grows and unfolds as we move through the Old Testament and from the Old to the New Testament. This "organic" or canonical approach to the interpretation of specific presentations of God surely ought to be embraced by those who confess that the Holy Spirit, not just the human authors, has produced the Holy Scriptures. "Let Scripture interpret Scripture," urged the Reformers.

If we take the organic approach, it is easy to see that the Old Testament gives a unified, ordered presentation of God. The root metaphor or basic defining idea is that God is the great King, the Sovereign Lord who creates the heavens and the earth. It is as the great King that he is creator, covenant-maker, shepherd, judge, warrior, defender, redeemer, and savior of his people, their shield and fortress. These terms are all functions and titles given to great human kings in the ancient Near East, a fact of relevance in historical exegesis (cf. "grammatical-historical exegesis"). Further, it is as the great King that God is also father of his people, as Pharaoh is of his people. Significantly, however, the Lord does not have a queen or female consort, unlike other ancient Near Eastern gods and their earthly vassal-kings, for he is the husband of his people. They are the ones to whom he is "married" in a relationship of covenant faithfulness. The point is that all the terms and titles of human functions and relationships which Scripture applies to God form a coherent unity grounded in the basic theme of God as King of creation. The nonhuman imagery—shield, fortress, rock, consuming fire—illuminates other aspects of this single, complex biblical picture of God.

It is noteworthy that even the feminine imagery for God that we find in the Old Testament fits the rhetoric of kingship in the ancient Near East. For example, we find feminine (and masculine) imagery in two royal inscriptions from northern Syria that are from the same time as the Old Testament. One is by Azitawadda, king of the Danunites, who writes, "Baal made me a father and a mother to the Danunites." The other is by king Kilamuwa of Sam'al, who writes, "To some I was a father. To some I was a mother. . . . They were disposed toward me as an orphan is to his mother" (J.B. Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, 3rd ed., 653b, 654b). It is probably this tradition of cross-gender imagery applied to kings that allows Isaiah to use the following striking imagery: "You shall suck the milk of nations; you shall suck the breasts of kings" (60:16, NRSV). This rhetorical convention also makes possible feminine imagery for God, the great King.

All the various ways in which the Old Testament speaks of God elaborate a masculine status, the great King, as the basic presentation of God in the Old Testament. What we must now see is that the New Testament does not abandon this basic idea but picks up one of the secondary aspects of God's kingship in the Old Testament—his fatherhood—and gives it special prominence.

7. Father

a. Old Testament

Father is an infrequent term for God in the Old Testament, occurring only about twenty times. A few of those instances are figurative, as indicated above (see 2. "Imagery"). Another example is Psalm 103:13: "As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord. . . . " And a couple of instances are implicit, such as Exodus 4:22-23 and Hosea 11:1-4. However, most cases use the term *father* as a generic predicate noun, that is, designating that God is a father, but do not treat it as a name, title, or term of address. Some explicitly link God as father with God as King; others do not.

A number of texts simply present God as father. In many of them the association of fatherhood with the great King is assumed (where God is *Yahweh*) but not stated. Deuteronomy 32:6 (the Song of Moses) asks, " . . . is God not your father, your creator . . . ?" Psalm 68:5 calls God "a father to the fatherless." Isaiah 63:16 is emphatic: "But you are our father . . . you, O Lord are our father." And again in Isaiah 64:8: "Yet, O Lord, you are our father. . . . " Jeremiah 31:9 reads, "I am a father to Israel and Ephraim is my first-born." Malachi 1:6 asks, "If I am your father, where is the honor due me?" And Malachi 2:10—"Have we not all one Father? Did not one God create us?" Jeremiah 3:19 begins to move beyond merely asserting that God is father and uses the term as a form of address: "I thought you would call me 'my father'. . . . " In all these texts God is identified as the father of his people. He is nowhere identified as their mother.

Other texts explicitly link God as father with the basic theme of God as King. This connection is revealed in the Messianic Covenant, which the Lord made with King David (II Sam. 7; I Chron. 17). In promising David that one of his descendants would always reign on his throne over the kingdom which God would establish forever, the Lord says, "I will be his father, and he will be my son" (II Sam. 7:14a). Here God is the father-King,

and his chosen anointed one (the Messiah), the son of David, is God's son. This messianic relationship not only parallels ancient Near Eastern human dynasties, where the great king is father of his son, the prince and heir; it also challenges their religions. The Pharaohs and Nebuchadnezzar are considered to be sons of their gods as well. But only Yahweh is God and King, and, therefore, only the messianic son of Yahweh has authority over God's earthly kingdom. The Messianic Covenant is a central theological-historical theme in the Old Testament after the reign of David, even though the kingdom is divided, eventually conquered, depopulated, and repopulated without a king. Among the other texts that explicitly identify the messianic father-son relationship are the following. In Psalm 2, a royal psalm, the Lord says to the king, " . . . you are my son; this day have I begotten [fathered] you" (6-7). Psalm 89:5 reads, "he [the Messiah] will call out to me, 'you are my father.'" Here "father" is becoming a term of address. And in a famous messianic passage, celebrated in Handel's *Messiah*, we find that the promised King will be a father to his people (as God is to him): "he shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. . . . He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom . . . forever" (Isa. 9:6-7).

Although the references to God as father in the Old Testament are not numerous, they acquire a central theological significance in connection with God's promise of a messianic ruler of his kingdom.

b. The New Testament

It is precisely because the messianic promise of God is fulfilled in Jesus Christ that the term *Father* becomes so prominent and important in the New Testament. It not only is used very frequently—about 250 times, occurring in every book except III John; it also joins *Lord* and *God* as a primary designator of God. In fact, *Father* becomes more prominent than *King* in the New Testament presentation of God, a reversal of the Old Testament emphasis. Limitations of space allow only for a survey of the linguistic and doctrinal significance of *Father* in the New Testament, not an extensive analysis.

1) Linguistic status

Occasionally father language is figurative, as when God is represented by the father in the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15). And there are instances where *father* is a common noun that is a personal designator, as in II Corinthians 6:18 and Hebrews 1:5, where the language of the Messianic Covenant of II Samuel 7 is invoked.

But in the vast majority of cases, *Father* is a standard kinship title that is an identifier of or synonym for *God*. Further, it is sometimes associated with the name of God, is often used as a term of address for God, and is possibly even a name for God in some contexts. Consider the following texts.

Father is a kinship title specifying God's relationship to us in I Corinthians 8:6, "There is one God, the Father . . . ," and Colossians 1:2b-3a, "Grace and peace to you from God our Father. We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. . . . " There are scores and scores of instances of this use of *Father* as a title throughout the various New Testament books.

Father is also used as a virtual equivalent for *God*, standing in its place. In many texts God is simply identified by this kinship title, *the Father*. This use is especially prevalent in the Gospel of John but also in many other books. In John 14:8 the disciples ask Jesus, "Show us the Father." "Father" simply stands for "God" without "God" even being mentioned. Jesus also uses the kinship term *Father* for *God* with a possessive pronoun. In Luke 2:42 Jesus says that he must be about his Father's business. In John 20:17 he tells Mary, "I must ascend to my Father and your Father." In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus repeatedly speaks to the people about God as "your Father."

As a kinship title virtually equivalent to *God*, *Father* is a term Jesus regularly, if not exclusively, uses to address God. This is how he prays during his ministry (cf. Matt. 11:25; Luke10:2) and especially toward its end—several different ways in the High Priestly Prayer (John 17), in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matt. 26:42; Mark 14:36 [*"Abba*, Father"]; Luke 22:42), and from the cross (Luke 23:34, 46). It is also how he taught his disciples to pray in the Lord's Prayer: "Our Father, who is in heaven." Especially in this very personal form of address, parallel to a child's calling a human father "Dad," *Father* seems to function as a name for God. This use will be discussed in the following subsections.

In sum, *Father* is the linguistically central term for God in the New Testament. Although there are instances where it is used as a common noun of personal designation, in the vast majority of cases *Father* is a kinship title and form of address virtually equivalent to *God*. As a standard title, it is in the same category as *Lord*, which translates the divine name *Yahweh*. In some cases *Father* itself may even function as a name of God.

2) Doctrinal significance

Father is also doctrinally central and integral to the New Testament. The transition from the secondary status of *father* in the Old Testament to its primacy in the New Testament hinges on Jesus the Messiah, the Christ, the Anointed One. Jesus is the fulfillment of God's promise to David that his offspring would be King (Luke 1:32-33). That makes Jesus the messianic Son of God and makes God his everlasting Father (cf. Heb. 1:5). This divine royal sonship is made explicit not only about Jesus' birth but also at his baptism (Matt. 3:17), transfiguration (Matt. 16:5), crucifixion (Matt. 26:63), resurrection (Acts 2:32-33), and exaltation (Phil. 2:9-11). Jesus is King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev. 19:11). The messianic Father-Son relationship is basic to and largely definitive of the person and work of Jesus Christ in the New Testament. The messianic relationship is essential to the gospel of salvation. It is not just a historically relative accident of the cultural environment of the New Testament that can be modified or deleted. It is the fundamental framework in terms of which other aspects of God's fatherhood are disclosed in the progressive revelation of redemptive history. Consider the following central teachings of the New Testament gospel.

Because God is the Father of Jesus Christ and we are unified with and ingrafted into him, we too are God's children, and he is our Father. In John 20:17 Jesus plainly says that his Father is our Father. In the Lord's Prayer he teaches us to pray to our Father. Romans 8:15-16 tells us

that we are God's children and he is our *abba*. God is our Father because we are his adopted children through the mediation of Jesus Christ (Gal. 4:4-7). Now we too can call God "Abba, Father" (v. 6). This is the gospel.

A significant corollary of the Father-children relationship between God and his people is the New Testament's emphasis on God's love, care, tenderness, faithfulness, and nurture. This is also the focus of the Old Testament instances of *father*. The divine Father-human child bond, while remaining a relationship of authority and appropriate respect, is warm, personally intimate, and wholly good for the child. (The Aramaic term *abba* conveys both intimacy and respect.) The wrath and judgment of God are not typically connected with his fatherhood. When he does discipline, he does so for our good (cf. Heb. 12:7-11). It is important to point this out since some feminists charge that the biblical presentation of God as Father is oppressive, abusive, and unhealthy and therefore best condemned, altered, or avoided.

Jesus is the only Mediator between us and the Father. "No one comes to the Father except through me," warns Jesus (John 14:6b). In Matthew 11:27 he states that "no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him." And John 1:18 asserts about Jesus, "No one has seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made him known."

Conversely, receiving the Son means receiving the Father. It is not possible to be committed to Jesus Christ and aloof from the Father. Jesus said, "When a man believes in me, he does not believe in me only, but in the one who sent me. . . . the Father who sent me commanded me what to say and how to say it" (John 12:44, 49). "If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well," admonishes Jesus (John 14:7). In fact, it is spiritually dangerous to follow what some contemporary feminist theologians advocate, a version of Christianity (!) which avoids God as Father and Son. John warns, "This is the anti-Christ, he who denies the Father and the Son" (I John 2:22b). The same Gnosticism which called for John's warning has reemerged in some current inclusivist theology. Is affirming the Father and Son just an archaic linguistic convention, or is it a matter of salvation?

Thus far we have identified basic gospel teachings crucially tied to the Father-Son relationship of the Messianic Covenant fulfilled in Jesus Christ. The messianic relationship is the basis on which other aspects of the New Testament revelation of God as Father are expressed.

Chief among them is disclosure of the Trinity. Whereas the messianic promise relates God as Father to Jesus Christ as a historical earthly person, the New Testament also teaches that the one who came as Messiah is the Word who was God, through whom all things were created (John 1:1-3; Col. 1:13-17; Heb. 1:1-5). This one is the Son, who fellowshipped with the Father before his incarnation. The Trinity is ontological, that is, of God's very nature. It is how God is in himself and not just how he relates to the world in creation and redemption. In the words of Jesus' own prayer, "And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began" (John

17:5). Jesus Christ is not merely some human son of God, as David was, but God himself taking on our fallen human nature. So the New Testament emphasizes that Jesus Christ (*Christ* is Messiah, that is "Anointed One") is *Lord, kurios,* the term for *Yahweh* and *Adonai* of the Old Testament. Philippians 2:5-11 teaches that Christ Jesus was in very nature God; that, because he emptied himself, God exalted him; and that "every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father." Peter's sermon in Acts 2:29-36 relates Jesus as Messiah to the Father and the Holy Spirit. The doctrine of the Trinity is present in the first sermon ever preached by the Christian church. Peter's proclamation follows the commission of Jesus himself, given before his ascension, to "make disciples of all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 28:19). These and many other texts are the basis for the church's historic confession and theological explanation of the doctrine of the Trinity—one God in three persons. Thus *Father* is the title or name—the exclusive designator—of the first person of the Trinity. The Trinity is the fullest extent of the way the one true God reveals himself in Scripture. It is normative for the church's language and doctrine of God. It can be more fully understood as the Spirit leads the church in history but not set aside or transcended.

Although the Father is revealed as first person of the Trinity, the New Testament also uses *Father* as equivalent to *God* in the Old Testament sense. (This point was made above about the linguistic status of *Father*.) Paul does so in I Corinthians 8:6: "For us there is one God, the Father, from whom all things come. . . . " Here he echoes the great confession of Deuteronomy 6:4: "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one." That Lord God is Father.

I Corinthians 8:6 not only identifies God as Father but also as creator of all things. Similarly, Ephesians 4:4 invokes "one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all." Paul again links the Father and creation in Ephesians 3:14, where he confesses, "I bow before the Father, from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name." Notice also that the human family gets its name from the Father; the Father does not get his name by extension from the human family. Paul would not endorse modern theologies that view language for God as mere human projection. The New Testament, following the Old, understands the fatherhood of God in creation as well as in the redemption of his people.

In sum, the term *Father* is doctrinally crucial and central in the New Testament. While it continues to refer to God as revealed in the Old Testament, *Father* becomes prominent in the New, for it is directly and essentially tied to God's work of salvation in Jesus Christ. It is integral to what is "new" about the New Testament, for the New Testament continues to speak of *God* and *Lord* as the Old Testament did. The status of *Father* is what changes. It does so because Jesus Christ as Messiah and as the Word made flesh—Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, as true human and true God—is the one who reveals and fulfills everything implicit and promised in the Old Testament. All of these characteristics, offices, and functions of Jesus are defined in relation to

God as Father. Proclamation of God as Father is therefore integral to the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ. *Father* joins *Lord* and *God* as the three basic New Testament terms for God.

3) Title or name?

Scholars who discuss inclusive language for God often debate whether *Father* is only a title or actually a name for God in the New Testament. The assumption of many seems to be that if it is *only* a title, it is not as important or unchangeable as a name. That assumption is itself problematic. But the title/name issue is significant enough to deserve attention.

The vast majority of theologians throughout history and in the Reformed tradition have held that *Father* is not just a title but a proper name of God, in particular, of the first person of the Trinity. This is the view of Augustine, Aquinas, Calvin, Herman Bavinck, Louis Berkhof, and Cornelius Plantinga, Jr., as well as most contemporary mainstream theologians. According to Wolfhart Pannenberg, a leading contemporary theologian, "On the lips of Jesus, 'Father' became a proper name for God" (*Systematic Theology* I:262).

There are sound linguistic and philosophical reasons for this position. As we saw in Section VI, words that ordinarily are titles can become proper names when they do not focus on the person's office or relationship but on identifying the person himself or herself. *King* is categorized as a title, but it has also become a surname. *Junior* is a kinship term that is used as a name. Titles function as names even more obviously when they are the most basic, familiar, and perhaps even the only term used for personal designation and address. This is why *Daddy* is said to function as a child's proper name for his or her father. It is the primary, unique, and most personal way of referring to and addressing the person who is one's father, not just focusing on the relationship. The *Chicago Manual of Style* currently classifies kinship terms used this way as names. By the same reasoning, *Father* is construed as Jesus' proper name for God. And this is why *Father* is said to be the proper name of the first person of the Trinity. Although it continues to express kinship, it is the unique and most intimate way of referring to the divine person who is both the Father of the Son and our Father. An instructive parallel is the term *Christ*. It is initially a title, *ho Christos*, "the Christ," "the Anointed One," the Greek translation of "the Messiah." But when the New Testament speaks of *Jesus Christ*, the article *the* has fallen away and *Christ* begins to function like a name. And when Paul and Peter simply write of *Christ*, the term has in fact become a name of Jesus. This analysis is widely accepted. The same applies to *Father*.

In addition to linguistic and philosophical considerations, there is also the biblical association of *Father* with the name of God. The Lord's Prayer makes this connection: "Our Father . . . hallowed be thy name." So does the Great Commission: "baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. . . . " And so does Jesus in the High Priestly Prayer (John 17:6, 11-12, 25-26): "Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name—the name you gave me . . . " (v. 11). In the Gospel of John the great I AM is revealed as Father, Word, Jesus,

Christ, Son, Holy Spirit, and Comforter. This New Testament association of *Father* with the name of God has motivated some theologians to consider *Father* as an expression of God's name and not merely as a title of God, whose name remains unstated. The status and significance of *Father* in relation to the name of God are considered further in Section E.

But even if *Father* is "only" a title and not a name, we humans have no right to trifle with it. We do not have the authority to confer titles upon God or to remove them. *Father* is the way God has chosen to present himself in human history. The fatherhood of God is integral to the gospel. We are to proclaim and apply it, not change it.

8. Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit deserves inclusion in this section because there are some instances in Scripture where *Holy Spirit* is linguistically masculine. We saw above in the discussion of feminine language that there are at least seven masculine instances in the Old Testament. One is in II Samuel 23:2: "The Spirit of the Lord spoke through me; his word was on my tongue." The verb and pronoun of "Spirit" are masculine. It was also mentioned earlier that, although most instances of *Spirit* in the Old Testament are feminine, they are translated as *pneuma* in the Septuagint, which is a neuter word. In the New Testament, too, *Spirit* is almost always construed as a neuter noun.

However, there are a few cases in the New Testament where *Spirit* is treated by the writer as a masculine noun. At least two occur in John. In John 16:13-14, there are two emphatic masculine pronouns referring to the Holy Spirit: "But when *he*, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. . . . *He* will bring glory to me. . . . " The italicized words reflect the Greek word *ekeinos*, literally "that one [masculine]." There is a similar case in John 14:26: "But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, *he* (Greek *ekeinos*) will teach you all things," but in this case the masculine pronoun may be agreeing with "Counselor," which is masculine (*parakletos*), rather than with "Spirit." This occasional tendency to masculinize the Holy Spirit is also found in the apostle Paul, who writes in Ephesians 1:13-14 of "the promised Holy Spirit, *who* is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance." Here Paul appears to have written the masculine form of the Greek word for "who" (*hos*), even though strict grammar would have required (and some manuscripts contain) the neuter form.

Fewer than a dozen instances (at most seven in the Old Testament and four in the New) are not enough to justify the claim that *Holy Spirit* is primarily masculine in Scripture. In fact, *Spirit* is mostly feminine in the Old Testament and almost always neuter in the New Testament. Perhaps this pattern indicates that although the Bible presents the Spirit as personal, it does not mean to give him/her/it personal gender. Or perhaps it is significant that the masculinity of the Spirit is the constant, continuing from the Old Testament to the New in spite of the non-masculine grammatical gender of *spirit* in Hebrew and Greek. It is difficult to formulate principles for translating gender language for the Holy Spirit on the basis of Hebrew and Greek usage.

It is clear and consistent, however, that even if *Spirit* is not masculine, the terms *God, Lord, Father, Jesus, Christ, Counselor*, and the other terms with which *Spirit* occurs and to which it is connected are masculine and are never influenced in grammatical gender by the non-masculinity of *Spirit*.

The fact that the Greek New Testament completely drops the grammatical femininity of *Spirit* of the Hebrew Old Testament is the source of a major difference between Jewish and Christian views of God's Spirit. In some post-Old Testament Jewish traditions the Spirit of God has taken on quasi-personal feminine characteristics. The Holy Spirit has not been regarded as feminine in Christian tradition (except in some strands of medieval mysticism) because of the New Testament. In fact, the Spirit has been regarded as masculine in the Western church, probably because *Spiritus* is masculine in Latin, the language of the Vulgate Bible and the traditional Roman Catholic Church.

9. Summary of masculine language for God

While masculine language is quite often applied to God figuratively, the vast majority of the thousands of cases in Scripture use masculine terms as personal designators. Many of these personal designators, especially in the Old Testament, are predicate nouns—God is king, judge, redeemer, father, and creator. But some of these designators are used frequently enough—or as designations of office, or as terms of address—that they have the status of divine titles, for example, *King, the Almighty, Judge of all the earth, Shepherd*, and *Father* (N.T.). And certainly *Lord* (*adonai*) is a title. Finally, God's names are also masculine names: *Yahweh, Elohim, theos*. Interestingly, the name *Yahweh* is translated by the title *Kurios* ("Lord") in the New Testament. *Father* is a title and probably also a name in the New Testament. God's masculine names linguistically require masculine titles, and God's names and titles together determine that the other personal designators of God be masculine. The massive number of masculine personal designators in turn governs an even larger number of gendered grammatical forms (verbs, pronouns, adjectives, articles). The depth and consistency of this pattern, read according to the linguistic principles set out in Section VII, C, lead inescapably to the conclusion that God is presented as a masculine person in the biblical text, especially when Scripture is viewed as an organic whole. (Whether Scripture theologically implies the masculinity of God's nature is discussed in VIII, C, 1.)

D. Summary of the biblical pattern of gendered language for God

1. Overall pattern

The Hebrew and Greek biblical texts overwhelmingly and consistently present God as a masculine person who is occasionally spoken of in feminine figurative language, i.e., in cross-gender imagery. This personal masculinity is indicated not only by the thousands of gender-specific personal designators for God—names, kinship terms, titles, epithets, and generic nouns—but also by the thousands of grammatically gendered verb forms, adjectives, articles, and pronouns which these personal designators govern. Feminine language is never used as a personal designator of God, and therefore there are no feminine grammatical forms, including pronouns, that refer to God. (*Spirit* in the Old Testament is a possible exception.)

While the existence of any feminine imagery for God at all may be surprising to some, the significance of its place in Scripture ought neither to be overestimated nor underestimated.

Feminine imagery ought not to be overestimated for several reasons. The fifteen or so indisputably feminine cases are often implied and indirect, not explicit. The feminine images are mostly similes (explicit comparisons of different things) rather than metaphors (direct figurative attributions of feminine characteristics to God and the ways he relates to creation). They become fewer and less direct as we move from the Old Testament to the New. None of this imagery in any way suggests that God is a feminine person. To gauge the role of feminine imagery for God in Scripture as a whole, note that the term *rock* is more frequently and more directly applied to God than are all instances of feminine language taken together. Feminine imagery for God is a minor, almost incidental phenomenon in the Bible.

Yet its significance ought not to be underestimated, for it demonstrates that even though God has chosen to present himself as a masculine person in Scripture and even though Scripture was written in traditional societies in which men had a privileged position, God also uses females to image his attributes and actions in the Bible just as he chose to image himself in creating them. The implicit significance of feminine imagery for God in Scripture must be given full consideration in theological reflection, in stewardship of the language of God's people, and in ministry of the gospel of grace to all who have been hurt by unbiblical views of God and sinful patterns of gender and male-female relations.

2. The personal gender of the Holy Spirit

In Scripture as a whole, the Spirit of God is linguistically masculine, feminine, and neuter. Mainly feminine in the Old Testament, the term *Spirit* may refer to an attribute or power of God in distinction from his person. But it is possible that there are feminine references to the personal Spirit of God in the Hebrew text. More clearly personal in the New Testament, the Holy Spirit is almost always linguistically neuter. The feminine completely falls away, suggesting that, if it was significant in the Old Testament, it no longer is. But there are a handful of masculine references in the New Testament. So either the Bible presents no clear view at all of the personal gender of the Holy Spirit or else it is hinting at the Spirit's masculinity, since that is the only constant across both testaments and does seem to reflect the otherwise overwhelming presentation of God as masculine in the biblical text. It would seem that this is as far as the biblical evidence allows us to go.

3. Evaluation of biblical arguments for inclusive language for God

In Section III, E we identified two arguments for inclusive language for God that can be based on a high view of the Bible as divinely inspired and therefore do not necessarily conflict with the CRC's confessional position on Scripture. We are now able to evaluate those arguments.

The first argument likens the Bible's masculine language for God to its treatment of polygamy and divorce, which are accommodations to fallen human culture and not expressions of what God ultimately wills. What is wrong with this position?

The answer is that within the progressive revelation of the Bible as a whole, the masculine language for God is not like polygamy and divorce. Polygamy and divorce are shown by the whole of Scripture to be accommodations to sin; the Bible tells us what God's final will is and progressively moves God's people away from these practices. But Scripture as a whole

repeatedly employs and progressively confirms the masculine language for God, culminating in the revelation of the triune name *Father, Son, and Holy Spirit*. There is nothing in Scripture that suggests that the masculine language for God is an accommodation to sin or that there is a better way to speak of God. (This does not deny that all language for God accommodates our creaturely limitations.)

The second argument asserts that we may use inclusive language for God because the Bible itself does. It speaks of God in masculine, feminine, and neuter terms, although it uses masculine language most frequently. All that is needed for inclusive language is balance in the number of masculine, feminine, and neuter expressions used.

This section has demonstrated, however, that there are significant qualitative differences between Scripture's use of masculine, feminine, and neuter language for God. Imagery is not personal designation and does not imply personal gender. For example, *Frank's new business was stillborn* is a maternal metaphor, but it does not imply that Frank is female. In the same way, the Bible's feminine imagery for God does not imply that God is feminine. Furthermore, figures of speech are not and do not imply titles, names, and other terms of address. To say *Bob is a workhorse* does not suggest that we can call Bob *Horse* or *Dobbin*. By the same logic, the feminine imagery for God in the Bible does not give us any reason at all to call on God with feminine names and titles. The overall pattern of Scripture presents God as a masculine person, not a person who is sometimes masculine, sometimes feminine, and sometimes neuter. Thus the Bible's use of gendered language for God is significantly different from contemporary inclusive language for God. That difference is far more than the relative frequency of masculine and feminine terms for God.

Although the two arguments for inclusive language for God discussed here may be consistent with the Christian Reformed view of Holy Scripture, they are fatally flawed in their exegesis and theological interpretation of Scripture.

E. God's name

1. God's name in Scripture

What does the Bible mean by *the name of God* or *the name of the Lord?* The issue of divine names arose above (VII, C) as we reflected on Scripture's masculine language for God. We saw that *Yahweh* is a name, whereas *Adonai* is a title, that nevertheless the title *Kurios* translates them both, and that there is a debate whether *Father* is a name as well as a kinship title. But these are linguistic categories. We must consider the doctrinal-theological significance of the divine name disclosed in Scripture.

In modern Western culture words and names are often considered little more than labels that people and cultures attach to things. Many people find no inherent meaning in names and consider their connection to persons to be purely arbitrary. There is no significant reason why Sam couldn't be called *Joe*. By analogy, according to this view, there is no significant reason why God cannot be called *Mother* or *the Mother*. Calling a rose by any other name does not change the rose.

Of course, it is true that changing words does not change the things they refer to. (But calling an apple *an orange* might eventually result in someone

picking out an orange instead of an apple. That would change things.) And it is possible in an abstract sense to label things in various ways. Just as a scientist might say "let *x* stand for the heaviest element," so a theologian could say "let *x* stand for the biblical God" or "let *Mother* stand for the biblical God." This theologian might then be referring to the biblical God by means of his or her arbitrary symbol. (Even here we must be careful, however. For as soon as we use the new symbol apart from the original terminology and description, we no longer have a way of knowing what it is that we are referring to.)

But the Bible does not view titles and names, whether human or divine, as conventional labels or arbitrary symbols. It has a much more historical, integral view of the relationship between persons and what they are called. Names have meanings, some of them profound. *Yohanan* (*John*) means "God is gracious." *Elimelek* means "my God is King." Furthermore, these names are not just pious sentiments arbitrarily attached to people. Often a name is given because it expresses the meaning or significance of a particular person's calling, life, and identity. *Jesus* (*Joshua*) means what Jesus does: "Yahweh saves" his people from their sins (Matt. 1:21). His name is *Immanuel*, for he really is "God is with us" (Matt. 1:23). Names often verbalize personal identity, as manifest in one's personal history. In Scripture names are virtually identical with persons themselves. Changing a name signals a change in identity, status, or relationship. That is why Nebuchadnezzar renames Daniel and his three friends. That is why God renames Abram and Jacob and Jesus names Simon *Petros*, "the Rock."

And this is how the Bible presents the names of God. *Yahweh, El Shaddai,* and *Adonai* have meanings that are true of God because they state who God is in historical relation to his creation and to his people. They do not disclose the hidden, esoteric truth of God apart from creation but who God really is and has been and will be in relation to his earthly kingdom. They are arbitrary only in the sense that God might not have created the world and involved himself within its history or that he might have chosen to do so in another way. But in his sovereign love, wisdom, and goodness, God has elected to involve himself in a particular way. And this way includes giving himself the names, titles, designations, and even the imagery that verbally express his identity—who he really is—in history. This language is no mere human cultural convention. In the Bible God's name stands for all he is in relationship to creation. It is the history of his mighty acts. It is the verbal dimension of his self-revelation in creation and redemption. It is his reputation, power, and glory. Herman Bavinck represents the theological tradition when he includes all God's attributes and acts—his entire self-revelation—in his name (*The Doctrine of God*, 85ff.). In fact, in Scripture, *hashem*, "The Name," is equivalent to God himself (Lev. 24:11; Isa. 30:27). Praying in Jesus' name is praying through Jesus himself. Baptizing into the name of the Father, Son, and Spirit is recognizing a real relation with the triune God himself. God's name is more than mere words.

Even when we limit our focus to language that expresses God's name, we must go beyond those terms that technically qualify as proper names. God's names include all the linguistic expressions by which Scripture speaks of God, including figures of speech. (The fact that figures of speech are aspects of the name of God in the biblical sense does not make them designators of

God.) Of course, this list of God's names begins with proper names, such as *Yahweh* and *Elohim*. In fact, *Yahweh eloheka* ("the Lord, your God") is the particular name that is hallowed in the Third Commandment (Ex. 20:7). But the Bible also considers titles and epithets as names of God, as we see in the messianic prophecy of Isaiah 9:6b: "His name [*shem*] will be called 'Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace'" (RSV). Jeremiah 23:6 gives "The Lord is our Righteousness" as a name of God. In Revelation 19:13 and 16 Jesus Christ has the names (*onoma*) "Word of God" and "King of kings and Lord of lords." Clearly, *name* means more than "proper name" in Scripture, both the Old and the New Testament.

So we conclude that *the name of God* includes all biblical designators for and descriptions of God and all ways in which God reveals himself. When we see phrases like "the name of the Lord" (or "the name of God," "of Jesus," "of the Father," etc.), we cannot simply identify these names or titles with The Name as such. But each is a name of The Name, who is God himself in all his fullness and in all the ways he has shown himself historically in nature and in grace, in creation and in Christ, as infallibly proclaimed in Scripture.

In the final analysis, then, it is not really important to ask whether *Father* acquires exactly the same linguistic status that *Yahweh* had in the Old Testament (cf. 6, c above). It may be that *Father* is "no more than" a title, although there are good reasons for counting it as a name. In either case "the name of the Father" is parallel to "the name of *Yahweh*" as a name in the biblical sense (*shem, onoma*) of the God who has entered our history as *Yahweh* and as *Father*. The name (identity, history, self-designation, glory, reputation) of God ought not to be tinkered with.

Feminine imagery is included in this broad notion of the name of God. This means, however, that feminine imagery rightly "names" God only when used in the way Scripture uses it—as imagery—and not when it is used to give God new titles and proper names as in contemporary inclusive language for God.

2. God names himself; human beings cannot and may not name God

The nature of God's name as understood in Scripture implies that human beings have neither the right nor even the ability to change or add to it, for such alteration would be equivalent to changing the way God has revealed himself in history.

We do not have the ability to alter God's name because it is determined by God himself as he discloses himself through his mighty acts and utterances in the history of his relation to his creation and his covenant people. The name of God in the broad linguistic sense—proper names, titles, designators, and even the figurative descriptions—is the verbal expression of who God is and what he has been doing in history. God's history with creation is determined only by God, and therefore only God can name God.

This assertion does not deny that humans can name God in the sense of attributing general titles and descriptions to him on the basis of his revelation, even general revelation (cf. V, C). Thus he is recognized as *the Absolute, the Creator*, and *the Great Designer*. But there is still an important sense in which God is unknowable through general revelation (cf. Acts 17:22-31). To know his personal identity, we must know the names that specify more particularly and accurately who God is—the personal names and specific titles that

came from God himself by special revelation (cf. V, D). Further, without special revelation, the "names" of God known through general revelation become misunderstood and distorted by human sin, as is evident from the world's religions and philosophies (cf. Rom. 1).

God has shown himself and his names to us in special revelation. He disclosed himself to Adam and Eve in the garden even before the fall. He revealed himself as *Elohim* and *El Shaddai* to Melchizedek and the patriarchs. God revealed himself as *I Am* and *Yahweh* to Moses. He named the one he sent *Jesus, Immanuel, Son of the Most High*, etc. (Matt. 1:21-23; Luke 1:31-32). Through Jesus Christ God revealed himself as "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit." Changing or augmenting God's names in the biblical sense of "name," especially his proper names and titles, is equivalent to changing the historical identity of God himself and the history of his relationship to us. It cannot be done.

And therefore we do not have the right to (re)name God, especially by changing or augmenting his names and titles. The Third Commandment instructs us not to misuse the name of God. Of course, we must recognize that this commandment enjoins us to love and honor God with all of our lives and not just to refrain from certain verbal behaviors (Heidelberg Catechism, Q. and A. 99). But surely it includes a warning about our language for God. "Correcting" the Bible's way of speaking about God is not showing him honor. Further, although it designates "*Yahweh* your God" as the name to be honored, the Third Commandment, understood in terms of the biblical theology of the name of God, obviously implies that we reverence all the ways in which Scripture speaks of God. It is impossible to suppose that *Elohim, Adonai, God, Lord, Christ, Father*, and the other biblical terms besides *Yahweh* are not implicitly included in the name of God as addressed by the Third Commandment. Thus the matter of language for God is covered by this commandment, which teaches us to receive, honor, and live worthy of the name of God as revealed in the Bible.

In addition to the Third Commandment, the nature of the act of naming in the Bible also implies that we do not have the right to name God, for naming in Scripture assumes a relationship of authority over the person named. If names are integrally tied to a person's identity, vocation, or nature, then naming a person asserts the right to determine or identify a person in this way. God can change Abram's name and make Jacob into Israel. Jesus gives Simon the name *Peter*. Nebuchadnezzar renames Daniel and his three friends. And Adam names the animals. But human beings do not give God names in the Bible because we are the vassal-subjects and he is the great King. We do not have naming authority over God and therefore the right to name him. We image God; he does not image us. Human fatherhood (*patria*) is named from God the Father, not the other way around (Eph. 3:14-15).

From this biblical perspective, the attitude of many promoters of inclusive language for God—that it is up to us which terms we choose to name God—seems spiritually presumptuous. It implicitly reverses the Creator-creature, Lord-servant relationship between God and us. The inappropriateness of changing God's proper names and titles is obvious from a human analogy. If a human being introduces herself to us by a particular title and name, for example, *Doctor Johnson*, or if a historical figure has a title and name, for example, *President Washington*, we do not have the right to alter these terms to

suit our own tastes or cultural circumstances. It is not our place to call the doctor *Debby* or the President *King George*, no matter what our preferences. How much less right human beings have to change the way God has presented himself in history!

F. Conclusion: the biblical pattern is the standard for the church

In Section V, "Revelation," we concluded that, since the Bible is the normative revelation infallibly interpreting all revelation, what Scripture says about speaking of God and how Scripture speaks of God are the standards for gendered language for God. In the present section the normativity of the biblical pattern of language for God has been reinforced through consideration of the nature and significance of God's name and the nature and significance of the act of naming.

In this section we have also concluded, after extensive study of Scripture using the linguistic categories set forth in Section VI, that throughout the Hebrew and Greek Bible as a whole, God is presented overwhelmingly and unambiguously with the vocabulary, linguistic gender, and syntax appropriate for a masculine person. Scripture shifts its emphasis from the "Lord God" who is "King" in the Old Testament to the "Lord God" who is "Father" of Jesus Christ in the New. However, there are at least sixteen instances of cross-gender imagery, where the characteristics or actions of God as a masculine person are represented with feminine figures of speech. God is never designated linguistically as a feminine person in Scripture. The personal gender of the Holy Spirit as presented in the biblical text is unclear.

This biblical pattern is normative for Bible translation, for the faith language of God's people throughout their lives, for the worship of the church, for its doctrine and theology, and for its ministry in the world. This is the most important conclusion of this study report.

VIII. Confessional, theological, and spiritual issues

A. Introduction

What Scripture says about God's name means that the Bible's pattern of speaking about God ought to be the pattern for the language of God's people. But Scripture is also the source of the church's confessions of faith and the theological explanation of those confessions. In this section we will explore the central confessional and theological issues which arise from inclusive language for God. In particular there are questions about (1) Holy Scripture, (2) the doctrine of God, including the relation of God, the image of God, and gender, as well as the Creator-creature distinction and the Trinity, (3) the doctrine of Christ, including his person and incarnation, (4) the doctrine of the atonement, and (5) the doctrine of the church. In addition to doctrinal and theological questions, inclusive language for God raises profoundly spiritual issues, matters of true religion and salvation itself. This section treats these doctrinal and spiritual matters in the order mentioned.

B. Holy Scripture

In Section V we discussed Scripture in relation to the other modes of God's revelation. The points made there need not be repeated at length. We affirmed that the Bible continues to function as God's infallible and definitive account of his mighty acts in creation and redemption in Jesus Christ and thus as God's

self-revelation. Scripture was authored by the Holy Spirit by means of the inspiration of the human writers and thus ought to be interpreted as a redemptive-historical organic unity. Reformed hermeneutics follows from the Reformed confession regarding Scripture. The nature of Scripture is a confessional matter (Belgic Confession, Arts. 2-7). By implication, hermeneutical and theological approaches that conflict with the nature of Scripture are also confessional matters.

In surveying the standard arguments for inclusive language for God in Sections III and V, we identified a number of approaches to Scripture that are problematic. Thus we only mention them again at this point. Some inclusivists hold more than one of the following positions.

First is the view that the Bible is a collection of merely human books that record the religious experiences of Hebrews and Christians, mostly men, in ancient partriarchal cultures. Thus its language for God is not normative for us. This view denies inspiration by the Holy Spirit.

Second is the view that the Holy Spirit directly inspired the writers of Scripture with God's personal presence and message of salvation but left to the fallible human writers the choice of language for asserting and describing the content of these divine encounters. Here, too, inclusivists conclude that the writers' patriarchal language reflects fallen culture and is not normative for us. This position denies the verbal inspiration of Scripture and Scripture's infallibility.

Third is the canon-within-the canon approach, which holds that those parts of Scripture that promote a gender-inclusive view of humans and God are truly revelatory but that the patriarchal texts (most of the Bible) cannot be considered as divine revelation. This approach obviously denies the maxim "all of Scripture."

Fourth is the continuing-revelation view, which places religious experience or the interpretation of Scripture on the same level as Scripture itself. Promoters of inclusive language sometimes argue that the Holy Spirit continues to reveal God in believers' experience and in their interpretation of Scripture in the same way and with the same authority as he did when the writers of Scripture interpreted their experiences of God and their textual traditions. Thus the current gender-inclusive view of God is taken to be the result of the continuing inspiration of the Holy Spirit and is therefore a valid reading of the Bible. However, this strategy twists the doctrine that the Spirit leads the church into the truth and denies the final authority of Scripture, relegating the Bible to the level of human interpretation or elevating the historical interpretation of Scripture to the level of Scripture itself.

Fifth are exegetical strategies that fail to treat Scripture as a Spirit-guided unity of progressive revelation. Some interpreters treat the different terms for God as independent entities, not as parts of a single, coherent presentation of God. This method enables them to exaggerate the feminine imagery and downplay the masculine language for God. Other inclusivist exegetes focus on certain names of God from the Old Testament without considering how they were incorporated into the New Testament. These methods of interpretation may claim to honor Scripture as infallible divine revelation but deny it in practice.

Such approaches to the Bible in defense of inclusive language for God directly contradict the Christian Reformed Church's confession about the nature of Scripture and the hermeneutics required by it.

C. The doctrine of God; the image of God

1. God, gender, and the image of God

At last we address one of the crucial issues involved in gendered language for God—is God really masculine? This is a major objection raised against the Bible by feminists. Mary Daly's quip has become famous: "If God is male, then the male is God." Indeed, our study of the patterns of gendered language for God has yielded the conclusion that the Bible presents God as a masculine person (Section VII). So the question is pressing. But we also saw that human language expresses the truth about God analogously or metaphorically (Section VI). The difference between Creator and creature means that our language for God is limited and creaturely in form. It does not apply to God in exactly the same sense that it applies to humans. When we say *God is King* and *David is king*, we attribute supreme authority and power to both. Yet God's monarchy is without the conditions and limitations that David's has. But what about the masculine connotation of the word *king*? Is gender a way in which David is like God or unlike him? Is God masculine?

In the history of Christian theological reflection, there has been a strong and pervasive tradition which denies that gender, masculine or feminine, is in any sense an attribute of God's nature. Biblical expressions of God's gender are understood as anthropomorphisms like his face and hands. Gendered language for God has an important meaning but not a literal meaning, according to this tradition. Gendered language has a meaning which shifts analogically or metaphorically when used of God. There are three main reasons why theologians have concluded that God in himself is not gendered.

The first argument denying that God is gendered relies on the biblical doctrine of the image of God. Genesis 1 teaches that God gave his image to humankind, both male and female. God did not give his image to animals, but they too are male and female. Therefore, maleness and femaleness are not part of the image of God. Rather, the image of God consists in personal capacities and characteristics which God possesses fully and which he created us to reflect in finite ways. We image God by having dominion and care of creation, by engaging in covenantal relationships of love and loyalty, and by manifesting true knowledge, righteousness, and holiness. God has created human males and females together to image him in these ways. God in himself is neither male nor female, neither masculine nor feminine, but he possesses in the highest degree all the personal powers and perfections reflected by humans of both genders. Since the traditional view holds that humans of both genders equally image God, it provides a strong biblical-Christian foundation for a just and healthy view of human gender relations (cf. next section).

The second argument from Scripture is also based on imaging God. The Lord warns against making male and female images of him. In Deuteronomy 4:15-16, for example, Moses says, "You saw no form of any kind the day the Lord spoke to you at Horeb out of the fire. Therefore watch yourselves very carefully, so that you do not become corrupt and make for yourselves an idol,

an image of any shape, whether formed like a man or a woman. . . . " In addition, there are texts which assert that God is not a man, although their point is not so much to deny that God has gender as to assert that he does not share human limitations and sinfulness. Numbers 23:19 and Hosea 11:9 are examples. Taking all these texts together, theologians have concluded that the writers of Scripture themselves did not attribute gender to God even though they spoke of God as a masculine person.

The third argument is based on experience as well as Scripture. Gender as we know it—masculinity and feminity—is correlated with sexuality, which is anatomical and physiological, that is, something bodily. Masculinity and femininity are the psychological, social, and cultural characteristics of personality typically exhibited by humans who are biologically male and female. But God is spirit and does not have a body (John 4:24). So God is neither male nor female and thus is neither masculine nor feminine. God does not have gender.

Although the view that gender is not in any sense an attribute of God's nature has been dominant in the history of Christian reflection, it is not the only view that is possible on the basis of the biblical givens. The biblical texts forbidding idolatry and stating that God is not a man do not explicitly deny gender to God. And it is not necessarily true that only creatures with bodies can have personal gender or that a person of one gender cannot image a person of the other gender. For example, it is quite possible that Satan is both a disembodied spirit and a "he" or that a daughter is just like her father. Just as a weak person can image God Almighty and a young person can image the Ancient of Days, so a woman can image the heavenly Father. Being created in the image of God is not about gender any more than it is about power or age, but it is about holy living with all the capacities that God has given us. About this view it is therefore possible to affirm that in an analogical sense God really is a masculine person, just as the Scriptures present him, without denying that men and women are equally made in the image of God. As an alternative to the traditional conception, this view of God's gender would have the advantage of remaining closer to scriptural language and minimizing the danger of making a false dichotomy between God as he reveals himself and God as he is in himself. Since this view, like the traditional view, can affirm that human males and females image God equally and that God does not favor one gender more than the other, it too can provide the foundation for a just and healthy view of gender relations among humans (cf. next section).

This report is not advocating the alternative position but includes it as worthy of mention. Of course, if God in himself is masculine, we should retain masculine language for him. Since for the purposes of this report we affirm the traditional view, however, the question again arises: If God in himself is not really gendered, why is it so important that gendered language about him be maintained? Why may we not restate all the truths of the Bible in inclusive language?

The basic answer to these questions has already been supplied by the doctrine of Scripture and its normativity for all human thought and discourse about God, as elaborated above in Section V. We are not wiser than God, who presented himself in history, guided the composition of Scripture, and gave the Bible to the church of all nations to proclaim and live by until

Christ returns. The Bible both presents God in masculine personal language and supplies reasons (the image of God and God's not being a man, discussed above) for concluding that God in himself is ungendered. So we accept both and interpret Scripture accordingly. Although we may conclude that God is not intrinsically masculine, we should not therefore eliminate masculine language for him any more than we stop saying that God hears our prayers, that Christ is seated at the right hand of the Father, and that we can frustrate the Holy Spirit just because these things are not literally true in the ordinary human sense. In the proper sense these statements are true, and there is no better way of saying them than the Bible does. It is the same for Scripture's masculine language for God. What it does mean must finally be determined on the basis of Scripture itself.

So the question returns: What does the Bible's masculine language for God mean if it does not imply that God is gendered? Some answers to this question are found in the sections below on the Creator-creature distinction and the Trinity. First, however, we must make some final observations about the image of God.

2. God, the image of God, and human gender relations

In dealing with the question of God and gender, the previous section introduced the doctrine of the image of God. Both the traditional position, which denies that God is gendered, and the alternative position, which affirms that God is masculine in an analogical sense, teach that human males and females equally image God but that the image of God does not include gender. Two important points must be made in this connection.

First, a number of inclusivist theologians treat gender as part of the image of God and on that basis project both genders back onto God. They confuse the truth that males and females equally image God with the false notion that the image of God is equally male and female, and they mistakenly conclude that God is or must be thought and spoken of as equally male and female (masculine and feminine). Some inclusivist theologians go so far as to say that the image of God "inevitably means that we imagine God in our own image" (Sally McFague, *Models of God*, 82). The biblical doctrine of the image of God corrects all these views. It tells us how we image God, not leaving it to our own imaginations. And what it tells us is that gender is not part of the image of God. Thus it is a mistake to conclude from human gender that God is gendered and to base arguments for inclusive language for God on the image of God.

Second, inclusivist theologians frequently tie human gender and God's gender together when discussing the problems of human gender relations. Unless our view of God is inclusive (gender-balanced or gender-neutral), they argue, we cannot have an inclusive view of humans. A masculine God will only justify and promote continuing sexism, gender injustice, and abuse in human society. But the biblical doctrine of the image of God exposes this false connection between human gender and God. The God who is King and Father has created males and females in his image. He loves his male and female children equally and demands justice for them all. He wants all of them to praise him by using the gifts he has given them. He hates abuse and oppression and is the defender of the weak and poor.

The fact that Scripture is gender inclusive with respect to humans while presenting God in masculine terms can be demonstrated quite strikingly from the redemptive-historical development of the messianic relationship itself, the very foundation of the biblical presentation of the fatherhood of God. In II Samuel 7:14 God promises David, "I will be his father and he will be my son." When Paul quotes that promise in II Corinthians 6:18, he does so as follows: "'I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.'" Using the "sons and daughters" language of Isaiah 43:6, Paul applies the messianic (kingly) office to the church, both males and females. These textual connections are striking evidence of the developmental pattern of gender language in the progressive revelation of the Bible: the New Testament becomes more inclusive of women with men at the same time as it centralizes the fatherhood of God. Gender inclusivists argue that language for humans and language for God must be treated the same: masculine language for God entails the superiority of the human male; gender justice among humans requires gender-inclusive language for God. But that is not the teaching of the Bible. It is a theological mistake to impose inclusive language on God even if it is appropriate for human beings.

3. The Creator-creature distinction

One non-gendered meaning of the Bible's masculine language for God pertains to the doctrine of God as Creator and his relationship with creation. The Apostles', Nicene, and Athanasian creeds, as well as the Heidelberg Catechism (Lord's Day 3-4, 11-14, 33-34, 45) and the Belgic Confession (Arts. 1, 9, 12), assert the creation of the world out of nothing and therefore teach an unqualified Creator-creature distinction. God has his being in himself, quite independent of the world. God freely chose to create the world and continues to relate to it intimately and constantly. The world depends completely upon God, but God does not depend on the world, although he is committed to it. God is no part of the world, and the world is no part of God. There is no continuity of being between them. This doctrine of creation is explicitly, strongly, and repeatedly tied to God as Father, "Creator of heaven and earth," in the creeds and confessions. One meaning of Scripture's Father-King language for God is that God is distinct from the creation.

A plausible theological explanation for Father-King language is its presentation of God and creation as two distinct beings, the one having caused the other and continually exercising parental love and care in relationship with it, without suggesting that they share the same nature or kind of existence because one has emanated from the other. Mother-birth-offspring language, on the other hand, does suggest emanation and continuity of being, as can be documented from the world's religions. Orthodox theologians have pointed out repeatedly that the Old Testament attacks the mother-goddesses of the ancient Near East because belief that the world was birthed by the Mother suggests continuity of being between Creator and creature. We are extensions of the goddess; she is the deepest dimension of the same fertile world order that we are part of. We all share in divinity. Mother goddesses are almost universally associated with pantheism and paganism in the world's religions (cf. Mother Nature in various guises). Furthermore, there is a resurgence of pantheism and paganism among contemporary religious feminists (cf. Section IV, G). Many feminist theolo-

gians stress the immanence of God in creation and God's nurturing, life-giving energies, which they directly associate with the maternal nature of God far more than they stress his transcendence and sovereignty over creation. As a result, many of them end up with unorthodox doctrines of the Creator-creature relation. Rosemary Ruether, for example, although she attempts to appear egalitarian by using the term *God/ess*, defines *God/ess* as "the Primal Matrix" (from Latin *mater*, "mother"). She is a panentheist, holding that God and creation are essentially interrelated.

Thus, while it might be abstractly possible to call God *Mother* or *Father-Mother* and still to affirm the biblical and confessional Creator-creature distinction, the history of religions shows that the association is doctrinally confusing and spiritually dangerous. Perhaps this is an important reason for God's choice of masculine language for his self-revelation in human history. But even if that is not God's reason and even if it is logically possible both to designate God as Mother and at the same time to affirm the Creator-creature distinction, it is not justifiable to do so because of the nature of God's revelation in Scripture (Section VII). With respect to God as Creator, therefore, naming God *Mother* is both a biblical and confessional matter.

4. The Trinity

   a. The importance of the doctrine to the Christian faith

      The doctrine of the Trinity is another meaning of the Bible's gendered language for God, which, according to the theological tradition, as suggested above, does not imply that God's nature is masculine. In Section VII we acknowledged the linguistic prominence and doctrinal centrality of God as Father. Through Jesus, the Messiah, the God who was *Yahweh* in the Old Testament showed himself to be Jesus' Father and our Father. Jesus declared God to be "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit" (Matt. 28:19). This is the fullest, most comprehensive revelation of God available in human history. It is at the heart of the New Testament gospel. Even more basic, God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in himself, not just in relation to the world. These are the reasons why the doctrine of the Trinity was so carefully defended during the early centuries of the church—one God in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And that is why the Apostles', Nicene, and Athanasian creeds are structured according to the three explicitly named persons of the Trinity. The Trinity is of the essence of the Christian faith. The Athanasian Creed makes affirmation of it a matter of salvation. The other doctrinal standards of the Christian Reformed Church also use the language of the Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—throughout and explicitly teach this historic ecumenical position (cf. Heidelberg Catechism Lord's Days 7-23; Belgic Confession Arts. 8-12).

      The language of the Trinity must remain the language of the church because this is the language of the faith once and for all delivered to the saints as proclaimed by Scripture. Changing our language for the Trinity not only departs from the Bible's words but also confuses or changes their meaning and the substance of the doctrine they express. Thus inclusive language for God becomes a confessional-doctrinal matter. Any doubt about its confessional status is removed by reading the inclusive-language Apostles' and Nicene creeds (cf. *The New Century Hymnal*). The last section of the Nicene Creed, for example, begins, "We believe in the Holy Spirit,

the Sovereign, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father-Mother, and from the Child."

b. The relation between Scripture and formulations of doctrine

We must raise a basic issue even before looking at inclusive language and the Trinity. All attempts to "rename" the Trinity operate with a faulty understanding of the relationship between Scripture and the church's historical confessions. They assume that "the Trinity," the idea that there is one God with three dimensions, aspects, or relations to creation (some inclusivist theologians do not affirm three actual persons), is the essential mark of Christian orthodoxy and that the language we use does not matter as long as it reflects this threeness-in-one. God is the "transcendental triad" who can be experienced and named in various ways. Thus an abstract doctrinal formulation becomes the heart of the faith, and the living language of the Bible becomes incidental to it. But this approach reverses the normative order and the historical order. The church arrived at its confessional-doctrinal formula in an attempt to understand and defend the particular language of Scripture, which remains the norm and source of doctrine. Ironically, these inclusivist theologians are guilty of the same mistake they accuse defenders of traditional ("scholastic") orthodoxy of making—elevating abstract doctrinal formulas over the Bible. By reducing Christian orthodoxy to affirmation of a vague theological concept, they fail to preserve the teaching of Scripture. The right relation of Scripture to human confessions and theology is itself a confessional matter in the Christian Reformed Church (cf. Heidelberg Catechism Lord's Day 7; Belgic Confession Arts. 5 and 7) and is reiterated in the Form of Subscription, signed by all officebearers.

c. Inclusive-language redesignations of the Trinity

The various inclusive-language reformulations of the Trinity are too numerous to examine individually, so we consider a few prominent examples—first, examples of gender-inclusive reformulations and, second, examples of gender-neutral reformulations.

1) Language inclusive of both genders

One gender-inclusive approach is to retain "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit" and to consider the Spirit feminine (cf. Section VII, B, and C). Thus there are two masculine persons and one feminine person in the Trinity. But this raises objections from both sides of the debate. From the side of tradition it is objected that the New Testament does not present the Holy Spirit as feminine, so this approach reverses the history of revelation and makes the Old Testament final. On the other side, inclusivists object that making the Spirit feminine is not egalitarian: the Trinity is still two-thirds masculine, and the dominant persons are masculine, whereas the Spirit is self-effacing and serves the Father and Son. This picture reinforces all the negative gender stereotypes, say inclusivists.

A second gender-inclusive approach to the Trinity is to add *Mother* to the triune name, either in conjunction with *Father* (Father and Mother or Father-Mother) or in conjunction with the entire name (e.g., "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, one God, Mother of us all," a liturgical formula used at Riverside Church in New York City). A basic objection

to all of these tactics is that they elevate recent linguistic innovations to the level of the language of the church's confessions and of Scripture itself, which the confessions claim faithfully to reflect. More to the point here, however, these innovations confuse or alter the meaning of the biblical-confessional language of the Trinity, as the following examples demonstrate.

Father and Mother on the lips of the believing community straightforwardly implies two persons, not one—a set of parents. It certainly does so in language about humans. Thus it is much too confusing to serve as a title or name for the first person of the Trinity. *Father-Mother*, in contrast, suggests that the first person of the Godhead is some sort of androgynous being—both male and female, a view that was characteristic of ancient Gnosticism and is resurfacing in contemporary feminist neo-Gnosticism. Further, *Father-Mother* is easily misunderstood as implying a reconfiguration of the relationship between the First and Second Persons of the Trinity. According to the Nicene Creed, the Son is "begotten, not made"; this "begottenness" is an eternal relationship with the Father, not the result of a process of generation. If *Mother* is added to *Father*, however, the relationship between the first and second persons readily acquires connotations of procreation and birth. "Begotten" seems more like a process of generation resulting from the self-fertilization of a male-female being than like an eternal relationship. It looks more like a Gnostic version of the Arian heresy—the Son is almost literally the "Firstborn," i.e., a procreation—and not much like the orthodox position stated against this heresy in the Nicene and Athanasian creeds.

Naming the entire Trinity *Mother* (e.g., "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, one God, the Mother of us all") is also unsatisfactory because this formula does not use *Mother* in the same way as *Father*. Thus it is both nonegalitarian and confusing. If *Mother* is a title-name for the triune God, then *Mother* is more basic and comprehensive than *Father*. The phrase as a whole would then be saying "the Mother is the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit." However, if the addition of *mother* is intended to be a figurative expression so that the whole phrase is understood as "the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are like a mother to us," the figurative nature of the phrase is linguistically unclear and gives *Mother* a lesser status than *Father*. This figurative reading is consistent with Scripture, which uses figurative maternal language for God. But then the wording should be changed so that the figurative nature of *mother* is made absolutely clear. As it stands, the formula attempts to preserve the appearance of equality between *Mother* and *Father*, but it is both confusing and unsuccessful.

All of these attempts at making trinitarian language gender inclusive confuse or alter the church's hard-won understanding of the biblical doctrine of the triune God, which is delicate and complex enough without human tampering.

2) Gender-neutral language

Gender-neutral language is the other way to make the Trinity seem nonsexist. *Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, Source, Word, and Comforter*, and *God, Christ, and Spirit* are common examples. Taken on their own, these

formulas are biblical, orthodox, and unobjectionable. However, they are not equivalent to the triune name. Yet inclusivists use them to substitute for or replace "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit," uses for which they are not adequate.

Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier does not name the three divine persons, but three divine functions of all three persons. If this set of functions were taken as a definitive statement of the Trinity, the church would be heading toward the heresy of modalism, the idea that Father, Son, and Spirit are not actual persons but three ways, or modes, in which God, who is really just one person, relates to the world—creating, redeeming, and sanctifying it. This teaching was explicitly condemned by the early church councils.

"Source, Word, and Comforter" are ways John refers to the persons who are "Father, Son, and Spirit." But "Father, Son, and Spirit" is the full way John and the rest of the New Testament identify who the "Source, Word, and Comforter" are, not the reverse. Without "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit," we do not know from Scripture that these are three distinct divine persons. Once again we are in danger of the heresy of modalism (God is one person with three modes of relating to us). So the triune name *Father, Son, and Holy Spirit* is necessary to explain who the Source, Word, and Comforter are. The latter is therefore not equivalent to the former and is inadequate as a standard substitute or replacement.

Similarly, *God, Christ, and Spirit* is a biblically based formula. But it cannot substitute for the triune name of God, *Father, Son, and Holy Spirit*, if only because, taken by itself, *God, Christ, and Spirit* seems to imply that Christ and the Spirit are not God. The formula is rightly understood and orthodox only if understood in terms of the teaching of the New Testament as a whole, encapsulated in the triune name of God. Thus *God, Christ, and Spirit* cannot function as a standard substitute equivalent to *Father, Son, and Holy Spirit*.

It is appropriate occasionally to use the gender-neutral triadic formulas mentioned, for they do express the teaching of Scripture. But these formulas in turn require the triune name of God in order to be properly understood. Therefore they cannot be used as equivalent to or as replacements for the triune name, as they are in inclusive language for God.

A gender-neutral formula that is more problematic even for occasional use is *Parent, Child, and Paraclete*. Unlike the other phrases, the first two terms of this one are not biblical. Furthermore, instead of the warm, intimate, personal title-names *Father* and *Son*, there is an intentional reduction to the impersonal generic categories of Parent and Child. The wonderfully close familial relationship within the Trinity and between God and us has been sacrificed for the sake of political correctness. In addition, *Child* connotes an immaturity that *Son* does not. Though not completely false (a father is a parent), this phrase is inadequate as a name for the Trinity and too spiritually distant for worship.

All of the above and similar attempts at egalitarian gendered language for the Trinity are problematic not only because they change

the language of Scripture but also because doing so changes, confuses, or undermines sound doctrine. This is a confessional matter. And it is also a pastoral matter, for most Christians learn their doctrine from the language of faith as it is used in home and church.

D. The doctrine of Christ

1. The person of the Son—Jesus Christ—and the incarnation

Many feminist theologians are promoting Sophia (Wisdom) Christology to counter a purely masculine view of the second person of the Trinity, the Son. The basic ideas are that wisdom is feminine and that Jesus is the incarnation of God's wisdom. These theologians rightly go back to God's wisdom in Proverbs 8, which is personified as a woman (cf. Section VII, B). This passage is indeed the background to John 1, Colossians 1, and Hebrews 1, which identify the creating Word of God as Jesus Christ. The personification of creative wisdom in Proverbs 8 does implicitly point forward to Christ. Jesus is the wisdom of God (I Cor. 1:24, 30) as well as the Word (John 1). So far so good.

Problems arise as Sophia Christology is elaborated, however. A modest version merely affirms that God's wisdom is feminine and that this feminine quality must be added to God's word, which is masculine (Hebrew, *dabar*; Greek, *logos*), so that the Son is understood to embody both the masculine and feminine sides of God. The problem with this version is that it mistakenly attributes personal gender to God's wisdom and word, which are not personal beings in the Old Testament, on the basis of their grammatical gender. (The Word is the pre-incarnate Son in John's Gospel, however, and thus he is a personal being.) Wisdom and word do not make either the one God or the second person of the Trinity feminine and masculine. But this view is more a linguistic confusion than a heresy.

More problematic is the doctrine that God's wisdom (and word, for those who wish to be inclusive) has become a person in the incarnation of Jesus Christ (God's "Sophia-Child"). While this assertion attempts to preserve the deity of Christ as the incarnation of God's wisdom, it fails to affirm the preexistence of the Son as a person, the second person of the Trinity. Instead it asserts that Jesus Christ is the personification of a (feminine) attribute of God, wisdom. This means that the Son is not a divine person who takes on our human nature but a human person in whom divine wisdom is fully invested. However, the Nicene and Athanasian creeds and the Reformed confessions (Heidelberg Catechism Q. and A. 17, 25, 33, 35; Belgic Confession Arts. 10, 18) teach that Jesus Christ is a divine person, the second person of the Trinity, who took on our human nature. This kind of Sophia Christology represents a modernist view of the person of Christ that repeats a heresy condemned by the councils of the early church. Sophia Christology cannot afford to confess the preexistent Son, for this would admit that he is a "masculine" person, which defeats gender inclusiveness for God. This position not only expresses false Christology; it also distorts the doctrine of the Trinity by denying that the Son is eternally a divine person. This attempt at feminist (Wisdom) or gender-inclusive (Wisdom and Word) Christology clearly contradicts the confessional position of the Christian Reformed Church.

2. The incarnation, our human nature, and gender: *Christa*?

In 1984 *Christa* raised quite a stir. *Christa* is a small sculpture done by Edwina Sandys, a crucifix with a bare-breasted woman hanging on the cross. Many pious Christians rejected it outright as blasphemous. A few defended it as an artistic statement that women too can identify with Jesus. And feminist theologians used the controversy to debate whether a male Jesus can save women and whether women can relate to a male Jesus.

Most feminist theologians argue that women can relate to Jesus because his human nature, his deeds, and his teachings are what matter, not his maleness. But there are those who continue to chafe at the fact that women are saved by a man and have to worship one as Lord, for that, they say, reinforces all the patriarchal structures and sexist stereotypes. They think the church should proclaim both Christ and Christa, for only then is the gospel expressed in gender-inclusive terms. After all, if it is Jesus' human nature and not his maleness that counts, why not symbolize him in both the genders that share his human nature?

This discussion highlights the central dilemma and tension in gender-inclusive theology: can it accept the particularity of the Christian faith or not? It is as undeniable that God has revealed himself as masculine as that the Son became incarnate as a male. This is the particular nature of reality. If this gender particularity presents a problem ("the scandal of particularity") for our view of God, it should also be a problem in our view of Jesus Christ. If it does not present a problem for Christ, however, as most feminist theologians eventually admit, why should gender particularity be a problem in the Bible's presentation of God? It is God's nature and acts that are important after all, not the gender particularity of the language in which he chose to have them declared.

Preaching Christa is obviously a departure from Scripture and the confessions regarding the humanity of Jesus Christ. There may, however, be some validity in viewing *Christa* as a work of art in distinction from a religious icon. Just as it is not wrong for C.S. Lewis to symbolize Christ as Aslan, the lion, it may not be wrong for an artist who wishes to express that Jesus shares the humanity of women to symbolize him as a woman. But it would be wrong to use *Christa* as a direct representation of Christ or to put it on the same level as Scripture, just as it would be wrong to use Aslan that way. Artistic symbol and reality must not be confused; neither should Scripture and the creations of the human imagination.

E. The doctrine of the atonement

The point of gender-inclusive language for God is not just to give equal attention to men and women but to help eliminate injustice and abuse, which traditional Christian language is alleged to promote (cf. Section III). For this reason many feminists object not only to traditional language but also to the doctrine it expresses. A disturbing example is the doctrine of the atonement as substitutionary punishment. Here, some feminists say, the Father vents his wrath on his own Son, horribly punishing him for something he did not do. This doctrine elevates child abuse by an angry father to an ultimate religious principle! Those feminists who nevertheless wish to remain Christian typically endorse a modern version of the doctrine that the atonement is an example of suffering love: in Jesus' passion we see how the world treats people who

promote love, liberty, and equality among humans, how God in Christ identifies with such suffering, and how the power of this suffering love can bring about love, liberty, and equality among all people.

Biblical and confessional Christianity does not deny that the atonement exemplifies divine love. But it affirms that it is at the same time a substitutionary punishment. The feminist view of the atonement identified here is biblically and confessionally objectionable for two reasons. First, it caricatures the substitutionary atonement, which is motivated by the Father's love (John 3:16), not by his abusive anger, and is undertaken voluntarily out of love by the Son, not an unwilling, manipulated victim. Second, this feminist interpretation denies the doctrine of atonement as set forth by the Reformed confessions (Heidelberg Catechism Lord's Days 15, 16; Belgic Confession Arts. 20, 21) because it is taught in Scripture.

F. The doctrine of the church

Scripture teaches that the body of Christ is one, and Jesus himself prays for the unity of the church (John 17). In spite of its historical divisions, the true Christian church is unified by a common confession of the faith once for all delivered to the saints and by a common proclamation of the gospel in obedience to Jesus' Great Commission to make disciples of all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed, which summarize the ecumenical faith of the church, also affirm its unity and catholicity. The unity and catholicity of the church are likewise affirmed by the Reformed confessions (Heidelberg Catechism Lord's Day 21; Belgic Confession Arts. 27-28, 32).

Gender-inclusive revisions of the church's language for God introduce substantive revisions into the doctrine taught by the creeds of the ecumenical Christian church and into the administration of the sacraments, especially baptism. The Christian Reformed Church could not recognize baptism into any other name than the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Belgic Confession Arts. 29, 34). Thus gender-inclusive language fractures and undermines the practical and doctrinal foundation of the unity and catholicity of the historic Christian church beyond the divisions and deviations which already exist. In this way, too, promotion of inclusive language for God is a practice that conflicts with the confessions of the Christian Reformed Church.

G. Spiritual issues

Inclusive language for God is not just a question of adherence to biblical tradition and sound doctrine; at some points, for some people, it is also a matter of ultimate spiritual direction and loyalty, an issue of true faith and salvation. A study report helpful to the denomination cannot fail to identify these points of ultimate spiritual significance. To do so, we reflect on the first three commandments.

1. Rejection of God; apostasy

   There are promoters of inclusive theology and language for God who openly express hatred for and rebellion against the Father-King God of the Bible. They do not appear to love and serve the God and Jesus Christ of the Bible, wishing only to speak of them in more inclusive ways. They spew venom against them and instead profess a God and a Jesus who are quite different from the biblical ones, whom they reject as hopelessly patriarchal.

Isn't the rejection of the God of the Bible in favor of women's rights or feminist ideology or a human redefinition of God a violation of the First Commandment? Isn't it putting another god before God? Worshiping a creature instead of the Creator? Isn't the rejection of the God and the Jesus of the Bible a matter of salvation? Of course, no one is ever saved by orthodoxy or by keeping the commandments. We are saved by grace alone. But isn't it possible to reject the Lord himself by rejecting the church's biblical proclamation of him in favor of some other allegiance? This is a most serious matter.

Of course, we do not judge anyone's heart, we do not mean to suggest that all or most who promote inclusive language for God are in spiritual danger, and we do not insinuate that all inclusivists are guilty of religious rebelliousness by association. Many promoters of inclusive language for God may love the Lord and may be mistaken in doctrine unintentionally or may be disoriented by the complexity of the issues involved. But for some this could be a matter of salvation.

2. Idolatry

The Second Commandment forbids making and worshiping idols. The Heidelberg Catechism (Q. and A. 96) interprets this commandment to include representing and worshiping God in any other way than he has revealed himself in his Word. When people reject important parts of the biblical presentation of God and Jesus Christ and develop new models of God more compatible with modern ideas and feminist interests, aren't they making idols? Aren't they making their own gods or defining God according to their own interests? Gender-inclusive language for God and the theology it expresses appear dangerously close to idolatry in some cases. Is The Primal Matrix a false god or only a poor rendering of the God of Scripture?

It may seem surprising that feminist theologians frequently charge historic Christianity with idolatry—idolizing a masculine picture of God. If idolatry is representing God in creaturely form and if human males are creatures, they argue, then defining God as Father, Lord, and King is making an idol. Of course, there may be Christians who commit the sin of deifying maleness. But the feminist allegation ignores the status of the Bible as definitive divine revelation. The Heidelberg Catechism has it right: idolatry is deviating from the way God has revealed himself in his Word.

3. Blasphemy

According to the catechism (Q. and A. 99), the Third Commandment prohibits blasphemy and any misuse of God's name; it promotes use of God's name with reverence and awe, proper prayer and confession, and praise for God in all we do and say. This commandment was mentioned above in connection with the name of God (Section VII, E).

Much of the inclusivist critique of biblical and traditional Christian language for God seems to violate this commandment. The masculine titles and names, all of which are included within the biblical notion of God's name, are considered by inclusivists to be the consequence of patriarchalism and in turn the cause of more patriarchalism, which is condemned as unjust and oppressive. It is hard to see how this negative judgment of God's self-revelation reverences God, praises him, and treats his name as holy. Criticism, revision, and rejection of the Bible's language for God are not only matters of orthodoxy; they readily touch on true spirituality and piety.

4. Refusal to submit to the Word of God

The rallying cry of the Reformation was "back to Scripture, Scripture alone, all of Scripture." All of life is to be lived according to the Word of God. Reformed people do not always agree on how to interpret Scripture or on exactly what it teaches or on how precisely to relate it to current culture. But they confess that they must live by the Word of God (Heidelberg Catechism Q. and A. 21; Belgic Confession Arts. 2-7) and not forsake it for the dictates of humans.

Gender-inclusive language for God directly challenges us at this point. It is not just a new theology—such as liberalism, neoorthodoxy, or liberation theology—that affirms the language of the Bible and the theological tradition but gives that language a new interpretation. Inclusive theology wants to change the very language of the Bible and of Christian doctrine, as well as giving it a new interpretation. Thus inclusive theology is a major challenge to the status and role of Scripture in the life of God's people. There is a real reluctance among inclusivists to submit to the text of the Bible, for the Bible and gender inclusivity for God seem to be on a collision course. Instead of submitting to Scripture, inclusivist theologians move in the other direction: they edit the Bible and redefine God himself in submission to current gender sensitivities and egalitarian principles.

God's people are always faced with the temptation put to Eve: "Did God really say that?" All of us must admit that there are areas in our lives where we find it hard to submit to what God teaches us in Scripture. Most dynamics of our culture reinforce the resistant tendencies we find in ourselves. The church must not strengthen this resistance or give in to it by yielding ground to the demands of gender-inclusive language for God. Where we have been less inclusive than Scripture, we ought to become more in line with it. But where demands for inclusiveness would push us beyond the bounds of Scripture, we ought not to go. This too is not finally a matter of doctrinal purity but of humble submission to the Word of God.

5. Conclusion

The spiritual motives and attitudes surrounding gender-inclusive language for God must be taken with ultimate seriousness. While some faithful Christians may promote inclusive language for God out of compassion for victims of male abuse, or in pursuit of healthy gender relations among humans, or in ignorance of the problems with such language, or as a result of persuasion by faulty arguments, there are spiritually dangerous motivations and consequences associated with inclusive language for God. For those who get personally caught up in this movement, rejection of God and his Word, idolatry, blasphemy, and false religion are lurking threats. These are not just issues of doctrine and tradition but matters of the heart and possibly of salvation.

IX. Summary: biblical gendered language for God and inclusive language for God

Having completed our biblical and theological reflections, we now pause to summarize the conclusions we have reached regarding gendered language for God and our evaluation of contemporary inclusive language for God. On the basis of these conclusions, subsequent sections consider the pastoral and

practical dimensions of gendered language for God and present a policy for its appropriate use.

A. Biblical gendered language for God

1. As the Spirit-inspired, infallible, written Word of God, Holy Scripture is normative for all human language for God, including language that arises in the history of the church's reflections on Scripture, in Christian religious experience, and in the human experience of God's general revelation. Language for God that arises from extrabiblical sources must faithfully reflect and unfold the biblical presentation of God, not alter or undermine it.

2. The biblical pattern of language for God is normative for two reasons. First, since the Bible is (among other things) the written record of God's self-disclosure, the pattern of its language expresses the way God has willed to reveal himself in history, and we should not seek to be wiser than God in our language about him. Second, Scripture itself teaches that only God can name himself and that we ought to honor "the name of the Lord," that is, all of God's self-revelation, in all we think, say, and do. Thus, as stated in the Conclusion of the Canons of Dort, believers ought "to think and also speak with Scripture according to the analogy of faith."

3. All human language for God, including biblical language, is creaturely and therefore cannot exhaustively define or fully describe God in himself. All our language for God is analogical or metaphorical, including gendered language. Thus when Scripture presents God as a masculine person—King, Lord, Father, and all the others—it does so in an analogical or metaphorical way.

4. Although all gendered language for God is analogical or metaphorical, there is a great difference between the patterns of masculine and feminine language for God in Scripture. The Bible speaks of God as a masculine person, using masculine names, titles, forms of address, epithets, generic designations, and all the grammatical forms (verbs, adjectives, pronouns) appropriate for masculine persons in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek syntax. The Bible does not speak of God as a feminine person in this way. However, there are a number (sixteen to twenty) of biblical images or figures of speech (similes, metaphors, a personification) that compare God as a masculine person to a female or maternal person or animal or that attribute feminine characteristics or activities to him (cross-gender imagery). The Bible's feminine imagery for God provides neither a linguistic nor a theological basis for speaking of God or to God as a feminine person.

5. The overall pattern of biblical language for God as that unfolds from the Old Testament through the New Testament should continue to be the pattern for God's people throughout their lives and for the ministry of the church. That pattern should also remain the normative framework within which extrabiblical terminology and patterns of usage are developed, understood, evaluated, and practiced.

6. As a practical generalization about gendered language, following this pattern means that Christians ought to continue to use the church's traditional, biblically based language for God and enrich it occasionally but regularly

with feminine imagery for God. Following this pattern also means that we should not speak of God as a feminine person, for example, entitling or addressing God as Mother or using feminine pronouns for God. And it means that we ought not to replace standard gendered designators of God, such as *Father, King*, and *himself* with gender-neutral language, such as *Parent, Monarch*, and *Godself*. (A more fully developed policy for the use of gendered language for God is presented in Section XI).

B. Evaluation of contemporary inclusive language for God

The central mandate of this study is to evaluate inclusive language for God. In this report we have defined inclusive language for God to mean gender-egalitarian language as understood in mainstream theological and ecclesiastical circles (Section III, D above), the precise parallel of inclusive language for humans. To eliminate the primacy of masculine language, inclusive language for God employs two general strategies: using masculine and feminine language equally and using gender-neutral language. In what follows we summarize the evaluations of these strategies, which have been developed in previous sections of the report.

1. Equal use of masculine and feminine language for God

In contemporary theological circles, full gender-inclusiveness in language for God requires that masculine and feminine terms be given equality in two senses: they must be used in the same ways and in the same quantities. If masculine names, titles, forms of address, and pronouns are used, roughly the same number of feminine names, titles, forms of address, and pronouns must also be used to guarantee gender balance and equality. According to this position, God must be Father and Mother, he and she.

This linguistic practice deviates from the biblical pattern in both senses of equality. First, Scripture does not use masculine and feminine language for God in the same ways. Personal designation of God is categorically masculine. All the feminine language for God is figurative. The egalitarian strategy obliterates this fundamental and substantive distinction, treating feminine imagery as equivalent to personal designators or confusing the masculine language of personal designation with figurative language. Second, there is no quantitative equality of gendered language for God in Scripture. There are thousands and thousands of indisputably masculine references to God and fewer than two dozen feminine references. On both counts, gender-egalitarian language for God is significantly and substantially different from the pattern of Scripture (cf. VII, D).

Gender-inclusive language for God not only deviates from the biblical pattern of language; it also changes the meaning of the Bible's presentation of God. First, it alters the historical identity of the God who revealed himself to Israel and in Jesus Christ. Second, gender-inclusive language implicitly changes the content of such basic Christian doctrines as the Trinity and the deity of Jesus Christ (cf. VIII, C).

Approval of inclusive language for God may be the result of an unacceptable view of Scripture, one which does not regard the Bible or its pattern of language for God as the final norm. Such views of Scripture consider Scripture to be a merely human book, or hold that its message is inspired but its words are not, or adopt a canon within the canon, or place religious experience on the same level as Scripture itself (cf. V, E and VIII, B).

However, approval of gender-inclusive language for God may also result from faulty interpretation of Scripture or flawed linguistic analysis (cf. VII, D). An example of faulty theological interpretation of Scripture is the view that the Bible's masculine language for God is an accommodation to sinful cultural patterns, such as polygamy and divorce, and is not the definitive teaching of Scripture. An example of faulty linguistic analysis is the confusion, mentioned above, between personal designators for God, which imply personal gender, and imagery for God, which does not.

2. Gender-neutral language for God

The other current strategy for avoiding the biblical tradition's masculine language for God is the use of gender-neutral language. Instead of *Father, Lord,* and *King*, inclusivists speak of *Parent, Sovereign*, and *Monarch*. Instead of using the masculine pronoun *he*, they avoid pronouns altogether, simply repeating *God* or coining new terms such as *Godself* to replace *himself*. There are several problematic issues here.

A minor point is simply the issue of good style. Repeating *God* without ever using pronouns and creating artificial parts of language like *Godself* (is it a noun or pronoun?) are questionable practices in terms of the standards of good English.

A more substantial problem is the loss of biblical meaning. In many cases, gender-neutral terms do not preserve the personal identity and intimacy of the God of Scripture. *Parent* is just not as close as *Father. Parent and Child* does not express the inner life of the Trinity as *Father and Son* does; nor does it express their relationship in history. The phrase *Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier* identifies three functions; it does not name three persons as does *Father, Son, and Holy Spirit* (cf. VIII, C).

A third problem is at the root of all inclusive language for God: it subjects Scripture and God himself to culture's current gender sensitivities. Even if substituting *Monarch* for *King* and *Sovereign* for *Lord* does not seem to lose essential theological meaning, it still imposes gender neutrality on the text of Scripture. If we strive to make our Bible translations and our language for God as genderless as possible, we appear more eager to conform to current cultural values than to the particularities of God's self-revelation in history.

X. Pastoral dimensions of gendered language for God

In this section we reflect on the pastoral dimensions of inclusive language for God, as mandated. The pastoral concerns arising from language for God are of two main kinds: the challenges to God's people which arise because of the conflicts between inclusive language for God and biblical Christianity and the problems in gender relations that are part of the motivation for inclusive language for God. After first identifying areas of pastoral concern, we make suggestions for ministry that use appropriate gendered language for God and address problems in gender relations, and finally we present statements of pastoral advice.

A. Areas of pastoral concern

1. True spirituality and piety

The dangerous spiritual dynamics (apostasy, idolatry, blasphemy) identified in Section VIII, G are the most basic pastoral concern about inclusive

language for God: this language is sometimes associated with false religion. Some of those who oppose biblical Christianity promote inclusive language for God as part of their cause. And some of those who have adopted inclusive language for God in the name of biblical Christianity appear to have been swept away from the faith. Clearly, language for God can be a matter of true religion and salvation.

We must not forget that it is also a deeply spiritual matter for those who find themselves emotionally unable to relate to the masculine presentation of God in Scripture and in the language of the church. In Section II we identified ways in which the effects of sinful gender relations have made it difficult, if not impossible, for some people to relate positively to God, even though they would dearly love to. We noted the woman who could only relive sexual abuse when someone prayed "our Father" and the man whose only link to the loving God was through his mother. These people are not rebels against God; they are his suffering children who often feel guilty as well as spiritually alienated because they have difficulty responding to him. They too are a pastoral concern of the church. If inclusive language for God is not an appropriate strategy for helping these sisters and brothers, alternatives must be found.

2. Fidelity to Scripture and sound doctrine

Inclusive language for God raises several matters of pastoral concern regarding Scripture and sound doctrine.

a. Confidence in the Bible

The trustworthiness of Scripture is directly tied to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and is the foundation for believers' assurance of God's love and guidance. If the language of Scripture, which is integral to the identity of God himself as we know him, is either a sexist misrepresentation of God or is so loosely tied to who God is that it can be changed to inclusive language without loss of meaning, then Christians have good reason to doubt that the Bible is the reliable, infallible, trustworthy revelation of God as confessed by the historic Christian church. The adoption of inclusive language for God will undermine believers' trust in the reliability of Scripture.

b. The language of Scripture as formative of the Christian faith

Modern studies confirm the ancient wisdom that the language we use is part of what shapes our beliefs, attitudes, and way of life. This is why feminists are so concerned about inclusive language. The piety and life pattern of Christians have always been shaped by the language of the Bible and the use of biblical language in worship and in the other means of forming Christian piety, doctrine, and our vision of life. Adopting inclusive language for God in Scripture, in the creeds, in liturgy and hymns, and in the educational material of the church will inevitably reshape the faith-language of ordinary Christians. This language in turn will redefine their understanding of the doctrines of the Christian faith, their experience of the faith, and the way it shapes their lives. The community that adopts inclusive language for God will inevitably shift in doctrine and piety from the God of the Bible to a modern human substitute.

The life-shaping function of language should also work to address misunderstandings of God and of the relationship between the human genders. It is not difficult for theologically uneducated people to make the mistake of concluding from the Bible's masculine language for God that God is "the Man upstairs," thinking of God almost literally as a great big human male. And it is even easier for sinful human beings to conclude, perhaps subconsciously, that human males are privileged because of their supposedly greater resemblance to God and that human females are somehow inferior and subordinate. Many conscientious Christians may suffer from these misunderstandings of Scripture and may harm others with them. This report does not deal with inclusive language for humans, which is a topic distinct from inclusive language for God, but it does note that the language of the Christian community can perpetuate misunderstandings of the biblical view of God and of human gender relations that hurt people and are legitimately criticized by feminist theologians. These misunderstandings and hurts are pastoral concerns.

c. The Bible and culture

1) The antithesis between Scripture and inclusive language for God

We confess that Scripture is the final authority for faith and life, including our engagement with contemporary culture. But it is a constant struggle for the church and for individual Christians to understand what Scripture tells us about our culture. And it is an even greater challenge to follow Scripture in our attitudes and our lives and not to give in to the forces of culture.

There is a clear conflict between the Bible and the contemporary ideal of gender inclusivism. The Bible does not give a gender-inclusive presentation of God. The contemporary ideal of inclusivism demands that the Bible and God himself bow before it. It is a matter of pastoral concern that God's people remain faithful to Scripture and not accommodate a cultural value contrary to it. It will be a great challenge to use feminine imagery for God in ways that are faithful to Scripture and that do not promote what is false about the inclusivism of our age.

2) The relevance of Scripture to the problems of gender relations

We have acknowledged sin and evil in the way males and females relate in human society. The CRC has begun to face the problem of abuse within its own families. We have admitted that we have not always valued women and their gifts as fully as we ought to have valued them. The Bible both convicts us of the sinful patterns of gender relations in our families, churches, and society at large and shows us the Lord's will. The Father God of the Bible has created males and females to bear his image equally. The basis for human rights and gender rights is God's will as expressed in the order of creation and stated in Scripture. The power of the Word of God and the good news it brings must be directed by the church at the gender-relation problems that exist in its own bosom and in society. It is a pastoral concern that Christians not hide God's Word under a basket by failing to hear and obey it or by diluting it with inclusive language for God. What many inclusivist theologians do not realize is that the Bible as given is precisely what is needed as the firm foundation and reliable guide for

addressing the problems of gender relations and the related spiritual problems that inclusivists rightly decry.

d. Flexibility in the use of scriptural gendered language for God

We have rejected contemporary inclusive language for God and have affirmed the biblical pattern of gendered language for God. We now point out the appropriateness of and need for flexibility in the use of gendered language for God within the biblical pattern. This is very important for various kinds of ministry that deal with sinful gender relations, as becomes evident in the suggestions for ministry and the policy for gendered language for God presented below.

Two examples illustrate permissible flexibility within obedience to the teaching of Scripture. Just as the general rule that Christians ought not to work on the Sabbath should not be enforced legalistically but should allow for work of necessity and mercy, so, too, affirmation of the biblical pattern of gendered language for God should acknowledge that there may be special situations that call for flexible application of the general rule. Another example of flexibility can be seen in the use of specific passages and teachings of Scripture for particular pastoral needs. While we affirm Scripture in its entirety, we typically select relevant parts of it for the sick and dying, for the young and vigorous, for the wayward, for times of peace and prosperity, or for times of war and social turmoil. In the same way, it is appropriate and sometimes necessary to focus on Scripture's feminine imagery and gender-neutral terminology for God in ministering to those who find it difficult to relate to the Bible's masculine presentation of God. The precise limits of flexibility cannot be formulated in advance; they must be determined by Spirit-led pastoral wisdom as it applies the biblical pattern of language for God in specific situations.

3. Obedient living: addressing problems in gender relations

Christians must not only confess the power of God's Word for all of life; they must also be vehicles of that power and conform themselves to its direction. It is a pastoral challenge for the church to disciple its members in developing obedient attitudes and patterns in their own gender relations in marriage, in family, in the church, and in various social relationships. It is important for the church to teach and model proper gender relations in its own ministries. It must fully affirm the value and gifts of both its female and male members, whether or not women are permitted to hold office. And through its preaching, teaching, discipling, and diaconal work, the church must seek to play its proper role in addressing the sexism, injustice, abuse, and neglect that plague gender relations in our society.

B. The use of gendered language for God in the ministries of the church

1. Worship and preaching

Feminine imagery for God has largely been absent from the language of worship and preaching in the Christian Reformed Church, as in most denominations. Full use of and conformity to Scripture requires that the Bible's feminine imagery be occasionally but regularly included and reflected on in worship and preaching. This would take place by way of carefully introducing this imagery within the church's traditional biblically based language of worship, including prayers, litanies, and selected liturgical

formulas. Hymns that include feminine imagery for God and that conform to denominational policy (Section XI) can be written or identified, made known to the churches, and eventually incorporated into the *Psalter Hymnal*. Adding feminine imagery would not involve revision of the church's basic pattern of confessional or liturgical language.

Sermons can incorporate Scripture's feminine imagery for God and address issues surrounding it in a number of ways. Sermons on texts that use such imagery, such as Isaiah 49:15 or Psalm 131, would be the most direct approach. Such sermons could emphasize that God's love is like the warm, close, supportive, unconditional love that we receive from our mothers, a spiritually important reality for males and females. Acknowledging the Bible's feminine imagery and addressing the claims of feminist theology would also be appropriate in sermons, such as catechism sermons, that proclaim the doctrine of the Trinity or the fatherhood of God through Jesus Christ. Of crucial importance in preaching the fatherhood of God is highlighting the biblical emphasis on his faithful love and unceasing care, characteristics lacking in many human fathers and in feminist caricatures of God as the oppressive Arch-Patriarch. Finally, sermon illustrations using women and mothers to exemplify God's attributes, attitudes, and actions are perfectly consistent with Scripture and the conclusions of this report. These and other strategies for using feminine imagery in preaching are not only legitimate but necessary for full conformity to the biblical presentation of God.

In addition, in worship settings where masculine language is emotionally difficult for some members, it may be pastorally wise and appropriate to use somewhat less masculine language and somewhat more gender-neutral language for God than in the biblical-traditional pattern. Simple acknowledgment of and sensitivity to their problem may be very helpful to such people. However, this practice should still conform to the biblical pattern and synodical policy for gendered language for God as a whole. It should not even implicitly seem to support the allegation that the biblical pattern is emotionally unhealthy or to make any other criticism of Scripture (see "Pastoral counseling" below for more on flexibility within the biblical pattern for the sake of spiritual therapy).

2. Church education

The educational programs of the church are a primary arena in which the meaning of the Bible's feminine imagery for God can be explored and explained. Perhaps the Sunday-school curriculum for the younger children does not offer much opportunity, since it focuses mainly on Bible history, where such imagery does not occur. But when young people learn the catechism and Reformed doctrine, they have a number of opportunities to discuss the Trinity, whether *Father* and *Son* really attribute gender to God in himself, how human males and females both image God equally, and how males and females are equally valuable and gifted in God's sight even though God presents himself in masculine terms in Scripture. (*Note*: We teach regarding the Lord's Supper that "this is my body" is really true but not literally true; it is no more difficult to teach that "God is our Father" is really true but not literally true.) Adult-education classes provide opportunities to deal with these issues in even more depth. Perhaps gendered language for God can be selected as a topic for extended study, and this synodical report can provide material for discussion.

Wherever the topic of gendered language for God is encountered in church-education programs, it is important to present both the biblical-confessional position and the main contemporary inclusive-language positions so that people can distinguish them and understand why the biblical material does not warrant gender-inclusive language for God in its various forms.

3. Pastoral counseling

The devastating consequences of abuse, neglect, and injustice, most of them caused by male power figures, is painfully evident in the lives of many people, both Christians and non-Christians, both males and females. In Section II of the report we noted the adverse effects of these sins on the spiritual lives of people, especially on their ability to relate positively to the God of the Bible, who is presented as a masculine person. It may be emotionally impossible for a woman sexually abused by her father to close her eyes and pray to God as her heavenly Father, even if she dearly wants to. She may be able only to reexperience the weight of her father's body on her. It may be that the only way a man who was abandoned by his father can feel that God loves him is by relating to God in terms of the love which his mother had for him. We noted too how these difficult situations motivate some Christians to adopt feminine or gender-neutral language for God, avoiding God as Father.

The conclusions of this study reject inclusive language for God as commonly understood and reaffirm biblically patterned language. In this regard, two points must be made about counseling those who suffer from the sins of sexism, abuse, and neglect.

First, the gospel as presented in Scripture is ultimately what victims of these sins need for their healing. They need to hear and experience the good news that, through Jesus Christ, God is our loving Father and we are his children. Even if our fathers and mothers abandon us, the Lord will always love and care for us. His love is like the love of our fathers and mothers but much greater than theirs. Victims need to hear that the God of the Bible condemns injustice and abuse, will punish it, and will vindicate the innocent. Many people who have suffered in these ways have testified that the God of the Bible, our heavenly Father, is precisely what they needed for their personal healing and wholeness. Abandoning biblical language for God and adopting feminine or gender-neutral terminology not only elevates a therapeutic strategy over Scripture but also robs victims of what they need most for their complete healing, the God who has revealed himself as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Second, pastoral wisdom must inform counseling strategy and may warrant flexibility in the use of the biblical pattern of language for God. It may be necessary or desirable when counseling some victims of neglect or abuse to avoid emphasizing God as Father at the outset. If a person has deep emotional antipathy to father figures or males in general, it may be best initially to use more gender-neutral terminology from Scripture when speaking of God and praying. If a mother, aunt, female neighbor, or woman teacher has enabled the counselee to feel loved and affirmed, it may be best initially to speak of the love of God and perhaps even to pray using feminine imagery (cf. XI, C). If the lack of a mother's love is part of the counselee's pain, emphasis on the Lord's mother-like love may be precisely what is needed.

However, the aim of pastoral counseling and thus of this therapeutic strategy must be to work steadily toward a positive relationship with the God of the Bible. This approach will not employ feminine imagery and gender-neutral language as a permanent solution. Emotional and spiritual health involves affirmation of God as Father and experience of his love. In this way the biblically normative pattern of gendered language for God is affirmed even if the strategy for counseling a particular person begins by using only a part of it (cf. A, 2, d, "Flexibility," above).

Similarly, people who have emotional difficulty with the biblical pattern of language but who are not in pastoral counseling or therapy may wish for a time to use some feminine imagery for God in their personal devotions as part of their Christian growth in piety and spiritual health. Here, too, however, it is important that the biblical pattern is recognized as normative and that the goal of this strategy of devotional language is spiritual health, which grows beyond discomfort with the biblical pattern. This strategy ought not to become a permanent alternative to the biblical pattern.

4. Evangelism

Presenting the gospel to people who are influenced by feminist ideology or who are sensitive to the sins of gender relations may also require tactical flexibility in choice of language. Evangelists and missionaries have recognized the need to communicate the gospel in language intelligible to the hearer and not to give unnecessary offense (the real "offense of the gospel" must never be blunted, however). It may be wise in witnessing to some contemporary people to use more feminine imagery and gender-neutral language for God than found in Scripture or in the normal speech patterns of the Christian community. In addition, it will always be important to stress that the God of Scripture has created all humans in his image, that he abhors injustice and abuse, and that he defends the weak and oppressed. It will also be helpful to point out that the "masculine" God of Scripture is different from sinful human fathers and the caricature of the biblical God presented in some contemporary feminist theology.

This evangelistic strategy, like the therapeutic method suggested above, affirms the biblical pattern of language for God as a whole, but it begins with only a certain part of it in order to make a significant hearing of the gospel possible. If the Holy Spirit uses this contact to change the hearer's heart, openness to the God of the Bible and the language of Scripture will surely follow. Discipleship in the Christian faith, even for a former radical feminist, will involve love and praise of our heavenly Father through Jesus Christ.

5. Promotion of health and justice in gender relations

As noted in Sections II and III, abuse, neglect, injustice, and the devaluation of women are important reasons why some people advocate inclusive language for God. God's people are called to oppose these sins and to minister to those who suffer from them so that justice and health result.

The church must proclaim God's will for the relations between husbands and wives, parents and children, and men and women in society at large. It must call God's people to obey his will for gender relations in all of their lives—their marriages, families, places of work, and their participation in the economic, social, cultural, and political dimensions of life. Further, the church must recognize the full humanity and giftedness of women in its

own life and ministry. It must enable women to realize that they image God as much as men do, that they have significant gifts to contribute to the life of the church, and that their use of these gifts is a valued and significant part of the life and ministry of the body of Christ.

In these ways the church can address problems that motivate inclusive language for God without endorsing it. The church will then demonstrate that the God of the Bible, though presented as masculine, is the only sure foundation and guarantee of gender health and justice among men and women. Thereby it will demonstrate in practice that a basic feminist charge against biblical Christianity—that it is by nature oppressive to females—is false. And it will demonstrate repentance for the ways in which the church has historically failed to esteem women and affirm their gifts. If the church stands for gender health and justice as resolutely as it stands for biblical language for God, the impetus for inclusive language for God will diminish. If the church does not stand for gender health and justice, its call for biblical language for God will continue to grate on or ring hollow in the ears of people sensitive to these matters.

An important point must be made here: the preceding statement on justice in gender relations can be endorsed by all members of the CRC whatever their views of headship and the ordination of women are. The statement is meant to call us all to affirming women and using their gifts as fully as possible according to the will of God. And it admits that we have not always done that in the past. The statement does not take positions on exactly what headship in marriage entails, whether headship extends beyond marriage, and whether it is within God's will to ordain women. Further, the statement does not take a position on specific issues of women's rights in society or on the ways and extent to which the social order is sinfully sexist. Our intention is to enable the denomination to adopt a position on gendered language for God without having to resolve issues that are associated with language for it but not essential to it.

C. Pastoral advice

We recommend that synod approve the following points of pastoral advice in implementing denominational policy for the use of gendered language for God.

1. Congregational leaders ought to promote the education of their members about the nature of gendered language for God in Scripture and the synodically adopted policy for its use so that false ideas about the relationship of God to gender are corrected and biblically shaped linguistic practices are fostered.

2. Congregational leaders are encouraged to use Scripture's wide variety of language for God, including feminine imagery, in worship and other congregational contexts with fidelity to synodical policy and sensitivity to their congregations' needs and concerns.

3. Poets, hymnodists, preachers, liturgists, and church educators are encouraged to write and publish material that employs a variety of language for God, including feminine imagery, according to synodical policy.

4. The church and its members must exercise sound judgment so that the manner and circumstances of their use of legitimate biblical feminine

imagery and gender-neutral language for God are not misunderstood as promoting standard inclusive language for God.

5. The church must warn its members of the false teachings and spiritually dangerous aspects of many kinds of contemporary feminism, feminist theology, and promotions of inclusive language for God.

6. The church must deal pastorally with those of its members who favor the gender-inclusive language for God rejected by this report. Inclusive language for God is a complex issue which is in part motivated by legitimate complaints about gender injustice and harm and is supported by arguments which, though faulty, do not always involve unorthodox theology, unconfessional views of Scripture, or resistance to God. Only where members fail to respond should discipline be considered.

7. The church must acknowledge that many people—males and especially females—have been hurt in various ways by male abuse of power and authority. The church must seek to minister the gospel to these people in ways that are effective for their emotional, relational, and spiritual healing.

8. The church must proclaim in word and deed the biblical understanding of human gender and gender relations so that both its female and male members fully experience that they are equal in imaging God, equal in Christ, and equally gifted by the Holy Spirit to be prophets, priests, and kings, whatever the differences in their God-given natures and roles.

(*Note*: Statements 8 and 9 can be affirmed regardless of one's position on headship and the ordination of women.)

9. The church must call upon its members to promote justice and well-being for women and men wherever false notions of gender and sinful gender relations have caused injustice and harm.

XI. Policy for the use of gendered language for God

The following statement is derived from the biblical, theological, and pastoral conclusions of this study. Since gendered language for God is multifaceted and complex, commentary and illustrations are provided in order to aid understanding of the policy and its implications. Formulated primarily for English, the policy is intended to be applicable to other languages as well. The study committee recommends Sections A-D below to synod as a statement of policy on the use of gendered language for God.

A. Basis for the policy

Holy Scripture is the only infallible source from which we can know God's particular self-disclosure in human history. Scripture is the norm for our understanding of God's special revelation in the history of redemption through Jesus Christ and of his general revelation in creation and providence. Thus it is the source and norm for the way God's people speak of him and to him.

B. Principles that govern gendered language for God

1. Christians ought to speak of God in the way that Scripture speaks of God, not only in the words it uses but also in the meaning those words convey and in the overall pattern of language it presents. Translations of Scripture ought

to be as faithful to the original meaning as possible within the standard vocabulary and syntax of the language of translation.

2. Language for God that does not come explicitly from Scripture but is based on general revelation or arises from the experience of God's people or from theological reflection must faithfully reflect and unfold the biblical presentation of God, not alter, undermine, or replace it.

3. Consistent with 1 and 2 above, Christians' language for God ought to be sensitive to the needs and tasks of God's people—to be healed from the effects of sin and evil, to engage people and cultures for Christ, and to stand against the dynamics of the world that conflict with God's will.

C. *Policy for the use of gendered language for God*

1. Use primarily the standard biblical names, titles, and other designations of God

   a. Statement

      God's people must honor and continue as a regular and normal practice to use the standard divine names and titles disclosed within the progressive revelation of Scripture as the primary designators for God and forms of address to God. Principal among them in English are *God (El* and *elohim* and their variations, *theos), Lord, (Yahweh, Adonai, Kurios), Father* (as synonymous with God), and the triune name *Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Father* is especially appropriate as a title/name and as a term of address in prayer because of the teaching and example of Jesus and because of its distinctive significance in New Testament revelation. Other standard titles or personal designators of God include *the Almighty, King, Judge, Savior, Shepherd, Creator*, and *Redeemer*. There are no feminine names, titles, or other personal designators for God in Scripture, so no feminine terms should be used in these ways.

   b. Comments and illustrations

      1) Direct metaphors: personal designators or figures of speech?

         Scripture never uses language that even seems to imply feminine personal gender for God, such as *God is our mother*. However, leaders in the Christian tradition have occasionally spoken this way. Calvin comments in connection with Isaiah 46:3 that "God . . . has manifested himself to be both their Father and their Mother" (*Commentary on Isaiah* 3:436, trans. Pringle). How is this consistent with the biblical pattern? The explanation is that assertions like *God is our mother* are ambiguous: formally they can be either personal designators or metaphors (figures of speech). In principle, asserting that *God is our mother* is consistent with the biblical pattern if it is intended as a figure of speech and used in a context that indicates its figurative nature. Calvin's comments on Isaiah 46:3 clearly distinguish between *Father* as a title and the figurative use of *father* and *mother*. In the context of our culture and inclusive language for God, however, assertions like *God is our mother* are almost sure to be misunderstood as "naming" God and "correcting" the biblical pattern. For these reasons, except in unusual circumstances and with great caution, we ought to adhere in practice to the biblical pattern, which does not use direct feminine metaphors such as *God is our mother*.

2) Translation of gender-specific terms

Translation that is both faithful to Scripture and to the language of translation requires that personal terms that are gender specific in the original should normally be gender specific in the translation if possible. For example, "king" is more faithful than "monarch" as a translation of the Hebrew word *melek* and the Greek word *basileus*. If gender specificity is not possible in translation, such terms should be rendered naturally. *Judge* and *Savior* are not gender specific in English, although they are in Hebrew and Greek. If a term designating God is not gender specific in the original, it should not be gender specific in translation unless this is unavoidable, in which case it should be masculine in conformity with the biblical pattern as a whole. The trend toward making translations of language for God as gender neutral as possible even when the original has specific personal gender elevates current sensitivities over faithfulness to the text.

3) Frequency of use and substitution for names and titles

The standard biblical pattern of primary divine names and titles is compromised not only when other terms are elevated to the status of titles and names but also when other terms are used too frequently in proportion to the primary titles and names of God or are used as regular substitutes for them.

For example, loss of the biblical pattern results when God is referred to as *Father* only occasionally while many secondary biblical terms and images for God are used as frequently. The result obscures the New Testament centrality and definitive nature of God as *Father* in the discourse and consciousness of the Christian community. Likewise, if feminine images are regularly paired with masculine titles in an attempt to achieve gender balance (e.g., "the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, one God, a mother to us all" used as a regular liturgical formula), their difference is muted, and the biblical pattern is compromised. The standard biblical terms for God ought to be used regularly and normally; the less-common terms ought to be used occasionally.

A common example of compromising divine names and titles by substitution is the practice of regularly using such gender-neutral triads as *Creator, Redeemer, and Comforter* to replace the triune name *Father, Son, and Holy Spirit*. Designating God by three divine functions is neither linguistically nor theologically equivalent to naming the three persons of the Godhead. While the use of such triadic labels is not improper, their trinitarian meaning is defined only by *Father, Son, and Holy Spirit*. So the triune name must be invoked regularly enough to provide the framework of meaning for these variations. Furthermore, substitutions ought r ot to occur when only the triune name or the name of the Father is appropriate, as in the administration of the sacraments and in the use of biblical greetings and blessings that include *Father* or *Father, Son, and Holy Spirit*.

4) Use of original-language names and titles

The names and titles of God have a history and meaning within the progressive revelation of the canon. The language of the Christian community ought to reflect the language of the full New Testament appropriation of the Old Testament. Primary use of Old Testament

language to avoid the alleged sexism of some New Testament terms conflicts with the progressive revelation of Scripture. Primary use of Hebrew, Greek, or Aramaic terms to avoid the alleged sexism of translations suppresses the full meaning of Scripture for those not familiar with the significance of the original. In addition, both strategies implicitly validate the false charge that biblical language for God is sexist.

An example of wrongly favoring the Old Testament is the primary use of Hebrew words such as *Yahweh, Adonai*, and *El Shaddai* as names for God in order to avoid *Father* and *Lord*, which some people allege to attribute domineering masculinity to God. These Hebrew terms and their meanings have all been assimilated into the New Testament language for God. They should be used when Old Testament texts are being read or explained and for special emphases but not as regular untranslated substitutes for the standard New Testament names and titles of God.

An example of inappropriate favoring of the original language is the use of the New Testament Aramaic word *abba* for God as a standard replacement for *Father*. This strategy fails to communicate the biblical meaning of *abba* (respectful but familiar *father*) and thus does not conform to the principle of faithful translation.

5) Addressing God in ways not used in Scripture

Throughout the history of the church Christians have sometimes addressed God using terms and images for God that are biblical but not used as forms of address to God in Scripture. *Heavenly Potter, Desire of the Nations, Keeper of Leviathan*, and *True and Only Light* are examples. Addressing God in these ways is not objectionable if the frequency and manner of this practice do not challenge the status of the standard biblical names and titles as forms of address.

In principle, feminine and maternal biblical imagery for God can also be used this way, but it should be used in ways that indicate that the language is figurative. *O Lord, you are like a nursing mother to us* and *O God who has given birth to your people* are acceptable examples. Addressing God as *Our Mother in Heaven* or praying *O God, our mother*, even if intended figuratively, cannot be distinguished in practice from using a name, title, or other personal designator. Forms of address that are not clearly figurative can be confusing and therefore ought to be avoided, especially in the contemporary context of inclusive language for God, where they are likely to be misunderstood.

2. Use the variety of biblical language for God

a. Statement

Following Scripture's standard pattern of primary language for God, the people of God are encouraged to use the Bible's wide variety of secondary language for God, including feminine imagery and figures of speech such as *midwife* and *mother*, terms for God from nature such as *rock* and *fire*, and words for inanimate objects such as *shield* and *fortress*, always striving to retain the biblical meaning of such language.

b. Comments and illustrations

1) The purpose of variety

The point of this practice is not to encourage linguistic variety for its own sake or merely to promote inclusiveness but to acknowledge and benefit from the entirety of Scripture's presentation of God. Attention must be paid to the biblical meaning of these terms for God, which must guide their use. Calling God *our Rock*, for example, should be done in a way that reflects the meaning of the term as found in the Bible. In Scripture *Rock* connotes God's unwavering reliability as defender of his people. Its biblical meaning is not, for example, God's solidarity with or immanence in nature, a significance the term is sometimes given in contemporary ecological theology. The same principle holds true for our use of the Bible's feminine imagery for God. For instance, the point of Hosea's image of a mother bear is to depict God's wrath against covenant unfaithfulness, not to display a feminine side of God.

2) Status and frequency

Within the whole pattern of biblical language for God, the variety of Scripture's imagery and its less-frequent designations for God is intended to illuminate and enrich its primary identification of God, not to obscure or relativize it. Thus feminine, natural, and artifactual imagery (*shield, fortress*) for God ought to be used occasionally and illustratively in keeping with its role in Scripture. It ought not to be used so frequently or prominently that the biblical presentation of God is altered or obscured.

3. Use masculine pronouns (and other gendered elements of language) appropriately

a. Statement

Since the personal designators for God in Scripture are masculine, it is linguistically necessary and appropriate to use masculine pronouns (and other linguistic elements and structures that reflect personal gender, in languages where they occur) for God. Since there are no feminine personal designators for God in Scripture (with the possible exception of Spirit in the Old Testament), it is linguistically inappropriate to use feminine pronouns (and other linguistic structures that imply personal gender) for God.

b. Comments and illustrations

1) Pronouns in figures of speech

It is legitimate to use feminine pronouns that are integral to images or figures of speech, since they are not personal designators of God. Thus *God is like a mother who nurses her children* is appropriate. But *God nurses her children* is inappropriate.

2) The Holy Spirit

A question remains with respect to the appropriate English pronoun for the Holy Spirit. The Bible clearly presents the personhood but not the gender of the Holy Spirit, which in various places may be feminine, masculine, or neuter. Although a case can be made for referring to the Spirit as *she* in some Old Testament passages or as *it* in the New Testament, there are also weighty considerations, based on the

progressive revelation of the personhood of the Spirit, that count against both options as a general policy. Since only the masculine gender is found in both Old and New Testament, there is biblical support for the English-language tradition that refers to the Holy Spirit as *he*.

3) Complete avoidance of pronouns

Some English speakers attempt to avoid all personal pronouns for God by repeating the word *God* or by coining new terms like *Godself*. But this practice is linguistically and stylistically problematic. More seriously, adopting this usage implicitly validates the false charge that using masculine pronouns for God is sexist and distorts our understanding of God. Thus English-speaking Christians ought not to avoid all (masculine) pronouns for God. However, there are languages, such as Korean, that naturally almost never use pronouns for God, in part in order to express biblical respect for him. For speakers of those languages the linguistic and theological objections of avoiding pronouns do not arise, and therefore the practice is appropriate.

4) Appropriate reduction of superfluous pronouns

Although masculine pronouns for God in English should not be eliminated, it is certainly permissible to reduce their number to what is necessary for good style and faithful communication of the biblical presentation of God. In fact, it may be pastorally desirable to do so, according to the stated principles governing use of gendered language for God (XI, B, 3 above), out of sensitivity to those who experience the heavily masculine language of Scripture for God as emotionally problematic.

4. Use extrabiblical language for God that conforms to biblical language

a. Statement

Christians may use language not found in Scripture, including feminine language, to speak of God provided that its extrabiblical status is recognized; that it is not intended to alter, correct, or detract from the normative character of biblical language; that it faithfully reflects, elaborates, or illustrates the meaning of the biblical language; and that its frequency of use accords with its secondary and dependent status.

b. Comments and illustrations

1) Examples of appropriate and inappropriate extrabiblical language

Just as theologians have coined such terms as *Trinity, Intelligent Designer*, and *Necessary Being* for God, so poets have called God *the Hound of Heaven* (Francis Thompson), and storytellers have represented Christ as the lion Aslan (C.S. Lewis) to restate and vivify biblical truths. Similarly, preachers throughout the ages have faithfully explained the word of God using countless extrabiblical illustrations of God and his ways with us. In the same way it is legitimate occasionally to speak of God in extrabiblical figures of speech associated with maternal and feminine qualities and characteristics—figures such as *grandmother, nanny*, and *wet-nurse* (Calvin's image)—to represent biblical truths. However, *Soul of the World* and *Womb of All Life* are extrabiblical images that are more suggestive of panentheism or paganism than they are of the God of the Scripture. Thus they are inappropriate.

2) Extrabiblical terms as forms of addressing God

In principle it may not be inappropriate in special circumstances to address God using extrabiblical terminology. Christians have occasionally begun prayers by invoking the Hound of Heaven, the Great Architect, or the Ground of All Being. If this practice is legitimate, then in principle it is not inappropriate occasionally to address God using feminine imagery not found in the Bible, provided its nonbiblical status and figurative nature are recognized and made clear. In practice, however, this mode of address is difficult to distinguish from giving God new names and titles and from employing standard inclusive language for God. It therefore should be avoided in all but the most exceptional circumstances.

3) Potential for misrepresentation

Care must also be taken that extrabiblical language not misrepresent the God of Scripture because of cultural or worldview connotations foreign to the Bible. For example, Francis Thompson's "Hound of Heaven" is a striking image of God's unflagging pursuit of a fleeing sinner. It works well in the Victorian English world of hunting dogs and landed gentry. It would be a problem, however, in a culture where dogs are considered low and unclean creatures. This same care must be taken in using extrabiblical feminine language for God. In one context it might be a healing vehicle for accurately communicating the love of the God of Scripture. In another context it might be taken as a declaration of solidarity with contemporary inclusivist critiques of biblical Christianity.

5. Contexts that may require flexibility

a. Statement

The standard language of the people of God ought to reflect the principles and patterns embodied in this policy statement. However, as is generally the case when Christians seek to apply the teachings of Scripture, there may be special circumstances and activities which call for flexible application of these rules (cf. X, A, 2, d and Principle B, 3). Spirit-led good judgment oriented to the broad pattern of Scripture must guide the use of language for God in activities such as pastoral counseling, personal devotions, evangelism, poetry, and art, where some flexibility may be appropriate and necessary, as long as the exceptions do not undermine the rule.

b. Illustrations

1) Pastoral counseling

In counseling some people who find the masculine language for God in Scripture to be emotionally difficult, it may be appropriate for a time to use feminine imagery and ungendered language for God primarily or with greater frequency than in the biblical pattern in order to promote healing, that is, until they reach the point where the language of Scripture is no longer experienced as problematic but redemptive.

2) Personal devotions

In personal devotions it may be appropriate to employ biblical or extrabiblical feminine imagery for God more frequently than in the

language of public worship and ordinary Christian discourse, provided the standard biblical pattern of language for God continues to define one's faith and shape one's piety.

3) Evangelism

A similar strategy of pastoral flexibility may be appropriate in evangelism with people who initially react negatively to the Bible's masculine language for God. Acceptance of Jesus as Savior and Lord will bring with it acceptance of God as Father. If the gospel as such remains a scandal to such people, so will its linguistic particularities.

4) Poetry and art

Variation in the language and imagery for God, both biblical and extrabiblical, is appropriate for Christian poets and artists to a greater extent, for example, than for writers of doctrinal, ecclesiastical, and liturgical material, Bible-study curricula, and hymns, which should more carefully follow the biblical pattern since they directly express and shape the faith of the people of God. Aslan is fitting as the primary symbol for Christ in C.S. Lewis's Narnia books but not in the worship or teaching ministry of the church.

D. Summary of the policy

The following statements are offered as a simple summary of the policy. They should not be used as a substitute to avoid the specific implications worked out above.

1. Follow the pattern of biblical language for God, speaking and writing of God the way Scripture does and using extrabiblical language for God that conforms to the biblical pattern and its meaning (XI, B, 1, 2).

2. Use the standard biblical names and titles (such as *God, Lord, the Almighty, Father,* and *Father, Son, and Holy Spirit)* and basic designations of God (such as *Creator, Redeemer, Savior, Judge,* and *King)* normally and primarily (XI, C, 1).

3. Do not use feminine names, titles, or other personal designations for God (XI, C, 1).

4. Supplement the standard terms for God with the variety of secondary biblical language for God, including feminine imagery, in appropriate proportions (XI, C, 2).

5. Do not avoid the gender specificity of biblical language for God (XI, C, 1, b, 2)).

6. Use masculine pronouns for God as required, but no feminine pronouns (XI, C, 3).

7. Use extrabiblical terms and images, including feminine imagery, that conform to the biblical pattern of language for God (XI, C, 4).

8. If occasionally addressing God with extrabiblical language, use language that conforms to the biblical pattern and its meaning (XI, C, 1, b, 5) and XI, C, 4, b, 2)).

9. If it is warranted in certain ministry situations, use more feminine imagery and gender-neutral language for God than normal as long as this practice aims at conformity to the biblical pattern (XI, C, 5).

10. Do not use feminine imagery and gender-neutral language for God in ways or circumstances in which this practice is likely to be confused with contemporary inclusive language for God (X, C, 4 and XI, C, 1, 2, 4, and 5).

E. Examples of hymns that conform and do not conform to the policy

These hymns are presented as illustrations of appropriate and inappropriate use of language for God. They are not intended to be included in the statement of policy recommended for adoption by synod.

1. Examples that conform to the policy

   a. The old Bohemian Brethren hymn "Sing Praise to God Who Reigns Above" contains maternal imagery for God that is completely consistent with the biblical pattern and the recommended policy for gendered language for God. Stanza three (as found in *Hymns for the Family of God*, 343) reads as follows:

      The Lord is never far away,
      But, through all grief distressing,
      An ever-present help and stay,
      Our peace, and joy, and blessing;
      As with a mother's tender hand,
      He leads His own, His chosen band:
      To God all praise and glory.

   b. "My God, How Wonderful You Are" (*Psalter Hymnal*, 499) contains a parallel comparison of fathers and mothers to God in stanza 5:

      No earthly father loves like you,
      no mother half so mild
      bears and forbears as you have done
      with me, your sinful child.

   c. The inclusion of two traditional hymns as positive examples is not meant to suggest that there are no contemporary hymns that use feminine imagery appropriately.

2. An example that does not conform to the policy

   a. Brian Wren's "Bring Many Names" (copyright 1989 Hope Publishing Co.; see B. Wren, *What Language Shall I Borrow?* pp. 137-38, and *Reformed Worship* 17: 30) is a well-known contemporary hymn that includes gendered language for God:

      Bring many names, beautiful and good;
      celebrate, in parable and story,
      holiness in glory, living, loving God.
      Hail and Hosanna, bring many names:

      Strong mother God, working night and day,
      planning all the wonders of creation,
      setting each equation, genius at play:
      Hail and Hosanna, strong mother God!

Warm father God, hugging every child,
feeling all the strains of human living,
caring and forgiving till we're reconciled:
Hail and Hosanna, warm father God!

Old, aching God, grey with endless care,
calmly piercing evil's new disguises,
glad of good surprises, wiser than despair:
Hail and Hosanna, old aching God!

Young, growing God, eager still to know,
willing to be changed by what you've started,
quick to be delighted, singing as you go:
Hail and Hosanna, young, growing God!

Great, living God, never fully known,
joyful darkness far beyond our seeing,
closer yet than breathing, everlasting home:
Hail and Hosanna, great living God!

b. Commentary and evaluation
   1) There is obviously much in this hymn that is both biblical and delightfully imaginative. That content ought to be acknowledged and appreciated. However, there are also the following problems:
   2) The basic theme of bringing many names to God expresses the modern theological idea that humans name God but fails to acknowledge that God has specially revealed his names and preserved them in Scripture. There is no hint of the difference between the hymn's biblical and extrabiblical descriptions of God. Further, the hymn's use of the term *names* removes the distinction between personal designators for God and figures of speech for him. All these positions are confusing and mistaken for the reasons explained in this study report.
   3) In another context "strong mother God" might be legitimate as an extension of maternal biblical imagery. In this hymn, however, it is explicitly given the status of a name. Further, the fact that it is given a status equal to "warm father God" falsely implies that *father* is no different from *mother* as a term by which we humans name God. This hymn clearly endorses and employs contemporary inclusive language for God, not the language pattern of Scripture.
   4) Two other images are also biblically and theologically problematic. It is true that God is "old" as the Ancient of Days, but he is not "aching," a description that seems to suggest that he is suffering from the vicissitudes of old age, not just that he empathizes with his suffering creatures. More obviously objectionable, the phrases "young growing God," "eager still to know," "changed by what you started," and "glad of good surprises" clearly reflect the modern panentheistic doctrine that God is limited and continues growing, learning, and developing as he interacts with his creation. Neither of these age metaphors is faithful to Scripture and orthodox Christian theology.
   5) Conclusion: This hymn does not conform to the policy for gendered language for God and is therefore inappropriate for use in the Christian Reformed Church. (Wren has written other fine hymns that are acceptable.)

XII. Recommendations for synodical action

The committee respectfully recommends the following:

A. That synod recommend this study report to the churches as a sound and helpful analysis of gendered language for God as found in Scripture and in contemporary inclusive-language practices.

B. That synod adopt the Policy for Gendered Language for God as interpreted by its commentary and illustrations (Section XI, A-D) for the Christian Reformed Church and its agencies.

C. That synod approve the nine points of pastoral advice (Section X, C).

D. That synod declare that the endorsement and/or use of contemporary inclusive (gender-egalitarian and/or gender-neutral) language for God is unacceptable to the Christian Reformed Church for one or more of the following reasons:

1. Inclusive language for God presents a significantly different view of God than the language of Scripture does.
2. It confuses, undermines, or conflicts with the church's confessional-doctrinal understanding of the Trinity and the person of Christ.
3. It involves fallacious linguistic, exegetical, and theological reasoning.
4. It presupposes views of Scripture or employs methods of interpreting Scripture that are incompatible with the church's confession about the nature and authority of Scripture.
5. It is spiritually dangerous in refusing to accept God as he has revealed himself.

E. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Mirth Vos (chair), John Cooper (reporter), and Lorna Van Gilst as representatives of the study committee.

F. That synod declare the committee's mandate fulfilled and therefore discharge the committee.

Committee to Study Inclusive Language for God
LeRoy Christoffels
John Cooper, reporter
Jai-Sung Shim
Lorna Van Gilst
William Vande Kopple
Mirth Vos, chair
Al Wolters, vice chair

CRC Canadian Ministries: A Proposal for Restructuring

Outline

I. Introduction

II. Historical background

III. Proposal for restructuring ministry in Canada

A. Core values and goals

B. Time schedule

C. Role of boards: providing accountability and direction
   1. Board of Trustees—Canada
   2. Canadian Ministries Board (responsible for all CRC ministries in Canada; will include pastors, elders, and deacons)

D. Triennial Conference: developing vision and ownership

E. Canadian ministries director (the person who will lead the coordination of Canadian ministries and act as spokesperson for government and ecumenical relations in Canada)

F. Standing ministry committees (Functioning through the Canadian Ministries Board, they will govern three clusters of ministries.)
   1, a. International Ministries
   1, b. Domestic Ministries
   1, c. Church Development

G. Role of classes in the new Canadian ministry structure (development of classical ministry committees for the coordination of classical ministries; a proposal to reconstitute the deacons' conferences as committees of classes)

H. Regional ministry centers and regional ministry developers (resource and training links to the classes and congregations)

I. Role of deacons and diaconal organizations in Canada: an overview

J. Transition of the Council of the Christian Reformed Churches in Canada

K. Finances (Current provision for funding CRC ministry in Canada will be maintained until the new Canadian Ministries Board is in operation.)

L. Conclusion

IV. Recommendations

Appendix 1: Mandates of the Canadian Ministries Board (CMB), the Board of Trustees—Canada (BOTC), and the Triennial Conference

Appendix 2: Position Description for the Canadian Ministries Director

Appendix 3: Overview of the Current CRCNA Structure in Canada

Appendix 4: A Brief History of the Christian Reformed Church in Canada, Focusing Especially on Its Relationship to the Denomination

Note: Shaded words and sections of the report have been added since this report was distributed to the churches in the fall of 1996. In a large measure they are the results of the ongoing dialogue in the Canadian churches, especially at the Council of the Christian Reformed Churches in Canada held in November 1996. They are clarifications of the reports intent. However, the principal recommendations of the report remain intact.

I. Introduction

Synod 1995 mandated the Committee to Study Structure for Ministry in Canada "to develop a proposal for a more effective structure for ministry in Canada." The proposal should include a Board of Canadian Ministries that would "coordinate and hold accountable all Canadian ministries of the CRC." Our committee presents this report in the fervent hope that our proposals make a significant contribution to the fulfillment of this mandate.

We want to emphasize, however, that the recommendations we are placing before synod are meant as a foundation upon which further building needs to be done. What happens next depends to some degree upon the work of the U.S. committee mandated by Synod 1996 to engage in "organizational reflection" for the U.S. churches. We are confident that our initial work on the Canadian scene will be more helpful when coupled with the work of a counterpart committee for the U.S. churches. Together these efforts will ensure continuity and smooth transitions as changes are made.

We are grateful for the many people who faithfully and cordially participated in this effort. May the ministry of the Lord in the church be enhanced because of their work.

II. Historical background

A. *Synod 1993*

Synod 1993 was presented with several overtures requesting a regional synod in Canada. It defeated those overtures and appointed a study committee "to develop a proposal for a more effective structure for ministry in Canada." That committee reported in 1995. It provided an excellent overview of the issues and historical background on the Council of the Christian Reformed Churches in Canada (CCRCC) and its role in the denomination. Specifically, it stressed the importance of a coordinated denominational vision for ministry in Canada, suggested that the ministries of the CCRCC be integrated into the existing ministries of the CRC, and proposed the delegation of deacons to major assemblies.

B. *Synod 1995*

Synod 1995 responded in three ways:

1. Synod affirmed that we are "a truly binational denomination" and committed itself to "developing ways to structure the ministries of the denomination that will retain its binational character and at the same time take into account the history, geography, and national character that are specific to the churches in Canada and to the churches in the United States."

2. It proposed that the Council of the Christian Reformed Churches in Canada (CCRCC) "reconstitute itself as a Board of Canadian Ministries (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."

3. Synod appointed a committee to "draft possible ways and means to implement the above resolutions." The committee was asked to report to the CCRCC in November 1995 and to Synod 1996.

C. Appointment of the Committee to Study Structure for Ministry in Canada

The committee appointed by Synod 1995 prepared a report and shared it with the CCRCC at its meeting in November 1995. The report proposed (1) a Canadian Ministries Board and a Canadian ministries director, (2) a blending of the agencies and the ministries of the Council into four groupings, and (3) the appointment of a new synodical committee to consult with classes, boards, and agencies and to further work out the proposal.

The Council of the Christian Reformed Churches in Canada gave in-principle approval to these proposals. It suggested the groupings be reduced from four to three if possible, it delayed action on the proposal to reconstitute itself as a Canadian Ministries Board until consultations could be held with all involved, and it asked that a new committee be appointed by the Board of Trustees to carry on the work of evaluating Canadian ministry structure.

The Committee to Study Structure for Ministry in Canada was therefore appointed by the Board of Trustees in December 1995. It includes representatives from across Canada as well as two people from the U.S. The executive director of ministries served as an adviser to the committee. It has met at least once with each of the following: classes, the agency boards, the ministries of the Council of the Christian Reformed Churches in Canada, and the diaconal organizations. It has learned a substantial amount from this interaction that has served to strengthen the final proposals in this report.

This committee provided an interim report to Synod 1996 (*Agenda for Synod 1996*, pp. 58-62). In the interim proposal we put forward a resolution that "a similar process of organizational reflection begin on the U.S. side of the border." Synod 1996 appointed a new committee to do this work. We anticipate meaningful interaction with that committee until our mandate is completed.

D. Mandate of the synodical Committee to Study Structure for Ministry in Canada

The Committee to Study Structure for Ministry in Canada was given the following mandate by the BOT in December 1995:

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 Canadian Ministries Board.
4. Identify the costs and benefits of the new structure.

This mandate grows out of the mandate given to the original committee by Synod 1995: "to develop plans for this board [Canadian Ministries Board] to coordinate and hold accountable all of the ministries of the CRC and plans to involve the Canadian churches."

Note: An overview of some of the history of this issue in Canada appears in Appendix 4 of this report.

E. Why we should do this task

A variety of specific reasons motivate this significant undertaking. Some are unique to Canada. Others are shared by the entire denomination. Several new opportunities for ministry are better addressed with a new way of structuring ministry. The following are some significant reasons for undertaking this process:

1. The connection between the local church and the ministry of the agencies needs to be enhanced so that there is a greater sense of local ownership.

2. Agencies of the church need to enhance their coordination in delivering ministry to and for the church.

3. The current structure does not ensure adequate decision making in Canada. This is important both to members of the CRC in Canada and to Revenue Canada.

4. The ministries of the CCRCC need to be woven into the fabric of the denomination.

5. The ministry of the deacons and diaconal organizations needs to be more effectively included in the denominational decision-making process.

6. Congregations need stronger support from the denominational agencies and better coordination of the delivery of resources in order to carry out their mission.

7. The CRC needs to position itself better in Canada to do more effective outreach ministry.

8. The CRC in Canada needs better ways of coordinating all its ministries.

We celebrate the Holy Spirit at work in God's people, creating a vision to carry out ministry that honors the name of Jesus. We celebrate the dedication of many members as they seek to serve Christ. We realize that changing the way we structure ministry will not "solve" all the issues that concern CRC members today, but we also recognize that the structure of the church's ministry makes an important contribution to church members' ability to serve with effectiveness and joy.

One principle has guided our discussions: *structure should enhance ministry.* Our work as a committee is not an exercise in change for its own sake. The outcome must be that the structures we put into place enhance the ministry of the local and regional church together with the denomination's ministries in our changing world.

*F. Present structure for ministry in Canada**

1. The present arrangement of ministries in Canada includes the following:

   a. An agency for each area of denominational ministry, with a binational director for each area. Only three of the agencies (CRWRC, Christian Reformed World Missions [CRWM], and Chaplaincy) have directors located in Canada.

   b. A binational board for each denominational agency and a *Canadian* board for CRWRC, CRWM, Home Missions, The Back to God Hour, and Chaplaincy (of the agencies listed, only CRWRC has a separate board in place in the U.S.; no others have corresponding U.S. boards).

   c. The Canadian Ministries Advancement Team (CMAT), which provides a vehicle for collaboration among the ministries in Canada. It is made up of agency leaders or representatives in Canada.

*Note: Appendix 3 of this report provides an organizational chart of Canadian ministries and a summary of relevant data about these ministries.

d. The Council of the Christian Reformed Churches in Canada, its six ministries, and a full-time executive director, accountable to a biennial Council meeting.

e. A diaconal conference in each classis (two of these are diaconal committees of classes [Huron and Alberta North]).

f. A regional organization of deacons in eastern Canada accountable to an annual meeting of its member diaconates. A regional diaconal group is beginning in western Canada.

Regarding the present administrative structure in Canada, the committee report to Synod 1995 said,

> The CRC has an inadequate administrative presence in Canada. . . . A strong ministry in Canada requires a more substantial denominational administrative presence in Canada.

Our committee agrees that there is need for a heightened administrative presence responsive to the specific needs of the church in Canada.

2. Council of the Christian Reformed Churches in Canada (CCRCC)

The CCRCC has a unique status in the CRC. Synod created a special status for the CCRCC as an ecclesiastical assembly functioning at the level of classis but without direct access to synod. In its report to Synod 1995, the Canadian structure committee said,

> The CCRCC was constituted to do what synod and its agencies were not doing. Its mandate is a short list of activities which synod, because of its international character, is not able to perform.
>
> (*Agenda for Synod 1995*, p. 311)

In effect, integration of ministries was an almost impossible task since division of labor was the guiding principle. The result was another layer of accountability and an absence of coordination. The CCRCC is not in a position to serve this integrating role. It falls to a new structure to do so.

One of the challenges before us is to develop a structure that provides the ministries of the CCRCC with a home within the larger setting of the CRC ministries in Canada and in the binational setting.

III. Proposal for restructuring ministry in Canada

A. Core values and goals

1. Values

The core value of this process of restructuring is to enhance, inspire, and equip the church to carry on its mission (locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally) most effectively.

The Christian Reformed Church has an important mission in a world that is facing significant change and loss of faith. As ambassadors of Christ with his powerful message of reconciliation and healing, the church is called to find the lost and nurture the found. We want to carry out that mission in a wholistic way in order to bring the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ to bear on Canadian society. Our great desire is to increase the effectiveness of this mission at the local and national level.

In the Christian Reformed Church we carry out this mission in a binational setting. As one church in two nations we share one Lord, one faith, one baptism. Our rich Reformed heritage, confessions, and Church Order bind us together. Under the umbrella of shared faith and life our binationality needs to be acknowledged—even celebrated. National differences need not imperil the unity of the CRC. In fact, they should strengthen the denomination. At its best, being a binational church can enrich and deepen the ministries undertaken in both countries and around the world.

2. Goals of restructuring ministry in Canada

The overall goal of these proposals is to create stronger working relationships among ministry partners in order to accomplish our shared mission. Some specific goals follow:

a. Recognition of the binational character of the church

As a binational church we need to be sensitive to the uniqueness of the ministry in both countries. In the Canadian context the CRC needs to address and/or be involved in social-justice issues, ministry with poor and aboriginal peoples, interchurch relations, and interaction with governments. Further, Canadian law requires that Canadian governing bodies maintain "direction, supervision, and control" over receipted tax-deductible funds gathered in Canada.

b. Development of a body to coordinate ministry in Canada

Because of the binational character of the CRC, Canadians must have significant ownership of and authority for planning and managing ministry in Canada. This includes a Canadian ministries director.

c. Nurturing local ownership for the mission of the church

Structures should encourage local ministries to connect with, draw from, and support the total ministry of the church.

d. Building vital links with classes to keep ministry close to the people

Each classis ought to become increasingly responsive to ministry needs and opportunities in its region and have a key role in promoting ownership and coordination of ministry within its boundaries and, where possible, in its region.

e. Encouraging a team approach to ministry

Structures should encourage the development of ministry teams among the agencies in order to promote and deliver an enhanced, unified, and stewardly approach to ministry.

f. Integrating diaconal ministries with the other CRC ministries

Diaconal work is an integral part of the church's ministry. This fact needs to be fully acknowledged in the decision-making process of the assemblies of the church.

g. Integrating the ministries of the Council of the Christian Reformed Churches in Canada into other CRC ministries

The ministries currently undertaken by the Council of the Christian Reformed Churches in Canada must be fully integrated into the Canadian structure of our binational church.

B. Time schedule

1. Four phases of developing an integrated structure

Our goal is an integrated approach to ministry by agencies and churches in both Canada and the U.S. that respects our binationality and the importance of the local church.

There are probably four phases in the development of an integrated structure:

a. Networking: Developing relationships with coworkers in other agencies; hearing each other's stories of ministry, what works and what doesn't; looking for shared values and ways to work together.

b. Collaboration: Working together on joint projects to accomplish a specific objective important to all involved.

c. Coordination: Coordinating all or part of a ministry activity for enhanced outcomes and/or wholistic ministry. Here the budget is shared; there is joint management and decision making.

d. Integration: Governance and leadership of the ministries under one management structure with ample room for specialized ministry expertise. The overall strategy is determined by the values and budget of a particular ministry group.

There are already several examples of excellent coordination and collaboration by the denominational agencies in Canada. These agencies conceived the idea for *CRC Source* and have developed ServiceLink as coordinated efforts of all the agencies. They have worked together on joint conferences and have developed plans for joint efforts in resource development, deputation, and some outreach ministry. The finances are coordinated out of one office rather than each agency having its own finance department. These attempts at coordination have been very productive.

The agencies and the ministries of the CRC in Canada and in the U.S. will need to work intentionally at collaboration and coordination. The next two years can be used to great benefit to learn and practice such an approach to ministry. We can learn from such efforts and build an organizational culture that says coordination is the norm, not the occasional success story.

There does need to be an intentionality to this process so that it is not prolonged. Staff and agencies need to know there will come a time when integration is not simply a vision of a preferred future but the expected mode of operation.

2. First two years

Change takes time. Should Synod 1997 endorse the recommendations in this report, we propose the following changes in the first two years:

a. That a Canadian Ministries Board become operational.
b. That a plan for the first Triennial Conference be ready for implementation.
c. That a Canadian ministries director be selected and at work.
d. That the denominational ministries in Canada begin to work in three groups to coordinate their ministry.
e. That one regional ministry center be operating and two more be in the planning stage.
f. That classical ministry committees be functioning in several classes.

g. That several diaconal conferences become committees of classes.
h. That the ministries of the CCRCC be coordinated and supervised by the Canadian Ministries Board (CMB).
i. That mechanisms for financing the above and a plan for how the Canadian Ministries Board will be involved in setting ministry shares be completed and functioning.

These recommendations provide a foundation for changes which can be initiated after Synod 1997. In the meantime, the synodical committee appointed by Synod 1996 can carry on a similar process of organizational reflection in the U.S. The U.S. committee's discussions with churches, classes, and agencies, coupled with the experience of the Canadian structure committee, will provide the church with the further reflection and action essential for positive change.

Within two years the church as a whole should be prepared to make some decisions on a structural model for the whole denomination, including the interface between the Canadian and U.S. sides of our binational church. What we envision is a process of restructuring that will ensure significant continuity for the agencies and ministries involved and will ensure a smooth transition.

C. *Role of boards: providing accountability and direction*

We now turn our attention to the specific aspects of the model we are proposing. The broad outline of this model follows. Some of the specific mandates and job descriptions are contained in Appendices 1 and 2.

1. Board of Trustees—Canada (BOTC)

At present a six-member Board of Trustees—Canada (BOTC) is in place. As part of the binational Board of Trustees and through the joint-venture agreements of various agencies, it ensures mutual accountability and unity of vision for all the ministries of the CRC on behalf of synod.

If the proposed changes are adopted, the Board of Trustees—Canada will be the legal agent for the CRC in Canada and the agent of synod for all matters that pertain to the Canadian ministries of the CRC. To the present responsibilities of the BOT—Canada the following will be added:

a. Convening, together with the Canadian Ministries Board, the Triennial Conference in Canada for the purpose of developing vision and strategy for ministry in Canada.

b. Collecting and distributing information from the Triennial Conference for the enhancement of ministry.

c. Appointing the Canadian ministries director upon nomination by the Canadian Ministries Board.

d. Approving Canadian ministry budgets, which will then be forwarded to the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA and synod.

e. Reviewing the work of the Canadian Ministries Board.

The Board of Trustees—Canada is the synodical board to provide *legal* and *general oversight* of CRC denominational ministry activity in Canada. Therefore, the Canadian Ministries Board will report to synod through the Board of Trustees—Canada. The CMB will be the *operational agent* of the

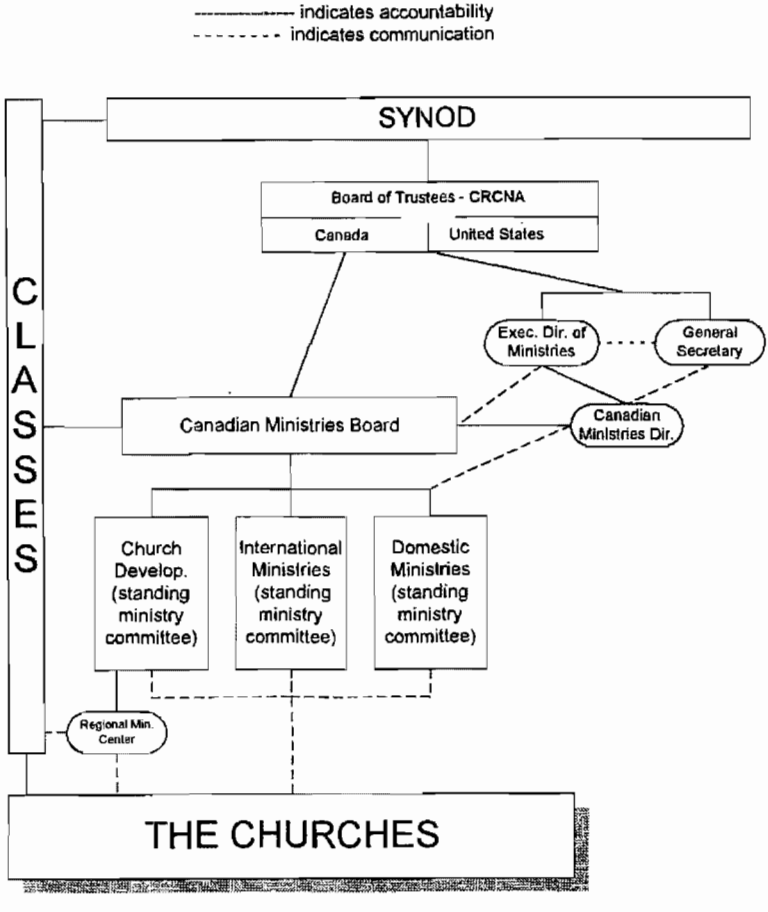
denominational ministries in Canada and will have the freedom and authority to provide leadership for a wholistic and integrated ministry.

As the Canadian Ministries Board gains experience and respect, it will have increasing authority to carry out its mission. Though there is an appearance of more layers of decision making, in fact there will be fewer. The essential decisions will be made by the Canadian Ministries Board. The Board of Trustees—Canada will ensure coordination binationally and will resolve disputes.

2. Canadian Ministries Board (CMB)

This board is responsible to coordinate and hold accountable the ministries of the CRC in Canada, as suggested by Synod 1995. This new body will provide overall direction. Its responsibilities and composition are stated below. Its relationship to the Board of Trustees—Canada can be found in the preceding section (III, B, 1). See Diagram 1 for graphic presentation.

Diagram 1
An Overview of the Proposed Structure for Canadian Ministries



a. Responsibilities of the Canadian Ministries Board (CMB)

The Canadian Ministries Board (CMB) will supervise and be responsible for denominational ministries conducted in Canada and for ministries performed internationally on behalf of the CRC in Canada. The CMB will function within the policies set by synod and the Board of Trustees—Canada within the framework of core values and goals contained in this report. These responsibilities include

1) Approving or recommending ministry plans and new ministry proposals.
2) Assuring the collaboration of ministries in Canada and with appropriate denominational partners in the U.S.
3) Supervising the Canadian ministries director.
4) Approving the appointment of senior denominational staff persons in Canada.
5) Overseeing the regional ministry centers in consultation with the classes.
6) Recommending to the Board of Trustees—Canada all budgets and the allocation of financial resources for all the denominational ministries in Canada.

Note: It is understood that, if the decisions are binational in scope and not limited to ministry or staff in Canada, they will be recommended to the Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church in North America for approval.

b. Election and composition

The Canadian Ministries Board will be made up of one representative from each of the twelve classes in Canada (12) and up to six (6) members-at-large as nominated by the CMB and ratified by the BOTC. The classical representatives will include four (4) pastors, four (4) who have served or are currently serving as elders, and four (4) who have served or are currently serving as deacons. The members-at-large will be selected for particular areas of expertise.

Members of the Canadian Ministries Board will serve three-year terms and will be eligible for second three-year terms, according to the normal rules of synod. We would suggest that the rotation of new members begin in the second term to ensure continuity during the critical first three years. Members of the Canadian Ministries Board will also serve as members of the standing ministry committees (see below). Ideally the connection between the Canadian Ministries Board and the classes would be strengthened if CMB members would also serve on classical ministry committees in their respective classes, but we realize that such service may be too demanding of CMB members, who are, after all, volunteers.

This proposal emphasizes the importance of binational cooperation in ministry. We need cooperation so that our common vision remains strong as a denomination. We recognize that successful ministry in Canada requires the room for the church in Canada to carry on its ministries within this binational context.

D. Triennial Conference: developing a vision and ownership

Vigorous dialogue between and active input from the local churches and the ministries of the CRC in Canada are essential for the healthy development of ministry. Integral to our proposal for a new structure for ministry in Canada are suggestions for such dialogue. Gatherings for dialogue will serve both to inform and to inspire the Canadian churches to own the ministries of the CRC as they together carry out their mission in Canada.

Dialogue should begin at the local and regional level. We suggest regional conferences to bring together members, churches, and ministries. These conferences could include time for (1) celebration of ministry that is taking place, (2) training and equipping for ministry, (3) sharing and planning ministry strategies, and (4) discussion of matters to put before the leadership of the CRC.

On the national level, we propose a conference to be convened every three years for ministry visioning. This conference, preceded by well-planned regional conferences and classical meetings to encourage dialogue and develop input, will continue the dialogue on vision and strategy for national ministry. Delegation to the conference ought to be widespread and diverse. (See Appendix 1, Section III, for guidelines concerning the Triennial Conference.)

This Triennial Conference will be convened jointly by the Board of Trustees—Canada and the Canadian Ministries Board. The Canadian ministries director will take the lead in implementing it, in cooperation with the regional ministry centers and the classes. A report of the findings will be appropriately circulated. The development of the budget and funding of the conference will be the responsibility of the Canadian Ministries Board.

We recommend that the focus of the first such conference be on developing a vision and strategy for ministry in Canada as we enter the twenty-first century. This theme will allow for the development of a common strategy among the various ministries in cooperation with the local churches and classes. This strategy can serve as a guide as we continue to work out our mission binationally.

Note: For a more detailed description of the mandates for the Canadian Ministries Board and the Board of Trustees—Canada and guidelines for the Triennial Conference, see Appendix 1 of this report.

E. Canadian ministries director (CMD)

One important piece in the proposed Canadian ministry structure is the appointment of a Canadian ministries director (CMD). This person will work closely with the Canadian Ministries Board to coordinate and hold accountable the ministries of the CRC in Canada. The Canadian ministries director will lead the coordination of the ministries in Canada so that each ministry develops plans that demonstrate a coordinated and integrated approach to its mission in Canada and in its delivery of services to the Canadian churches.

Specifically, the responsibilities of the Canadian ministries director will be these:

1. To stimulate the development of collaboration and teamwork among the agency staff persons, agency boards, and ministries of the CRC.
2. To assist ministries in developing strategic ministry plans.
3. To serve as adviser to the Canadian Ministries Board, the Board of Trustees—Canada, and the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA.

4. To act as spokesperson in Canada on matters related to government and ecumenical relations.
5. To supervise ServiceLink and offices for finance, communication, and stewardship.

The Canadian ministries director (CMD) will be spokesperson for the Christian Reformed Church in the Canadian context. The position will require the freedom to represent the CRCNA in Canada and to give recognition to the CRC and its ministry activity in the Canadian ecumenical and public setting.

The Canadian ministries director will have a unique reporting relationship. The position will require accountability to the Canadian Ministries Board and to the executive director of ministries (EDM). The Canadian Ministries Board will have responsibility for all the ministries conducted on behalf of the CRCNA by the agencies and committees of the CRC in Canada. The Canadian ministries director will be accountable to the Canadian Ministries Board *for the overall performance of the office*. The Canadian ministries director, through the Canadian Ministries Board, will also have a reporting relationship to the Board of Trustees—Canada.

The executive director of ministries (EDM) as the staff person of the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA has responsibility for all administrative and agency activity in the whole of the binational church. Therefore, the Canadian ministries director will be *administratively accountable* to the executive director of ministries. This kind of accountability is true for all agency directors.

The general secretary as the staff person of the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA has responsibility for ecumenical relations and contact with the government in the whole of the binational church. Although the CMD is not administratively accountable to the general secretary, he will consult with the general secretary on matters related to ecumenical relations and contact with the government. The general secretary shall have access to the Canadian Ministries Board.

The executive director of ministries, the general secretary (GS), and the Canadian ministries director will form a mutually interdependent relationship that allows for input from the Canadian perspective as they give leadership to the vision and mission of the CRCNA.

Note: For a detailed job description of the Canadian ministries director, see Appendix 2 of this report.

F. Standing ministry committees (SMCs)

We are proposing that the agencies and ministries in Canada be grouped into three ministry clusters called standing ministry committees (SMCs) for coordinating and eventually integrating their work.

The agencies and ministries of the CRC in Canada are doing extremely valuable work. Presently each ministry has its own board and develops its own ministry plan and budget. There is limited coordination among the ministries. It will be the task of the SMCs, whose membership will include representatives of the various ministries, to develop coordinated and integrated ministries. The agencies and ministries will be encouraged to develop interagency teams of staff members for the purpose of developing ministry.

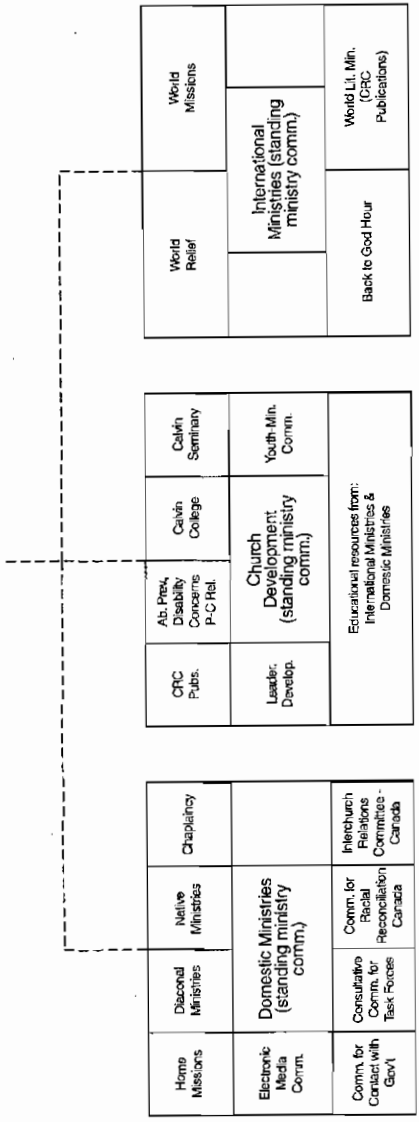
1. Proposed groupings

We propose bringing the agency ministries in Canada together into three ministry groups. Though we realize that there is a variety of options for

grouping ministries together, we have grouped the agencies according to where ministry takes place: International Ministries, Domestic Ministries, and Church Development. Because ministries will be encouraged to partner with each other through the interagency teams, we believe dialogue and cooperation will take place.

For ease of recognition, we have used the current agency names to identify the various ministries in each standing ministry committee. The proposed groupings and a description of them follows. Diagram 2 (below) describes the proposed committees in relationship to agencies and ministries.

Diagram 2
Proposed Groupings of the Standing Ministry Committees in Canada



a. International Ministries

The focus of these ministries is primarily on ministry beyond North America. Some particularly Canadian aspects of their work will also be coordinated by the Domestic Ministries standing ministry committee. The International Ministries standing ministry committee will include the Canadian work of The Back to God Hour, Christian Reformed World Relief Committee, Christian Reformed World Missions, and World Literature Ministries (part of CRC Publications).

b. Domestic Ministries

The focus of this standing ministry committee is outreach ministry in Canada. This committee will assist the CRC in Canada with developing a coordinated witness. We recommend two subgroups here:

1) Outreach Ministries

This subgroup will include Home Missions, Diaconal Ministries, Native Ministries, Chaplaincy, and the Electronic Media Committee. These outreach ministries will develop a coordinated ministry in a given classis or geographic area. By learning about each other's ministry plans and developing a coordinated approach, they can have a greater impact and develop more wholistic ministry.

2) Church-in-Society Ministries

This subgroup will include the following agencies: Committee for Contact with Government (CCG), Interchurch Relations Committee — Canada (IRCC), Consultative Committee on Task Forces (CCTF), and Committee on Racial Reconciliation in Canada (CRRC—equivalent to SCORR). This group will have a significant advocacy focus. It can develop a coordinated approach to addressing the social and political issues of Canadian society.

Because the Canadian ministries director (CMD) is spokesperson for the CRC in Canada, the CMD will work closely with this group. To be effective, this work must be more fully integrated with the activity of the churches than it presently is. Current social-justice committees need more integration and accountability to function well. This grouping will also recommend the ecumenical relations appropriate to the CRC in Canada.

c. Church Development

This standing ministry committee will provide a coordinated approach to delivering resources and training to the local churches and classes through the regional ministries center. It will bring together all the educational and training activities of the ministries mentioned under International Ministries and Domestic Ministries. These will be coordinated with the resources of CRC Publications, Pastoral Ministries (Disability Concerns, Abuse Prevention, Pastor-Church Relations), Calvin College, and Calvin Theological Seminary.

We strongly suggest that this committee have a strong link with the denominational Youth-Ministry Committee and with a committee on ministry with the elderly. Some new work groups in Canada may be needed to address Canadian concerns regarding disabilities, abuse prevention, and pastor-church relations within the larger binational context. The focus of this standing ministry committee is to develop a

coordinated approach to the delivery of services to churches at the local level through the regional ministry centers.

2. Membership of the standing ministry committees

Normally the membership of each standing ministry committee will include representatives of the Canadian Ministries Board, representatives of each organization in a particular SMC, and people chosen for their expertise as appropriate. The SMCs will usually include ten to fifteen (10 to 15) people.

While the Canadian Ministries Board is being established, current denominational boards which are binational in composition will remain in place. Further changes recommended in this report will await the final report of the U.S. committee reviewing the structure of denominational ministries.

3. Mandate of the standing ministry committees

The standing ministry committees will have responsibility to review the input from their advisory committees, interagency project teams, and ministry staffs. Their goal will be to develop an integrated approach and to recommend the following to the Canadian Ministries Board for approval:

a. The work of the interagency project teams, work groups, or advisory committees.

b. All policy matters related to their ministries.

c. Staffing recommendations for their ministries.

d. Budgets of the ministries.

e. Reviews and comments on ministry strategies and plans as submitted by the Canadian ministries director.

f. New ministry initiatives.

The SMCs will review the work of each of the ministries and of the advisory committees on a regular basis. They may recommend changes in ministry priorities and focus to the Canadian Ministries Board.

4. Advisory committees

The three standing ministry committees will be served by advisory committees and work groups. Members of advisory committees will be selected for the particular gifts and passions they have for the ministry they guide. These members will be appointed by the Canadian Ministries Board.

These advisory committees will go through a transition over the next two years. During this transition, the current board or committee of each ministry in Canada will become an advisory committee/work group of its standing ministry committee. The current committees should be somewhat reduced in size. They will each send a representative to their respective standing ministry committees for the purpose of joint planning and coordination of ministry. They will also be involved in preparing a plan for the role of the standing ministry committees in the binational setting in light of the ongoing discussions in the U.S.

The goal is that eventually the standing ministry committees will provide coordination and guidance for the ministries. In the future, new advisory committees and work groups may be appointed to focus on certain areas of ministry as needed. These will not necessarily be the same as the currently existing committees or boards.

5. Need for flexibility within the groupings

It is easy to consider each standing ministry committee or ministry to be a separate entity, but to do so would be unfortunate, because obvious connections between ministries (for example, Home Missions, World Missions, CRWRC, and Diaconal Ministry) need to be honored. Organizational charts separate ministries. Governance emphasizes boundaries. But in the task of developing ministry, a flexible approach is required so that agency specialists can develop creative partnerships in ministry.

In addition to organizational groupings, we as a committee felt a need to coordinate certain functions. Below are two examples:

a. Communication

Presently various ministries have newsletters and other methods of communication. Development and distribution of communication materials would be improved if responsibility for such efforts became the responsibility of a single office. A good beginning has been made with *CRC Source.*

b. Deputation

A coordinated approach to church deputation by mission agencies would not only save resources but also present a unified mission picture. The Christian Reformed World Relief Committee—Canada and Christian Reformed World Missions—Canada are already beginning this coordinated approach.

Similar efforts could be undertaken for finance, education, interchurch relations, diaconal activity, and mission actions. A dynamic approach to the relationships among the ministries reinforces the belief that we can do more together than we can do separately.

6. Number of people involved in boards and committees

Our overall goal is a lean administrative structure. We expect that the number of people involved in governance roles on various boards and committees will not increase and will eventually be reduced. The boards and standing ministry committees in our model do not need to be large in order to be effective.

The new Canadian Ministries Board will be fifteen (15) to eighteen (18) people, smaller than the current number in the CCRCC. The typical size of a standing ministry committee will be between ten (10) and fifteen (15). These will not be additional administrative people because they also serve on agency boards or advisory committees. (This overlap will ensure maximum communication and collaboration.) In the transition to the new structure, agency boards will still be in place. Over the next two to three years, the composition of some of these boards may shift, some becoming smaller advisory committees. In the long run the overall number of people involved in governance will likely decrease.

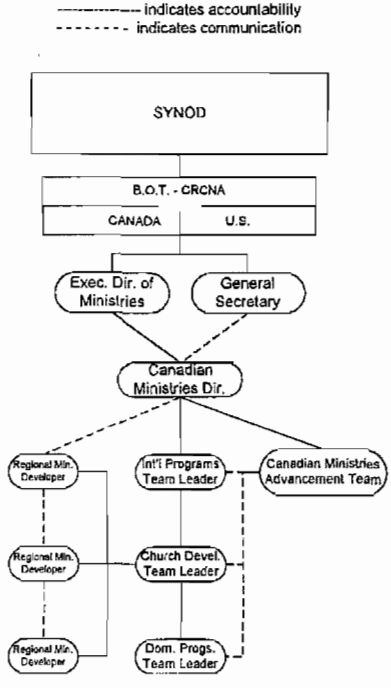
The current cost of the people attending various boards and committees involved in the governance of the ministries in Canada is about $146,000 per year, or 1 percent of the total income for all agencies and ministries in Canada. This is not a big expense. People give generously of their time and effort to these bodies and serve them well. We envision that this cost will remain about the same.

An integrated strategy for involvement and communication will assist the churches in owning the shared ministries of the denomination. In our model, classical representatives make up the Canadian Ministries Board. We strongly encourage CMB-member involvement on the classical ministry committees and in the regional ministry centers. This would help ensure greater ministry connections in Canada. Furthermore, we strongly encourage local churches to become more involved in classical and regional ministries to further strengthen their bonds with the denomination. We are convinced that involvement and communication are the most critical factors in local ownership of ministries. However, with the exception of the regional ministry developers, the church will continue to depend on its loyal volunteers to develop these links with the Canadian CRCs.

7. Team leaders for the standing ministry committees (SMCs)

Each of the SMCs will include people who presently give leadership to their particular ministries. From these persons a team leader responsible for implementing the decisions of each standing ministry committee will be selected. The team leader will be head of the leadership staff of a ministry. His or her function will be one of coordination. Nomination of the team leader will be the responsibility of the Canadian ministries director in consultation with each standing ministry committee and the Canadian Ministries Advancement Team (see below). The final appointment will be made by the Canadian Ministries Board. Diagram 3 below describes the team leaders.

Diagram 3
Proposed Canadian Ministries Administrative Staff



Team leaders will

a. Report to the Canadian ministries director.

b. Collaborate and cooperate with other agency leaders from within their own standing ministry committees.

c. Plan programs together and develop strategies for cooperation.

d. Coordinate the planning and programming activities which grow out of the standing-ministry-committee decisions. (This will be done in consultation with other senior agency personnel on both sides of the border.)

e. Work with the team leaders of the other standing ministry committees.

The team leader will participate with agency personnel on both sides of the border in planning and management. In this context the challenge is to make the Canadian part of the church integral to the decision-making, visioning, and direction-setting process for the work and ministry of the whole denomination.

8. Canadian Ministries Advancement Team (CMAT)

The Canadian ministries director will chair the Canadian Ministries Advancement Team (CMAT). Its membership will include the executive director of ministries, Canadian agency directors (where such exist), and the team leaders. This group will be responsible for visioning, for planning, and for working cohesively toward the optimum use of organizational resources for effective CRC ministry in Canada and throughout the world. Much of the collaboration for new or improved ministry initiatives will take place in this group.

9. Other personnel

Current staffing levels in the Canadian agencies are quite lean. Besides the fact that there are few people in director positions in the Burlington office, most of the current support staff for the agencies are located in Grand Rapids and Chicago. An overall review of staff allocations in the agencies on a binational basis will need to be carried out.

We have not done a position-by-position assessment at this time, but no doubt the Canadian Ministries Board and Canadian ministries director will need to look at some reallocation of responsibilities. For example, it may be useful to give the responsibilities for church deputation to one person rather than having a person in each agency work part-time on deputation. A more coordinated approach will also need to be taken on communications. When the regional ministry centers become operational, they may require increased services from the Burlington office.

G. Role of classes in the new Canadian ministry structure

Classes should play a vital role in the development of local ownership and meaningful interaction in the decision-making process. Classes now provide guidance on a variety of matters that concern the churches in them and coordinate important administrative functions in the church. We propose that classes expand their role to include the nurturing of local ownership and the coordination of ministry. A dynamic relationship between the classes, the Canadian Ministries Board / Board of Trustees—Canada, and the ministries of the church

will stimulate this development and provide accountability for ministry in Canada.

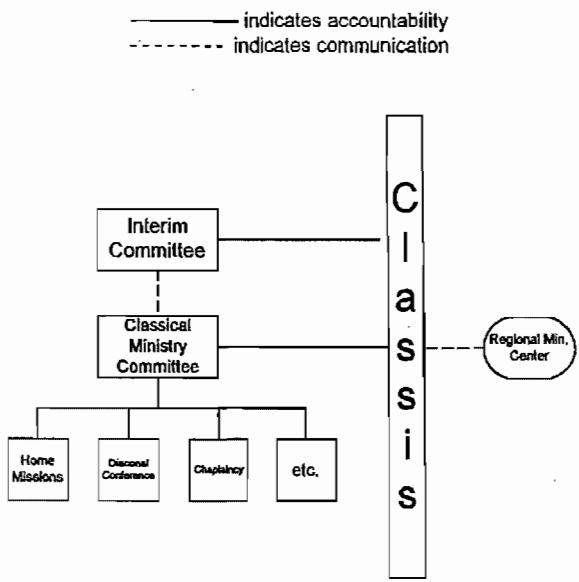
We invite each classis to implement the following proposals to (1) appoint a classical ministry committee (CMC), (2) integrate diaconal conferences into its ministry, and (3) cooperate in the establishment of regional ministry centers (RMCs). Diagram 4 below illustrates the proposed relationships.

1. Classical ministry committees (CMCs)

   Increasingly, ministries get their funding from a classis and need to be supervised on a regular basis. Usually these ministries operate independently from each other. This is an especially unfortunate arrangement for outreach ministries in the same community. Some kind of coordination of ministries is essential.

   But the task of coordination is not easily done by classis when it is in session for only one or two days two or three times per year. A classical ministry committee could assist in this important work between meetings of classis. This work would be distinct from that of the classical interim committees, which would focus on administrative matters related to classes if classical ministry committees were instituted. There should, however, be an overlap of one to two members to ensure communication between these two kinds of classical committees.

Diagram 4
A Sample Classis



a. Mandate of a classical ministry committee

The mandate of a classical ministry committee would include the following:

1) Nurturing the vision
   a) Facilitating the preparation and adoption of a mission statement for classis.
   b) Serving existing classical committees with consultation, advice, and expertise in accord with the vision, ministry plan, and mandate of classis.
   c) Processing reports from the Canadian Ministries Board and the various agency ministries and preparing a coordinated report (this would take the place of individual agency reports).
   d) Recommending ministry proposals to classis.
   e) Preparing nominations for the Canadian Ministries Board, Board of Trustees—Canada, and classical committees.
2) Resourcing the local churches
   a) Promoting training for officebearers and local ministry/team committee members.
   b) In consultation with the regional center, organizing conferences, workshops, seminars, and other training opportunities to develop ways in which local churches can be mobilized and equipped for ministry.
   c) Collaborating with other classical ministry committees to consider and propose cooperative joint ventures.
3) Communicating the vision and the work of classis
   a) Preparing a classical (or regional) newsletter.
   b) Keeping churches informed of prayer concerns.
   c) Encouraging the use of denominational resources.

Examples: There are several examples of classes that are already doing some of these activities. Classis Minnesota North (the only binational classis) has a vision statement that sees as part of its role the coordination of ministry. Classis Lake Erie provides regular training events for equipping leaders for ministry and publishes a newsletter that identifies prayer concerns.

b. Composition of a classical ministry committee

At least seven members should make up a classical ministry committee. We suggest that the following be included: a representative of the Canadian Ministries Board; one representative each from the classical interim committee, the diaconal conference, and the home missions committee; a representative of an international ministry; a Chaplaincy representative; one or two members-at-large. It may be helpful to include a ServiceLink representative as well as the regional ministry developer (RMD) in an advisory capacity.

c. Integration of diaconal ministry

The work of the deacons is vital to the ministry of the churches. Their ministries need to be more effectively integrated into the denominational structure if ministry is to be wholistic and unified in approach. The meaningful involvement and integration of deacons in the governance of the church will enhance CRC ministry in Canada.

The Church Order provides for the deacons' conference to be a "classical diaconal committee." We encourage this, provided there is real clarity about the purpose and role of such a committee. The present diaconal conference should be meaningfully involved in the process of becoming a committee of classis. The mandate of such a classical diaconal committee includes developing meaningful integration of the diaconal work and other ministries.

A classical diaconal committee would

1) Provide regular reports of diaconal ministry to classis.
2) Give input to the classical ministry committee and serve as advisers at classis meetings.
3) Set up joint training events for church leaders and caregivers.
4) Help to process financial decisions through classis.

We strongly encourage classes to appoint two or three deacons as advisers to classis meetings. They should be nominated by the diaconal conference and appointed by classis. As advisers, they would have opportunity to speak and contribute to the decision-making process.

The experience in Canada of a diaconal conference becoming a classical diaconal committee is limited. The best example is in Classis Alberta North. In 1986, classis made the conference a diaconal committee of classis. In 1992, classis assumed responsibility for the financial stability of the conference, and it assigned the conference a ministry share (as is the case with other ministries). The conference reports regularly at each classis meeting (one hour), has a representative on the Home Missions committee and on the Native Ministries Committee of Classis Alberta North, and prepares a budget, which is submitted to classis for approval.

In Classis Huron, the conference became a committee of classis in 1994. Two representatives from the conference attend classis meetings as advisers with full privilege of the floor but no vote.

H. Regional ministry centers (RMCs) and regional ministry developers (RMDs)

1. Regional ministry centers

a. Functions

Regional ministry centers will be a vital link to classes and churches to enhance the use of the resources for the ministries of our denomination and to coordinate denominational ministry activity in a given region. A key goal for this proposed new structure is to equip God's people in the local settings for more effective ministry. It is at the local level that the ministry of the church takes on its clearest expression.

Regional ministry centers will coordinate the delivery of services to the congregations. Many resources already exist in the denomination. For example, regional home missionaries do leadership training, small-group ministry, Congregational MasterPlanning, and needs assessment; diaconal ministries provide training for deacons and other caregivers; church-education consultants introduce materials from CRC Publications and provide workshops. However, at present the resources from the various agencies are not coordinated, and agencies approach the churches independently. We want to maintain the high level of skill that already exists and at the same time develop a coordinated team approach for the

delivery of resources to the local churches. The regional ministry developers (see below) will serve as leaders for the region served by a regional ministry center.

b. Location

We recommend that initially three regional centers be developed, in British Columbia, Alberta, and eastern Canada. Recognizing that eastern Canada encompasses a large area both geographically and culturally, we envision that eventually eastern Canada will be subdivided into two ministry regions. We also envision that these centers of expertise will be mobile within the regions. Therefore, they will require limited physical office space in a central location. Regional ministry developers will be equipped with appropriate communication and computer technology that will allow them to function effectively from many different locations.

c. Staffing and accountability

Each regional ministry center will be staffed by a regional ministry developer (RMD) who is accountable to the team leader of the Church Development standing ministry committee. (See position description for regional ministry developer below.)

2. Regional ministry developers: position description

Each of the three regional ministry centers will be served by a regional ministry developer who will

a. Provide access to and develop new resources for church development. The RMD will provide the local church with "one-stop shopping" access to the resources of the denomination about any ministry activity, agency, or program and will work with the other agency representatives in the region to provide a coordinated approach to training.

Example: The RMD might develop a joint training program for all officebearers and caregivers in a local congregation.

b. Build partnerships with international CRC ministries and the local church. The intent here is to bring the mission on the field close to home for purposes of prayer, education, personal involvement, and deputation.

Example: The RMD might link a classis or a group of churches with an international field.

c. Nurture planning for effective ministry by classes, ministries, and agencies. The intent here is to bring together a variety of ministries in a classis or a region to work at developing ministry plans.

Example: The RMD might develop a ministry plan for ministry with the poor in a given region, making use of a variety of denominational resources and those of other Christian ministries in a region, using ServiceLink to provide a resource bank of volunteers to do ministry.

d. Coordinate the outreach efforts of denominational ministries in a region. This involves brainstorming and developing a plan to coordinate strategies for more effective outreach ministry.

Example: The RMD might develop a cooperative strategy when Home Missions is doing a church plant to couple that work with parallel work from other agencies such as Diaconal Ministry, Chaplaincy, and The Back to God Hour.

To achieve these goals, regional ministry developers will work closely with classes, the local churches, and denominational resources in an area to

1) Assess regional needs, identify goals, and develop plans for the ministry development of the Christian Reformed Church in a region through established congregations, new congregations, and region-specific service ministries.
2) Develop leadership-training opportunities for officebearers, pastors, and volunteers.
3) Educate classes and churches about the personnel and material resources of the denomination that can help develop local churches by pointing them to resources in areas such as church education, elder/deacon training, pastor-church relations, and education related to abuse, disabilities, and race relations.
4) Bring together ministry personnel affiliated with specific denominational agencies to develop a coordinated and integrated strategy to serve local churches and classes more effectively with their resources. This effort will include regional personnel associated with Home Missions, CRWRC, and CRC Publications.
5) Link classical groups of churches in a region with particular international fields and churches where the CRC ministers, in order to encourage mutual education, prayer support, and financial assistance.
6) Create a resource bank that identifies people, ideas, and materials available to assist local churches and classes.
7) Assist in coordinating the placement of volunteers identified by ServiceLink.
8) Create new resources where there are significant gaps in resources and develop ministry with the church's aging population.

The RMD will communicate regularly with denominational agency personnel and with the standing ministry committees, the advisory council for the region, and the classical ministry committee.

Regional ministry developers (RMDs) will not be primarily involved in the direct delivery of services to local congregations. The RMD will act as leader, referring churches to existing resources in the denomination wherever possible. Only in an area where the RMD has a particular skill or insight will the RMD deliver direct services to a congregation. The RMD's work with classes will focus on planning for the future, coordinating outreach ministries, linking national personnel and volunteers to classes and local churches within a region, and maintaining key links between the region and central denominational personnel. If goals are to be carried out effectively regional ministry developer will need to be a full-time position.

The regional ministry developers will need to have significant knowledge of all ministries within the Christian Reformed Church along with strong planning, management, and communication skills. This will be a mid-level position within the denomination's administrative structure, requiring someone who has significant experience in ministry development and wisdom in dealing with churches and classes.

Each regional ministry developer (RMD) and center (RMC) will be assisted by a regional advisory council (RAC). This council will be made up of two representatives from each of the classes in the region, preferably members who serve on their respective classical ministry committees. Although these councils will not be governance bodies, as advisory groups they will provide input about regional needs, share experience and ideas with classes in the region, and help ensure local ownership for the regional ministry developers.

3. A pilot project

Though many denominations have regional structures and the Christian Reformed Church has some regional agency personnel, the concepts of regional ministry centers and regional ministry developers are new to our denomination. Therefore, we recommend that we proceed with one center as a pilot project. Initially the Canadian ministries director, in consultation with the various classes, other denominational personnel, and the Canadian Ministries Board, should select one pilot center in which these concepts can be tested and refined before they are expanded to other regions in Canada. This pilot program will ensure that the initial cost is modest and that sufficient attention can be given to the development of an effective regional model. After a trial period the other regional centers can be developed.

4. Resources

The costs of supporting a regional ministry center (RMC) will include the costs for the regional ministry developer as well as this person's equipment and travel. A regional ministry center with a full-time regional ministry developer will cost roughly $90,000 to $100,000 annually. The funding for the regional ministry center will come from either a reallocation of denominational ministry-share funds currently used for other purposes or a small increase in ministry share.

I. Role of the deacons and diaconal organizations

A stated goal of this restructuring process is to integrate deacons, diaconal conferences, and regional diaconal organizations more effectively into the fabric of the denomination. Placing deacons on the Canadian Ministries Board and making the diaconal conference a working committee of classis are important beginnings. These actions incorporate the diaconal strength of our denomination into our decision-making process.

Two further issues deserve consideration: (1) the role of regional diaconal organizations and (2) the role of deacons in major assemblies.

1. Role of regional diaconal organizations in Canada: an overview

Canadian churches have been blessed with a strong diaconal presence at the local and classical levels, as is particularly evident in the training of deacons. Recently deacons have been developing outreach initiatives to launch ministry into their communities. Much of their effort goes on without much involvement or consultation with the other ministries of the church.

Since 1959, in eastern and central Canada there has been a strong *regional* presence in the form of Diaconal Ministries (formerly called The All Ontario Diaconal Conference). This umbrella organization serves the 140 Christian Reformed churches from Manitoba to the Maritimes with resources, training, and domestic project funding through a fund called Operation Manna. This

organization is governed by a board consisting of two representatives from each of the nine participating diaconal conferences (one classis has two conferences) and is accountable to a business session held each year at the annual meeting.

This vital, grassroots movement of deacons nurtures a diaconal vision for ministry that enriches the church. Two-thirds of the revenues for this organization are derived from dues paid by diaconates or paid out of local-church budgets. Diaconal Ministries of Eastern Canada (DMEC) keeps the churches well informed of its work. This organization is vigorous in its development of cooperative links with other denominational ministries. It is a participant in the Canadian Ministries Advancement Team *by invitation* and is involved in cooperative ventures such as ServiceLink.

In western Canada diaconal activity is flourishing. In British Columbia there is one conference for the two classes. In Alberta and Saskatchewan there is a diaconal conference in Classis Alberta North and another in Classis Alberta South. Alberta North has a full-time staff person, paid through a ministry share from classis. A few years ago British Columbia had a part-time staff person but presently does not have diaconal staff. CRWRC provides some resources and staff support to these conferences. The conferences also engage in creative projects in the community and the world.

At present there are ongoing discussions in western Canada to consider a regional network of diaconal conferences and diaconates. These talks are in the beginning stages. Their intent is to consider developing a communication network and possibly collaborating on specific projects and training events. More discussions are planned.

Across Canada deacons are networking well and cooperating on the development of resources, but these diaconal activities are not significantly incorporated into the deliberative bodies of the church. Only two diaconal conferences serve as official committees of classes. While some argue this organizational structure allows diaconal ministry to maintain its unique character and its focus on ministry development, such grassroots organization and independence come at a price. Deacons are often excluded from discussions when key ministry decisions are made. Major assemblies ought to consider an increased role for deacons in the deliberative bodies of the church to enhance ministry of the whole church and to increase meaningful communication between the deacons and other ministries.

2. Diaconal Ministries in Canada

We recommend that a national advisory committee called Diaconal Ministries be established as one of the ministries connected with Domestic Ministries (standing ministry committee). This advisory committee would be made up of eight to ten members, one from each of two conferences, plus two to four members-at-large. This committee would

a. Coordinate domestic diaconal outreach ministry.
b. Serve as a catalyst for such ministry locally and in the regions.
c. Coordinate regional or national fund-raising for such programs.
d. Start outreach projects and assist local diaconates in doing community-development work.
e. Nurture cooperative outreach ministry efforts with other domestic agencies of the CRC.

The staff resources of all diaconal organizations that work in this area (including the domestic diaconal work within CRWRC) would be combined into one position known as field director.

Over time, the responsibility for *training* deacons would shift to the local conference/classical level. To assist classes/conferences, a national staff person with a two-thirds-time commitment would be assigned to develop new training materials, equip and provide resources for local trainers, and give diaconal input on leadership development to the Church Development standing ministry committee. This could be done with a reallocation of responsibilities among current diaconal staff.

In addition to the national advisory committee, regional groups would continue to provide guidance and input on training, resources, and educational programs for deacons. Each regional group would have a membership of six to eight people.

Diaconal Ministries in Eastern Canada (DMEC) would eventually be part of this new national advisory committee. This arrangement would assume that (1) a national advisory committee is in place as part of Domestic Ministries to supervise domestic ministry projects and the coordination of funding (this ensures a meaningful continuity for the Operation Manna fund); (2) a regional advisory group is in place to give meaningful input to the education and training programs; (3) a staff person is in place to initiate domestic outreach ministry and a person is in place to develop resources for diaconal training and education; and (4) that there is a continuity of funding for these programs.

It is understood that this process would begin after Synod 1997 and that the process would take about a year or two. The integration of Diaconal Ministries of Eastern Canada into the new denominational structure requires a decision by the deacons at their annual meeting.

3. The role of deacons in major assemblies

The absence of deacons from our major assemblies (classis and synod) hinders an integrated approach to ministry. On a financial note, the diaconal committee of a classis is required to submit its budgets for approval to classis, a body that includes no deacons with voting privileges. At a minimum we recommend the appointment of diaconal advisers to classis and to synod. Classes and synod should ensure meaningful diaconal participation in committees that they appoint.

We also suggest that synod take another look at the matter of delegation of deacons to major assemblies. This issue is not new to synod. For over twenty years it has been debated, and several excellent reports have been presented to synod on the subject. We suggest that synod appoint a committee to review all previous debate on this matter, to summarize the issues pro and con, and to prepare a recommendation concerning the delegation of deacons for Synod 1999.

J. Transition of the Council of the Christian Reformed Churches in Canada (CCRCC)

During the past few years it has become increasingly clear that the current structure of the Council needs to be replaced so that the ministries of the Council are woven into the fabric of the denomination. Our proposal recommends a significant transition for the CCRCC. If this report's recommendations are adopted, there will no longer be a separate Council of the Christian

Reformed Churches in Canada. Yet the ministries of the Council will remain. These ministries need to find a clear place in a new structure.

If Synod 1997 adopts the recommendations as outlined in this report, we recommend the following process for the structural dismantling of the CCRCC and the integration of its ministries into other denominational structures. This process was endorsed at the November 11-12, 1996, meeting of the CCRCC in Winnipeg.

1. The November 1996 meeting of the CCRCC will be its last. The Council Interim Committee (CIC) will continue to function until the Canadian Ministries Board is organized and convened for its first meeting, at which time the CCRCC Interim Committee will render an account of its work to the Canadian Ministries Board.

2. All of the CCRCC's standing committees will continue to function under their current mandates as part of the Interim Committee until the Canadian Ministries Board is organized and after that until such time and in such a manner as the CMB shall decide.

3. All presently employed CCRCC staff shall remain in place until the Canadian Ministries Board is organized. Once the CMB is operational, it shall assume all responsibility for the present CCRCC personnel. It is understood that the Interim Committee of the Council and/or the Canadian Ministries Board shall have the authority to deal with any personnel matters that need attention prior to the completion of the proposed reorganization.

4. All CCRCC-approved ministry shares shall continue as needed until the Canadian Ministries Board proposes a new budget in order to ensure the continuity of income for CCRCC ministries. The classical treasurers should be notified to forward their money to the Canadian Ministries Board and not to the CCRCC.

5. The first Triennial Conference (possibly in 1999) will take time to celebrate the work of the Council of the Christian Reformed Churches in Canada.

If Synod 1997 does not adopt the main recommendations of this report or if other significant complications arise, the Interim Committee of the CCRCC will convene a meeting of the CCRCC at a time and place of the Interim Committee's choosing.

K. Finances

Our mandate requests a brief outline of some of the costs of these proposals. It may be helpful to begin with a brief look at the costs to run the present structure. Over $12 million (Canadian) is collected annually in income from the Christian Reformed Church in Canada for all denominational ministries. It is important to note that a significant amount of this money is sent overseas and is assigned to the funding of programs in a variety of locations, in accordance with the binational agreements of various agencies.

Of the total monies collected in Canada, the CCRCC controls just under $900,000 (Canadian). This income is generated through classical-ministry-share assessments unique to Canada and a few small transfer payments from the United States. The deacons in eastern Canada have a budget of $180,000

(Canadian) for diaconal ministries in that region. This does not include the monies expended by diaconal conferences at the classis level all across Canada.

Financial accounting for all Canadian ministries has already been consolidated in the Burlington, Ontario, office of the Christian Reformed Church. The Canadian controller effectively administers a centralized system of revenue and expenditure accounting, personnel and payroll records, and cash-flow management. This system is used for all ministries of the Christian Reformed Church in Canada as well as for international ministries specifically supported by the Canadian portion of the church. This financial accounting arrangement, put in place over the past few years, is working well and therefore requires no substantial revisions at this time. It also satisfies the regulations of Revenue Canada regarding charitable contributions raised in Canada. Any minor modifications required as a result of organizational restructuring can be handled in consultation with the director of finance of the Christian Reformed Church.

A small finance and administration committee to provide the Canadian Ministries Board with advice and to monitor the financial activity of the Burlington office would be useful.

Note: For a more detailed breakdown of present finances and a further explanation of the administrative services provided by the Canadian office, see Appendix 3 of this report.

Two financial issues related to a restructuring of ministry in Canada warrant further comment: (1) the costs of the CCRCC ministries and (2) the costs of ministries under the proposed structure.

1. The costs of the CCRCC ministries

   The ministries of the CCRCC are dependent for their continued operation upon the gracious contributions of many people in Canadian CRC congregations. Ministries of the CCRCC are funded through classical ministry shares. As noted above, the security of that income is important.

   Over the years some have raised concerns about what they perceive as an additional layer of funding responsibility required only of churches in Canada. For example, Native American ministries in the U.S. are covered through denominational ministry shares, but in Canada there is an extra allocation of classical ministry shares for aboriginal ministry. Similarly, the work of interchurch relations in Canada is an extra allocation in the CCRCC budget, whereas similar work in the U.S. is funded through denominational ministry shares. The equitableness of this situation is an important issue. The committee recommends that the Canadian Ministries Board and the Canadian ministries director address this concern as a top priority. We trust that a reexamination of the level of synodical- and classical-ministry-share funding will lead to an equitable binational ministry share.

   The present system of support will continue for existing Canadian ministries while the structural transition occurs because continuing support is required to eliminate unnecessary upheaval in the ongoing ministries of the church while new organizational structures are established.

   The committee recommends no immediate changes in the current amounts or allocation of funds for ministries specific to the Christian Reformed Church in Canada. For similar reasons the committee also

recommends no major changes in the current structure of the ministry shares which fund ministries of the church in Canada.

In the short term, the proposed restructuring would require only that classical ministry shares now dedicated to the CCRCC be transferred to the new Canadian Ministries Board and that classical funds now collected for specific diaconal activities continue in their current form.

2. Cost of ministries under the proposed structures

The committee has had as one of its goals to spend approximately the same amount as is currently being spent on governance so that most of the funds contributed directly enhance the ministry of the church. The committee recommends that the costs for the Canadian Ministries Board and the Canadian ministries director be borne by the whole denomination because the denomination has committed itself to being a binational church. The cost of the meetings of the agencies and ministries as well as related expenses will continue to be drawn from the agency budgets. At present that cost is about 1 percent of the overall income gathered in Canada. We should be able to work with approximately the same budget under the new organization.

There may be some small increases in governance expenses during the 1997-1998 transition as new structures are phased in and old structures are phased out.

We anticipate the following possible changes (noted in Canadian dollars):

a. The meeting expenses of the Canadian Ministries Board (three meetings per year) will be assigned to the denomination as a whole. They are estimated to be $25,000.

b. The Triennial Conference will be an expense every third year. The Canadian Ministries Board should allocate funds to pay for the costs of three delegates from each classis in Canada. That will result in a $20,000 cost spread over three years. In addition, there will be costs related to planning the event. Much of this cost will be covered by the current allocation of the CCRCC for its biennial Council meeting and the pre-Council conference.

c. The salary of the Canadian ministries director should be allocated to the denomination and not entirely to the churches in Canada. The total cost, including benefits and expenses, will be approximately $100,000. Approximately two-thirds of this amount will be recovered through the phasing out of the executive secretary of the Council of the Christian Reformed Churches in Canada position.

d. The meeting expenses of the standing ministries committees (SMCs) should be covered out of the budgets of the ministries in each group.

e. The regional ministry centers and particularly the regional ministry developers will require reallocated funds and will likely need some additional denominational funding. We estimate the cost of salary, benefits, and expenses for one center to be a maximum of $100,000. Since the three centers will be phased in gradually, there will be time to assess the level of funding required to make them effective.

L. Conclusion

Change is never easy. The process of learning to do things differently will not be easy. But we have been greatly encouraged by the willingness of the stakeholders at every level not only to hear us but to partner with us in this venture. We have experienced God's blessings on the ministries of our church. We as a committee were blessed in this work.

We sense that the Lord is giving the CRC new opportunities to develop crucial ministries. We are convinced that our Lord desires us to call forth the gifts of God's people to be used and shared in ministry at home and in the world.

We are confident that the proposed new structure will bless God's people with greater access to the resources they need. We expect, through the work of the Holy Spirit, an enhanced readiness by members of Christ's church to give themselves to the vast and varied ministry God is entrusting to the Christian Reformed Church.

V. Recommendations

A. That synod give the privilege of the floor to Mr. Ben Vandezande, facilitator of the committee; Rev. Gordon H. Pols, chairman; and Dr. Shirley Roels.

B. That synod adopt the proposed structure for Canadian ministries in order to inspire and equip the church on every level (locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally) to carry out its mission most effectively. This proposal has the following components:

1. The Canadian Ministries Board as the agent responsible to coordinate and hold accountable all ministries of the CRC in Canada within the policies set out by synod, the Board of Trustees, and the core values and goals contained in this report. The Canadian Ministries Board shall be composed of fifteen to eighteen members, one from each of the Canadian classes and three to six to serve as members-at-large. Classis representatives shall include four pastors, four persons who have served at least one term as elder, and four persons who have served at least one term as deacon.

2. A Triennial Conference, convened jointly by the Canadian Ministries Board and the Board of Trustees—Canada, for the purpose of ministry visioning.

3. A Canadian ministries director, accountable to the Canadian Ministries Board and administratively accountable to the executive director of ministries, to supervise the coordination of Canadian ministries and to act in consultation with the general secretary as spokesperson in Canada on government and ecumenical relations.

4. The grouping of denominational ministries into three clusters governed by three standing ministry committees: International Ministries, Domestic Ministries, and Church Development. Team leaders will coordinate the ministries of each of the standing ministry committees.

5. The cooperation of the classes through their involvement in the regional ministry centers and their appointment of classical ministry committees and classical diaconal committees.

6. The development of regional ministry centers and the appointment of regional ministry developers, beginning with one prototype in western Canada.

7. The maintenance of current funding for CRC ministry in Canada until the new Canadian Ministries Board is in place.

C. That responsibility for implementation be assigned to the Board of Trustees—Canada and be delegated to the Canadian Ministries Board when it is formed.

D. That synod discharge the committee.

Committee to Study Structure
for Ministry in Canada
Gerrit J. Bomhof (secretary)
Neil de Koning
Ray Elgersma
Lee Hollaar
Ruth Krabbe
Gordon H. Pols (chair)
Shirley Roels
William Terpstra
Ed Vander Veer
Ben Vandezande (facilitator)
Jack Westerhof
Peter Borgdorff (adviser)

APPENDIX 1

Mandates of the Canadian Ministries Board (CMB) and the Board of Trustees—Canada (BOTC) and Guidelines for the Triennial Conference

I. Board of Trustees—Canada (BOTC)
The Board of Trustees—Canada shall be responsible for the following:

A. The Board of Trustees—Canada shall be the legal agent in Canada for the Christian Reformed Church in North America and the registered federally chartered charity in Canada.

B. The Board of Trustees—Canada shall be the agent of the synod of the Christian Reformed Church in North America and its Board of Trustees (binational) for all matters that pertain to the Canadian ministries of the CRC.

C. The Board of Trustees—Canada shall participate in the exercise of mutual accountability with the Board of Trustees—Michigan Corporation (i.e., the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA) for the overall ministry of the agencies of the Christian Reformed Church.

D. The Board of Trustees—Canada shall collect and distribute information for the enhancement of ministry in Canada to the churches and classes in Canada and advise them concerning the same.

E. The Board of Trustees—Canada, together with the Canadian Ministries Board, shall be the convening agent of the Triennial Conference of representatives of Christian Reformed churches and classes in Canada for the purpose of envisioning the ministries the Canadian Christian Reformed churches have in common within the Canadian context. Such a conference may, from time to time, be convened as an interclassical assembly under the authority of Article 44-b of the Church Order of the Christian Reformed Church. When such a conference is convened under Article 44-b, the Board of Trustees—Canada shall request one of the classes to be the convening assembly.

F. The Board of Trustees—Canada shall be the agent for all joint-venture and agency agreements between the Canadian Ministries Board and like denominational entities in the United States.

G. The Board of Trustees—Canada shall maintain a relationship of accountability and support with the Canadian ministries director for all matters under the jurisdiction of the Board of Trustees—Canada.

H. The Board of Trustees—Canada shall be responsible for ecumenical relationships within Canada for which the Canadian ministries director is the appointed spokesperson.

I. The Board of Trustees—Canada shall fulfill all other functions assigned to it by the specific instruction of synod or described in the Constitution and Bylaws of the Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

II. Canadian Ministries Board (CMB)

A. Functions

On behalf of the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA) and within the policies of the Board of Trustees (binational), the Canadian Ministries Board shall be responsible for all the ministries conducted by the agencies and committees of the Christian Reformed churches in Canada and ministries performed internationally on behalf of the Christian Reformed churches of Canada.

Such responsibility shall include but not be limited to the following:

1. Approving all ministry activity conducted by the committees and agencies of the Canadian Ministries Board.

2. Approving all budgets and allocation of financial resources for all denominational ministries in Canada and recommending such to the Board of Trustees—Canada.

3. Approving the initiation of all new ministry proposals requiring denominational resources within Canada or requiring resources collected within Canada.

4. Supervising the recruitment and nomination process for the Canadian ministries director (CMD), who will be appointed by the Board of Trustees—Canada and ratified by the synod of the Christian Reformed Church.

5. Holding the Canadian ministries director accountable for the performance of his/her office.

6. Approving the appointment of all senior denominational staff members in Canada.

7. Assuring the collaboration of ministries in Canada with appropriate agencies and committees in the United States and proposing joint-venture and agency agreements with like denominational entities in the United States for approval by the Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

8. Arranging for a plan of regional ministry centers in consultation with the classes located within each region.

9. Presenting an annual account of its work to the Board of Trustees—Canada.

Note: It is understood that, if decisions are binational in scope and not limited to ministry or staff in Canada, they will be recommended to the Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church in North America for approval.

B. *Composition*

1. The Canadian Ministries Board shall be made up of one (1) member from each of the classes of the CRC in Canada and not fewer than three (3) and not more than six (6) members-at-large.

2. The classical representatives shall be equally selected from among the three (3) offices of the church, i.e, four (4) elders, four (4) deacons, and four (4) ministers, on a rotation schedule as determined by the Board of Trustees—Canada.

   Note: The rotation of these members should begin in their second term to allow for maximum continuity in the first three years. The qualifications for the elders and deacons are that they must have served at least one term in the office for which they are nominated. They need not be currently in office.

3. The three to six (3 to 6) members-at-large shall be nominated by the Canadian Ministries Board.

4. All elections and/or nominations for membership on the Canadian Ministries Board shall be ratified by the Board of Trustees—Canada.

5. Terms of service on the Canadian Ministries Board shall be governed by the rules of synod.

6. All members of the Canadian Ministries Board shall have designated alternates, according to the rules of synod.

7. The Canadian Ministries Board shall appoint such committees (including the standing ministry committees) as it from time to time shall determine and as shall receive the approval of the Board of Trustees—Canada.

C. Relationships

1. The Canadian Ministries Board shall report through the Board of Trustees—Canada to the Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

2. The Canadian Ministries Board shall ensure the cooperation of the standing ministry committees in the overall ministry of the Christian Reformed Church.

3. The Canadian Ministries Board shall encourage and support the members of the denominational staff in Canada.

4. The Canadian Ministries Board shall direct and supervise the activities of the Canadian ministries director in cooperation with the executive director of ministries.

5. The Canadian Ministries Board shall permit the executive director of ministries and the general secretary of the CRCNA access to its meetings in matters relating to their work.

III. Triennial Conference

A. Convening the conference

The Triennial Conference shall be convened every third year by the Board of Trustees—Canada jointly with the Canadian Ministries Board for the purpose of ministry visioning around a theme selected by the Board of Trustees—Canada in consultation with the Canadian Ministries Board.

B. Budget provisions

Budget provisions shall be made for the convening of the conference by the Board of Trustees—Canada with participation of the Canadian Ministries Board.

C. Guidelines for the Triennial Conference

In response to the discussion at the CCRCC meeting November 11-12, 1996, in Winnipeg, the following are suggested guidelines for the organization of the first Triennial Conference.

1. Agenda

   a. Heart of the agenda
      1) Sharing and planning strategies for ministry
      2) Discussion of matters to be considered by the leadership of the CRC in Canada

      Although the conference ought to include celebration and equipping for ministry, the central focus must remain on the development of ministry in Canada.

   b. All churches and ministries of the church will be encouraged to suggest and recommend that which will contribute to the upbuilding of the church in Canada. Items to be placed on the agenda will come by way of recommendation or overture through

1) Regional conferences
2) Classes to which Canadian churches belong
3) The Canadian Ministries Board

2. Participants

a. This conference is a gathering of the church, though not an ecclesiastical assembly as defined by the Church Order. Therefore, we seek a wide spectrum of participants. We recommend the following:
1) Staff as assigned by the Canadian ministries director and Canadian Ministries Board (nonvoting participants).
2) Up to five (voting) delegates from each regional conference.
3) Up to five (voting) delegates from each classis, all of whom are presently involved in some significant ministry within the boundaries of classis.
4) And nonvoting participants who choose to come.

b. Because of a desire to ensure adequate participation from various sectors of the church, the Canadian Ministries Board may invite others to participate. For example, CMB should include some native peoples or young people in the dialogue.

3. Process

Through small groups and plenary sessions, a discussion process will lead to resolutions. These resolutions will be voted on by voting delegates. Once adopted, these (nonbinding) resolutions will go to the Board of Trustees—Canada, which in turn will pass them on to the churches, classes, synod, boards, and committees as appropriate. Added to these resolutions will be the ways and means that individuals, assemblies, and organizations can take further action on these matters.

4. Cost

Developing a budget for and funding the Triennial Conference is the responsibility of the Canadian Ministries Board. At the present time there is a budget of $20,000 (Can.) in the CCRCC budget for the biennial Council meeting. We believe this figure ought to remain in the budget. We believe that the primary funding for the costs of delegates to this "grassroots" meeting ought to be the responsibility of local assemblies and organizations. Funding possibilities include resources from the Canadian Ministries Board, classes, various ministries and congregations, and other sources as appropriate.

D. Article 44-b and the Triennial Conference

In 1967 the synod of the CRCNA adopted an agreement of cooperation among the classes of the CRC in Canada. With the formation of the Canadian Ministries Board, the ministry of the CCRCC will be integrated into the regular structure of the CRCNA. The mandate, jurisdiction, and authority granted to the CCRCC will no longer be required.

However, there may be occasions when an ecclesiastical assembly of Canadian classes will be required to make a final decision. Reasons for this may include the requirements of Canadian law, ecumenical relationships in Canada, and particular ministry in the Canadian context. Although we do not see a regular meeting under Article 44-b as an ordinary method of decision making, we believe that this option should be open to the Canadian churches.

The following policy will guide the Canadian churches in structuring themselves as an ecclesiastical assembly under Church Order 44-b:

1. The Board of Trustees—Canada will recommend to synod that an assembly of Canadian classes take place. Such a recommendation will include the time and place of meeting (either at the same time and place as synod or at a Triennial Conference) and the agenda (mandate).

2. Synod will approve such an assembly, providing the mandate, jurisdiction, and authority required.

3. The Board of Trustees—Canada will make appropriate arrangements for such a gathering to take place either at synod or a Triennial Conference.

4. Ordinarily, such a gathering will consist of the Canadian delegates to synod or a selection of the participants to a Triennial Conference. Ordinarily, these delegates will include a minister, an elder, and a deacon from each classis.

5. Alternatively, Canadian classes may overture synod to mandate the Board of Trustees—Canada to call such an assembly.

APPENDIX 2

Position Description for the Canadian Ministries Director

I. Qualifications

The Canadian ministries director (CMD) shall

A. Be a member of the Christian Reformed Church with a good knowledge of and commitment to the teaching of Scripture and the Reformed confessions and a love for the whole mission of the church.

B. Have received appropriate educational training and prior ministry-management experience in which leadership and management skills have been demonstrated.

C. Possess a reputation for personal and professional integrity.

D. Demonstrate a high level of self-reliance and intuitive judgment in decision making.

E. Have the ability to plan and work collaboratively with everyone involved in congregational, regional, and denominational ministries.

F. Have a demonstrated ability in written and oral communication.

G. Have the capacity to delegate authority.

H. Have the ability to understand and act on advice with respect to budgetary guidelines, financial reports, and fiscal priorities of ministries in Canada.

II. Organizational relationships

The Canadian ministries director shall

A. Be an ex officio (nonvoting) member of the Canadian Ministries Board (CMB).

B. Be an adviser to the Board of Trustees—Canada and the Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

C. Consult with the executive director of ministries and the general secretary as appropriate in the discharge of all responsibilities.

D. Chair the meetings of the Canadian Ministry Advancement Team.

E. Be a member of the Ministries Coordinating Council (MCC).

III. Accountability

The Canadian ministries director shall be accountable to the Canadian Ministries Board for the overall performance of the office. Administrative accountability shall be to the executive director of ministries (EDM). Although the Canadian ministries director is not administratively accountable to the general secretary, the director shall consult with the general secretary on matters related to ecumenical relations and contact with the government. Through the Canadian Ministries Board the Canadian ministries director shall also have a reporting relationship to the Board of Trustees—Canada.

IV. Appointment and term of service

The appointment of the Canadian ministries director shall be recommended by the Canadian Ministries Board in consultation with the executive director of ministries. The Board of Trustees—Canada shall make the appointment, which shall be subject to ratification by synod. The Canadian ministries director shall serve at the pleasure of the Canadian Ministries Board and the Board of Trustees—Canada. Annual performance reviews shall be conducted according to normal policy and with the participation of the Canadian Ministries Board.

V. Duties and responsibilities

The Canadian ministries director shall

A. Be invested by the Canadian Ministries Board with executive responsibility and a management role which shall enhance the unified ministry of the denomination in Canada through joint strategic planning and coordination of goals while recognizing the particular responsibilities and roles of each standing ministry committee and respecting the agreed-upon role of the synodical agencies.

B. Develop and implement a strategic Canadian ministries plan as a basis for managing the planning, coordination, and integration of the work of the CRC ministries in Canada into the denominational ministry program.

C. Require reports from all the ministries and committees, provide the Canadian Ministries Board with analyses and reviews of programs, and make recommendations, in consultation with others, with respect to the distribution of the resources of the ministries in Canada.

D. Call meetings of the Canadian Ministries Advancement Team (CMAT) and, where there are other groupings for ministry, convene all appropriate personnel. The Canadian ministries director shall ensure cooperation and collaboration of ministries.

E. Present an appropriately planned annual budget, incorporating individual budgets from each ministry and committee into the strategic plan for all ministries.

F. Submit an annual report to the Canadian Ministries Board on work being done with the ministries, standing committees, and institutions, based on individual goals and the strategic plan for the denomination.

G. Ordinarily attend the meetings of each standing committee as requested or at the Canadian ministry director's own initiative.

H. Serve as spokesperson for the CRC in Canada on matters of interchurch relations.

I. Serve as spokesperson for the CRC in Canada regarding relations with and submissions to the government and other public organizations and institutions as appropriate.

J. Be an advocate to the Christian Reformed churches in Canada on behalf of all CRC ministries responsible to the Canadian Ministries Board.

K. Supervise with the director of finance the work of the financial administrator in Canada and receive advice in all matters involving finances.

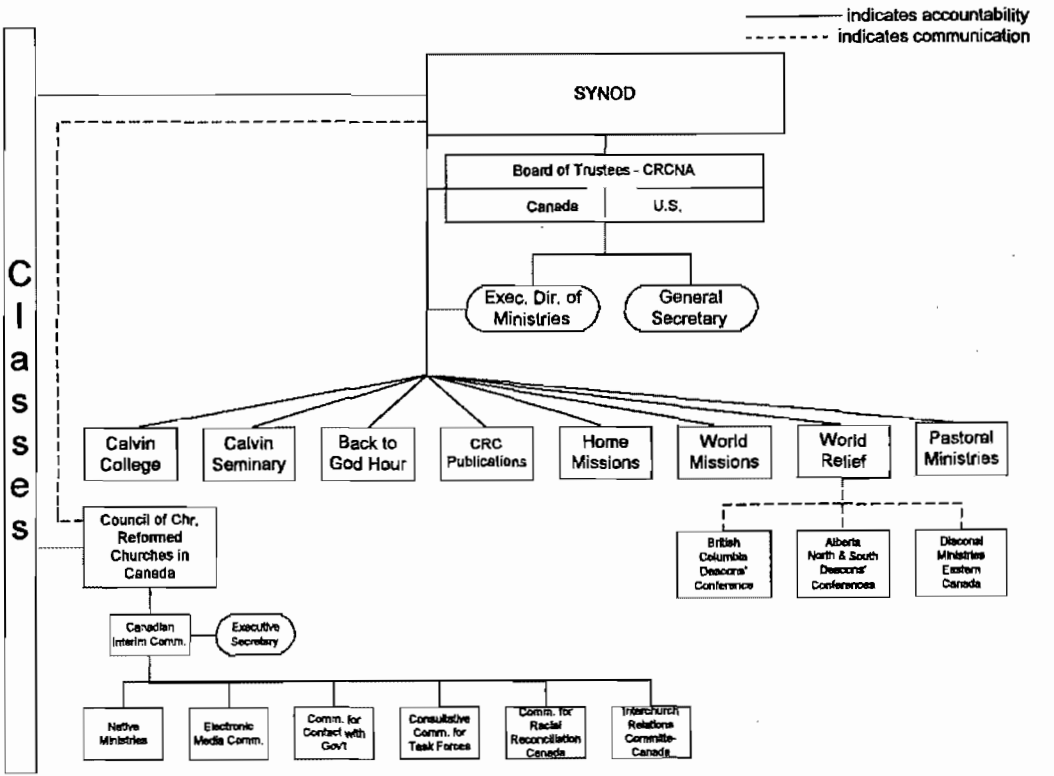
L. Supervise the personnel and functions of the Coordinated Services program.

M Perform such other duties as may be assigned.

APPENDIX 3

Overview of the Current CRCNA Structure in Canada

I. Graphic representation of the current structure



II. Administrative and financial services performed in Burlington on an interagency basis

A. Personnel services

1. Maintenance of personnel and payroll records.
2. Administration of payroll for all Canadian employees of the CRC, CRC agencies, CCRCC, and Indian Ministries, including Canadian missionary staff of Christian Reformed World Missions and the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee.
3. Administration of benefits and group Retirement Savings Plan for Canadian employees of the CRC, including Canadian missionary staff of World Missions and CRWRC.

B. Legal services

Currently the CRCNA and some of its agencies are

1. Providing corporate offices for the registered CRC charities as defined in the Canadian Business Corporations Act and for charities recognized by Revenue Canada.
2. Providing national offices for denominational boards which exist to exercise "due diligence and fiduciary responsibility" and to exercise "direction and control" over the activities supported by tax-deductible contributions.
3. Acting as partner agent in joint-venture agreements when funds are directed to other-than-specific activities of a particular Canadian CRC charity (such as an agreement with a U.S. agency of the CRC).

C. Banking services

1. Acting as the administrative contact with the netting-for-interest (NFI) banking program of the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce.
2. Contracting with COMCHEQ payroll services.

D. Accounting and financial services

1. Accounting for The Back to God Hour, World Missions, CRWRC, and the CRCNA (including CRC Publications, Pastoral Ministries, Fund for Smaller Churches).
2. Accounting for CCRCC, Indian Ministries, Classical Student Funds, RACOM, and ServiceLink.
3. Providing receipting services for all agencies mentioned above and for Home Missions, Calvin College, and Calvin Theological Seminary. (Receipting is maintained under a common departmentalized database, utilizing a common receipting program.)
4. Providing checking (chequing) services for all agencies.
5. Providing financial services for the Ministers' Pension Plan and the Consolidated Group Insurance Plan.

III. A summary of income for CRC agencies and ministries in Canada and a summary of the number of staff and board members involved

Agency	Total Income	# of Staff	# of Board Members
Home Missions	$1,663,313	2 Reg. H.M. 3 part-time assts.	12
World Missions	2,167,734	3 (1 Dir.)	12
World Relief (includes government funds)	4,149,890	6 (1 Dir.) + alternates	15
Back to God Hour	1,943,778	2 part-time	5
Denominational and Coordinated Services	539,870	6	6
Pastoral Ministries	316,080	1	5
Fund for Smaller Churches	213,674	-	-
Publications/ World Literature	68,157	-	-
Calvin College	273,701	-	-
Calvin Theological	475,424	-	-
Subtotal	$11,811,621	20	55
Other ministries			
CCRCC (six committees)	437,371	2	50
Indian Ministries	439,267	3	12
Diaconal Ministries	190,775	2	18
Total	$12,879,034	28	80

Note: Agency and ministry figures represent the 1995-1996 fiscal year.
CCRCC and Indian Ministries figures represent the 1995 fiscal year.

APPENDIX 4

A Brief History of the Christian Reformed Church in Canada, Focusing Especially on Its Relationship to the Denomination

The Christian Reformed Church began as a United States-based church over 125 years ago. It was not until early in this century that a few Canadian outposts appeared: Nobleford in 1905, First Edmonton in 1910, Burdett in 1911, Winnipeg in 1911, Neerlandia in 1915, Chatham in 1926, Sarnia in 1926, Vancouver in 1926, Hamilton in 1929, Lacombe Woodynook in 1935, Holland Marsh in 1938, Houston, B.C., in 1939. These churches were incorporated into U.S. classes.

The CRC in Canada, preponderantly a post-World War II Dutch-immigrant phenomenon, grew significantly after the war. The fledgling immigrant churches were ministered to by U.S. CRC "home missionaries," who worked tirelessly to minister to immigrants who were strangers in a strange land. In 1951 there was only one Canadian classis—Classis Ontario. By 1960 there were seven.

In 1950 synod received an overture from Classis Kalamazoo asking for the establishment of particular synods. It argued that particular synods would help the Canadian churches become better acquainted with denominational life and thus would help Canadian classes with problems resulting from the influx of immigrants.

A synodical committee responded in 1952, arguing that "Particular Synods composed of classes both in Canada and in the United States will bring about a greater acquaintance with our denominational life and will lead to an increased mutual understanding between the churches here and there" (*Acts of Synod 1952*, p. 171). There is a hint here of paternalism, but surely in a good and noble sense. Synod said, " . . . the church was not yet ripe for an immediate decision on this matter" (*Acts of Synod 1952*, p. 34).

Synod 1957 considered the matter again. Its committee felt classes should be grouped across the Canada-U.S. line because this "would be wholesome toward a greater feeling of unity and that the very necessity of working into another's situation would result in a greater sense of belonging together" (*Acts of Synod 1957*, p. 245).

Synod agreed to "take steps necessary for the establishing of Particular Synods" (*Acts of Synod 1957*, p. 50). A fully developed plan was presented by a committee to Synod 1959. This plan proposed that the Canadian churches be grouped as one particular synod because "Canada has *peculiar* problems all of its own such as language, immigration, publicity, relations to the government, etc." (*Acts of Synod 1959*, p. 129).

The 1959 report stated about its recommended approach, "If it is feared that this will create sectionalism between the Canadian and United States churches we call your attention to the fact that our unity is in our Confessional Standards, denominational interests, and loyalty to the Truth. . . . Sectionalism or unity is produced by the mind and attitude of people, not primarily by organizational lines" (*Acts of Synod 1959*, pp. 129-30).

Both Classis Hudson and Classis Grandville contested the report's argument that separate Canadian and U.S. synods would not lead to sectionalism. Hudson argued it "would accentuate rather than obliterate differences between our Canadian and American churches" (*Acts of Synod 1959*, p. 521). Grandville argued that "this new set-up of Particular Synods will accentuate rather than moderate these different mentalities, attitudes, and approaches of our people to the various problems of church life" (*Acts of Synod 1959*, p. 553). Synod did not adopt the particular-synod proposal, and the issue basically died until 1965.

In 1965 Classis Chatham asked synod for a regional synod of the four classes of eastern Canada: Chatham, Eastern Ontario, Hamilton, and Toronto. These four classes had met five times since 1960 in the form of a conference to deal with matters of common concern. But they found themselves handicapped "because it [the assembly] had no power to act." It lacked the status of an ecclesiastical assembly. "All the reports and decisions of the conference had to be referred to the four classes for ratification," and if even one of the classes decided not to agree, a decision "became null and void for all four classes" (*Acts of Synod 1965*, pp. 460-62).

It is interesting to note the kinds of common action Classis Chatham had in mind. All of them recur in the Agreement of Cooperation of what was to become the CCRCC. They mention (1) official contact with the government in such matters as educational laws, the Lord's Day Act, marriage and divorce laws,

controversial CBC radio and TV programming, bilingualism and biculturalism, and members in the armed forces (many of these issues, of course, were of national concern and not just of concern to eastern Canada; reflected in these issues is a mindset toward Christian cultural involvement and church-state relations which is more pronounced in the Canadian than in the U.S. CRC constituency); (2) public relations (e.g., media concerns); (3) concern for proper incorporation of our churches; (4) evangelism (which needs to take into account Canada's history, customs, types of people and churches, the French and Roman Catholic populations in Quebec, and Indian reserves); (5) ecumenical contacts (Free Reformed, Canadian Reformed, RCA, Presbyterian churches, etc.); (6) institutions of mercy (Shalom, seniors' residences, etc.).

Chatham's request was contested by overtures from two Canadian churches. Calvin CRC of Dundas argued that such a particular synod for Ontario "may well jeopardize the unity of our denomination." Aylmer CRC stated concern "about the fact that the establishment of such a regional synod would tend to create a certain estrangement between the believers in the area of the proposed regional synod, and the denomination as a whole." It referred to the request as calling for an "organizational innovation."

Synod decided to appoint a committee "which shall study ways and means by which the Christian Reformed Churches in Canada may most effectively deal with matters that are *peculiar* to them as a body of churches in Canada. This committee shall be composed of persons both from Canada and the United States." It cannot escape notice that the wording of the mandate makes it clear that the matters to be resolved were in and for Canada. By delineating the mandate in this way synod lost a glorious opportunity to address head-on the matter of one church in two nations. The matters were not Canadian matters only.

The committee appointed by Synod 1965 consisted of four American and two Canadian pastors, namely, Revs. T. Van Kooten, J. De Kruyter, J.T. Holwerda, A. Venema, and L. Mulder and Dr. L. Praamsma. Reporting to Synod 1966, the committee observed that, indeed, the Inter-Classical Conference had "no official standing as an ecclesiastical assembly and could sit only in an advisory capacity." It concurred with Classis Chatham that "there are matters peculiar to the Canadian churches as a body that call for some *united* decision and actions"—and then it restated most of the concerns found in the Classis Chatham overture. Not all the issues were unique to Canada, but "these issues exist in the context of churches with a different history within a different nation with a different government" (*Acts of Synod 1966*, p. 143).

The committee made a number of other significant statements which are worth quoting:

> 1. . . . the Christian Reformed Church as a *denomination* is United States oriented. . . . It may be described as a United States denomination with congregations in Canada . . . we must face the situation that obtains today.
>
> . . . .
>
> 2. The overwhelming majority of members within the churches in Canada has recently come from a specific background (religious, social and political), in the Netherlands. These members are now finding their place within a new national situation which requires specific direction and action. The Canadian churches should assume their full responsibility within national life as quickly as possible.
>
> . . . .

3. Finally, one may not overlook the difference between the United States and Canadian churches because of the latter's recent background in the Netherlands. There is no disagreement between the membership of the Christian Reformed Churches in the United States and Canada in respect to loyalty to the Word of God and the Reformed confessions. However, there are differences within that general framework of essential agreement. The members of the Canadian churches, barring a few exceptions, have recently immigrated from a historical national situation where Christian social and political organizations were of great influence in society. . . . The churches in the United States, however, have always been a small minority within a very large country. They have developed within that country largely in isolation. The result of these distinct backgrounds give rise to different attitudes, and even different objectives within the churches in Canada and the United States.
(*Acts of Synod 1966*, p. 144)

Synod 1966 (*Acts of Synod 1966*, pp. 53-54) then adopted five guidelines "for those Classes which desire to take 'counsel on joint action.'" These guidelines stipulated that such bodies restrict themselves to matters of mutual concern which cannot be dealt with locally or by the general synod or by their committees, that they not function as courts of appeal in matters of discipline or protest against decisions of ecclesiastical assemblies, and that membership by classes be voluntary.

Clearly, what synod allowed in 1966 was considerably less than Classis Chatham had asked for in 1965. The new assembly, based on these five guidelines, would lack the status of an ecclesiastical assembly, and, given the explicitly voluntary nature of its membership, would be limited in its ability to effect ministry. These same problems would later afflict the CCRCC as well. In addition, any ministries the CCRCC might initiate in Canada would need to be funded by the churches in Canada. In effect, an additional layer of ecclesiastical "taxation" was levied from Canadian CRC members by a body which had no official ecclesiastical status.

The Council of the Christian Reformed Churches in Canada (CCRCC) was born when the Canadian classes adopted an Agreement of Cooperation Between the Classes of the Christian Reformed Churches in Canada in Winnipeg on November 2, 1966, and when Synod 1967 approved the Agreement. The Council held its first meeting in the Kildonan CRC, Winnipeg, in November 1968.

Council and synod were in conflict with each other from the outset. Synod 1970 instructed the Council to pay a pension for Mr. C. Steenhof, who had served as fieldman in Canada. Council refused. This refusal was appealed to synod by Second CRC of Toronto. Synod sustained that appeal. Thereupon, Council complied but also asked synod "not to initiate actions which will involve the Council in financial obligations without first giving Council a vote in such decisions" (*Acts of Synod 1970*, p. 32). The same synod "mandate[d] the Council . . . to instruct its Interchurch Relations Committee to initiate contact with the Free Christian Reformed Church." Instruction *from* synod but no access *to* synod—this situation created feelings of ill will and resentment.

Synod 1975, in somewhat gentler fashion, requested the Council to consider addressing itself to Canadian governmental bodies with regard to the matter of equitable distribution of educational tax dollars—in particular, for Christian schools. In 1982 the officers of synod proposed a resolution for adoption by synod "to be forwarded to the Premier of Ontario and leaders of the opposition party." The resolution expressed concern about the imminent passage of Bill 137,

"which would have had the effect of denying the right of the Institute for Christian Studies and of Redeemer Reformed Christian College to grant generally accepted degrees." Synod passed the resolution "by way of special exception," arguing that "action taken by the entire denomination at its highest assembly will have more effect than action by the executive committee of the regional body"—the regional body being, of course, the CCRCC (*Acts of Synod 1982*, pp. 100-01). The CCRCC felt that its responsibilities had been usurped by this action of synod.

The fragility of Council came to painful expression when Council hired an executive secretary and Classis Eastern Canada consequently withdrew from the Council in 1977. The classis overtured Synod 1978 to elucidate how Church Order Article 44 gave Council the right to function "as an assembly making binding decisions." It complained that synod did not "guarantee the autonomy of the classis entering the Council so that a classis could remain free from the responsibility of certain decisions of the Council with which the classis cannot agree" (*Acts of Synod 1978*, p. 651, Overture 16). Synod did not accede to this overture.

Movement to Canadianize the denomination has progressed over the last two decades. In 1979 synod authorized the creation of a Canadian corporation under the name of the Christian Reformed Church in North America. It also authorized the establishment of a common address and office for the denominational agencies and their registration under Canadian tax law. In the late 1980s and early 1990s several joint-venture agreements were made between U.S. and Canadian counterparts of various denominational agencies.

In 1983 Classis Alberta South overtured the Canadian Council of the Christian Reformed Churches in Canada "to appoint a committee to study the advisability of replacing Council with two Regional Synods in Canada; results of such a study to be referred to the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church for advice and possible implementation." As grounds it stated that "at this stage in the history of the CRC in Canada the Council may have outlived its usefulness" and that "Regional Synods would be a better expression of normal Reformed Church Policy and would be a better vehicle for the expression of regional concerns of the CRC in Canada" (*Acts of Council 1983*, p. 134). Council acceded to this request and gave as an additional ground that "the establishment of a particular Synod would enable Classis Eastern Canada to be a full participant in the affairs of the Canadian CRC (*Acts of Council 1983*, p. 14).

The study committee of Alberta members reported to Council in 1985. Council decided not to replace itself with a regional synod in Canada. Instead, Council appointed a new committee to draw up a plan for having the whole denomination go to a regional synod structure. Its grounds stated that "this was the original idea and request of the Canadian churches" and that "this would bring the work of the church closer to the actual life of the local congregations and strengthen the basic Reformed principle of the autonomy of the local congregation." Furthermore, "decentralization would bring the work of Home and World Missions closer to the members of the church. (A particular section of this work could be given to a particular regional synod, thus encouraging more local awareness and support.)" (*Acts of Council 1985*, p. 26).

A study committee reporting to the Council in 1989 proposed a model for regional synods—one in the U.S. and one in Canada—and stated that "the effect of this model is to decentralize the ministry of the church, bring it closer to the

life of the local congregation, and strengthen the witness of the church in both Canada and the United States (*Acts of Council 1989*, p. 79). Council endorsed the thrust of the proposed model and "the principle of regional synods, and ask[ed] the consistories to overture the upcoming meeting of these classes to overture the Synod of 1990 to implement regional synods as soon as possible" (*Acts of Council 1989*, p. 15). The result was a rush of overtures from seven Canadian classes to Synod 1990.

In the preceding reflection we see the coming of age of the CRC in Canada and the need for appropriate adjustment of our ecclesiastical structure. The binational character of the Christian Reformed Church needs to be appreciated and acknowledged, and the maturity of the Canadian CRC needs to be affirmed in a global ministry context. Canadian distinctiveness and the ensuing ministry opportunities come to expression in a great variety of ways, including political, cultural, social, and religious (ecclesiastical) realities. As a church ministering in a global context, we need to recognize distinctiveness in different cultural contexts and to empower believers to minister in all spheres of God's creation as they have opportunity. Our history shows that the Canadian arm (as well as the American arm) of the Christian Reformed Church in North America sought to do that. Our structure needs ongoing reformation so that our ministries continue unimpeded.

ADDENDUM TO THE REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE TO STUDY STRUCTURE FOR MINISTRY IN CANADA (PHASE III) RE CANADIAN CHURCHES AND INTERCHURCH RELATIONS

I. Background

At its meeting held in November 1995, the Council of the Christian Reformed Churches in Canada (CCRCC) approved "applying for membership in the Canadian Council of Churches (CCC) on the following grounds":

a) CCC has changed its format from a council to a looser forum structure, providing an excellent forum at which the CCRCC can witness to the Reformed faith.
b) We will never be forced to accept or support positions that are contrary to our Reformed faith, as we may opt out of decisions so taken and have it so noted in documents issued by the CCC.

(*Acts of Council, 1995*, Art. 21, G, 7)

This action was discussed by the denominational Interchurch Relations Committee (IRC). In its report to Synod 1996, the IRC recommended 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" (*Acts of Synod 1996*, p. 382). Synod adopted this recommendation and assigned the matter to the Committee to Study Structure for Ministry in Canada (*Acts of Synod 1996*, p. 521).

II. Observations

In 1967 synod approved an Agreement of Cooperation between the Classes of the Christian Reformed Church in Canada. The agreement mandates the

CCRCC to "deliberate and take action on all matters presented to its assembly by one or more affiliated classes or churches," in six different areas, including "contacts with other churches in Canada" (*Acts of Synod 1967*, pp. 124-25). The Council subsequently established its own Interchurch Relations Committee, and in 1983 the following mandate was adopted by the CCRCC for this committee:

1. To establish and maintain contact with other Christian churches in Canada in order to:
   a. become better informed about each other;
   b. learn from each other; and
   c. share the riches of the Reformed faith with others.
2. To give priority to the churches which are Reformed as to confession, polity, and liturgy.
3. To establish and maintain contact with Canadian ecclesiastical associations, in order to:
   a. keep abreast of ecumenical developments in Canada; and
   b. present a clear witness of the Reformed world and life view where possible.
4. To present concrete proposals to the CCRCC as to:
   a. which Canadian churches should be received into ecclesiastical fellowship, to be decided by the CRC in NA; and
   b. which Canadian ecclesiastical associations the CCRCC should join as a member.
5. To encourage local contact between CRC congregations and the congregations of other denominations, and to give guidelines for such contact.
6. To keep the CCRCC informed about its activities as committee and to execute its decisions.
7. To maintain contact with the Interchurch Relations Committee of the CRCNA for mutual exchange of information and discussion of issues pertaining to Interchurch Relations in Canada.

(*Acts of Council, 1983*, pp. 8-9)

We note that the action taken by the CCRCC to "apply for membership in the Canadian Council of Churches" appears well within this mandate.

III. Analysis

We see the issue at hand as two pertinent questions: May the Canadian churches, through their governing bodies (Canadian Ministries Board, CCRCC, and/or Canadian Board of Trustees), enter into bilateral or multilateral relationships with other churches or ecumenical organizations in Canada, or does the decision to enter such relationships require the consent of the whole church, i.e., synodical approval?

The answers to these questions depend upon one's ecclesiology. On the one hand, it can be cogently argued that an affirmative answer is possible for the second question only. Although certain relationships of fellowship or cooperation with other ecclesiastical bodies may be appropriate on a congregational level, on a larger scale—certainly on a national scale—they become the concern of the whole church. Thus, on the local level a minister may join an interdenominational ministerial fellowship, and a congregation and perhaps even a classis may join an interdenominational group in addressing a local need or concern, but the decision to join such national organizations as the National Association of Evangelicals or the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada or the Canadian Council of Churches involves the whole church and should therefore be made by synod.

On the other hand, it can also be cogently argued that an affirmative answer is possible for the first question, because the decision to join a national ecu-

menical group directly involves only those churches residing within the context of the nation. It is difficult for the synodical delegates of a binational denomination to make a knowledgeable and well-informed decision about the merits of a relationship with a church or ecumenical organization regarding which many of these delegates are likely to have little, if any, firsthand knowledge.

Our recommendation (below) attempts to borrow the best from both approaches in order to respect the uniqueness within a binational church.

IV. Recommendation

That the CRC in Canada be allowed to enter into ecumenical relationships within Canada as recommended by the Canadian Ministries Board, approved by the Board of Trustees—Canada, and ratified by synod. Such relationships should honor the conditions adopted by synod for interchurch and ecumenical relationships. It will be synod's jurisdiction to deal with possible appeals against any relationship into which the Canadian churches might enter. Binational or international relationships with other churches or organizations (e.g., Reformed Church in America or Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland) would be entered into by synod upon recommendation of its denominational Interchurch Relations Committee, composed of both U.S. and Canadian members.

Note: It strikes the committee as ideal that the U.S. component of our binational church likewise be permitted to enter into interchurch and ecumenical relations within its national context.

Committee to Study Structure for
Ministry in Canada
Gerrit J. Bomhof (secretary)
Neil de Koning
Ray Elgersma
Lee Hollaar
Ruth Krabbe
Gordon H. Pols (chair)
Shirley Roels
William Terpstra
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Peter Borgdorff (adviser)

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OVERTURES, APPEALS, AND COMMUNICATIONS

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OVERTURES

Overture 1: Interpret Church Order Articles 8 and 12

I. Background

There is a difference of interpretation within Classis Grand Rapids North regarding the application of Church Order Articles 8 and 12 to ministry-staff positions. The question arises from a concrete case, though the question is broader than this one case: Is it permissible for a church council to *hire* an ordained minister to fill a staff position for which the job description lists ordination as a requirement, or does the Church Order require that such a person be *called* by the congregation? Also, may a church council *hire* an ordained minister to fill a staff position for which the job description does not list ordination as a requirement?

Some in classis believe that these articles of the Church Order were not written in a context of staff ministries and therefore need not be applied to positions other than that of senior pastor. Others are convinced that these articles do apply, since staff ministers should be understood as collectively carrying out the duties prescribed by Article 12 for the minister of the Word.

Realizing that staff ministries are becoming increasingly common throughout the denomination, classis is looking to synod to clarify this matter so that each classis will not adopt its own interpretations and applications.

II. Overture

Classis Grand Rapids North overtures synod to interpret how the churches are to understand Church Order Articles 8 and 12 with respect to ordained persons serving in ministry-staff positions other than that of senior pastor.

Classis Grand Rapids North
Joseph Vanden Akker, stated clerk

Overture 2: Reassert the Right of Synod to Make Nominations from the Floor

Classis Illiana overtures synod to reassert the right of synod to make nominations from the floor for any position requiring synodical approval.

Grounds:

1. Synod is the broadest assembly representing the classes and the churches. It has historically affirmed the right of nomination from the floor until Synod 1995 surrendered it.
2. Synod acted unwisely in giving up this right, which had been entrusted to it by the churches.

3. Without this right synod will become increasingly marginalized in the decision-making process, and the life and future of the denomination will therefore be significantly affected.

Classis Illiana
Laryn G. Zoerhof, stated clerk

Overture 3: Adopt Affirmations of Faith

The council of Gallatin Gateway Community Church, Bozeman, Montana, overtures synod to adopt the Affirmations of Faith that accompany this overture.

Ground: These Affirmations of Faith should be adopted so that believers in our churches may more readily discern truth from error, be instructed in the Word, witness effectively to our world, defend against error, and become instruments in preserving and promoting the true unity of Christ's church in accord with the Word of God.

Council of Gallatin Gateway Community Church, Bozeman, MT
Ron Moss, clerk

Attachment

Affirmations of Faith . . .

The Apostle Paul challenges Christians of all ages as follows: *"I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned"* (Romans 16:17). Therefore we affirm our belief in the historic Reformed Christian faith given in the Scriptures, commit ourselves to live according to it, and reject all that is contrary to the Word of God. Furthermore, we affirm this testimony concerning the following points over which uncertainty has sometimes arisen.

I. CONCERNING THE WORD OF GOD

A. **Foundation of Our Faith and Practice**

WE AFFIRM:

1. That the foundation for all that the church believes and teaches both in faith and practice is the infallible and inerrant Word of God written, the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments.
2. That the Scriptures possess absolute authority and that the Ecumenical Creeds and the Three Forms of Unity, our confessions, possess authority subordinate to the Scriptures in our churches.
3. That the Holy Spirit will lead, guide, and direct His church always in accord with and never in ways which run contrary to the Word of God.
John 17:17; Matthew 4:4; 5:17-20; II Timothy 3:14-17; Hebrews 4:12; Psalm 119:105; Belgic Confession Articles 2, 3, 5, 7, 29

WE REJECT:

1. "With all our hearts whatsoever does not agree with this infallible rule" (Belgic Confession Article 7).
2. The error of those who teach that the Holy Spirit leads, guides, and directs His church contrary to the Word of God, or that He provides new divine revelation in addition to the Word of God (Deuteronomy 12:32).

3. The efforts of all who set aside or subtract from God's Word (in the name of evangelism, for example), because these efforts invalidate the church's total witness to the world and make obedience to the Great Commission impossible.

WE COMMIT OURSELVES:

1. To preach and teach the whole counsel of the Word of God as our fundamental duty, to make, nurture, and equip disciples of Jesus Christ, and to obey the Great Commission joyfully.
2. To live according to the Word of God in all of life: in the context of our interpersonal relationships, our families, our churches and schools, our daily callings and tasks in the marketplace.
3. To submit to the final authority of the Word of God instead of the rules and regulations of those who "ascribe more power and authority" unto themselves "than to the Word of God" (Belgic Confession Article 29).

B. **The Inerrancy of Scripture**

WE AFFIRM:

1. That the Scripture is the very Word of God written. Since God does not lie nor does He make mistakes, His Word cannot contain error. Scripture is inerrant and authoritative. "Scripture in its whole extent and in all parts is the infallible and inerrant Word of God" (*Acts of Synod 1979*, p. 127).
2. That Scripture's primary subject is the glory of God, a central demonstration of which is the message of redemption. Since the Scripture's authority, however, extends to all that it actually teaches, all of Scripture's subject matter is God's Word and always true. When Scripture speaks concerning matters of history, science, ethics, or anything else, it is true and authoritative, and it governs our thinking in these areas.
3. That the infallibility of Scripture necessarily implies the inerrancy of Scripture. *II Timothy 3:16, 17; II Peter 1:20, 21; Mark 13:31; Titus 1:1-3; Hebrews 6:16-20; Revelation 22:18, 19; Belgic Confession Articles 3, 7; Acts of Synod 1979, pp. 127-128*

WE REJECT:

1. The error of those who teach that the Scripture is not itself in its entirety the Word of God, but becomes the Word of God, or contains the Word of God.
2. The error of those who teach that because of the secondary or human factor in the Scripture's authorship there are errors, contradictions, or discrepancies in the Word of God.
3. The error of those who teach that Scripture's authority only extends to matters of salvation, but not to the Scripture's references to matters of history, science, ethics, or anything else.
4. The error of those who teach that we need not study God's World as well as God's Word in matters of history, science, ethics, or other areas of general revelation, or who claim that Scripture provides a complete description of such areas.

WE COMMIT OURSELVES:

1. To teach diligently and defend faithfully the Word of God as infallible and inerrant, and to reject all teaching that militates against this doctrine.
2. To believe and teach all that the Word of God teaches, accenting the primary message of Scripture that there is redemption for us from sin only through Jesus Christ.
3. To preach the law as a teacher of sin and rule of gratitude.

II. THE CHURCH OF GOD

A. **Its Savior**

WE AFFIRM:

1. That the redemptive work of Jesus Christ was unique and He remains the only way of salvation, our only comfort in life and death.
2. That we are made right with God by grace alone through faith alone on account of Christ alone.

Acts 4:12; I Timothy 2:5; John 14:6; II Timothy 1:8-12; Hebrews 10:11-14; Romans 5:1, 2, 9-11; 8:1-4; Ephesians 2:1-10; Belgic Confession Articles 20, 21, 22, 23, 26

WE REJECT:

1. The error of those who teach that there may be salvation apart from inclusion in the covenant of grace mediated by Jesus Christ, for this is a subversion of the gospel.
2. The error of those who teach that the ground of salvation is in any part the work of those who are saved.

WE COMMIT OURSELVES:

1. To exalt the Son of God, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, to whom the name above all names and all authority in heaven and earth has been given.
2. To proclaim this gospel of Christ to our world as the only answer to mankind's sin, rebellion, and separation from God.

B. **Its Worship**

WE AFFIRM:

1. That the elements in the worship of the church and the content of these activities must be done for the glory of God as prescribed by the Word of God.
Exodus 20:4; Deuteronomy 5:8-10; Leviticus 10:1-7; I Samuel 15:22, 23; John 4:23, 24; Heidelberg Catechism Q/A 96; Belgic Confession Article 32

WE REJECT:

1. The error of those who confuse worship with entertainment, who substitute man-centered activities for God-centered worship, who neglect law or gospel to remove the offense of the Word, who preach or teach "self-esteem" or self-improvement as alternatives to repentance and faith, or who "worship Him in any other way than He has commanded in His Word" (*Heidelberg Catechism, Answer 96*).

WE COMMIT OURSELVES:

1. To promote in worship only that which brings glory to God and that which He has commanded in His Word, as the author of Hebrews says, "Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe" (Hebrews 12:28).

C. **Its Offices**

WE AFFIRM:

1. That men and women equally bear the image of God and are to serve Him with all their gifts according to His specific callings to them.
2. That from creation men were given authority leadership in the family and in the church.
3. That Christ, as He makes clear in His Word, does not call women to the authoritative offices in the church, and therefore the church may not ordain them to these offices.
4. That the purpose of the spiritual gifts given to men and women in Christ is not self-fulfillment but service to others, to the end that God receives all the glory.
5. That Christ rules His church through the officers He calls to govern it according to the regulations of His Word.
I Timothy 2 & 3; Titus 1; I Corinthians 14; Belgic Confession Articles 30, 31; Acts of Synod 1994, pp. 505-508, 513-516

WE REJECT:

1. The error of those who teach that permitting women to be ordained as authoritative officebearers in the church is a position which honors the Scriptures as the infallible Word of God.
2. The error of those who deny these offices to women for reasons which are contrary to the Scriptures, such as bigotry, male chauvinism, or tradition.

WE COMMIT OURSELVES:

1. To develop and use the gifts and abilities of all of God's people - men, women, and our youth - in accord with the Word of God and for the good of God's kingdom and people.

2. To preserve the holiness and authority of the offices of the church in accord with the Word of God.

D. **Its Unity**

WE AFFIRM:

1. That the church is the universal body of Christ. The basis of its unity is not a denominational name, ethnicity, or similarity of background, but solely the Lord Jesus Christ, the Word of God, and the doctrines which the Word teaches.
2. That God's people are accountable to admonish and encourage one another, according to the Word of God, both on the local level and whenever possible on a wider basis.
3. That each church must seek ecclesiastical fellowship and union with other churches who faithfully adhere to the Word of God, but only with such bodies.
4. That, though the local church comes primarily under the authority of the local elders, the rulers of each church are also accountable through broader assemblies to other elders who live and rule in accord with God's Word.
   Ephesians 2:11-22; 4:1-16; Acts 15; I Corinthians 5-6:11; 11:17-34; 12:12-31; Belgic Confession Articles 27, 28, 29

WE REJECT:

1. The error of those who teach that there is no accountability for the church beyond the local congregation.
2. The error of those who teach that we should not seek ecclesiastical fellowship with those who believe and adhere faithfully to the Word of God and Reformed confessions, and who are therefore content to remain by themselves.

WE COMMIT OURSELVES:

1. To demonstrate openly in our world that we are part of the body of Christ by a pure and holy lifestyle, by our words and deeds, by being and sending missionaries of the gospel, and by seeking unity with believers everywhere who faithfully adhere to God's Word.
2. To submit ourselves to one another out of reverence to Christ and before His Word, and to hold one another accountable to live, act, teach and minister in accordance with that Word.
3. To seek, where possible, ecclesiastical fellowship and union with all who believe and faithfully adhere to the Word of God and Reformed Confessions.
4. To pray for the unity of the church and its faithfulness to the Word of God throughout the world.
5. To call churches to repentance which do not adhere faithfully to God's Word, and sever relationships with churches which do not repent after repeated admonitions, lest by our association we share in condoning their sin.
6. To the principle expressed to the Church Order Article 86, "No church shall in any way lord it over another church, and no officebearer shall lord it over another officebearer."

III. **THE LIFE OF GOD'S PEOPLE**

A. **Great Commission**

WE AFFIRM:

1. That it is a fundamental duty of God's people to strive to make and nurture disciples for Jesus Christ in joyful adherence to the Great Commission.
2. That the task of fulfilling the Great Commission can only be done effectively in our community and world if we stand firmly on the teachings of the Scripture, and if all of God's people, not simply a select few, actually are engaged in being Christ's witnesses.
3. That faithfulness in fulfilling this Great Commission is not dependent on marketing methods or techniques which minimize Biblical standards for worship and evangelism.
   Matthew 10:32, 33; 28:16-20; Mark 8:38; Luke 9:26; II Timothy 2:12; I Peter 2:1-12; 3:15; Acts 1:8; Heidelberg Catechism Q/A 54

WE REJECT:

1. The error of those who teach that missions is not properly the concern of the church or its members.
2. The error of those who teach that by trusting in or using marketing methods and techniques which minimize or undermine Biblical standards for worship or evangelism they are being faithful in fulfilling the Great Commission.
3. The error of those who seek to attract people to Christ through entertainment and proceed to teach them only concepts which are designed not to offend non-Christians.
4. The error of those who teach or defend that all will be saved (universalism) or that all religions are valid (theological pluralism).

WE COMMIT OURSELVES:

1. To fulfill this Great Commission by repenting of our failure to be Christ's witnesses adequately in the past and by making His Commission a priority for the life of the church and its members.
2. To fulfill this Great Commission by training and equipping ourselves and others to accomplish this mandate better.
3. To pray fervently and compassionately for our lost world and neighbors.
4. To employ those methods, and only those methods, for outreach which conform to the Scripture and the Reformed confessions.

B. The Christian Life

WE AFFIRM:

1. That Jesus Christ is the Lord of all of life, not simply of a particular aspect of the Christian's life.
2. That every part of our hearts and lives must be brought into conformity to the Word of the Lord of life.
3. That no part of life is spiritually neutral, but that Christ is the covenant Head and Lord of every endeavor of the Christian: education, business, labor, family, recreation, political activity, social activity, and so forth.
4. That the Christian life begins with Christ's gift of regeneration, that we embrace this life by repentance and faith as our response to the gospel, that this repentance and faith will characterize the Christian throughout this life, and that we are unable to submit any part of our lives to Christ unless they continue to be present.
Ephesians 1:15-23; 4:1-6; I Corinthians 6:12-20; 10:31; Matthew 5; 6:10; John 3:1-21; Belgic Confession Article 29

WE REJECT:

1. The error of those who teach that some vocations or parts of life are holier than others, or that some vocations or parts of life are not subject to the claims of Jesus Christ.
2. The error of those who teach and live as if the Christian faith does not or should not control what we do in daily life.
3. The error of those who teach that kingdom living can exist where there is no regeneration, or no personal holiness.

WE COMMIT OURSELVES:

1. To acknowledge Christ's exalted position as Lord and to humble ourselves before Him by obeying His Word in every aspect of daily life.
2. To honor Christ as Lord, and covenant head, and King by educating our children (wherever possible) from a specifically Christian perspective; by living as families and individuals, as husbands and wives, fathers and mothers, men and women, children and young adults in obedience to God's Word; and by using our gifts and abilities to fulfill our callings in society - all to the glory of God.
3. To live a holy lifestyle of thanksgiving in accordance with God's Word.
4. To proclaim the Lord Jesus Christ to our churches and world as our Savior from ongoing sin, and as our only help who enables us to submit to His lordship.

IV. CRITICAL MORAL/ETHICAL ISSUES AND CONTROVERSIES FACING THE CHURCH TODAY

A. Homosexuality

WE AFFIRM:

1. That homosexual desires and actions in any context, whether promiscuous relations or so-called relationships of troth, are a result of the fall and are sinful.
2. That those who are guilty of these desires and actions or who argue their legitimacy must, like all sinners, be clearly called to repentance and faith.
3. That the church acts contrary to love for God and its neighbor when it declares morally good or neutral anything which God has declared sinful.
   I Corinthians 6:9-11; Leviticus 18:22; Romans 1:26, 27; Genesis 19

WE REJECT:

1. The error of those who teach that people do not have to repent of homosexual desires or actions because these actions and desires are not sinful, or because such actions and desires are morally neutral.
2. The error of those who would ordain to ecclesiastical office those who practice or advocate homosexuality as a legitimate lifestyle.
3. The error of those who would have no compassion for the homosexual offender.

WE COMMIT OURSELVES:

1. To provide loving support, patient encouragement, and care for those struggling against homosexual temptations, and to encourage them to seek forgiveness and grace to overcome these temptations.
2. To disallow ecclesiastical office to those who practice or advocate homosexuality as a legitimate lifestyle, and to those who deny 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).
3. To discipline those who deny that the Bible condemns homosexual activity and desires.

B. Feminine Language for God

WE AFFIRM:

1. That God alone has the sole right and authority to tell us how He ought to be addressed by His church.
2. That persons of the Trinity receive masculine reference in the Scriptures, not as a result of a cultural bias of a previous age, but because this is how God chooses to reveal and characterize Himself.
   Matthew 6:9; Luke 1:34, 35; John 4:23, 24; Matthew 3:16-17

WE REJECT:

1. The error of those who teach that the Scriptures or Confessions should be changed to reflect gender neutral titles in their references to God.
2. The error of those who teach that it is acceptable to substitute the term "goddess" for God, "Mother" for Father in the Lord's Prayer, or to call Christ a sister, and all such similar terms which are unbiblical.

WE COMMIT OURSELVES:

1. To uphold the full revelation of God, and to seek to understand carefully all that He has revealed about Himself in the Scriptures including His character, His attributes, and His names.
2. To be mindful, honoring, and respectful of the way God has characterized Himself in His Word in our prayers, writings, speech, teaching, preaching, and educational material.

C. **Abortion**

WE AFFIRM:

1. That God's gift to us of human life is so precious in God's sight that He is the only one who may decide when human life shall end.
2. That the unborn child from conception is a human being in the image of God.
3. That intentional abortion except to prevent the death of the mother is a grievous sin. *Psalm 139:13; Jeremiah 1:5; Exodus 20:13; Acts of Synod 1972, pp. 63-64; Acts of Synod 1976, p. 64*

WE REJECT:

1. The error of those who teach that the unborn child is not, or may be less than a human being.
2. The error of those who teach that abortion is not the taking of the life of a human person.

WE COMMIT OURSELVES:

1. To teach and exemplify the goodness of sexual relations only within marriage.
2. To honor and protect all human life from conception on.
3. To provide support services for pregnant women who find it difficult to keep their children in order to encourage them to choose a live birth.
4. To support all moral efforts to protect the life of the unborn in our land and throughout the world.

D. **Genesis**

WE AFFIRM:

1. That the Book of Genesis was written by Moses under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and in all its parts is an accurate, historical presentation.
2. That Genesis 1 teaches that God created everything out of nothing and that He created it good.
3. That God created the first man, Adam, from the dust of the ground and the first woman, Eve, from that man. The first man was a unique creation of God, not descending from any previously existing creature. All human beings are descended from these first parents.
4. That at creation each creature was made according to its own kind, thus ruling out the notion that the various creatures evolved from one form of life (Genesis 1:1; Corinthians 15:39).
   Genesis 1-11; Hebrews 1:2, 10; Hebrews 11:3; Mark 10:6; Luke 24:27; Belgic Confession Articles 2, 3, 4, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 23; Acts of Synod 1982, pp. 107-108; *Acts of Synod 1991*, p. 767

WE REJECT:

1. The error of those who teach that the first 11 chapters of Genesis are not the inerrant record of historical factual events of the beginning of our world, but are myth or only a literary device designed to teach religious truth.
2. The error of those who teach that Adam was not a historical figure, and the error of those who teach that Adam was not the first human being, that he descended from "evolutionary forebears of the human race" (*Acts of Synod 1991*, p. 767), or that he was not a direct creation of God.

WE COMMIT OURSELVES:

1. To understand and teach the Book of Genesis, not only as an accurate account of the beginning of the world, but also as the foundation for many of the Reformed, Christian doctrines so precious to and important for the church.
2. To respect the uniqueness of human beings as the only image-bearers of God.

By these statements may believers more readily discern truth from error, be instructed in the Word, witness effectively to our world, defend against error, and become instruments in preserving and promoting the true unity of Christ's church in accord with the Word of God.

Overture 4: Form at Least Four Theologically Identified Classes

I. Background

The decisions of synod relative to women in office and the supplement to Article 3-a of the Church Order have created unrest in the denomination, as evidenced by the continuing loss of individual members and entire congregations. This must be stopped.

Elders and ministers from a total of 129 CRCNA churches who attended the 1995 and 1996 conferences held in South Holland, Illinois, met to seek solutions to this ongoing struggle. This overture is a result of the South Holland discussions. It is advanced with the firm belief that all churches and classes within the denomination will be well served by passage of this overture.

II. Overture

In order to advance the cause of Jesus Christ, the Reformed faith, and the Christian Reformed Church in North America, Classis California South overtures synod

A. To appoint and mandate a committee to work out the details of and to implement on or before September 1, 1997, the formation of at least four theologically identified classes within the Christian Reformed Church in North America. Such classes shall

1. Consist of churches which agree with the Affirmations of Faith passed at the conference of some CRC churches held in South Holland, Illinois, on November 7-8, 1996 (*Note:* The Affirmations of Faith are printed as part of Overture 3).

2. Initially be geographically defined by and consist of those churches which have indicated their desire to join a theologically identified classis as noted in an addendum to this overture which will be supplied prior to Synod 1997.

3. Receive until January 1, 1998, without further need for classical or synodical action, any Christian Reformed churches within their geographical boundaries that agree with the above requirement and wish to join.

4. Enjoy all the rights and privileges of Christian Reformed Church in North America classes, including the right of being assigned synodical deputies from neighboring theologically identified classes.

B. To instruct the general secretary to maintain a list of theologically identified classes as well as a list of those classes which have decided "that the word *male* in Article 3-a of the Church Order is inoperative for their constituent churches and [to] publish [those lists] annually in *The Banner* along with the presentation of candidates for the ministry" (*Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 735, e).

Grounds for A and B:

1. The Church Order permits classical realignments (see *Manual of Christian Reformed Church Government*, 1994 edition, pp. 227-28, Art. 39).
2. Synod 1996 acknowledged that transfer from one classis to another is allowable (cf. Church Order Art. 39 and its supplement). This overture provides an expeditious way to accomplish transfer.
3. Synod 1996 approved a language-affinity (Korean) classis.

4. Synod 1982 approved the formation of Classis Red Mesa to accommodate special needs.
5. Other denominations in the Reformed tradition have had and some still have nongeographical classes. For example, in the last century, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) had "affinity presbyteries" organized on explicit theological grounds to allow people of differing theological persuasions to coexist within the same denomination. In Philadelphia, for instance, there were two nongeographical presbyteries, the larger one composed of people willing to use evangelical methods similar to those of the modern church-growth movement.
6. Synod 1995 sought to make room for those members and churches which disagree. However, its efforts have had the effect of placing certain churches and members in violation of their biblically directed consciences. The theologically identified classes will appeal to many who may otherwise believe they must leave the denomination as a matter of conscience.
7. This approach, by virtue of keeping churches and members within the CRCNA, will serve to stabilize the denomination's membership and financial base.

Classis California South
James Howerzyl, stated clerk

Overture 5: Assign to the Appropriate Body the Task of Reviewing the Requirements and Procedures for Classical Examinations of Candidates

Classis Chatham overtures synod to assign to Pastoral Ministries or another appropriate body the task of reviewing the requirements and procedures for the classical examination of candidates for the ministry as outlined in the supplements of Church Order Article 10. Proposed revisions should be presented for approval to Synod 1998.

Grounds:

1. Although there is no difficulty with Article 10 itself, the way examinations are conducted seems to vary from one classis to the next.
2. The acceptable qualifications and standards of competence may vary from one classis to the next; indeed, even a candidate's opinion on a debatable issue may be judged differently in different classes.
3. There is much emphasis on sermons and preaching, but there is little or no mention of other ministerial duties, e.g., pastoral visiting, counseling, teaching, prayer, outreach, leadership, administration, time management, and so forth.
4. Though the regulations give a minimum time for one of the specific areas of the examination, no maximum times are given. Therefore, an examination may last as little as an hour or as long as a day. Some candidates receive much more scrutiny than others.
5. The synodical deputies have the opportunity to ask additional questions. There are no guidelines regarding the type of those questions nor the length of them. Sometimes the questions are for clarification only; other

times questions can be very leading and critical. Some deputies preface their questions with long, leading remarks. There does not seem to be a consistency among the deputies.

6. Three synodical deputies have the power to nullify the decision of all the duly elected classis delegates. Although appeals may be made to the following synod, any damage to a candidate's reputation or honor cannot be undone.
7. While strongly endorsing the need for classical examinations, we need at the same time to remember that candidates have already met the standards of approval of the seminary staff, the Board of Trustees of Calvin Theological Seminary, the delegates to synod, and their calling churches by the time they reach classical examinations.

Classis Chatham
Jan H.G. Vandergeest, stated clerk

Overture 6: Retain Geographical Classes with Option of Transfer for Theological Compatibility

Classis of the Heartland overtures synod to retain the current practice of geographical classes with the option for churches to move to a neighboring classis for greater theological compatibility.

Grounds:

1. The church as body: Paul writes in I Corinthians 12:14, 15, and 21, "Now the body is not made up of one part but many. If the foot should say, 'Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,' it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I don't need you!' And the head cannot say to the feet, 'I don't need you!'" We need each other. The church, including the Christian Reformed denomination, is like a body. For a body to function well, each member must be able to work with all of the other members. This is essential for quality of life in the body of Christ, the body of believers.
2. The church as family: Paul also refers to the church in Galatians 6:10 as the "family of believers" and in Ephesians 2:19 as "God's household." We need each other in the family. For a family to function well, each member needs to be able to communicate with other family members. In dysfunctional families individuals ignore each other or have gatherings at which some members are not welcome. We must not encourage such dysfunctional behavior.
3. The spiritual and emotional health of the church: Spiritual health and emotional health come in part from being challenged. If we fragment into smaller segments, we lose the opportunity to challenge one another or be challenged on a classical level. That lack of challenge will impoverish us. In the early church Paul confronted Peter. We read about that confrontation in Galatians 2:11-14. From that confrontation they both grew as Christians. Let's maintain at the classical level the opportunity to grow together that was modeled by Paul and Peter.
4. The New Testament model for the church: The Jerusalem Council in Acts 15 benefited from a wide diversity of ideas that were debated and dis-

cussed (Acts 15:7a). The Holy Spirit led Peter to the proper resolution of the relationship of Jews and Gentiles (Acts 15:7b and following). At both classical and synodical levels we benefit from discussion that represents the full diversity of the church.

5. Unity of joint response to regional needs: In our classis there is a wide diversity of theological perspectives, yet we are able to work together for the common good of Christ's kingdom through several ministries. This type of common ministry began when Paul challenged the churches he planted to take an offering for the Jerusalem church. Their unity was expressed by a common response to a need, not by a theological litmus test. Geographical classes that meet regional needs most closely approximate the New Testament model, and therefore they are worth retaining.
6. Loss of theological influence: The formation of theological classes into which one segment of the church withdraws means fewer delegates to synod who share the particular theological position represented by a theological classis. Further, theological classes will be stereotyped, as classes already are, so their influence will be further diminished. Those who oppose women serving in the office of elder and minister will lose most through theological classes.
7. Further and further fragmentation: If the CRC goes in the direction of theological classes, the initial division will be along the lines of those who favor women in office and those who do not. Later each of these classes could fragment further over the issue of ministry to the homosexual community. We could conceivably have
   a. A theological classis that opposes women as elders and pastors and opposes all ministry to the homosexual community because of its unbiblical lifestyle.
   b. A theological classis that opposes women as elders and pastors but believes the biblical mandate is to minister to all people regardless of their sexual orientation.
   c. A theological classis which ordains women elders and pastors but will not support a ministry to the homosexual community because of its unbiblical lifestyle.
   d. A theological classis that favors women in the offices of elder and minister and wants to reach out biblically and pastorally to people regardless of their sexual orientation.

Then those four options could become eight. The above four divisions could divide into supralapsarians and infralapsarians, etc., etc. The concept of theological classes is flawed, and carried to its logical conclusion, it is absurd.

Classis of the Heartland
Gary L. Luurtsema, alternate stated clerk

Overture 7: Add Supplement Permitting Shared Ministers

I. Background

On September 25, 1996, Classis Rocky Mountain dealt with a request from the Christian Reformed Church of Luctor, Kansas, to allow the church to call a pastor who would also be the pastor of the Reformed Church (RCA) of Prairie

View, Kansas. A number of circumstances led to this request. Both the Prairie View Reformed Church and the Luctor Christian Reformed Church have experienced great difficulty in attracting a minister in what is obviously a rural outlying area for both denominations. The cause of this difficulty is largely economic. As farming requires greater acreage to be economically viable, there is a decline in the membership of many rural churches. This has indeed been the case in both the Prairie View and Luctor churches. As a result, it has become financially difficult for either church to support the services of a full-time minister. The two churches have developed a long history of cooperation and mutually shared ministries. After lengthy vacancies in both churches, Rev. Paul Copeland, an ordained minister in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, became available to serve both churches on an interim basis. His services were very much appreciated by the churches, and consequently they have both been led to extend a formal call to Rev. Copeland. Presently the arrangement is a well-defined term call for a period of three years. Rev. Copeland has since been examined, received, and installed as a minister of the Word in the Reformed Church in America. A year ago Classis Rocky Mountain communicated with the office of the general secretary on this issue and received encouragement to proceed in the manner reflected by the following overture.

II. Overture

Classis Rocky Mountain overtures synod to add the following supplement to Article 8 of the Church Order:

> Article 8-c: Ministers of denominations in full ecclesiastical fellowship with the Christian Reformed Church may be called by way of exception to serve in the Christian Reformed Church while jointly serving ministries within their own denominations. This arrangement requires the approval of classis and the concurrence of the synodical deputies. The specific need for their services must be demonstrated, and the pension-fund arrangements must be satisfactorily met in the denominations holding the ministers' credentials.
>
> Ministers from churches in ecclesiastical fellowship who so serve churches in the Christian Reformed Church will be accorded full ministerial status in the Christian Reformed Church with regard to representing the church and being delegated to the broader assemblies or any of the denominational boards. Such ministers will thus in effect have dual standing, in both denominations, for the duration of their services in the Christian Reformed Church.
>
> The Christian Reformed Church will reciprocate in these arrangements and will by way of exception allow its ministers to be called by congregations of churches in ecclesiastical fellowship if such ministers jointly serve in a congregation of the church in ecclesiastical fellowship and in a congregation of the Christian Reformed Church.

Grounds:

A. Due to the lack of available ministers in the Christian Reformed Church, some CRC churches are finding it difficult to procure the services of a CRC minister.
B. The economics of some of the outlying and especially the rural churches make it difficult to raise the salaries necessary to attract the services of a minister.
C. The sharing of a minister in the manner described in this overture effectively and pastorally addresses these needs.
D. The sharing of a minister in this manner effectively embodies the unity and love of the larger body of Christ.

Classis Rocky Mountain
Meindert Bosch, stated clerk

Overture 8: Permit Transfer of Trinity CRC from Classis Northern Michigan to Classis Muskegon

Classis Northern Michigan, through its Interim Committee, overtures synod to transfer Trinity Christian Reformed Church of Mount Pleasant, Michigan, to Classis Muskegon.

Grounds:

1. This is the desire of Trinity CRC, since Classis Northern Michigan has not reversed its earlier decisions regarding Church Order Article 3-a.
2. Classis Muskegon is willing to accept the transfer.

Classis Northern Michigan
Paul J. Veenstra, stated clerk

Overture 9: Transfer Pine Creek CRC to Classis Zeeland

Classis Holland overtures synod to permit the transfer of Pine Creek Christian Reformed Church from Classis Holland to Classis Zeeland.

Grounds:

1. The principles of Reformed polity allow for classical alignment along geographic lines and in some very special but limited cases along linguistic lines (cf. Church Order Art. 39, *Acts of Synod 1996*, pp. 556-59, Art. 71).
2. Synod 1996 affirmed, on the basis of past actions of synod, that a congregation may seek synodical consideration for transfer to another classis for other reasons as long as there is not a "significant departure" from the principle of geographic proximity (cf. *Acts of Synod 1996*, pp. 560-61, Art. 76, C).
3. Because Classis Holland has opened all offices to women, Pine Creek Christian Reformed Church has indicated that it will be unwilling to cooperate with Classis Holland when congregations delegate women to meetings of classis.
4. Pine Creek Christian Reformed Church has requested to be transferred to Classis Zeeland.

5. Classis Zeeland and Pine Creek Christian Reformed Church are in geographic proximity to each other.

Classis Holland
Peter D. Winkle, stated clerk

Overture 10: Add a Reason for Adopting the Recommendation of the Committee to Study Inclusive Language for God

Classis Illiana overtures synod to add the following reason for adopting the recommendation of the Committee to Study Inclusive Language for God: "Inclusive language for God tends further to fragment Christ's church by deviating from the common tradition and creeds of the universal church throughout the ages."

Grounds:

1. The primary bases of language about God are biblical language patterns and the carefully wrought language of the ecumenical creeds of the church. Scripture is the common treasure of the church in all times and ages. The ecumenical creeds similarly are the common tradition of Western Christianity.
2. Christ in his high-priestly prayer beseeched the Father for the unity of those who would believe in him, that the world might believe that the Father had sent him (John 17:20-23). A step less conducive to Christian unity than altering the language whereby Scripture and the creeds refer to God can scarcely be imagined.

Classis Illiana
Laryn G. Zoerhof, stated clerk

Overture 11: Refer the Inclusive-Language Report to the Churches for Study

I. Introduction

Synod 1994 appointed a committee "to study the use of inclusive language for God" with the mandate

> to examine the biblical, confessional, theological, cultural, and pastoral dimensions of inclusive language for God. The study should be sensitive to the linguistic and literary issues involved. The results of the study should provide clear advice to the church concerning the significance and limits of inclusive language for God.
> (*Acts of Synod 1994*, pp. 496-97)

The committee appointed by Synod 1994 has now produced an extensive study, which includes new guidelines for the use of language for God.

The report is long, detailed, and closely argued. For these reasons it is difficult to understand and assimilate the report in the context of judicatory meetings like those of church councils, classes, and synod. Critical assessment of the report requires time, labor, and discussion. Therefore, we believe that this report and the guidelines recommended by it need a longer period for discussion among and within the churches. The problems and questions raised by the

report are not pressing in the churches. The denomination has already adopted a basic set of guidelines. Little would be lost by tabling this report and allowing churches and classes a longer time to consider it and respond to it. In matters like this the church is almost never wrong in going slow.

As a preliminary step, we draw attention to the following areas in the report that we believe require further study.

II. Questions

A. Motivation for the use of inclusive and feminine language for God

The report assumes throughout that the motivation for the use of inclusive and feminine language for God arises from the fall and the resulting breakdown of relationships between women and men, as is demonstrated by the following quotation:

> Theologians and church leaders who call for inclusive language for God are motivated by a deep concern to address problems which arise because of improper attitudes and relations between genders. These leaders believe that harm done to women and children by men make it necessary to avoid speaking of God as an exclusively masculine person. (Section II, A)

Does this really do justice to the motivation for using feminine language for God? Might not the motivation also be to explore the wonder and variety of God?

B. Relationship of grammatical gender and the sexes

The committee makes much of the connection between grammatical gender and personal gender in biblical languages. Is their discussion of this knotty area of linguistics adequate (compare, for example, the discussion of grammatical gender in Waltke and O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1990)?

Even if the committee's discussion of the grammar of gender in biblical languages is correct, are the conclusions it draws from the linguistic analysis correct? For example, are the facts that the grammar of *ruach* usually requires feminine verbs while the grammar of *`elohim* usually requires masculine verbs anything other than conventions of Northwest Semitic languages, as true for Canaanite paganism as for Israelite monotheism? Is the committee exegeting the culture and the language rather than the text?

Further, what allowances are to be made for the fact that masculine is generally the default gender in biblical languages, as it has been until recently in English? In general, is the committee on solid footing in basing theology on linguistics?

C. The nature of language for God

The committee notes that all language for God has an "analogical" character. This means that affirmations about God in human language are not true in precisely the same way that similar affirmations about human beings are true. God's love is not the same as our love, though it is analogous. Further, the committee says that some affirmations about God are metaphorical and some are not metaphorical. The affirmation that God loves the world is not metaphorical, but the affirmation that God is a rock is. In general, these seem to be helpful distinctions, although the terminology appears to be somewhat arbitrary. Our questions have to do with the introduction into the argument of the category of

"personal designators." We wonder whether this category is coherent and whether it contributes to a careful analysis of language for God. Is it really true that personal designators have a different status from other language for God? If *Rock* is used in one place as a personal designator and in another as a metaphor for God, do the two uses have different status? Does this distinction arise from the Bible?

In this same vein, the committee quotes Calvin as saying that God is both our father and mother but takes pains to say that the affirmation that God is father and the affirmation that God is mother are essentially different. "God is father," according to the committee, is not metaphorical, whereas "God is mother" is. Is this really what Calvin means? Doesn't the committee's interpretation of Calvin have at least the appearance of special pleading? Do we really wish to promulgate guidelines that would rule out this remark by Calvin?

Finally, is the claim that Christian terminology for God should be limited by biblical terminology a sound principle? Hasn't the church always and everywhere explored new names for God, instructed by the Bible and subject to the biblical witness, but nevertheless free in Christ to explore "the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God"?

In general, the discussion of the nature of language about God in the report seems controversial, novel, and disputable. We believe that the church should seek further discussion in these areas from other linguists, theologians, and scholars competent in the languages and literature of the Bible.

D. Theological considerations

The committee makes some strong assertions about the importance of masculine language for God in parts of the report. For example, the committee makes the claims that using feminine language for God will break down the distinction between creator and creation (VIII, C, 3). In making this claim, is the committee adopting the idea that transcendence is masculine and immanence is feminine? Is this pagan pattern, with its associations of male-transcendence-separation and female-immanence-nurture, one that a thoughtful Christian who wishes to use feminine language for God is compelled to adopt? Does the fact that some theologians use feminine language for God in ways that confuse creator and creation necessarily mean that feminine language *causes* or *leads* people to this confusion?

The committee also makes strong assertions in regard to the doctrine of the Trinity. It says, as a matter of fact, that "All attempts to rename the Trinity operate with a faulty understanding of the relationship between Scripture and the church's historical confessions" (VIII, C, 4, b). Doesn't this assertion go far beyond the traditional practice of the church? In trying to understand the Trinity, hasn't every generation looked for new ways of naming the persons of the Trinity? While Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are primary, hasn't the church been greatly enriched in its understanding by fresh attempts to understand our triune God (e.g., from the early church, such attempts as *Lover*, *Beloved*, and *Love;* or the words of the great councils, including *Trinity, person*, and *homoousios*, none of which is biblical)?

E. Policy or guidelines

The committee uses the word "policy" for what in our tradition have been called "guidelines." What, in the context of our polity, does "policy" mean?

Synods have frequently promulgated guidelines; have they issued policies of this kind?

F. Slighting other points of view

The report argues very strongly for its point of view, but in doing so, it may slight other points of view. Is the church well served by this sort of report? Wouldn't the church be better served by a more evenhanded approach?

How we speak of God is vitally important in the life of the church. The issues raised by the committee are important. They deserve careful consideration. We urge synod not to rush into decision on this matter.

III. Overture

Classis Lake Erie overtures synod to take no action on the report and recommendations from the Committee to Study Inclusive Language for God and to refer the report to the churches for study.

Grounds:

A. The matter is of great importance and deserves a more lengthy discussion.
B. The matters addressed in the report are not issues that have greatly affected the life of the Christian Reformed Church. As the committee itself says, "Feminine imagery for God has largely been absent from the language of worship and preaching in the Christian Reformed Church . . . " (X, B, 1).
C. Adequate guidelines for these matters are currently in place.
D. More discussion is necessary with respect to many of the claims and arguments of the report, especially since these claims and arguments are used to justify the guidelines proposed by the committee. The church is not well served by taking action before the churches and classes have had adequate time to discuss and digest the report.

Classis Lake Erie
George Vander Weit, stated clerk

Overture 12: Appoint a Study Committee to Determine a Position on the Practice of Euthanasia

Classis Chatham overtures synod to appoint a study committee to determine an appropriate denominational position with respect to the practice of euthanasia.

Grounds:

1. The practice of euthanasia has become an issue in our culture. This issue needs an official Christian Reformed Church response in order to give guidance to our members and our church institutions.
2. The necessity for an official stance is underlined by the fact that the Committee for Contact with the Government (CCG) of the Council of the Christian Reformed Churches in Canada (CCRCC) has already produced a lengthy discussion paper entitled "Medical Decisions and Public Policy Pertaining to the End of Life," which some have interpreted to include the

recommendation of active euthanasia for a person in the late stages of a terminal illness.

Classis Chatham
Jan H.G. Vandergeest, stated clerk

Overture 13: Reaffirm Commitment to the Sanctity of Life

In light of recent decisions by the United States government relative to the subject of abortion and in view of the history of the Christian Reformed Church's position on this issue, Classis Zeeland overtures synod

1. To reaffirm its commitment to the sanctity of life and condemn the practice of partial-birth abortion.

2. To instruct its officers to send official correspondence to the President of the United States and to the Congress of the United States lamenting the presidential veto of the ban on partial-birth abortions and calling upon the government to enact legislation which would protect "the unique value of all human life" and prohibit "the wanton or arbitrary destruction of any human being at any stage in its development" (*Acts of Synod 1972*, pp. 63-64).

Ground: There is ample precedent for the officers to make official resolutions (Synod 1996) or to direct official correspondence to appropriate governments and their leaders (Synod 1988). The U.S. President's recent veto of a law banning the horrific act of partial-birth abortion makes such resolutions and correspondence especially timely.

Classis Zeeland
Steven R. Sytsma, stated clerk

Overture 14: Declare Dr. Bouma's Position on Abortion Contrary to CRC Position; Instruct Dr. Bouma to Comply; Instruct Calvin College Board of Trustees to Ensure Compliance

I. Background

Last year Classis Wisconsin overtured synod concerning the views found in the book *Christian Faith, Health, and Medical Practice* and held by its editor, Dr. Hessel Bouma III, professor of biology at Calvin College. The concern of Classis Wisconsin centered on the lack of compliance of the book and its editor with the position on abortion taken by various synods, including Synod 1972 (see *Agenda for Synod 1996*, pp. 313-16, particularly Section II, A and B). Synod 1996, in response to Classis Wisconsin's overture, stated the following:

A. That Classis Wisconsin, in sharing its grievances with the book and its editor, did not specify any scriptural or confessional violations.

B. That a 1975 synodical decision allowed for debate, discussion, and disagreement over certain synodical decisions among members in the CRC.

C. That Dr. Bouma, according to the Calvin College Board of Trustees, held "a healthy respect" for the 1972 decision (see *Acts of Synod 1996*, p. 528).

II. Observations on the decision of Synod 1996

A. It seems strange that Synod 1996 would say that Dr. Bouma's views on abortion have no pertinence to scriptural or confessional violations simply because Classis Wisconsin did not explicitly state chapter and verse. Are we to say that one's views on abortion carry with them no scriptural or confessional significance?

B. Synod 1996 quoted a declaration from Synod 1975 concerning differences of nuance in the confessions and synodical pronouncements. What it did not quote was the declaration made prior to the statement that it did quote, namely, that all officebearers and members are expected to abide by synodical pronouncements made on "doctrinal and ethical matters" (*Acts of Synod 1975*, p. 44; *Manual of Christian Reformed Church Government*, p. 170, Section 3, b). Surely synod's pronouncements on abortion are about an ethical matter. Though disagreement, debate, and discussion of synodical decisions always take place, all members of the church—and especially those called to official functions within the church—must realize that such disagreements, debates, and discussions should be addressed in the assemblies of the church where it can be pointed out how certain decisions violate Scripture or the Church Order (Church Order Art. 29) before they are taught publicly. Otherwise, making "settled and binding" decisions becomes meaningless.

C. The assertion that Dr. Bouma has a "healthy respect" for the official positions of the CRC blurs his position at best; many people who disagree completely on issues have "healthy respect" for one another's views. Certainly "healthy respect" does not mean "compliance."

III. Overture

Therefore, Classis of the Heartland overtures synod

A. To revise the decision of Synod 1996 by declaring Dr. Bouma's position on abortion, articulated in Chapter 8 of the book *Christian Faith, Health, and Medical Practice*, contrary to the official position of the Christian Reformed Church.

Grounds:

1. Last year's ground from Classis Wisconsin (*Agenda for Synod 1996*, p. 317).
2. The Board of Trustees of Calvin College has detected that "certain of the book's conclusions and his [Dr. Bouma's] positions do not agree with the decision of synod in every respect" (*Acts of Synod 1996*, p. 528), but synod has not officially declared it.
3. To do so would be to maintain a measure of ecclesiastical integrity.

B. To instruct Dr. Bouma to bring his position into compliance with the 1972 synodical decision on abortion and to instruct the Board of Trustees of Calvin College to ensure that compliance.

Grounds:

1. Last year's grounds from Classis Wisconsin (*Agenda for Synod 1996*, pp. 317-18).
2. The assertion that Dr. Bouma's positions on abortion are not scriptural or confessional issues is untenable (e.g., Ex. 20:13; Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 40).

3. Synod 1975 and the Church Order (Art. 29) require such compliance because the matter under discussion is an ethical one and synod's pronouncements on such ethical matters are considered "settled and binding" (see II, B above).
4. A "healthy respect" for the decision of Synod 1972 is not equivalent to compliance.

Classis of the Heartland
Gary L. Luurtsema, alternate stated clerk

Overture 15: Provide Biblical Grounds for the Denomination's Position on Abortion

I. History

Synod 1972 received a study-committee report (Report 41) on the subject of abortion. The six-page report devoted approximately one page to "the biblical witness" relevant to the issue without doing detailed exegesis of any particular passage. The report concluded that "the Bible nowhere speaks directly to the question of abortion" and noted that relevant passages "are frequently given differing interpretations by those equally committed to the final authority of Scripture " (*Agenda for Synod 1972*, p. 480). There was a difference of opinion among committee members as to whether "the union of sperm and egg, by the act of fertilization, forms a new, unique, independent human individual" (*Agenda for Synod 1972*, p. 481). Due to this difference there was also a difference of opinion as to whether abortion should be permitted only "to preserve the life of the mother" or whether there may be some other "highly unusual circumstances . . . under which abortion may be considered permissible" (*Agenda for Synod 1972*, p. 482).

Synod 1972 did not adopt the study-committee report and changed some of its recommendations. It adopted, among other recommendations, the following: "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" (*Acts of Synod 1972*, p. 64). It also affirmed that "an induced abortion is an allowable option only when the life of the prospective mother is genuinely threatened by the continuation of the pregnancy" (*Acts of Synod 1972*, p. 64). No grounds were given for the action of synod, and, other than references to the sixth commandment and to the concept of man as God's imagebearer, no biblical references were given to support synod's position.

Since then, synod has addressed the issue of abortion in various ways in 1976, 1981, and 1993. However, synod has neither authorized another study committee nor provided biblical exegesis to support its position.

II. Overture

Classis Wisconsin overtures synod to appoint a study committee to do a thorough study of the biblical texts, terms, and concepts relevant to the issue of abortion in order to provide synod with biblical and creedal grounds for its decision of 1972. Members should be appointed who fully support the decision of 1972.

Grounds:

A. Abortion continues to be a burning issue in society and a key issue for Christian reflection and action.
B. Biblical and creedal grounds have never been provided for synod's decision on this important issue.
C. Although various members of the Reformed community have written on the subject of abortion, a decision of synod will have more authority in the denomination and will provide a more unified witness to society than that provided by various individuals.
D. The present overture differs from that of 1993 because this overture does not ask synod to "restudy the issue of abortion" but to provide biblical and creedal grounds for its position.
E. The treatment of key texts, terms, and concepts relevant to the issue of abortion may also help to illuminate other current issues, such as euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide.

Classis Wisconsin
Adrian Dieleman, stated clerk

Overture 16: Repent for Allowing Ordination of Women into Authoritative Offices

I, Paul Scharold, a member of Tri-Cities Christian Reformed Church, Kennewick, Washington, overture synod to repent of the sin of allowing, without discipline, actual instances of the practice of ordaining women into authoritative ecclesiastical offices in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

Grounds:

1. The practice is in violation of the Scriptures according to but not limited to (a) the stated position of the Tri-Cities Christian Reformed Church and (b) an interpretation deemed to be Reformed and to honor the Scriptures as the infallible Word of God by Synod 1994 (p. 514), Synod 1995 (p. 731), and Synod 1996.
2. The practice is contributing to the disunity of the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
3. The practice is contributing to significant spiritual grief in the Tri-Cities Christian Reformed Church.

Paul Scharold
Member, Tri-Cities CRC, Kennewick, WA

Overture 17: Revise Synodical Decision Permitting Classes to Declare the Word "Male" in Church Order Article 3 Inoperative

Classis of the Heartland overtures synod to revise the decision of Synod 1996 which confirmed Synod 1995's decision regarding the supplement added to Church Order Article 3, allowing 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:

1. Synods 1995 and 1996 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*, pp. 505-08)—was "in conflict with the Word of God or the Church Order."
2. 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. Synod 1996, though confirming the decision of Synod 1995, did nothing to validate the action of Synod 1995 on this score.
3. To state 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) is to state that Scripture can teach two equally valid, contradictory things.
4. The decisions of 1995 and 1996 undermine 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.

Note: In the event that this revision is enacted, synod should designate a time for churches and classes to comply with this revision.

Classis of the Heartland
Gary L. Luurtsema, alternate stated clerk

Overture 18: Declare 1995 and 1996 Decisions re Women in Office to Be Contrary to Scripture; Return to Decision of 1994 as Final Word

The council of Gallatin Gateway Community Church, Bozeman, Montana, overtures synod

A. To declare that the decisions of Synod 1995 and Synod 1996 concerning the ordination of women to the office of minister of the Word, elder, and evangelist are against the clear teaching of God's Word, as was stated and accepted by Synod 1994 (*Acts of Synod 1994*, pp. 506-08, Art. 71).

B. To return to the decision of 1994 as the final word on this matter.

Grounds:

1. Doing so would honor the Word of God as stated and accepted in the 1994 decision of synod concerning the ordination of women as ministers, elders, and evangelists.
2. We must show submission to Scripture and to the many Reformed churches that are suspending relationships with us or are considering such action due to our unscriptural position on women's ordination taken in 1995 and again in 1996.
3. We must clearly show once again that we believe the Bible to be our clear and sufficient guide on all matters of faith and life.

4. We must undo the past because the way the decision of 1995 was made not only violated the clear teaching of Scripture but also deceptively overthrew the intent of the Church Order by bringing a matter up again without any new grounds and by essentially changing Article 3 of the Church Order without doing so in an accepted and agreed-upon way.

Council of Gallatin Gateway
Community Church,
Bozeman, MT
Ron Moss, clerk

Overture 19: Revise the Decision of Synod 1996 Not to Accede to Overture 22

I. Background

Classis Lake Erie overtured Synod 1996 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" (*Agenda for Synod 1996*, p. 268). Our classis submitted this overture because we believe that churches in classes that have declared the word *male* inoperative in Church Order Article 3 should have the opportunity to call female pastors who will be supported by the denominational agencies. Synod 1996 declined to make that modification on the ground that "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" (*Acts of Synod 1996*, p. 547).

Neither of the sentences in the above ground supports synod's decision. The first sentence says "ministerial personnel placed by synodical agencies represent the entire denomination." In truth, all ministerial personnel represent the entire denomination. That is why synodical deputies must concur with a classis when anyone enters the ministry of the Christian Reformed Church and why synod itself approves the reports of these deputies.

The assertion that ministers placed by the agencies are somehow in a different category seems to arise from a concern about the loss of ministry shares. We understand that perspective because finances necessary to support the denominational agencies have sometimes been withheld by those who seek to exert pressure to achieve their goals. We regard such action as unjustifiable and are saddened that synod, the broadest assembly of our denomination, seems to adopt the same perspective in this ground. In so doing, synod encourages those who engage in such action and penalizes those who faithfully support denominational agencies even when they do not agree with everything those agencies do.

The second sentence of the ground says, "Respect for the consciences of those who oppose women in office demands that we honor the decision of Synod 1995 on this matter." If that is really true, then women may never serve our agencies as ordained pastors because there will always be some who object.

Even if one concedes that conscience is somehow involved in this matter, this sentence demonstrates concern for the consciences of only one segment of the denomination. This dishonors both the letter and spirit of the 1995 decision, which attempts to make room for all members of the denomination, saying, "... 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. 731).

Because neither sentence in the ground supports the action taken by Synod 1996, Synod 1997 should reconsider this matter and should modify Regulation f associated with the 1995 declaration on women in office by adopting the following: "Synodical agencies shall respect local views on women in office in the placement of ministerial personnel."

This modification is consistent with the 1995 decision. Furthermore, there are several other reasons for adopting it:

A. *It is an answer to prayer:* This modification is sensitive to the call of our Savior. The church prays that the Lord of the harvest will "send out workers into his harvest field" (Matt. 9:38). The church should not reject the Holy Spirit's answer to that prayer.

B. *It is a timely answer to prayer:* We are experiencing a shortage of ministers, and our denomination is increasingly looking to other seminaries and other denominations for its pastors. In light of this reality, it is not wise to prohibit the service of Calvin Seminary graduates in positions supported by our denominational agencies.

C. *It is consistent with our denominational commitment to women:* For decades we have encouraged the church to use the gifts of women, saying, "... 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). Synod acts contrary to its own declarations when it restricts the use of women's gifts.

D. *It is welcomed by some classes:* Thus far, sixteen classes, one-third of the classes, have declared the word *male* inoperative in Church Order Article 3. The agencies of our denomination would not only be *allowed* to place women in those classes, but many classes would *welcome* the service of women pastors. Even if one wants to discuss this issue in terms of finances, the ministry share contributions of these sixteen classes will totally cover the cost of the few women who may be placed by our agencies.

E. *It is beneficial to all classes:* If a classis is willing to call a female pastor to a position of service, one more male pastor is available for classes who do not wish to call a female. The entire denomination, experiencing a shortage of ministers, benefits from the modification suggested.

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, does not honor members, churches, and classes who wish to affirm that call tangibly with their prayers and financial support, and does not respond appropriately to the shortage of ministers in our denomination. Synod is called to encourage, not discourage, the call to missions, through which the Lord Jesus

is proclaimed. The ground given by Synod 1996 to continue this restriction does not support the restriction. There are many good reasons why this restriction ought to be modified by Synod 1997.

II. Overture

Classis Lake Erie overtures synod

A. To revise the decision of Synod 1996 not to accede to Overture 22 (*Agenda for Synod 1996*, pp. 267-68).

Ground: The ground given to defeat Overture 22 makes an erroneous judgment about ministers who represent the denomination and does not respect the "two different perspectives and convictions" in our denomination regarding the service of women.

B. To modify Regulation f associated with the 1995 declaration on women in office by adopting the following:

> Synodical agencies shall respect local views on women in office in the placement of ministerial personnel.

Grounds:

1. 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."
2. This modification demonstrates that synod itself is doing what it is encouraging congregations and classes to do, namely, to find ways to honor the two different perspectives in our denomination concerning the service of women pastors.
3. 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.

Classis Lake Erie
George Vander Weit, stated clerk

Overture 20: Appoint a Committee to Study the Biblical Grounds for Using a Quota-Based System

I. Overture

Classis Holland overtures synod to appoint a study committee (A) to research the biblical and practical grounds for using a quota-based system[1] of denominational funding rather than a proportion-based system[2] and (B) to recommend any possible changes to Church Order Supplement, Article 45 warranted by its findings.

[1]Quota-based system: Funding is generated by a flat-rate assessment for each individual family or member (example: the current ministry-share system).

[2]Proportion-based system: Funding is generated by assessing individual families, members, or congregations a percentage of their total income (example: the tithe).

Grounds:

1. The current practice of supporting denominational ministries has not been satisfactorily studied for biblical and theological appropriateness. A study committee would discover biblical or theological reasons why the current practice of denominational funding should or shouldn't be continued.
   a. The use of a percentage-based system (the tithe) appears to be sanctioned in Scripture. The use of a quota system is less obvious in Scripture. As a denomination, we should have a well-thought-out biblical or theological rationale for using our current quota-based system. If such a theology is not warranted by Scripture, changes may be called for to maintain biblical integrity in our finances.
   b. In the past several years increasing emphasis on the tithe principle has been coming to the attention of congregations in the CRC. As we teach this principle to members of our churches, we have been challenged to explain why a quota system rather than a proportional system is used to fund denominational agencies and their ministries.
2. A quota-based system of funding denominational ministries is possibly unjust to congregations whose members primarily represent the lower end of the income scale.
   a. On the level of individuals in a congregation, a proportion-based system of funding (the tithe) is clearly more just than a quota-based system. The tithe is just because it asks each individual in a congregation to give back to the Lord a modest amount proportional to the blessings God has given. Conversely, a quota-based system is unjust because it asks those on lower income levels to give a greater proportion of their financial blessings to the ministry of the church than it requires from those at higher income levels. Example: In a quota system a widow on fixed income is asked to give as much as the president of a large corporation. This is obviously unjust.
   b. It is probable that what is unjust to individuals on the congregational level would also be unjust for congregations on the denominational level.
   c. A hypothetical example illustrates the point:
      1) Suppose that Easton CRC has one hundred giving households whose income is $20,000 per annum. Weston CRC has one hundred giving households whose income is $35,000 per annum. If the members of these churches are consistent in giving according to the biblical norm of the tithe (10 percent), then Easton CRC would generate income of $200,000 per year ($2,000 per giving unit X 100 giving units = $200,000). Along the same lines, Weston CRC would generate income of $350,000 ($3,500 per giving unit X 100 giving units = $350,000).
      2) For argument's sake, assume that Easton Church and Weston Church are both required to pay $500 per giving unit to support denominational ministries. Each church would pay $50,000 a year to denominational agencies.
      3) When the percentage of total income is calculated for each church, we find that Easton CRC pays 25 percent of its ministry income to

support denominational ministries. Weston CRC pays 14.29 percent of its ministry income to the denomination.

4) Therefore, in a quota-based system, those congregations whose members are more affluent would *feel* a lighter burden on their local budget than those congregations whose members are less affluent.

d. The hypothesis regarding the injustice of a quota-based system needs to be studied among churches in the CRC to see if inequities actually exist. If the congregations of the CRC are all financially homogeneous, then the system does not create injustices. It is more likely, however, that individual CRCs are homogeneous in membership but that at the same time there are substantial differences in socioeconomic status among CRC churches.

3. With the current system of denominational funding, there is no way to maintain symbiosis between the local congregations of the CRC and the ministries carried out by denominational ministries and CRC-approved parachurch organizations.

a. Consider the following premise and scenario:

— Premise

The local congregations of the CRC live in a symbiotic relationship with denominational and parachurch ministries. The local congregation benefits from denominational and parachurch ministries, and the denominational and parachurch ministries rely on income from the local congregations to carry out ministry (the principle of symbiosis).

— Scenario

1) Trend 1: Over the past thirty years, many established congregations have experienced an overall decline in membership. This, in turn, results in less money generated for local and denominational ministry.

2) Trend 2: Over the past thirty years, the means by which members are attracted to and maintained in local congregations (i.e., aggressive programming and multiple staffing) have increased the need for ministry financing at the local level.

3) Trend 3: Over the past thirty years, denominational ministries have expanded and therefore need more funding.

b. If trends 1 and 2 above are true and continue to increase, then at some point the symbiotic relationship between the local congregation and the denominational/parachurch ministries will become unstable. The capacity for growth in the local church is hindered by the desire for growth in denominational ministries, which requires additional funding from congregations. If this hindering trend continues, the result will be the eventual death of both the denominational/parachurch agencies and the local congregations. Note also that death would result in the above scenario even if the current rate of denominational and parachurch funding (trend 3) remained at a constant rate.

c. Even if trends 1 and 2 are not true today, our concern for the symbiotic relationship is still an issue because the scenario could occur at any point in the history of our denomination.

d. It is our judgment that a proportion-based system of funding denominational ministries would automatically maintain an appropriate level of homeostasis between denominational/parachurch ministries and

the local congregations. In such a proportional system, overaggressive or underaggressive funding on a denominational level would not occur because the denomination's prerogative to draw funds from the local congregations would be dependent on what was received by the local congregation and not upon a fixed amount set without thought to the symbiotic relationship between the congregations and the denominational ministries.

4. The denominational funding study of 1992, though helpful in many respects, was not initially intended, nor did it choose, to examine the financial balance necessary between the local church and denominational ministries and therefore failed to address or satisfy the needs of the local church in ministry-share giving.
   a. The study of 1992 did not engage in an evaluation of denominations similar to the CRC and their denominational ministry shares, an evaluation which would enable us to see whether local churches in the CRC are giving comparable or disproportionate amounts of their budgets to denominational ministries.
   b. The 1992 report noted the inequity of ministry-share giving on individual families, but it never addressed the inequity of assuming that all churches are equal in their ability to support denominational funding.
   c. It should be noted that, after extensive study, the report of 1992 concluded that in spite of its own finding—which stated that "available financial information demonstrates a troubling trend: financial support is shifting away from our denominational ministries"—the solution was to (1) rename the same system, (2) standardize the expectations, and (3) attempt to educate our way out of a national and denominational giving trend which reflects a shift in cultural and societal changes. In short, the report recommended no changes. This is an unsatisfactory answer to churches facing building programs, financial shortfalls, growing staff needs, and so forth while seeking to remain denominationally supportive.
   d. Finally, if the balance between local-church and denominational funding is not studied at the synodical level, it will be addressed at the classical level on a case-by-case basis as requests arise. The result will be a very chaotic financial landscape for both the denominational ministries and the local churches.

II. Suggested approaches to the issue

A. Set up a theological task group to study the biblical and theological appropriateness of a quota-based system over a proportion-based system. Include in the mandate a study of the possible injustice of the current quota-based system.

B. Commission a survey to find out whether the percentage of total congregational budget being sent to denominational agencies has increased, decreased, or remained the same over the past one hundred years .

C. Commission a survey to find out what percentage of total budget in each congregation is currently going to denominational ministries. In the sampling, determine both the socioeconomic homogeneity and the socioeconomic level of

each congregation. Examine the data to see whether socioeconomic status does indeed differ from congregation to congregation and, if so, whether the current system of funding burdens ministries of congregations whose constituency is of lower socioeconomic status.

D. Commission a study of the history and emergence of denominational ministries in the CRC. In the study compare the ratio of denominational staff members (including missionaries) per professing CRC members and examine the trends.

E. Commission a study of the funding demands of local congregations. Determine whether the funding demands and the expectations of parishioners for service have created a greater need for local funding in the contemporary context than twenty-five and fifty years ago.

F. Commission a study to compare the mean and median of congregational budgets sent to denominational agencies in sister denominations and compare these figures with the mean and median of congregational budgets sent to denominational ministries in the CRC.

Note:

We realize that this overture might be perceived as threatening to those whose work and passion are dependent on maintaining the current structure in the area of denominational funding. Given the possibility of a conflict of interest on this issue, we recommend that synod consider the merit of appointing a committee that will have the capability of looking at this issue objectively and without the suspicion of bias. We suggest that the committee include a majority of members who do not work for denominational agencies, who have spent a significant amount of time ministering in congregations, and who have an intimate understanding of the ministry needs of the local church in the contemporary context.

Classis Holland
Peter D. Winkle, stated clerk

Overture 21: Express Gratitude for Free to Serve Rallies, Acknowledge Imperfections in the CRC, and Call Upon Members to Remain United within the CRC

I. Background

In the fall of 1996 we were called upon by the leadership of our denomination to celebrate the great things that God has done through the Christian Reformed Church in our communities and in the world. As a result, seven Free to Serve rallies were scheduled for strategic places throughout the denomination. The rally for the Great Plains was held on two nights on the campus of Dordt College. During the day between the two programs there was a Ministries Festival, where twenty-five booths exhibited a variety of church and church-related ministries. It was a marvelous event, bringing praise and thanksgiving to our sovereign God.

At the same time that we were preparing for and engaged in this celebration, we received a message from the United Reformed News Service informing us of

a meeting at First Christian Reformed Church in South Holland, Illinois, attended by over two hundred ministers, elders, and deacons. The report indicated that those present at the meeting were opposed to the ordination of women and that they had convened "to consider a proposal made last November to consider seceding from the denomination. . . ."

We were and continue to be troubled by this situation. We believe that it was appropriate to celebrate what God has done in and through the Christian Reformed Church. We also believe that it was appropriate to engage in a critique of the Christian Reformed Church. What troubles us is the consideration being given to possible secession from the Christian Reformed Church. Secession at this time by those concerned with the direction of the denomination is *unnecessary*, because they are not being asked or forced to leave, and it is *undesirable*, because their departure will weaken and damage both the membership and the testimony of the Christian Reformed Church.

II. Overture

Therefore, Classis Iakota overtures synod

A. To express gratitude for the Free to Serve rallies and for the opportunity to acknowledge what God is doing in his world through the Christian Reformed Church.

Ground: It is clear from events such as the area Ministries Festival that God is using the Christian Reformed Church "to prepare God's people for works of service" (Eph. 4:12).

B. To acknowledge the imperfections of the Christian Reformed Church and the importance of an ongoing critique and continual reformation.

Ground: In *Our World Belongs to God* we grieve because of our brokenness and pray for courage to "struggle for the purity of the church and for the righteousness God demands" (Art. 43).

C. To call upon our brothers and sisters who are considering secession to remain united with us so that we may avoid schism as a way of dealing with differences and may work together to conform more and more to that which Scripture requires of us as part of the one body of Jesus Christ.

Grounds:

1. Scripture demands this of us. For example, in John 17:21 Jesus prays, ". . . that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you."

   And in I Corinthians 12:24, 25 Paul writes, "But God has combined the members of the body . . . so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other."
2. The confessions expect this of us. For example, in the Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 21, Question and Answer 55, when asked "What do you understand by 'the communion of the saints'?" we respond, "First, that believers one and all, as members of this community, share in Christ and in all his treasurers and gifts. Second, that each member should consider it a duty to use these gifts for the service and enrichment of other members."

And in Article 28 of the Belgic Confession, we declare that

> We believe that since this holy assembly and congregation is the gathering of those who are saved . . ., no one ought to withdraw from it, content to be by himself, regardless of his status or condition.
>
> But all people are obliged to join and unite with it, keeping the unity of the church. . . .

Classis Iakota
C. Eric Fennema, stated clerk

Overture 22: Remind Churches of Decisions on Fomenting Divisiveness

I. Background

Over the past quarter century our denomination has discussed the issue of women serving in the offices of the church. In recent years that discussion became much more divisive when synods reversed the decisions of the preceding synods. Not until 1995 and 1996 did two synods in succession make the same decision. 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" (*Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 731). Synod 1995 also adopted regulations to guide churches and classes as they use the gifts of women in the offices of the church. Synod 1996 was asked to reverse this decision, but it affirmed the decision by a two-thirds majority. Delegates also expressed the hope that fellow believers would strive to live and minister together.

This perspective was expressed already by the 1984 study committee that cautioned the denomination as follows:

> . . . on the matter before us there are differences between honest, sincere, committed, devout, and well-intentioned Christian brothers and sisters. While this acknowledgment does not solve the problem, it does place the problem in a context where Christians who differ significantly on these matters can speak with each other, accept each other, and live with each other in the same family of faith. Important as the matter before us is, it does not concern an essential creedal affirmation such as the church faced in the controversy with Arius.
>
> We urge everyone who is considering the question of the ordination of women to do so with charity and humility. We ask everyone to acknowledge that the matter is not crystal clear. If it were, it would have been solved long ago. Some of the most gifted theological minds and pastoral hearts in our denomination have wrestled with this matter and have come to different conclusions. This alone should suffice to eliminate stridency from our discussion.
>
> (*Acts of Synod 1984*, p. 286)

Unfortunately, stridency has frequently marked our discussions of this issue and has been increasingly apparent in the past two years. Immediately after Synod 1995 a letter was sent to all councils in the denomination inviting them to a conference "to formulate appropriate actions and responses to Synod 1995." The delegates to this conference voted to send a letter to Synod 1996 asking that the 1995 decision be reversed. They also voted to "inform Synod 1996 that should she [the Christian Reformed Church] not humble her heart in repentance before the Lord, this conference will reconvene next year to consider a proposal to form a new denomination." In stark contrast to the caution given by

the 1984 study committee, the letter accused the denomination of committing heinous sin, trifling with the text of Scripture, engaging in hermeneutical gymnastics, and ripping the Bible from the hands of our people. The letter and the minutes of the conference were sent to all councils in the denomination.

After Synod 1996 affirmed the 1995 decision, the conference organizers sent another letter to all councils, inviting them to another conference to "discuss and recommend appropriate responses to Synod's actions." Despite the fact that Synod 1996 defeated overtures requesting the formation of classes based on theological affinity, another proposal approved by the delegates to the 1995 conference, the letter also informed all councils that the interim committee of the conference was "recommending that church councils join in the formation of a new CRC classis based on theological commitment." At the conference, delegates again voted to form a new denomination if synod did not respond favorably to their requests. After the meeting the conference organizers sent a letter to all church councils, inviting them to become members of their organization by subscribing to a six-page document entitled Affirmations of Faith and by sending a suggested donation.

Throughout its history the Christian Reformed Church has operated with a council-classis-synod form of church government. Our denomination has never operated with a congregational form of government that attempts to adjudicate matters by sending to all councils letters that recommend certain courses of action or by calling extra-ecclesiastical conferences. In fact, previous synods have addressed such activities in rather strong terms. Synod 1971 declared that "consistories have the duty to admonish and deal with members who persist in functioning individually or through extra-ecclesiastical organizations in attacking the church, in fomenting divisiveness in the body of our Lord, and in slandering fellow members" (*Acts of Synod 1971*, p. 108). Synods 1974 and 1991 reiterated that decision.

In his February 22 and March 1, 1993, *Banner* editorials entitled "Well-nurtured Discontent," the late Dr. John Kromminga, past president of Calvin Theological Seminary, traced the history of attacks on our denomination, its agencies, and its institutions. He concluded his editorial by saying,

> Nobody claims that the CRC or its synods or its agencies is perfect. But the patient silence of the church in response to partisan attack must not be taken as an admission that the charges are correct. Unfortunately, such silence, while well-intentioned, has allowed the sheer repetition of baseless accusations to confuse the minds and hearts of church members.
>
> It is time to tell these church members that they need not hang their heads in shame at the supposed unfaithfulness of their church. Though guilty of shortcomings, the church has not abandoned God's Word. And it has not been abandoned by God's Spirit.

In response to repeated letters received by our councils and in response to the calling of extra-ecclesiastical conferences which make various accusations about synod and about fellow Christians, it is necessary that synod again remind the churches of its previous decisions concerning such activity.

II. Overture

Classis Lake Erie overtures synod

A. To remind members that the denomination does not operate with a congregational form of government that attempts to adjudicate matters by sending letters to all councils or by calling extra-ecclesiastical assemblies but operates with a Reformed system of government that provides for the appeal of synodical decisions through councils and classes.

B. To remind consistories that they "have the duty to admonish and deal with members who persist in functioning individually or through extra-ecclesiastical organizations in attacking the church, in fomenting divisiveness in the body of our Lord, and in slandering fellow members" (*Acts of Synod 1971*, p. 108).

Classis Lake Erie
George Vander Weit, stated clerk

Overture 23: Assign an Additional Duty to Stated Clerks of Classes

Classis Columbia overtures synod to include the following duty for the stated clerk of each classis:

1. To report promptly to the denominational general secretary any call accepted to a church, including staff positions within the classis.
2. To report to the general secretary retirements, leaves of absence, releases, resignations, and defections of pastors within the classis to other positions, posts, or ministries.

Note: To make dissemination of this information optimally effective, it is assumed that the general secretary's office will be responsible to notify *The Banner* office in each instance. In this way the general secretary will be well informed, and information will be placed before all the churches in our denomination in a timely and consistent manner.

Grounds:

a. Accepted calls continue to be reported very late or not at all.
b. The general secretary's office frequently does not know changes have been made, and it is often necessary for this office to have such information to serve the churches well.
c. *The Banner* continues to ask individuals to send in such information, with very poor response.
d. This information is important for vacant churches looking for names to place on their lists of possible candidates.
e. A significant number of members in our fellowship continue to be interested in pulpit exchanges.
f. Such reporting is not burdensome for the stated clerks of classes. Only a few phone calls, letters, or electronic communications will be required during a year.

Classis Columbia
Howard B. Spaan, stated clerk

Overture 24: Allow Classes to Seat Deacons at Classical Assemblies

I. Introduction

Throughout the history of our denomination several attempts have been made to include deacons in all the assemblies of the church. Although churches in some areas did include deacons at classical gatherings during the early days of the Reformation, most of our history finds deacons being intentionally excluded from the broader assemblies.

Classis Muskegon believes the time has come for our denomination to allow deacons to attend classical gatherings as delegates with credentials identical to those of ministers and elders. We also believe that mission-shaped congregations and classes will find their ministries seriously curtailed should deacons continue to be excluded from the broader assemblies. In this overture we will present a historical overview of the place deacons have occupied in our denominational structure. We will then state why we believe the time has come for our denomination to delegate deacons to the broader assemblies. Finally, we will submit recommendations requesting synod to allow classes to seat deacons as delegates to their meetings.

Note: This overture does not ask that deacons be delegated to synodical gatherings. Although we believe that would be a natural outgrowth of this overture, it is our opinion that classes should first be given the freedom to include deacons in their assemblies. When a number of classes experience the benefit of including deacons, the time to welcome deacons at synodical gatherings will also be at hand.

II. Historical overview

From the very beginning of the Reformed tradition, the place of deacons in the ecclesiastical structure has been uncertain and ambiguous. Reformed congregations have always been aware of the importance of conducting a ministry of mercy among the suffering and wounded peoples of the world and are united in assigning the conduct of this ministry to the diaconate. But there has been no consensus on how the diaconate fits into the organizational structure of the church.

This is somewhat surprising since Reformed theologians emphasize the equality of the offices and frequently recommend that all the offices be represented at the broader assemblies. However, in practice we find that even though all the offices are represented in the council of each congregation, deacons are excluded from the broader assemblies. A review of our history will reveal that the exclusion of deacons stems primarily from a rather unexpected distinction the church makes between governance and service. The distinction is unexpected because the council of each congregation, which is made up of both elders and deacons, is assigned governance issues by our Church Order (see Art. 37, which declares that the council is the governing body of each congregation, and Art. 74, which assigns the "governance" of evangelism to the council).

We will first call attention to a number of venerable Reformed theologians who recommend that all the offices be represented in all the assemblies of the church and then review our denominational history, which excludes deacons from the broader assemblies.

A. Reformed theologians on the inclusion of deacons at broader assemblies

Dr. Klaas Dijk, a renowned Reformed theologian, emphasizes not only the equality of the offices in his book *De Dienst Der Kerk* but also notes the unity of the offices in Christ. He maintains that

> ministers and elders are also shepherds, who must comfort the sick and support the weak with priestly compassion; ministers and deacons do not escape the royal task on the one hand to rule the flock (e.g., deacons must share in the calling of a minister) and on the other hand to firmly lead and direct the life that is burdened with need and distress back into the right paths; and elders and deacons are called to direct the sheep to follow the Good Shepherd who desires to lead them in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. (p. 227)

He goes on to write that the "ministry of mercy is, in its root, one with all the other parts of the service of the church of Christ" (p. 239).

Professor William Heyns in his *Handbook for Elders and Deacons* declares that something is amiss in the development of the office of deacon among Reformed congregations. He devotes an entire section to what he calls the "Unsatisfactory Condition of the Diaconate" and strongly advocates the inclusion of deacons at all the assemblies of the church, based on the unity of the offices.

Dr. Herman Bavinck writes about the place of the diaconate in the ecclesiastical structure in the second edition of his *Dogmatiek*. He, too, advocates the delegation of deacons to the broader assemblies.

Dr. F.L. Rutgers in *Kerkelijke Adviezen I* suggests that it was the civil authorities who would not permit full recognition of deacons in the ecclesiastical structure because the civil authorities wanted to reserve the control of the care of the poor for themselves.

Dr. Abraham Kuyper also recognized that the diaconate did not have the place in our structure which it ought to have and wrote in 1884 that the diaconal office "ought to be interwoven in the ruling organism of the church" (*Tractaat van de Reformatie der Kerken*, p. 21).

Biesterveld, van Lonkhuijzen, and Rudolph in their work *Het Diaconaat* recognized that the diaconate is an underdeveloped office in the Reformed tradition and advocated some form of diaconal participation at the broader assemblies (see pp. 371-98).

Our Church Order recognizes the equality of the offices in Articles 2 and 85 but still excludes deacons from the broader assemblies.

B. Denominational exclusion of deacons from broader assemblies

In the early days of the Reformation, when congregations were small, both elders and deacons formed the consistory, and both participated in classical assemblies. But by the mid 1800s only ministers and elders were delegated to classis.

Recent attempts to include deacons as delegates to classis and synod began in 1962. In that year Classis Chatham overtured synod to consider the delegation of deacons to the broader assemblies. Synod rejected the overture on the ground that "insufficient scriptural evidence has been adduced to warrant such a change in the Church Order" (*Acts of Synod 1962*, Art. 137). Classis Chatham resubmitted its overture the following year, this time including a study of biblical passages upon which its overture rested. In response, synod appointed a study committee, which made its report in 1967.

The study committee informed synod

> that there are only two undisputed references to the office of deacon in the New Testament: Philippians 1:1—"Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus that are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons. . . ." and I Timothy 3:3-13—"Deacons in like manner must be grave, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre; holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. And let those also first be proved; then let them serve as deacons, if they be blameless. Women in like manner, must be grave, not slanderers, temperate, faithful in all things. Let deacons be husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. For they that have served well as deacons gain to themselves a good standing, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus."
>
> (*Acts of Synod 1967*, Supplement 24, p. 233)

The study committee report included an in-depth study of Scripture and had a section titled "Theological Study of the Ministry and Offices of the Church."

Based on its biblical and theological study, the committee recommended that "synod declare that, in the light of Scripture and the Reformed confessions, it judges that there are no lawful objections to the delegation of deacons to the major assemblies of the church." It also recommended that "synod decide that *one* minister, *one* elder and also *one* deacon be delegated to classes and to synods, and that these three office-bearers shall be delegated with identical mandates and credentials" (*Acts of Synod 1967*, Supplement 24, pp. 253-54).

In response to these recommendations, Synod 1967 adopted the study-committee recommendation that "the delegation of deacons to the major assemblies of the church is neither prohibited nor demanded by Scripture and the Reformed confessions" (*Acts of Synod 1967*, p. 93). However, synod did not agree to open the broader assemblies to deacons. Instead it decided as follows:

> That Synod do not at the present time move in the direction of delegating deacons to major assemblies.
>
> *Grounds:*
>
> a. The study committee has not proved that principles of Scripture or Church Order "demand" such delegation.
> b. Even on the assumption that deacons "may" be delegated, it has not been demonstrated that practical considerations make their delegation necessary.
>
> (*Acts of Synod 1967*, p. 93)

In 1970 Classis Hamilton challenged the decision of 1967 and presented an overture which it believed did demonstrate the need for deacons to be delegated to the broader assemblies. Synod 1970 appointed another study committee to consider the Hamilton overture.

The newly appointed study committee made its report in 1972. It came with a majority and a minority report. The majority report argued against seating deacons as delegates at classis and synod, and the minority report supported the conclusions of the 1967 report and once again recommended that deacons be delegated to the broader assemblies. The majority report presented the following argument in support of its position:

> Granted, there are matters pertaining to works of mercy discussed and dealt with at synod (although we would be hard put to find a synod that spent more than half a day on specific diaconal matters, if we keep this properly distinguished from financial matters in general), but unless it can be proven that elders are functioning outside of their domain, or exercising an authority which they have no right to exercise as elders when they deal with these matters, we ought not to conclude that

> there is an injustice being done. And we believe that there is biblical evidence to show that elders are not functioning outside of their domain when they make decisions in regard to these matters, since the primary responsibility to rule belongs to their office.
>
> (*Acts of Synod 1972*, Supplement—Report 32, Art. 40)

Synod decided "not to move in the direction of delegating deacons to major assemblies at this time," but it did "encourage the churches to continue giving constructive attention to this matter" (*Acts of Synod 1972*, p. 48).

Classis Muskegon took the synodical decision seriously and attempted to give "constructive attention" to the matter, especially in light of the report on ecclesiastical office and ordination which synod adopted in 1973. In 1975 Classis Muskegon overtured synod "to revise the Church Order to provide for the delegation of deacons to meetings of classes and synods." Its first ground for the overture states that "the delegation of deacons is consistent with recent decisions of synod pertaining to the nature of ecclesiastical office and ordination" (*Acts of Synod 1975*, Overture 4, p. 633). Synod decided to refer the matter "back to Classis Muskegon for further study and reflection" and suggested "that classis address itself especially to the recurring reservations which previous synods have expressed to the practice of delegating deacons to major assemblies" (*Acts of Synod 1975*, Art. 102, p. 103).

Classis Muskegon resubmitted its overture the following year, 1976, stating that synod had

> missed the point of our overture. . . . The thrust of our overture was and is that . . . the adoption of the guidelines on ecclesiastical office by Synod 1973 . . . has created an entirely new situation. In view of this fact classis did not feel it necessary to refer to history before 1973, but asked synod to look at the delegation of deacons in the light of the implications of our new situation. . . . Synod's response by-passed the main point of our overture completely.
>
> (*Acts of Synod 1976*, Overture 6, p. 630)

In answer to Classis Muskegon, synod decided as follows:

1. That synod not adopt the overture of Classis Muskegon originally submitted to the Synod of 1975 and re-submitted to the Synod of 1976.

   Ground: The overture fails to demonstrate that by adopting the guidelines in 1973, "synod has created an entirely new situation."

2. That synod do not accede to the request for a study committee to consider the implications of the guidelines adopted in 1973.

   Ground: Neither the fact that it was synod that adopted the new guidelines nor the observation that the matter pertains to all the churches in common relieves Classis Muskegon of the responsibility to make such a study if they feel it is necessary.

(*Acts of Synod 1976*, Art. 51, pp. 52-53)

Classis Muskegon's response to synod's decision was made at its January 18, 1978, meeting, when it was decided that each church would be represented at the following three meetings of classis

> by the pastor (or elder if vacant) and an elder and one deacon. That after the opening and constitution of classis the deacons and elders separate so that each group may deal with matters that pertain to their office, and that before the closing of classis the whole group reassemble to deal with matters of mutual interest, and for closing devotions.
>
> (Classical minutes, Art. 39B)

This decision was appealed by the council of Second Christian Reformed Church of Fremont at the May 18, 1978, meeting of classis. Since classis did not sustain the appeal, the Fremont church submitted its appeal to Synod 1978. In the appeal, Second Fremont stated that it

> is not in any sense making a judgment on the question of whether deacons should or should not be delegated to major assemblies. . . . The only concern which Second Fremont has in this matter is the legality of sending deacons to our major assembly and seating them without a prior authorization to do so in our Church Order and with approval of synod.
>
> (*Acts of Synod 1978*, pp. 662-63)

Synod sustained the appeal on the basis that the "action of Classis Muskegon is a violation of Article 40-a of the Church Order" and reminded Classis Muskegon of the "directive of the Synod of 1976" (*Acts of Synod 1978*, p. 115).

Once again Classis Muskegon sent an overture to synod (in 1980) regarding the delegation of deacons to broader assemblies. This time it reminded synod that the seating of deacons at major assemblies is a practical rather than a principial matter in view of the fact that synod had agreed that the seating of deacons is not prohibited by either Scripture or the creeds. It also submitted a carefully worked-out plan on how the delegation of deacons at the broader assemblies could be implemented. Synod responded to this overture by turning the matter over to an existing study committee on synodical studies and decisions pertaining to the office of deacon.

By this time the question of whether deacons should be delegated to the broader assemblies was clouded by the gender issue. This issue raised the question of headship, which led synod to declare that elders had the right to exercise an authority which was not granted to deacons.

The committee assigned by Synod 1980 to study the seating of deacons at broader assemblies made a brief report in 1981 which had no recommendation. A sentence from the report summarizes what had happened to the office of deacon within our denomination: "Our reflections on such vital ideas as 'authority,' 'headship,' 'consistory,' and 'ordination' have led several of us to a position which has distanced the deacons even more than they presently are in the Christian Reformed Church from the governing and policy making functions within the church" (*Acts of Synod 1981*, p. 517).

For all practical purposes, the delegation of deacons to classis and synod had become a non-issue. Until clarity about headship and authority could be achieved, there would be little to discuss about the delegation of deacons to the broader assemblies.

II. A new day

We have now come to a new day in the Christian Reformed Church. The gender issue is being viewed from a different perspective than it has been in the past. The office of deacon is gradually being restored to the position it held before the gender issue deprived it of being involved with governance matters.

As we once again address the issue of whether deacons should be delegated to broader assemblies, we see no need to engage in a renewed examination of Scripture and the creeds on the matter. A thorough study of Scripture and the creeds has already been made, and synod has acknowledged that neither Scripture nor the creeds prohibit the delegation of deacons to the broader assemblies.

We proceed to a consideration of deacons at the broader assemblies from the position that the church needs their presence at these assemblies in order to conduct an effective ministry in the world of our day.

A. Relationship of governance and service

In past years the church understood that the headship of Christ was to be exercised through the offices of minister and elder. Ministers and elders assumed responsibility for the governance of the church while deacons were given the responsibility for the ministry of mercy. The work of the deacons was under the supervision of the council. When the church proceeds from this understanding of the function of the offices, there is little reason to delegate deacons to the broader assemblies, as the majority report to Synod 1972 indicated.

Most of the overtures presented to synod from 1967 through 1980 on seating deacons at the broader assemblies presumed that elders dealt with governance issues whereas deacons conducted ministries of mercy. It was generally assumed that, should deacons be delegated to the broader assemblies, they would meet separately to consider diaconal matters and join the elders only when issues of mutual concern were on the table.

The distinction made between governance and service is not conducive to effective ministry. When governance and service are separated from each other, we encounter the kind of unfortunate situation that happened when synod in 1978 decided that deacons should not be delegated to classis simply because the Church Order does not allow it. Our denomination would be better served by proceeding from the position presented by Reformed theologians and our own study on office and ordination, which emphasizes the unity of the offices.

Classis Muskegon believes that in recent years we have too often allowed governance to get in the way of effective ministry. When that happens, congregations tend to become impatient and frustrated with synodical regulations and sometimes move in the direction of ignoring them. Such actions may appear on the surface to be a result of the individualistic spirit of our day, but that may not always be the motivating cause. Some congregations may reluctantly bypass synodical rulings simply because they are repeatedly frustrated and hampered by regulations which stifle their ministries.

B. The conduct of a wholistic ministry

In recent years there has been a growing awareness that a wholistic approach is essential in ministry to the needs of humankind. The medical and social sciences are already reaping the benefits of this approach and advocating its significance. We believe the church will also conduct a more effective ministry when it employs this approach.

When a wholistic approach to ministry is implemented, we will recognize that the ministry of mercy is a crucial element in nearly every facet of ministry. There is no reason to exclude deacons from broader assemblies on the ground that certain agenda items are of no concern to them or beyond the scope of their particular ministry.

C. The role of the diaconate in mission-shaped congregations

In addition to contending that deacons should be included at classical gatherings because our ministry should be a wholistic ministry, we also contend

that the continued exclusions of deacons from the major assemblies will seriously curtail the missionary outreach of each congregation.

In years gone by, congregations focused their ministries on the nurture of those who were members of the church. They conducted catechism classes for the youth and Bible studies for the adult members of the congregation. Elders and ministers conducted home visitations. The deacons focused their attention on the benevolent needs of the members and distributed offerings to denominational agencies which supervised ministries in faraway places. Since the 1960s, part of the denominational outreach was devoted to ministries of mercy throughout the world, ministries supervised by CRWRC. All of this is still going on and will, we hope, continue. But today the focus of congregational ministries is shifting. Instead of focusing exclusively on church memberships and denominational ministries, congregations are now also reaching out to their communities in new and dynamic ways. In doing so, they are coming to the realization that deacons are the ones who often stand on the front lines of our spiritual warfare. They reach out to the poor and disadvantaged of the community on behalf of the congregation and engage the congregation in reaching out with them. They are the ones who are bringing a new vitality to congregational ministries and are helping congregations be recognized in their communities as points of light in a dark and hurting world.

The work of the deacons is now motivating a number of classes to include ministry issues in addition to governance issues on their agendas. We believe it would be a serious curtailment of the ministry of the churches to exclude deacons from the broader assemblies.

We therefore overture synod to declare that the delegation of deacons to the classical assembly is appropriate and permissible. We are not at this time asking that a change be made in the Church Order or that deacons be delegated to synod. We simply request that synod permit classes to seat deacons at their classical assemblies. Not all classes will be inclined to do so at this time, but those who do will probably recognize the value of their decision. Should the delegation of deacons be as fruitful as we believe it will be, the time will soon come when the churches will urge synod to have deacons delegated to synod in addition to ministers and elders.

IV. Overture

Classis Muskegon overtures synod to adopt the following recommendations:

A. That synod allow classes to seat deacons in addition to ministers and elders as delegates at their assemblies by adding the following supplement to Article 40-a of the Church Order:

> The council of each church shall delegate a deacon in addition to a minister and an elder to classis provided the classis approves of the delegation of deacons to the classical assembly.

Grounds:

1. The delegation of deacons to classes is prohibited by neither the Bible nor the creeds of our denomination.
2. The equality of the offices supports the inclusion of deacons at broader assemblies.

3. A growing number of classes are including ministry issues on their agendas, and therefore it would be wise to include deacons in the classical sessions.

B. That deacons delegated to classes be given credentials identical to those given to ministers and elders.

Ground: A wholistic approach to ministry requires the inclusion of deacons in all matters under consideration by classis.

Classis Muskegon
Douglas J. Van Essen, stated clerk

Overture 25: Add Guideline to the Abuse Guidelines

I. Background

The Abuse Guidelines speak of three procedures that envision the consistory/council acting as an adjudicatory body in abuse allegations (II, B, 1). They also speak of procedures that envision the use of a classical abuse-response team acting as an advisory panel (II, B, 2). The guidelines, however, do not specifically point out who chooses which procedures to follow when both the consistory/council and the abuse-response team are options in adjudicating abuse guidelines.

II. Overture

Classis Pacific Northwest overtures synod to add the following to II, B, 2, d of the Abuse Guidelines: "If the consistory/council chooses, it may have two representatives observe all the procedures of the advisory panel. All matters of confidentiality apply to the consistory/council observers."

Ground: Consistory/council observers would enhance the trust level and the communication between the advisory panel and the consistory/council.

Classis Pacific Northwest
Gordon A. Terpstra, stated clerk

Overture 26: Clarify a Provision of the Abuse Guidelines

I. Background

The Abuse Guidelines speak of three procedures that envision the consistory/council acting as an adjudicatory body in abuse allegations (II, B, 1). They also speak of procedures that envision the use of a classical abuse-response team acting as an advisory panel (II, B, 2). The guidelines, however, do not specifically point out who chooses which procedures to follow when both the consistory/council and the abuse-response team are options in adjudicating abuse allegations.

II. Overture

Classis Pacific Northwest overtures synod to clarify in Abuse Guidelines II, B, 2 that, when an abuse-response team is available, the accuser makes the choice

between whether the abuse-response team or the consistory/council will act as the hearing panel.

Grounds:

A. If the alleged abuser is an officebearer, the accuser may be at a severe disadvantage if the consistory/council has the choice of acting as the hearing panel.
B. An abuse-response team is a neutral body composed of both men and women who are knowledgeable about the issues of abuse.

Classis Pacific Northwest
Gordon A. Terpstra, stated clerk

Overture 27: Revise the Abuse Guidelines

I. Background

Classis Lake Erie has expressed interest in the Abuse Guidelines a number of times over the years. In 1992 our classis sent an overture to synod. In response to the invitation of Synod 1994 to comment on the guidelines, three of our councils gave suggestions. At Synod 1995 our delegates presented six pages of comments to the synodical advisory committee considering the guidelines. In 1996 we sent an overture to synod. On May 8, 1996, one month before synod, two members of our classis met with the Abuse Prevention director to discuss that overture. At Synod 1996 a member of our classis met with synod's advisory committee. After Synod 1996 our classis appointed a five-person committee to review the guidelines provisionally adopted by that synod. At the end of August our committee gave a number of suggestions to the office of Abuse Prevention. Our committee also reviewed the guidelines mailed to all councils in November (see *Agenda for Synod 1997*, pp. 195-207) and presented its recommendations to our classis. At our March 1997 meeting, Classis Lake Erie voted to send the following comments with recommendations to Synod 1997 and to overture synod to adopt these recommendations.

II. Analysis

A. The advice of legal counsel (Abuse Guidelines, Section I)

The background of this report informs the denomination that "throughout the whole process some disagreement has existed between the office of Abuse Prevention and legal counsel as to whether the document details essentially an ecclesiastical process or essentially a judicial process which should mirror civil law" (Section I, par. 7). That tension has been evident in the discussion of these guidelines for quite some time. At Synod 1995 the denomination's Canadian legal counsel informed synod that he had not seen the guidelines. The guidelines submitted to Synod 1996 were submitted over the objection of the denomination's American legal counsel and without having been seen by Canadian legal counsel. Synod 1996 provisionally adopted the guidelines only after American legal counsel worked extensively with synod's advisory committee to revise the originally submitted guidelines. Now Synod 1997 is being informed that there is still disagreement between legal counsel and the office of Abuse Prevention. We recognize that the guidelines detail an ecclesiastical process, but

in an increasingly litigious society even an ecclesiastical process needs to be constructed in such a way that legal liability is minimized. That fact is very significant here because the guidelines shift legal liability from the denomination to the individual churches and classes.

Recommendation 1:

That Synod 1997's advisory committee making recommendations on these guidelines be informed about the reservations that the denomination's American and Canadian counsels still have about these guidelines.

B. Procedures and guidelines for handling abuse allegations against a church leader (Section II)

This section begins by listing five reasons why a procedure for handling abuse allegations is necessary. The first indicates that allegations of child abuse are often made "when an adult survivor of child abuse becomes separated from a familial abuser in adulthood." Though it may be true that church leaders are abusive to members of their families, the concern of these guidelines is much broader than abuse that happens among family members. The word *familial* should be dropped and *a* should be changed to *an*.

Recommendation 2:

That the first reason why a procedure for handling abuse allegations is necessary be revised as follows:

1. Many allegations of child abuse surface after a child reaches adulthood.This happens when an adult survivor becomes separated from an abuser in adulthood. Sometimes in adulthood the adult survivor comes to recognize the behavior done to him/her as abusive.

* * * * *

In recent years our society has expressed its concern about abuse and has taken steps to address this significant problem. We are grateful that our denomination is also attempting to address this issue in a way that will bring justice and healing. We believe that a set of guidelines can assist the churches in achieving these goals.

Unfortunately, the increased focus on abuse has produced a number of false allegations. We have seen family members alienated, careers destroyed, and people sent to jail because of allegations that later were determined to be untrue. Thus, the church needs to ensure that its guidelines provide justice for all parties involved. Since 1992, this has been one of the concerns of our classis. Although we applaud an approach "designed to make it easier for victims to come forward with their allegations of abuse" (I, par. 1), we believe that the consideration of such allegations must be evenhanded. The church must deal justly with the alleged victim, but it must also deal justly with the accused. The committee states that the current procedure for handling abuse allegations "is perceived by some to be biased in favor of the accused" (II, A). We believe the existing guidelines are biased in favor of the accuser. As much as possible the church ought to use a set of guidelines free from any bias.

A bias in favor of the alleged victim is evident in the section that attempts to answer "why a procedure for handling abuse allegations is necessary" (II, A). Reason 5 in answer to that question states, "Because abuse committed by a church leader is always an abuse of authority, the church, as Christ's representa-

tive, must move swiftly to protect innocent and vulnerable persons from unconscionable attacks" (II, A, 5). Totally absent is any recognition that it is equally unconscionable to lodge a false accusation against a church leader or that the church must move swiftly to protect innocent and vulnerable church leaders from such attacks. This, in fact, is the stated role of the advisory panel that is convened in the case of adults. According to the guidelines, "the role of the advisory panel is to evaluate the gravity of the allegations and the probable veracity of them" (II, B, 2).

Recommendation 3:

That synod replace number 5 (Section II, A, 5) with the following:

5. Such a procedure is a tangible expression of the church's desire to secure justice and healing for all parties involved when allegations of abuse are made.

* * * * *

The committee indicates that its intent in crafting these guidelines "was to introduce a pastoral approach for responding to victims of abuse in the Christian Reformed Church" (I, par. 1). Though we would broaden the concern of the guidelines to include a pastoral approach to the accused as well, we also believe that any approach must be pastoral. To that end we believe that these guidelines can and must be introduced in a much more pastoral way. The current introduction does not really introduce the guidelines. Instead, it rehearses past failures of the church as it attempted to follow the biblical directives of Matthew 18. Though the guidelines make a distinction between a crime and ungodly conduct (II, B, 1), the introduction speaks of abuse as a "heinous crime" (II, A, par. 3) and speaks of forgiveness "granted in order to smooth things over in a congregation" as "an abomination to God" (II, A, par. 6). Such language is neither helpful nor necessary in a denomination that is seriously attempting to address the issue of abuse. It is possible to take a strong stand against a particular evil without using such language.

In spite of its criticism of the procedure outlined by our Lord in Matthew 18, the committee does indicate that "some abusers who were dealt with according to Matthew 18 readily admitted their sins" (II, A, par. 6). Even though this was the case, the committee states that justice was not done because consistories did not respond appropriately to these confessions. In such cases it is obvious that the problem was not with the procedure outlined in Matthew 18; the procedure accomplished its purpose. It is just as obvious that the procedure now being proposed will not be successful if consistories do not respond appropriately to the information produced by it. We believe the church is not well served by an introduction that dwells upon past failures of the church and speaks disparagingly, and, in some respects, unfairly about a procedure outlined by our Lord. The church will be better served by an introduction that points positively to the new procedure and calls all members to work diligently to secure justice and healing for all parties involved.

Recommendation 4:

That synod replace the paragraphs after the five reasons why a procedure for handling abuse allegations is necessary with the following:

In developing and implementing a procedure to handle abuse allegations, two great tensions exist. First, tension exists because the church wants to respond to the horror contained in the allegations and at the same time wants to protect the character, office, and family of someone accused of abuse. Second, tension exists because the church wants its members to stay out of civil court and to resolve disputes in an ecclesiastical manner. Some, however, believing that the church's procedure for resolution is biased in favor of the accused, choose the civil courts for redress.

Currently the majority of abuse allegations are addressed by local consistories who attempt to follow the provisions of Matthew 18:15-17. At times this procedure is successful, but it can hinder victims from dealing with abuse because it requires the accused and the accuser to meet face to face. An abused person is seldom able to encounter an abuser in this way. When the abused is forced to face one who has dealt so inappropriately with him/her, the abused feels like a victim once again. Therefore, abused people have been unwilling to come forward with their stories even though their silence means that they cannot experience significant healing in their own lives and that an abusive spiritual leader continues to serve in a position of authority.

The guidelines below are designed to make it easier for people to come forward with their allegations of abuse. There is a set of guidelines for adults and another set for children. Both provide direction to the church for an appropriate and speedy handling of abuse allegations. The guidelines for adults require the formation of an advisory panel constituted by the local classis. This panel, composed of people with expertise in the dynamics of abuse, will be an invaluable help to the local church and to all parties involved. We encourage all classes to form an advisory panel and remind them that the office of Abuse Prevention is available for any assistance needed to accomplish this.

In both procedures it is still the local consistory that must make a decision based on the information received, and a number of factors must be considered when a consistory makes that decision. Confession, repentance, forgiveness, and healing are significant ingredients in this process. Because forgiveness is at the heart of the Christian gospel, the church is sometimes tempted to believe that these matters have been resolved when forgiveness has been declared. However, if forgiveness is declared in the absence of heartfelt confession and sincere repentance, neither party is assisted. The abused experience resentment because their concerns have been dismissed so lightly; the abusers are not held accountable for their actions or the consequences of those actions and may go on to abuse again.

Even when forgiveness is appropriately granted, decisions still remain about whether or not a person may continue to serve in a position of responsibility and trust in the church. When the accused is an officebearer, the Church Order gives guidance in terms of suspension/deposition; when the accused is not an officebearer, the same kind of questions must be considered. Thus, council members should be knowledgeable about abuse. Members of the classical advisory panel are able to assist

local councils when these matters are discussed even in the case of children, where the panel is not convened.

Confession, repentance, and forgiveness are not the end of this matter but are the beginning of a healing process. Abuse, even the allegation of abuse, is accompanied by a great deal of pain which permanently changes people's lives. The church in its guidelines and in its continuing ministry must facilitate healing for all parties involved. It is our prayer that the following guidelines will better equip the church to evaluate specific allegations of abuse so justice and healing may be realized.

C. Types of abuse covered by the guidelines (II, B, a-c)

Throughout the years there has been uncertainty about the types of abuse to be included in the guidelines. The original report submitted to Synod 1992 defined four types of abuse: physical abuse, physical neglect, sexual abuse, and emotional abuse. In 1995, emotional abuse was deleted, and spiritual abuse was added. The guidelines submitted to Synod 1996 listed physical abuse, neglect (applying only to minors), sexual abuse, emotional abuse, and spiritual abuse (applying only to adults). The guidelines provisionally approved by Synod 1996 listed only physical abuse and sexual abuse. Synod 1996 also adopted the recommendation of its advisory committee to "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" (*Acts of Synod 1996*, p. 563, I, C, 2). The ground for this recommendation was that "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" (*Acts of Synod 1996*, pp. 563-64).

The guidelines being proposed to Synod 1997 include physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional/psychological abuse, and spiritual abuse (II, B). We believe that church leaders can be guilty of spiritual abuse, and our delegates supported such allegations in a specific case brought to the attention of Synod 1996 by another classis via an overture. However, we have some hesitancy about including the categories of emotional/psychological and spiritual abuse in the guidelines at this point because our Abuse Prevention office informed Synod 1995 that a church leader who does not give a person an opportunity to play a violin in church is guilty of spiritual abuse since the leader is preventing the use of a person's gifts. This raises a number of questions. Can spiritual abuse be alleged against a church council because it will not nominate a particular person or gender for office? Can spiritual abuse be alleged against a church-school superintendent who will not allow a member to teach? We concur in the decision of Synod 1996 that, before these two categories are included in the guidelines, a discussion about what constitutes emotional/psychological abuse and spiritual abuse and what materials are available to assist the churches in dealing with these forms of abuse must take place. It is better to add these two categories when appropriate material is available than to include them when there is a lack a clarity about what constitutes these types of abuse.

Recommendation 5:

That the office of Abuse Prevention comply with the recommendation passed by Synod 1996 regarding emotional and spiritual abuse before these categories are added to the current guidelines.

D. Provisions that specify the time necessary to convene a meeting (II, B, 2)

Several times the guidelines ask that the executive committee, the consistory, or council (II, B, 2, a-n) be convened in forty-eight (48) hours or in seven days. Within twenty-four (24) hours of its meeting, consistory members are expected to contact individuals and are to have available in written form the deliberations of their meeting (II, B, 2). In a period of fifteen (15) days, the executive committee of the local council must meet, after which the classical advisory panel also must meet (II, B, 2). The expectation that the executive committee/consistory/council/advisory panel can be called together on such short notice is unrealistic. It is also unrealistic to suggest that twenty-four (24) hours after it meets the consistory will have its deliberations in written form to present to people who may request that.

Shortly before Synod 1996, representatives of our classis had an opportunity to review the suggested guidelines for children, guidelines that contained similar time provisions. When Abuse Prevention was informed that these time provisions were unrealistic, it amended them. Instead of doing the same in the guidelines for adults, Abuse Prevention has added a note which states that "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" (II, B, 2).

This kind of latitude is not really helpful if the denomination is attempting to formulate guidelines that it wishes the churches ordinarily to follow. Such time provisions will leave the local bodies and the advisory panel open to attack because, in spite of the disclaimer, members will allege that the provisions are really synod's intention and that bodies not meeting them really do not take these matters seriously. For legal reasons the note should remain, but the time provisions must be made more realistic.

Recommendation 6:

That the time provisions be revised as follows:

1. II, B, 2, b: "as soon as possible" instead of "within fifteen days."

   Note: As this guideline now stands, within fifteen days the executive committee of the local council must be convened, and, after that meeting, the classical advisory panel must find a date when it and all witnesses for the plaintiff will be available.

2. II, B, 2, i: "within one week" instead of "within forty-eight hours."

3. II, B, 2, j: "within one week" instead of "within forty-eight hours."

4. II, B, 2, k: (twice in the paragraph) "within seven days" instead of "within twenty-four hours."

   Note: The two members conveying the consistory's decision must have the deliberations of the consistory in written form.

5. II, B, 2, k: "as soon as possible" instead of "within seven days."

   Note: This is the first time the council is convened.

6. II, B, 2, l: "as soon as possible" instead of "within seven days."

   Note: This is the first time the council is convened.

7. II, B, 3, f, 5): "As soon as possible" should be added to the beginning of the sentence.

   Note: The 1995 guidelines originally had "within one week of the consistory meeting." If time provisions are used in the adult guidelines, they ought also to be used in the guidelines for children.

E. The initiation of the advisory-panel process (II, B, 2)

In the guidelines submitted to Synod 1997, a significant change has been made in II, B, 2, b. Previously this guideline read, "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." Now it reads, "The executive committee (or its equivalent), after consulting with one another (no one of those consulting may be implicated by the victim) and reviewing the alternatives, could notify the classical abuse-response team to convene an advisory panel." Previously, the use of the advisory panel could be chosen by an alleged victim. Now this alternative can be denied by the executive committee, which is not required to give a reason for its denial. The current guidelines give no indication that this decision can be appealed and no guidance to the alleged victim who may wish to appeal it.

For the sake of the alleged victim, much more clarification is needed at this point. Much more clarification is also needed for the sake of the accused and for the sake of maintaining the integrity of the local council.

The committee appointed by our classis to review these guidelines knows of two cases where abuse was alleged against ministers who were members of our classis. In one, a person alleged that the minister was in love with her and cited compliments, statements in sermons, hugs given in public settings, and other actions. The consistory determined these allegations to be groundless and later discovered that the accuser had alleged the same things at a church she previously attended. In the second case, a person undergoing psychiatric treatment alleged that her minister had made an inappropriate private advance when she was a teenager. When a relative informed the minister of this allegation, he immediately contacted the council's vice president and visited the parents of the now married daughter to describe the very public incident that was being referenced, offering to contact witnesses if the parents desired that.

Wisely, the guidelines for children specify that a consistory member who is informed about alleged abuse should contact authorities only if there is "a reasonable suspicion that abuse has occurred" (II, B, 3, b). In the adult guidelines the executive committee of the local council, the body that has the most intimate knowledge of the parties involved, should also be able to make a determination about "reasonable suspicion." Without such a determination, obviously false allegations that are potentially damaging to the accused and that waste the time of the advisory panel are immediately brought to the panel for investigation. Thus, we are grateful that the "should" of 1996 has become the "could" of 1997.

An executive committee that does not believe that reasonable suspicion exists could inform a person that it will not call for the classical advisory panel to be convened. The possibility of making this decision respects the local council as a ministering body that has a significant contribution to make at the very beginning of this process. It assumes that the local council is seriously interested in a just resolution that is fair to all parties involved. However, such involvement does open the council to the criticism of being an "old boys network that protects its own." Thus, what happens at the initiation of the advisory-panel process must be spelled out in more precise detail.

Recommendation 7:

That guideline II, B, 2, b be revised as follows:

> (See Footnote 4, a for important information.) As soon as possible the executive committee (or its equivalent) should meet to consult with one another. No one of those consulting may be implicated by the victim. If the information presented suggests a reasonable suspicion that abuse has occurred, the executive committee should notify the classical abuse-response team to convene an advisory panel (composed of members of the classical abuse-response team) regarding the allegation. The advisory panel should be convened as soon as possible.

Recommendation 8:

That the following heading be added as II, B, 2, c:

> c. Procedure to be followed when members of the executive committee judge an allegation to be insubstantial

Recommendation 9:

That the following be added as guideline II, B, 2, c, 1):

> If the information presented does not suggest a reasonable suspicion that abuse has occurred, two members of the executive committee should meet with the alleged victim within seven days of the executive-committee meeting to discuss its decision and to offer whatever pastoral assistance may be appropriate. They should also inform the alleged victim that this decision may be appealed to the classical abuse-response team. A summary of the executive committee's deliberations should be given in writing if requested. This summary should protect the identity of the person against whom allegations have been raised.

Recommendation 10:

That the following be added as guideline II, B, 2, c, 2):

> If the alleged victim believes that the executive committee has erred, that person or that person's representative should contact a member of the classical abuse-response team. As soon as possible, two members of the team should meet with the alleged victim to determine if the information presented suggests a reasonable suspicion that abuse has occurred. If these two members judge that no reasonable suspicion exists, they should meet with the alleged victim within seven days of their initial meeting to inform the person that the matter is closed and to offer whatever pastoral assistance may be appropriate. If these two members judge that there is

reasonable suspicion that abuse has occurred, they should meet with the executive committee of the alleged victim's council as soon as possible to discuss this matter. If the executive committee still judges that the information presented does not suggest a reasonable suspicion that abuse has occurred, the matter is closed. If the executive committee believes that there is a reasonable suspicion that abuse has occurred, it should notify the classical abuse-response team to convene an advisory panel (composed of members of the classical abuse-response team) regarding the allegation. The advisory panel should be convened as soon as possible.

Note: Recommendations 8, 9, and 10 above will provide the new material of II, B, 2, c, 1) and 2) and will necessitate renumbering the remaining guidelines.

E. The use of the worship service to make announcements regarding discipline (II, B, 2, n; II, B, 3, e, 5); II, B, 3, f, 5))

Synod 1991 extensively revised Section IV of the Church Order, the section on discipline. One of the things it did was to change what was mandated in worship services. It made optional all announcements about discipline and the reading of liturgical forms pertaining to discipline. It did so because various cultures in our denomination handle discipline differently and also because some in the Anglo culture believe it is inappropriate to use the worship service for this purpose. The supplement to Church Order Articles 78-81 states that "the liturgical forms and announcements for admonition and discipline may be used if the consistory judges that these will further the purposes of discipline and will serve the welfare of the congregation" (*Church Order and Rules for Synodical Procedure 1996*, p. 63).

The guidelines suggest that the church make announcements about discipline in the public worship service. That is apparent in II, B, 2, n: "A designee of council should inform the congregation in writing at the next scheduled worship service of the action taken at the council meeting." This is an improvement on the 1995 guidelines, which required an oral announcement in the worship service, but it still obligates churches to use the worship service for this purpose and assumes that the designee will read what is written. That is also true in II, B, 3, e, 5) and II, B, 3, f, 5), which state that "a council member should be appointed to disclose to the congregation only the facts as known at the time." Some councils simply will not reveal a heretofore confidential matter to their congregations on a Sunday morning as the congregation and visitors from the community gather to worship God. Synod ought not to adopt guidelines that call local congregations to do what the Church Order itself leaves optional. We are well aware that some will respond to this observation by saying that these are only guidelines, which the churches do not have to follow. Again, we would assert that synod adopts guidelines with the expectation that the churches follow them.

Recognizing the limitations of oral communications, we also believe that any communication of these sensitive matters must be written. A guideline that calls for written notification will serve the church well and will not prohibit the reading of such material at a worship service by councils who believe that such announcements further the purposes of discipline and serve the welfare of the congregation.

Recommendation 11:

That II, B, 2, n be revised as follows:

> When the council decides either to suspend or depose from office, it should inform the congregation in writing of this action.

Recommendation 12:

That the third sentence of II, B, 3, e, 5) be revised as follows:

> In the case of suspension, the council should notify the congregation in writing of the facts known at the time.

Recommendation 13:

That the third sentence of II, B, 3, f, 5) be revised as follows:

> In case of suspension, the council should notify the congregation in writing of the facts known at the time; the council should not convey any of the particulars relating to the alleged victim's allegations.

* * * * *

Guideline II, B, 3, c originally called for an oral announcement to the congregation. For the sake of uniformity and clarity, the words "by a designee of the consistory" should be deleted.

Recommendation 14:

That the second sentence in II, B, 3, c be revised as follows:

> Subject to the best interest of the abused child, the consistory should notify the congregation in writing of the admission of wrongdoing against a child.

G. Unnecessary meeting of the council (II, B, 2, k)

The guidelines specify that two members of the consistory meet with the accused to present the charges against that person. The person either acknowledges or denies the charges. If the person denies the charge, there is no reason to call a council meeting since the guidelines instruct the consistory to conduct a formal hearing, which may then result in the convening of the council (cf. B, 2, l). No purpose is served by involving the full council at this point.

Recommendation 15:

That beginning with the last sentence, II, B, 2, k be revised as follows (*note:* this revision incorporates the revised II, B, 2, n):

> If the accused acknowledges the allegations, the council should be convened as soon as possible to initiate appropriate steps of discipline by following the Church Order, specifically Articles 82 and 83. Both the accused and the accuser should be notified in writing of the pastoral-care and church-discipline steps taken at this meeting. When the council decides either to suspend or depose from office, it should inform the congregation in writing of this action.

Recommendation 16:

That the revised II, B, 2, n be added as the last sentence of II, B, 2, l, since B, 2, l speaks of the parties to whom council announces its decision: "When the

council decides either to suspend or depose from office, it should inform the congregation in writing of this action."

Note: If synod approves Recommendations 15 and 16, existing II, B, 2, n will no longer be necessary and should be omitted from the guidelines.

* * * * *

In our suggested revision of II, B, 2, k, we amended the Church Order reference from Articles 81-83 to Articles 82 and 83 because, although the council is involved in the work of special discipline (Articles 82 and 83), general discipline (Article 81) is the work of the consistory. The same change should be made in II, B, 2, l.

Recommendation 17:

That the Church Order reference in II, B, 2, l be changed from Articles 81-83 to Articles 82 and 83.

* * * * *

The adult guidelines are really written only for officebearers even though they are to be used for paid staff, volunteers, etc. As in the children's guidelines, it would be helpful to have a reference to removal from position or duty since suspension/deposition does not apply in every case.

Recommendation 18:

That a reference be added to the adult guidelines about removal from position or duty, since the guidelines will also be used for people who are not officebearers.

H. Admission of wrongdoing (II, B, 3, c)

Guideline II, B, 3, c in the child guidelines specifies what happens if at any point in the process the alleged abuser admits wrongdoing. It also gives guidance to the consistory in announcing this to the congregation. This guideline should also be a part of the adult guidelines.

Recommendation 19:

That the following be added to the adult guidelines:

> 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 interest of the abused, the consistory should notify the congregation in writing of the admission of wrongdoing. Such disclosure should not exceed the scope of the admission and should be factual and pastoral.

* * * * *

In addition to the materials mailed to the churches, Synod 1995 also adopted guidelines for ministerial personnel in their interpersonal relationships (*Acts of Synod 1995*, pp. 779-81). The last sentence in the introduction to those guidelines reads, "The use of Bible verses to rationalize abusive behavior compounds the abuse of authority, and, as Christians, we denounce it." Again, we believe that a strong stand against the evil of abuse can be taken in a more positive and pastoral way.

Recommendation 20:

That the last sentence in this introduction be revised as follows:

> The use of Bible verses to rationalize abusive behavior compounds the abuse of authority since there is no biblical text or principle that justifies such behavior.

III. Overture

Classis Lake Erie overtures synod to revise the Abuse Guidelines by adopting the recommendations in the analysis above.

Classis Lake Erie
George Vander Weit, stated clerk

Overture 28: Delay Final Approval of Abuse Guidelines; Appoint Study Committee to Examine Possible Conflict between Guidelines and Church Order

Classis Grand Rapids East overtures synod

A. To delay final approval of the Guidelines for Handling Abuse Allegations Against a Church Leader as provisionally approved by Synod 1996 and revised by the Pastoral Ministries Board.

B. To appoint a study committee that will examine how Church Order can be upheld and, at the same time, adjudication authority for allegations of abuse against a church leader can be given to a body other than a consistory/council (see guidelines, II, B, 1).

Grounds for A and B:

1. The present guidelines "envision the consistory/council acting as an adjudicatory body in abuse allegations." Classis questions the ability of consistory/council to stay neutral and impartial when adjudicating abuse allegations against a church leader.
2. Although there has been much in recent years to expose the sin of abuse, many people, including many consistory/council members, remain uninformed about the nature and extent of abuse. Far too often reports of abuse are received with skepticism and disbelief, even when accompanied by weighty evidence. We must continue our denominational efforts at recognition of and education about abuse; however, it is unwise to proceed with the assumption that each council member in the CRC is prepared to deal effectively and competently with abuse allegations.
3. Abuse, by its very nature, includes well-entrenched patterns of denial, secrecy, minimization, and rationalization. A person who engages in abusive behavior is a master of self-deception and seduces the target of his/her abusive behavior into a pattern of secrecy and denial as well. Therefore, abusive behavior often remains a secret. An abuser generally has years and years of practice at maintaining his/her own self-deception. The abuser also has years and years of practice ensuring that the victim of his/her abuse will keep the abuse secret. The abuser is an accomplished and convincing liar with an uncanny ability to present himself/herself as

innocent and wrongfully accused. It is unrealistic to assume that consistory/council members are prepared to withstand the danger of falling into the trap of deception and denial as habitually practiced by the abuser.

4. Church leaders garner respect and esteem in the CRC. When abuse allegations have been brought against a church leader, council/consistory members are frequently faced with an accuser who appears weak, confused, and frightened alongside a leader who is respected and supposedly trustworthy. Furthermore, many consistory/council members may have had and continue to share relationships of friendship, collegiality, and confidence with the accused. Again, this is a situation that interferes with neutral and impartial adjudication.
5. In the event that a false accusation is made against a church leader, exoneration will be more complete if persons outside council/consistory find the allegations to be unsubstantiated.

C. To make provisions in the final guidelines—and in the present guidelines for as long as they are used—for both the accused and the accuser to have trained support who will provide pastoral care and information on rights and ecclesiastical procedures.

D. To make provisions in the final guidelines—and in the present guidelines for as long as they are used—for both the accuser and the accused to receive written copies of all meeting dates and findings in each step of the process.

Ground for C and D: These measures ensure that both parties have support and guidance available until the matter is concluded. They also ensure that oral communications are not misunderstood or misinterpreted.

E. To amend the present guidelines to ensure that no consistory/council member who is a relative or friend of either the accused or the accuser be part of the adjudication process.

F. To amend the present guidelines to include a session of education for the consistory/council by a professional from outside the congregation who is trained in the nature and dynamics of abuse.

Ground for E and F: These measures will promote an atmosphere and attitude of objectivity and neutrality.

Classis Grand Rapids East
Philip R. Lucasse, stated clerk

Overture 29: Instruct the Interchurch Relations Committee to Develop a New Strategy for Ecumenical Work

Classis Grand Rapids East, noting at Synod 1996 the impasse that our ecumenical relations have reached, overtures synod to instruct the Interchurch Relations Committee to develop a new strategy for ecumenical work that will enable us to minister to and with other denominations without expecting agreement on all points before joint talks or work can be carried out.

Grounds:

1. The impasse of our present ecumenical strategy is illustrated by the Orthodox Presbyterian Church's censure of our positions and our censure of the positions of the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland. We need to change our approach from looking for areas of disagreement to looking for ways to work and witness together.
2. The 1995 and 1996 decisions on women in office have isolated us from some of our traditional ecumenical partners. However, the recognition by these synods "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. 731) enables us to live with some significant differences within our denominational fellowship and may show us a way to live with some ecumenical differences as well. Locally, congregations manage to work with neighboring congregations of different backgrounds. The same should be possible on a larger scale if a less negative strategy is used.
3. Our present approach has confined our ecumenical work largely to the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) and the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC), some members of which differ with us considerably on theology and worldview. We do not allow such differences to stop us from working together as churches that confess the same Lord. But we seem unable to be evenhanded and to work with the historic Reformed churches in the World Alliance of Reformed Churches because of theological differences, even though we share the same Lord and the common desire to serve him in public life nationally and internationally. Perhaps, as John Calvin is said to have done, we should reserve the third mark of the church (discipline) for our own denomination and use the other two marks of the church (Word and sacraments) to guide us in finding ecumenical partners.

Classis Grand Rapids East
Philip R. Lucasse, stated clerk

Overture 30: Establish Clear Mandate for Any Board or Agency to Control Canadian Ministry

Classis Niagara overtures synod to establish, prior to making any final decision regarding the report of the Committee to Study Structure for Ministry in Canada, a clear mandate for any proposed board or agency to control Canadian ministry in order to ensure that such mandate

A. Is in keeping with the established vision and direction of the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

B. Meets the requirements of a substantial portion of the general membership of the Christian Reformed Church in Canada.

C. Embraces the Christian Reformed tradition of separating the activities of the church as a body from certain activities of its members as individuals. (Such member activities include, but are not limited to, the operation of Christian

schools, the establishment of Christian social-action groups, and Christian involvement in politics.)

D. Does not include the interaction with governments.

Grounds:

1. To promote unity, it is imperative that any new organization or board be given a clear mandate. No proposed board of the CRCNA should be allowed to establish its own mandate. Simply to assume continuance of the mandate of the existing Council of the Christian Reformed Churches in Canada would also cause serious misunderstanding because the CCRCC is not an official board of the CRCNA and exists for a different purpose.
2. There is significant concern in our congregations about recent activities of the CCRCC and/or some of its committees. We believe many other Canadians share this concern.
3. One of the strengths of the CRC has always been that it has focused primarily on meeting the spiritual needs of its members. It has been well demonstrated that spirit-filled members of the CRC have a significant impact in the world around them without "official" church action.
4. The report of the Committee to Study Structure for Ministry in Canada proposes a structure to carry on the current activities of the existing CCRCC. However, the CCRCC is a voluntary organization without ecclesiastical authority and without direct accountability to the CRCNA. We do not believe that all of its current activities are appropriate for an official organization or board of the CRCNA.
5. There is no proven basis for the statement "In the Canadian context the CRC needs to address and/or be involved in . . . interaction with governments" (Report of Committee to Study Structure for Ministry in Canada, III, A, 2, a). This goal, stated in the report of the committee, is, we believe, within the existing mandate of the CCRCC. However, the tradition of the CRCNA demonstrates exactly the opposite.
6. We are convinced that the CRC in Canada must focus on the spiritual care of its members and its mission of faith and mercy to others. Christian action in other forums should be undertaken by concerned Christians not under the umbrella of the "official" church.

Classis Niagara
John Te Brake, stated clerk

Overture 31: Table Recommendations from the Committee to Study Structure for Ministry in Canada

Classis British Columbia North-West overtures synod to

A. Table the recommendation from the Committee to Study Structure for Ministry in Canada to adopt the proposed structure for Canadian ministries until the Committee to Study Structure for Ministry in the U.S. gives its report.

Grounds:

1. Adoption of the report would be premature. The report proposes reorganization of ministry structure in ways that need further clarification concerning their impact on denominational boards, agencies, and churches in Canada and the U.S.
2. The two parallel structure studies need to be considered together to ensure unity in our ministries.

B. Instruct the Committee to Study Structure for Ministry in Canada during this interim period to give more clarity to the details of its report, giving special attention to the effectiveness of the present ministry conducted through the Council of the Christian Reformed Churches in Canada and the impact of the proposed restructuring on localized ministries.

Grounds:

1. The churches need a clearer picture of the implications of restructuring on their ministries before they determine their degree of support.
2. The denomination needs this information to evaluate the implications of restructuring on existing ministries.

Classis British Columbia North-West
Peter Brouwer, stated clerk

Overture 32: Reject the Proposed Structure for Canadian Ministries and Authorize a Review of All CCRCC Ministries

In response to the report entitled "CRC Canadian Ministries: A Proposal for Restructuring," written by the Committee to Study Structure for Ministry in Canada (Phase III), Classis British Columbia North-West overtures synod to adopt the following recommendations:

A. That since it has already completed the creation of a legal entity for the Christian Reformed Church in Canada (CRC-Canada) in order to satisfy all the legal requirements of Revenue Canada, synod not adopt the structure for Canadian ministries as proposed in the report entitled "CRC Canadian Ministries: A Proposal for Restructuring," written by the Committee to Study Structure for Ministry in Canada (Phase III).

B. That synod authorize a thorough review of all current ministries of the Council of the Christian Reformed Churches in Canada (CCRCC) to determine whether they are effective and whether they represent the express intent of the CRC-Canada in terms of resource allocation.

Grounds:

1. Two separate and distinct issues

   While the legal and ministry issues facing the CRC-Canada are related in that they both affect the Canadian churches, they are separate and distinct issues for the entire denomination. The issue of creating a separate legal entity for the CRC-Canada is driven by the government of Canada and can be avoided neither in intent (i.e., we have no choice in the matter) nor content (i.e., the shape of the legal entity is determined by the laws of government, not the intent of the churches). However, the

issue of creating a distinct CRC-Canada ministry structure is determined by the direction of the denomination and can be shaped any way the denomination chooses. These two distinct issues must be dealt with separately, something the report of the committee fails to do.

2. Unresolved matters

By its own admission, the proposed structure is only a "foundation upon which further building needs to be done" (Section I). While it is granted that this "further building" depends in part on the findings of the U.S. structure committee, some of it should already have been done by the present committee. For example, the report states, "We have not done a position-by-position assessment at this time, but no doubt the Canadian Ministries Board and the Canadian ministries director will need to look at some reallocation of responsibilities" (III, F, 9). There are too many issues left to be dealt with before the full scope of the proposed restructuring can be truly appreciated.

3. Due authority

The report takes for granted that "the ministries of the CCRCC be integrated into the existing ministries of the CRC" (II, A). Rationale for this assumption is never made clear in the report. Are the ministries of the CCRCC reflective of the entire denomination, or do they lead it on a new and perhaps unwelcome path? For example, the CCRCC Committee for Contact with the Government has in the past spoken for the CRC-Canada when authority had not been granted it to the extent that the committee assumed. Also, the report recommends that the person in the new position of Canadian ministries director will become "the spokesperson for the CRC in Canada" in "addressing the social and political issues of Canadian society" (III, F, 1, b, 2)). The report also suggests that "the Canadian Ministries Board will have increasing authority" (III, C, 1). Both the wisdom and effectiveness of a single spokesperson and a board with greater authority for a constituency as diverse as the CRC-Canada is questionable. Besides, the Christian Reformed Church in the United States (CRC-U.S.A.) has no such counterpart, neither in a single person nor in a specifically designated standing committee, to speak on American social and political issues for the U.S. churches.

4. Unnecessary bureaucracy

A growing and undeniable trend among our churches is to invest scarce resources more heavily in local ministries, often, sadly, at the expense of denominational and classical ministries. Yet the committee's restructuring proposes an increase in bureaucracy that makes further demands on the resources of the local churches. While the proposal professes that "Our overall goal is a lean administrative structure" (III, F, 6), the report suggests the opposite. For example, it proposes that every classis add yet another standing committee: the classical ministries committee. By its own admission the report states that the bureaucracy may be too demanding on its own new board. The report suggests that, if the new structure is to function effectively, the members of the new Canadian Ministries Board "will also serve as members of the standing ministries committees" as well as "serve on [the new] classical ministry committees of their respective classes." Yet the report concedes that "such

service may be too demanding of the Canadian Ministry Board members, who are, after all, volunteers" (III, C, 2, b).

5. Financial burdens

While the report makes an effort to present a financial picture that will not place additional burdens on the local churches' finances, it at the same time indicates that the present level of funding might not be sufficient. For example, the report states, "The committee has had as one of its goals to spend approximately the same amount as is currently being spent on governance so that the funds contributed directly enhance the ministry of the church" (III, K, 2). Yet in the same paragraph it transfers additional financial burden onto the whole denomination, which will be asked to fund the new Canadian Ministries Board as well as the new position of Canadian ministries director. Furthermore, it anticipates "a small increase in ministry share" (II, H, 4).

6. Unity of the church

The concerns regarding a greater separation of our churches along national lines as expressed by Synods 1957, 1959, and 1965 (see Appendix 4) still ring true. The proposed restructuring, in the words of the overture of Calvin CRC, Dundas, Ontario, in 1965, "may well jeopardize the unity of our denomination" (Appendix 4, pp. 414-19). This concern persists, and the report does nothing to dispel it. As a generalization, it is fair to say that the CRC-U.S.A. tends to be more evangelical and the CRC-Canada tends to be more socially conscious. We need each other lest we polarize our ministries along national lines.

7. Sidestepping synod

Synod recently decided against regional synods. This report appears to attempt to sidestep synod's decision by creating, in effect, a Canadian regional synod but calling it by a different name.

8. Mission of the church

Regarding the essential mission of the church, the report laudably states that the CRC "is called to find the lost and nurture the found" (amen and amen!). The report adds, "Our great desire is to increase the effectiveness of this mission at the local and national level" (III, A, 1). Yet the report does the opposite by increasing bureaucracy that requires additional resources to be drawn away from the local churches, where calling the lost and nurturing the found happens.

9. Cumbersome classical administration

A particular concern arises out of the proposed classical administration. The new classical ministries committees are to coordinate, collaborate, plan, report, and develop new and existing ministry initiatives with "outreach ministries" such as Home Missions, Native Ministries, Chaplaincy, the Electronic Media Committee, etc. However, these ministries are too diverse, and the resources are too little—even as proposed in the report—to do this coordinating and collaborating work effectively. Besides, the need for this is questionable, particularly since, for example, Home Missions is currently functioning very well as it is through its regional home missionaries.

10. Lack of sufficient accountability

The report proposes a "Triennial Conference in Canada for the purpose of developing vision and strategy for ministry in Canada"

(III, C, 1, a; see also Appendix 1, Section III). A triennial conference lacks sufficient accountability to adequately direct and represent the CRC-Canada.

11. Needless overlap for new staff

In addition to a Canadian ministries director (at a cost of $100,000 [III, K. 2, c]), the report proposes three new regional ministry developers (also at a cost of $100,000 each [III, K, 2, e]). These costly positions are entirely new. The report neglects to mention the effectiveness of the regional home missionaries in helping local churches—both new churches and established churches—fulfill their mission in calling the lost and nurturing the found.

Classis British Columbia North-West
Peter Brouwer, stated clerk

Overture 33: Instruct U.S. Ministers' Pension-Fund Committee to Provide Options of a "Defined-Benefit" or a "Defined-Contribution" Plan

I. Background

The Christian Reformed denomination offers two separate pension plans. One is a "defined-benefit" plan, which covers ministers. Under the defined-benefit plan a minister is entitled to a certain pension established by synod and based on years of service times 1.1 percent of average salary at the time of a minister's retirement. The minister has no clearly assigned equity in the fund. If a minister dies before his/her spouse, the spouse receives 80 percent of the pension until the spouse dies or remarries. The principal generating the pension remains with the denomination.

The second plan offered is provided for nonministerial denominational employees. This is a "defined-contribution" plan. Under this plan certain "contributions" are made to a fund and set aside in the name of the employee. Upon retirement the employee receives the total of these assets or has the option of designating the interest on this total as his/her pension income. The defined-contribution plan over the years has proven to be much more beneficial to its participants than the defined-benefit plan has been to its participants.

A comparison of specific costs and benefits for the two types of plans will demonstrate the point. Presently, for the Ministers' Pension Fund, $3,040 per participating minister is being budgeted annually to cover ministers' retirement benefits, disability benefits, and administrative costs. Upon retirement after thirty-five years of service, a minister is currently eligible to receive $11,073.37 per year—a specifically defined *benefit*.

However, if only $2,400 per year—a specifically defined *contribution*—had been set aside each year for thirty-five years in the name of this same minister and conservatively invested at 5 percent, it would amount of $240,846 by the time of the minister's retirement. The same amount invested at 6 percent for thirty-five years would amount to $301,937.

If a minister received $240,846 in a lump sum at retirement and invested it at 5 percent, it would yield an annual income of $12,042; at 6 percent it would yield an annual income of $14,450. If a minister received $301,937 in a lump sum at

retirement and invested it at 6 percent, it would generate an annual yield of $18,116. Since the accumulated assets of the plan would have become the minister's responsibility upon his/her retirement, if the minister died, the spouse would inherit the principal (unless otherwise designated) and continue to receive the same annual amount as the minister had been receiving.

It should be noted that these are very conservative figures. Currently an interest rate of 7.5 percent is assumed for the Canadian plan and 8.0 percent for the U.S. plan. The total portfolio performance for the past five years has averaged 11.8 percent for the Canadian plan and 13.2 percent for the U.S. plan (*Agenda for Synod 1996*, p. 172).

II. Overture

Classis Illiana overtures synod to instruct the denominational U.S. ministers' pension-fund committee to give all members of the plan the option of choosing either a defined-benefit or a defined-contribution plan. (This overture is addressed to the U.S. plan, but it can also be addressed to the Canadian plan if synod so desires.)

Grounds:

A. A defined-contribution plan would allow ministers to build up equity. What is collected would belong to the participants and not to the denomination.

B. A defined-contribution plan would give participants some control over the investment of funds that are received on their behalf. Under such a plan participants can hope to receive more information about investment objectives, equity in the plan, and allowable benefits than they do in the existing defined-benefit plan.

C. Studies have shown that returns are substantially more for participants in a defined-contribution plan than for those in a defined-benefit plan. The difference in the risk factor between a defined-benefit plan and a conservatively invested defined-contribution plan is negligible.

D. A defined-contribution plan would more adequately provide for widows, widowers, and children. In the current ministers' plan, benefits are cut by 20 percent upon the death of the retired pastor. If the spouse remarries, all benefits are cut off. In a defined-contribution plan, benefits would remain the same for surviving spouses as they were for the original participant, and equity in the plan would become part of the estate upon the death of the beneficiary. Currently these assets remain with the denomination. Heirs received nothing.

E. Actuarially, the current ministers' plan is 99 percent fully funded. Therefore, moving to a defined-contribution plan could be easily accomplished without reduction of benefits to current retirees.

F. The denomination already offers a defined-contribution plan to nonministerial denominational employees.

G. For the same contributions and the same number of years of service, a nonministerial denominational employee is far better off financially upon retirement than a pastor is. Changing to or offering the option of a defined-contribution plan for ministers would correct this obvious inequity.

Classis Illiana
Laryn G. Zoerhof, stated clerk

Overture 34: Instruct Pension Committees to Modify Guideline re Reimbursement for Final Moving Expense

I. Background

The policy for moving allowances for retired ministers and ministers' widows has been in place since 1957. It was clarified in 1989. On September 23, 1995, the joint committee of the U.S. Board of Pensions and Insurance and the Canadian Board of Trustees of Pensions and Insurance approved a policy statement regarding reimbursement for moving expenses. The statement concludes, "The move that will be reimbursed must clearly be tied to the final move of a minister from a church in which that minister had been serving up to retirement. Discretionary moves unrelated to retirement from service to a local congregation are not eligible for reimbursement."

This policy resulted in denial of reimbursement to Pastor Jan Friend and Pastor Harold De Jong for their final moves upon retirement.

II. Overture

Classis Pacific Northwest overtures synod to instruct the joint committee for pensions and insurance to modify their guidelines to include reimbursement for the final moving costs of chaplains.

Grounds:

A. Chaplains are ministers in regular standing in the CRC; the policy as it is amounts to a double standard.
B. Chaplaincy Ministries pays the pension contribution on behalf of the chaplains. The statement of September 23, 1995, seems particularly unfair to military chaplains.
C. Chaplaincy Ministries, unlike some other agencies, does not provide a moving allowance.
D. Chaplains, like many congregational pastors, are often called to minister at a distance from their preferred retirement locations.
E. In the past, Chaplaincy Ministries has paid for moving costs.

Classis Pacific Northwest
Gordon Terpstra, stated clerk

Overture 35: Instruct Pension-Fund Trustees to Factor in Permitted Ministry-Share Reductions for Smaller Churches

Classis Northcentral Iowa overtures synod to determine that, when the amount of the billing for the ministers' pension funds is established, the pension-fund trustees factor in the ministry-share reduction permitted to smaller churches according to the formula established by Synod 1987.

Grounds:

1. Smaller churches need a significant reduction in ministry-share expectations and ministers' pension-funds assessments in order to maintain viable local ministries and thus to move toward maturity, numerical growth, and financial independence.

2. A reduction in assessments conforms with previous conclusions of synod, which read, "A thirty-family congregation is able to pay approximately 50 percent of the salary of the minister and contribute to quotas [ministry shares]" (*Acts of Synod 1971*, p. 23; *Acts of Synod 1987*, p. 560).

Classis Northcentral Iowa
David Zylstra, stated clerk

APPEALS

Personal Appeals

1. Rev. Clarence A. Reyneveld

COMMUNICATIONS

Communication 1: Classis Zeeland

This communication from Classis Zeeland regards the request of Pine Creek Christian Reformed Church (Holland) to transfer from Classis Holland to Classis Zeeland. At its January 15, 1997, meeting Classis Zeeland adopted the following motion:

> That Classis Zeeland is willing to accede to the request of Pine Creek CRC to become part of Classis Zeeland, pending the approval of synod.

Classis Zeeland
Steven R. Sytsma, stated clerk

Communication 2: Interim Committee of the Council of the Christian Reformed Churches in Canada

To: Synod 1997 of the Christian Reformed Church in North America

Dear Delegates:

Last November 11 and 12 the Council of the Christian Reformed Churches in Canada, in special session, carried this motion unanimously:

> The CCRCC, having received and discussed the report of the Committee to Study Structure for Ministry in Canada (Phase III), endorses the recommendations of this committee and thanks synod for having appointed this committee to serve Council with advice.

It was further decided

> to inform synod that upon adoption by synod of the recommendations of the Committee to Study Structure for Ministry in Canada (Phase III) there will no longer be a separate Council of the CRCs in Canada. The ministries of Council will remain and find their place in the new structure.

The study committee offered five recommendations for the transition of the current ministries of the Council of the Christian Reformed Churches in Canada. These were also agreed to. They can be found in the report of the synodical Committee on Structure, Section III, J, and on pages 7 (Art. 21L) and 32 of the *Acts of Council 1996*.

These decisions are the result of thorough discussions. They embody a compromise of diverse aspirations for the structuring of ministries of the CRC in the Canadian context. They also translate the vision and basic values synod enthusiastically endorsed last year.

The level of interest and agreement that has been generated, the amount of energy consumed in arriving at consensus, and the awareness that the best of plans are perfected by working them out—these all suggest that it is prudent for Synod 1997 to implement the unaltered recommendations as soon as possible.

The CCRCC Interim Committee therefore urges Synod 1997 to adopt the full proposal and pledges its support in implementing all the recommendations of the Committee to Study Structure for Ministry in Canada.

For the Interim Committee of the CCRCC
Rev. Fred Heslinga,
Interim Committee secretary

Communication 3: Council of the Christian Reformed Churches in Canada

I. Introduction

Canada celebrated its centennial in 1967. In that year the postwar immigrant Christian Reformed churches raised their own milestone: after twenty years of classical and interclassical reflection on their place in this vast and multicultural land, they worked out a modest plan for translating their vision for being Christian Reformed Church in the public arena.

The previous synod had agreed to the following Agreement of Cooperation for the ten and a half classes:

> 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 present report builds on the introduction given to synod last year in Communication 4. It covers only the work of the Council of the Christian Reformed Churches in Canada (CCRCC) since Synod 1996 and the work of its seven standing committees and representatives. It omits the thirty years of development of public witness and necessary structure leading up to the present. The applications reported provide the rationale for valuing this exciting story. The only vehicle that could make it happen was the all-Canada Christian Reformed Council. In the words of Synod 1967, "... its jurisdiction and authority was limited to those ecclesiastical matters which are of common concern to the member classes and which cannot be dealt with equally well either by the local churches or the synod."

II. Work with other churches—the Interchurch Relations Committee

A. The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada

The past year was important for members of the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC). EFC has once again provided significant bridging functions for its twenty-eight member denominations. It brought together eight hundred

"world shapers" in a four-day inspirational convention designed to encourage and focus church leaders in their leadership in ministries. Most of the fifty Christian Reformed participants met in caucus afterward to share what they had learned.

EFC has also opened an office in our nation's capital. Its director will use his thorough training in Reformed worldview to assist churches and Christian members of Parliament in the design of appropriate scriptural witness.

To its standing commissions on family, on women in the church, on social action, on education, and on evangelization in Canada, the EFC has now added a Task Force for Global Mission. Before Synod 1997 meets, EFC will host the World Evangelical Fellowship's quadrennial meeting in Abbotsford, British Columbia. The new task force will avail itself of the presence of world leaders in Christian missions. It will sponsor "Canadian Churches Reshaping Global Missions for the Twenty-First Century."

My own tasks in EFC were three: to bring the Reformed worldview and positions to bear on EFC's work, to help select its second president, and to refer its activities to our own leaders in each of the subject areas.

B. The Canadian Council of Churches (CCC)

For the Canadian Council of Churches (CCC) 1996 was also significant. The CCC arrived at an interchurch agreement on its cooperative functions. Clearly detailed, the agreement retrofits the CCC into a forum for the Orthodox and mainline churches to identify agenda and develop positions. It also provides for abstention, smaller-group action, and parallel denominational action. (A Baptist convention, the Salvation Army, and the CCRCC participate in both Canadian interchurch organizations.)

In a modest way the forum model was tested by its Faith and Witness Commission. Faith and Witness released a brief Statement of Convergence against Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide. It also has collected from member churches summary chapters for a book about the theology and practice of marriage current in member churches. When our synod starts a resource library, this book will provide a useful addition.

A review of the biblical witness of the churches to justice in Canada in the last quarter century left participants both humbled and hopeful. Values identified may explain the reason more than any measured accomplishment. These include the personal and organizational strength we bring to human-rights work from our various constituencies and church structures, the continuing need to build and strengthen church constituency, and long-standing, respected international work of churches and coalitions.

Two task groups made little progress this year—the semiannual interfaith discussion group between Christians and Jews and the task group for discussions between Christians and Muslims. History, current standoffs in the cradle of Christianity, and the smallness of Christian presence in Asia and northern Africa may help to explain why.

The CCC is now collating responses to a six-part study on gospel and cultures in member denominations. The findings will constitute part of the agenda at the triennial assembly of the Canadian Council of Churches in Ottawa on the eve of our own synod.

Unique to this year was the application for full membership by the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCB). Representing the French and English

halves of the Roman Catholic Church, the CCCB had been an associate member for thirteen years. The CCCB had been particularly warm in its denominational response to our own application for membership early in 1996. The bishops recognize our creedal integrity as we have applied it in discussion and action. They have joined other member churches in expressions of respect and trust toward us. The June triennial assembly will register that in its own way.

III. Work with aboriginal peoples in Canada (CCRCC's Committee for Ministry with Indian and Metis People in Canada)

In quarterly reports the directors of our three urban ministry centers convey the pain and progress of healing and community building. Particularly challenging is the development of Christian leadership and community. Both do happen, but growth is often marked by setbacks. Our directors, native staff, and volunteers struggle against powerful odds. For instance, the breakup of families by the forced placement of children in off-reservation boarding schools has strained the relationship of many present native leaders with the culturally foreign churches. Discovery of long-suppressed verbal and sexual abuse further divides communities and confuses converts. Churches are on trial.

But daily ministries of worship, Bible study, prayer, counseling, referral, and group programs for all ages draw growing members into our safe shelters, where Christian compassion is served with coffee, soup, and bannock.

As part of their healing, native communities are asking our supporting churches to consider them as partners in the gospel, in effect, to recognize what gifts God gave them to share with our churches. In April a workshop will help the Committee for Ministry with Indian and Metis People to define the meaning and implications of its work and mandate. In the fall the committee hopes to participate in the first CRC interagency forum on cross-cultural ministries.

Six years ago our Progressive Conservative government put to work the Royal Commission on Aboriginal People. The current Liberal government received its most thorough, comprehensive, and compelling report last October. Three months later the government has not yet permitted parliamentary debate on its conclusions and recommendations. As part of the recommended approach to cultural recognition and reconciliation, the Assembly of First Nations has asked the churches to do a concerted program of education among their own memberships. The basic values to be conveyed are that native people were historically self-sufficient and should not be forced into cultural assimilation; that they need land and other resources for recovery; and that once they recover, they can be self-sufficient in governance, education, health, and the administration of justice. The interchurch Aboriginal Rights Coalition is preparing an educational kit for use or adaptation by the churches. The CCRCC's own Committee for Racial Reconciliation in Canada has prepared an educational kit for youth groups on the wider issues of racism.

IV. Witnessing to peace with justice

A. CCRCC Committee for Contact with the Government

This long-standing committee has worked hard to produce a paper on a biblical understanding about the family as normative in our day. A subcommittee will attempt to draw out implications for public-policy advocacy. This effort is timely because federal and provincial governments have curbed family and

child support as well as health and educational services in a hard drive to reverse their deficit spending.

In the context of family the committee may also produce a summary booklet for churches about its work until now on the place of homosexual persons in family, church, and society. A summary on euthanasia and a subsequent paper on assisted suicide may be released for church responses this fall. However, these projects may not be complete in time for preparing a brief if the government accelerates its legislative action on end-of-life issues.

In August 1996 the committee appealed against the plan of the government of Ontario to introduce video lottery terminals. The same brief was used in antigambling actions in British Columbia and Alberta. Early in March the Province of Ontario declared its intent to license up to forty-four casinos and twenty thousand video lottery terminals. This information was accompanied by the announcement that the contracting government anticipates returns of 70 percent into tax coffers.

In response to this flagrant exploitation, the Committee for Contact with the Government mailed the brief and other helps to every congregation and social-justice contact in Ontario. The hope is that many municipalities will be persuaded against licensing such installations in their own jurisdictions.

B. Interchurch task forces

In all, twelve coalitions focus on various justice issues. The CCRCC is a participant in four of them. It has observer status in two others and cooperates also in specific, time-limited working groups. Council's Consultative Committee for Task Forces oversees the work of our representatives on the working groups.

The Committee for Refugees has disseminated a ten-action kit to help churches respond to the needs of the world's uprooted people. The CCRCC and CRWRC have entered into a renewed contract with the government for the sponsorship of refugees.

The Interchurch Committee for Human Rights in Latin American continues to relay stories of the oppression and the release of Christians and stories of their working communities in Latin America. Emphasis has been on Mexico, Peru, Columbia, and Central America. The Task Force on the Church and Corporate Responsibility helps multinational corporations develop codes for guiding their resource exploration and other business in ways more sensitive to the people and their surroundings than the profit motive would require.

In quite another sphere of justice we have limited participation in the Church Council on Justice and Corrections. Based in solid scriptural research and current practice, this coalition suggests sentencing alternatives to incarceration.

We also monitor court cases and the government movements toward taxation of churches and parsonage properties. We protest the inequitable regulations now governing education taxes and the suppression of religious education at all levels of education, especially in Ontario. Finally, Council has done some cooperative work against violence on television, against violence against women, and against child abuse.

Our Electronic Media Committee will coproduce a television special with Disability Concerns on stress a Christian family experiences because of an emotionally challenged child. EMC has also assisted The Back to God Hour in the production of special television segments. At this writing a Christian producer is challenging our Reformed community to produce a series of round-

table discussions on public issues that are important for us. And this happens on the heels of EMC's consultations with our own "Faith 20" producers, The Back to God Hour.

We hope that all who read this report will conclude with us that the witness given by the CCRCC demonstrates the same relevance and integrity seen in all the other ministries of the churches, locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally.

The work of the CCRCC is dependent on dozens of volunteers who share a deep commitment to Christ and loyalty to the vision of the CRC. We pray that Synod 1997 will encourage them in this small piece of church work and implement the model for structuring ministries in Canada.

Council of the Christian Reformed Churches in Canada
Arie G. Van Eek, executive secretary

Communication 4: Classis Lake Erie

Dear fellow believers in Christ Jesus:

Whenever the ministry of one of our member congregations leads it to make a decision that raises concern about the Church Order, that congregation, out of respect for the covenant that unites us as a group of churches in classis, makes that known to us. As congregations who value our denominational covenant, our classis has done the same with synod. We communicate with synod now because we have taken action that has a bearing on the Church Order.

In May 1994 our classis held a special meeting to discuss the creation of a "comprehensive classical vision and mission strategy statement." We addressed the need for "a ministry vision that is owned by all the congregations and which affects all [classical] activities . . .," the need for "balance between the resources that are expended on the local, classical and denominational level . . .," and the need for renewal of the "vision of . . . communicating the good news to all people . . . ." Since this meeting would address the entire ministry of our classis, each council was asked to delegate a pastor, an elder, and a deacon.

This meeting was significant for two reasons. First, it began a planning process that culminated in the adoption of a strategic plan at our October 1996 meeting. Second, the participation of our deacons in this special meeting convinced many that comprehensive ministry cannot be planned or executed well if one of the three offices in each council has no official input or involvement in the decisions made. This realization generated discussions in three successive classis meetings that culminated in a decision at our March 1996 meeting to request each council to delegate a pastor, an elder, and a deacon to all classis meetings. Providentially, this began in October 1996, so our deacons not only were represented on our strategic-planning task force but also were part of the discussion at the classis meeting at which our strategic plan was adopted. We are excited about the new phase of ministry we have entered and anticipate more unified and comprehensive ministry as representatives of the Lord Jesus.

We realize that there have been unsuccessful attempts to modify Church Order Article 40-a to require every council in every classis to delegate a deacon. Though we believe the delegation of deacons will be beneficial for the ministry

of our classis, we are not requesting a change in the Church Order to require this of all classes. We also realize that in 1978, when a classis did receive deacon delegates, one of its member churches successfully appealed to synod to prohibit such an arrangement, believing it to be a violation of the Church Order. We do not anticipate that any appeals will come from councils in our classis since all our councils believe that the delegation of deacons is a critical piece in our classical strategic ministry plan.

Because we wish to make sure that this new arrangement enhances our ministry, we have scheduled a specific review of it at the end of two years. At that time we will make any necessary adjustments and reformulations. We write now to assure synod that the delegation of deacons to our classis is not an attempt to change Church Order but to minister more comprehensively to our communities in the name of our Savior. Please pray for us as we work to achieve that goal.

Classis Lake Erie
George Vander Weit, stated clerk

Communication 5: Classis Muskegon

This communication from Classis Muskegon regards the request of Trinity Christian Reformed Church (Mount Pleasant, Michigan) to transfer from Classis Northern Michigan to Classis Muskegon. At its March 6, 1997, meeting Classis Muskegon adopted the following motion:

> That Classis Muskegon endorse the overture of Classis Northern Michigan requesting approval of the move of Trinity Christian Reformed Church, Mount Pleasant, Michigan, to Classis Muskegon.

Classis Muskegon
Douglas J. Van Essen, stated clerk

Communication 6: Council of First CRC, Montreal, Quebec

As Christian brothers and sisters in ministry, we commend the Committee to Study Structure for Ministry in Canada on its work and on the time spent preparing its report and carrying out its worthy project. As servants of Jesus Christ who seek to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit, we can see the need for change at certain times in order to do our ministry more effectively. Please do appreciate the fact that we are convinced the motivation for this idea is well grounded and admirable.

Yet the council of First Christian Reformed Church of Montreal takes the position that it cannot endorse the report on restructuring in its present form. In our opinion, the foundation for approving this restructuring concept has not yet been properly laid, and there remains a need for more dialogue with the local churches before the restructuring should be implemented. This report is too vague, and it lacks the detail for councils and consistories to understand properly what is being proposed.

Let us cite two examples to emphasize what we mean. First, in Section III, F, 1, a, the proposed changes to International Ministries are not spelled out. Perhaps

the information is known and recognized, but we do not *see* it. Second, the financial ramifications of the changes are unclear, and it is not obvious which positions will be created or eliminated. In light of this confusion and uncertainty, we recommend that the committee back up a few steps in order to make more clear and obvious what is being developed in this report and what the implications are of putting these recommendations into effect.

Due to the fact that council and consistory members serve for only three years, the consultation process has not served to get them up to speed to approve such a radical change in how the CRC governs its ministries in Canada. Actually, to have arrived at the point of restructuring without an informed general awareness of exactly what that restructuring will mean violates the first principle upon which the restructuring is being recommended, namely, that "the connection between the local church and the ministry of the agencies needs to be enhanced so that there is a greater sense of local ownership" (p. 376). We ask synod to delay approval until further clarification and consultation have taken place.

Finally, as a council we strongly recommend that a term limit of four years be established for the position of the Canadian ministries director (CMD), with the possibility of reappointment for four years.

Grounds:

1. A defined term of appointment is a normal operating procedure for any organization.
2. A term limit would help the CMD formulate a constructive mandate and would provide the church (through its synod) with the opportunity to measure his effectiveness and to exercise the necessary oversight for the position.
3. A term limit would help keep the person in this position focused and therefore would increase his/her effectiveness.

Council of First CRC, Montreal, QB
John Jellema, clerk

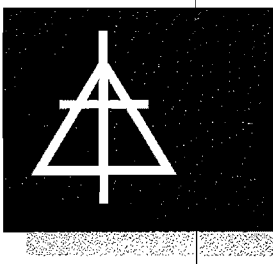
Communication 7: Classis Yellowstone

Classis Yellowstone communicates to synod its support of the report of the Committee to Study Inclusive Language for God.

Classis Yellowstone
J. William Van Der Heide, stated clerk

CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA

ACTS OF SYNOD



1997

Christian Reformed Church in North America

ACTS OF SYNOD

June 14-20, 1997
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FOREWORD

Acts of Synod 1997 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 1997* or adopted on the floor of synod
- Financial reports
- The minutes of Synod 1997
- An index

It will be necessary for the user of the *Acts of Synod 1997* to keep the *Agenda for Synod 1997* at hand for ready reference. The *Agenda* is not reprinted in the *Acts*. The pagination continues from the *Agenda* to the *Acts*. Supplementary materials begin on page 497, following preliminary unnumbered pages. Financial reports begin on page 569. Minutes of synod follow, beginning on page 583. The index references both volumes; the numbers in boldface type refer to pages in the minutes of Synod 1997.

The various sections of the *Acts of Synod*, including the minutes of synod, are identified with black bars on page edges, which help to locate and identify the sections.

May all who read the reports of the ministries and study committees and the minutes of Synod 1997 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

Board	Classis	Member	Alternate	Term
Synodical Deputy	Atlantic NE		Rev. J. Vande Lune	
Home Missions	Alberta South		Rev. C. Pool	
	Iakota		Rev. C.J. De Ridder	
World Missions	Central California		Rev. P.V. De Jonge	
	Iakota		Dr. W.H. Lammers	
	Pacific Hanmi		Rev. D.W. Yang	2000
CRWRC	Pacific Hanmi		Rev. J. Hyun	2000

II. Board of Trustees membership

Trustees whose terms expire in 1997:

District	Member	Alternate
Central U.S. I	Mr. William Weidenaar	Rev. Laryn G. Zoerhof
Central U.S. II	Mr. Nelson Gritter	Dr. William R. Dahms
Central U.S. III	Mr. Howard Johnson	Dr. James Strikwerda
Western Canada	Rev. Peter Brouwer	Rev. Alvin Beukema
At-large	Dr. Carol Rottman	Mrs. Marti Minnema

Words of thanks are in order for Rev. Peter Brouwer, Mr. Howard Johnson, Dr. Carol Rottman, and Mr. William Weidenaar, who are completing their first terms of service on the Board; to Mr. Nelson Gritter, who is leaving the Board after six years; and Mr. Milton Kuyers, who is leaving after six years as an active alternate on the Program and Finance Committee and two years as a member. We recognize with gratitude the contributions these members have made and thank them for the many hours they have given to the service of Christ and his church as members of the Board.

III. Judicial Code Committee nominations

A. For the positions of Mr. Donald F. Oosterhouse and Mrs. Jean Vogelzang

Mr. James De Vries is a member of Millbrook CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan. He received a B.A. degree from Calvin College and a J.D. degree from Case Western Reserve University School of Law, Cleveland, Ohio. He practices law

at the Black and Nicewander, P.C., law firm in Jenison, Michigan. He serves as Men's Life leader at Millbrook CRC and formerly served in this capacity at West Park CRC in Cleveland, where he also served as deacon and elder and as secretary of health, abuse, and disabilities committees.

Mr. Carl Oosterhouse is a partner in the law firm of Varnum, Riddering, Schmidt & Howlett, Grand Rapids, Michigan, and serves as a member of the firm's management committee. He is a member of Mayfair CRC, where he has served as deacon. He received a B.A. degree from Calvin College and a J.D. from the University of Michigan Law School. He presently is a member of the Board of Trustees of the Grand Rapids Christian School Association, serving as its president for the past two years. He previously served on the denominational Unordained Employees' Pension Fund Committee and on the local March of Dimes board.

Mr. Perrin Rynders is a member of LaGrave Avenue CRC, Grand Rapids, where he has served as deacon. He holds a B.A. degree from Calvin College and a J.D. from the University of Michigan Law School. He is a partner in the law firm of Varnum, Riddering, Schmidt & Howlett, Grand Rapids. He serves as a board member of Pathfinder (formerly Jellema House) and for MOKA Corp. (a nonprofit organization serving handicapped individuals). Mr. Rynders also serves on the Legal Studies Advisory Board of Grand Valley State University.

Mr. Loren Veldhuizen is a member of Calvary CRC in Orange City, Iowa. He is a partner in the law firm of Klay, Veldhuizen, Bindner, De Jong & Pals in Orange City. He received a B.A. degree from Calvin College and a J.D. from the University of Iowa. He serves on the Barnabas Foundation Board and is a past member of the Calvin College, Bethany Christian Services, and Bethesda boards. He has also served as a delegate to synod and on the classical home-missions committee and abuse-response committee. He and his wife are licensed foster parents in Iowa and have cared for over forty children.

B. *For the position of Dr. Harvey Bratt*

Mrs. Jeanne Engelhard is a member of Shawnee Park CRC, Grand Rapids, where she presently serves as a deacon. She received an R.N. degree from Calvin College-Blodgett Memorial Hospital School of Nursing and a B.S.N. from University of Detroit/Mercy College and is presently enrolled in the master's program in organizational communication at Western Michigan University. She is employed as director of Critical Pathways at Blodgett Memorial Medical Center. She presently serves on the Ramoth House board and is past chair of Seymour Christian School Board.

Ms. Gayla Witte is a member of East Leonard Christian Reformed Church, Grand Rapids, Michigan. She works as a paralegal at the law firm of Mika, Myers, Beckett & Jones, Grand Rapids, Michigan. She has been a member of the Calvin Oratorio Society for sixteen years and has been active in various church activities.

The Board thanks Dr. Harvey Bratt, Mr. Donald F. Oosterhouse, and Mrs. Jean Vogelzang for their six years of service on the Judicial Code Committee.

IV. Trademarking the denominational names

As is noted in the printed *Agenda for Synod 1997*, pages 35-36, the various names of the Christian Reformed Church have been trademarked in the United States. To date we have received notice of the registration of three of the names: Christian Reformed Church, CRC, and CRCNA.

United States legal counsel informs us of the following provisions regarding the trademark:

> Now that the Mark has been registered as a service mark with the Patent and Trademark Office, any use of the Mark should be followed by the symbol "®". In addition, [the church] must defend [its] right to use the Mark against any infringement by others.

V. Ethnic advisers to synod

Synod 1996 adopted the Guidelines for Ethnic Advisers to Synod (*Acts of Synod 1996*, pp. 454-55). These have been incorporated into the Rules for Synodical Procedure.

The Board appointed the following persons to serve as ethnic advisers to Synod 1997:

Mr. Bing Goei
Mr. John Harvey
Rev. Paul S. Lam
Mr. Socheth Na
Rev. Luis Pellecer
Rev. Reginald Smith

VI. Articles of Incorporation for member churches in Canada

The Articles of Incorporation being proposed for the member churches in Canada are similar to those proposed for member churches in the United States (see *Agenda for Synod 1997*, p. 27 and Appendix 1). They have been presented to Industry Canada for review, and from that office we have received word that "your format for standard Application (Appendix A) has been approved" (from letter sent to Mr. Wietse Posthumus, Canadian legal counsel).

The following comments from Mr. Posthumus provide some explanatory background regarding incorporation in Canada:

> In Canada, corporations may be incorporated, either pursuant to Provincial legislation (e.g., *Ontario Corporations Act*) by way of Articles of Incorporation, or pursuant to Federal legislation (*Canada Corporations Act*) by way of Letters Patent. The term "Articles of Incorporation" was adopted for Ontario Corporations some time ago though the traditional term "Letters Patent" continues to apply to non-share capital corporations incorporated under the *Canada Corporations Act*. I will use the term "Articles of Incorporation" for both types of corporation.
>
> The constituting documents of corporations consist basically of (a) Letters Patent/Articles of Incorporation; (b) Operating by-law (usually By-Law No. 1); (c) other significant by-laws as may be passed or subsequently enacted. It is desirable to have the Articles of Incorporation contain the more fundamental provisions, such as the objects clause, basis and church government provisions. (Articles of Incorporation are more difficult to amend than a by-law). At the same time, because of the official government sanction of the Articles of Incorporation, there is greater concern on the part of the government agencies with the provisions contained in the Articles of Incorporation than those set out in a by-law.

Mr. Posthumus acknowledges that most churches have previously incorporated provincially rather than federally. His judgment is that "it is now considered wise to incorporate pursuant to the *Federal Corporations Act*."

Recommendation:

That synod adopt the "Application for Incorporation for a Corporation without Share Capital Under Part II of the Canada Corporations Act" (see Appendix A) as a model for Christian Reformed churches in Canada to use when incorporating.

Grounds:

A. This form is recommended by legal counsel.
B. This format has already received approval from Industry Canada.
C. This form assists our churches to comply with Church Order Article 32-d.

VII. Operating bylaw regarding property for member churches in Canada

The Board of Trustees is presenting to Synod 1997 a recommendation regarding a replacement article concerning "Property" for use in the articles of incorporation of United States congregations (see *Agenda for Synod 1997*, pp. 25-27). Canadian congregations need a similar statement for inclusion in an operating bylaw.

Recommendation:

That synod approve the wording of the bylaw regarding "Property" (see Appendix B) and recommend that it be included in the operating bylaw of Christian Reformed churches in Ontario and serve as a guideline for the operating bylaw of congregations in other provinces.

Grounds:

A. It is recommended by legal counsel.
B. It has the substantial approval of the Ontario Public Trustee's office.

VIII. Christian Reformed clergy involved in ordaining officebearers in seceding congregations

A. Background

Since Synod 1996, at least three CRC ministers have participated in ordaining officebearers in congregations which have seceded from the CRC. In none of the cases did the council supervising the CRC minister give authorization for such action. The churches and classes nearest the seceding congregation also were not contacted for permission or acquiescence in the action. No CRC council authorized the action, and the three CRC ministers participated in an official act of worship without proper supervision.

The irregularity of these actions and their divisive character have led many to question their propriety. One classis received the following communication:

> The members of the . . . Council are disturbed and confused by this action [to ordain] on the part of an ordained minister in the CRCNA and question its propriety. On the surface, it appears that
> 1. Rev. . . . has taken this action without authority to do so,
> 2. this action violates the spirit of unity and covenant within the CRCNA, and
> 3. this action demonstrates insensitivity toward our hurting brothers and sisters of the . . . CRC as well as others who grieve this division and separation.

The Board of Trustees presents the matter in this anonymous format because it thinks that synod needs to consider the issue and its ramifications, even though it has not been asked to investigate these instances as deserving of special discipline. Therefore, the names of the ministers, churches, and classes have been removed from the presentation.

In the Reformed tradition the authority of office is exercised jointly and not separately. This distinguishes Reformed polity and its view of office from the episcopal/hierarchical system, which grants priests and bishops permission/authority to act separately or individually. The authority to ordain is not held personally by an officebearer, but jointly by an assembly. Therefore, when a new candidate is ordained to the ministry, classis and synod, through its synodical deputies, authorize that act and ask one of their ministers to participate on their behalf at the ordination service. Other ministers may be present and invited to participate, but all are acting under the authority given by classis and synod.

The same is true on the local level. After officebearers are properly chosen, "the council shall proceed to ordain or install them . . . " (Church Order Art. 5). Even though the minister plays a primary role in the worship service in which the elders and deacons are ordained or installed, ordination and installation are accomplished only under the authority of the council. Ministers may not act on their own authority.

The whole church should be concerned about the misuse of office represented by these three cases and the support and furtherance of secession which this use of office encourages.

B. Recommendation

The Board of Trustees recommends that synod urge church councils to prohibit ministers under their supervision from participating in ordination services in seceding congregations.

IX. Letter to the general assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church

After considering the situation which occurred in the Doon, Iowa, Christian Reformed Church, the Board adopted and sent a letter to the general assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. The text of the letter was made available to the synodical delegates.

X. Financial matters

The Board of Trustees has completed its review of the denominational agencies' fiscal year 1996 financial reports, fiscal year 1997 revised budgets, fiscal year 1998 proposed budgets, and ministry-share requests for 1998.

The *Agenda for Synod 1997—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 developing 1998 individual agency budgets began in late 1996. The final budgets reflect the scrutiny provided by administrative evaluation, interagency consensus, and Board oversight.

The 1998 ministry-share requests are expressed in terms of professing members over 18 years of age as a result of action taken by Synod 1993. For 1998, 100 percent of the church's ministry-share determination will be based on the number of professing members over 18 years of age.

The Back to God Hour	$30.97
CRC TV	11.11
Calvin College	25.14
Calvin Theological Seminary	22.20
CRC Publications	
World Literature Ministries	2.29
Home Missions	51.05
World Missions	48.17
Pastoral Ministries	10.15
Denominational Services	16.25
Fund for Smaller Churches	7.85
Ministers' Pension Funds	0.00
	$225.18

Note: If synod does not approve funding Ministers' Pension Funds (including chaplains) totally on a participant-assessment basis, the amount of $23.24 will be added to the above amount, totaling $248.42.

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 Student Loan Fund
   - CRC Publications
     - World Literature Ministries—above-ministry-share needs
   - Home Missions—above-ministry-share needs
   - Pastoral Ministries—above-ministry-share needs
     - 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
   - World Missions—above-ministry-share needs
   - World Relief—one offering per quarter because CRWRC receives no ministry-share support

2. Denominationally Related Agency

United Calvinist Youth
   a. GEMS Girls' Clubs (formerly Calvinettes)
   b. Calvinist Cadet Corps
   c. Early Teen Ministry
   d. Youth Unlimited/Young Calvinist Federation

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
      Audio Scripture (formerly PRM International)
      Crossroad Ministries
      Faith, Prayer and Tract League
      Friendship Ministries
      Gideons International
      International Bible Society
      InterVarsity Christian Fellowship
      Lord's Day Alliance
      Metanoia Ministries
      Mission 21 India
      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 Mental Health Services

   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
      The King's University College (through the U.S. Foundation)
      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
International Bible Society
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
Institute for Christian Studies
Redeemer Reformed Christian College
Reformed Bible College
The King's University College
Trinity Christian College
Worldwide Christian Schools—Canada

D. Deletions

Institut Farel, previously accredited, has not renewed its application.

E. New organizations

No new organizations are being recommended for support this year.

F. Recommended salary ranges for 1998

The Board recommends the following salary ranges for 1998, which represent a 3 percent adjustment for the U.S. ranges and 2.5 percent for the Canadian ranges:

	Proposed U.S. 1998 Range			Proposed Canadian 1998 Range		
Level	Minimum	Midpoint	Maximum	Minimum	Midpoint	Maximum
20	$68,295	$85,369	$102,443	$87,974	$109,967	$131,961
19	$62,138	$77,671	$93,206	$76,319	$95,399	$114,479
18	$56,950	$71,187	$85,424	$66,501	$83,126	$99,752
17	$52,573	$65,717	$78,860	$58,219	$72,774	$87,329
16	$48,911	$61,138	$73,366	$51,287	$64,109	$76,930
15	$45,841	$57,302	$68,762	$45,478	$56,848	$68,217
14	$40,239	$50,298	$60,358	$40,570	$50,711	$60,853
13	$35,540	$44,425	$53,310	$36,447	$45,558	$54,670

Note: The shaded areas are not currently in use.

G. U.S. Board of Pensions and Insurance

For some years the Ministers' Pension Plan has had the provision that plan participants may withdraw from the plan and receive a lump-sum payment if the participant is under age 55. The U.S. Board of Pensions and Insurance, at its meeting on March 6, 1997, expanded that provision for plan participants age 55 and over "who are transferring their membership and ministerial credentials to another denomination or to some other church group." The Canadian Pension Trustees concurred with this amendment at its April 18, 1997, meeting. According to the plan document, "Synod has the right to amend any or all of the provisions of the plan." Synod 1997 is requested to adopt the proposed amendment as approved by the boards.

H. Pension premium for chaplains

Consistent with the proposal that ministry-share funding for ministers' pensions be changed to a "direct billing" arrangement under which each congregation is assessed $14.00 per confessing member, the Board of Trustees requests that synod also approve including the funding of chaplains' pensions in this same direct-billing formula. Presently the pension premium for chaplains is funded through the budget of Pastoral Ministries. Approximately 25 percent of the Pastoral Ministries budget is dedicated to this obligation. The Pensions and Insurance Office bills Pastoral Ministries for the premiums due, and that invoice is then paid.

The grounds advanced by the Board of Pensions and Insurance for changing the funding of ministers' pensions apply also to chaplains' pensions. The Board of Trustees has taken note of that fact and has passed a motion requesting synod to add the monies needed for chaplains' pensions to the amount per member proposed by the Board of Pensions and Insurance. This proposed change will cause an increase of two dollars ($2.00) per confessing member. If this request is approved, the $14.00 recommendation will then become $16.00. Correspondingly, if this recommendation is approved, the ministry share for Pastoral Ministries will be reduced by $2.32, to $10.15.

I. Pension computation for 1998

The Ministers' Compensation Survey 1997 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 $31,736 (U.S.) and $33,600 (Canada).

J. Special Assistance Fund

Since January 1, 1995, the previously approved ministry share for the Special Assistance Fund has been suspended, and no significant income has been deposited into this fund since that time. That decision was made by Synod 1994 upon recommendation of the Pensions and Insurance trustees because the balance in the fund was sufficient for the needs at that time. That situation has now changed, and it is necessary to supplement the fund balance because of a special need that has arisen and because it is expected that the retirement of a number of ministers in the next five years will also present a need for additional assistance. The Board of Trustees now recommends that synod reinstate the ministry share for the Special Assistance Fund in the

amount of $2.25 per professing member. This request represents an addition to the per professing member ministry-share request submitted on behalf of the ministries of the CRC if synod does not approve the direct-billing pension proposal. If synod does approve the direct-billing pension proposal, then this ministry-share request ($2.25) will be subtracted from the proposed $23.24 ministry-share reduction. The net effect if synod approves both recommendations will be a reduction of $20.99, which will bring the ministry share to $227.43 per professing member for 1998.

XI. Recommendations

A. That synod approve the Board's interim appointments (see Section I).

B. That synod express its appreciation to retiring members of the Board for their services to the church (see Section II).

C. That synod express its appreciation to retiring members of the Judicial Code Committee for their services (see Section III).

D. That synod take note of the trademarking of the denomination's names and the provisions regarding the trademark (see Section IV).

E. That synod adopt the "Application for Incorporation for a Corporation without Share Capital Under Part II of the Canada Corporations Act" (see Appendix A) as a model for Christian Reformed churches in Canada to use when incorporating (see Section VI).

Grounds:
A. This form is recommended by legal counsel.
B. This format has already received approval from Industry Canada.
C. This form assists our churches to comply with Church Order Article 32-d.

F. That synod approve the wording of the bylaw regarding "Property" (see Appendix B) and recommend that it be included in the operating bylaw of Christian Reformed churches in Ontario and serve as a guideline for the operating bylaw of congregations in other provinces (see Section VII).

Grounds:
A. It is recommended by legal counsel.
B. It has the substantial approval of the Ontario Public Trustee's office.

G. That synod urge church councils to prohibit ministers under their supervision from participating in ordination services in seceding congregations (see Section VIII).

H. That synod take note of the letter sent to the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

I. That synod approve "direct billing" rather than ministry shares as the way of funding chaplains' pensions and that synod approve the addition of $2.00 per confessing member to the amount directly billed each congregation in order to implement the change. (For 1998, each congregation's directly billed amount will be $16.00 per confessing member— $14.00 for ministers' pensions and $2.00 for chaplains' pensions.)

J. That synod approve the per professing member ministry shares as recommended for 1998 (see Section X, A).

K. That synod approve the list of denominational and denominationally related agencies recommended for one or more offerings (see Section X, B).

L. That synod approve the list of nondenominational agencies recommended for financial support but not necessarily for one or more offerings (see Section X, C).

M. That synod approve the proposed salary ranges for 1998 (see Section X, F).

N. That synod approve the proposed amendment to the Ministers' Pension Plan (see Section X, G).

O. That synod approve the final average salaries recommended for computing 1998 pension amounts in the U.S. and Canada (see Section X, H).

P. That synod approve a ministry share of $2.25 for the Special Assistance Fund (see Section X, J).

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

APPENDIX A

APPLICATION FOR INCORPORATION FOR A CORPORATION WITHOUT SHARE CAPITAL UNDER PART II OF THE CANADA CORPORATIONS ACT

To the Minister of Industry Canada

I.

The undersigned hereby apply to the Ministry of Industry, Science and Technology for the grant of a Charter of Letters Patent under the provisions of Part II of the Canada Corporations Act, constituting the undersigned and such others as may become members of the Corporation thereby creating a body corporate and politic under the name of

(name of church).

The undersigned have satisfied themselves and are assured that the proposed name under which incorporation is sought is not the same as or similar to the name under which any other company, society, association or firm in existence is carrying on business in Canada, or is incorporated under the laws of Canada or any province thereof, or so nearly resembles the same as to be calculated to deceive except that of (**name of church**), which, as the unincorporated church organization for which this Corporation is the successor, has signified its consent to the use of the said name and that it is not a name which is otherwise on public grounds objectionable.

II.

The applicants are individuals of the full age of eighteen years with power under law to contract. The name, the place of residence and the calling of each of the applicants are as follows:

NAME	ADDRESS
A	
B	
C	

The said A, B, and C will be the first directors of the Corporation.

III.

The objects of the Corporation are as follows:

1.0 The Corporation is organized and operated exclusively for religious and charitable objectives and purposes and shall be carried out by all lawful means, including but not limited to the following:

1.1 Proclaiming the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ through (**name of church**), hereinafter referred to as "The Local Church."

1.2 Promoting the principles and teachings of the Holy Bible as interpreted by the Reformed creeds, namely, the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dordt, in The Local Church.

1.3 Fulfilling the scriptural mandate enunciated by Jesus Christ in Mark 16:15 to "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature" by actively supporting and promoting Christian missions through The Local Church.

1.4 Training the members of The Local Church to be witnesses for the gospel and providing for the financial support and security of ordained and unordained personnel of the Church.

1.5 Receiving funds directly and/or through offerings in The Local Church for the support of the ecclesiastical and charitable activities, functions and programs of The Local Church and/or for the purposes of supporting and making contributions to religious and charitable educational organizations that are registered charities under the Income Tax Act of Canada.

2. For the attainment of the above objects and as incidental and ancillary thereto, to exercise any of the powers as prescribed by the Canada Corporations Act or any other statutes or laws from time to time applicable, except where such power is contrary to the statutes or common law relating to charities.

IV.

The operations of the Corporation may be carried on throughout Canada and elsewhere.

V.

The members and directors of the corporation recognize and subscribe to the following as the fundamental principles of church doctrine and government:

A. The Bible as the inspired and infallible word of God and the only rule for faith and life; and

B. The formulas of unity of the Christian Reformed Church in North America, namely, the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism and the Canons of Dordt and any amendments or additions thereto as may hereafter be adopted by the synod of the Christian Reformed Church.

C. The eighty-six articles of the Church Order, adopted by the synod of the Christian Reformed Church, and any revision thereof after 1991, are incorporated herein by reference and shall regulate the ecclesiastical government, organization and operation of The Local Church in its corporate expression and form.

VI.

The place within Canada where the head office is to be situated is the _____ of _____, in the _____ of _____, in the Province of _____.

VII.

It is specifically provided that in the event of dissolution or winding up of the Corporation all of its remaining assets after payments of its liabilities shall be distributed to one or more charities in Canada that are registered with Revenue Taxation Canada for the purposes of the Income Tax of Canada and have objects similar to the one herein.

VIII.

In accordance with Section 65 of The Canada Corporations Act, it is provided that, when authorized by bylaw, duly passed by the directors and sanctioned by at least two-thirds of the votes cast at a special general meeting of the members duly called for considering the bylaw, the directors of the Corporation may from time to time

A. Borrow money upon the credit of the Corporation;

B. Limit or increase the amount to be borrowed;

C. Issue debentures or other securities of the Corporation;

D. Pledge or sell such debentures or other securities for such sums and at such prices as may be deemed expedient; and

E. Secure any such debentures, or other securities, or any other present or future borrowing or liability of the Corporation, by mortgage, hypothec, charge or pledge of all or any currently owned or subsequently acquired real and personal, movable and immovable property of the Corporation, and the undertaking and rights of the Corporation.

Any such bylaw may provide for the delegation of such powers by the directors to such officers or directors of the Corporation to such extent and in such manner as may be set out in the bylaw.

Nothing herein limits or restricts the borrowing of money by the Corporation on bills of exchange or promissory notes made, drawn, accepted or endorsed by or on behalf of the Corporation.

IX.

The bylaws of the Corporation shall be those filed with the application for Letters Patent until repealed, amended or added to.

X.

The Corporation is to carry on its operations without pecuniary gain to its members, and any profits or other accretions to the Corporation are to be used in promoting its objects.

DATED at the City of _____, in the Province of _____, this day of _____, _____.

_____

A

_____

B

_____

C

NAMES OF ALL INCORPORATORS

APPENDIX B

Operating Bylaw re Property

A. The corporation shall hold all real and personal property exclusively upon the trusts described in the Objects and in furtherance of the Fundamental Principles of the Church Doctrine and Government of the Corporation as outlined in the (Letters Patent or Articles of Incorporation) of this church and as interpreted by the classis of which this church is a member (the "classis"), subject to review on appeal by the synod of the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

B. In the event of the disbanding of this church, with the approval of classis, and dissolution of this corporation, its remaining assets, if any, after the payment of its debts and expenses, shall be distributed to, and only to, one or more charities in Canada[1] that are registered with Revenue, Taxation Canada for the purposes of the Income Tax Act of Canada and have objects similar to this corporation, in the manner proposed by the council, upon consultation with classis—and approved by the affirmative vote of a majority of the members of the church.[2]

[1]Make sure wording matches the wording used in the dissolution clause in the Letters Patent or Articles of Incorporation.

[2]Corporate decisions regarding distribution of assets on dissolution should be made and finalized prior to the dissolution of the corporation.

C. In the event of consensual division of this church by vote of its members and with the consent of the classis into two or more Christian Reformed churches, all real and personal property of this corporation shall be distributed between the two or more Christian Reformed churches as agreed to by the members, subject to the review of said distribution by classis (or synod on appeal).

D. In the event that the classis (or synod on appeal) determines that an irreconcilable division (schism) has occurred within this church, the confessing members of this church who, according to the exclusive determination of classis (or synod on appeal), remain true to the Objects, the principles of doctrine and ecclesiastical government, as set out in the (Letters Patent or Articles of Incorporation), shall be the lawful congregation of this church and shall constitute the sole membership of this corporation which shall have the exclusive right to hold and continue to hold and enjoy the real and personal property of this church. Nothing in this Article ___, however, shall prevent the classis (or synod on appeal) from determining, in keeping with the scriptural injunction of I Corinthians 6, that more than one group of confessing members of this church are each a lawful congregation and from dividing the real and personal property among this church and such other lawful congregation(s) having the same or similar objects and arising from this church in such proportion as classis (or synod on appeal) may determine.

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AGENCY AND COMMITTEE SUPPLEMENTS

The Back to God Hour

The Back to God Hour Board, having met on May 14-15, 1997, presents these changes and additions to its earlier report.

I. Nominees

A. Replacement of nominee

One of the nominees presented in the printed agenda has withdrawn his name from consideration. The Back to God Hour Board presents the name of Rev. Case Admiraal to replace the nomination of Rev. Thomas Haan.

Rev. Case Admiraal is pastor of Immanuel CRC, Ripon, California. A graduate of Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary, he has served in a number of positions in classis, including church visitor, member of classical interim committee, and regional pastor. He has been a delegate to synod four times and was a member of the synodical study committee on dance and the Christian life (1982). He is presently a member of the Judicial Code Committee.

B. Nominees not previously provided

1. Great Plains (one-year term)

Rev. Charles J. De Ridder of Sioux Falls, South Dakota, was ordained to the ministry in 1976 and has served churches in Michigan and California. Presently he is pastor at Shalom CRC in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. Rev. De Ridder served an incomplete term as Back to God Hour Board member before a move from his district necessitated his resignation from the board.

Rev. Robert A. Lyzenga of Spring, Texas, was ordained to the ministry in 1994. He is pastor of New Life Church in Houston, Texas.

2. Central U.S. I (three-year term)

Mrs. Jean Bilthouse of Western Springs, Illinois, is a member of the Christian Reformed church in Western Springs, where she is involved in the Coffee Break ministry and on various committees. She is a former elementary-school teacher and has been a "Faith 20" telephone volunteer for many years. Mrs. Bilthouse was a Back to God Hour Board member from 1981-1986.

Mrs. Nancy Mast of Frankfort, Illinois, is a member of Faith CRC in Tinley Park. She is president and owner of Fred C. Thieme & Co., Ltd., a local CPA firm. Her education includes a B.A. in economics from DePauw University and an M.B.A. from the University of Michigan. Presently she serves on the board and as treasurer of Roseland Christian Health Ministry.

II. Appeal

The Back to God Hour Board presents the following two recommendations to synod in response to recommendations coming from the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA:

A. That synod not accede to the Board of Trustees' recommendation to reallocate to other agencies or institutions a portion of The Back to God Hour/"Faith 20" ministry share approved by Synod 1996.

Grounds:

1. This recommendation was made without a proper evaluation of the effectiveness and efficiency of the use of the current financial resources available to each of the agencies or institutions, and it fails to consider how each agency may be hindered in carrying out its ministry mandate effectively if the proposed reallocation should be approved.
2. Approval of this Board of Trustees' recommendation would create a problematic precedent with regard to making ex post facto adjustments to budgetary decisions of a previous synod.
3. Approval of this Board of Trustees' recommendation would create an ethical dilemma and foster added constituency mistrust in our church-government process because it would effectively override the intended giving decisions of many churches and individuals by redirecting designated contribution dollars without prior donor knowledge or approval.

B. That synod restore The Back to God Hour/"Faith 20" ministry-share request for fiscal year 1997-1998 as originally presented to the Ministries Coordinating Council.

Grounds:

1. The proposed Board of Trustees' ministry-share recommendation includes allocation changes made very late in the process without a proper evaluation of the effectiveness and efficiency of the use of the current financial resources available to each of the agencies, and the proposed budget recommendation fails to consider how each agency may be hindered in carrying out its ministry mandate effectively if the proposed reallocation should be approved.
2. The Back to God Hour Board completed its budget process for fiscal year 1997-1998 in good faith under a "no increase in ministry share" mandate, as directed by the Board of Trustees. Synod's approval of the current ministry-share recommendation proposed by the Board of Trustees would have the effect of appearing to ratify an after-the-fact, change-of-rules budget process caused by a Board of Trustees' decision at the end of the process to reallocate some of The Back to God Hour/"Faith 20" budgeted ministry share to other agencies or institutions.
3. Approval of this ministry-share recommendation would reduce ministry share for The Back to God Hour/"Faith 20" for calendar year 1998 even below the amount budgeted for the previous calendar year, a decision which may result in eliminating certain mission programs of The Back to God Hour.

The Back to God Hour
John Kuyers, executive director

The Calvin College Board of Trustees, having met on May 15-16, 1997, presents this supplement to guide delegates in their decisions and to inform them of additional matters relating to Calvin College.

The board had a full agenda in its two days of meetings, and the highlights, as always, were personnel matters. Interviewing new staff and faculty and bidding farewell to retiring faculty and trustees continue to be an important aspect of the May meeting.

I. Staff matters

A. Appointment of vice president

Mr. James Kraai, former treasurer and vice president for financial affairs at Indiana Wesleyan University, has accepted the position of vice president for administration and finance at Calvin College (see Recommendation IV, A).

B. Retirees (see Recommendation IV, B, 1-14)

II. Ministry shares (see Recommendation IV, D)

As requested by the Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church in North America (BOT-CRCNA), Calvin College (the college) requested that its ministry-shares allocation for 1998 be the same as its allocation for 1997. By a divided vote, the Ministries Coordinating Council (MCC) recommended that ministry shares for the college already allocated by synod for calendar year 1997 be reduced for the second half of the year and that the college ministry shares for all of 1998 be reduced as well. In February 1997 the Board of Trustees of Calvin College requested the BOT-CRCNA not to implement the request of the Ministries Coordinating Council to cut the college ministry-shares allocation. The BOT-CRCNA denied this request. The college board now appeals to synod this decision of the BOT-CRCNA and asks that synod restore the college ministry shares already allocated for the second half of calendar year 1997 and grant the same ministry shares for all of 1998.

The price of education is a critical issue for the college in the light of competition with comparable regional institutions and its desire to keep education affordable for CRC students. Though it retains a low rate of tuition compared to other regional institutions, the college remains overly dependent on tuition revenues (87 percent). The living trust received by the college through ministry shares has remained flat for the last eight years. Consequently, the denominational contribution has become a smaller percentage of the college budget each year.

The timing of the cuts recommended by the BOT-CRCNA is particularly difficult to justify for at least three reasons.

A. The college is presently engaged in a major effort to strengthen its ties with the denomination, the agencies, the seminary, and each classis and congregation. To begin to withdraw denominational support just as this effort gets fully underway would be counterproductive and unwise.

B. The college has just announced a major increase in denominational grant amounts for CRC students and special subsidies for Canadian students. The

total grant money is equal to the entire ministry-shares allocation the college would have received if the BOT-CRCNA had not made cuts. If approved, ministry-share cuts would negatively affect tuition rates.

C. The college and the seminary have recently reached a tentative agreement that the seminary, which has been paying significantly less than 1 percent of the cost of operating the computer and communication systems on the combined campuses (even though it has approximately 7 percent of the combined faculties and 7 percent of the combined operating budgets) will pay the college an additional amount each year to cover a greater portion of the cost of supplying computer and communication services to the seminary. It is especially inappropriate at this time to cut funds allocated to the college and give additional funds to the seminary so that the seminary can pay the college a more appropriate share of the costs that are now paid primarily with college-student tuition dollars.

Therefore, the Board of Trustees of Calvin College requests that the recommendation to cut the college ministry-shares allocation decided upon by the BOT-CRCNA not be approved and implemented.

III. Strategic plan

The board gave final approval to a long-range plan, with goals and strategies, entitled *Calvin College: Distinctively Christian, Academically Excellent, Always Reforming, a Five-Year Plan, 1997-2002.*

This plan builds on the foundation of the *Expanded Statement of Mission,* adopted in 1992. The college is committed to the four major themes of this plan: to advance Calvin's leadership in developing distinctly Christian patterns of teaching and learning, to establish Calvin College as a major center for Christian thought and cultural creativity, to strengthen Calvin's performance as a partner in ministry and community service and deepen the practice of community on its own campus, and to improve Calvin's competitive position as a provider of high-quality education at a reasonable cost.

IV. Election of college trustees

A. *Regional trustees* (see Recommendation IV, C, 1)

B. *Alumni trustee* (see Recommendation IV, C, 2)
The Board appointed Janice Veenstra to the one open position.

Janice Veenstra has a B.A. from Calvin College and an M.A. from the University of Michigan (Detroit). Janice has worked at Comerica Bank since 1992 as analyst, trust officer, and assistant vice president. She presently serves as vice president in the Discretionary Trust Department. Previously she was a teacher in the Christian-school system and served as an independent consultant in the Dearborn private and parochial schools. She has served as president of the Calvin College Alumni Board and was awarded the Outstanding Alumni Service Award in 1996. Janice is a member of the Inter-City Baptist Church in Dearborn, Michigan.

C. *At-large trustees* (see Recommendation IV, C, 3)
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 a three-year term:

1. *Cecilia Mereness* is a Calvin alumna (1959) from Grand Rapids, Michigan. Cecilia served as director of GEMS (Calvinettes) from 1965-1976 and was a trainer/coordinator/consultant for CRC Publications from 1976-1997. She was the director of Friendship Ministries, a nondenominational foundation to raise money for the promotion of spiritual growth of people with developmental disabilities, from 1983-1997 and has recently retired. Cecilia is a member of Church of the Servant (CRC), Grand Rapids.

2. *Kenneth Olthoff* has a B.A. from Calvin College (1952) and an M.B.A. from the University of Michigan. Ken has worked for the General Motors Corporation since 1954. From 1954-1962 he was based in Chicago. From 1962-1984 he worked in Detroit, serving as general director of General Motors worldwide. From 1984-1991, when he retired, he served as director of personnel at the Packard Electric Division of G.M. in Warren, Ohio. Ken is a member of Sunlight Community Church (CRC), Port St. Lucie, Florida.

3. *Maurice Williams* holds a B.A. from Calvin (1988) and an M.B.A. from Keller Graduate School of Management, Chicago, Illinois (1996). Maurice is executive director of the Roseland Christian Community Homes Corporation in Chicago and has extensive experience in business development and financial management. He has spoken publicly on topics related to community development. Maurice is a member of Roseland CRC, Chicago, Illinois.

V. Recommendations

A. That synod ratify the appointment of Mr. James L. Kraai, as Vice President for Administration and Finance for three years, effective July 1, 1997.

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 below.

1. Martinus A. Bakker, Ph.D., Professor of Germanic Languages, Emeritus
2. Claude-Marie Baldwin-Vos, Ph.D., Professor of French, Emerita (September 1, 1996)
3. Henry J. Baron, Ph.D., Professor of English, Emeritus
4. Wallace H. Bratt, Ph.D., Professor of Germanic Languages, Emeritus
5. Henry Holstege, Jr., Ph.D., Professor of Sociology, Emeritus
6. Albion J. Kromminga, Ph.D., Professor of Physics, Emeritus (December 31, 1996)
7. Chris S. Overvoorde, M.F.A., Professor of Art, Emeritus
8. John H. Primus, Th.D., Professor of Religion and Theology, Emeritus
9. William H. Stronks, Ph.D., Director of Off-Campus Programs, Emeritus
10. Peter Vande Guchte, Ed.D., Professor of Business, Emeritus (January 31, 1997)
11. Marjorie A. Viehl, Ph.D., Professor of Nursing, Emerita
12. Donald A. Vroon, M.A., Professor of Physical Education, Emeritus
13. Clarence P. Walhout, Ph.D., Professor of English, Emeritus
14. Jack Wiersma, Ph.D., Professor of Education, Emeritus (December 31, 1996)

C. 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
Farwest U.S. I	Rev. Jeffrey Dykema	Rev. J.W. De Vries	1998
Farwest U.S. II	Mr. Charles A. Pasma	Dr. John Padmos	2000
Central U.S. I	Mr. Vernon Boerman	Mr. Gerald Baas	2000
Central U.S. II	Mrs. Miriam Schaafsma	Rev. Kenneth A. Baker	2000
Central U.S. III	Mr. Jack Postma	Dr. Roger Brummel	2000
Central U.S. IV	Rev. Edward Blankespoor	Mr. Marvin De Boer	2000
Central U.S. IV		Mr. William Knoester	2000
Eastern U.S.		Mr. Donald Sporn	2000
Eastern Canada II	Mr. Walter Neutel	Mrs. Susan Koppendrayer	2000

2. Alumni trustee

Ms. Janice Veenstra 2000

3. At-large trustees

Mrs. Cecilia Mereness 2000
Mr. Kenneth Olthoff 2000
Mr. Maurice Williams 2000

E. That synod consider the appeal of the Calvin College Board of Trustees regarding the cut in ministry shares (see II, Ministry shares).

F. 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; the secretary of the board, Rev. James Cooper; and the president of the college, Dr. Gaylen Byker, when matters pertaining to the college are presented.

Calvin College Board of Trustees
James Cooper, secretary

Calvin Theological Seminary

This report includes actions and recommendations of the seminary board of trustees resulting from its April executive committee and its plenary meeting of May 15-16, 1997.

I. Information

A. Board of Trustees of Calvin Theological Seminary

Because board chairman Rev. Joel Boot cannot be present at synod to represent the seminary, the board requests that Rev. Gerry Heyboer, vice president, be given the privilege of the floor on seminary matters (Recommendation II, A).

The general secretary's office has received and tabulated votes for regional seminary trustees. These elections, effective July 1, need synodical ratification.

Far West U.S. I
Rev. Donald J. Klompeen, trustee
Rev. Alfred Lindemulder, alternate

Far West U.S. II
Rev. Kenneth D. Koeman, trustee
Rev. James R. Kok, alternate

Great Plains
Dr. Carl E. Zylstra, trustee
Dr. Eugene Rubingh, alternate
Dr. Dean Deppe, trustee
Rev. Roger D. Kramer, alternate

Central U.S. IV
Ms. Nell Vander Ark, trustee
Ms. Mary Brasser, alternate

Eastern Canada I
Mr. Martin Bosveld, trustee
Mr. Jack Geschiere, alternate

B. Graduates, licentiates, candidates

Forty-nine students graduated from seven degree programs this spring. The class included the first Ph.D. graduate in the history of Calvin Theological Seminary.

Successful interviews were conducted with twenty-nine new candidacy applicants recommended by the faculty (Recommendation II, C).

One candidate from last year requested extension of his candidacy. The board so recommends to synod (Recommendation II, D).

Twenty-five students were granted either regular or temporary licensure to exhort.

C. Appointment

The board ratified the appointment of Dr. Karin Maag as director of the H. Henry Meeter Center for Calvin Studies. She will have faculty status at Calvin College.

D. Finances

The board approved the 1997-1998 operating budget.

The board approved a base salary increase of 2.5 percent and a tuition increase of 10 percent.

The board recommends 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 (Recommendation II, E).

E. Salary disclosure

Job level	Number of positions	Compensation quartile (includes housing allowance)
18	1	3rd

II. Recommendations

A. That Rev. Gerry Heyboer, vice president of the seminary board, be given the privilege of the floor on seminary matters.

B. That synod approve the election of regional trustees and their alternates for the seminary board for terms beginning on July 1, 1997, and running for three years.

C. That synod declare the following as candidates for the ministry in the Christian Reformed Church, subject to completion of all requirements:

John G. Aukema
Amanda J. Wiersma Benckhuysen
Martin A. Benckhuysen
Mark D. Bennink
Raymond A. Blacketer
Fred M. Bultman
Andrew Kyung-Jin Chun
Karl J. De Lange
Daniel De Vries
Michelle R.A. Gritter
Shin Jae Hwang
Robert L. Knol
Joel C. Korenstra
Henry J. Lengkeek
Robert J. Loerts
Michael F. Miedema
Christopher P. Mitchell
Coleman S. Moore
Steven J. Mulder
Kevin J. Muyskens
David J. Nederhood
Eleanor M. Kredit Rietkerk
Johannes Schouten
Andrew R. Sytsma
Wayne A. Ten Harmsel
Colin Vander Ploeg
Arthur L. Verboon
Todd V. Wagenmaker
Andrew Yongil Yi

D. That Munchul Kim be granted a one-year extension of his candidacy.

E. That Calvin Theological Seminary be included on the approved list for church offerings, both for above-ministry-share general operations and for the seminary Revolving Loan Fund.

Calvin Theological Seminary
Board of Trustees
Calvin Hoogendoorn, secretary

From time to time the Interchurch Relations Committee is asked to publish and update the provisions for ecclesiastical fellowship and the list of churches with whom we have ecclesiastical fellowship. The following contains the requested information.

I. Churches in ecclesiastical fellowship

A. Provisions of ecclesiastical fellowship

1. Exchange of fraternal delegates to major assemblies
2. Occasional pulpit fellowship
3. Fellowship at the table of the Lord
4. Joint action in areas of common responsibility
5. Communication on major issues of joint concern
6. Exercise of mutual concern and admonition with a view to promoting the fundamentals of Christian unity

Degrees of ecclesiastical fellowship may involve fewer than all six elements. At present the CRCNA is in full fellowship with the churches listed below unless otherwise indicated. Restrictions were placed on the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (RCN/GKN) in 1983 relating to provisions 1 and 2. Further restrictions were placed upon the RCN/GKN in 1996 relating to provisions 3 and 4. Synod 1996 of the CRCNA decided to lift the suspension of our relationship with the Reformed Churches in South Africa (RCSA) (Synod Potchefstroom) which was enacted by Synod 1989.

B. List of churches in ecclesiastical fellowship (with the year in which such fellowship was established)

Africa

1. Christian Reformed Church of Nigeria (CRCN) (1974)
2. Church of Christ in the Sudan Among the Tiv (NKST) (1974)
   (Nongo U Kristu U Ken Sudan Hen Tiv)
3. Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa (URCSA)
   (Verenigende Gereformeerde Kerk in Suider Afrika)
   a. Dutch Reformed Church in Africa (DRCA) (1983)
   b. Dutch Reformed Mission Church in South Africa (DRMC) (1982)
4. Midlands Reformed Churches in South Africa (MRCSA) (1991)
   (Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika—Sinode Middellande)
5. Reformed Church in Africa (RCA) (1982)
6. Reformed Churches in South Africa (Synod Potchefstroom) (1974)
   (Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika) (suspension lifted by CRCNA - 1996)
7. Reformed Churches in South Africa (Synod Soutpansberg) 1989
   (Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika)

Asia, Australia, Indonesia, and New Zealand

1. Christian Reformed Church of Sumba (Indonesia) (1974)
   (Gereja Kristen Sumba)
2. Dutch Reformed Church in Sri Lanka (1974)

3. Reformed Church in Japan (RCJ) (1974)
4. Reformed Churches of Australia (RCA) (1974)
5. Reformed Churches of New Zealand (RCNZ) (1974)
   (suspended by RCNZ - 1995)

Europe

1. Christian Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (CRCN) (1980)
   (Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland)
   (ecclesiastical fellowship severed by CRCN - 1995)
2. Netherlands Reformed Churches (NRC) (1982)
   (Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerken—Buiten Verband)
3. Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (RCN) (1974)
   (Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland)
   (ecclesiastical fellowship restricted by the CRCNA - 1983, 1996)

North America

1. Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church (1977)
2. Evangelical Presbyterian Church (1986)
3. Korean American Presbyterian Church (1979)
   (suspended by KAPC - 1996)
4. Orthodox Presbyterian Church (1975)
   (restricted by OPC - 1996)
5. Presbyterian Church in America (1975)
6. Reformed Church in America (1976)
7. Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America (1974)

South America

1. Evangelical Reformed Church in Brazil (1974)
   (Igreja Evangelica Reformada no Brasil)
2. Reformed Church in Argentina (1974)
   (Iglesias Reformadas en le Argentina)

C. *Philippine Christian Reformed Church (PCRC)*

The Philippine Christian Reformed Church (PCRC) is currently a church in *corresponding fellowship* with the CRCNA. However, the PCRC has expressed, through its synodical representative in the United States, Lawrence de los Trinos, that it wishes to become a church in *ecclesiastical fellowship* with the CRCNA. The PCRC was started as a mission work by CRCNA missionaries in 1962. The first congregation was formed in 1968. In 1975 the denomination was officially organized with three local churches. Today there are thirty-four organized churches, thirty-seven organizing churches, and 4,575 communicant members. The church has five classes, and church-development work is going on in Metro Manila and in at least seven provinces. The local churches are served by fifty ordained and unordained pastors. The doctrinal standards of the PCRC are the Belgic Confession, the Canons of Dort, and the Heidelberg Catechism. Its church order is patterned after that of the CRCNA.

Recommendation:

That the PCRC be received into ecclesiastical fellowship with the CRCNA.

Grounds:

1. It is the responsibility of the IRC to recommend to synod which churches are to be received into ecclesiastical fellowship.
2. The PCRC is Reformed in confession and polity, as determined not only by its formal standards but also by its actual practice.
3. The PCRC desires to become a church in ecclesiastical fellowship with the CRCNA.

II. Ecumenical Organizations

A. North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC)

The membership in NAPARC of the CRCNA is a question on the agenda of the Interim Committee of NAPARC. The president of NAPARC is gathering materials related to the motion of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) that the membership of the CRCNA be suspended (see *Agenda for Synod 1997*, pp. 224-25).

A letter acknowledging the IRC's February 3, 1997, letter to the PCA was received from its stated clerk.

In response to the IRC's observation that the PCA had put forth no effort "to contact our IRC with a view to discussing matters of concern," the PCA interchurch-relations committee has arranged to meet with representatives of the CRCNA on May 28, 1997, in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

B. Reformed Ecumenical Council (REC)

The REC has published a treatise entitled *The Unique Person and Work of Christ*. This has been distributed to its member churches. Because the subject is of significant interest in the interchurch setting, the IRC has decided to review and critique the document with a view to recommending that Synod 1998 refer it to the churches of the CRCNA as a responsible Reformed statement regarding the subject and as a useful study document for the ministry and witness of the church. A committee is being asked to review and critique the publication.

The IRC has asked one of its members, Mrs. Claire Elgersma, who serves as first clerk of the REC and who will be traveling to South Africa in June 1997 with the Interim Committee of REC, to represent the IRC to the Dutch Reformed Church, the Reformed Church in Africa, and the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa, with a view to bringing greetings, strengthening ecumenical relationships, conducting conversations, and determining the status of interchurch relationships among the denominations visited.

C. National Association of Evangelicals (NAE)

Several resolutions were adopted by the NAE at its fifty-fifth annual convention, meeting in Orlando, Florida, March 3-6, 1997. Their titles include the following: "Does God Speak to Our Time?," "Partial-Birth Abortion," "Physician-Assisted Suicide," "The Church's Responsibility to Prisoners," and "Heeding the Call of the Poor: Let the Church Be the Church." In order that synod and members of the CRCNA may be informed relative to this part of NAE's activity, the IRC decided to append these timely publications to this supplementary report (see Appendix A, 1-5).

D. World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC)

Although the CRCNA is not a member church of WARC, contact is maintained through the Caribbean and North American Area Council (CANAAC) of WARC. Dr. Henry Zwaanstra serves as IRC's observer to its Theological Commission.

WARC is meeting August 8-20, 1997, in Debrecen, Hungary. The IRC is requesting Dr. Richard Van Houten, general secretary of the REC, to serve as an observer at WARC, representing the CRCNA as well as the REC.

III. Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (RCN)/Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (GKN) (see *Agenda for Synod 1997*, pp. 227-28, Section IV)

A delegation from the RCN/GKN met with members of the IRC and others in Grand Rapids on May 6-10, 1997. Persons coming from the Netherlands included the Revs. Leo Koffeman, Evert Overeem, Douwe Visser, and Richard Vissinga. Rev. Liesbeth van Hilten represented the Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk (Netherlands Reformed Church), one of the denominations that, with the Evangelisch Lutherse Kerk and the RCN/GKN, is in process of federation.

Informative and helpful discussions focused on the Ecumenical Charter of the CRCNA and *Samen op Weg*, the REC document *Hermeneutics and Ethics*, and such subjects as homosexuality and cooperative ministries.

The core committee of the IRC, consisting of Drs. Lyle Bierma, David Engelhard, and Henry Zwaanstra, was joined for the discussions by Revs. Robert Haven, Leonard J. Hofman, and Edward Van Baak of the IRC, Drs. John Cooper, Henry De Moor, Melvin Hugen, and Calvin Van Reken from Calvin Theological Seminary, and Dr. Al Wolters from Redeemer College.

These discussions with the RCN/GKN were held by the IRC in fulfillment of its 1996 synodical mandate to "intensify its pursuit of the two remaining provisions of ecclesiastical fellowship with the GKN" (*Acts of Synod 1996*, p. 520). Additional discussions are tentatively planned for January 1998 in the Netherlands.

The delegation from the Netherlands also met with representatives of the agencies of the CRCNA and the general secretary of the Reformed Ecumenical Council.

IV. Reformed Churches of New Zealand (RCNZ) (see *Agenda for Synod 1997*, p. 230, Section VIII)

The IRC responded to the decision of the RCNZ to "suspend ties with the CRCNA" (letter dated 19 December 1995). However, no reply has been received. At its April 25, 1997, meeting the IRC decided to inform the RCNZ again that our two churches should engage in a continuing discussion and/or correspondence relative to matters of mutual concern.

V. Churches in ecclesiastical fellowship in North America

A. Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) (see *Agenda for Synod 1997*, pp. 230-31, Section IX, A)

A report on the February 21, 1997, meeting of representatives of the CRCNA and the Committee on Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations of the OPC is included with this supplementary report as Appendix B.

The general assembly of the OPC is scheduled to meet June 4-11, 1997, at Geneva College in Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania. It is the desire of the IRC that the discussions with the OPC which have been held during the past year at the initiation of the CRCNA will have a favorable impact on the deliberations of the OPC general assembly when its relationship with the CRCNA is considered.

B. Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) (see *Agenda for Synod 1997*, pp. 231-32, Section IX, B)

Dr. Paul R. Gilchrist, stated clerk of the PCA, acknowledged the February 3, 1997, letter of the IRC administrative secretary. A letter dated April 7, 1997, was received from Robert B. Ashlock, chairman of the Interchurch Relations Committee of the PCA, written in response to the June 28, 1996, letter of Synod 1996 (see Appendix C).

A letter of response, signed by the general secretary and the IRC administrative secretary, has been sent to the Interchurch Relations Committee of the PCA (see Appendix D). Documents relevant to the position of the CRCNA on women in ecclesiastical office were enclosed with the letter.

As noted above (Section II, A), members of the IRC are scheduled to meet with representatives of the PCA on May 28, 1997.

C. Reformed Church in America (RCA)

A letter was received from the RCA Commission on Christian Unity conveying the decision of the 1996 general synod of the RCA requesting the CRCNA to make provision for *union churches* with the RCA. The portion of the RCA *Book of Church Order* that deals with union churches was enclosed with the letter.

The IRC informs Synod 1997 that, inasmuch as it received this request in March 1997, it will study the matter during the coming year with a view to presenting a recommendation to Synod 1998.

VI. Structure for ministry in Canada

The IRC has taken note of the addendum to the report of the Committee to Study Structure for Ministry in Canada re Canadian churches and interchurch relations.

The IRC informs synod that the implications for the IRC in the proposed structure—pertaining to the relationship of the IRC and other committees/persons charged with ecumenical responsibilities—require clarification. This applies as well to the concluding note which refers to the "U.S. component of our binational church."

VII. Hospitality Committee

The following have been appointed to serve as the Hospitality Committee for interchurch relations during Synod 1997: Rev. and Mrs. Tymen Hofman and Rev. and Mrs. Gerard Bouma.

VIII. Matters requiring synodical action

A. That the Philippine Christian Reformed Church be received into ecclesiastical fellowship with the CRCNA (see Section I, C).

B. That synod take note of the discussions being held by the IRC with the

RCN/GKN in fulfillment of its 1996 synodical mandate to "intensify its pursuit of the two remaining provisions of ecclesiastical fellowship with the GKN" (*Acts of Synod 1996*, p. 520, see Section III).

C. That synod take note of the IRC's request that implications for the IRC in the addendum to the report of the Committee to Study Structure for Ministry in Canada, as well as in the appended note, be clarified (see Section VI).

Interchurch Relations Committee
Leonard J. Hofman, administrative secretary
Edward A. Van Baak, president

APPENDIX A

NAE

Does God Speak to Our Time?

A Resolution Adopted by the 55th Annual Meeting of the National Association of Evangelicals

In the current climate of postmodernism, many argue that 1) all human interpretation involves error, and 2) as individuals or as interpretive communities, we interpret and understand everything, including the Bible, from our own perspective. This, it is argued, relativizes all claims to objective, culture-transcending truth.

While we acknowledge postmodernism's exposure of the theories of autonomous reason, we cannot accept the currently politically correct relativism of postmodernism. We affirm that human beings, made in the image of God, can know some things truly, even if our finitude prevents us from knowing anything exhaustively.

Most importantly, we affirm that God, who has chosen to act through mighty deeds such as creation, and supremely in the Lord Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word, communicates His truth through the Scriptures. These words, however mediated by human beings, are finally reliable because they are God's words, the words of a personal, sovereign, omniscient God. The original text of holy Scripture preserves these words, which God, accommodating Himself to our limitations, has graciously given us for His glory and for His people's good.

Though we may not hope to understand the sacred text exhaustively, we can understand much of it truly. By relying on the illumination of the Holy Spirit which will aid us in our reading and re-reading, in our careful study, in our self-consciously committing ourselves to strive against all domestication of Scripture that springs from much alleged or thoughtless biases, we can grasp and grow in the truth of what it says, and in our obedient conformity to it. All true Christian unity is grounded in unqualified and hearty submission to Scripture in its total context.

Whatever our culture, race, language, heritage, or time in history, as evangelical Christians, we joyfully bow to the complete authority of the Scriptures as embodied in the 66 canonical books of the Old and New Testaments. We affirm the Scriptures' truthfulness, acknowledging that, while our knowing is culturally influenced, we may know the mind and thoughts of Him who inhabits eternity, by this written revelation He has graciously provided. Therefore, we are under His mandate to herald this good news to everyone.

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The National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) is a voluntary association of individuals, denominations, churches, schools and organizations comprised of approximately 42,500 congregations nationwide from 48 member denominations and individual congregations from an additional 27 denominations, as well as several hundred independent churches. The membership of the association includes 245 parachurch ministries and educational institutions. Through the cooperative ministry of these members, NAE directly and indirectly benefits over 27 million people. The association maintains its national offices in Carol Stream, Illinois, and an office for governmental affairs in the nation's capital.

NAE

Partial-Birth Abortion

A Resolution Adopted by the 55th Annual Meeting of the National Association of Evangelicals

The National Association of Evangelicals affirms the declarations of Scripture that all human life is a sacred gift from a sovereign God. Therefore, partial-birth abortion is a great moral wrong. American Catholic Cardinals have correctly characterized this inhumane procedure as "more akin to infanticide than abortion."

Partial-birth abortion is a horrific "medical procedure" that takes the life of a child in a way scarcely paralleled in the most barbarous ages. Indeed, it is a practice totally unworthy of a civilized nation. With Jefferson, we tremble for our country when we reflect that God is just, that His justice cannot sleep forever.

The President of the United States vetoed legislation in the 104th Congress banning partial-birth abortion. He offered as a "justification" for his action that he had determined that he could not sign the legislation unless it contained an exception for cases where there might be "serious health consequences to the mother." However, as observed in a resolution of the Southern Baptist Convention, "'the mother's health exception' has been completely discredited as a catch-all loophole which has been demonstrated to include any reason the mother so desires." Moreover, in a letter to all members of Congress last year, numerous doctors stated that the partial-birth abortion procedure is never medically indicated.

We appeal to the Congress to enact legislation once more to combat what any civilized people, familiar with the grisly details of partial-birth abortion, should only consider morally wrong. Moreover, if the President again ignores the will of the people and persists in vetoing this legislation a second time, we call on every member of Congress to override that wrongful veto.

We appeal to President Clinton to support a ban on partial-birth abortion, not only in the third trimester, but at any time, especially because the recent revelations of Ron Fitzsimmons, Executive Director of the National Coalition of Abortion Providers, plainly demonstrate that the President was intentionally misled before his veto last year.

It is time for all who love life to join together as fellow Americans and heal this national wound, lest this moral disgrace continue unabated.

NAE

Physician-Assisted Suicide

A Resolution Adopted by the 55th Annual Meeting of the National Association of Evangelicals

Physician-assisted suicide is one of the profound ethical issues confronting America today. With moral relativism directing a quality of life ethic, physician-assisted suicide is being advocated as a "right." And it is even being suggested that the lives of some people are not worth living, and accordingly they should be encouraged, for the sake of themselves, family, or society, to end their lives.

The primary legal issue is whether the so-called "right to die" should be considered a liberty interest protected under Section 1 of the 14th Amendment; subsidiary legal arguments supporting physician-assisted suicide revolve around alleviating severe pain and exercising personal autonomy. But the underlying moral issue is far more profound. This matter of life and death involves our relationship with one another on the human level, and the relationship of each of us with God.

We believe that life is a gift from God, and that human life has absolute—not relative—value. Death is a significant transition that we all face. The physical and emotional suffering that may precede death can be very grievous, but it may also spiritually enrich us, and afford a last opportunity for reconciliation with friends, family, and God. We believe there is a profound moral distinction between allowing a person to die, on the one hand, and killing on the other (Deut. 5:17). We affirm the ethic "always to care, never to kill."

We pray earnestly that the Supreme Court will not attempt to interpret the Constitution as giving a right to physician-assisted suicide. We also pray that the Court will not leave this matter to the States, which would mean each State would be free to pass legislation permitting doctors to end the lives of their patients under certain circumstances. As evangelicals, we deny that there are any circumstances which justify euthanasia, with or without consent. Therefore, the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) expresses its firm opposition to State legislation which would legalize physician-assisted suicide. And NAE will support federal legislation to ensure that federal tax dollars will never be used to pay for or promote physician-assisted suicide.

We recognize the pressing need to alleviate the severe pain which may precede death. Medical experts say that 99 percent of such pain can be adequately managed, yet 25 percent of those with pain do not benefit from medical treatment which would satisfactorily alleviate the pain. We appeal to the medical profession to do all in its power to close the gap between the knowledge of how to cope with pain therapeutically and the application of that knowledge to anyone needlessly suffering pain.

While for the Christian to die is gain, it is wrong to intrude upon God's prerogative by advancing that day. Rather, we look to our Lord Jesus Christ to sustain us.

NAE

The Church's Responsibility to Prisoners

A Resolution Adopted by the 55th Annual Meeting of the National Association of Evangelicals

Understanding that the United States has the world's highest rate of incarceration among industrialized nations with some 1.6 million Americans currently incarcerated, the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) recognizes the necessity of the biblical mandate to minister to those in prison and to family members impacted by incarceration.

We therefore affirm the Church's need to share the gospel with those in prison, to support and encourage—and be supported and encouraged by—believers who are the "church-behind-the-walls," and to support and encourage families impacted by incarceration and ex-prisoners as they complete their incarceration and re-enter society.

NAE acknowledges that the people of God—whether in prison or free in society—are equal in the sight of our Lord Jesus Christ as we have been saved only by His grace through faith. The teaching of Jesus Christ in Matthew 25 to "visit those in prison" is tantamount to doing so for Christ Himself. Both those who are incarcerated, and those family members who remain on the outside, represent individuals for whom Christ died, who need to hear the message of salvation, and who may, because of the trauma occurring in their lives, be particularly open to the message of the Gospel and to committing their lives to Christ. Prisoners and their families represent one segment of the "harvest field" referred to in Matthew 9:36-38.

Incarcerated believers who make up the "church-behind-the-walls" have the same need as believers in the "outside world" for instruction, for living by example, and for being equipped to do ministry. Local churches can play an important role not only in sharing the gospel with incarcerated non-believers, but also in supporting, teaching and equipping saints in the incarcerated church for ministry in their environment. Building strong believers in the "church-behind-the-walls" will become even more important as prison overcrowding, changing architecture of prison facilities, and political pressure to reduce recreational and educational programming for prisoners decreases opportunities for "outsiders" to effectively minister within the prison walls.

Further, the "church-behind-the-walls" can teach and effectively model for Christians in the outside world biblically directed care for one another, transformation of the mind and personality through a relationship to Christ and the ministry of the Holy Spirit, and racial, cultural, and economic reconciliation.

And finally, to reduce the current tragic recidivism rate of roughly 75 percent of prisoners re-entering society, the local church must extend itself to effectively support and nurture those re-entering society after a period of incarceration (Rom. 12:13). The church must mentor prisoners and families through the difficult post-prison adjustments by helping to secure housing, employment, transportation and clothing, and by providing spiritual and moral support to ex-prisoners who genuinely seek to be more Christ-like in all they are and do.

NAE

Heeding the Call of the Poor: Let the Church Be the Church

A Resolution Adopted by the 55th Annual Meeting of the National Association of Evangelicals

"The Lord maintains the cause of the needy and executes justice for the poor." (Ps. 140:12) Millions of sick, disabled and unemployed Americans, immigrants, and their children remain dependent on government assistance for survival. We have long maintained that many government programs, while meeting immediate needs, actually weaken families, destroy initiative, and trap people in poverty. The new welfare reform law ends many of these programs, offering the Church a significant opportunity to continue to demonstrate that there is a better way to help the poor.

As the Church, with God's help, we should care for the poor in ways which go far beyond what government programs provide. We should offer a community of love and support which respects the dignity and accountability of each individual. We should give families the support and encouragement they need to stay together. We should promote both the individual responsibility and community care which are vital to the restoration of the broken human spirit. Through ministries of evangelism, discipleship, mercy and justice, we should serve the poor, strengthen families and transform our communities.

The short-term impact of reductions in government programs of food, health care, and income assistance will likely be an increase in hunger and hopelessness in many of our communities. We challenge the Christian community to commit itself to model the sacrificial love of Christ by increasing its financial giving and personal involvement with the poor.

We call on every church congregation in America to help at least one family or individual struggling with long-term unemployment to obtain productive, stable work. This may involve skills training, discipleship, and networking. We call on every Christian employer to hire and train persons who have been trapped in poverty. And we call on the Christian community to commit itself to renewed efforts to remove racism, prejudice, and other barriers to employment in the community and society. "The righteous know the rights of the poor, the wicked have no such understanding." (Proverbs 29:7)

We call on government to engage in creative partnerships with churches and parachurch ministries which have proven ability to lift people out of poverty. We are encouraged by the "Charitable Choice" provision of the welfare reform legislation, something we have long promoted. It correctly provides that faith-based programs which provide drug and alcohol treatment, job search, and similar services will be able to compete for government funding on an equal footing with programs which propose secular approaches.

We recognize that we are accountable to God for how we respond to the poor. "If you close your ear to the cry of the poor, you will cry out and not be heard." (Prov. 21:13) We claim the promise of Psalm 41:1: "Happy are those who consider the poor; the Lord delivers them in the day of trouble." We have heard the cry of the poor. We pledge to respond generously, creatively and justly.

APPENDIX B

Report on the Meeting of Representatives of the Interchurch Relations Committee of the Christian Reformed Church in North America and the Committee on Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church

Willow Grove, Pennsylvania
February 21, 1997

The two delegations met in the denominational administrative offices of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Willow Grove, Pennsylvania, from 10:00 a.m. to 5:40 p.m. The ad hoc delegation representing the Interchurch Relations Committee (IRC) of the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA) was composed of the following persons:

Andrew J. Bandstra, Th.D., Professor of New Testament, Emeritus, Calvin Theological Seminary, Grand Rapids, Michigan
John W. Cooper, Ph.D., Professor of Philosophical Theology, Calvin Theological Seminary, Grand Rapids, Michigan
David H. Engelhard, Ph.D., General Secretary, Christian Reformed Church in North America

The ad hoc delegation representing the Committee on Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church was composed of the following:

Mark T. Bube, General Secretary, Committee on Foreign Missions, Orthodox Presbyterian Church
Richard B. Gaffin, Jr., Ph.D., Professor of Systematic Theology, Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Thomas E. Tyson, General Secretary, Committee on Christian Education, Orthodox Presbyterian Church

Prior to the meeting, the following documents had been exchanged:

From the CRCNA—
Report 31: "Hermeneutical Principles Concerning Women in Ecclesiastical Office" (*Acts of Synod 1978*, pp. 484-533)
"Women in Office: A Report to the Christian Reformed Churches" (1990, CRC)
Grounds for 1990 decision (*Acts of Synod 1992*, p. 382)
Overture 64 (*Acts of Synod 1995*, pp. 473-95)
1995 synodical decisions (*Acts of Synod 1995*, pp. 726-36)
A Cause for Division? Women in Office and the Unity of the Church (John W. Cooper, Calvin Theological Seminary, 1991)

From the OPC—
Report of the Committee on Women in Church Office (*Minutes of the 55th [1988] General Assembly*, pp. 310-73)

Mark Bube convened the meeting and read II Corinthians 5:1-6:2. John Cooper led in prayer. By general consent M. Bube was asked to chair the meeting. It was agreed that the twofold purpose of the meeting was to

1. Discuss biblical materials and hermeneutical issues relating to women in office.
2. [with a view towards] reporting to our respective interchurch-relations committees and exchanging reports (but not to require a unified report). (*Note:* See Attachment for the OPC report to its Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations Committee.)

Inasmuch as the CRC's position permitting women to serve in the offices of minister, elder, and evangelist was to be the focus of the discussion and inasmuch as the CRC has not yet adopted an official statement or argument which articulates its position, the subcommittee appointed by the IRC tried to represent the CRC position by way of the documents mentioned above, which represent a hermeneutical, biblical, and theological framework within which Synod 1995's decision was adopted to permit exceptions to Church Order Article 3-a. Both the CRC delegation and the OPC delegation were aware that the positions articulated were approximations of the CRC's position.

Dr. John Cooper distributed an outline of what the subcommittee had asked him to present, namely, "The Hermeneutics and Theological Method of the CRC Position on Women's Ordination." That outline is reproduced here (slightly edited) so that the IRC is adequately informed of what was said.

THE HERMENEUTICS AND THEOLOGICAL METHOD OF THE CRC POSITION ON WOMEN'S ORDINATION

I. Principles and methods of exegesis (cf. Louis Berkhof): Identifying the meaning of the text
   A. Grammatical-literary method
   B. Historical-contextual method
   C. Theological method: what the individual text means within the whole of Scripture
II. Theological method: Identifying the teaching of Scripture as a whole
   A. Part-whole dialectic: how the parts constitute the whole; how the whole locates and contextualizes the parts
   B. Scripture as a whole: progressive redemptive-historical revelation of how God in Jesus Christ is redeeming and restoring his fallen creation, especially his covenant people, and how he wishes us to live in relation to him; God's sovereignty in creation and redemption, covenant, and kingdom are the basic themes.
   C. Specific doctrines: determined by drawing the teaching of all relevant parts of Scripture into a coherent whole—the analogy of Scripture; "let Scripture interpret Scripture"
   D. The analogy of Scripture: how Scripture interprets Scripture
      1. Redemptive-historical, progressive revelation: e.g., N.T. interprets O.T.
      2. Kinds of analogy (both equally strong determiners of doctrine)
         a. Positive analogy (what Scripture explicitly and repeatedly states)
         b. General analogy (what Scripture repeatedly implies ["good and necessary inference"], Berkhof's teaching re the abolition of slavery)
         c. How an analogy of Scripture is strong enough to overturn an apparently clear single text, according to the following rules (Berkhof's example: I John 3:6, which seems to say believers don't sin)

3. Rules for weighting texts in formulating doctrine (all texts are not of equal weight)
   a. Frequent and broadly distributed texts as stronger than a single text or single book
   b. Univocal stronger than merely similar
   c. Clear texts stronger than ambiguous or obscure texts
   d. Apparently contradictory texts: affirm both, trusting ultimate coherence

E. Biblical doctrine as an ordered whole

We must not only coherently order all the teachings of Scripture but also discern the relations among them: which are basic and central and how the others derive from those upon which they depend. The true meaning of a doctrine depends in part on its place in the whole body of doctrine.

III. Application of Scripture to our lives today

A. All of Scripture is normative for life today, but not all in the same way.

B. Much in Scripture is universally normative and applies straightforwardly today.

C. Biblical factors imply that not all scriptural directives are literally or universally normative.
   1. Grammatical-literary: literal or figurative, a command or advice, etc.
   2. Historical
      a. Redemptive-historical: fulfillment of some O.T. laws
      b. Historical-cultural change in Scripture: haircuts, head coverings
   3. Accommodations to culture
      a. Adiaphora: greeting customs, hair length
      b. Fallen: polygamy, divorce, slavery?
   4. Situational instructions: "don't eat blood or strangled meat"

D. The key distinction: principle and application of principle

Using Reformed hermeneutics, exegesis, and theological methodology, we can (usually) determine when Scripture is stating an enduring principle or command and when a biblical instruction, injunction, or command is the application of an enduring principle, which may or may not be explicitly stated.

IV. Conclusion: one hermeneutical-theological approach to doctrine and life; two results

Using the above principles, a good case can be made both for the prohibition of the ordination of women and for the permissibility of the ordination of women. While this may involve differing exegeses of such texts as I Timothy 2, more than exegesis is involved.

Also involved are different ways of weighting and interrelating, within the corpus of Reformed doctrine, the teachings on the equality of men and women in creation, fall, redemption, and eschaton and the subordination of women to men in marriage and beyond marriage, the nature and relation of office to gifts and anointing by God's Spirit in O.T. and N.T., the meaning of authority, and the like.

These differences in interrelating various doctrines involve a *different weighting of the positive and general analogy of Scripture and a different application of the rules for weighing texts.* As a result, they yield *differing conclusions about what is principle and what is application of principle* in such crucial texts as I Timothy 2.

For example, the case for women's ordination views the equality of men and women as theologically-ontologically more basic and enduring than the subordination of women in marriage and sees Paul's main concern in the relevant passages to be the protection of marriage. (Marriage is one specification of the male-female relation in creation, and for Paul marriage is an expression of the oneness we have in the body of Christ. It no longer obtains in the new creation.) So I Timothy 2 is, among other things, an application of the principle of the sanctity of marriage. But this means that if women are unmarried or if they are in a cultural setting where marriage is not threatened by female leadership in worship, such leadership does not

necessarily violate Paul's principle. And the basic equality of men and women in Christ would move the interpreter toward equal eligibility for leadership where equal giftedness is present. (A theology of office, authority, and gifts also comes into play here.)

The tradition's position against the ordination of women weights the spiritual equality of men and women and the relational subordination of women equally, affirming them both as correlative principles which are coherent because they have different meanings and domains. A crucial idea is that male headship in marriage also obtains in the church so that no woman could have authority over any man. All the texts enjoining or manifesting the subordination of women, including I Timothy 2, are taken as reiterating a universal and enduring biblical principle. Equality of giftedness and equality of male and female in the threefold office of Christ are understood as perfectly consistent with this exclusion of women from the offices of the church.

V. Burden of proof? Slippery slope?
   A. Given the church's long tradition, the burden of proof obviously falls on those who favor change.
   B. What must be proven? How heavy is the burden of proof? Consider three levels.
      1. Both positions are exegetically-theologically legitimate and roughly equal in strengths and weaknesses (rough epistemic parity).
      2. The new view is clearly superior exegetically-theologically to the traditional view.
      3. The Bible clearly teaches the new view; the traditional view is demonstrably mistaken.
   C. The CRC holds V, B, 1 above.
      1. Two interpretations are possible. This does not mean that Scripture is contradictory. The uncertainty is with our interpretation, not Scripture.
      2. Since two interpretations are possible within the CRC's confessional commitments, the Reformed principle of not binding consciences is appropriately applied. For us this includes how Scripture regulates worship and church government.
      3. Slippery slope? Does the case for the permissibility of women's ordination undermine the church's position on other issues, such as euthanasia, abortion, homosexuality, and inclusive language for God? Not at all. The case for women's ordination is based on the positive and general analogy of Scripture regarding the equality of men and women in creation and in Christ, an analogy affirmed by both sides in the debate. There is nothing in Scripture which would generate an analogy for killing the innocent, approving homosexuality, or inventing new names for God. Some arguments for women's ordination and for these other positions have used a new hermeneutic, but the CRC case for the permissibility of ordaining women uses the old hermeneutic, which rules out liberal views on other contemporary issues.

The discussion following the presentation by J. Cooper, outlined above, raised the following concerns/questions/comments from the OPC:

1. The CRC position is inherently unstable. It could lead eventually to requiring "affirmative action" on the part of congregations because "justice" requires it.

2. Will those opposing women's ordination be treated fairly?

3. Female fraternal delegates would not be welcome at OPC assemblies.

4. The standards for "burden of proof" are not sufficient to carry the case put forth by the CRC.

5. The different weighting of evidence and the differing interpretations of key biblical teachings (e.g., male headship) make it difficult for the OPC to acknowledge that the CRC decision to allow the ordination of women is permissible.

In an attempt to help the OPC understand the lengthy but disciplined process followed by the CRC to come to its present position, A. Bandstra rehearsed the history of the discussion within the CRC. Beginning with decisions of the Reformed Ecumenical Synod (now Council) in 1963 and 1968, the CRC discussion of the matter has covered more than one-quarter of a century. The various reports from CRC study committees were highlighted for purposes of discussion. It was noted that the first study committee reported to and recommended that Synod 1973 declare that "the practice of excluding women from ecclesiastical office cannot conclusively be defended on biblical grounds." While synod did not adopt this recommendation, the conclusion contained in it was accepted as correct by many. Only after several more biblical studies and hours of discussion within the church and at its assemblies did Synod 1995 come to its decision to permit selective exceptions to Church Order Article 3-a.

Conversation about the history of the debate and the conclusions of some of the documents didn't raise any new concerns of major importance.

IRC's subcommittee had prepared a document entitled "Assumptions/Understandings re CRC Conversations with the OPC." Even though the document is not exhaustive, it did articulate what we thought were important assumptions for our meeting. The document follows:

ASSUMPTIONS/UNDERSTANDINGS RE CRC CONVERSATIONS WITH THE OPC

1. The unity of the church is divinely given, biblically prescribed, and confessionally affirmed.
2. The unity of the church requires work in each generation.
3. The unity expressed and experienced between the CRC and the OPC has been genuine, precious, and long-standing.
4. The unity of the CRC and the OPC is grounded in confessional commitments which are similar, but not identical.
5. The unity between the CRC and the OPC has been tested from time to time by the practices and decisions of one church body which were questioned by or rejected by the other.
6. Working to maintain the unity of our two churches is worthwhile and necessary for the reasons listed above.
7. Within the unity of our two churches we have had and continue to have slightly different approaches to Scripture and the normative inferences drawn from it.
8. The "regulative principle" is honored by both churches, but in slightly different ways. The CRC confesses with the Heidelberg Catechism that the teaching of the second commandment is "that we in no way . . . worship him [God] in any other way than he has commanded in his Word" (Q. and A. 96). This has been understood in the Dutch Calvinist tradition which has shaped the CRC to mean that worship *must* include what God has explicitly commanded and *may* include what is not forbidden if it is inferentially permissible on the basis of biblical principles.

   The OPC seems to understand the "regulative principle" re worship to mean that what is not explicitly permitted is forbidden with the exception of those few matters that are permitted by necessary inference.

   Aside: Both of our churches have been instructed by Calvin on this matter. It may be profitable sometime to discuss whether either or both of us is faithful to Calvin. He states in one place: ". . . it behooves me to declare that

I approve only those human constitutions which are founded upon God's authority, drawn from Scripture, and, therefore, wholly divine" (IV.X.30).

Further in that same passage Calvin teaches the following:

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

9. Discussions between the CRC and the OPC today are focused on the role of women in worship and in the ruling offices of the church. Both of us are seeking to do what Calvin did, namely, "approve only those human constitutions which are founded upon God's authority, drawn from Scripture, and, therefore, wholly divine" (IV.X.30).
10. The current position of the CRC, as argued in the documents submitted, is essentially this: ordaining women to the offices of minister and elder is permitted by Scripture but not required by it. Given our differing positions re the "regulative principle," we have come to different conclusions regarding the permissibility of women in the offices.
11. Given the conclusion re the permissibility of ordaining women to all the offices, the CRC has chosen not to "bind the consciences" of those who so believe by not prohibiting them from ordaining and being ordained. Liberty of conscience in matters permissible is a principle dear to the Reformation churches.

Mention of the "regulative principle" in assumption 8 sparked a new discussion. The OPC makes a distinction between the *elements* (or parts) of worship and the *circumstances* of worship. Prayer is an *element* of worship, but whether it is done in a seated or kneeling position or with hands raised is *circumstantial*. For the OPC a woman serving as a minister is elemental and not circumstantial. Therefore it is not permitted.

In addition to the regulative principle, the OPC representatives spoke of "divine right" Presbyterianism, i.e., men are placed in office by King Jesus and rule by his power and authority alone. The consequences, then, of the church's placing persons (i.e., women) in office who have been biblically disqualified are monumental. They ask, "By whose power and authority do such persons attempt to exercise the keys of the kingdom?" This line of thought requires them "to consider the horrible circumstances that attend upon giving heed to false prophets" (i.e., women ministers and elders).

Since the application of the regulative principle continues to be debated among conservative Presbyterians, we ought not make more of that matter than is necessary. Nonetheless, the OPC is making exegetical distinctions on the basis of that principle which seem at times to be special pleading. For

example, in I Timothy 2:8 Paul instructs the church as follows: "I want men everywhere to lift up holy hands in prayer, without anger or disputing." On the basis of their use of the regulative principle, prayer is elemental and lifting hands is circumstantial. "Lift[ing] up holy hands in prayer" was referred to by the OPC as a "symbolical application" by Paul and of less consequence than his "substantive conclusion" a few verses later when he says, "I do not permit a woman to teach . . . (I Tim. 2:12). "Preaching [is] far more central" than prescribed posture in prayer, the OPC claims. Christians everywhere may agree with that conclusion, but, as the CRC delegation attempted to argue, that conclusion is dependent on the same hermeneutic employed by those who think it is permissible for women to serve in the offices of minister, elder, and evangelist, i.e., the posture statement is an application of a principle and not the principle itself.

Near the end of the meeting we had a more general discussion about ecumenical relationships as well as specific conversation about CRC-OPC relationships. The assumptions quoted above explicitly mention the importance the CRC places on the relationship, and we made the same point in conversation.

In its report the OPC committee summarized the CRC position as articulated by IRC's subcommittee as follows:

a. The CRCNA remains fully committed to the final and infallible authority of Scripture in doctrine and life.
b. It is important to discern whether a particular Scripture is stating i) an enduring (universal) principle (or command) itself; or ii) only an application of an enduring principle, which may or may not be explicitly stated in that particular Scripture.
c. In the post-apostolic age—and as prophesied in the Old Testament—women fully and equally hold the general office of believer, including all the gifts apportioned thereto.
d. In the New Testament, the headship given to males is limited to the h/w relationship in marriage, and does not carry over into either the church or into general society.
e. Therefore, compelling scriptural evidence is required to exclude women from the special offices in the church.
f. The injunctions of I Timothy 2, I Corinthians 11, and I Corinthians 14 (etc.) may legitimately be read to be applications of principles designed to address particular problems in local circumstances, and not as statements of enduring principles (or commands) themselves.
g. Since there is no such compelling scriptural evidence requiring the permanent exclusion of women from the special offices, the most that can be definitively asserted is that Scripture requires neither the inclusion nor the exclusion of women in the special offices.
h. Therefore, the church ought not to bind the consciences of those who have come to the conclusion that women should be allowed to use their God-given gifts for the edification of the body in the special offices.
i. The relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship is a visible demonstration of the unity of the church both to the church and to the world.
j. An (unwarranted) disruption of that demonstrated unity of the church damages the witness of the church.
k. Whatever differences may exist between our two churches on the issue of women in special office, they are not of sufficient gravity so as to warrant a complete termination of our relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship.
l. If the OPC believes she needs to regulate and further restrict the duties and privileges granted and undertaken in her relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the CRCNA, we would understand her need to do so.

m. But we would plead with her to so do in a manner that does the least damage to the witness of the CRCNA and other Reformed churches (with whom she has relations) to the world.

Your delegation thinks that this is an accurate and fair summary of what we attempted to do. We were pleased to serve the IRC and the CRC in this way. We pray that God will bless our work in such a way that his name is honored and his church is strengthened.

Arthur J. Bandstra
John W. Cooper
David H. Engelhard

"...ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake."
II Corinthians 4:5

Presbyterian Church in America
OFFICE of the STATED CLERK

1852 Century Place, Suite 190
Atlanta, Georgia 30345

April 7, 1997

Dr. David H. Engelhard, General Secretary
The Christian Reformed Church of North America
2850 Kalamazoo Avenue, SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49560-0500

Dear Dr. Engelhard:

We are grateful to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for the fellowship we have shared with the Christian Reformed Church since 1975. The CRC was a great encouragement to us in the formative years of our denomination, and we have appreciated your commitment to the gospel and to the Reformed faith. We continue to pray God's grace upon you.

We received the communication of Synod 1996 to the Presbyterian Church in America, dated June 28, 1996. Please forgive our long delay in responding. We acknowledge that the CRC has prayed and debated the issue of women's ordination to the offices of minister and elder, and that you have been unable to agree on the matter. Indeed, we understand that as a result you have found yourselves in a very difficult position.

You state that Synod 1995 did not declare that "one approach to the matter was right and the other wrong." You consequently took the expedient approach of allowing your church government to be suspended in respect to "local needs and circumstances." This is the very point that disturbs us.

It must be manifest that God is not divided on the matter. If women's ordination is forbidden by Scripture, then to allow it is wrong. Conversely, if women's ordination is permitted by Scripture, then to forbid it cannot be right. You say both sides "honor the Scriptures as the infallible Word of God," and you are not saying both positions can be true; yet the practical effect of allowing both positions to be held is to convey the impression Scripture is ambiguous. Whether or not you agree, in our opinion this is the implication, and it goes back to a dubious view of infallibility. It would have been better, where the church cannot decide which view is right, to stay with tradition, rather than opening the door to such ambiguity. Thus, Scripture no longer guides the Christian Reformed Church in any practical way in the matter of women's ordination. Neither does your form of government.

Do you not see that by crossing this line you have rendered yourselves defenseless against other issues? For example, will you to able to maintain a biblical position on homosexuality should the pressure mount to negate the sinfulness of such behavior? Can you hold to belief in an infallible Bible if sufficient numbers among you abandon the conviction of inerrancy of the Scriptures? Brothers, we do not accuse you of this but we fear for you. Other denominations have faltered at this point.

Stated Clerk of the General Assembly
Reverend Paul R. Gilchrist, Ph.D

(404) 320-3366
FAX (404) 320-7219

Business Administrator
Ross E. Cook

"...ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake."
II Corinthians 4:5

Presbyterian Church in America
OFFICE of the STATED CLERK

1852 Century Place, Suite 190
Atlanta, Georgia 30345

In our view, this is the most dangerous position in which the Church of Christ can find itself. If you had declared that the Bible teaches the ordination of women, we would believe you had grievously erred in your understanding of Scripture, but we could at least maintain a common standard, though we disagree. Now, *defacto*, we have no common point of reference from which to disagree.

The General Assembly of 1995 called upon you to "repent and rescind" and by this, in a manner of speaking, we meant to urge you to draw back from the ordination of women but more important, to return to a position of being yielded to the authority of Scripture, in submission to the historic confessional position of your church. We are afraid for you out of our great love for you. That is why we spoke as bluntly as we did.

We do not wish to lose you from NAPARC or from ecclesiastical fellowship with the PCA. To the contrary, we desire to stand side by side with you in the fellowship of Christ, and to share in the cause of the gospel.

Nevertheless, the General Assembly instructed the Interchurch Relations Committee to seek to remove the CRC from membership in NAPARC should our remonstrance fail. We feel it has failed. We feel strongly that the action of Synod 1995, for the reasons given above, namely your fundamental position in regard to Scripture and the Reformed Confessions of the Church, have significantly shifted the CRC away from the consensus that forms the basis of NAPARC.

We fervently pray that you will return to your faithful practice of and commitment to the Word of God as evidenced in your long held position on this matter.

In the love of Christ, for the Interchurch Relations Committee,

Robert Ashlock

Robert B. Ashlock, Chairman
Interchurch Relations Committee
Presbyterian Church in America

Stated Clerk of the General Assembly
Reverend Paul R. Gilchrist, Ph.D

(404) 320-3366
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Business Administrator
Ross E. Cook

CHRISTIAN
REFORMED
CHURCH
IN
NORTH
AMERICA

April 28, 1997

Mr. Robert B. Ashlock, Chair
Interchurch Relations Committee
Presbyterian Church In America
1852 Century Place, Suite 190
Atlanta, GA 30345

Dear Mr. Ashlock:

We have received your letter of April 7, 1997, in response to the letter of Synod 1996 of the Christian Reformed Church. We accept your apology for the long delay in responding. As you know, we would have hoped for a reply and some discussion prior to the fiasco that occurred at the NAPARC meeting in November. But that is no longer possible and so we move on from here.

You rightly observe that God is not divided regarding the matter of women in the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist. But his church is. And his church (i.e., the CRC part of it) is divided over this matter after prolonged study and discussion. We have not taken the matter lightly nor come to our conclusion in a derelict manner. We have concluded that both those who argue against the ordination of women and those who argue for it do so on the basis of an established and accepted Reformed hermeneutic, and both sides "honor the Scriptures as the Word of God."

You also observe correctly that "if women's ordination is permitted by Scripture, then to forbid it cannot be right." This is precisely the conclusion which Synod 1995 drew on the basis of all the biblical data which had been presented over the years. It did not say that Scripture demands the ordination of women, but that it permits it. Therefore, without altering the Church Order provision it allowed for exceptions for those churches who believe Scripture permits the ordination of women.

You may be right that the Christian Reformed Church's position conveys "the impression [that] Scripture is ambiguous." But that is only an impression and not a reality. We have tried to avoid leaving that impression by reiterating that it is the interpretations of the Bible which lead to different conclusions and ambiguity. We have often repeated that the Bible itself is not divided. Your opinion on this matter is already formed, but we would ask that you give us the benefit of the doubt.

You state that in your opinion our present position "goes back to a dubious view of infallibility." We are baffled that you would attack our view of infallibility when our differences involve varying interpretations and not a difference over our view of Scripture. Neither in earlier discussions nor in the recent letter have you given evidence that you have seriously examined our exegetical and hermeneutical work. We think your allegation about our view of infallibility is uncharitable, and will not hold up under close scrutiny. We need to resolve this matter.

Furthermore, we find your charge that "Scripture no longer guides the Christian Reformed Church in any practical way in the matter of women's ordination" is seriously mistaken. We must admit that Scripture doesn't guide us in exactly the same way it guides you, but it is wrong for you to say that it doesn't guide us. There are those in Reformed and Presbyterian churches who take different positions regarding the "gifts of the Spirit" (I Cor. 12). Some are cessationists, some believe in full expression, and others take a mediating position. Are those who disagree with your position spoken about as those with a "dubious view of infallibility" and as those who are no longer guided by Scripture? We would hope not.

We thank you for being concerned about our faithfulness in other matters. Since we believe that the hermeneutical and exegetical principles used to study the women in office issue are thoroughly Reformed, we do not think that we are on a slippery slope which would lead us to abandon sound doctrine in the area you mention. Please do not deal with us and our decisions from the point of view of fear ("we fear for you"), but from the view of faith and encouragement. If you are making your decisions about the CRC on the basis of fear and what might be, then it will be difficult for us to discuss these matters.

Your letter of 1995 did issue a call to "draw back from the ordination of women." We heard your request and we knew that you wanted us to share your interpretation of Scripture regarding the ordination of women. We were unable to heed your call because our own interpretation of Scripture had led us to different conclusions. We thought then, and we think now, that we have "yielded to the authority of Scripture" in our study, deliberations, and decision making. For you to suggest otherwise is neither an accurate nor fair understanding of our twenty-five-year history in this matter. It is precisely because we are "yielded to the authority of Scripture" that we painstakingly examined the Scriptures and that our synods moved slowly toward the ordination of women and approved it only when it was convinced that it was biblically permissible. Please temper your judgment in these matters. We plead with you not to accuse us so loosely of not "being yielded to Scripture" and of having a "dubious view of infallibility."

One final comment. You say in your letter that we have violated our church government and not been faithful to our confessions. Our various studies reviewed our confessions thoroughly and concluded that the confessions do not explicitly address the matter of women in office. We have known for many years that your view of Church Order

and our view differ. Your view places the Church Order more on a par with the confessions and ours places it below the confessions. Therefore, for us to permit an exception to our normative Church Order regarding the gender of officebearers is not a violation of our confession. Furthermore, we have permitted exceptions before.

Thank you for hearing us in reply to your letter. Before we received your letter, we had agreed to meet with representatives of your committee on May 28 in Grand Rapids. The conclusions and opinions stated in the letter make us question the necessity of meeting. Your collective mind is clearly communicated in the letter and your resolve to move forward with the recommendation to remove us from NAPARC appears firm. Yet we believe that we could have a profitable meeting if you would read the enclosed documents which provide some rationale for the CRC's present position and be ready to discuss them with us when we meet in May.

We regret that our relationship of "ecclesiastical fellowship" has come to this tensive impasse. We think both of us wish it were otherwise. Since we are not taking the initiative to break the relationship, we must leave it in your hands and under the leading of our sovereign and triune God. We would ask you to find a way to maintain the unity of our churches. The fractured and fighting church cannot be a convincing witness to the world.

Yours in Christ's service,

David H. Engelhard
General Secretary
Christian Reformed Church in North America

Leonard J. Hofman
Administrative Secretary
Interchurch Relations Committee

Enc.: Report 31: Committee to Gather Biblical Grounds
Overture 64: Revise Synod 1994's Decision re Women Serving in All Ecclesiastical Offices
Exegesis 9: Elements of a Case for the Ordination of Women

OVERTURES AND COMMUNICATIONS

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OVERTURES

Supplement to Overture 4: Form at Least Four Theologically Identified Classes

I. Introduction

On April 28, 1997, Rev. James Howerzyl, stated clerk of Classis California South, received a letter from Dr. David H. Engelhard, general secretary of the CRCNA, informing Classis California South that its January 1997 overture requesting the formation of at least four theological classes within the CRC (printed as Overture 4 in the *Agenda for Synod 1997*) was judged by the Program Committee of Synod 1997 to be a request for revision of a synodical decision. The Program Committee permitted classis to reformulate the overture if it so desired.

Although Classis California South does not believe that Overture 4 seeks revision of a synodical decision, we do wish to work diligently with our brothers "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" (De Ridder and Hofman, *Manual of Christian Reformed Church Government 1994*, p. 11) as together we seek to bring peace and unity within our churches and our beloved denomination.

We therefore submit this supplemental information to Overture 4 printed in the *Agenda for Synod 1997*.

II. Background

There is concern that Overture 4 is seeking revision of a synodical decision, and therefore it must provide "sufficient and new grounds for consideration" (see Church Order Article 31). The decisions cited in the general secretary's letter were those taken by Synod 1996 in response to Overture 5 of that year, which asked for the formation of one theological classis.

Synod 1996 did not accede to Overture 5 for the following reasons:

Grounds:

* * * *

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.

* * * *

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).

(*Acts of Synod 1996*, p. 561)

III. Sufficient and new grounds

A. Overture 4, as written, indicates that a list of churches desiring to join theologically identified classes will be presented to Synod 1997. This show of need was not available to Synod 1996 and ought by itself to constitute "sufficient and new grounds."

B. Classis California South believes that the unity and harmony of the denomination is at stake in a way not evident in 1996. It is our sincere belief that churches and members are now prepared to leave the denomination if the overture is not granted. Passage of Overture 4 is the last hope for many.

C. Synod 1995 referred to the unity and harmony of the denomination as a precious and compelling reason to reconsider Synod 1994's actions relative to Church Order Article 3. This year's Overture 4 not only presents the same compelling rationale in a more evidentiary manner but, in fact, provides *all* churches an opportunity for unity regardless of their geographic circumstance.

D. The 1996 overture requested *one* theological classis. The 1997 overture calls for the formation of "at least *four* theologically identified classes." This new formulation ensures accountability and prevents the feared fragmentation.

E. Subsequent to Synod 1996, classis has noticed the alarming erosion of members from the denomination. Several congregations have left, and others have been fractured (see the article "CRC Losses Since Synod 1996," *The Banner*, March 10, 1997, p. 7ff., and United Reformed News Service press release NR 1997-0020). It is absolutely crucial that Synod 1997 pass Overture 4 to stem the exodus of members from our fellowship.

Classis California South
James Howerzyl, stated clerk

Overture 36: Reject the Idea of Theologically Identified Classes

I. Background

The unrest in a few of our churches is a matter of concern to all. It is important that the churches continue together to seek ways to prevent further unnecessary fragmentation and schism. However, Classis Holland firmly believes it is not in the best interest of the churches to seek solutions which would in any way weaken or threaten a united commitment to the Reformed confessions and polity.

II. Overture

Classis Holland overtures synod to reject so-called "theologically identified classes."

Grounds:

A. Historic Reformed polity allows classical boundaries to be formed *only* on the basis of (1) geographical or (2) linguistic/cultural grounds (see, e.g., Church Order of the Synod of Dordrecht, 1618-1619, Arts. 41 and 51). Recent examples of linguistic/cultural classes are Classis Pacific Hanmi and Classis Red Mesa.

B. Every Christian Reformed classis is already a *theologically identified* classis in that each is bound by the Reformed confessions accepted by the Christian Reformed Church. This is evidenced in the signing of the Form of Subscription.

C. Within the framework of our Reformed confessions, a classis benefits from a diversity of gifts and persons (cf. Heidelberg Catechism, L.D. 21, Q. 55; Rom. 12; I Cor. 12).

D. A scheme of forming or redefining classes on the basis of "hot-button issues" of the day, extraconfessional statements, or any grounds other than the two allowed by historic Reformed polity would provide a breeding ground for schismatic activity, create a climate of ecclesiastical chaos, and militate against the good order of the church (cf. Belgic Confession, Art. 28; John 17; Eph. 4; I Cor. 14:40).

E. A similar experiment can be found in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in the nineteenth century. The general assembly discovered that establishing *affinity presbyteries* "opens a wide door for mischiefs and abuses of the most serious kind," that it "in process of time, fills the whole church with unsound and schismatic ministers," and that the net result is to "divide churches; stir up strife; and promote party spirit and schism with all their deplorable consequences." The assembly judged that such a procedure is "contrary to the letter and the spirit" of the Church Order and "ought to be frowned upon, and as soon as possible, terminated" (Minutes, 1835).

F. Synod already permits a process for individual congregations to request transfer to another classis as long as there is not a significant departure from the Reformed principle of geographical proximity (cf. *Acts of Synod 1996*, p. 561, Art. 76, B, 2).

G. Synod 1996 has already rejected the idea of a so-called theologically identified classis (cf. *Acts of Synod 1996*, pp. 560-61). Decisions of synod are to be considered "settled and binding."

Classis Holland
Peter D. Winkle, stated clerk

Overture 37: Transfer Garden Grove Korean CRC to Classis Pacific Hanmi

Classis California South overtures synod to permit the transfer of Garden Grove Korean CRC from Classis California South to Classis Pacific Hanmi.

Ground: This is the request of the council.

Classis California South
James Howerzyl, stated clerk

Overture 38: Refer Report on Inclusive Language for God to the Churches for Further Study

I. Background

This overture arises out of pastoral concern regarding the disparity between the state of the inclusive-language issue in our congregations and the actions recommended by the report of the Committee to Study Inclusive Language for God. In most of our churches inclusive language for God is not an issue. Furthermore, we are not aware of situations where this is an issue of such magnitude that the local congregation and council (or classis) are incapable of dealing with the matter in a pastoral and appropriate manner. For this reason, there is no need to take action that involves adopting detailed and extensive policy for congregations.

Moreover, as the special considerations and grounds of the present overture indicate, adopting the report's pastoral and policy recommendations (X, C and XI, A-D), as well as Recommendation D, is premature and pastorally unwise. A report this massive, with far-reaching policy recommendations, inevitably raises a host of questions regarding its findings, its argumentation, and its possible repercussions. Some illustrations are considered below.

A. Findings and argumentation

The report elaborates and underscores at length the obvious preponderance in the Scriptures of masculine language for God (Section VII). At the same time, the report rightly maintains the traditional position that God is beyond gender (VII, C, 1). The report also insists that "Christians ought to speak of God in the way that Scripture speaks of God, not only in the words it uses *but also in the meaning those words convey* . . ." (XI, B, 1, emphasis added). Consequently, guided by this sound hermeneutical principle and the biblically derived conviction that God is ungendered, the committee concludes that when we speak of or address God as "he" the "meaning these words convey" is not that God is "he" but rather that God is not an "it." But if the Bible teaches that the pronoun "he" and masculine names or titles do not convey the meaning that God is "he," then a case must be made for the *normativity* of masculine pronouns or titles.

There may well be sound arguments for insisting that referring to God as "he" is normative, but the report does not advance such arguments. The report moves directly from the *fact* of biblical usage to the *normativity* of such usage. The report does go beyond this merging of biblical description and biblical normativity by invoking the first three commandments of the decalogue (VIII, E and G), but this

appeal begs the question. These prohibitions are properly invoked only if one has first shown that using, for example, a personal pronoun other than "he" is, as such, an expression of idolatry, image making, or misusing God's name. But claiming that these commandments are indeed violated by the use of personal pronouns other than "he" ignores the report's restriction of the *meaning* of masculine language for God, namely, the restriction that such language conveys nothing about God's gender. Accordingly, the claim that the first three commandments are thus transgressed by the use of pronouns other than "he" goes contrary to the intent of these commands as confessed by our church (re idolatry, see Heidelberg Catechism, Q. and A. 95; re image making, see Heidelberg Catechism, Q. and A. 96-98; re blasphemy, see Heidelberg Catechism, Q. and A. 99).

B. Pastoral and policy recommendations

Problems within the report such as those illustrated above are sufficient reason not to take hasty action. The nature and scope of the report's recommendations, however, call for even greater caution. At stake is this question: What kind of directives may a synod appropriately give to local congregations? As the report indicates, inclusive language for God arose as a synodical issue out of the need for policy guidelines for CRC Publications. It is quite appropriate to move beyond providing guidelines for an agency. In fact, Synod 1992 did precisely that in recommending agency guidelines "as *pastoral advice*" to the churches (*Acts of Synod 1992*, pp. 615-16, emphasis added). But it is questionable whether it is appropriate to impose extensive and detailed policy regarding the use of language on congregations and their members. Yet this is what the report proposes in its pastoral advice and the (closely related) policy recommendation.

II. Special concerns

A. Without adequate grounds or argumentation, the report elevates the language issue to confessional status, with potentially divisive consequences.

B. One or more of the reasons given for declaring that inclusive language for God is unacceptable (Recommendation D) ignore the important observation which the report makes in IV, G, 4.

C. Imposing on congregations detailed policy regulating language for God may be unnecessary and is not in harmony with the spirit of Reformed church polity and general practice of Christian Reformed synods.

III. Overture

Classis Toronto overtures synod to refer the report of the Committee to Study Inclusive Language for God, together with its recommendations, to the churches for further study and response.

Grounds:

A. There is no need in our congregations sufficiently urgent to justify hasty decisions regarding the complex issues with which the report deals.
B. Adequate time is needed to weigh the repercussions of adopting the report's expansive pastoral advice and policy recommendations.

Classis Toronto
John Tenyenhuis, stated clerk

Overture 39: Grant Waiver for Potential Ministerial Candidate

Classis California South overtures synod to

A. Waive the requirement for residence at Calvin Theological Seminary for one semester of study in the case of Mr. Mark Bruursema under the adjusted SPMC program for those over 40 years of age.

B. Allow Mr. Bruursema to take the one unfulfilled requirement for a course in Christian Reformed church history under the direction of two Christian Reformed minister-professors locally.

C. Declare Mr. Mark Bruursema a candidate eligible for a call in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

Grounds:

1. Mr. Bruursema has completed all required courses for the M.Div. degree except for the course in Christian Reformed church history.
2. He attended Calvin Theological Seminary for one year in 1985-1986.
3. He finished all the requirements for a preseminary degree at Calvin College.
4. He received the M.Div. degree from Westminster Seminary West in California.
5. He has extensive experience in ministry: he has served as a church planter and pastor for four years in a sister church, the Presbyterian Church of Victoria, Australia, has served almost two years as the unordained pastor of the San Marcos CRC, and has carried on the complete work of ministry for almost six years except for the administration of the sacraments.
6. There is a shortage of ministers available for call in the smaller churches of our denomination and classis.
7. It is a hardship both for the San Marcos church and Mr. Bruursema to interrupt his ongoing and successful ministry in San Marcos.

Classis California South
James Howerzyl, stated clerk

Overture 40: Declare Commitment to 1973 Report on Homosexuality and Require Apologies for and Policy Changes re the GALA Advertisement in *The Banner*

I. Introduction

Classis Columbia, out of love for the Christian Reformed Church, requests that Synod 1997 review *The Banner's* April 28, 1997, publication of an advertisement for GALA, the Gay and Lesbian Association of Calvin College Alumni; that it correct mistakes in theological and editorial judgment which were made; and that it take steps to restore confidence both within and outside the denomination that the Christian Reformed Church remains faithful to the Bible's teaching on homosexuality.

II. Background

A. The *Banner* editor and the director of CRC Publications failed to check out GALA before publishing its ad.

1. According to CRC Publications director Gary Mulder, he and the editor decided to assume that the organization fits into the same category as groups like Metanoia and Exodus, which minister to persons wishing to leave the homosexual lifestyle. They did so even though the word *gala* means "festive" or "showy," implying endorsement of homosexual tendencies.

2. They knew that *The Calvin Spark* had already turned down an ad from the same organization, but they did not ask the Calvin Alumni Association or Calvin College why this had happened.

B. In screening the ad, the editor did not ask GALA to endorse the denomination's 1973 report on homosexuality.

1. He did not say to GALA, "You must *endorse* the church's teaching before I will publish your ad." He said only that the ad "*must not contradict* the official stand of the CRC. . . ."

2. This meant that neither the ad nor the GALA organization had to declare allegiance to the 1973 decision; all that was necessary was that the ad give no indication that it "was condoning a homosexual lifestyle."

3. Under these standards, even a pro-homosexualism organization could have published a *Banner* ad, provided it made no overt statement against the official CRC stance.

4. Publishing such an ad is contrary to the 1973 decision which condemns homosexualism as "incompatible with the Word of God" (see *Acts of Synod 1973*, p. 632, point 3).

C. By publishing the ad, the *Banner* editor failed to consider the pastoral needs of homosexuals who might read the ad.

1. He did not check out GALA's position on the 1973 report.

2. He did not ask GALA to endorse the 1973 report before accepting its ad.

3. Therefore, the ad could have been placed by an organization that was pro-homosexualism.

4. Consequently, a homosexual who read and responded to it ran the risk of being led astray from biblical truth.

5. This ad goes against point 6 regarding pastoral advice to homosexual persons in *Acts of Synod 1973*, page 632: "Homosexuals, especially in their earlier years, should be encouraged to seek such help as may effect their sexual reorientation, and the church should do everything in its power to help the homosexual overcome his disorder."

6. By publishing this ad, the editor in effect encouraged homosexuals to seek help from an organization which conceivably could have urged them to practice their homosexuality.

D. When faced with evidence of improper editorial and theological judgment, neither the CRC Publications Board nor the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA gave appropriate oversight in dealing with the situation.

1. The CRC Publications Board and the Board of Trustees did place a "letter of regret" in the May 19, 1997, *Banner* (also signed by the magazine's editor).
2. However, the letter made no apology for the faulty process used in publishing the GALA ad.
3. The letter expressed regret only for "the hurt, confusion, and anger that this ad has caused some members of the Christian Reformed Church."
4. Thus, *The Banner* is under no constraints that would prevent it from following the same course again.

These events demonstrate that the CRC's official teaching on homosexuality has not been faithfully promoted by *The Banner* and others in recent months.

The magazine's editor undermined that teaching when he failed to ask GALA to endorse the 1973 synodical report. He exposed those who struggle with homosexuality to spiritual risk by publicizing an organization whose beliefs had never been verified.

Furthermore, the CRC Publications Board and the Board of Trustees failed to correct these errors of judgment once they occurred.

III. Overture

Classis Columbia overtures synod to do the following:

A. To declare its commitment to the 1973 report on homosexuality and to the following reaffirmation made by synod in 1996: "'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. 652). This statement applies also to the homosexual activity of a couple that seek to live in a loving monogamous relationship" (*Acts of Synod 1996*, p. 573).

B. To direct the *Banner* editor and the director of CRC Publications to apologize to synod and to *The Banner*'s readers not only for any impression the ad created but also for the fact that it was published at all.

C. To direct the *Banner* editor to apologize to synod and to *The Banner*'s readers for failing to ask GALA to endorse the denomination's official teaching before publishing its ad.

D. To direct the *Banner* editor to apologize to synod and to *The Banner*'s readers for his pastoral insensitivity toward those struggling with homosexual tendencies. Especially for their benefit GALA should have been required to express agreement with the 1973 synodical report before its ad was published.

E. To direct the *Banner* editor to apologize to synod and to *The Banner*'s readers for his pastoral insensitivity toward nonhomosexual members of the Christian Reformed Church who may have been offended by the GALA ad.

F. To direct the CRC Publications Board and its director and the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA to apologize for failing to correct the decision-making process by which the GALA ad came to be published.

G. To direct that no material pertaining to issues on which the Christian Reformed Church has taken an official stand be promoted or advertised by any denominational agency unless it can be *demonstrated* that it conforms to the doctrinal standards and the synodical decisions of the Christian Reformed Church.

H. To direct the general secretary of the CRC to communicate in writing with the National Association of Presbyterian and Reformed Churches (NAPARC) and with the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) to indicate that our denomination has taken the actions listed above. This action is to assure sister churches and like-minded organizations of our continued commitment to the Bible's teaching on homosexuality.

Grounds:

1. The publication of the GALA ad has caused dismay and unrest within the denomination.
2. The publication of the GALA ad appears to give ecclesiastical sanction to those practicing homosexual relationships and thus may cause persons with homosexual tendencies to stumble and fall into sin.
3. The publication of the GALA ad has caused other churches and Christian organizations to question our denomination's commitment to the Bible.
4. The 1973 report on homosexuality was not applied in an appropriate manner when the decision was made to publish the GALA ad.
5. If *The Banner*'s action is not corrected, it may establish a new standard for dealing with homosexuality in the CRC. The question would no longer be "Do you agree with our church's teaching?" It would be "Do you agree not to disagree?" This would give those who wish to undermine the church's stance an enormous amount of leeway to pursue an unbiblical agenda.
6. The CRC Publications Board and the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA failed to give appropriate oversight in this situation. The only body which can deal with this shortcoming is synod, to which all parties named above are accountable.

Classis Columbia
Howard B. Spaan, stated clerk

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COMMUNICATIONS

Communication 8: Classis Huron

Classis Huron communicates the following to Synod 1997 regarding the synodical study-committee report on inclusive language for God.

The study clearly states that the language of Scripture is divinely inspired and therefore universally normative. Man does not have the freedom to change the language of Scripture to suit the cultural trends of the times. Thus, inclusive language for God is not acceptable. We should not speak of God as a feminine person nor replace standard gendered designators of God with gender-neutral language. To do so would violate Scripture and our confessions.

The solution to the perplexing problems of understanding God and his will for us today lies not in adding to, subtracting from, or altering the language of Scripture but in humbly relying upon the illuminating power of the Holy Spirit, for he will lead the humble into all truth. The church must lean not upon its own understanding but must trust in the holy Counselor, the Spirit of truth and light.

Classis Huron expresses its approval of the study report on the following grounds:

1. The study report upholds the historic Reformed principles of hermeneutics and orthodox teachings on the nature of Scripture.

2. The study report accurately presents the full range of arguments for inclusive language for God and rationally refutes each one.

3. The pastoral advice of the study report gives clear and helpful guidelines while remaining true to the Scripture.

4. The study report, by being faithful in defending the truth revealed in Holy Scripture, has fulfilled its mandate to the glory of God and the well-being of the church of Jesus Christ.

Classis Huron
Hilbert Rumph, stated clerk

Communication 9: Classis California South

Classis California South conveys its endorsement of Classis Holland's overture and grounds concerning ministry shares. Many churches in Classis California South struggle with the payment of ministry shares. Some are able to pay them in full but only with great struggle and to the detriment of funding for local ministry. Others are unable to pay very much, if anything at all. All the churches of our classis are concerned. We therefore heartily endorse the overture of Classis Holland and urge its passage.

Classis California South
James Howerzyl, stated clerk

Communication 10: Classis Zeeland

Classis Zeeland urges Synod 1997 to approve the overture of Classis California South regarding the formation of theologically identified classes within the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

Classis Zeeland
Steven R. Sytsma, stated clerk

Communication 11: Orthodox Presbyterian Church

The Orthodox Presbyterian Church
Office of the General Assembly

The Rev. Donald J. Duff, Stated Clerk Phone 215/830-0900 • Fax 215/830-0350

June 10, 1997

The Synod of the Christian Reformed Church in North America
Dr. David H. Engelhard, General Secretary
2850 Kalamazoo Ave. SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49506

Dear Brethren,

The 64th General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church has just made one of the most difficult decisions that it has ever made in its entire history. After a very close and deeply valued relationship of almost precisely 61 years to the day (June 11, 1936), initiated by your Synod to our first General Assembly, this current Assembly has voted to terminate our existing Ecclesiastical Fellowship as of July 1, 1997 with the following action:

That, with respect to the relationship between the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and the Christian Reformed Church in North America, the 64th (1997) General Assembly:

A. Determine that,

Whereas the 63rd (1996) General Assembly decided, "That, unless the 1997 regular general assembly determines that intervening actions of the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church in North America warrant a reversal of this action or a continuation of the period of suspension, the relation of Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the Christian Reformed Church in North America shall be terminated with the close of that assembly" (Minutes, Arts. 169 and 171, p. 52), and

Whereas Synod 1996 of the Christian Reformed Church in North America not only retained the decision of Synod 1995, but also further proceeded to implement the 1995 decision by confirming certain women as "candidates for the ministry in the Christian Reformed Church" (Acts, Synod 1996, Art. 75.2, p. 560);

Therefore, in accordance with the action of the 63rd General Assembly quoted above, this General Assembly

1. Determine that intervening actions of the Christian Reformed Church in North America do not warrant a reversal of the action of the 63rd (1996) General Assembly to terminate the relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

Ground

The setting aside of the clear command of 1 Tim. 2:12 by the Synods of 1995 and 1996, allowing the ordaining of women to ruling and teaching office in the church changes the basis of the covenant established between the Christian Reformed Church in North America and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in the relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship; the Orthodox Presbyterian Church cannot any longer fulfill the requirements of that covenant because it cannot participate in ecclesiastical matters with the Christian

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Reformed Church in North America where women ministers and/or ruling elders are involved.

2. Postpone the effective date for such termination to July 1, 1997.

Grounds

a. Since the Christian Reformed Synod of 1997 is not scheduled to begin until after the close of this Assembly, changing the termination date from "with the close of (this [64th] General) Assembly" to July 1, 1997 obviates the difficulty of seeking to communicate with the Christian Reformed Church in North America concerning Ecclesiastical Fellowship when, under the earlier provision, we would no longer be in that relationship with them.

b. It permits a fraternal delegate of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church to be present in an official capacity at the Christian Reformed Synod of 1997 in order to inform the Synod of this action and to convey personally the sorrow of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church that the fellowship that our churches have had for over 60 years can no longer be continued.

B. Inform the Synod of the CRCNA that the opening of the special "offices of elder, minister, and evangelist" to women (Acts 1995, Arts. 75 and 79, pp. 731-736, and Acts 1996, Art. 75.2, p.560) is contrary to sound doctrine.

Grounds

1. The ordination/installation of women to "the office of elder, minister, or evangelist" is prohibited by Scripture (1 Timothy 2:12). Synod 1995 erred when it set aside a clear Scripture command (1 Tim. 2:12) when it opened the special offices of "elder, minister, and evangelist" to persons biblically prohibited from holding them (Acts of Synod 1995, Arts. 75 and 79, pp. 731-736). The inviolability of the passage is particularly incisive. God declares, "I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over the man." That this prohibition clearly is an abiding prohibition for the church today is apparent from its context. Scripture gives the reasons for that prohibition by declaring, "For Adam was formed first, then Eve" (v.13). He then states a second reason for the prohibition, namely, "For Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner" (v 14). Scripture thus grounds its forbidding of women to rule and teach in the church in the account of creation and the fall. And by grounding the prohibition in these events in the history of redemption, the prohibition is removed from the temporary and culturally conditioned to that of abiding requirement for the church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

2. The final authority in determining whether the special offices of "elder, minister, and evangelist" are open to women is Scripture alone.

a. "The supreme judge by which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and private spirits, are to be examined, and in whose sentence we are to rest, can be no other but the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scripture." (Westminster Confession of Faith I.10)

b. "The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself: and therefore, when there is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture

(which is not manifold, but one), it must be searched and known by other places that speak more clearly." (Westminster Confession of Faith I.9)

c. "We receive all these books, and these only, as holy and canonical, for the regulation, foundation, and confirmation of our faith; believing without doubt, all things contained in them...." (Belgic Confession V)

d. "... Therefore we reject with all our hearts whatsoever doth not agree with this infallible rule...." (Belgic Confession VII)

3. It is one of the hallmarks of the Reformed church that it has developed a self-conscious hermeneutic, especially in the area of church government and worship. That hermeneutic is the centuries-old Reformed "Regulative Principle", namely, that there must be positive warrant from Scripture for every element of doctrine, government, and worship in the church, that is, whatsoever in these spheres is not commanded in the Scriptures, either expressly or by good and necessary consequence therefrom, is forbidden.

a. "The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man's salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit or traditions of men. Nevertheless, we acknowledge the inward illumination of the Spirit of God to be necessary for the saving understanding of such things as are revealed in the Word: and that there are some circumstances concerning the worship of God, and government of the Church, common to human actions and societies, which are to be ordered by the light of nature, and Christian prudence, according to the general rules of the Word, which are always to be observed." (Westminster Confession of Faith I.6, emphasis added)

b. "The light of nature sheweth that there is a God, who hath lordship and sovereignty over all, is good, and doth good unto all, and is therefore to be feared, loved, praised, called upon, trusted in, and served, with all the heart, and with all the soul, and with all the might. But the acceptable way of worshipping the true God is instituted by Himself, and so limited by His own revealed will, that He may not be worshipped according to the imaginations and devices of men, or the suggestions of Satan, under any visible representation, or any other way not prescribed in the Holy Scripture." (Westminster Confession of Faith XXI.1, emphasis added)

c. "We believe that these Holy Scriptures fully contain the will of God, and that whatsoever man ought to believe unto salvation, is sufficiently taught therein. For since the whole manner of worship which God requires of us is written in [Holy Scriptures] at large, it is unlawful for any one, though an Apostle, to teach otherwise than we are now taught in the Holy Scriptures...." (Belgic Confession VII)

d. "Question 96: What does God require in the second commandment? Answer: That we in nowise make any image of God, nor worship him in any way other than he has commanded in his Word." (Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 96, emphasis added)

e. "Christ orders his church by the rule of his Word; the pattern of officers, ordinances, government, and discipline set forth in Scripture is therefore to be observed as the instruction of the Lord. Church government must conform to the scriptural pattern and follow the specific provisions revealed in the New Testament...." (OPC Form of Government I.3, emphasis added)

4. Christ has appointed a government in His Church, and governors and ministers thereto, whose authority to govern and minister rests solely upon Christ's appointment.

a. "We believe that this true Church must be governed by the spiritual policy which our Lord has taught us in his Word namely, that there must be Ministers or Pastors to preach the Word of God, and to administer the Sacraments; also elders and deacons, who, together with the pastors form the council of the Church; that by these means true religion may be preserved, and the true doctrine every where propagated, likewise transgressors punished and restrained by spiritual means; also that the poor and distressed may be relieved and comforted, according to their necessities. By these means every thing will be carried on in the Church in good order and decency, when faithful men are chosen, according to the rule prescribed by St. Paul to Timothy." (Belgic Confession XXX, emphasis added)

b. "We believe that the Ministers of God's Word, and the Elders and Deacons, ought to be chosen to their respective offices by a lawful election of the Church, with calling upon the name of the Lord, and in that order which the Word of God teacheth. Therefore every one must take heed not to intrude himself by indecent means, but is bound to wait till it shall please God to call him; that he may have testimony of his calling, and be certain that it is of the Lord...." (Belgic Confession XXXI, emphasis added)

c. "In the mean time we believe though it is useful and beneficial that those who are rulers of the Church institute and establish certain ordinances among themselves for maintaining the body of the Church; yet they ought studiously to take care that they do not depart from those things which Christ, our only master, hath instituted. And, therefore, we reject all human inventions, and all laws which man would introduce into the worship of God, thereby to bind and compel the conscience in any manner...." (Belgic Confession XXXII, emphasis added)

d. "The Lord Jesus, as King and Head of His Church, hath therein appointed a government, in the hand of Church officers...." (Westminster Confession of Faith XXX.1)

e. "To these officers, the keys of the kingdom of heaven are committed...." (Westminster Confession of Faith XXX.2)

f. "There is therefore but one King and Head of the church, the only Mediator between God and man, Jesus Christ, who rules in his church by his Word and Spirit. His mediatorial office includes all the offices in his church. It belongs to his majesty from his throne of glory not only to rule his church directly but also to use the ministry of men in ruling and teaching his church through his Word and Spirit, thus exercising through men his own authority and enforcing his own laws. The authority of all such ministerial office rests upon his appointment, who has ordained government in his church, revealed its nature to us in his Word, and promised his presence in the midst of his church as this government is exercised in his name." (OPC Form of Government I.2, emphasis added)

5. It is especially important that those who fill the pulpits in the church be there only by divine appointment.

a. "Question: By whom is the word of God to be preached? Answer: The word of God is to be preached only by such as are sufficiently gifted, and also duly approved and called to that office." (Westminster Larger Catechism Q&A. 158).

b. "The public reading of the Holy Scriptures [in public worship] is performed by the minister as God's servant...." (Directory for the Public Worship of God, III.2, emphasis added)

c. "In the sermon God addresses the congregation by the mouth of his servant [the minister]." (Directory for the Public Worship of God, III.3, emphasis added)

6. The qualifications for those who would hold special office in the church are part of the "all things necessary" (in Westminster Confession of Faith I.6, see above), and therefore are elemental ... not (merely) circumstantial ... to the worship and government of the Church. And Scripture is (as it must be for things which are elemental) sufficiently clear on the matter of whether women may hold the special offices of elder, minister, or evangelist.

7. Synod 1995 erred when it determined 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 based on the assertion that numerous presentations to synods have "adduced] good biblical grounds for [the two mutually contradictory] positions" (Acts of Synod 1995, Article 75, pages 731-32). Synod 1995's action does injury to the clarity and sufficiency of Scripture and to the infallible rule of its interpretation.

8. Synod 1995 further erred when it acted to change an element (the qualifications for special office) in the government and worship of the church without positive Scriptural warrant. We note that proponents of arguments proffered in favor of changing a teaching regarding the government and worship of the church which has been the established position of the godliest of saints for almost 2,000 years are themselves willing to claim no more than "rough epistemic parity" for their new interpretation. Such hermeneutic falls far short of the Regulative Principle which has been embraced by Reformed churches since the time of the Reformation itself.

9. As with other actions that violate a command of Scripture, the action of Synod 1995 to relegate an elemental matter (like qualification for special office) to a detail for "regional decision" is inherently destabilizing and unworkable, and ultimately proves to be divisive to the body of Christ. When a duly ordained minister of the Word enters the pulpit, is he there by divine appointment? But what if he is biblically disqualified (or prohibited) from holding that office, is he still divinely appointed to such? Should he be received by those in the congregation as such? Does the King and Head of the church entrust the exercise of the keys of the kingdom of heaven to persons whom he has previously barred from holding the office to which the exercise of such keys has been committed?

The action of Synod 1995, by corrupting the biblical qualifications for special office in the church, insinuates itself into the three areas of the church's life (preaching, sacraments, and discipline) that have been cataloged as the marks by which a true church is known.

a. "... The marks by which the true Church is known are these: If the pure doctrine of the gospel is preached therein; if she maintains the pure administration of the sacraments as instituted by Christ; if church discipline is exercised in punishing of sin; in short, if all things are managed according to the pure Word of God, all things contrary thereto rejected, and Jesus Christ acknowledged as the only Head of the Church...." (Belgic Confession XXIX)

b. "This catholic Church hath been sometimes more, sometimes less visible. And particular Churches, which are members thereof, are more or less pure, according as the doctrine of the Gospel is taught and embraced, ordinances administered, and public worship performed more or less purely in them." (Westminster Confession of Faith XXV.4)

C. Inform Synod 1997 of the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA) that: in spite of the seeming finality of the CRCNA decision on women in ruling and teaching office, the OPC pleads again with Synod to turn from the course on which the church has embarked, and return to full fellowship with the brothers and sisters in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

D. Instruct the Stated Clerk to inform the Christian Reformed Synod immediately of the above actions, including the grounds, with an appropriate cover letter.

We assure you that our decision has left us with a heavy heart even though we could do no other. If you do not know it there will be many ties of marriage and personal heartfelt fellowship that will remain between us and you may be certain that as a church our love and prayer for you will continue.

Yours in Christ,

Donald J. Duff, Stated Clerk

Communication 12: Presbyterian Church in America

STATED CLERK OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY
Reverend Paul R. Gilchrist, Ph.D.

BUSINESS ADMINISTRATOR
Ross E. Cook

OFFICE OF THE STATED CLERK, 1852 Century Place, Suite 190, Atlanta, Georgia 30345

(404) 320-3366 Fax (404) 329-1275
Email: info@ac.pca-atl.org

June 16, 1997

Dr. David H. Engelhard, General Secretary
Christian Reformed Church of North America
2850 Kalamazoo Avenue, SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49560-0500

FAX: 616-224-0834
And First Class Mail

Dear David:

Greetings to you and the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church of North America.

I am writing to convey to you the actions of the twenty-fifth General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America taken last week in Colorado Springs, regarding matters concerning the Christian Reformed Church.

As you are well aware, the PCA has viewed with increasing concern the decision of Synod 1995 to open the offices of minister and elder to women. We have seen this as the result of a subtle yet profound shift on the part of the CRC away from its historic commitment to the inerrancy of Scripture; and we have become convinced that you are now vulnerable to other departures from sound Biblical doctrine and practice.

Accordingly, the twenty-fifth General Assembly has made the following decision:

> "That the General Assembly terminate our recognition of the Christian Reformed Church as a church in ecclesiastical fellowship with the PCA effective immediately and the [Interchurch Relations Committee] be instructed to initiate conversations with the CRC with a view toward making a recommendation to the 26th General Assembly concerning the future relationship between the two denominations, but that Presbyteries and Sessions be encouraged to develop fellowship with the Classes and Congregations in the CRC which do not ordain women to ruling office."

You should also be aware that the General Assembly is determined to push ahead with the action we initiated at the last meeting of NAPARC to suspend the CRC from membership in that body, stating:

> "The General Assembly. . . directs the IRC that, if the CRC does not reverse the action of Synod 95 regarding women in office within a year of being suspended by NAPARC, at the next meeting of NAPARC the IRC shall introduce a motion that the CRC be expelled from NAPARC."

". . . for the WORD of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged SWORD, piercing even to the division of the soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the HEART."

Brothers, we take this action with a deep sense of sorrow. The CRC and the PCA have been staunch allies in the cause of the Gospel and have stood side by side as proponents of the Reformed faith since the PCA was organized in 1973. We feel the loss of this close association and grieve that this step has become necessary.

We do not wish for our relationship to end. The General Assembly has determined that the PCA's current categories of ecclesiastical relationships need to be clarified and updated and so we cannot say precisely from our perspective how our future relationship with you ought to be defined. However, if you are willing, we would request that we might begin to explore together how the CRC and the PCA may still maintain some constructive relationship. This we desire. Indeed, we wish and pray for the day when the full cordiality and fellowship we have enjoyed in he past may, by the gracious working of the Holy Spirit, be completely restored.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Paul R. Gilchrist
Stated Clerk of the General Assembly

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FINANCIAL REPORTS

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Operating Budget
Fiscal Year 1997-98

	Fiscal 95-96 Actual	Fiscal 96-96 Budget	Fiscal 96-97 Budget	Fiscal 97-98 Proposed
INCOME:				
Ministry Share	$4,439,796	4,420,000	4,463,350	4,463,350
% of Total Income	51.2%	55.8%	54.5%	53.0%
Other Gift Income:				
Ministry Support	3,368,820	3,098,250	3,170,750	3,545,750
Television	36,138	56,500	57,000	57,000
Total Gift Income	3,402,958	3,154,750	3,227,750	3,602,750
% of Total Income	39.2%	39.8%	39.4%	42.8%
Other Income:				
Legacies	691,561	200,000	350,000	200,000
Other	141,297	150,000	155,000	150,500
Total Other Income	832,858	350,000	505,000	350,500
% of Total Income	9.6%	4.4%	6.2%	4.2%
TOTAL INCOME	8,678,812	7,924,750	8,196,100	8,416,600
EXPENDITURES:				
Program Services:				
English	2,496,510	2,477,150	2,521,500	2,523,500
Spanish	317,916	337,000	352,000	361,000
Portuguese	435,045	311,500	367,000	456,000
Arabic	357,860	354,475	343,500	340,600
French	201,323	180,200	249,250	179,450
Indonesian	138,736	121,500	107,250	123,750
Japanese	543,412	561,000	571,000	577,500
Chinese	475,708	472,750	485,700	526,200
Russian	94,212	191,000	192,000	180,000
Television	2,049,102	2,012,500	2,072,836	2,017,500
Total Program Services	$7,109,824	$7,019,075	$7,262,036	7,285,500
% of Total	88.5%	88.6%	88.3%	86.6%
Support Services:				
Management & General	332,668	292,000	312,500	389,600
Fund-raising	557,435	560,000	602,400	693,500
Capital & Other	33,827	48,000	43,000	68,000
Total Support Services	923,930	900,000	957,900	1,131,100
% of Total	11.5%	11.4%	11.7%	13.4%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	8,033,754	7,919,075	8,219,936	8,416,600
NET SURPLUS (DEFICIT)	$641,858	5,676	(23,836)	0

Operating Budget
Fiscal Year 1997-98

	Fiscal 95-96 Actual	Fiscal 96-96 Budget	Fiscal 96-97 Budget	Fiscal 97-98 Proposed
INCOME:				
Ministry Share	$2,795,904	2,725,000	2,800,000	2,835,000
% of Total Income	6.1%	5.9%	5.4%	5.3%
Other Gift Income:				
Annual Fund	2,252,689	2,200,000	2,700,000	3,000,000
Other	66,098	71,000	0	5,000
Total Gift Income	2,318,787	2,271,000	2,700,000	3,005,000
% of Total Income	5.1%	4.9%	5.2%	5.6%
Other Income:				
Tuition	39,457,510	39,617,700	44,575,800	46,598,900
Other	1,270,865	1,457,200	1,457,200	1,350,500
Total Other Income	40,728,375	41,074,900	46,033,000	47,949,400
% of Total Income	88.8%	89.2%	89.3%	89.1%
TOTAL INCOME	**45,843,066**	**46,070,900**	**51,533,000**	**53,789,400**
EXPENDITURES:				
Program Services:				
Instructional	14,589,155	14,722,200	16,198,000	16,634,900
Research	191,352	194,500	197,400	167,200
Public Service	122,162	121,400	129,200	129,200
Academic Support	4,038,371	4,151,600	4,591,400	4,856,700
Student Services	3,272,454	3,454,300	3,612,800	3,864,300
Student Aid	10,036,809	10,453,100	11,853,600	12,704,700
Total Program Services	$32,250,303	$33,097,100	$36,582,400	38,157,000
% of Total	70.5%	71.8%	71.1%	70.9%
Support Services:				
Management & General	9,698,393	9,162,500	10,301,600	11,217,700
Fund-raising	952,233	772,800	848,300	935,600
Plant Operations	2,546,232	2,513,500	2,948,000	2,701,400
Debt Service	280,585	525,000	777,700	777,700
Total Support Services	13,477,443	12,973,800	14,875,600	15,632,400
% of Total	29.5%	28.2%	28.9%	29.1%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	**45,727,746**	**46,070,900**	**51,458,000**	**53,789,400**
NET SURPLUS (DEFICIT)	**$115,320**	**0**	**75,000**	**0**

Operating Budget
Fiscal Year 1997-98

	Fiscal 95-96 Actual	Fiscal 95-96 Budget	Fiscal 96-97 Budget	Fiscal 97-98 Proposed
INCOME:				
Ministry Share	$1,822,683	1,917,200	1,989,300	2,111,345
% of Total Income	53.0%	53.4%	52.8%	52.4%
Other Gift Income:				
Annual Fund	612,045	533,300	597,000	625,295
Other	92,286	55,000	99,750	115,800
Total Gift Income	704,331	588,300	696,750	741,095
% of Total Income	20.5%	16.4%	18.5%	18.4%
Other Income:				
Tuition	761,379	828,300	914,500	1,007,950
Other	151,865	257,100	162,000	168,000
Total Other Income	913,244	1,085,400	1,076,500	1,175,950
% of Total Income	26.5%	30.2%	28.6%	29.2%
TOTAL INCOME	3,440,258	3,590,900	3,762,550	4,028,390
EXPENDITURES:				
Program Services:				
Instructional	1,453,944	1,491,400	1,557,300	1,626,185
Public Service	93,886	73,800	77,500	83,650
Academic Support	372,747	363,000	383,100	409,635
Student Services	183,077	226,900	212,800	239,160
Student Aid	147,970	200,300	223,800	209,800
Total Program Services	$2,251,624	$2,355,400	$2,454,500	2,568,430
% of Total	65.2%	65.6%	65.2%	63.8%
Support Services:				
Management & General *	797,627	850,895	935,550	1,069,950
Fund-raising	175,282	175,705	168,800	158,810
Plant Operations	227,252	208,900	203,700	231,200
Other	0	0	0	0
Total Support Services	1,200,161	1,235,500	1,308,050	1,459,960
% of Total	34.8%	34.4%	34.8%	36.2%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	3,451,785	3,590,900	3,762,550	4,028,390
NET SURPLUS (DEFICIT)	($11,527)	0	0	0

* Management & General includes actual staff benefits of $512,456 for 1995/96. For 1997/98, the staff benefit budget is $519,700.

Operating Budget
Fiscal Year 1997-98

	Fiscal 95-96 Actual	Fiscal 95-96 Budget	Fiscal 96-97 Budget	Fiscal 97-98 Proposed
INCOME:				
Ministry Share	$219,000	$247,000	$221,000	$220,000
% of Total Income	3.3%	3.7%	3.3%	3.4%
Other Gift Income:				
Donations/Offerings	$259,000	$189,000	$125,000	$165,000
	0	0	0	0
Total Gift Income	$259,000	$189,000	$125,000	$165,000
% of Total Income	3.9%	2.8%	1.9%	2.5%
Other Income:				
Sales Revenue	$5,868,000	$6,074,000	$6,251,000	$5,985,000
Miscellaneous	280,000	194,000	126,000	114,000
Total Other Income	$6,148,000	$6,268,000	$6,377,000	$6,099,000
% of Total Income	92.8%	93.5%	94.9%	94.1%
TOTAL INCOME	$6,626,000	$6,704,000	$6,723,000	$6,484,000
EXPENDITURES:				
Program Services:				
Banner	$1,591,000	$1,558,000	$1,673,000	$1,224,000
Education (EWE)	3,936,000	3,938,000	3,919,000	3,799,000
World Lit Ministries	540,000	484,000	410,000	479,000
	0	0	0	0
Total Program Services	$6,067,000	$5,980,000	$6,002,000	$5,502,000
% of Total	92.9%	91.2%	91.3%	91.6%
Support Services:				
Management & General	$463,000	$576,000	$570,000	$502,000
	0	0	0	0
Total Support Services	$463,000	$576,000	$570,000	$502,000
% of Total	7.1%	8.8%	8.7%	8.4%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	$6,530,000	$6,556,000	$6,572,000	$6,004,000
Cummulative effect of an accounting change	$162,000			
NET SURPLUS (DEFICIT)	($66,000)	$148,000	$151,000	$480,000

Operating Budget
Fiscal Year 1997-98

	Fiscal 95-96 Actual	Fiscal 95-96 Budget	Fiscal 96-97 Budget	Fiscal 97-98 Proposed
INCOME:				
Ministry Share	$5,667,400	$5,800,000	$5,800,000	$5,500,000
% of Total Income	68.4%	67.7%	69.9%	67.5%
Other Gift Income:				
Missionary Support	$822,700	$800,000	$800,000	$700,000
Churches and Individuals	799,300	957,000	852,000	920,000
Total Gift Income	$1,622,000	$1,757,000	$1,652,000	$1,620,000
% of Total Income	19.6%	20.5%	19.9%	19.9%
Other Income:				
Legacies	$0	$250,000	$0	$135,000
Consulting, Conferences	329,500	373,000	352,000	390,000
Other	661,100	385,000	496,000	505,000
Total Other Income	$990,600	$1,008,000	$848,000	$1,030,000
% of Total Income	12.0%	11.8%	10.2%	12.6%
TOTAL INCOME	**$8,280,000**	**$8,565,000**	**$8,300,000**	**$8,150,000**
EXPENDITURES:				
Program Services:				
Est-Church Development	$2,094,900	$2,415,000	$2,331,000	$2,672,000
New-Church Development	4,780,600	4,950,000	4,847,000	4,803,000
Land Grants and Capital	229,700	25,000	25,000	25,000
Total Program Services	$7,105,200	$7,390,000	$7,203,000	$7,500,000
% of Total	86.9%	86.3%	86.8%	86.7%
Support Services:				
Management & General	$589,000	$650,000	$601,000	$649,000
Fund-raising	485,400	525,000	496,000	501,000
Total Support Services	$1,074,400	$1,175,000	$1,097,000	$1,150,000
% of Total	13.1%	13.7%	13.2%	13.3%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	**$8,179,600**	**$8,565,000**	**$8,300,000**	**$8,650,000**
NET SURPLUS (DEFICIT)	**$100,400**	**$0**	**$0**	**($500,000)**

Operating Budget
Fiscal Year 1997-98

	Fiscal 95-96 Actual	Fiscal 95-96 Budget	Fiscal 96-97 Budget	Fiscal 97-98 Proposed
INCOME:				
Ministry Share	$5,086,000	$4,930,000	$5,286,000	$4,912,000
% of Total Income	41.0%	40.4%	42.4%	39.6%
Other Gift Income:				
Above Ministry Share	$4,933,000	$4,722,000	$4,731,000	$4,970,000
Estate Gifts	410,000	574,000	565,000	586,000
Total Gift Income	$5,343,000	$5,296,000	$5,296,000	$5,556,000
% of Total Income	43.1%	43.4%	42.5%	44.8%
Other Income:				
Field Receipts	$1,876,000	$1,882,000	$1,798,000	$1,827,000
Miscellaneous	102,000	103,000	93,000	106,000
Total Other Income	$1,978,000	$1,985,000	$1,891,000	$1,933,000
% of Total Income	15.9%	16.3%	15.2%	15.6%
TOTAL INCOME	$12,407,000	$12,211,000	$12,473,000	$12,401,000
Transfers from Foundation	189,000	220,000	220,000	193,000
TOTAL INCOME & TRANSFERS	$12,596,000	$12,431,000	$12,693,000	$12,594,000
EXPENDITURES:				
Program Services:				
Africa	$2,714,000	$2,915,000	$2,873,000	$2,941,000
Asia	4,156,000	4,305,000	4,200,000	4,004,000
Latin America	3,267,000	3,284,000	3,518,000	3,326,000
Europe	475,000	441,000	448,000	463,000
Education	407,000	365,000	370,000	378,000
Total Program Services	$11,019,000	$11,310,000	$11,409,000	$11,112,000
% of Total	88.8%	88.8%	88.6%	87.8%
Support Services:				
Management & General	$782,000	$820,000	$839,000	$927,000
Fund-raising	604,000	611,000	631,000	619,000
Total Support Services	1,386,000	1,431,000	1,470,000	1,546,000
% of Total	11.2%	11.2%	11.4%	12.2%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	$12,405,000	$12,741,000	$12,879,000	$12,658,000
NET SURPLUS (DEFICIT)	$191,000	($310,000)	($186,000)	($64,000)

Operating Budget
Fiscal Year 1997-98

	Fiscal 95-96 Actual	Fiscal 95-96 Budget	Fiscal 96-97 Budget	Fiscal 97-98 Proposed
INCOME:				
Ministry Share	$0	$0	$0	$0
% pf Total Income	NA	NA	NA	NA
Other Gift Income:				
General	$7,133,000	$6,675,000	$7,176,000	$7,437,000
Disaster	623,000	619,000	609,000	659,000
Total Gift Income	$7,756,000	$7,294,000	$7,785,000	$8,096,000
% of Total Income	83.6%	81.0%	84.6%	86.4%
Other Income:				
Grants	$1,428,000	$1,668,000	$1,380,000	$1,230,000
Interest/Other	74,000	38,000	38,000	39,000
Total Other Income	$1,502,000	$1,706,000	$1,418,000	$1,269,000
% of Total Income	16.2%	19.0%	15.4%	13.6%
TOTAL INCOME	$9,258,000	$9,000,000	$9,203,000	$9,365,000
EXPENDITURES:				
Program Services:				
International	$5,110,000	$5,038,000	$5,091,000	$5,103,000
Domestic	1,164,000	1,197,000	1,189,000	1,214,000
Disaster	928,000	764,000	525,000	560,000
Grants	381,000	312,000	325,000	300,000
Total Program Services	$7,581,000	$7,311,000	$7,130,000	$7,177,000
% of Total	79.6%	79.2%	78.5%	77.7%
Support Services:				
Fund-raising	$1,027,000	$1,009,000	$1,018,000	$1,073,000
Management & General	878,000	896,000	923,000	878,000
Denominational Services	16,000	13,000	13,000	107,000
Operating Reserve	0	0	0	0
Total Support Services	$1,921,000	$1,918,000	$1,954,000	$2,058,000
% of Total	20.2%	20.8%	21.5%	22.3%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	$9,502,000	$9,229,000	$9,084,000	$9,235,000
NET SURPLUS (DEFICIT)	($244,000)	($229,000)	$119,000	$130,000

Christian Reformed Church Loan Fund, Inc., U.S.

Statement of Operations
Fiscal Year Ended December 31, 1994 and
Fiscal Eighteen Months Ended June 30, 1996

	1/01/94 to 12/31/94 Actual	1/01/95 to 6/30/96 Actual (18 months)
INCOME:		
Interest Income	$611,579	$1,127,449
EXPENDITURES:		
Interest	370,199	666,481
Payroll and fringe benefits	69,477	113,972
Provision for loan losses	50,000	100,500
Foreign currency adjustment		(16,058)
Administrative	27,134	49,913
	516,810	914,810
NET REVENUE	$94,769	$212,639

Operating Budget
Fiscal Year 1997-98

	Fiscal 95-96 Actual	Fiscal 96-98 Budget	Fiscal 96-97 Budget	Fiscal 97-98 Proposed
INCOME:				
Ministry Share	$1,564,291	1,539,187	1,539,187	1,648,159
% of Total Income	18.3%	21.4%	19.4%	18.8%
Other Gift Income:				
Individual Contributions	22,215	5,000	5,000	1,000
Free-to-Serve Project	250,000		629,919	0
Fellowship Fund	193,750	0	48,704	0
Total Gift Income	465,965	5,000	683,623	1,000
% of Total Income	5.4%	0.1%	8.6%	0.0%
Other Service Income:				
Product Services Revenue	4,900,973	5,079,250	4,939,000	4,927,267
Other services	755,615	538,872	769,849	2,171,590
Investment Income	572,494	0	0	0
Other Income	295,089	16,000	14,000	0
Total Other Income	6,524,171	5,634,122	5,722,849	7,098,857
% of Total Income	76.3%	78.5%	72.0%	81.1%
TOTAL INCOME	8,554,427	7,178,309	7,945,659	8,748,016
EXPENDITURES:				
Cost of Services:				
General Management	628,952	497,576	503,977	315,816
Investment Interest Expense	374,617			
Building Services	514,711	333,316	590,516	564,331
Bldg. Debt Interest	318,824	408,594	248,000	220,000
Resource Dev & Fellshp Fd.	72,516	18,365	48,704	49,020
Personnel & Benefits Adm.	98,961		302,562	336,558
Product Services Cost of Goods Sold	4,779,441	4,934,250	4,839,000	5,005,885
CSIS	514,962		272,586	287,176
Payroll Services		0	31,701	46,507
Central Finance Dept.			0	997,422
Other			0	2,000
Total Cost of Services	7,302,984.00	6,193,101.00	6,837,046.00	7,824,515.00
% of Total	86.0%	89.5%	82.6%	90.1%
Program Services:				
Synodical Services	381,053	389,058	435,199	511,017
Study Committees	26,830	25,000	40,000	30,000
Service Committees	133,760	129,477	147,951	97,223
Assistance & Grants	90,591	80,300	63,700	78,000
Education	98,635	68,955	96,632	108,972
Free-to-Serve Project	175,653	0	629,919	0
Korean Ministries	37,160	33,752	30,328	33,960
Fellowship Fund Grants	246,619			
Total Program Services	$1,190,301	726,542	1,443,729	859,172
% of Total	14.0%	10.5%	17.4%	9.9%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	$8,493,285	6,919,643	8,280,775	8,683,687
NET SURPLUS (DEFICIT)	$61,142	258,666	(335,116)	$64,329

Operating Budget
Fiscal Year 1997-98

	Fiscal 95-96 Actual	Fiscal 96-96 Budget	Fiscal 96-97 Budget	Fiscal 97-98 Proposed
INCOME:				
Ministry Share	$915,738	852,000	860,000	800,000
% of Total Income	96.3%	99.4%	99.5%	99.5%
Other Gift Income:				
Offerings & Gifts	830	3,000	1,000	1,000
% of Total Income	0.1%	0.4%	0.3%	0.3%
Other Income:				
Interest Income	6,366	2,000	7,000	5,000
Other	28,320			0
Total Other Income	34,686	2,000	7,000	5,000
% of Total Income	3.6%	0.2%	0.6%	0.6%
TOTAL INCOME	951,254	857,000	868,000	806,000
EXPENDITURES:				
Program Services:				
Subsidy Payments	750,450	757,500	710,000	670,000
Moving Expenses	7,520	16,000	15,500	15,000
Educational Allowances	4,974	7,000	7,000	7,000
Auto Reimbursement	53,732	70,000	60,000	65,000
Biennial Regional Conf.	0	0	5,000	25,000
Total Program Services	816,676	850,500	797,500	782,000
% of Total	96.5%	97.6%	97.8%	97.8%
Support Services:				
Management & General	12,136	21,000	16,000	16,000
Total Support Services	12,136	21,000	16,000	16,000
% of Total	1.5%	2.4%	2.2%	2.2%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	828,812	871,500	813,500	798,000
NET SURPLUS (DEFICIT)	122,442	(14,500)	54,500	8,000

Operating Budget
Fiscal Year 1997-98

	Fiscal 95-96 Actual	Fiscal 96-96 Budget	Fiscal 96-97 Budget	Fiscal 97-98 Proposed
INCOME:				
Ministry Share	$1,122,650	1,081,839	1,081,839	979,531
% of Total Income	85.2%	86.2%	87.2%	86.0%
Other Gift Income:				
Voluntary Contributions	165,078	171,978	158,920	158,920
Total Gift Income	165,078	171,978	158,920	158,920
% of Total Income	12.5%	13.7%	12.8%	14.0%
Other Income:				
Legacies	0	0	0	0
Other Income	30,000	500	0	0
Total Other Income	30,000	500	0	0
% of Total Income	2.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
TOTAL INCOME	1,317,728	1,254,317	1,240,759	1,138,451
EXPENDITURES:				
Program Services:				
Chaplain	420,333	423,061	374,895	147,993
Race Relations	241,207	259,689	245,379	245,496
Disability Concerns	119,794	115,228	115,583	110,453
Pastor-Church Relations	123,732	117,162	67,989	127,039
Abuse Prevention	55,423	50,133	45,923	84,383
Total Program Services	960,489	965,273	849,769	715,364
% of Total	79.2%	77.0%	68.5%	62.8%
Support Services:				
Management & General	223,110	250,160	351,408	296,319
Fund-raising	29,724	38,884	39,582	126,768
Total Support Services	252,835	289,044	390,990	423,087
% of Total	20.8%	23.0%	31.5%	37.2%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	1,213,324	1,254,317	1,240,759	1,138,451
NET SURPLUS (DEFICIT)	$104,404	0	0	0

Operating Budget
Fiscal Year 1997-98

	CANADA (CAN $)	UNITED STATES (US $)	Combined (US $)
INCOME:			
Per Member (>18 years old) Assessments:	$681,891	$1,853,703	$2,355,093
% of Total Income	80.6%	72.7%	74.2%
Participant Assessments:	$163,632	$697,697	$818,015
% of Total Income	19.4%	27.3%	25.8%
TOTAL INCOME	**$845,523**	**$2,551,400**	**$3,173,108**
EXPENDITURES AND ACCRUED LIABILITIES:			
Program Services:			
Actuary-Determined Pension Cost *	$720,523	$2,251,400	$2,781,197
% of Total	85.2%	88.2%	87.6%
Support Services:			
Allocated Fees	$35,000	$75,000	$100,735
Investment/Advisory Fees	75,000	200,000	255,147
Other Expenses	15,000	25,000	36,029
Total Support Services	$125,000	$300,000	$391,911
% of Total	14.8%	11.8%	12.4%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	**$845,523**	**$2,551,400**	**$3,173,108**
NET SURPLUS (DEFICIT)	**$0**	**$0**	**$0**

* "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 December 1996.

REPORT OF SYNOD 1997

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SYNODICAL SERVICE OF PRAYER AND PRAISE 1997

Sunday, June 15, 1997 - 4:00 P.M.
Pillar Christian Reformed Church
Holland, Michigan

God's People Gather

Prelude ..... "Toccata on Psalm 146"
Jan Swart

Choral Introit ..... "Amazing Grace"
Dale Grotenhuis

*God's Greeting and Welcome

*Opening Hymn ..... "Praise the Lord! Sing Hallelujah"
Psalter Hymnal 146

To Offer Praise and Prayer

A Mission Litany

As people called by God,

We gather to praise God, listen to him, and respond.
Sing joyfully to the Lord . . . sing to him a new song; play skillfully, and shout for joy. For the word of the Lord is right and true; he is faithful in all he does. (Psalm 33:1, 3, 4)

We nurture each other in faith and obedience to Christ.
The plans of the Lord stand firm forever, the purposes of his heart through all generations . . . he who forms the hearts of all, who considers everything they do. (Psalm 33: 11, 15)

We love and care for one another as God's people.
May your unfailing love rest upon us, O Lord, even as we put our hope in you. (Psalm 33:22)

We commit ourselves to serve and to tell others about Jesus.
The eyes of the Lord are on those who fear him, on those whose hope is in his unfailing love. (Psalm 33:18-19)

We pursue God's justice and peace in every area of life.
The Lord loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of his unfailing love. (Psalm 33:5)

Therefore,
We wait in hope for the Lord; he is our help and our shield. In him our hearts rejoice, for we trust in his holy name. (Psalm 33:20-21)

Greetings from the
Reformed Church in America ..... The Rev. Dr. Elton J. Bruins
(North American Fraternal Delegate)

*Hymn of Praise ..... "Filled with the Spirit's Power"
Psalter Hymnal 417

Chaplaincy Ministries ..... The Rev. Jacob Heerema
(Director of Chaplaincy Ministries)

Prayer for Chaplains ..... Mr. Bernard Velthouse
(President of Council, Pillar CRC)

Greetings from the
Reformed Churches of Australia ..... The Rev. John W. Westendorp
(International Fraternal Delegate)

Choral Anthem ..... "God's Faithfulness"
Dale Grotenhuis

Hymn ..... "I Will Sing of the Mercies of the Lord Forever"
Psalter Hymnal 169, stanza one

To Hear God's Word Proclaimed

Scripture Lesson ..... Isaiah 43:16-21

Message ..... "Following a God on the Move"

Prayer for Synod ..... The Rev. Dr. John Luchies
(Minister of Pastoral Care, Pillar CRC)

*Hymn ..... "In God the Father I Believe"
Psalter Hymnal 518

To Celebrate What God Is Doing

Home Missions ..... The Rev. John Rozeboom
(Executive Director of Home Missions)

Prayer for Home Missions ..... Mrs. Margaret Kleis
(Member of Mission Outreach Committee, Pillar CRC)

World Missions ..... The Rev. Merle Den Bleyker
(Executive Director of World Missions)

Prayer for World Missions ..... Mrs. Gertrude Bomers
(Chairperson of Mission Outreach, Pillar CRC)

Calvin Theological Seminary ..... The Rev. Dr. James De Jong
(President of Calvin Theological Seminary)

Prayer for the Seminary and the Graduates ..... The Rev. Eugene Bradford
(Associate Pastor, Pillar CRC)

To Respond in Gratitude

*Hymn of Application ..... "Your Hand, O God, Has Guided"
Psalter Hymnal 509 (tune 502)

Offertory Prayer..... The Rev. Dr. Carl E. Zylstra
(*President of Dordt College*)

Offertory..... "Fantasia on Old Hundredth"
Pethel

Offering ..... Dordt College

To Go Forth in Service

*Doxology ..... "Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow"
Psalter Hymnal 637

*Benediction

Postlude..... "Fugue in C Minor"
J. S. Bach

Participants:

The Rev. Michael De Vries (senior pastor, Pillar CRC), preaching
Dale Grotenhuis, choral director
Katha Petroelje, piano
Miska Rynsburger, flute
Pillar Choir and Dordt alumni
Lynda Hakken, organ
John Swierenga and Bruce Formsma, trumpets

Delegates and invited guests enjoy fellowship and a light supper at the Hayworth Center following the service.

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MINUTES OF SYNOD 1997

SATURDAY AFTERNOON, JUNE 14, 1997
First Session

ARTICLE 1

President pro tem Rev. Michael De Vries, pastor of Pillar Christian Reformed Church, Holland, Michigan, the convening church, announces *Psalter Hymnal* 523, "Lord, You Give the Great Commission." He recognizes Howard Slenk, Calvin College professor emeritus, organist for the opening session.

The president pro tem reads from John 13:1-17 and announces *Psalter Hymnal* 291, "May the Mind of Christ, My Savior." He briefly addresses synod, explaining John's account of Jesus washing Peter's feet. He states, "You'll be blest not if you know what to do, but if you do it," and challenges the delegates to be men of integrity after the model of Jesus Christ, servants to one another. The president pro tem leads in prayer and announces *Psalter Hymnal* 601, "Jesu, Jesu, Fill Us with Your Love."

ARTICLE 2

The president pro tem introduces Dr. Gaylen Byker, president of Calvin College, who welcomes the delegates to the Calvin College campus and briefly addresses synod.

ARTICLE 3

The president pro tem requests the general secretary, Dr. David H. Engelhard, to call the roll of delegates; the credentials of the forty-seven classes indicate that the following delegates are present:

DELEGATES TO SYNOD 1997

Classis	Ministers	Elders
Alberta North	Cornelius Vriend	William Wildeboer
	Homer G. Samplonius	Bill Hulsman
Alberta South	Michael Reitsma	Leonard Bouwsema
	John R. Huizinga	Durk De Jong
Arizona	Frank E. Pott	Harry Molling
	Fred J. Walhof	Peter Hamstra
Atlantic Northeast	Stanley J. Vander Klay	John R. Knoops
	J. George Aupperlee	Bradley J. Gundlach
B.C. North-West	Jack S. Hielema	Garry Storteboom
	Leonard H. Batterink	Ken M. Vander Horst

Classis	Ministers	Elders
B.C. South-East	Harry C. Salomons	Ken Byl
	James R. Berry	John Dykshoorn
California South	Kenneth K. Cho	Keith A. Vander Pol
	Randal S. Lankheet	Peter M. Nanninga
Central California	Harold Hiemstra	Dirk Hoek
	Jack A. Huttinga	Darwin Houtsma
Chatham	John D. Hellinga	Ralph Vording
	Eric Pennings	Tom Sypkes
Chicago South	Paul A. Hansen	Don Holwerda
	Marvin P. Hoogland	Henry W. Washington
Columbia	Alvin J. Machiela	Ivan R. Imig
	Calvin J. Aardsma	James W. Piske
Eastern Canada	Norman A. Sennema	Henk Breimer
	Henry P. Kranenburg	H. Mitchell Bell
Florida	Gianni Gracia	Josue Abreu
	Michael H. Van Hofwegen	Donald R. Vande Polder
Georgetown	Marvin W. Heyboer	Jerry Van Solkema
	Duane E. Tinklenberg	Thomas R. Vander Hulst
Grand Rapids East	David H. Beelen	Bert Bratt
	Jack Roeda	Ken Andree
Grand Rapids North	Edward J. Blankespoor	Mark A. Witte
	Fred J. Van Dyk	Donald F. Oosterhouse
Grand Rapids South	Ronald L. Fynewever	Dan L. Buist
	Ronald G. Kool	Jack Bloem
Grandville	Daniel B. Mouw	Marion J. Vos
	John P. Gorter	Irving H. Poelman
Greater Los Angeles	Daniel J. Brink	Arthur E. De Jong
	John W. De Vries	Arnold D. Westra
Hackensack	John A. Algera	Edwin Arevalo
	Trevor A. Rubingh	Charles A. Mast
Hamilton	Peter A. Hoytema	Peter Lenters
	Jacob Kerkhof	Benjamin J. Ponsen
Heartland	Randall R. Bergsma	Fred Krommendyk
	Gary L. Luurtsema	John Van Ballegooyen
Holland	Wayne A. Brouwer	Sander De Haan
	Michael De Vries	Eugene D. Westra
Hudson	David D. Poolman	Albert G. De Roo
	Wesley Van Dyk	Bernard W. Tolsma
Huron	Ronald V. Luchies	Harry H. Sjaarda
	Jack De Vries	Jerry Van Dyk
Iakota	Stanley R. Scripps	Arnold Feekes
	Roger W. Sparks	Albert L. Kuipers
Illiana	Thomas J. Kok	Vernon J. Boerman
	Herman J. Schutt	Donald Dykstra
Kalamazoo	Kenneth A. Baker	Leonard D. Klok
	Neal R. Rylaarsdam	Louis J. Meinema
Lake Erie	Clayton G. Libolt	Paul R. Bouman
	Emmett A. Harrison	Joe Post
Lake Superior	Gerrit J. Bomhof	Rob R. Braun
	Thomas K. Groelsema	Marten Posthumus
Minnesota South	Jerry D. Buwalda	Marlin D. Van Schepen
	Timothy J. Brown	Darrel Tinklenberg
Muskegon	Larry D. Baar	Al T. Wezeman
	Leslie D. Van Dyke	Jess J. De Young
Niagara	Donald W. Cowart	Brian van Staalduinen
	Henry Vander Beek	Cornelis Van Soelen
Northcentral Iowa	Henry Dykema	Clarence R. Henze
	Thomas J. Vos	Kenneth E. Muyskens

Classis	Ministers	Elders
Northern Illinois	John J. Wiegers	Peter Roeters
	Fred A. De Jong	David W. Bakker
Northern Michigan	Thomas A. De Does	Wilfred Hoekwater
	John Rop, Jr.	David D. Westmaas
Pacific Hanmi	Ike Chang	David W. Yang
	Moses I. Jeong	Hyo Won Chang
Pacific Northwest	Thomas L. Haan	Gary L. Van Hulzen
	Gerard Van Groningen, Jr.	Stephen G. Donovan
Pella	Thomas R. Dykstra	Paul E. Vos
	Robert J. Timmer	James P. Jonker
Quinte	Ed W. Visser	Lawrence J. Lutgendorf
	H. Charles Kooger	Andy Buwalda
Red Mesa	Stanley A. Jim	Bobby L. Boyd
	W. Keith Bulthuis	Jack B. Davis
Rocky Mountain	Clair Vander Neut	John Molegraaf
	William Verhoef	W. Dean Dyk
Thornapple Valley	William J. Renkema	Julius Kuiper
	Norman L. Meyer	Andrew Tiesenga
Toronto	Nick C. Overduin	George Vandervelde
	John Tenyenhuis	Jan H. Ottevangers
Wisconsin	Larry L. Meyer	Steven M. Baas
	Martin Toonstra	Robert M. Brenton
Yellowstone	Jacob C. Weeda	Louis Regnerus
	Gary G. Hofland	Leon H. Smit
Zeeland	Ronald J. Meyer	Harry J. Mulder
	James E. De Vries	Paul Wagenmaker

The roll call indicates that the following delegates are absent: Rev. Gianna Gracia and Elder Josue Abreu (Florida), Rev. Jack De Vries (Huron), Rev. John J. Wiegers (Northern Illinois), Rev. Thomas R. Dykstra (Pella), Elder Bobby Boyd (Red Mesa), Rev. Clair Vander Neut (Rocky Mountain), Rev. Nick C. Overduin (Toronto), Rev. Larry L. Meyer and Rev. Martin Toonstra (Wisconsin).

ARTICLE 4

The assembly proceeds to elect officers by ballot.

The following are elected:

President: Rev. Michael De Vries
Vice President: Rev. Wayne A. Brouwer
First Clerk: Elder Dr. George Vandervelde
Second Clerk: Rev. Norman L. Meyer

ARTICLE 5

The general secretary calls the attention of delegates and visitors to the following matters:

I. Taping of synodical sessions

Synod 1979 authorized the making of an official audio recording of the entire proceedings of the general sessions of synod. Although the general sessions of synod are recorded, executive sessions are not. Delegates to synod are informed at the opening session of synod that all the general sessions are

being taped. Synod has designated that the office of the general secretary be responsible for the use and storage of these materials.

II. Confidentiality of the executive sessions of synod

The Board of Trustees calls the matter of confidentiality to the attention of Synod 1997 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).

III. 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).

ARTICLE 6

The general secretary introduces and welcomes Rev. and Mrs. John W. Westendorp from the Reformed Churches of Australia, Rev. John P. Galbraith from the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, and Rev. Takashi Yoshida from the Reformed Church in Japan, who are serving as fraternal delegates.

Dr. James A. De Jong, president of Calvin Theological Seminary, welcomes and introduces the faculty advisers: Rev. Carl J. Bosma, Dr. Henry De Moor, Dr. Ronald J. Feenstra, Dr. Roger S. Greenway, Dr. Melvin D. Hugen, Dr. Calvin P. Van Reken, Dr. Jeffrey A.D. Weima, and Dr. Henry Zwaanstra. (Dr. De Jong also serves as a faculty adviser.)

The general secretary welcomes and introduces the ethnic advisers: Mr. Bing Goei, Mr. Johnny Harvey, Mr. Socheth Na, and Rev. Reginald Smith. Rev. Paul S. Lam and Rev. Luis Pellecer will also serve.

Mrs. Eileen Christofferson is introduced to synod by the general secretary. She is serving as a prayer intercessor at synod, representing Classis Rocky Mountain.

The executive director of ministries introduces agency directors and staff that are present: Ms. Norma Coleman, personnel director; Ms. Beth Swagman, director of Abuse Prevention and executive director of Pastoral Ministries; Mr. Kenneth J. Horjus, director of finance and administration; Rev. John Suk, editor of *The Banner;* Mr. Gary Mulder, executive director of CRC Publications; Rev. John Rozeboom, executive director of Home Missions.

ARTICLE 7

The following schedule is adopted: morning session, 8:00-11:45; afternoon, 1:15-5:15; evening, 7:00-10:00; coffee breaks at 9:45 a.m. and 3:00 p.m.

ARTICLE 8

The general secretary presents the Agenda Directory for Synod 1997, which contains a complete listing of every matter on the agenda that requires synodical action. He indicates where the materials may be found and to which advisory committee each item has been assigned.

ARTICLE 9

The general secretary presents the report of the Program Committee, which recommends the following advisory committees for Synod 1997:

Committee 1—Synodical Services

Chairman: Harold Hiemstra; **reporter:** John Tenyenhuis; **ministers:** James R. Berry, Peter A. Hoytema, Moses I. Jeong, Daniel B. Mouw, Leslie D. Van Dyke; **elders:** Edwin Arevalo, Steven M. Baas, David W. Bakker, Hyo Won Chang, Donald Dykstra, Bill Hulsman, Ivan R. Imig.

Committee 2—Missions

Chairman: Daniel J. Brink; **reporter:** Michael H. Van Hofwegen; **ministers:** Ike Chang, Kenneth K. Cho, Henry Dykema, Michael Reitsma, Trevor A. Rubingh, Herman J. Schutt, David W. Yang; **elders:** H. Mitchell Bell, Ken Byl, James P. Jonker, Charles A. Mast, Marlin D. Van Schepen, Eugene D. Westra; **adviser:** Roger S. Greenway.

Committee 3—Education

Chairman: Duane A. Tinklenberg; **reporter:** Nick C. Overduin; **ministers:** John D. Hellinga, Ronald G. Kool, William J. Renkema, John Rop, Jr., Roger W. Sparks; **elders:** Jack Bloem, Peter Hamstra, Leonard D. Klok, John Molegraaf, Peter M. Nanninga, Paul Wagenmaker; **advisers:** Gaylen J. Byker, James A. De Jong, Bing Goei.

Committee 4—Publications

Chairman: James E. De Vries; **reporter:** Bert Bratt; **ministers:** Gary G. Hofland, Ronald V. Luchies, Larry L. Meyer, Neal R. Rylaarsdam, Thomas J. Vos, John J. Wiegers; **elders:** Paul R. Bouman, Jack B. Davis, Darwin Houtsma, Peter Lenters, Tom Sypkes, Al T. Wezeman; **adviser:** Henry Zwaanstra.

Committee 5—Pastoral Ministries

Chairman: Stanley J. Vander Klay; **reporter:** Homer G. Samplonius; **ministers:** Calvin J. Aardsma, Fred A. De Jong, Paul A. Hansen, Emmett A. Harrison, Jack S. Hielema, Stanley A. Jim; **elders:** W. Dean Dyk, John Van Ballegooyen, Keith A. Vander Pol, Jerry Van Dyk, David D. Westmaas, Mark A. Witte; **advisers:** Melvin D. Hugen, Paul S. Lam.

Committee 6—Financial Matters

Chairman: Henry W. Washington; **reporter:** Durk De Jong; **ministers:** Jerry D. Buwalda, John W. De Vries, Thomas K. Groelsema, Martin Toonstra, Fred J. Walhof; **elders:** Ken Andree, Jess J. De Young, Dirk Hoek, John R. Knoops, Julius Kuiper, Garry Storteboom, Darrel Tinklenberg, Jerry Van Solkema.

Committee 7—Interdenominational Matters

Chairman: William Wildeboer; **reporter:** John P. Gorter; **ministers:** David H. Beelen, Donald W. Cowart, Gianni Gracia, Marvin W. Heyboer, Marvin P. Hoogland, H. Charles Kooger; **elders:** Wilfred Hoekwater, Don Holwerda, Fred Krommendyk, Leon H. Smit, Andrew Tiesenga, Thomas R. Vander Hulst; **adviser:** Carl J. Bosma.

Committee 8—Appeals

Chairman: Clayton G. Libolt; **reporter:** Paul E. Vos; **ministers:** Gary L. Luurtsema, Ronald J. Meyer, Harry C. Salomons, Robert J. Timmer, Fred J. Van Dyk, Wesley Van Dyk; **elders:** Sander De Haan, John Dykshoorn, Harry J. Mulder, Jan H. Ottevangers, Donald R. Vande Polder, Cornelis Van Soelen, Arnold D. Westra, **adviser:** Calvin P. Van Reken.

Committee 9—Church Order I

Chairman: Ronald L. Fynewever; **reporter:** Leonard H. Batterink; **ministers:** J. George Aupperlee, Thomas A. De Does, Thomas J. Kok, David D. Poolman, William Verhoef; **elders:** Andy Buwalda, Albert G. De Roo, Arnold Feekes, Clarence R. Henze, Harry Molling, Irving H. Poelman, Louis Regnerus; **advisers:** Henry Zwaanstra, Johnny Harvey.

Committee 10—Church Order II

Chairman: Donald F. Oosterhouse; **reporter:** Gerrit J. Bomhof; **ministers:** John A. Algera, Larry D. Baar, Thomas R. Dykstra, Jack A. Huttinga, Gerard Van Groningen, Jr., Ed W. Visser; **elders:** Josue Abreu, Rob R. Braun, Albert L. Kuipers, Louis J. Meinema, Harry H. Sjaarda, Brian van Staalduinen; **advisers:** Henry De Moor, Socheth Na.

Committee 11—Inclusive Language for God

Chairman: Jake C. Weeda; **reporter:** Henry P. Kranenburg; **ministers:** Timothy J. Brown, W. Keith Bulthuis, Jack De Vries, Randal S. Lankheet, Frank E. Pott; **elders:** Vernon J. Boerman, Robert M. Brenton, Bradley J. Gundlach, James W. Piske, Peter Roeters, Ken M. Vander Horst; **advisers:** Ronald J. Feenstra, Luis Pellecer.

Advisory Committee 12—Canadian Structure

Chairman: Jacob (Jack) Kerkhof; **reporter:** Kenneth A. Baker; **ministers:** Eric Pennings, Stanley R. Scripps, Clair Vander Neut, Cornelius Vriend; **elders:** Leonard Bouwsema, Stephen G. Donovan, Lawrence J. Lutgendorf, Kenneth

E. Muyskens, Marten Posthumus, Bernard W. Tolsma, George Vandervelde, Ralph Vording; **adviser:** Jeffrey A.D. Weima.

Committee 13—Worship

Chairman: Edward J. Blankespoor; **reporter:** Jack Roeda; **ministers:** Randall R. Bergsma, Thomas L. Haan, John R. Huizinga, Alvin J. Machiela, Norman A. Sennema, Henry Vander Beek; **elders:** Bobby L. Boyd, Henk Breimer, Dan L. Buist, Arthur E. De Jong, Benjamin J. Ponsen, Joe Post, Gary L. Van Hulzen, Marion J. Vos; **advisers:** James A. De Jong, Reginald Smith.

Recommendation:

That synod adopt the Program Committee's report and the advisory committees for Synod 1997 as presented.

—*Adopted*

ARTICLE 10

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 11

The vice president of synod, Rev. Wayne A. Brouwer, leads the assembly in closing prayer, and synod adjourns at 6:10 p.m. It will reconvene on Monday at 8:00 a.m.

MONDAY MORNING, JUNE 16, 1997
Second Session

ARTICLE 12

Rev. Norman L. Meyer, second clerk, leads in opening prayer and reads from Psalm 46. He announces *Psalter Hymnal* 560, "Like a River Glorious."

The roll call indicates that Rev. Gianna Gracia and Elder Josue Abreu (Florida), Rev. Jack De Vries (Huron), Rev. John J. Wiegers (Northern Illinois), Rev. Thomas R. Dykstra (Pella), Elder Bobby Boyd (Red Mesa), Rev. Clair Vander Neut (Rocky Mountain), Rev. Nick C. Overduin (Toronto), and Rev. Larry L. Meyer and Rev. Martin Toonstra (Wisconsin) are present. They rise to express agreement with the forms of unity.

ARTICLE 13

The vice president of synod, Rev. Wayne A. Brouwer, expresses the appreciation of synod to Pillar Christian Reformed Church for serving as convening church for Synod 1997 and to Rev. Michael De Vries for his participation in the praise and prayer service and as president pro tem in the opening of synod. Rev. Brouwer also acknowledges the services of all others who participated in the prayer service and in the opening session of Synod 1997.

ARTICLE 14

The officers of synod present the following recommendations:

A. That an overture from Classis California South (Overture 39) requesting a waiver of certain candidacy requirements for a person in its region be received for placement on the agenda for synod and referred to Advisory Committee 3 for review and recommendation.

—*Adopted*

B. That an overture from Classis Columbia (Overture 40) requesting reaffirmation of commitment to the 1973 report on homosexuality, apologies for the GALA advertisement in *The Banner*, and policy changes for *Banner* advertising be received for placement on the agenda for synod and referred to Advisory Committee 4 for review and recommendation.

—*Adopted*

C. That an official communication from the Orthodox Presbyterian Church be received for placement on the agenda for synod and referred to Advisory Committee 7 for review and recommendation.

—*Adopted*

ARTICLE 15

Dr. James A. De Jong, president of Calvin Theological Seminary, introduces those present (together with their families) who will be declared candidates for the ministry of the Word.

President De Vries congratulates the candidates and their spouses and families. He addresses the candidates from Mark 4:26-29, the parable of the growing seed. He states, "As you are about to launch out in an active ministry role, first of all, don't take yourself too seriously. You plant the seed, the Word is proclaimed in Word and deed, and like the farmer, you rest a while. After a time the seed grows, and soon the harvest is come. Do take seriously the sowing and power of the seed. Once the seed is sown, let God and the Spirit do the work. Be lighthearted, believing that you'll do your best, you'll be faithful the Word, and you'll leave the rest to almighty God." He concludes, saying, "Our Father in heaven, thy kingdom come. Amen."

Rev. Brouwer, vice president, leads in prayer.

ARTICLE 16

The morning session is adjourned at 8:45 a.m. so that delegates can continue to work in advisory committees. Synod will reconvene at 7:00 p.m.

MONDAY EVENING, JUNE 16, 1997
Third Session

ARTICLE 17

Rev. Trevor Rubingh reads from Revelation 19 and announces *Psalter Hymnal* 627, "Bless His Holy Name," as the opening prayer.

ARTICLE 18

The officers of synod recommend that the following resolution be adopted:

> The synod of the Christian Reformed Church, in session on June 16, 1997, conveys to the Reverend Calvin Bolt the following resolution of appreciation and encouragement:
>
> You have served the Christian Reformed denomination with exemplary leadership at congregational, classical, and synodical levels over the many years of your ministry. The confidence of God's people in your leadership has been publicly affirmed on a number of occasions when you were called to serve as president of synod. Always, through your wise counsel and compassionate spirit, you have earned our trust. Your integrity of character and humble strength have set a standard of service that inspires all who know you. We trust that the One who has guided you throughout your ministry will hold you securely through the dark valley you now walk. May the God of all comfort surround you and your family with the grace you need in this difficult time.
>
> We are honored to call you brother, mentor, and friend.

—*Adopted*

ARTICLE 19

The officers announce the following appointments:

Sergeant at Arms:
Elder Keith Vander Pol (Classis California South)

Devotions Committee:
Rev. John A. Algera (Classis Hackensack)
Elder Eugene D. Westra (Classis Holland)

Testimonial-Luncheon Committee:
Rev. Edward J. Blankespoor (Classis Grand Rapids North)
Elder George Vandervelde (Classis Toronto)
Elder Sander De Haan (Classis Holland)

ARTICLE 20

Advisory Committee 4, Publications, Elder Bert Bratt reporting, presents the following:

I. Historical Committee

A. *Material:* Historical Committee Report, pp. 220-21

B. *Recommendations*

1. That Dr. Henry Zwaanstra represent the committee when matters pertaining to its mandate come before synod.

—*Granted*

2. That synod approve the work of the committee.

—*Adopted*

II. Sermons for Reading Services Committee

A. Material: Sermons for Reading Services Committee Report, p. 251

B. Recommendations

1. That synod approve the publication of *The Living Word* for 1998 to provide sermons for reading services for the churches.

   —*Adopted*

2. That synod encourage churches and ministers to subscribe to this service for the benefit of churches and individuals.

   —*Adopted*

(The report of Advisory Committee 4 is continued in Article 34.)

ARTICLE 21

Advisory Committee 5, Pastoral Ministries, Rev. Stanley J. Vander Klay (for Rev. Homer G. Samplonius) reporting, presents the following:

I. Pastoral Ministries

A. Material: Pastoral Ministries Report, pp. 185-95

B. Observation

Pastoral Ministries became an agency of the Christian Reformed Church when Synod 1995 gathered five independent ministries into one agency. These five are Abuse Prevention, Chaplaincy Ministries, Disability Concerns, Pastor-Church Relations, and Race Relations. Each ministry is guided by a division director except Chaplaincy Ministries, which has both a Canadian and a U.S. director. The board of Pastoral Ministries, composed of fifteen members, oversees the growing work of all five divisions. Opportunities for ministry to the most vulnerable and hurting members of church and society continue to grow as cutbacks and the process of downsizing continue at many levels of state institutions. This year synod will be asked to fill five board positions as the first members of this young board complete their initial terms.

The executive director, the division directors, the board, and its chairman need the ongoing support, encouragement, and prayers of synod as they continue to work toward a fully integrated agency with a commonly shared vision.

C. Recommendations

1. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Rev. Charles Terpstra, chairman, and Ms. Beth Swagman, executive director, when Pastoral Ministries matters are discussed.

   —*Granted*

2. That synod encourage churches to celebrate All Nations Heritage Week from September 28 through October 4, 1998.

   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 especially as they celebrate worldwide communion in October.

b. The financial support that is received when congregations celebrate All Nations Heritage Sunday 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 65.)

ARTICLE 22

The evening session is adjourned at 7:25 p.m. so that delegates can continue to work in advisory committees. Synod will reconvene on Tuesday at 8:00 a.m. Rev. John A. Algera leads in closing prayer.

TUESDAY MORNING, June 17, 1997
Fourth Session

ARTICLE 23

Rev. Paul S. Lam reads from I Corinthians 15:20-28, 55-58 and announces *Psalter Hymnal* 405, "I Serve a Risen Savior." He leads in opening prayer.

The following delegates are appointed to review the minutes:

Elder Julius Kuiper
Elder Jan H. Ottevangers

The roll call indicates that all delegates are present.

The officers recommend that a communication received from the Presbyterian Church in America be placed on the agenda for synod.

—*Adopted*

ARTICLE 24

The general secretary presents Ballot 1, and delegates vote.

ARTICLE 25

Advisory Committee 3, Education, Rev. Nick C. Overduin reporting, presents the following:

I. Calvin College

A. Materials

1. Calvin College Report, pp. 70-72
2. Calvin College Supplement (except Section II), pp. 517-20

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; the secretary of the board, Rev. James Cooper; and the president of the college, Dr. Gaylen Byker, when matters pertaining to the college are presented.

—*Granted*

2. That synod ratify the following administrative appointment:

   Henry E. De Vries, Ph.D., Vice President for Information Services, for two years with faculty status.

   —*Adopted*

3. That synod ratify the following reappointments with tenure: (Italics indicate promotion to that rank.)

   a. Cheryl Kreykes Brandsen, M.S.W., Associate Professor of Sociology and Social Work.
   b. Kelly J. Clark, Ph.D., *Professor* of Philosophy.
   c. Karen Carlson Muyskens, Ph.D., *Professor* of Chemistry and Biochemistry.
   d. Mark A. Muyskens, Ph.D., *Professor* of Chemistry and Biochemistry.
   e. Edward Miller, Ph.D., Professor of Spanish.
   f. John T. Netland, Ph.D., Associate Professor of English.
   g. Allen L. Shoemaker, Ph.D., Professor of Psychology.
   h. William R. Stevenson, Ph.D., Professor of Political Science.
   i. Yvonne H. Van Ee, Ph.D., Professor of Education.

   —*Adopted*

4. That synod ratify the appointment of James L. Kraai as Vice President for Administration and Finance for three years, effective July 1, 1997.

   —*Adopted*

5. That synod give appropriate recognition to the following for their service to Calvin College and the Christian Reformed Church and confer on them the titles listed:

   a. Martinus A. Bakker, Ph.D., Professor of Germanic Languages, Emeritus.
   b. Claude-Marie Baldwin-Vos, Ph.D., Professor of French, Emerita (September 1, 1996).
   c. Henry J. Baron, Ph.D., Professor of English, Emeritus.
   d. Wallace H. Bratt, Ph.D., Professor of Germanic Languages, Emeritus.
   e. Henry Holstege, Jr., Ph.D., Professor of Sociology, Emeritus.
   f. Albion J. Kromminga, Ph.D., Professor of Physics, Emeritus (December 31, 1996).
   g. Chris S. Overvoorde, M.F.A., Professor of Art, Emeritus.
   h. John H. Primus, Th.D., Professor of Religion and Theology, Emeritus.
   i. William H. Stronks, Ph.D., Director of Off-Campus Programs, Emeritus.
   j. Peter Vande Guchte, Ed.D., Professor of Business, Emeritus (January 31, 1997).
   k. Marjorie A. Viehl, Ph.D., Professor of Nursing, Emerita.
   l. Donald A. Vroon, M.A., Professor of Physical Education, Emeritus.
   m. Clarence P. Walhout, Ph.D., Professor of English, Emeritus.
   n. Jack Wiersma, Ph.D., Professor of Education, Emeritus (December 31, 1996).

   —*Adopted*

6. That synod ratify the following appointments to the board (terms to begin and end on the convening date of the first full board meeting following the meeting of synod):

a. Regional trustees

Region	Delegate	Alternate	Term
Farwest U.S. I	Rev. Jeffrey Dykema	Rev. John W. De Vries	1998
Farwest U.S. II	Mr. Charles A. Pasma	Dr. John Padmos	2000
Central U.S. I	Mr. Vernon Boerman	Mr. Gerald Baas	2000
Central U.S. II	Mrs. Miriam Schaafsma	Rev. Kenneth A. Baker	2000
Central U.S. III	Mr. Jack Postma	Dr. Roger Brummel	2000
Central U.S. IV	Rev. Edward Blankespoor	Mr. Marvin De Boer	2000
Central U.S. IV		Mr. William Knoester	2000
Eastern U.S.		Mr. Donald Sporn	2000
Eastern Canada II	Mr. Walter Neutel	Mrs. Susan Koppendrayer	2000

b. Alumni trustee

Ms. Janice Veenstra 2000

c. At-large trustees

Mrs. Cecilia Mereness 2000
Mr. Kenneth Olthoff 2000
Mr. Maurice Williams 2000

—*Adopted*

II. Calvin Theological Seminary

A. Materials

1. Calvin Theological Seminary Report, pp. 73-76
2. Calvin Theological Seminary Supplement (except Section II), pp. 521-22

B. Recommendations

1. That Rev. Gerry Heyboer, vice president of the seminary board, and Rev. Calvin Hoogendoorn, secretary, be given the privilege of the floor on seminary matters.

—*Granted*

2. That synod ratify the following faculty reappointments (advance in rank is indicated in italics):

   a. Gary J. Bekker, *Professor* of Church Education and Missiology and Academic Dean, for two years, 1997-1999.
   b. Harry Boonstra, Theological Librarian and Assistant Library Director for Seminary-Related Matters, with indefinite tenure.
   c. Carl J. Bosma, Associate Professor of Old Testament, for two years, 1997-1999.
   d. Ronald J. Feenstra, Heritage Professor of Systematic and Philosophical Theology, with tenure.
   e. Arie C. Leder, *Professor* of Old Testament, with tenure.
   f. Craig Van Gelder, Professor of Domestic Missiology, for two years, 1997-1999.
   g. Jeffrey A.D. Weima, Associate Professor of New Testament, for two years, 1997-1999.

—*Adopted*

3. That the reappointment of Mr. Philip Vanden Berge, chief financial officer and treasurer of the seminary board, for two years (1997-1999) be approved.

—*Adopted*

4. That synod interview Mr. Michael J. Williams with a view to ratifying his appointment as assistant professor of Old Testament for three years, 1997-2000.

—*Adopted*

5. That this interview be scheduled for Tuesday, June 17, 1997, at 7:00 p.m. and be held according to the regulations adopted by synod (*Acts of Synod 1979*, pp. 69-70, Art. 60, II) and implemented as follows:

   a. That Rev. John D. Hellinga serve as primary questioner on behalf of synod for a maximum time of thirty minutes.
   b. That questions be allowed from the delegates for a maximum time of thirty minutes.
   c. That synod ratify the appointment of Michael J. Williams upon satisfactory interview.

—*Adopted*

6. That synod declare that, upon completion of the preparation stipulated by the seminary board, Mr. Williams will be eligible for call as associate pastor for the purpose of serving as a faculty member at Calvin Theological Seminary.

—*Adopted*

7. That synod approve the election of regional trustees and their alternates for the seminary board for terms beginning on July 1, 1997, and running for three years.

Region	Delegate	Alternate
Far West U.S. I	Rev. Donald J. Klompeen	Rev. Alfred Lindemulder
Far West U.S. II	Rev. Kenneth D. Koeman	Rev. James R. Kok
Great Plains	Dr. Carl E. Zylstra	Dr. Eugene Rubingh
	Dr. Dean Deppe	Rev. Roger D. Kramer
Central U.S. IV	Ms. Nell Vander Ark	Ms. Mary Brasser
Eastern Canada I	Mr. Martin Bosveld	Mr. Jack Geschiere

—*Adopted*

8. That synod declare the following as candidates for the ministry in the Christian Reformed Church, subject to completion of all requirements:

John G. Aukema
Martin A. Benckhuysen
Mark D. Bennink
Raymond A. Blacketer
Fred M. Bultman
Andrew Kyung-Jin Chun
Karl J. De Lange
Daniel De Vries
Shin Jae Hwang
Robert L. Knol
Joel C. Korenstra
Henry J. Lengkeek
Robert J. Loerts
Michael F. Miedema
Christopher P. Mitchell
Coleman S. Moore
Steven J. Mulder
Kevin J. Muyskens
David J. Nederhood
Johannes Schouten
Andrew R. Sytsma
Wayne A. Ten Harmsel
Colin Vander Ploeg
Arthur L. Verboon
Todd V. Wagenmaker
Andrew Yongil Yi

—*Adopted*

The following abstention statement is registered: "I abstain from the vote on Recommendation 8 (male candidates) on the basis of conscience because of the separation of male and female candidates.

Kenneth Andree (Grand Rapids East)

9. That synod declare the following as candidates for the ministry in the Christian Reformed Church, subject to completion of all requirements:

Amanda J. Wiersma Benckhuysen
Michelle R. A. Gritter
Eleanor M. Kredit Rietkerk

—*Adopted*

The following negative votes are registered:

Peter M. Nanninga (California South), Alvin Machiela and James Piske (Columbia), Fred Krommendyk (Heartland), Albert G. De Roo (Hudson), Leonard D. Klok (Kalamazoo), Rob R. Braun (Lake Superior), Fred A. De Jong (Northern Illinois), Hyo Won Chang, Ike Chang, Moses I. Jeong, David W. Yang (Pacific Hanmi), William J. Renkema and Andrew Tiesenga (Thornapple Valley), Martin Toonstra (Wisconsin), and Ronald J. Meyer and Paul Wagenmaker (Zeeland).

The following register their abstention on

Recommendation 9: Peter Hamstra and Harry Molling (Arizona), Bradley J. Gundlach (Atlantic Northeast), Fred J. Van Dyk (Grand Rapids North), Jack Bloem (Grand Rapids South), John Gorter (Grandville), Louis Meinema (Kalamazoo), Thomas K. Groelsema (Lake Superior), Donald W. Cowart and Henry Vander Beek (Niagara), Jerry Van Groningen, Jr. (Pacific Northwest), Thomas R. Dykstra, James P. Jonker, and Paul E. Vos (Pella), Robert M. Brenton and Steven M. Baas (Wisconsin).

10. That Munchul Kim be granted a one-year extension of his candidacy.

—*Adopted*

III. Youth-Ministry Committee

A. *Material:* Youth-Ministry Committee Report, pp. 214-19

B. *Recommendations*

1. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Youth-Ministry Committee chairperson, Rev. Jacob Heerema, and the chair-elect, Dr. Robert Keeley.

—*Granted*

2. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to the United Calvinist Youth division directors: Mrs. Jan Boone, GEMS Girls' Clubs director; Mr. Richard Broene, Cadet Corp director; Mr. Nate Vander Stelt, Early Teen Ministry director; and Rev. Brian Bosscher, Youth Unlimited director.

—Granted

IV. Christian colleges and institutions of higher learning

A. Materials

1. Dordt College Report, p. 255
2. Institute for Christian Studies Report, pp. 256-57
3. The King's University College Report, p. 258
4. Redeemer College Report, p. 259
5. Reformed Bible College Report, p. 260
6. Trinity Christian College Report, p. 261

B. Recommendations

1. That synod receive the reports of Dordt, ICS, King's, Redeemer, RBC, and Trinity with gratitude and prayer and praise to God.

—Adopted

2. That synod note with joy the increased enrollment and gifts at RBC and wish the new president, Dr. Nicholas V. Kroeze, God's blessing on his life and work.

—Adopted

3. That synod take note of decreased enrollment and some financial concerns at some of the Christian colleges.

—Adopted

4. That synod urge young people of the CRC to seriously consider Christian higher education.

—Adopted

5. That synod wish the new president of Trinity Christian College, Dr. A.J. Anglin, God's blessing on his life and work.

—Adopted

V. Response to Overture 14: Declare Dr. Bouma's Position on Abortion Contrary to CRC Position; Instruct Dr. Bouma to Comply; Instruct Calvin College Board of Trustees to Ensure Compliance

A. Material: Overture 14, pp. 443-45

B. Recommendation

That synod not accede to Overture 14.

Grounds:

1. The committee studied Overture 14 for quite some time and eventually concluded that it does not provide sufficient new grounds.
2. The committee notes that there is considerable merit in Overture 15, which is not specifically on this committee's agenda but which could serve as a partial answer to Classis Heartland's concerns in Overture 14 and to concerns which also exist within the committee and in the church.

3. The committee acknowledges what was said in *Acts of Synod 1996*, p. 528:

> 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.
>
> —*Adopted*

The following negative votes with statement are registered:

Each delegate of Classis California South records his negative vote on the decision *not* to declare Professor Hessel Bouma's views on abortion contrary to the official position of the CRC. He and others in the book *Christian Faith, Health, and Medical Practice* (Eerdmans, 1989) state, "... we would recommend abortion on genetic grounds in those cases in which the fetus is not a potential person because deformities prevent it from coming even close to having God-imaging capacities" (p. 227). In our opinion, this statement (and others in that book) are unbiblical and are contrary to the CRC's position on abortion as stated in the *Acts of Synod 1972* and elsewhere.

Kenneth K. Cho, Randal S. Lankheet,
Peter M. Nanninga, Keith A. Vander Pol

VI. Response to Overture 39: Grant Waiver for Potential Ministerial Candidate

A. *Material:* Overture 39

B. *Overture*
Classis California South overtures synod to

1. Waive the requirement for residence at Calvin Theological Seminary for one semester of study in the case of Mr. Mark Bruursema under the adjusted SPMC program for those over 40 years of age.

2. Allow Mr. Bruursema to take the one unfulfilled requirement for a course in Christian Reformed church history under the direction of two Christian Reformed minister-professors locally.

3. Declare Mr. Mark Bruursema a candidate eligible for a call in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

Grounds:

a. Mr. Bruursema has completed all required courses for the M.Div. degree except for the course in Christian Reformed church history.
b. He attended Calvin Theological Seminary for one year in 1985-1986.
c. He finished all the requirements for a preseminary degree at Calvin College.
d. He received the M.Div. degree from Westminster Seminary West in California.
e. He has extensive experience in ministry: he has served as a church planter and pastor for four years in a sister church, the Presbyterian Church of Victoria, Australia; has served almost two years as the unordained pastor of the San Marcos CRC; and has carried on the complete work of ministry for almost six years except for the administration of the sacraments.
f. There is a shortage of ministers available for call in the smaller churches of our denomination and classis.

g. It is a hardship both for the San Marcos church and Mr. Bruursema to interrupt his ongoing and successful ministry in San Marcos.

C. *Recommendation*

That synod not accede to Overture 39.

Ground: The adjusted SPMC program already makes allowance for some hardship.

—*Adopted*

(The report of Advisory Committee 3 is continued in Article 39.)

ARTICLE 26

Advisory Committee 8, Appeals, Elder Paul E. Vos reporting, presents the following:

I. Response to Overture 15: Provide Biblical Grounds for the Denominational Position on Abortion

A. *Material:* Overture 15, pp. 445-46

B. *Observations*

In 1993 Classis Hackensack overtured synod, requesting a committee to restudy the issue of abortion (Overture 10, *Agenda for Synod 1993*, pp. 283-86). Synod did not accede to this overture, citing two grounds:

1. 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.
2. There is sufficient material in the Reformed community to give guidance to our members on the issues surrounding abortion.

In 1996 Classis Wisconsin overtured synod, requesting that synod declare the position on abortion in the book *Christian Faith, Health, and Medical Practice* to be contrary to the position of the Christian Reformed Church. Synod responded with a set of observations, including the observations that neither the book nor the teaching of one of its authors, Professor Hessel Bouma, was in violation of Scripture or the creeds and that disagreement with a synodical decision is not a violation of Article 29 of the Church Order.

In Overture 15, Classis Wisconsin is asking that synod appoint a committee "to do a thorough study of the biblical texts, terms, and concepts relevant to the issue of abortion in order to provide synod with biblical and creedal grounds for its decision of 1972. Members should be appointed who fully support the decision of 1972."

Synod has repeatedly addressed this issue. The overture gives no new reasons why the decision of Synod 1993 should be reconsidered.

C. *Recommendation*

That synod not accede to Overture 15

Grounds:

1. Synod has previously addressed a request for a new study of the abortion issue (*Acts of Synod 1993*, p. 515).
2. If Classis Wisconsin believes that a better biblical and confessional case can be made for the decision of Synod 1972, the classis should bring

these materials to synod for consideration. Appointing a committee to reach a predetermined conclusion does not inspire confidence in the results of the committee nor respect the discipline of biblical study.

A motion is carried to table the advisory-committee report in order to consider Overture 15.

Recommendation:

That synod appoint a study committee to do a thorough study of the biblical texts, terms, and concepts relevant to the issue of abortion in order to provide synod with biblical and creedal grounds for its decision of 1972. Members should be appointed who fully support the decision of 1972.

Grounds:

1. Abortion continues to be a burning issue in society and a key issue for Christian reflection and action.
2. Biblical and creedal grounds have never been provided for synod's decision on this important issue.
3. Although various members of the Reformed community have written on the subject of abortion, a decision of synod will have more authority in the denomination and will provide a more unified witness to society than that provided by various individuals.
4. The present overture differs from that of 1993 because this overture does not ask synod to "restudy the issue of abortion" but to provide biblical and creedal grounds for its position.
5. The treatment of key texts, terms, and concepts relevant to the issue of abortion may also help to illuminate other current issues, such as euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide.

—*Defeated*

Note: Synod makes it known that this is not a vote on abortion but a vote on the need for a committee to study abortion. The synodical position of 1972 remains unchanged.

II. Response to Overture 13: Reaffirm Commitment to the Sanctity of Life

A. Materials

1. Overture 13, p. 443
2. *Acts of Synod 1972*, pp. 63-64

B. Background

President Clinton has once vetoed a ban on partial-birth abortions, and he is about to be faced with the issue again. Partial-birth abortion has received widespread condemnation, including a resolution adopted by the fifty-fifth annual meeting of the National Association of Evangelicals.

C. Recommendations

1. That synod reaffirm the unique value of all human life and condemn the practice of partial-birth abortion.

—*Adopted*

2. That synod instruct the general secretary of the CRCNA to send official correspondence to the President of the United States and to the Congress of the United States lamenting the presidential veto of the ban on partial-birth abortions and calling upon the government to enact legislation which would protect "the unique value of all human life" and prohibit "the wanton or arbitrary destruction of any human being at any stage in its development" (*Acts of Synod 1972*, pp. 63-64).

   Grounds:

   a. There is ample precedent for the officers to make official resolutions (Synod 1996) or to direct official correspondence to appropriate governments and their leaders (Synod 1988).
   b. President Clinton's earlier veto of a law banning the horrific act of partial-birth abortion makes such resolutions and correspondence especially timely.
   c. This action is consistent with the long-held position of the CRCNA.

   —*Adopted*

III. Overture 12: Appoint a Study Committee to Determine a Position on the Practice of Euthanasia

A. *Material:* Overture 12, pp. 442-43

B. *Background/observations*

The Committee for Contact with the Government (CCG) of the Council of the Christian Reformed Churches in Canada (CCRCC) drafted a discussion paper on euthanasia which was intended to be circulated to the churches for comment. The paper contained a statement which some have interpreted to include the recommendation of active euthanasia for a person in the late stages of terminal illness. The paper has since been revised and is presently in its second revision.

The practice of euthanasia is of great concern in the church and is inconsistent with the long-standing CRC position regarding the unique value of human life.

C. *Recommendations*

1. That synod not accede to Overture 12, which requests the appointment of a study committee regarding the practice of euthanasia.

   —*Adopted*

2. That synod invite the CCG to broaden its study to include exegetical material and the practical application of biblical principles for persons making decisions about death and dying and that the CCG make available future drafts of these materials to churches in the United States as well as Canada for evaluation and discussion.

   Ground: The CCG of the CCRCC is currently working on a study paper, which is into its third revision. For synod to set up a new study committee would be duplicative and not timely.

   —*Adopted*

IV. Appeal of Rev. Clarence Reyneveld

Synod enters into executive session.

A. Background

Rev. Clarence Reyneveld appeals the decision of Classis Pacific Northwest of March 5, 1997, to release him from active ministerial service in the Anacortes Christian Reformed Church by way of Article 17 of the Church Order. Specifically, Rev. Reyneveld asks synod to

1. Declare that the Anacortes CRC council hindered [him] from freely carrying out the duties which Article 12-a of the Church Order grants to a pastor of a congregation, namely, (a) to have supervision over fellow officebearers [and] (b) to see to it that everything is done decently and in order.

2. Declare that the church visitors assigned to Anacortes CRC failed to fulfill certain duties which Article 42 prescribes: namely, (a) to ascertain whether the officebearers faithfully perform their duties and observe the provisions of the Church Order and (b) to help all with advice and assistance.

   Rev. Reyneveld cites a number of grounds supporting his requests.

B. Discussion

The advisory committee makes the following observations in response to Rev. Reyneveld's appeal:

1. Article 17 provides for separation without finding fault. Article 17 is available for situations in which there has been an irreparable breakdown of relationship between pastor and church and in which there is no reason for disciplinary action.

2. Classis Pacific Northwest, in its decision of March 5, 1997, did declare that certain corrective actions should be taken by the Anacortes council.

The appellant expressed concern about the proliferation of Article 17 separations. The advisory committee recognizes his concern, especially in small churches with financial concerns. An appeal, however, is not the proper way to address these broader concerns. The appellant also expressed concern about a former pastor's continuing to chair the Anacortes council. This concern was addressed by Classis Pacific Northwest. In addition, the appellant expressed concern about the regional pastor's serving as a church visitor. The advisory committee recognizes that there may be dangers associated with this practice.

C. Recommendation

That synod not sustain the appeal of Rev. Clarence Reyneveld.

Grounds:

1. Classis Pacific Northwest heard the facts presented at the classis meeting and determined that an Article 17 separation was warranted. Synodical deputies concurred with this action.
2. Classis Pacific Northwest has already addressed certain irregularities in the conduct of the Anacortes council and in its own practice regarding church visitors.
3. The advisory committee reviewed the actions of Classis Pacific Northwest and agrees that an Article 17 separation is appropriate.

—Adopted

Synod returns to open session.

ARTICLE 27

Advisory Committee 2, Missions, Rev. Michael H. Van Hofwegen reporting, presents the following:

I. The Back to God Hour

A. *Material:* The Back to God Hour Report, pp. 65-69

B. *Observations*

1. We praise God for the proclamation of the gospel in nine languages through The Back to God Hour. We also pray for the Lord's provision in replacing several BTGH ministers. Radio broadcasting reaches many areas not easily reached by other means, especially geographically remote areas and areas where people are more likely to listen to the gospel in private than in public.

2. A major review of "Faith 20" television programming has taken place. Because of tremendous competition and a growing realization that a different format would be more effective, The Back to God Hour Board has decided to terminate "Faith 20" in the United States on June 28, 1997. Limited broadcasting of previously recorded programs will continue in Canada. The Back to God Hour is now in the process of developing a new, magazine-type format for television to begin broadcasting in the fall of 1998. This program will be more closely tied to local churches than "Faith 20" was.

C. *Recommendation*

That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Rev. John Bylsma, president; Mr. John Kuyers, executive director; and Dr. Calvin L. Bremer, director of ministries, when Back to God Hour matters are discussed.

—*Granted*

II. Home Missions

A. *Material:* Christian Reformed Home Missions Report, pp. 145-58

B. *Observation*

We give thanks to God for the broad range of ministry carried out by Christian Reformed Home Missions. We especially rejoice that 25,500 persons have been received into the CRC through evangelism since 1988. We also note with gratitude that 168 new churches have been started since 1988, more than half of which are multiethnic. The greatest challenge reported to this advisory committee is finding sufficient leadership to meet the opportunities that the Lord is presenting.

C. *Recommendations*

1. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Rev. Shawn Sikkema, president; Rev. John Rozeboom, executive director; and Mr. Jack Heinen, director of finance, when matters pertaining to Home Missions are discussed.

—*Granted*

2. That synod encourage all Christian Reformed churches to recognize Easter Sunday as a significant opportunity to take offerings for Christian Reformed Home Missions.

—*Adopted*

III. World Missions

A. *Material:* Christian Reformed World Missions Report, pp. 159-68

B. *Observation*

We give thanks to the Lord of the harvest for his abundant blessings in the ministries of 336 missionaries in thirty countries and for faithfully directing Christian Reformed World Missions in a time of transition. We especially praise God for the many years of service of Rev. William Van Tol as executive director and praise God that Rev. Merle Den Bleyker has replaced him as of April 1, 1997. We commend Rev. Den Bleyker and his family to the churches for prayer; he has been receiving chemotherapy for cancer since April and is responding well.

The vice president of synod, Rev. Wayne Brouwer, leads the assembly in prayer for Rev. Den Bleyker.

C. *Recommendations*

1. 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. Merle Den Bleyker, 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 express the appreciation of the church for the twelve years of service given by Rev. William Van Tol as the CRWM-International executive director.

—*Adopted*

3. That synod encourage all Christian Reformed churches to recognize Pentecost Sunday as a significant opportunity to take offerings for Christian Reformed World Missions.

—*Adopted*

4. That synod permit Rev. William Van Tol, who has concluded his service as CRWM-International executive director, to address synod briefly and Rev. Merle Den Bleyker, the new executive director, to present to synod missionary personnel who are on home service.

—*Adopted*

IV. Christian Reformed World Relief Committee

A. *Material:* Christian Reformed World Relief Committee Report, pp. 169-77

B. *Observation*

The programs and ministries of CRWRC continue to flourish as the Lord brings diverse people together in carrying out the vision of CRWRC. The advisory committee is encouraged by the movement from a pyramid type of

management style to self-managed teams that focus on collaboration and integration in both the planning and implementation of ministry. The movement toward and potential for greater interagency cooperation is also encouraging.

C. *Recommendations*

1. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Mr. Calvin Hulst, president of CRWRC-U.S.A.; Mr. Marvin De Vries, president of CRWRC-Canada; Mr. John De Haan, director of CRWRC-U.S.A.; and Mr. Wayne deJong, director of CRWRC-Canada, when CRWRC matters are discussed.

   —*Granted*

2. That CRWRC missionaries who are presently in North America be presented to and acknowledged by synod.

   —*Adopted*

3. That synod commend the work of mercy carried on by CRWRC and urge each church to take at least four offerings per year for CRWRC in lieu of ministry-share support.

   —*Adopted*

(The report of Advisory Committee 2 is continued in Article 35.)

ARTICLE 28

Advisory Committee 9, Church Order I, Rev. Leonard H. Batterink reporting, presents the following:

I. Adopt change in Article 36-a of the Church Order

A. *Material:* Board of Trustees Report (Section II, A, 5), p. 29

B. *Background*

Synod 1996 changed Article 36-a, which had specified that ministers shall "ordinarily" serve as president of the church council/consistory. The change was judged to be a "substantial" one, requiring the approval of a following synod, in keeping with Article 47 of the Church Order.

C. *Recommendation*

That synod adopt the proposed change in Church Order Article 36-a (II, A, 5):

> 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.

—*Adopted*

II. Proposed changes in Church Order Article 38 and the model Articles of Incorporation for member churches

A. *Material:* Board of Trustees Report (Sections II, A, 1), pp. 23-25

B. *Background*

In response to an overture from Classis Zeeland, Synod 1995 instructed the Board of Trustees to provide a legal review of the process being used by

churches leaving the denomination (*Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 697, Art. 51). The Board of Trustees has done so and now proposes three additions to Article 38 of the Church Order, one relating to churches disbanding or reverting to unorganized status, one relating to the merger of two or more councils and congregations, and one relating to a council deciding to disaffiliate from the denomination. It also proposes changes to the model Articles of Incorporation for member churches of the Christian Reformed Church. The changes appear under Section III of this committee's report.

C. *Recommendations*

1. That synod propose the following additions to Church Order Article 38 (II, A, 1).

   38-c: When a council and congregation decide to disband or revert to unorganized status, the approval of classis is required. If any distribution of assets is required, the congregation and council shall consult with classis.

   Grounds:
   a. Classis approves the formation of a council as part of the denomination; it is logical that it should also be involved in the dissolution of a congregation.
   b. A change of status may have an impact upon the classis through ministry shares. The requirement that classis approve of such changes maintains accountability.
   c. Assets of a congregation may come from substantial contributions by classis or other denominational agencies. The advice of classis in the distribution of assets will ensure some consideration of denominational agencies that may have provided funding.

   —*Adopted*

   38-d: When two or more councils and congregations decide to merge, the approval of classis is required.

   Ground: Classis approves the formation of a council; it is logical that classis be involved when the status or realignment of congregations is being considered.

   —*Adopted*

2. That synod adopt the following procedure for disaffiliation from the CRC:

   A local congregation may disaffiliate from the denomination only according to the following procedure:

   a. A church council which adopts a resolution to disaffiliate from the denomination shall inform its classis of its actions, ordinarily at the next scheduled meeting of classis. The council shall provide written grounds for its intention to withdraw.

   b. Classis shall appoint representatives to meet with the council to attempt to dissuade the council from such action. Representatives of classis shall have the opportunity to meet in person with the council and to present

written rebuttal to the council's grounds. Meetings between the council and classical representatives shall continue no longer than two months unless both parties agree to a continuation.

c. If the council is not dissuaded by the classical representatives and wishes to continue the disaffiliation process, the council shall issue a call for a congregational meeting. It will present together with this call its written grounds for disaffiliation and any written rebuttal presented by the classical representatives.

d. Representatives of classis shall be informed of the time and location of congregational meetings at which a congregation's withdrawal from the denomination is being considered and shall be given opportunity to persuade the congregation to remain within the denomination.

e. At the congregational meeting a preliminary vote may be taken following the discussion. If a majority favors withdrawal, a second meeting to confirm this decision shall be scheduled no earlier than one month and no later than one year following.

f. If the second congregational vote favors disaffiliation and the council follows through on its decision to disaffiliate, classis shall provide for the pastoral care of those members who wish to remain within the denomination.

g. If the congregation wishes to disaffiliate from the denomination, classis (and synod upon appeal) shall settle any disputes between differing factions within the disaffiliating congregation. The separation will be complete when classis (or synod upon appeal) declares it acquiesces in the decision of the congregation to disaffiliate from the denomination.

Grounds:

1) This procedure is consistent with the teaching of I Corinthians 6 regarding believers' involvement in the settling of disputes.
2) This procedure is consistent with the legal need for structuring relationships involving church property so that the civil courts are not required to solve church disputes (cf. *Presbyterian Church v. Hull Church*, 393 US 440, 449 [1969]).
3) There is an urgent need for a policy on these matters.

—*Adopted*

The following negative vote with statement is registered:

I wish to record my negative vote on the Procedure for Disaffiliation from the CRC. Item C, 2, g represents a significant change in the Church Order regarding the governing relationship between a classis and a congregation. My motion to amend this to be a proposal to synod instead of being adopted was not supported.

Stephen G. Donovan (Pacific Northwest)

(The report of Advisory Committee 9 is continued in Article 33.)

ARTICLE 29

The morning session is adjourned; Elder Eugene D. Westra leads in closing prayer.

TUESDAY AFTERNOON, June 17, 1997
Fifth Session

ARTICLE 30

Dr. Roger S. Greenway announces *Psalter Hymnal* 510, "I Love Your Church, O Lord," and he reads from Colossians 1:24-29. He leads in opening prayer and announces *Psalter Hymnal* 501, "Oh, for a Thousand Tongues to Sing."

ARTICLE 31

Dr. James A. De Jong, president of Calvin Theological Seminary, briefly addresses synod. He challenges the delegates to encourage gifted young people to consider the ministry as their vocation. Dr. De Jong introduces Rev. Daniel Devadatta, director of recruitment/financial aid at Calvin Theological Seminary, who briefly addresses synod regarding the student body at the seminary. Delegates view a video that presents the academic offerings at the seminary and portrays the campus facilities, including the classrooms and the housing for seminary students.

ARTICLE 32

Rev. Duane A. Tinklenberg, chairman of Advisory Committee 3, introduces the following persons involved in youth ministry: Rev. Jake Heerema, retiring chairman of the Youth-Ministry Committee; Dr. Robert Keeley, newly elected chairman; Ms. Jan Boone, director of GEMS; Mr. Richard Broene, director of Cadets; Mr. Nate Vander Stelt, director of Early Teen Ministry; and Rev. Brian Bosscher, director of Youth Unlimited.

ARTICLE 33

(The report of Advisory Committee 9 is continued from Article 28.)

Advisory Committee 9, Church Order I, Rev. Leonard H. Batterink reporting, presents the following:

I. Proposed additions to Church Order Article 38-e (continued from Article 28, II)

A. Material: Board of Trustees Report (Section II, A, 1), pp. 23-25

B. Recommendations

1. That synod propose the following addition to Church Order Article 38:

   38-e: When a council decides to disaffiliate from the denomination, the set process for disaffiliation adopted by synod shall be followed.

   Grounds:

   a. Classis approves the formation of a council as part of the denomination; it is logical that classis be involved when a congregation leaves the denomination.
   b. The involvement of classis provides an ecclesiastical structure for hearing any disputes that may exist or be created in the disaffiliation. This arrangement is consistent with I Corinthians 6.

—Adopted

The following negative votes with statements are registered:

This motion seeks to change the Church Order in such a manner so as to nullify the primary role of the local congregation. This, in effect, makes the classis/synod the "trustee" of the local congregation.

Stephen G. Donovan (Pacific Northwest)

I record my negative vote on the proposed change to the Church Order Article 38-e and its proposed Supplement (Art. 28, II, C, 2, g above). I believe the procedures arising out of this change violate the ruling authority of the local consistory and move our denomination toward an un-Reformed and hierarchical model of church government.

Randal S. Lankheet (California South)

2. That synod declare, upon adoption of the above changes to Article 38-e of the Church Order by Synod 1998, that the adopted disaffiliation procedure become Church Order Supplement, Article 38-e (cf. Art. 28, II, C, 2, g above).

—*Adopted*

The following negative vote with statement is registered:

This vote reflects my vote on issues preceding and establishing the basis for this motion.

Stephen G. Donovan (Pacific Northwest)

II. Proposed changes in the model Articles of Incorporation for member churches

A. Materials

1. Board of Trustees Report (Section II, A, 1), pp. 25-28
2. Board of Trustees Supplement (Sections VI and VII, Appendix A, and Attachment B)

B. Background

Article VII of the current model of the Articles of Incorporation contains statements regarding ownership of, control over, and distribution of property. That article reads as follows:

> The ownership of all property, real or personal, acquired by this church shall be vested exclusively in this corporation, and title to the same shall be taken in its name alone.
>
> This corporation shall have exclusive control over all its temporalities, nor shall the exercise of its property rights through the lawful decisions of its council and/or congregation be subject to revision by the classis of which this church is a member or the synod of the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
>
> In the event of schism in this church, as defined by Article 153, *Acts of Synod 1970*, if a division of its property becomes necessary, this shall be done according to the scriptural injunction of I Corinthians 6. Every effort shall be made to achieve a just and fair division of property. To this end, counsel, assistance, and advice shall be sought first from the classis and synod, provided that if these ecclesiastical methods to not resolve the controversy, the church may seek the counsel, assistance, and advice of nonecclesiastical advisors and sources.
>
> (*Acts of Synod 1980*, p. 402)

C. Recommendations

1. That synod adopt the following replacement article concerning "Property":

PROPERTY

A. Manner in Which Held

All real and personal property shall be exclusively in furtherance of the purposes of this church as a member church of the Christian Reformed Church in North America and in furtherance of the principles of doctrine and ecclesiastical government outlined under Articles III and V of these Articles of Incorporation and interpreted by the classis of which the church is a member (the "classis"), subject to review on appeal by synod, consistent with the Church Order.

B. In the Event of Dissolution

In the event of the disbanding of this church and the dissolution of this corporation, the church's remaining assets, if any, after the payment of its debts and expenses, shall be conveyed as the board of trustees [i.e., council] may propose and as the affirmative vote of a majority of the members shall determine, subject to each of the following:

1. The classis must approve the disbanding of this church and the dissolution of this corporation.

2. The board of trustees shall consult with classis in formulating its proposal for property distribution.

3. The vote of the members shall be in accordance with the provisions of paragraph B of Article VII of these Articles of Incorporation.

4. All remaining assets must be distributed only to one or more organizations which qualify as exempt organizations under Section 501 (c) (3) of the Code.

C. In the Event of Consensual Division

In the event that a majority of the members of this church consensually agree to divide this church, with the consent of the classis, into two (2) or more member churches of the Christian Reformed Church in North America, all real and personal property of this corporation shall be distributed as a majority vote of the members determines in accordance with the provisions of paragraph B of Article VII of these Articles of Incorporation and subject to review by classis.

D. In the Event of Irreconcilable Division

In the event that the classis (or synod on appeal) determines that an irreconcilable division (schism) has occurred within this church, the confessing members of this church who, according to the exclusive determination of the classis (or synod on appeal), remain true to the purposes of this church as a member church of the Christian Reformed Church in North America and the principles of doctrine and ecclesiastical government outlined under Articles III and V of these Articles of Incorporation shall be the lawful congregation of this church and shall have the exclusive right to hold and enjoy the real and personal property of this church. Nothing in this Article VI shall prevent the classis (or

synod on appeal) from determining, in keeping with the scriptural injunction of I Corinthians 6, that more than one group of confessing members of this church are each a lawful congregation and dividing the real and personal property between the groups of members as classis (or synod on appeal) may determine.

Grounds:

a. The current Article VII is based on a congregationalist principle of church government which posits the absolute autonomy of the local congregation. Its introduction into our current model in 1970 was designed, among other things, to prevent the opposite extreme: a hierarchical principle whereby the ownership of a local congregation's assets is held by broader assemblies of a denomination. But neither of these extremes accurately reflects traditional Reformed principles of church government followed by the CRCNA. The latter has always posited a "relative autonomy" of the local congregation whereby the ownership and disposition of assets is indeed held and controlled by its members but the intervention in this area of broader assemblies on appeal or in case of serious difficulties is legitimate and to be honored.
b. The ambiguity in the current Article VII as to exactly who decides how to resolve disputes concerning property distribution upon irreconcilable division (schism) tends to drive the parties in such division in the direction of requesting a resolution from civil courts.
c. The current Article VII, providing as it does a pro rata distribution of property regardless of particular circumstances, has not prevented serious conflicts leading to irreconcilable division (schism) and may well have exacerbated such conflicts by ruling out the possibility of a settlement of disputes concerning distribution of assets by binding arbitration of broader assemblies.
d. The proposed article makes it more likely that church members will follow the directives of I Corinthians 6:1-8 and refrain from asking the civil courts to resolve their disputes.
e. The proposed article more clearly preserves the reasonable expectations of members present and past that their donations have been used and will be used in furtherance of the purposes of the church as a member church of the CRCNA.
f. The proposed article reflects the proposed changes to Article 38 of the Church Order.

—*Adopted*

The following negative vote with statement is registered:

This article, if incorporated by a congregational body, in effect makes the classis (or synod on appeal) the "trustee" of the local congregation.

Stephen G. Donovan (Pacific Northwest)

2. That synod approve the updated model Articles of Incorporation for the use of our congregations (see Appendix 1, *Agenda for Synod 1997*, pp. 41-44).

—*Adopted*

The following negative vote with statement is registered:

Please note, however, that this makes a distinct reference to the Articles of Incorporation as a "model."

Stephen G. Donovan (Pacific Northwest)

3. That synod include these revised model Articles of Incorporation in the Church Order as Supplement, Article 32-d.

   Grounds:
   a. This will make the synodical model more accessible to churches and classical church visitors on a continuing basis.
   b. Models, by their very nature, deserve a place in the Supplement rather than in the Church Order itself.

   —*Adopted*

The following negative vote with statement is registered:

I believe the Articles of Incorporation demand more serious consideration than they will get as a "Supplement" to the Church Order.

Stephen G. Donovan (Pacific Northwest)

4. That synod instruct the general secretary to send a biennial inquiry regarding the congregations' current articles of incorporation and to recommend that congregations adopt articles that faithfully reflect the model contained in Church Order Supplement, Article 32-d.

   Ground: This action encourages member congregations to keep current their articles of incorporation.

   —*Adopted*

The following negative vote with statement is registered:

This provision oversteps synod's authority in recommending and reportedly inquiring as to each local congregation's compliance.

Stephen G. Donovan (Pacific Northwest)

5. That synod require any congregation receiving financial assistance from synodical agencies (e.g., Fund for Smaller Churches, CRC Loan Fund, CR Home Missions) or newly affiliating with the CRC to have and maintain articles of incorporation that faithfully reflect the model adopted by synod and contained in Church Order Supplement, Article 32-d.

   Ground: This guarantees that all denominational grants will be used in furtherance of the purposes of the congregation as a member church of the CRCNA.

   —*Adopted*

The following negative vote with statement is registered:

This requirement exceeds the need expressed in the ground offered.

Stephen G. Donovan (Pacific Northwest)

6. That synod adopt the "Application for Incorporation for a Corporation without Share Capital Under Part II of the Canada Corporations Act" (see *Acts of Synod 1997*, pp. 509-12) as a model for Christian Reformed churches

in Canada to use when incorporating (see Board of Trustees Supplement, Section VI).

Grounds:
a. This form is recommended by legal counsel.
b. This form has already received approval from Industry Canada.
c. This form assists our churches to comply with Church Order Article 32-d.

—*Adopted*

The following negative vote with statement is registered:

All reasons previously offered apply.

Stephen G. Donovan (Pacific Northwest)

7. That synod approve the wording of the bylaw regarding "Property" and recommend that it be included in the operating bylaw of Christian Reformed churches in Ontario and serve as a guideline for the operating bylaw of congregations in other provinces (see *Acts of Synod 1997*, pp. 512-13).

Grounds:
a. It is recommended by legal counsel.
b. It has the substantial approval of the Ontario Public Trustee's office.

—*Adopted*

The following negative vote with statement is registered:

All reasons previously offered apply.

Stephen G. Donovan (Pacific Northwest)

III. Response to Overture 24: Allow Classes to Seat Deacons at Classical Assemblies

A. Materials

1. Overture 24, pp. 459-66
2. Communication 4: Classis Lake Erie, pp. 494-95

B. Background

Synods have received overtures proposing the delegation of deacons to major assemblies for thirty-five years but have acceded to none. The response of Synod 1967 was typical. It declared that "the delegation of deacons to the major assemblies of the church is neither prohibited nor demanded by Scripture and the Reformed confessions," then agreed "not at the present time to move in the direction of delegating deacons to major assemblies" (*Acts of Synod 1967*, Art. 131, p. 93).

Classis Muskegon submitted overtures on this matter to synods in 1975 and 1976. In January 1978, the classis decided to delegate deacons to its meetings on a temporary, experimental basis. That decision was appealed by a church within Classis Muskegon, and synod in 1978 sustained the appeal.

In 1980 Classis Muskegon submitted a lengthy overture to synod, including a history of the issue in the Christian Reformed Church, an analysis of arguments in favor and against the delegation of deacons to the major assemblies, and a concrete plan for integrating the office into the functions of classis and

synod. At that time, however, the denomination was awaiting a study-committee report on the diaconate to decide the propriety of women serving in the office. Synod referred Classis Muskegon's overture to the study committee. Unfortunately, the report that emerged gave the matter no significant attention, and the issue was lost.

Classis Muskegon now asks for a fresh look at the issue, judging that "a new day" has come in the Christian Reformed Church. It argues that governance and service functions should not be separated from each other and notes "a growing awareness that a wholistic approach is essential in ministry."

In addition, Classis Lake Erie has sent a communication informing synod that it has been developing "a comprehensive classical vision and mission strategy statement." In that context, Classis Lake Erie has asked each council to delegate a minister, elder, and deacon to its meetings, believing that this new arrangement enhances its ministry.

C. *Recommendations*

1. That synod permit classes to seat deacons in addition to elders and ministers as delegates by adding the following supplement to Article 40-a of the Church Order:

> The council of each church shall delegate a deacon in addition to a minister and an elder, provided the classis approves of the delegation of deacons to its meetings. Deacons delegated to classis shall be given credentials identical to those given to ministers and elders. The gender of diaconal delegates to a classis shall be consistent with the decisions of that classis concerning the supplement to Article 3-a of the Church Order.

Grounds:

a. Previous synods have declared that the delegation of deacons to broader assemblies is prohibited neither by the Bible nor by the creeds of our denomination.
b. The unity and equality of offices (cf. Church Order Art. 85) supports the inclusion of deacons at the broader assemblies.
c. Integrated word and deed ministry presents a more effective witness to the world. A number of classes are restructuring to accomplish this goal. The delegation of deacons to their meetings will enable them to do so more fully.

—*Adopted*

The following negative votes with statements are registered:

This substantial and overwhelming change to our church government, rather than be proposed so that the churches may review it before deciding, has been treated as a mere parenthetical note by being offered as a supplement to our Church Order.

Stephen G. Donovan (Pacific Northwest)

Each of us records his negative vote on the decision to permit classes to delegate deacons to the meetings of classis. Not only does this decision find no biblical warrant as pertains to the diaconate; it also runs counter to 450-plus years of history in our Reformed and Presbyterian denominations.

Kenneth K. Cho, Randal S. Lankheet, Peter M. Nanninga, and Keith Vander Pol (California South)

2. That the Board of Trustees be instructed to devise an equitable system of voting for regional representatives to denominational boards to account for the differences in classical policy.

—*Adopted*

3. That synod declare the above to be its answer to Overture 24.

—*Adopted*

ARTICLE 34

(The report of Advisory Committee 4 is continued from Article 20.)

Advisory Committee 4, Publications, Elder Bert Bratt reporting, presents the following:

I. CRC Publications

A: Material: CRC Publications Report (excluding appendix re worship), pp. 77-93

B. Recommendation

That synod grant the privilege of the floor to the following people when matters of CRC Publications are discussed:

For the board
Rev. Stanley Mast, president
Mr. Fred Herfst, vice president
Mr. Gary Mulder, executive director

For *The Banner*
Rev. John F. Suk, editor in chief

For Education, Worship, and Evangelism
Rev. Robert De Moor, interim editor in chief

—*Granted*

II. Response to Overture 40: Declare Commitment to 1973 Report on Homosexuality and Require Apologies for and Policy Changes re the GALA Advertisement in *The Banner*

A. Material: Overture 40

B. Background

Overture 40 is a response from Classis Columbia to an advertisement placed in *The Banner* for a new organization called GALA. This ad has generated the fear that *The Banner* is sympathetic to homosexual behavior. The overture questions *The Banner*'s loyalty to the denominational position on homosexuality adopted in 1973 and reaffirmed in 1996. The overture requests apologies and implementation of procedures so that ads are consistent with denominational positions.

The advisory committee has reviewed the overture and met with the *Banner* editor and the director of CRC Publications.

C. Recommendations

1. That synod take note of the declaration of editor Rev. John Suk and the CRC Publications Board as follows:

> We are strongly committed to the letter and spirit of the biblical teaching embodied in the synodical report on homosexuality adopted by Synod 1973. We also support the mandate and efforts of the newly appointed synodical committee that has been asked to provide ways to minister more effectively to homosexual members. We commend the 1973 report to the churches and are confident that if that advice is followed, our churches can be havens of healing for all who seek Christ.

—*Adopted*

2. That synod accept the apologies made by the *Banner* editor and the director of CRC Publications. They acknowledge errors in judgment in this serious matter.

—*Adopted*

3. That synod direct the CRC Publications Board to draw up explicit guidelines for evaluating proposed ads for publication in *The Banner*. These guidelines are to be approved by the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA.

   Ground: There are presently no specific guidelines for ads, only guidelines for editorial material.

—*Adopted*

4. That synod designate the CRC Publications Board to respond to any further communications about the GALA ad.

   Ground: There are appropriate procedures in place for the CRC Publications Board to deal with such matters.

—*Adopted*

5. That synod declare this to be its answer to Overture 40.

—*Adopted*

III. Response to Overtures 17 and 18

A. Materials

1. Overture 17, pp. 446-47
2. Overture 18, pp. 447-48

B. Background

Classis of the Heartland overtures synod to revise the decision of Synod 1996 which confirmed Synod 1995's decision regarding the supplement added to Church Order Article 3 allowing 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.

C. Recommendation

That synod not accede to Overtures 17 and 18.

Grounds:

1. Synods 1995 and 1996 have addressed the objections raised.

2. Synod 1995 has declared the year 2000 as the time when the matter will be reviewed.

—*Adopted*

The following negative vote with statement is registered:

We as a synod should not act on this overture before hearing from the Interchurch Relations Committee. We are being called to account and seemingly refuse to listen.

Stephen G. Donovan (Pacific Northwest)

ARTICLE 35

(The report of Advisory Committee 2 is continued from Article 27.)

Advisory Committee 2, Missions, Rev. Michael H. Van Hofwegen reporting, presents the following:

Board of Trustees

A. Material: Board of Trustees Report, II, C, 3, pp. 38, and Appendix 2, pp. 45-61

B. Background

The denominational Vision and Mission Statement before us, along with the goals and strategies, has been five years in the making. They are the result of two rounds of listening conferences held in sixty-nine local churches throughout North America, feedback received from synodical delegates in 1993 and 1995, and input from agency boards, committees, and staff. Each denominational agency has expressed agreement with and commitment to these statements.

CRC members have had various opportunities to give input to this document. In addition to the listening conferences, input was solicited from every local church council. The document was modified several times as a result of feedback.

Synod is asked to approve the Vision and Mission Statement on page 45 of *Agenda for Synod 1997* and to give "concept endorsement" to the proposed goals and strategies found on pages 54-61. "Concept endorsement" means approval in principle, specifically with regard to the direction taken in these strategies. The agencies, under the oversight of their respective committees and the Board of Trustees, will work together with local churches in elaborating and implementing the specific strategies. The material contained in pages 46-53 is a resource for the churches.

Note that the goals and strategies constitute a five-year plan, from 1997-2002. An evaluation will begin three years into the cycle so that a strategic-plan update can be completed by 2002. Annual reviews will also be conducted by the respective agencies and denominational staff.

C. Recommendation

That synod grant the privilege of the floor to executive director of ministries Dr. Peter Borgdorff and other members of the Ministries Coordinating Council (MCC) when the denominational Vision and Mission Statement is discussed.

—*Granted*

(The report of Advisory Committee 2 is continued in Article 43.)

ARTICLE 36

A thirty-minute presentation is made by the Committee to Study Structure for Ministry in Canada with Mr. Ben Vandezande (facilitator) and Dr. Shirley Roels as presenters. The Canadian-structure report will be discussed at the evening session.

ARTICLE 37

The afternoon session is adjourned; Mr. Bing Goei leads in closing prayer.

TUESDAY EVENING, June 17, 1997
Sixth Session

ARTICLE 38

Elder Sander De Haan reads from Romans 12:1-11and leads in opening prayer. He announces *Psalter Hymnal* 547, "Fill Thou My Life, O Lord, My God."

ARTICLE 39

(The report of Advisory Committee 3 is continued from Article 25.)

Seminary faculty appointment: Mr. Michael J. Williams

A. Material: Calvin Theological Seminary Report, pp. 74-75

Mr. Michael J. Williams, nominee for the position of assistant professor of Old Testament for three years, 1997-2000, is introduced to synod by Dr. James A. De Jong, president of Calvin Theological Seminary. Rev. John D. Hellinga interviews Mr. Williams, who also responds to questions from the floor.

B. Recommendation

That synod approve the appointment of Mr. Michael J. Williams as assistant professor of Old Testament for three years, 1997-2000.

—*Adopted*

The president of synod congratulates Mr. Williams. Mr. Williams responds.

The vice president assumes the chair.

ARTICLE 40

Advisory Committee 12, Canadian Structure, Rev. Kenneth A. Baker reporting, presents the following:

Structure for Ministry in Canada

A. Materials

1. Report of the Committee to Study Structure for Ministry in Canada (Phase 3), pp. 373-421
2. Overture 30, pp.480-81
3. Overture 31, pp. 481-82

4. Overture 32, pp. 482-85
5. Communication 2, pp. 489-90
6. Communication 6, pp. 495-96

B. *Observations*

1. Background

The process by which the report of the Committee to Study Structure for Ministry in Canada comes to synod is noteworthy because of the significant shift in direction which it reflects. What began in 1993 as a request for the establishment of a regional synod in Canada turned into a synodically mandated endeavor to develop and propose a structure for ministry in Canada that would honor the "truly binational" character of our denomination and would see the Council of the Christian Reformed Churches in Canada (CCRCC) "reconstitute itself as a Board of Canadian Ministries (BCM) . . . to coordinate and hold accountable all Canadian ministries of the CRC. . . ." Thus Synod 1995 set in motion the process which led to the proposed ministry structure that now appears before us. The study committee took up this ambitious task with serious intent and developed a structural model that is designed "to enhance, inspire, and equip the church to carry on its mission (locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally) most effectively" (*Agenda for Synod 1997*, p. 378).

2. Implementation

It must be understood that endorsement of the proposed recommendations does not entail implementation of a final product, but implementation of a process. Furthermore, it must be recognized that the proposed model contains built-in checks and balances that facilitate development of the structure with purpose and integrity. Significant too is the fact that the counterpart synodical study committee on ministry structure in the United States will be completing its work while the proposed Canadian structure is in the early stages of implementation, thus providing opportunity for mutually enriching interaction and refinement. Note too that several members of the Committee to Study Structure for Ministry in Canada also serve on the U.S. committee. Since the Canadian Ministries Board is accountable to the Board of Trustees—Canada (BOTC) and will report annually to synod via the BOTC and since the Canadian ministries director (CMD) will be administratively accountable to the executive director of ministries (EDM), it is clear that the process of implementation will be encouraged and safeguarded in the context of relationships of support and accountability.

3. Accountability

One of the critical components of any ministry structure is the element of accountability. The advisory committee is impressed with the fact that the proposed structure provides clear lines of accountability throughout the system (see Appendices 1 and 2 on mandates and position descriptions, pp. 404-11, in the *Agenda for Synod 1997*). Such provisions provide the framework and impetus for development of a ministry model that will be integrated, focused, and responsible in the delivery of ministry in Christ's name. Furthermore, weaving the work of the CCRCC into the fabric of

denominational ministry will result in a high degree of ecclesiastical accountability and at the same time will ensure continuity of ministry.

4. System

What is entailed in the proposed structure for ministry is a system for doing ministry that holds together integrally. In other words, the constituent components (Canadian Ministries Board, Triennial Conference, Canadian ministries director, standing ministry committees, regional ministry centers, regional ministry directors, and classical ministry committees) cannot be separated from one another or implemented in piecemeal fashion. In concert they mutually reinforce and advance the core values and goals which undergird the system. To do justice to this systemic and integrated approach, therefore, the advisory committee deems it imperative that approval be given to the recommendations as a whole.

5. Opportunity

Since 1966 the Christian Reformed churches in Canada have sought to coordinate and conduct a wholistic and effective ministry through the vehicle of the CCRCC. When Synod 1995 proposed the reconstitution of the CCRCC as a Board of Canadian Ministries, it remained to be seen whether a strategy could be developed that would win the confidence and approval of the CCRCC. We note that the proposed structure gained such endorsement twice—first in 1995 and, after the modifications recommended by Synod 1996, again in November of 1996 by a unanimous vote (see Communication 2, *Agenda for Synod 1997*, p. 489). The CCRCC has indicated its readiness to have its ministries absorbed into the new structure. The executive secretary of the CCRCC is retiring soon and will be available to help facilitate transition to the new ministry structure over the next couple of years. It appears evident to us that the Lord has led us as a denomination to a moment of opportunity to affirm and encourage our churches in Canada to proceed with faith and diligence into an exciting new chapter of ministry in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

6. Distinctiveness

In Section III, A of the report on structure for ministry in Canada, reference is made to "our great desire . . . to increase the effectiveness of this mission [the CRC's mission in the world] at the local and national level" (*Agenda for Synod 1997*, p. 378). The report goes on to affirm that "in the Canadian context the CRC needs to address and/or be involved in social-justice issues, ministry with poor and aboriginal peoples, interchurch relations, and interaction with governments" (*Agenda for Synod 1997*, p. 379). We find it gratifying to recognize in such comments the sense of passion and mission that lives within the Canadian constituency of the CRC as it seeks to serve and follow Christ in a way that addresses the particular needs, challenges, and opportunities that present themselves in the Canadian context. We note also that the study committee traveled extensively throughout Canada in a determined effort to listen and respond to the hopes, aspirations, and concerns of individuals and groups who are committed to effective ministry. It is time that we as a denomination recognize and affirm the distinctiveness of Canadian culture and national-

ity by encouraging a ministry structure that respects the integrity, maturity, vision, and calling of our Canadian Christian Reformed community.

7. Diaconate

   One of the strengths of the proposed ministry structure which is truly reflective of the CRC's Canadian ministry experience is the high value placed on the integration of diaconal ministry into the broad range of ministries offered by the church. While the proposed structure for ministry does not address the question of delegation of deacons to major assemblies by way of its recommendations, it does ensure that in the governing structure of the CRC ministries in Canada the diaconal dimension of the church's work will be respected and promoted as an integral component.

8. Benefits and cost

   The benefits of the proposed ministry restructuring are captured well by the statement of core values and goals in Section III, A of the report. Primary among them are the nurturing of local ownership for the mission of the church, building stronger accountability for the ministries of the church in Canada (see 3 above), developing a team approach to ministry among the agencies as they serve the churches and reach out to do ministry, and integrating diaconal ministries and the ministries of the CCRCC into the fabric of the denomination. As for the financial cost of ministry under the proposed structure, the advisory committee notes the study committee's goal "to spend approximately the same amount as is currently being spent on governance so that most of the funds contributed directly enhance the ministry of the church" (*Agenda for Synod 1997*, p. 402). The only area of significant new cost is the regional ministry center, and since these centers are going to strengthen the connection and service to the local church, we deem the initial expenses to be worthwhile.

C. *Recommendations*

1. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Mr. Ben Vandezande, facilitator of the committee; Rev. Gordon H. Pols, chairman; and Dr. Shirley Roels.

   —*Granted*

2. That synod adopt the proposed structure for Canadian ministries in order to inspire and equip the church on every level (locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally) to carry out its mission most effectively. This proposal has the following components:

   a. The Canadian Ministries Board as the agent responsible to coordinate and hold accountable all ministries of the CRC in Canada within the policies set out by synod and the Board of Trustees. The Canadian Ministries Board shall be composed of fifteen to eighteen members, one from each of the Canadian classes and three to six to serve as members-at-large. Classis representatives shall include four pastors, four persons who have served at least one term as elder, and four persons who have served at least one term as deacon.

   b. A Triennial Conference, convened jointly by the Canadian Ministries Board and the Board of Trustees—Canada, for the purpose of ministry visioning.

c. A Canadian ministries director, accountable to the Canadian Ministries Board and administratively accountable to the executive director of ministries, to supervise the coordination of Canadian ministries and to act in consultation with the general secretary as spokesperson in Canada on government and ecumenical relations.

d. The grouping of denominational ministries into three clusters coordinated and guided by three standing ministry committees: International Ministries, Domestic Ministries, and Church Development. Team leaders will coordinate the ministries of each of the standing ministry committees.

e. The cooperation of the classes through their involvement in the regional ministry centers and their appointment of classical ministry committees and classical diaconal committees.

f. The development of regional ministry centers and the appointment of regional ministry developers, beginning with one prototype in western Canada.

g. The maintenance of current funding for CRC ministry in Canada until the new Canadian Ministries Board is in place.

Grounds:

a. The new structure creates stronger working relationships among ministry partners in order to accomplish the shared mission of the church. In creating such relationships, the new ministry structure accomplishes, among other things, the following:
   1) It recognizes and honors the binational character of the CRC.
   2) It develops a body to coordinate ministry in Canada.
   3) It nurtures local ownership for the mission of the church.
   4) It builds vital links with classes in order to keep ministry close to the people.
   5) It encourages a team approach to ministry.
   6) It integrates diaconal ministries with the other CRC ministries.
   7) It integrates the ministries of the CCRCC into other CRC ministries.

b. The new structure provides a stronger component of accountability into the ministries of the church in Canada.

c. The new structure recognizes the distinctive character of the Canadian environment for conducting ministry as well as the appropriateness of having such ministry governed and coordinated by the Canadian churches.

—*Adopted*

3. That responsibility for implementation be assigned to the Board of Trustees— Canada and be delegated to the Canadian Ministries Board when it is formed.

   Ground: This is consistent with the provisions of the new structure for governance of ministries in Canada.

—Adopted

(The report of Advisory Committee 12 is continued in Article 50.)

ARTICLE 41

The evening session is adjourned; Rev. David D. Poolman closes in prayer.

WEDNESDAY MORNING, June 18, 1997
Seventh Session

ARTICLE 42

The president of synod provides an update on his own illness (cancer) and its treatment and announces that his daughter, Mrs. Jennifer LeFebre, was diagnosed Tuesday with malignant melanoma. He requests the prayers of the delegates.

Elder Edwin Arevalo reads from Acts 9:7-17 and announces *Psalter Hymnal* 520, "Te Vengo a Decir" ("I've Come to Tell"). He leads in opening prayer.

ARTICLE 43

(The report of Advisory Committee 2 is continued from Article 35.)

Advisory Committee 2, Missions, Rev. Michael H. Van Hofwegen reporting, presents the following:

I. Board of Trustees

A. Material: Board of Trustees Report, II, C, 3, pp. 38, and Appendix 2, pp. 45-61

B. Recommendations

1. That synod approve the denominational Vision and Mission Statement as proposed (*Agenda for Synod 1997*, p. 45).

—*Adopted*

2. That synod give "concept endorsement" to the goals and strategies attached (*Agenda for Synod 1997*, pp. 54-61), which the agencies will use to work toward the implementation of the strategic plan.

   Grounds:
   a. Synod 1992 called for a denominational Vision and Mission Statement, and subsequent synods were kept informed about its development.
   b. Synod 1995 sent to the churches an earlier draft for study, discussion, and response.
   c. The views of members, agencies, and committees contributed to the preparation of the Vision and Mission Statement.
   d. All the denominational agencies and institutions indicate support of the Vision and Mission Statement in its present form.

—*Adopted*

II. Response to Overture 19: Revise the Decision of Synod 1996 Not to Accede to Overture 22

A. Material: Overture 19, pp. 448-50

B. Background

Synod 1995 approved a process whereby local churches could exercise the option of ordaining women to the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist (*Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 733). Synod 1995 also adopted seven regulations to guide the church in the implementation of this policy (*Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 735). Among these regulations is the following: "f. Synodical agencies shall not appoint women as ministers of the Word to any field of labor within their jurisdiction nor seek to have them installed by a local church." In addition, Synod 1995 declared "that this arrangement be in effect until the year 2000, at which time it will be reviewed" (*Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 735).

Synod 1996 received twenty-nine overtures and two communications related to the 1995 decision. The large majority of these sought revisions of the 1995 decision; a few sought refinements. The mind of Synod 1996 was basically to stay the course with the 1995 decision, believing that "the denomination is not well served by continued reversals on this issue" (*Acts of Synod 1996*, p. 551).

Overture 22, from Classis Lake Erie, requested Synod 1996 to modify Regulation f of Synod 1995's decision to read as follows:

> Synodical agencies . . . shall respect local views on women in office in the placement of ministerial personnel.
>
> (*Acts of Synod 1996*, p. 268)

Synod 1996 did not accede to this overture.

Now Classis Lake Erie overtures Synod 1997 to revise the decision of Synod 1996 not to accede to Overture 22.

C. Recommendation

That synod not accede to Overture 19 (*Agenda for Synod 1997*, pp. 448-50).

Grounds:

1. Overture 19 does not present "sufficient and new grounds for reconsideration," as required in Church Order Article 31.
2. With respect to the use of women's gifts in ecclesiastical office, Synod 1995 adopted a motion that the present "arrangement be in effect until the year 2000, at which time it will be reviewed" (*Acts of Synod 1995*, p. 735).

—*Adopted*

ARTICLE 44

Advisory Committee 1, Synodical Services, Rev. John Tenyenhuis reporting, presents the following:

Board of Trustees

A. Materials

1. Board of Trustees Report, pp. 19-61 (except Section II, A, 1, 2, and 5; II, C, 3; and Appendix 2)
2. Board of Trustees Supplement (except Sections VI, VII, and X)

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; and Mr. Kenneth Horjus, director of finance and administration, when matters pertaining to the Board of Trustees are discussed.

—Granted

2. That synod approve the Board's interim appointments to the agency boards and committees (I, D, 1; Supplement I).

Board	Classis	Member	Alternate	Term
Synodical Deputies	Alberta North		Rev. H.G. Samplonius	
	Atlantic Northeast	Rev. S.J. Vander Klay	Rev. J. Vande Lune	2000
	Columbia		Rev. G.P. Hutt	
	Hackensack		Rev. J. Reiffer	
	Illiana		Rev. R.J. Blauw	
	Minnesota North		Rev. W.H. Kooienga	
	Northcentral Iowa		Rev. H. Dykema	
	Toronto		Rev. H.A. Van Hoff	
CRC Publications	Wisconsin	Rev. E.J. Laarman	Rev. R.L. Gelwicks	1999
Home Missions	Alberta South		Rev. C. Pool	
	California South	Rev. R.K. Young		1999
	Grand Rapids East		Mr. J. Witte	
	Hudson	Rev. K.J. Ver Hulst	Mr. D. Holwerda	2000
	Iakota		Rev. C.J. De Ridder	
	Pacific Hanmi	Rev. I. Chang	Rev. I.C. Kim	1999
World Missions	Central California		Rev. P.V. De Jonge	
	Chicago South		Mr. Martin Ozinga, Jr.	
	Hudson	Rev. J.G. Keizer	Rev. J.J. Stastny	1999
	Iakota		Dr. W.H. Lammers	
	Pacific Hanmi	Rev. D.W. Yang	Rev. C.C. Cho	2000
	Pacific NW	Rev. R.J. De Ruiter	Mr. W. Eskes	1999
CRWRC	Chicago South	Mr. Pete Kamp		2000
	Huron		Mr. George Lubberts	
	Pacific Hanmi	Rev. J. Hyun		2000
	Red Mesa		Mr. J. Smart	
	Thornapple Valley		Mr. T. Van't Land	

—Adopted

3. That synod ratify the following board/committee appointments as approved by the Board of Trustees (I, D, 2-7):

   a. Calvin Theological Seminary

   Appointment of Dr. Mark S. Khil, Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, as the alternate member for Central U.S. II, to fill the position vacated by Rev. S.J. Kang, who moved out of the region.

b. CRC Publications

Appointment of Mr. Dennis Bergsma to fill an at-large position on the board of CRC Publications.

c. Fund for Smaller Churches

Appointment of Mr. Henry Eizenga to the Fund for Smaller Churches Committee to fill the unexpired term of Mr. James Hofman, who resigned after accepting employment elsewhere.

d. Committee to Examine Routes to Ordained Ministry in the CRC

Appointments to the Committee to Examine Routes to Ordained Ministry in the CRC (Rev. Alan Breems and Mrs. Patricia Tigchelaar declined appointment to the committee by Synod 1996):

Rev. Bruce Ballast (to replace Rev. Breems)
Ms. E. Joyce Scholten (to replace Mrs. Tigchelaar)

e. Committee to Give Direction about and for Pastoral Care for Homosexual Members

Membership on the above-named committee was referred by Synod 1996 to the Board of Trustees for appointment. The following members have been appointed to serve on the committee:

Mrs. Rose Alons
Ms. Mary-Lee Bouma
Rev. Cornelius (Corky) De Boer
Dr. Melvin Hugen, chairman
Dr. John Kreeft
Rev. Yong-Ju Oh
Rev. Herman Van Niejenhuis
Dr. Robert Van Noord
Rev. Gerald Zandstra

f. Committee to Study Structure for Ministry in the U.S.

Mrs. Mary Jo De Jong was appointed as a replacement for Dr. Mary Szto, who was unable to serve. The board also appointed Mr. William Weidenaar to the committee, as explained in II, A, 3 (*Agenda for Synod 1997*, p. 28).

—*Adopted*

4. That synod adopt the proposed changes in the Rules for Synodical Procedure (italicized words are the new wording of the rules) (II, A, 4):

a. Rule I.D.3

The officers of synod shall be chosen *from a slate of nominees* by the delegates from their own number, by ballot, in the following order: president, vice president, first clerk, and second clerk. Whoever receives a majority of the valid votes cast shall be elected. (See *Acts of Synod 1996*, p. 533 re procedure for selecting the slate of nominees.)

b. Rule II.C

1) Delete the second sentence of II.C.1 because the new regulations adopted for the one-week synod render it unnecessary.
2) Add a new II.C.4 and renumber the present C.4 to C.5.

The minutes of each day will be examined and proofread by a small committee appointed by the officers of synod. The edited and proofread

minutes will be posted in a public place where they can be read by delegates, and copies will be made available to delegates upon request.

c. Rule VI.B.2.a

A second sentence is to be added: *An alternate chairperson and an alternate reporter will be appointed for each committee except the Judicial Code Committee.*

Ground for a-c: The proposal adopted by Synod 1996 re a one-week synod included these changes in concept and in some instances in the exact wording of the proposed changes.

d. Rule VI.B.2.d

The second sentence is to be replaced by

If there is both a majority and minority report from the committee, each report must be signed by the members who favor it.

The following note is to be added to this regulation:

(Note: Committee members may not speak publicly against their committee's report unless they have submitted a minority report or have received permission from the chair of the committee to voice a minor disagreement.)

Ground: This note codifies what has been a long-standing practice.

e. Rule VI.D.1

The appointment of study committees is usually one of the last acts accomplished by synod each year. Occasionally there is an extended debate about who should or should not be appointed to a committee. The present process does not allow for delegates to suggest names of nominees for proposed committees. The following sentence inserted between the two existing sentences of Rule VI.D.1 will help:

Delegates to synod will be given opportunity to suggest nominees to the advisory committee, but no new nominees will be accepted from the floor when a committee is recommended.

Ground: This provision allows for delegate participation at a stage in the procedure when suggestions can be evaluated and processed.

f. Rule VIII.J

The regulation adopted re the length of time allotted for the discussion of issues at a one-week synod should be inserted as VIII.J.4, and the present numbers 4 and 5 should become 5 and 6. The new regulation reads:

The officers of synod may assign a time limit for debate on issues they think will be debated 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.

—Adopted

5. That synod note the Board of Trustees' approval of the appointment of Mr. Kenneth J. Horjus as the director of finance and administration for the Christian Reformed Church in North America and the approval and ratification of the appointment of Rev. Merle Den Bleyker as the executive director of Christian Reformed World Missions (II, C, a-b).

—Adopted

6. That synod ratify the appointment of Rev. Robert De Moor as editor in chief of the Education, Worship, and Evangelism Department of CRC Publications (II, C, 1, c).

—Adopted

7. That Mr. Horjus, Rev. Merle Den Bleyker, and Rev. De Moor be introduced to synod and be given the opportunity to address synod briefly.

—Granted

Rev. Robert De Moor briefly addresses synod at this time. He introduces himself, tells about his family, informs the delegates of his background prior to his appointment as editor in chief of the Education, Worship, and Evangelism (EWE) Department of CRC Publications, and states his present activities and his goals for the EWE Department. The president of synod congratulates Rev. De Moor.

8. That synod approve the following roster for agency presentations on a schedule of synod's choosing (II, C, 4):

   Christian Reformed World Missions
   Calvin Theological Seminary
   Christian Reformed World Relief Committee

—Granted

9. That synod permit Rev. William Van Tol, former CRWM-International director, to address synod with a farewell speech at a time of synod's choosing (II, C, 4).

—Granted

10. That synod ratify the election of the following regular members and alternates to become members of the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA for a three-year term beginning July 1, 1997:

    Central U.S. I
    Mr. William Weidenaar, member
    Mr. Daniel Hoebeke, alternate

    Central U.S. II
    Rev. Alvin L. Hoksbergen, member
    Rev. Scott D. Los, alternate

    Central U.S. III
    Mr. Howard Johnson, member
    Dr. James Strikwerda, alternate

Western Canada (clergy)
Rev. Peter Brouwer, member
Rev. Alvin Beukema, alternate

Western Canada (nonclergy)
Dr. William Vanden Born, member
Mr. Jan Lok, alternate

11. That synod express its appreciation to retiring members of the board—Mr. Milton Kuyers and Mr. Nelson Gritter—for their service to the church (II).

—*Granted*

12. That synod express its appreciation to retiring members of the Judicial Code Committee—Dr. Harvey Bratt, Mr. Donald F. Oosterhouse, and Mrs. Jean Vogelzang—for their services (III).

—*Granted*

13. That synod refer to the BOT the invitation from First CRC of Orange City, Iowa (letter dated May 28, 1997), to hold Synod 2003 in Northwest Iowa and that synod express its appreciation for the invitation.

—*Adopted*

14. That synod take note of the trademarking of the denomination's names and the provisions regarding the trademark (IV).

—*Adopted*

(The report of Advisory Committee 1 is continued in Article 52.)

ARTICLE 45

The executive director of ministries, Rev. Peter Borgdorff, introduces to synod Mr. Kenneth J. Horjus, director of finance and administration. Mr. Horjus briefly addresses synod, informing synod about his family, his career background prior to his current appointment, and his previous relationships with the denomination and synod.

ARTICLE 46

Advisory Committee 7, Interdenominational Matters, Rev. John P. Gorter reporting, presents the following:

I. Interchurch Relations Committee

A. Materials

1. Interchurch Relations Committee Report, pp. 222-34
2. Interchurch Relations Committee Supplement, pp. 523-41

B. Recommendations

1. That Rev. Edward A. Van Baak (president), Dr. Henry Zwaanstra (vice president), and Rev. Leonard J. Hofman (administrative secretary), along with other IRC members as necessary, be given the privilege of the floor when matters pertaining to the IRC are discussed.

—*Granted*

2. That synod take note that Rev. Leonard J. Hofman is serving the first year of a two-year term as chairman of the National Association of Evangelicals board of directors.

—*Adopted*

3. That the Christian Reformed Church in North America invite the Philippine Christian Reformed Church to enter into ecclesiastical fellowship (see Supplement, Section I, C).

Grounds:

a. The PCRC is Reformed in confesson and polity, as determined not only by its formal standards but also by its actual practice.
b. The PCRC has expressed its desire, through the denominational representative in the United States, to become a church in ecclesiastical fellowship with the CRCNA.

—*Adopted*

The general secretary acknowledges Rev. Keith Bulthuis, Rev. Norman Meyer, and Rev. Edward Van Baak, who were instrumental in beginning the first church and ordaining the first officebearers in the Philippine Christian Reformed Church in 1975.

4. That synod take note that discussions are being held by the IRC with the RCN/GKN in fulfillment of its 1996 synodical mandate to "intensify its pursuit of the two remaining provisions of ecclesiastical fellowship with the GKN."

—*Adopted*

II. Response to Overture 29: Instruct the Interchurch Relations Committee to Develop a New Strategy for Ecumenical Work

A. Materials

1. Overture 29, pp. 479-80
2. Interchurch Relations Committee Report, p. 232

B. Recommendation

That synod refer Overture 29 to the Interchurch Relations Committee for consideration as the committee pursues its review of the Ecumenical Charter.

Ground: The Interchurch Relations Committee is already addressing the main concerns presented in the overture.

—*Adopted*

III. Reformed Ecumenical Council

A. Material: Interchurch Relations Committee Report, pp. 225-56, 234-50

B. Background

The REC assembly met in June 1996 on the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the Reformed Ecumenical Synod, now Reformed Ecumenical Council (REC), in Grand Rapids. A book-length report was approved, *The Just Stewardship of Land and Creation*. Environmental matters are urgent concerns, especially for the churches in Africa. The assembly is asking that the member

churches use this report. A brief summary and review of the report, as well as specific guidelines, are found in the *Agenda for Synod 1997*, pages 234-50. The full report is available from the office of the Reformed Ecumenical Council, 2017 Eastern SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49507, USA.

C. Recommendations

1. That synod

   a. Alert the churches to the existence of the book-length report entitled *The Just Stewardship of Land and Creation.*

   b. Recommend to the churches Section IX, "Guidelines for Ecclesiastical Action," and Section X, "Guidelines for Congregational Reaction," as material for study, reflection, and implementation.

   c. Urge the churches to send responses on the report and guidelines to the Reformed Ecumenical Council.

—Adopted

2. That synod

   a. Request the editors of *Reformed Worship* to prepare, within one year, four liturgies on the just stewardship of land and creation.

   b. Request the editor of *The Banner* to prepare, within one year, at least one article on the just stewardship of land and creation.

   c. Urge pastors to preach on the just stewardship of land and creation within the next year.

   d. Encourage the churches to make use of the booklet *Earth-Wise*, available from CRC Publications.

—Adopted

IV. Orthodox Presbyterian Church

A. Materials

1. Interchurch Relations Committee Report, pp. 230-31
2. Interchurch Relations Committee Supplement, pp. 523-41
3. Communication 11, from the OPC, dated June 10, 1997, pp. 561-66

B. Background

The CRC has had a long and intimate relationship with the OPC for many decades. At its sixty-fourth general assembly the OPC voted to terminate the relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship with the Christian Reformed Church as of July 1, 1997. This decision was not made lightly, and it was a painful one for them.

C. Recommendation

That synod send the following letter to the general assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in response to the letter dated June 10, 1997.

Dear Brothers of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church,

The synod of the Christian Reformed Church in North America has received the June 10,1997, letter of Rev. Donald J. Duff on behalf of the general assembly of your church. We regret that you have decided to terminate the relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship with us. Your delegate, Rev. John P. Galbraith, has indicated with appreciation that the Orthodox Presbyterian Church still considers us as brothers and sisters in Christ. We assure you that we hold you in the same high esteem as a church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We appreciate the clarity with which you described and defined the specific area of disagreement which brought you to your decision.

It is our hope that ways may be found to continue to discuss hermeneutical issues and search for ways in which we can cooperate, especially in local missions and witness. Furthermore, we hope we can continue the brotherly love that has bound us closely for many years.

Be assured of our continued prayers.

—*Adopted*

V. Presbyterian Church in America

A. Materials

1. Interchurch Relations Committee Report, pp. 231-32
2. Interchurch Relations Committee Supplement, pp. 523-41
3. Communication 12, from the PCA, dated June 16, 1997, pp. 567-68

B. Background

The CRC has been in ecclesiastical fellowship with the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) since 1975. At its twenty-fifth general assembly, in June 1997, the PCA decided to terminate its recognition of the CRC as a church in ecclesiastical fellowship. However, the PCA is willing to explore how to maintain some kind of relationship with the CRC.

C. Recommendations

1. That synod direct the Interchurch Relations Committee to explore how the CRC can still maintain a constructive relationship with the PCA.

   —*Adopted*

2. That synod instruct the Interchurch Relations Committee to continue pursuing the matter of membership in North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council.

   —*Adopted*

3. That synod send the following letter to the general assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America in response to the letter dated June 16, 1997:

   Dear Brothers of the Presbyterian Church in America,

   The synod of the Christian Reformed Church of North America has received the June 16, 1997, letter of Dr. Paul R. Gilchrist on behalf of the general assembly of the PCA. We regret that you have decided to

terminate your recognition of the CRCNA as a church in ecclesiastical fellowship.

We take exception with your judgment that the CRC has made "a subtle yet profound shift . . . away from its historic commitment to the inerrancy of Scripture."

Nonetheless, we appreciate your desire to "explore together how the CRC and PCA may still maintain some constructive relationship." Synod has instructed our Interchurch Relations Committee to pursue this matter.

As to our membership in NAPARC, synod has also referred this issue to our Interchurch Relations Committee.

Be assured of our continued prayers.

—*Adopted*

4. That synod approve the diligent work of the Interchurch Relations Committee.

—*Adopted*

A motion is made that synod instruct the Interchurch Relations Committee to address the RCSA on the matter of their theological support of apartheid.

—*Adopted*

It is moved that Communications 11 and 12 be included in the *Acts of Synod*.

—*Adopted*

ARTICLE 47

The general secretary recognizes fraternal delegates Dr. Elton J. Bruins from the Reformed Church in America and Rev. John W. Westendorp from the Reformed Churches of Australia. Both fraternal delegates addressed the assembly at the Praise and Prayer Service on Sunday afternoon.

Dr. John P. Galbraith and Rev. Douglas A. Felch, fraternal delegates from the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, are welcomed and introduced by the general secretary. Dr. Galbraith addresses synod. The president of synod responds.

The general secretary introduces and welcomes Dr. Anjov Ahenakaa, fraternal delegate from the Church of Christ in the Sudan Among the Tiv. Mrs. Ahenakaa is also recognized. Dr. Ahenakaa addresses synod, and the president of synod responds.

Rev. Leonard J. Hofman, chairman of the National Association of Evangelicals' (NAE) board of directors, is introduced to the assembly by Dr. Engelhard. Rev. Hofman addresses the assembly on behalf of the NAE, and the president of synod responds.

Rev. William Van Tol, who has concluded his service as executive director of World Missions International, is welcomed and introduced by the executive director of ministries. He has left his position with World Missions to begin a position on the mission field in Mexico City. Rev. Van Tol addresses synod. He informs the delegates that it was the nurturing in the Christian faith by his parents and the resurrection of Christ that inspired him to mission work. He says, "There is no message more powerful than the voice of the resurrected Christ." He also challenges the delegates to make decisions that will energize the church to send hundreds more missionaries to all nations of the world, including North America.

ARTICLE 48

The morning session is adjourned; Elder Rob R. Braun leads in closing prayer.

WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON, June 18, 1997
Eighth Session

ARTICLE 49

Rev. Peter Borgdorff introduces Rev. Merle Den Bleyker, executive director of World Missions. Rev. Den Bleyker announces *Psalter Hymnal* 525, "O Christians, Haste," and leads in opening prayer.

Rev. Den Bleyker briefly addresses synod, describing his background as a "missionary kid." He expresses gratitude to his wife, Donna, and World Missions office personnel present for their support in the directorship transition and in his illness. He relates his dreams and goals for World Missions and concludes the presentation with a video on the World Missions story. The president of synod responds, congratulating Rev. Den Bleyker on his appointment as executive director of World Missions and assuring him of prayers for his good health.

The general secretary introduces Rev. Takashi Yoshida, fraternal delegate from the Reformed Church in Japan, who addresses synod. The president of synod responds.

The general secretary reads greetings received from the following churches in ecclesiastical fellowship:

Dutch Reformed Church in Sri Lanka (Rev. Charles N. Jansz)
Reformed Church in Argentina (Rev. Roberto H. Jordan)
Reformed Church in South Africa (Soutpansberg Synod)
(Mr. S.B.K. Makhado)

The vice president assumes the chair.

ARTICLE 50

(The report of Advisory Committee 12 is continued from Article 40.)

Advisory Committee 12, Canadian Structure, Rev. Kenneth A. Baker reporting, presents the following:

Structure for Ministry in Canada

A. Materials: (see Article 40)

B. Recommendations (continued)

4. That the CRC in Canada be allowed to enter into ecumenical relationships within Canada as recommended by the Canadian Ministries Board, approved by the Board of Trustees—Canada, and ratified by synod. Such relationships should honor the conditions adopted by synod for interchurch and ecumenical relationships. It will be synod's jurisdiction to deal

with possible appeals against any relationship into which the Canadian churches might enter. Binational or international relationships with other churches or organizations (e.g., Reformed Church in America or Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland) would be entered into by synod upon recommendation of its denominational Interchurch Relations Committee, composed of both U.S. and Canadian members.

Ground: This provision honors the responsibility of the Canadian Ministries Board to supervise and hold accountable the ministries of the CRC in Canada, while at the same time recognizing the accountability of the CMB to the BOTC and synod.

—*Adopted*

5. That synod discharge the committee with thanks.

—*Adopted*

6. That synod declare this to be its answer to Overtures 30, 31, and 32 and Communications 2 and 6.

—*Adopted*

ARTICLE 51

The president of synod reassumes the chair.

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 52

(The report of Advisory Committee 1 is continued from Article 44.)

Advisory Committee 1, Synodical Services, Rev. John Tenyenhuis reporting, presents the following:

I. Board of Trustees

A. *Materials:* (see Article 44)

B. *Recommendations* (continued)

15. That synod urge church councils to prohibit ministers under their supervision from participating in ordination services in seceding congregations (VIII).

—*Recommitted*

16. That synod take note of the letter sent to the Orthodox Presbyterian Church by the BOT (submitted to synod in the BOT supplement) but that the letter not be reproduced in the official *Acts of Synod 1997*.

Ground: The letter contains personal references and charges of offense.

—*Adopted*

Note: The BOT sent a letter to the Orthodox Presbyterian Church lodging a complaint against the action of an OPC minister and the response of a member

of the Presbytery of the Dakotas. In reaction to that letter, the following response was received from the OPC:

B. That in response to their inquiry the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA be informed that the action of the 63rd (1996) General Assembly referred to in the CRCNA letter that "in some areas the CRC is no longer a 'church of like practice'" was carefully worded to avoid saying that the CRCNA is not a true church of Jesus Christ. No OPC General Assembly has ever made such a judgment.

C. That in response to their request that the Assembly "hold the individuals and the Presbytery accountable for their actions and statements and that you discipline them accordingly," the Assembly provide the following information:

1. The General Assembly cannot act as a court of original jurisdiction with regard to a minister, since he is under the jurisdiction of his Presbytery;
2. According to your letter, you apparently believe the Presbytery of the Dakotas did not take action in the matter; and
3. Synod should encourage Classis Iakota to seek satisfaction first from the individuals named, then failing such satisfaction it may seek it from the Presbytery. Failing that, it may seek it from the OPC General Assembly.

II. Response to Overture 21: Express Gratitude; Acknowledge Imperfections; Call upon Members to Remain United within the CRC

A. *Material:* Overture 21, pp. 454-56

B. *Recommendations*

That synod accede to the overture by declaring

1. Its gratitude for the Free to Serve rallies and for the opportunity to acknowledge what God is doing in his world through the Christian Reformed Church.

2. That it acknowledges the imperfections of the Christian Reformed Church and the importance of an ongoing critique and continual reformation.

3. The need to call upon our brothers and sisters who are considering secession to remain with us so that we may avoid schism as a way of dealing with differences and may work together to conform more and more to that which Scripture requires of us as part of the one body of Jesus Christ.

—*Adopted*

III. Response to Overture 22: Remind Churches of Decisions on Fomenting Divisiveness

A. *Material:* Overture 22, pp. 456-58

B. *Observations*

Classis Lake Erie in its overture reminds synod of increasing divisiveness within our churches and encourages synod

1. To remind members that the denomination does not operate with a congregational form of government that attempts to adjudicate matters by sending letters to all councils or by calling extra-ecclesiastical assemblies but operates with a Reformed system of government that provides for the appeal of synodical decisions through councils and classes.

2. To remind consistories that they "have the duty to admonish and deal with members who persist in functioning individually or through extra-ecclesiastical organizations in attacking the church, in fomenting divisiveness in the body of our Lord, and in slandering fellow members" (*Acts of Synod 1971*, p. 108).

Recommendation:

That synod not accede to Overture 22.

Ground: Synod need not remind the churches of positions it has previously taken.

—*Adopted*

IV. Response to Overture 23: Assign an Additional Duty to Stated Clerks of Classes

A. *Material:* Overture 23, p. 458

B. *Recommendation*
That synod not accede to this overture.

Grounds:
1. It is a good practice that pastors and congregations continue to take the responsibility for reporting as in our present policy since the entire responsibility for the calling and moving of ministers lies primarily with the local congregations.
2. The reporting of the movement of ministers through retirements, leaves of absence, releases, resignations, and defections is already the responsibility of the stated clerks of classes.

—*Adopted*

V. Communication 3: Council of the Christian Reformed Churches in Canada

Recommendation:
That synod note with gratitude to God the communication from the CCRCC which outlines the activities of the Council.

—*Adopted*

VI. Ministerial retirements

A. *Information*
Synod has received notice of the following ministerial retirements:

Minister	Classis	Effective Date
Calvin Bolt	Georgetown	June 30, 1997
Henry Bouma	Pella	January 1, 1997
William Brander	Holland	October 1, 1996
Henry Eshuis	Niagara	May 21, 1997
Donald J. Griffioen	Chicago South	July 1, 1997
John Hofman, Jr.	Columbia	October 1, 1996

Minister	Classis	Effective Date
John W. Jongsma	Chatham	September 28, 1997
John G. Klomps	Toronto	April 1, 1997
James R. Kok	Central California	January 1, 1997
*Marvin Konynenbelt	Zeeland	January 1, 1996
John Kroon	Minnesota South	August 1, 1997
James C. Lont	Holland	January 1, 1996
Bernard W. Mulder	Thornapple Valley	August 16, 1997
Harvey A. Ouwinga	Kalamazoo	October 5, 1997
Donald H. Postema	Lake Erie	January 1, 1998
John H. Primus	Grand Rapids East	August 31, 1997
Robert Ruis	Lake Superior	February 1, 1997
Gerrit W. Sheeres	Thornapple Valley	June 30, 1997
Harvey A. Smit	Grand Rapids East	January 1, 1997
Garrett H. Stoutmeyer	Northern Illinois	January 1, 1997
Walter Swets	Grand Rapids South	January 15, 1997
Wesley Timmer	Atlantic Northeast	August 1, 1997
Harry A. Van Dam	Arizona	December 13, 1996
James E. Versluys	Holland	July 1, 1996
Cornelius Vriend	Alberta North	September 15, 1997

*Medical disability

B. Recommendations

1. That synod acknowlege with profound gratitude the faithful labors of these ministers.

—Adopted

2. That a prayer of thanksgiving be offered by one of the officers of the synod for their many years of dedicated service.

—Adopted

Vice president Rev. Wayne A. Brouwer leads the assembly in prayer, thanking God for the dedication and the many years of service of these ministers of the Word.

VII. Work of synodical deputies

A. Classical examination of candidates

Synodical deputies report their concurrence with the decisions of classes to admit the following to the office of minister of the Word:

Candidate	Classis	Synodical Deputies and Classes
Mary S. Hulst Antonides	Grand Rapids East (9-19-96)	J.H. Looman, Kalamazoo G.W. Sheeres, Thornapple Valley D.J. Van Beek, Grand Rapids North
Darrell J. Bierman	Huron (9-11-96)	M. Van Donselaar, Hamilton H.A. Van Hoff, Toronto H. Vander Plaat, Niagara
Jeffrey J. Brower	Illiana (9-10-96)	T.H. Douma, Northern Illinois L.J. Kuiper, Wisconsin D.J. Van Loo, Chicago South
M. Dale Fopma	Heartland (9-25-96)	J.D. Buwalda, Minnesota South D.W. De Groot, Iakota D.A. Zylstra, Northcentral Iowa

Candidate	Classis	Synodical Deputies and Classes
Richard E. Grift	Hamilton (9-17-96)	H.J. Bierman, Huron J. Kuipers, Chatham H.A. Van Hoff, Toronto
Ruth M. Hofman	Toronto (7-4-96)	H.R. De Bolster, Hamilton E. Gritter, Quinte H. Vander Plaat, Niagara
Peter J. Janssens	B.C. South-East (9-20-96)	C. Vriend, Alberta North J. Corvers, Alberta South H. Jonker, B.C. North-West
James H. McCune	Grand Rapids South (9-19-96)	P. De Jong, Northern Illinois R. Klimp, Northern Michigan D. Tinklenberg, Georgetown
Anthony J. Meyer	Central California (9-17-96)	D.R. Koll, Greater Los Angeles R. Vander Ley, Pacific Northwest R.L. Scheuers, California South
Marc A. Nelesen	Zeeland (9-18-96)	J.H. Scholten, Holland J. Gorter, Grandville D. Tinklenberg, Georgetown
Harrison A. Newhouse	Quinte (9-24-96)	M. Van Donselaar, Hamilton R. Koops, Huron H. Vander Plaat, Niagara
Stephen K. Rhoda	Chicago South (4-17-97)	J. Bylsma, Wisconsin H.J. Schutt, Illiana T.H. Douma, Northern Illinois
Gary M. Stevens	Kalamazoo (10-22-96)	D. Tinklenberg, Georgetown J. Gorter, Grandville D.J. Van Beek, Grand Rapids North
Richard A. Terpstra	Zeeland (9-18-96)	J.H. Scholten, Holland J. Gorter, Grandville D. Tinklenberg, Georgetown
Bruce J. Vaandrager	Northern Illinois (9-18-96)	J. Bylsma, Wisconsin H.J. Schutt, Illiana D.J. Van Loo, Chicago South
Peter L. Vander Beek	Chatham (9-17-96)	H.R. De Bolster, Hamilton R. Koops, Huron H. Vander Plaat, Niagara
Jeffrey C. Vanderhooft	Northern Michigan (9-24-96)	J. Gorter, Grandville G.W. Sheeres, Thornapple Valley C.D. Vander Meyden, G.R. South
Everett J. Vander Horst	B.C. North-West (9-17-96)	W.L. Vander Beek, B.C. South-East P.J. Kok, Pacific Northwest D.L. Recker, Columbia
Geoffrey A. Vandermolen	Chatham (9-17-96)	H.R. De Bolster, Hamilton R. Koops, Huron H. Vander Plaat, Niagara
Roger J. Visker	Grand Rapids North (9-17-96)	S.E. Hoezee, Grand Rapids East C.D. Vander Meyden, G.R. South K.L. Havert, Grandville
John W. Wilczewski	Grand Rapids North (1-21-97)	D.A. Struyk, Grand Rapids South S.E. Hoezee, Grand Rapids East J. Gorter, Grandville
Steven A. Zwart	Minnesota North (9-17-96)	J. Bylsma, Wisconsin N.J. Visser, Minnesota South D.A. Zylstra, Northcentral Iowa

Synodical deputies G.G. Vink (Central California), J. Van Schepen (Greater Los Angeles), and W.K. Bulthuis (Red Mesa) **do not concur** with the action of Classis California South, in session on October 16, 1996, to declare **Mr. Mark Bruursema** eligible for calling to and ordination in Hope Christian Reformed Church.

Recommendation: That synod approve the work of the synodical deputies.

—*Adopted*

B. Classical examinations via Church Order Article 7

1. Synodical deputies C. Vriend (Alberta North) and H. Jonker (B.C. North-West), 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 B.C. South-East, in session on September 20, 1996, to declare **Mr. Herb de Ruyter** eligible for call to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

   Note: The third synodical deputy, J. Corvers (Alberta South), became ill just prior to the classis meeting and was unable to attend.

   Deputies' comments: Although ordination under Church Order Article 7 requires one examination for eligibility and another for candidacy, Classis B.C. South-East combined the two examinations. The following motion was adopted:

   > That classis recognize the unique circumstances of Herb de Ruyter's application to enter the ministry by way of CO Article 7 and, by way of exception, declare the scheduled exam to be his examination for ordination rather than to declare him a candidate for ministry in the CRC.
   >
   > *Grounds:*
   > 1. Herb has an MA in church education from Calvin Seminary plus an additional year of study.
   > 2. His seventeen years of ministry experience (six years in Classis B.C. South-East) provide ample testimony of his commitment, dedication, abilities, and gifts for ministry.

2. Synodical deputies W.J. Dykstra (Lake Erie), J.J. Hoogland (Hudson), and W. Timmer (Atlantic Northeast), having examined the written credentials submitted by the council of Northside CRC, having considered the need, and having heard the examination for licensure to exhort in accordance with the provisions of Church Order Article 7 and its supplement, concur in the decision of Classis Hackensack, in session on September 24, 1996, to grant **Ms. Sheila Holmes** the right to exhort in churches of classis.

   Statement of need: Ethnic ministry to African Americans in particular but also to Hispanics and others in Paterson, New Jersey.

3. Synodical deputies R. Bultman (California South), J. Van Schepen (Greater Los Angeles), and G.G. Vink (Central California), having heard the discussion and reviewed the documentation from the Classical Interim Committee, **do not concur** in the decision of Classis Arizona, in session on September 21, 1996, that there is a need for proceeding with the examination toward candidacy for ordination of **Mr. Rodney Hugen** under the provisions of Church Order Article 7 and its supplement.

Grounds:

a. The need has not been established.
b. Generic need does not justify a specific case.

Deputies' comments:

a. Classis Arizona may consider pursuing other avenues to use Mr. Hugen's gifts in the present circumstances.
b. Classis Arizona is reminded of the documentation required by Synod 1996 (cf. *Acts of Synod 1996*, pp. 580-81) before examinations can begin under Article 7.

4. Synodical deputies D.A. Zylstra (Northcentral Iowa), J.G. Busscher (Minnesota North), and L.J. Howerzyl (Pella), having examined the written credentials submitted by the council of Sibley, Iowa, CRC, having considered the need, and having heard the examination for licensure to exhort in accordance with the provisions of Church Order Article 7 and its supplement, concur in the decision of Classis Heartland, in session on March 1, 1997, to grant **Mr. Marvin Leese** the right to exhort in churches of classis until August 31, 1997.

   Statement of need: Pastors willing to serve in small rural congregations are in very short supply.

5. Synodical deputies J.H. Looman (Kalamazoo), G.W. Sheeres (Thornapple Valley), and D.J. Van Beek (Grand Rapids North), having heard the examination for ordination in accordance with Church Order Article 7, concur in the decision of Classis Grand Rapids East, in session on September 19, 1996, to admit candidate **Mr. Harry W. Lew** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

   Deputies' comments: The deputies note the following irregularities in the examination:

   a. The decision was made without the delegates having been supplied with a copy of the candidate's sermon.
   b. The position to which Harry Lew was called was originally approved ecclesiastically in 1974. The review of this position mandated by synod (see *Manual of CRC Government 1994*, page 105, 4, b, 1, d) did not occur. However, we participated in classis' discussion of the matter and concur that the duties of chaplaincy with Campus Directions continue to be consistent with the calling of a minister of the Word and that the accountability and pension issues have been addressed satisfactorily (cf. Church Order Art. 12).

6. Synodical deputies H. Vander Plaat (Niagara), H.J. Bierman (Huron), and M. Van Donselaar (Hamilton), having heard the examination for ordination in accordance with the provisions of Church Order Article 7, concur in the decision of Classis Toronto, in session on September 26, 1996, to admit **Mr. Richard Nanninga** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

7. Synodical deputies J. Corvers (Alberta South) and W.L. Vander Beek (B.C. South-East), having examined the written credentials submitted by the council of First CRC, Red Deer, Alberta, having considered the need, and having heard the examination for licensure to exhort in accordance with the provisions of Church Order Article 7 and its supplement, concur in the decision of Classis Alberta North, in session on March 4, 1997, to grant **Mr. Bill Nieuwenhuis** the right to exhort in Christian Reformed churches until his examination.

Note: H. Jonker (B.C. North-West) was not able to serve as synodical deputy because he had to serve as chairman of his classis. His alternate was unable to be present.

8. Synodical deputies D. Tinklenberg (Georgetown), J.W. Uitvlugt (Zeeland), and J.A. Molenbeek (Muskegon) do not, at this point, concur with the decision of Classis Holland to declare the need to ordain **Mr. Robert Pohler** to the ministry of the Word. The deputies advise classis instead to examine him for licensure to exhort within the churches of classis for a period of time to be set by classis, after which Faith Christian Reformed Church can come to classis with a statement of need to call and ordain Mr. Pohler to the ministry of the Word. At that time his exceptional gifts for the ministry can be affirmed by way of his classical examination.

   Grounds:
   a. We are not satisfied that urgent need for the ordination of Robert Pohler has been adequately established.
   b. This is the normal process established by synod for entry into the CRC ministry by way of Article 7 of the Church Order.

   Note: Synodical deputies advise and urge Mr. Pohler to continue his theological education toward receiving an M.Div. degree and his church to support him in this effort.

9. Synodical deputies J. Kuipers (Chatham), R. Koops (Huron), and G. Ringnalda (Toronto), having heard the examination for ordination in accordance with the provisions of Church Order Article 7, concur in the decision of Classis Hamilton in session on January 21, 1997, to admit **Mr. Sririsack Saythavy** to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

Recommendation: That synod approve the work of the synodical deputies.

—*Adopted*

C. *Ministers from other denominations, Church Order Article 8*

1. Synodical deputies D.W. De Groot (Iakota), J.D. Buwalda (Minnesota South), and A.L. Kuiper (Heartland), having reviewed the documents specified in accordance with Church Order Supplement, Article 8, concur in the declaration of Classis Northcentral Iowa, in session on August 20, 1996, that a **need** has been demonstrated to call a minister from another denomination.

   Statement of need: The Austinville CRC has followed a full course of contacts in its search for a pastor. They worked with the director of Pastor-Church Relations and the coordinator of field education at Calvin Theological Seminary, and they subsequently contacted a list of ministers and candidates, all of whom indicated very little interest in Austinville CRC. Furthermore, the CRC continues to have over one hundred vacancies.

2. Synodical deputies J. Bylsma (Wisconsin), H.J. Schutt (Illiana), and D.J. Van Loo (Chicago South), having reviewed the documents specified in accordance with Church Order Supplement, Article 8, concur in the

declaration of Classis Northern Illinois, in session on September 18, 1996, that a **need** has been demonstrated to call a minister from another denomination (namely, Presbyterian Church in Korea) to serve as pastor of Korean CRC, Chicago, Illinois.

Statement of need: The congregation has assured the classis that it has made significant effort to seek a (Korean) pastor from within the CRC and from among the students at Calvin Theological Seminary through Rev. John Taek Kim.

3. Synodical deputies J. Corvers (Alberta South), H. Jonker (B.C. North-West), and W.L. Vander Beek (B.C. South-East), having reviewed the documents specified in accordance with Church Order Supplement, Article 8, concur in the declaration of Classis Alberta North, in session on October 8, 1996, that a **need** has been demonstrated to call a minister from another denomination to serve as associate pastor to St. Albert CRC and to minister to Edmonton Korean Mission Church.

4. Synodical deputies S.E. Hoezee (Grand Rapids East), J.H. Scholten (Holland), and D. Tinklenberg (Georgetown), having concurred with one another via telephone; having reviewed the letter dated January 12, 1997, sent by the clerk of Korean Christian Reformed Church in Kalamazoo to the clerk of Classis Kalamazoo, along with a copy of Article 11 from the Classical Interim Report; and having been assured by telephone conversation with the stated clerk of Classis Kalamazoo that the application from Rev. Kim required by Church Order Supplement, Article 8 will be furnished at the meeting of classis along with a statement of health, appropriate diplomas, and an evaluated psychological report, hereby concur in the declaration of Classis Kalamazoo, in session on January 28, 1997, that a **need** has been demonstrated to call a minister from another denomination to serve as pastor of Korean Christian Reformed Church in Kalamazoo.

5. Synodical deputies W.L. Vander Beek (B.C. South-East), R. Vander Ley (Pacific Northwest), and D.L. Recker (Columbia), having reviewed the documents specified in accordance with Church Order Supplement, Article 8, concur in the declaration of Classis B.C. North-West, in session on March 4-5, 1997, that a **need** has been demonstrated to call a minister from another denomination (Korean Presbyterian) to serve as minister of the Word at Light Presbyterian Church.

   Statement of need: The grounds that established need for a pastor from another denomination follow:

   a. The Asianization of Vancouver.
   b. The need for indigenous Korean leadership in Vancouver.
   c. The presence of a Korean church seeking affiliation.
   d. The CRC's commitment to growing in its multiethnic and multicultural diversity.

6. Synodical deputies S.E. Hoezee (Grand Rapids East), J. Gorter (Grandville), and D. Tinklenberg (Georgetown), having reviewed the documents specified in accordance with Church Order Supplement, Article 8, concur in the declaration of Classis Kalamazoo, in session on

May 13, 1997, that a **need** has been demonstrated to call a minister from another denomination (Reformed Church in America) to serve as pastor of Calvary CRC, Plainwell, Michigan.

Statement of need: The council has demonstrated a sustained and realistic effort to obtain a CRC pastor. The church feels the pastor is a good match for the congregation and the ministry.

7. Synodical deputies P.A. Apol (Hackensack), J.G. Keizer (Hudson), and G. Ringnalda (Toronto), having heard the colloquium doctum of **Rev. Carlos Aranguiz**, an ordained minister in the Anglican Church of Chile, in accordance with Church Order Article 8, concur in the decision of Classis Atlantic Northeast, in session on October 26, 1996, to declare him eligible for call to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

8. Synodical deputies C.D. Vander Meyden (Grand Rapids South), R. Opperwall (Grand Rapids East), and K.L. Havert (Grandville), having heard the colloquium doctum of **Rev. Humberto Casanova**, in accordance with Church Order Article 8, concur in the decision of Classis Georgetown, in session on September 19, 1996, to declare him eligible for call to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

9. Synodical deputies J. Bylsma (Wisconsin), H.J. Schutt (Illiana), and D.J. Van Loo (Chicago South), having reviewed the documents specified in accordance with Church Order Supplement, Article 8, concur in the declaration of Classis Northern Illinois, in session on September 18, 1996, that a **need** has been demonstrated to call a minister from another denomination (name of denomination: National Baptist Church) to serve as minister in the CRC.

   Statement of need: (a) In an era in which there is increasing recognition that the horizontal dimension of Christ's ministry of reconciliation is focused on issues of race, Rev. George Cooper comes to us as a gift of God to work that ministry of reconciliation among us. (b) Synod has declared: "For multicultural or ethnic minority churches the need for indigenous leadership shall constitute the criterion for meeting the 'need' requirements of Article 8 of the Church Order" (*Acts of Synod 1985*, pp. 752-53).

10. Synodical deputies L.J. Kuiper (Wisconsin) and D.J. Van Loo (Chicago South), having heard the colloquium doctum of **Rev. George Cooper**, in accordance with Church Order Article 8, concur in the decision of Classis Northern Illinois, in session on March 5, 1997, to declare him eligible for call to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

    Note: The following statement was provided by the third deputy, R.J. Blauw (Illiana):

    > As a minister of the Word and given my position on women in ecclesiastical office, I do not want to compromise what I consider to be a clear teaching of Scripture. Since a woman elder was delegate to Classis Northern Illinois, in good conscience I am unable to serve in the capacity of synodical deputy.

11. Synodical deputies J. Van Schepen (Greater Los Angeles), W.K. Bulthuis (Red Mesa), and G.G. Vink (Central California), having heard the colloquium doctum of **Rev. Michael Horton**, in accordance with Church Order Article 8, concur in the decision of Classis California South, in session on October 16, 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. Corvers (Alberta South), W.L. Vander Beek (B.C. South-East), and H. Jonker (B.C. North-West), having heard the colloquium doctum of **Rev. Woon Joung**, in accordance with Church Order Article 8, concur in the decision of Classis Alberta North, in session on October 8-9, 1996, to declare him eligible for call to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

13. Synodical deputies J. Bylsma (Wisconsin), H.J. Schutt (Illiana), and D.J. Van Loo (Chicago South), having heard the colloquium doctum of **Rev. Hyun Jin Kim**, in accordance with Church Order Article 8, concur in the decision of Classis Northern Illinois, in session on October 3, 1996, to declare him eligible for call to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

14. Synodical deputies S.E. Hoezee (Grand Rapids East), J. Gorter (Grandville), and D. Tinklenberg (Georgetown), having heard the colloquium doctum of **Rev. Kiwoong Kim**, in accordance with Church Order Article 8, concur in the decision of Classis Kalamazoo, in session on May 13, 1997, to declare him eligible for call to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

15. Synodical deputies W.L. Vander Beek (B.C. South-East), R. Vander Ley (Pacific Northwest), and D.L. Recker (Columbia), having heard the colloquium doctum of **Rev. You Hoon Kim**, in accordance with Church Order Article 8, concur in the decision of Classis British Columbia North-West, in session on May 27, 1997, to declare him eligible for call to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

16. Synodical deputies W.K. Bulthuis (Red Mesa), J. Van Schepen (Greater Los Angeles), and G.G. Vink (Central California), having reviewed the documents specified in accordance with Church Order Supplement, Article 8, concur in the declaration of Classis California South, in session on October 16, 1996, that a **need** has been demonstrated to call **Rev. Neville L. Koch** from another denomination (Dutch Reformed Church in Sri Lanka) to serve as pastor in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

17. Synodical deputies J. Van Schepen (Greater Los Angeles), W.K. Bulthuis (Red Mesa), and G.G. Vink (Central California), having heard the colloquium doctum of **Rev. Neville L. Koch**, in accordance with Church Order Article 8, concur in the decision of Classis California South, in session on January 15, 1997, to declare him eligible for call to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

18. Synodical deputies W.K. Bulthuis (Red Mesa), J. Van Schepen (Greater Los Angeles), and G.G. Vink (Central California), having reviewed the docu-

ments specified in accordance with Church Order Supplement, Article 8, concur in the declaration of Classis California South, in session on January 15, 1997, that a **need** has been demonstrated to call a minister from another denomination to serve as pastor of Orange County Calvary CRC.

19. Synodical deputies G.J. Kamps (Arizona), G.G. Vink (Central California), and D.R. Koll (Greater Los Angeles), having heard the colloquium doctum of **Rev. Byoung Il Lee**, in accordance with Church Order Article 8, concur in the decision of Classis California South, in session on May 14, 1997, to declare him eligible for call to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

20. Synodical deputies J.D. Buwalda (Minnesota South), D.W. De Groot (Iakota), and J.M. Gray (Heartland), having heard the colloquium doctum of **Rev. George McGuire**, in accordance with Church Order Article 8, concur in the decision of Classis Northcentral Iowa, in session on September 10,1996, to declare him eligible for 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 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 14, 1997, that a **need** has been demonstrated to call a minister from another denomination to serve as missionary pastor/church planter in Pomona, California.

    Deputies' comments: This action pertains to **Rev. Albino Melendez** and is approved contingent upon the successful completion of physical-health statement by the medical doctor.

22. Synodical deputies W.K. Bulthuis (Red Mesa), J. Van Schepen (Greater Los Angeles), and G.G. Vink (Central California), having reviewed the documents specified in accordance with Church Order Supplement, Article 8, concur in the declaration of Classis California South, in session on January 15, 1997, that a **need** has been demonstrated to call a minister, **Rev. Tong Kun Park**, from another denomination to serve as senior pastor of Orange Korean Christian Reformed Church.

23. Synodical deputies A. Begay (Red Mesa), J. Van Schepen (Greater Los Angeles), and G.G. Vink (Central California), having heard the colloquium doctum of **Rev. Tong Kun Park**, in accordance with Church Order Article 8, concur in the decision of Classis California South, in session on February 15, 1997, to declare him eligible for call to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

24. Synodical deputies J.A. Molenbeek (Muskegon), D. Tinklenberg (Georgetown), and J.W. Uitvlugt (Zeeland), having reviewed the documents specified in accordance with Church Order Supplement, Article 8, concur in the declaration of Classis Holland, in session on January 16, 1997, that a **need** has been demonstrated to call a minister from another denomination (Reformed Church in America) to serve as ordained cultivation director.

Statement of need: His ministry gifts have already been experienced and affirmed by Victory Point CRC, where his membership resides. Victory Point CRC has a history of and since its beginning has planned for multiple ministry.

Note: Rev. D. Tinklenberg concurred via teleconference call during the session of Classis Holland. He was unable to be present due to adverse winter weather and bad driving conditions.

25. Synodical deputies J.A. Molenbeek (Muskegon), D. Tinklenberg (Georgetown), and J.W. Uitvlugt (Zeeland), having heard the colloquium doctum of **Rev. Steve Rusticus**, in accordance with Church Order Article 8, concur in the decision of Classis Holland, in session on May 22, 1997, to declare him eligible for call to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

26. Synodical deputies P. De Jong (Northern Illinois), L.J. Howerzyl (Pella), and J.D. Buwalda (Minnesota South), having reviewed the documents specified in accordance with Church Order Supplement, Article 8, concur in the declaration of Classis Northcentral Iowa, in session on March 4, 1997, that a **need** has been demonstrated to call a minister, **Rev. John Tousley**, from another denomination (Reformed Church in America) to serve as a minister of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church.

    Statement of need: There is a need for pastors who desire to serve in rural congregations in the CRC. This is a need confirmed by the experience of the rural churches and by Rev. Duane Visser of Pastor-Church Relations.

27. Synodical deputies P. De Jong (Northern Illinois), L.J. Howerzyl (Pella), and J.D. Buwalda (Minnesota South), having heard the colloquium doctum of **Rev. John Tousley**, in accordance with Church Order Article 8, concur in the decision of Classis Northcentral Iowa, in session on April 29, 1997, to declare him eligible for call to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

28. Synodical deputies R.L. Bouwkamp (Pella), J.D. Buwalda (Minnesota South), and J.M. Gray (Heartland), having reviewed the documents specified in accordance with Church Order Supplement, Article 8, concur in the declaration of Classis Iakota, in session on September 17, 1996, that a **need** has been demonstrated to call a minister from another denomination (Reformed Presbyterian Church) to serve as pastor of Rapid City Christian Reformed Church.

    Statement of need:

    a. We acknowledge that not all avenues of calling were exhausted by Rapid City CRC.
    b. We acknowledge that Rapid City has three unique conditions:
        1) Distance from neighboring Christian Reformed churches.
        2) The need for a person with the ability to effectively evangelize the Rapid City area.
        3) After several seminary graduates, the congregation needs a pastor with experience, especially to address tensions in the congregation.

c. **Rev. R. Van Osdol** has fifteen years of experience in the Reformed Presbyterian Church and is a gifted church planter and congregational peacemaker. In the past nine months as interim pastor in Rapid City he has served well in these areas of ministry. Therefore, he uniquely meets the congregation's need.

d. The general shortage of CRC pastors makes the likelihood of finding another person like this rather remote, and we judge that Rapid City cannot afford a lengthy vacancy due to isolation and the need to resolve congregational tensions.

29. Synodical deputies J. Weeda (Yellowstone), R.L. Bouwkamp (Pella), and A.L. Kuiper (Heartland), having heard the colloquium doctum of **Rev. Randal Van Osdol**, in accordance with Church Order Article 8, concur in the decision of Classis Iakota, in session on March 4, 1997, to declare him eligible for call to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

30. Synodical deputies S.E. Hoezee (Grand Rapids East), H.J. Schutt (Illiana), and D.J. Van Loo (Chicago South), having heard the colloquium doctum of **Rev. Milton Villanueva** (Presbyterian Church in America), in accordance with Church Order Article 8, concur in the decision of Classis Florida, in session on September 27, 1996, to declare him eligible for call to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

Recommendation: That synod approve the work of the synodical deputies.

—*Adopted*

D. Ministers in specialized services, Church Order Article 12-c

Minister	Work	Classis and Date	Synodical Deputies
Rev. J. Stoel	Chaplain, Porter Memorial Hospital and Christian Haven Homes	Illiana (9-10-96)	T.H. Douma, Northern Illinois L.J. Kuiper, Wisconsin D.J. Van Loo, Chicago South
M.T. Brands	Minister/Bible teacher with Youth with a Mission	Grand Rapids East (9-19-96)	J.H. Looman, Kalamazoo G.W. Sheeres, Thornapple Valley D.J. Van Beek, Grand Rapids North
S. De Vries	Chaplain, Hospice of Northeastern Illinois	Northern Illinois (3-5-97)	L.J. Kuiper, Wisconsin D.J. Van Loo, Chicago South

Comment: The third deputy, R.J. Blauw (Illiana), did not serve as a deputy. Because a woman elder was delegated to Classis Northern Illinois, he in good conscience was unable to serve in the capacity of synodical deputy.

R. De Young	Campus pastor, Western Michigan University	Kalamazoo (9-10-96)	S.E. Hoezee, Grand Rapids East G.W. Sheeres, Thornapple Valley D. Tinklenberg, Georgetown
A.D. Evans	Chaplain, St. Michael's Hospital, Toronto, ON	Toronto (9-26-96)	R.L. Bouwkamp, Pella H.J. Bierman, Huron M. Van Donselaar, Hamilton
R.D. Gorter	Missionary/teacher in Russia for Christ for Russia	Chicago South (4-17-97)	J. Bylsma, Wisconsin T.H. Douma, Northern Illinois H.J. Schutt, Illiana
H.W. Lew	Campus minister with Campus Directions, Grand Rapids, MI	Grand Rapids East (9-19-96)	J.H. Looman, Kalamazoo G.W. Sheeres, Thornapple Valley D.J. Van Beek, Grand Rapids North
T.L. Rietkerk	U.S. Army chaplain	Greater Los Angeles (10-2-96)	G.J. Kamps, Arizona R.L. Scheuers, California South G.G. Vink, Central California

Deputies' comments: Deputies' approval is given with the knowledge that Anaheim has called Rev. Tim Rietkerk to the position. We were not present at the meeting of classis but felt we could concur by way of phone conversations. There was some question as to the need to do so in that the position of U.S. Army chaplain has been determined to be consistent by way of an agency in the CRCNA that governs it.

D.J. Tigchelaar	Executive director of The Bible League — Canada	Huron (9-11-96)	M. Van Donselaar, Hamilton H.A. Van Hoff, Toronto H. Vander Plaat, Niagara
K.D. Van De Griend	Associate director of Asian Ministries, The Bible League	Illiana (1-21-97)	P. De Jong, Northern Illinois L.J. Kuiper, Wisconsin D.J. Van Loo, Chicago South
S.J. Van Zanen	Instructor of history and theology, Miskole Liberal Arts College, Hungary	Minnesota North (9-17-96)	J. Bylsma, Wisconsin N.J. Visser, Minnesota South D.A. Zylstra, Northcentral Iowa
D.A. Venegas	Director of chaplaincy services at Alternative Directions, Grand Rapids, MI	Grand Rapids East (9-19-96)	J.H. Looman, Kalamazoo G.W. Sheeres, Thornapple Valley D.J. Van Beek, Grand Rapids North
C.E. Zylstra	President of Dordt College, Sioux Center, Iowa	Iakota (9-17-96)	R.L. Bouwkamp, Pella J.D. Buwalda, Minnesota South J.M. Gray, Heartland

Recommendation: That synod approve the work of the synodical deputies.

—*Adopted*

E. Release from the ministry under Article 14-b

1. Synodical deputies W.J. Dykstra (Lake Erie), W. Timmer (Atlantic Northeast), and P.A. Apol* (Hackensack), having heard the discussions relating to the resignation of **Daniel L. Bratt**, in accordance with Church Order Article 14-b, concur in the decision of Classis Hudson, in session on September 25, 1996, to declare that **Daniel L. Bratt** is dismissed from the office of minister of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

   *Concurred by telephone.

2. Synodical deputies R. Bultman (California South), G.G. Vink (Central California), and J. Van Schepen (Greater Los Angeles), having heard the discussions relating to the resignation of **C. Oliver Buus**, in accordance with Church Order Article 14-b, concur in the decision of Classis Arizona, in session on September 21, 1996, to declare that **C. Oliver Buus** is honorably released from the office of minister of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

3. Synodical deputies D.W. De Groot (Iakota), Rev. J.G. Busscher (Minnesota North), and A.L. Kuiper (Heartland), having heard the discussions relating to the resignation of **Alan L. Camarigg**, in accordance with Church Order Article 14-b, concur in the decision of Classis Minnesota South, in session on March 6, 1997, to declare that **Alan L. Camarigg** is honorably released from the office of minister of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

4. Synodical deputies W.J. Dykstra (Lake Erie), W. Timmer (Atlantic Northeast), and P.A. Apol* (Hackensack), having heard the discussions relating to the resignation of **Ronald J. de Groot**, in accordance with

Church Order Article 14-b, concur in the decision of Classis Hudson, in session on September 25, 1996, to declare that **Ronald J. de Groot** is honorably released from the office of minister of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

*Concurred by telephone.

5. Synodical deputies W.J. Dykstra (Lake Erie), P.A. Apol (Hackensack), and J. Vande Lune (Atlantic Northeast), having heard the discussions relating to the resignation of **Casey D. Freswick**, in accordance with Church Order Article 14-b, concur in the decision of Classis Hudson, in session on May 14, 1997, to declare that **Casey D. Freswick** is in the status of one deposed from the office of minister of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

6. Synodical deputies P.A. Apol (Hackensack), J.J. Hoogland (Hudson), and G. Ringnalda (Toronto), having heard the discussions relating to the resignation of **Fred F. Gunnink**, in accordance with Church Order Article 14-b, concur in the decision of Classis Atlantic Northeast, in session on March 6, 1997, to declare that **Fred F. Gunnink** is dismissed from the office of minister of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

7. Synodical deputies G.J. Kamps (Arizona), W. Verhoef (Rocky Mountain), and D.L. Recker (Columbia), having heard the discussions relating to the resignation of **Edward J. Marcusse**, in accordance with Church Order Article 14-b, concur in the decision of Classis Yellowstone, in session on March 7, 1997, to declare that **Edward J. Marcusse** is released from the office of minister of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

8. Synodical deputies J.R. Kok (Central California) and J. Van Schepen (Greater Los Angeles), having heard the discussions relating to the resignation of **Bradd Nymeyer**, in accordance with Church Order Article 14-b, concur in the decision of Classis Arizona, in session on March 1, 1997, to declare that **Bradd Nymeyer** is dismissed from the office of minister of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

   Deputies' comment: R.L. Scheuers (California South) cannot concur with this decision because he believes "dismissed" is too harsh and "released" would have been a better term.

9. Synodical deputies J.G. Busscher (Minnesota North), L.J. Howerzyl (Pella), and D.A. Zylstra (Northcentral Iowa), concur in the decision of Classis Heartland, in session on March 1, 1997, to acquiesce in the resignation of **Stuart C. Pastine** and to declare that his status is that of one deposed from office.

10. Synodical deputies A.L. Kuiper (Heartland), R.L. Bouwkamp (Pella), and J. Weeda (Yellowstone), having heard the discussions relating to the resignation of **Mark D. Vander Hart**, in accordance with Church Order Article 14-b, concur in the decision of Classis Iakota, in session on March 4, 1997, to declare that **Mark D. Vander Hart** is honorably released from

the office of minister of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

Recommendation: That synod approve the work of the synodical deputies.

—*Adopted*

11. Synodical deputies S.E. Hoezee (Grand Rapids East), C.D. Vander Meyden (Grand Rapids South), and D.E. Tinklenberg (Georgetown) having conferred by phone regarding the resignation of **Thomas C. Vanden Heuvel**, in accordance with Church Order Article 14-b, concur in the decision of Classis Grandville, in session on February 9, 1997, to declare that **Thomas C. Vanden Heuvel** is honorably released from the office of minister of the Word in the CRCNA.

Recommendation: That synod not approve the work of the synodical deputies in number 11 above and return this matter to Classis Grandville.

Ground: A matter this serious should be conducted with the synodical deputies present to hear the deliberation.

Synod enters into executive session.

—*Recommitted*

Synod returns to open session.

F. Article 14-c: Release from Office to Enter a Nonministerial Vocation

Synodical deputies T.H. Douma (Northern Illinois), L.J. Kuiper (Wisconsin), and D.J. Van Loo (Chicago South), having heard the grounds submitted by the council of Second Christian Reformed Church, Highland, Indiana, and the discussion of Classis Illiana, in session on September 10, 1996, concur in the decision of classis (1) to acquiesce in the resignation of **John Boer** from the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America (Church Order Art. 14) and (2) to declare the status of **John Boer** to be as one deposed from the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America (cf. Church Order Supplement, Art. 14-b).

Deputies' comments:

1. We ask synod to take note of the fact that this situation of a person resigning under these circumstances but not yet deposed is not clearly addressed in either Article 14 or Article 82 of the Church Order.
2. We remind classes that all confidential communications received by officebearers of the church in the discharge of the duties of their office are privileged communications and are to be held inviolate.

G. Article 14-e: Return to Office of a Person Who Was Released to Enter a Nonministerial Vocation

Synodical deputies H.R. De Bolster (Hamilton), E. Gritter (Quinte), and H.J. Bierman (Huron), having heard the interview of the applicant and the discussion of Classis Toronto, in session on January 23, 1997, concur in the decision of classis not to grant **Mr. John Veenstra**'s request, in accordance with Church Order Article 14-e, to be eligible for call to the ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

H. Extensions (and releases) under Article 16-c

1. Synodical deputies S.E. Hoezee (Grand Rapids East), C.D. Vander Meyden (Grand Rapids South), and D. Tinklenberg (Georgetown) concur with the decision of Classis Grandville, in session on September 19, 1996, to extend the eligibility of **Rev. Robert D. Ritsema** for call for one year.

2. Synodical deputies G.J. Kamps (Arizona), G.G. Vink (Central California), and D.R. Koll (Greater Los Angeles), having heard the discussion of Classis California South, in session on May 14, 1997, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 16-c, that **Rev. Thomas Van't Land** be given an additional extension in his eligibility for call until the January 1998 classis meeting.

Recommendation: That synod approve the work of the synodical deputies with regard to Church Order Articles 14-c, 14-e, and 16-c.

—Adopted

I. Release from Ministry in a Congregation under Article 17-a

1. Synodical deputies S.E. Hoezee (Grand Rapids East), G.W. Sheeres (Thornapple Valley), and D. Tinklenberg (Georgetown), having heard the grounds submitted by the council of Korean CRC, Kalamazoo, Michigan, in session on September 10, 1996, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-a, that **Rev. Seung Jai Kang** is released from ministerial service in Korean CRC, Kalamazoo.

2. Synodical deputies D.L. Recker (Columbia), J.S. Hielema (B.C. North-West), and W.L. Vander Beek (B.C. South-East), having heard the grounds submitted by the council of Anacortes CRC, Anacortes, Washington, and the discussion of Classis Pacific Northwest, in session on March 4, 1997, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-a, that **Rev. Clarence A. Reyneveld** is released from ministerial service in Anacortes CRC.

3. Synodical deputies H.R. De Bolster (Hamilton), R. Koops (Huron), and G. Ringnalda (Toronto), having heard the grounds submitted by the council of Athens CRC, Athens, Ontario, and the discussion of Classis Eastern Canada, in session on Wednesday, March 26, 1997, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-a, that **Rev. John Roke** is released from ministerial service in Athens CRC.

   Deputies' comments: Deputies also concur with the decision of Classis Eastern Canada that the Athens CRC council (re Art. 17-c) declare Rev. John Roke eligible for call after the classical committee of reconciliation and the Athens CRC council have satisfactorily resolved with John Roke the concerns raised in his documents.

4. Synodical deputies R.L. Scheuers (California South), G.J. Kamps (Arizona), and G.G. Vink (Central California), having heard the grounds submitted by the council of The Spirit Filled CRC of Artesia, California, and the discussion of Classis Greater Los Angeles, in session on July 18, 1996, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-a, that **Rev. Ky Chun So** is released from ministerial service in The Spirit Filled CRC of Artesia.

5. Synodical deputies R. Koops (Huron), H. Vander Plaat (Niagara), and G. Ringnalda (Toronto), having heard the grounds submitted by the council of Faith CRC, Burlington, Ontario, and the discussion of Classis Hamilton, in session on May 13, 1997, concur with the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-a, that **Rev. Peter Veltman** is released from ministerial service in Faith CRC of Burlington.

Recommendation: That synod approve the work of the synodical deputies.

—*Adopted*

J. Extensions (and releases) under Article 17-c

1. Synodical deputies D.J. Van Beek (Grand Rapids North), G.W. Sheeres (Thornapple Valley), and J.H. Looman (Kalamazoo) concur with the decision of Classis Grand Rapids East, in session on September 19, 1996, to extend the eligibility for call of Rev. James Lucas for one year pursuant to Church Order Article 17-c.

   Grounds:
   a. Rev. Lucas attests to a continued call from God to ordained ministry.
   b. Rev. Lucas continues to demonstrate gifts for ministry in pastoral care, teaching, and preaching.
   c. Rev. Lucas is actively pursuing a call to ministry as chaplain of AWARE.
   d. The deliberate pace with which Eastern Avenue CRC is responding to Rev. Lucas's request has necessitated the extension of the credentials of Rev. Lucas for another year.

Recommendation: That synod approve the work of the synodical deputies.

—*Adopted*

2. Synodical deputies G.W. Sheeres (Thornapple Valley), J.W. Uitvlugt (Zeeland), and J. Gorter (Grandville), having heard the discussion of Classis Georgetown, in session on May 15, 1997, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-c, that **Rev. Clark G. Van Halsema**'s eligibility for call be extended for one year.

   Ground: Imminent prospect of a call to a ministry.

   Deputies' comments: Deputies also suggest that the committee appointed by classis continue to work with Rev. Van Halsema concerning his relationship with Hillcrest CRC and to assist him in his transition to another ministry.

3. Synodical deputies H.J. Bierman (Huron), H.R. De Bolster (Hamilton), and E. Gritter (Quinte), having heard the discussion of Classis Toronto, in session on January 23, 1997, concur in the decision of classis to declare, in accordance with Church Order Article 17-c, that **Larry Kin Wai Lau** is released from the office of minister of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

Recommendation: That synod approve the work of the synodical deputies on 2 and 3 above.

—*Adopted*

K. Retired ministers resigning

During this past year (July 1996-June 1997) at least five retired ministers resigned their membership in the CRC and thereby forfeited their privilege to "retain the honor and title of a minister of the Word" in the CRC (Church Order Art. 18-b). Their act of leaving is not directly covered by the Church Order because they are not under call and are no longer active in the ministry.

The following retired ministers resigned their membership in the CRC and are no longer accorded the privileges of the office of minister of the Word in the CRC:

Jerome Batts
H. Dexter Clark
John de Pater
Fred Handlogten
Donald Houseman

(The report of Advisory Committee 1 is continued in Article 58.)

ARTICLE 53

Advisory Committee 10, Church Order II, Rev. Gerrit J. Bomhof reporting, presents the following:

I. Response to Overture 1: Interpret Church Order Articles 8 and 12

A. Material: Overture 1, p. 425

B. Observations

Overture 1 raises two questions regarding ministers of the Word who work in specialized ministry positions. First, may ordained ministers be "hired" rather than "called" to their positions and, second, what happens to their ordination status when they are hired to positions which do not require ordination in their job descriptions?

C. Recommendation

That synod declare that ordained ministers serving in or being appointed to specialized "ministry staff positions" be called in accordance with Church Order Article 4 and that Church Order Articles 6 through 22 apply to them as well as to "senior pastors."

—Adopted

II. Response to Overture 2: Reassert the Right of Synod to Make Nominations from the Floor

A. Material: Overture 2, pp. 425-26

This overture asks that synod return to its previous nomination process for appointments to denominational boards and committees by allowing for nominations from the floor of synod. Synod 1995 decided to discontinue the practice of allowing nominations from the floor "in order to take into consideration such matters as balance in membership, expertise, availability, eligibility, and both gender and ethnic inclusiveness."

The advisory committee judges that there are adequate opportunities for individuals, churches, and classes to give their input before a nomination comes to synod.

B. *Recommendation*
That synod not accede to Overture 2.

Ground: The overture is a request for a revision of a rule adopted by Synod 1995. No "sufficient and new grounds for reconsideration" have been presented (Church Order Art. 31).

—*Adopted*

III. Response to Overture 3: Adopt Affirmations of Faith

A. *Material:* Overture 3, pp. 426-32

B. *Background*
The Galatin Gateway CRC of Bozeman, Montana, asks synod to adopt the Affirmations of Faith "passed at the conference of some Christian Reformed churches held in South Holland, Illinois, on November 7-8, 1996" (*Agenda for Synod 1997*, p. 433).

C. *Recommendation*
That synod not accede to Overture 3.

Grounds:
1. While much of the material contained in the Affirmations of Faith may be helpful to congregations and individuals as they articulate our common confession, the three forms of unity and the Contemporary Testimony are creedally sufficient at this time.
2. Gallatin Gateway CRC has not sufficiently demonstrated the need for synod to adopt these Affirmations of Faith.

—*Adopted*

IV. Response to Overture 5: Assign to the Appropriate Body the Task of Reviewing the Requirements and Procedures for Classical Examinations of Candidates

A. *Material:* Overture 5, pp. 434-35

B. *Background*
In this overture Classis Chatham asks synod to mandate a review of the requirements and procedures for classical examinations of candidates for ministry (Church Order Supplement, Art. 10). Classis Chatham "strongly endorses the need for classical examinations" but has concerns that "the way examinations are conducted seems to vary from one classis to the next."

C. *Recommendation*
That synod not accede to Overture 5.

Ground: The problems cited in the overture appear to lie in the area of implementation rather than legislation.

—*Adopted*

V. Response to Overture 7: Add Supplement Permitting Shared Ministers

A. *Material:* Overture 7, pp. 436-38

B. *Background*

Luctor CRC in Luctor, Kansas, is seeking to procure the services of Rev. Paul Copeland, a minister of the Reformed Church in America who is serving the Prairie View Reformed Church. Presently there is no provision in the Church Order for such ministry arrangements.

C. *Recommendations*

1. That synod add the following to Supplement, Article 8 of the Church Order:

F. Ministers of denominations in ecclesiastical fellowship with the Christian Reformed Church may be called by way of exception to serve in the Christian Reformed Church while jointly serving ministries within their own denominations. This arrangement requires the approval of classis and the concurrence of the synodical deputies. The specific need for a minister's services must be demonstrated, and the pension-fund arrangements must be satisfactorily met in the denomination holding the minister's credentials.

Ministers of denominations in ecclesiastical fellowship who so serve churches in the Christian Reformed Church will be accorded the right of delegation to classes and participation in classical committee work for the duration of their time of service in the Christian Reformed Church. This right of delegation and participation shall not extend beyond the boundaries of the classis.

The Christian Reformed Church will by way of exception allow a minister to be called by a congregation of a denomination in ecclesiastical fellowship if such a minister jointly serves in a congregation of the denomination in ecclesiastical fellowship and in a congregation of the Christian Reformed Church.

Grounds:

a. The economics of some churches make it difficult to raise the salaries necessary to support the services of a full-time minister.
b. The sharing of a minister in this manner enables effective ministry to continue.

—*Adopted*

2. That synod declare this to be its response to Overture 7.

—*Adopted*

(The report of Advisory Committee 10 is continued in Article 57.)

ARTICLE 54

The afternoon session is adjourned; Elder Charles A. Mast leads in closing prayer.

WEDNESDAY EVENING, June 18, 1997
Ninth Session

ARTICLE 55

Dr. Emily Brink leads in opening devotions, and the assembly sings *Psalter Hymnal* 232, "You Are Worthy," and the chorus "Hallelujah, Amen." She leads in opening prayer.

ARTICLE 56

Advisory Committee 13, Worship, Rev. Jack Roeda reporting, presents the following:

"Authentic Worship in a Changing Culture"

A. *Material:* Appendix to CRC Publications Report, "Authentic Worship in a Changing Culture," pp. 93-144

B. *Introduction*

Because of the enormous changes taking place in the worship services of Christian Reformed congregations, Synod 1994 requested the CRC Worship Committee to study the following questions regarding worship:

- What are the essentials of public Christian worship? What is nonnegotiable in a Reformed setting? How do the Reformed confessions and our expression of our faith determine our approach to worship?
- How do the various cultural realities come to expression with the diversity now current in the church?
- How are the four motifs identified in the 1968 report (biblical, catholic, confessional, pastoral) expressed in our worship? Can an emphasis on the pastoral motif become so dominant that the other three motifs are ignored?
- How does the church maintain its biblical and Reformed character in the current climate?
- For whom is worship intended—the believer? the seeker? both? Can sound principles of worship guide the church in providing worship that glorifies God, that expresses the heartfelt covenantal commitment of God's people, and that draws others into the circle of faith?

(*Acts of Synod 1994*, pp. 526-27)

The committee has prepared a lucid and substantial report for synod that answers these questions according to the principles of Reformed worship, Scripture, the Reformed confessions, and the 1968 report of the Liturgical Committee.

The report itself is neither an exhaustive biblical-theological study of Christian worship nor a "how to" manual for preparing worship. Rather, it is a theological reflection upon the cultural situation in which we worship today. The report identifies and explains some of the dynamics in our culture and then reflects theologically upon those forces and the changes they have caused in worship. "Our goal," says the report, "is to equip church leaders with perspectives and insights that will help them make decisions regarding worship that are biblically and theologically informed and culturally discerning" (*Agenda for Synod 1997*, p. 94). The study committee offers a summary of the 1968 report on worship, acknowledging that this report is the beginning point of their own reflection and that it forms the biblical-theological framework for all their observations. This summary is then followed by an analysis

of the cultural winds blowing through our congregations and the enduring motifs of biblical worship to keep us on course.

C. *Recommendations*

1. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Rev. Duane Kelderman, Rev. Wayne Brouwer, and any other member of the committee present when this report is discussed.

—Granted

2. That synod endorse the following principles and commend them to the churches as guidelines for evaluating worship.

   a. A biblical-theological approach to worship must embrace strengths and critique weaknesses in worship at every point on the contemporary worship continuum; it will resist simplistic either/or choices and will reject the use of labels that polarize the church and caricatures that misrepresent the sincere attempts of fellow believers to worship.

   —Adopted

   b. A biblical-theological approach to worship demands discerning analysis of the powerful cultural forces that presently affect the church's life and worship:
      1) Cultural assimilation brings greater exposure to other Christian traditions and a declining interest in preserving specific beliefs and customs that have distinguished one tradition from another.
      2) A pervasive consumer culture increases the church's awareness of the various needs and expectations of those it desires to reach with the gospel, but a consumer culture may also tempt the church to accept consumer preferences rather than biblical or historical principles as primary determinants of its ministry and worship.
      3) Rapid change in all areas of life makes it increasingly difficult for the church to develop the positive, healthy traditions essential to shaping Christian community identity.
      4) The shift from a culture of discourse to a culture of entertainment, especially as promoted by television, calls into question many of the ways in which the church has historically understood and communicated the Word.
      5) A widespread emphasis on felt needs and on self-fulfillment as the highest human good carries with it a temptation to reduce the message of the gospel to therapeutic categories.
      6) The prevalence of economic anxieties, family breakdown, addiction, stress, and violence in contemporary society means that many people now come to church primarily in search of healing for pain and meaningful answers to pressing personal concerns.

      —Adopted

   c. A biblical-theological approach to worship underscores the following general norms:
      1) Certain enduring biblical components serve as a common basis in all Christian worship, including
         a) That worship is an ascription of worth, adoration, and praise to God.

b) That this worship naturally includes confession of sin and surrender to the true God.
c) That worship is a God-initiated engagement of God and the worshiper, as well as a corporate/communal engagement among the worshipers, both locally and universally.
d) That worship strengthens and is strengthened by the Christian community and must build upon the shared memory, shared meaning, and shared traditions of a particular community.
e) That worship reflects the mighty redemptive acts of God.

—*Adopted*

2) There is a basic biblical dynamic of worship: when God's people worship with pure hearts and in authentic community and when that community is ever renewing and being renewed in its worship, then effective evangelism, i.e., the proclamation of the good news of Jesus Christ to those outside the community of faith, is the natural outgrowth.

—*Adopted*

The following negative votes with statements re 1) and 2) are registered:

I record my negative vote for the following reasons:

1. The study report, in its list of Reformed distinctives in worship, fails to mention the primacy of preaching in the worship service, the historic practice of joining confession of sin/assurance of forgiveness/reading of the Law as a guide for gratitude, ordinarily preaching through the Heidelberg Catechism, etc.
2. The study report makes not even a passing reference to the overall guideline for Reformed worship emphasized by John Calvin and summarized as follows in the Heidelberg Catechism: "that we [not] worship [the Lord] in any other way than he has commanded in his Word" (Q. and A. 96).

Randal S. Lankheet (California South)

I record my negative vote for the following reasons: The study committee mandate was, in part, to discuss "what is *nonnegotiable* in a Reformed setting" (my emphasis). The study committee report merely refers to "historic strengths" of the worship of the Reformed community. The mandate seems to ask for absolutes of Reformed worship, but the report only describes current practices in our churches. Thus the report fails to fulfill a crucial part of the mandate.

Peter M. Nanninga (California South)

3) There is a recurring, community-constituting basic pattern to Christian worship: gathering as a covenant community, proclamation of the Word, celebration of the Lord's Supper, going out for service in the world. (The elements that give shape and form to this basic pattern are elaborated in the 1968 Liturgical Committee report, *Acts of Synod 1968*, pp. 142-55.)
4) Authentic worship has an intrinsically sacramental character: in worship, certain elements from the stuff of creation—water, bread and wine, the human words of the sermon—become Spirit-charged, identity-shaping vehicles of God's grace.
5) Christians do not need to fear diversity in authentic worship: Christians of diverse backgrounds enrich one another when they come together in Christ, and when growth and change take place

among people whose hearts are right and who are in Christian community, God is praised in ever-expanding and ever-deeper ways.

6) Worship cannot be separated from evangelism. Although the church does not gather in worship primarily for evangelism, the church must worship in ways that call people to faith and life in Christ.
7) The historic strengths in the worship of the Reformed community deserve continuing cultivation.

These include

a) A redemptive-historical perspective that takes seriously the rich communion of relationships involved in worship.
b) A healthy trinitarian balance within worship.
c) The Calvinist theology of preaching and the sacraments.
d) A strong appreciation for the psalms and the Old Testament in general.
e) An emphasis on the importance of congregational singing.

—*Adopted*

The following negative votes with statement are registered:

I would like to record my negative vote to Recommendation 2, c, 3) for the following reason: I feel that these guidelines fail to take into account the regulative principle of Heidelberg Catechism Q. and A. 96, that we not . . . "worship God in any other way than He has commanded in His Word."

Rev. Roger Sparks (Iakota)

I wish to record my negative vote on the worship guidelines on the grounds that the report does not make clear references to the 1968 CRCNA report on worship, the creeds, or Scripture.

Keith A. Vander Pol (California South)

3. That synod commend to the churches the practical suggestions found in Section V: Questions and answers (cf. *Agenda for Synod 1997*, pp. 127-42), as guidelines for evaluating worship.

—*Adopted*

4. That synod disseminate this report as widely as possible among the churches for study and discussion by

   a. Directing CRC Publications to publish the report separately from the *Acts of Synod* for distribution to church councils and worship committees.

   b. Directing CRC Publications to develop supplementary educational materials based on the report and promote discussion of its conclusions by means of workshops throughout North America.

   c. Acknowledging with thanks CRC Publications for funding the publishing of the report with discussion guidelines.

   d. Encouraging the churches to familiarize their worship leaders and planners with the principles and recommendations of this report.

—*Adopted*

5. That synod direct the CRC Worship Committee to consult with the Calvin Worship Institute, Calvin Theological Seminary, CR Home Missions,

CR World Missions, Pastoral Ministries, Youth Ministries, and CRC Publications with a view to assessing how the worship principles of this report are reflected in the programs of these agencies and to report on their work to Synod 2000.

—*Adopted*

6. That the work of this committee be declared completed and the committee be discharged with much thanks.

—*Adopted*

ARTICLE 57

(The report of Advisory Committee 10 is continued from Article 53.)

Advisory Committee 10, Church Order II, Rev. Gerrit J. Bomhof reporting, presents the following:

I. Response to Overture 8: Permit Transfer of Trinity CRC from Classis Northern Michigan to Classis Muskegon

A. *Material:* Overture 8, p. 438

B. *Recommendation*

That synod accede to the overture and approve the transfer of Trinity CRC of Mt. Pleasant, Michigan, from Classis Northern Michigan to Classis Muskegon.

—*Adopted*

II. Response to Overture 9: Transfer Pine Creek CRC to Classis Zeeland

A. *Material:* Overture 9, pp. 438-39

B. *Recommendation*

That synod accede to the overture and approve the transfer of the Pine Creek CRC from Classis Holland to Classis Zeeland.

—*Adopted*

III. Response to Overture 37: Transfer Garden Grove Korean CRC to Classis Pacific Hanmi

A. *Material:* Overture 37, p. 552

B. *Recommendation*

That synod accede to the overture and approve the transfer of Garden Grove Korean CRC from Classis California South to Classis Pacific Hanmi.

—*Adopted*

(The report of Advisory Committee 10 is continued in Article 61.)

ARTICLE 58

(The report of Advisory Committee 1 is continued from Article 52.)

Advisory Committee 1, Synodical Services, Rev. John Tenyenhuis reporting, presents the following:

I. Work of synodical deputies (recommitted)

A. Materials (see Article 52, VI, E)

11. Synodical deputies S.E. Hoezee (Grand Rapids East), C.D. Vander Meyden (Grand Rapids South), and D.E. Tinklenberg (Georgetown), having conferred by phone relating to the resignation of **Thomas C. Vanden Heuvel**, in accordance with Church Order Article 14-b, concur in the decision of Classis Grandville, in session on February 9, 1997, to declare that **Thomas C. Vanden Heuvel** is honorably released from the office of minister of the Word in the CRCNA.

B. Recommendation

That synod not approve the work of the synodical deputies in number 11 above and return this matter to Classis Grandville.

Ground: The matter of resignations under Article 14-b should be conducted with the synodical deputies present to hear the deliberation.

—*Adopted*

II. Board of Trustees (recommitted)

A. Material: Board of Trustees Supplement, *Acts of Synod 1997*, pp. 502-03

B. Recommendation

That synod remind pastors that it is inappropriate to participate in and officiate at the ordination services of officebearers in churches which have recently seceded from the CRC. Church councils are urged to discourage pastors under their supervision from participating in such services.

—*Adopted*

ARTICLE 59

The evening session is adjourned; Elder Vernon Boerman leads in closing prayer.

THURSDAY MORNING, June 19, 1997
Tenth Session

ARTICLE 60

Rev. Reginald Smith reads from Isaiah 43:10-13 and leads in opening prayer. He announces *Psalter Hymnal* 552, "The Blood Will Never Lose Its Power."

The roll call indicates that all delegates are present.

ARTICLE 61

(The report of Advisory Committee 10 is continued from Article 57.)

Advisory Committee 10, Church Order II, Rev. Gerrit J. Bomhof reporting, presents the following:

Response to Overture 4: Form at Least Four Theologically Identified Classes (Reports A and B; *note*: half of the committee favored Report A, and half of the committee favored Report B.)

A. Materials

1. Overture 4, pp. 433-34
2. Supplement to Overture 4, pp. 549-50
3. Overture 6, pp.435-36
4. Overture 36, pp. 550-51
5. Communication 10, p. 560

B. Recommendation

1. Even though the advisory committee is not totally convinced that sufficient and new grounds have been presented to warrant reconsideration of the matter of theologically distinct classes (Church Order Art. 31), it recommends that synod consider Overture 4 under its open-ended jurisdiction (Rules for Synodical Procedure, V, B, 12).

   Ground: The unity and harmony of the denomination are precious and compelling reasons to reconsider the decision of Synod 1996.

   —*Adopted*

Note: Recommendation 1 above is identical in Reports A and B.

Advisory Committee 10, Church Order II, Elder Louis J. Meinema reporting, presents the following:

Response to Overture 4: Form at Least Four Theologically Identified Classes (Report A)

A. Materials (see above)

B. Recommendations

2. That synod appoint and mandate a committee to work out the details of and to implement on or before October 1, 1997, the formation of at least four theologically identified classes within the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

   Such classes shall

   a. Consist of churches which agree in general with the Affirmations of Faith passed at the conference of some Christian Reformed churches held in South Holland, Illinois, on November 7-8, 1996.

   (*Note:* The Affirmations of Faith are printed as part of Overture 3).

b. Be geographically defined by and consist of those churches which have indicated their desire to join a theologically identified classis.

c. Receive until January 1, 1998, without further need for classical or synodical action, any Christian Reformed churches within their geographical boundaries that agree with the above requirement and wish to join.

d. Enjoy all rights and privileges of Christian Reformed Church in North America classes, including the right of being assigned synodical deputies from neighboring theologically identified classes.

Grounds:

1) This recommendation is the most practical way to implement and live out the synodical decision of 1995 "That synod recognizes that there are two different perspectives and convictions, both of which honor the Scripture as the infallible Word of God, on the issue of whether women are allowed to serve in the offices of elder, minister, and evangelist" (Church Order Art. 3), as well as the 1996 synodical decision allowing churches to transfer to another classis for reasons that go beyond the sole matter of geographical proximity (Church Order Supplement, Art. 29, p. 56).
2) Synod 1982 approved the formation of Classis Red Mesa to accommodate special needs, and Synod 1996 approved a language-affinity (Korean) classis.
3) Synod 1995 sought to make room for those members and churches which disagree. However, its efforts have had the effect of placing certain churches and members in violation of their biblically directed consciences.
4) This approach, by virtue of keeping churches and members within the CRCNA, will serve to stabilize the denomination's membership and financial base.

3. That synod declare this to be its answer to Overtures 6 and 36 and Communication 10.

According to the ruling of the president, Report B is read as information by Rev. Gerrit J. Bomhof.

A. Materials (see above)

B. Recommendations

2. That synod not accede to Overture 4.

Grounds:

a. The concept of theologically identified classes is foreign to Reformed church government. Classes are assemblies of neighboring churches that embrace the same creeds and confessions (Church Order Art. 39). The only exceptions to this organizing principle have been classes formed on the basis of linguistic and cultural grounds.
b. Synod already permits an individual congregation requesting transfer to another classis to adduce grounds that go beyond the sole matter of geographic proximity.

c. Within the boundaries of our Reformed confessions, "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" (*Acts of Synod 1996*, p. 561, C, 1, c) (cf. Acts 15, Phil. 2:1-11, I Cor. 12).
d. "Formation of a new classis based on theological affinity would lead only to further fragmentation within the denomination" (*Acts of Synod 1996*, p. 561, C, 4, b).
e. "Departing significantly from the principle of geographic proximity may well impair effective" classical ministries (*Acts of Synod 1996*, p. 561, C, 1, b).
f. The proposed theologically identified classes would be composed of "churches which agree with the Affirmations of Faith passed at the conference of some CRCs held in South Holland, Illinois, on November 7-8, 1996." Section II, C of the affirmations directly contradicts the decision on women's ordination adopted at Synod 1995. Consequently,
   1) The consciences of members of congregations joining such theologically identified classes may be bound.
   2) Synod cannot both permit the formation of such theologically identified classes and maintain the decisions of 1995 regarding the ordination of women to all the offices.

3. That this constitute synod's answer to Overtures 6 and 36 and Communication 10.

Synod returns to its consideration of the recommendations of the advisory-committee Report A.

Recommendation 2 of Report A is tabled, and the assembly moves to advisory committee Report B, Recommendation 2.

2. That synod not accede to Overture 4.

Grounds:

a. The concept of theologically identified classes is foreign to Reformed church government. Classes are assemblies of neighboring churches that embrace the same creeds and confessions (Church Order Art. 39). The only exceptions to this organizing principle have been classes formed on the basis of linguistic and cultural grounds.
b. Synod already permits an individual congregation requesting transfer to another classis to adduce grounds that go beyond the sole matter of geographic proximity.
c. Within the boundaries of our Reformed confessions, "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" (*Acts of Synod 1996*, p. 561, C, 1, c) (cf. Acts 15, Phil. 2:1-11, I Cor. 12).
d. "Formation of a new classis based on theological affinity would lead only to further fragmentation within the denomination" (*Acts of Synod 1996*, p. 561, C, 4, b).
e. "Departing significantly from the principle of geographic proximity may well impair effective" classical ministries (*Acts of Synod 1996*, p. 561, C, 1, b).

f. The proposed theologically identified classes would be composed of "churches which agree with the Affirmations of Faith passed at the conference of some CRCs held in South Holland, Illinois, on November 7-8, 1996." Section II, C of the affirmations directly contradicts the decision on women's ordination adopted at Synod 1995. Consequently,
   1) The consciences of members of congregations joining such theologically identified classes may be bound.
   2) Synod cannot both permit the formation of such theologically identified classes and maintain the decisions of 1995 regarding the ordination of women to all the offices.

—*Adopted*

The following negative votes are registered:

Randal S. Lankheet (California South) and Stephen G. Donovan (Pacific Northwest)

Note: Out of concern that this vote be rightly understood, synod emphasizes that it already permits individual congregations requesting transfer to another classis to adduce grounds that go beyond the sole matter of geographic proximity (see Ground b of Recommendation 2).

3. That this constitute synod's answer to Overtures 6 and 36 and Communication 10.

—*Adopted*

ARTICLE 62

The general secretary reports the results of Ballot 1.

The general secretary presents Ballot 2, and delegates vote.

ARTICLE 63

The morning session is adjourned; Elder Josue Abreu leads in closing prayer.

THURSDAY AFTERNOON, June 19, 1997
Eleventh Session

ARTICLE 64

Rev. Stanley J. Vander Klay reads from Ephesians 1:3-14 and leads in opening prayer. He announces *Psalter Hymnal* 591, "Savior, Like a Shepherd Lead Us."

ARTICLE 65

(The report of Advisory Committee 5 is continued from Article 21.)

Advisory Committee 5, Pastoral Ministries, Rev. Homer G. Samplonius reporting, presents the following:

I. Abuse Guidelines

A. Materials

1. Pastoral Ministries Report and Appendix, pp. 185-207
2. Overture 25, p. 466
3. Overture 26, pp. 466-67
4. Overture 27, pp. 467-78
5. Overture 28, pp. 478-79

B. Background

1. The Committee on Abuse Prevention first introduced to Synod 1994 the concept of an independent body of people to review allegations of abuse against church leaders. The report recommended that allegations of abuse be reviewed by a body composed of church members not belonging to the church or the churches of the alleged victim and alleged offender in order to avoid the emotional stress of hearing allegations against or by persons known to the body. Designed to make it easier for female victims to come forward, the committee suggested that the body be composed of both men and women.

   Synod 1994, in spite of recognizing some weaknesses, recommended the concept to the churches for study. Suggestions were to be submitted to the incoming director of Abuse Prevention. After consultation with Dr. David Engelhard and Dr. Henry De Moor, both the language of the report and the relationship between the review body and the council/consistory were thoroughly reviewed. Attorneys in the United States and in Canada were consulted, and a revised document was presented to Synod 1995.

2. Synod 1995 approved a set of guidelines for use in the churches as a model and for local adoption. In addition, synod added the recommendation that the council/consistory be the adjudicatory body and that the newly named advisory panel function only in an advisory capacity to the council/consistory.

   After Synod 1995, additional concerns were raised, which resulted in still further substantial revisions. These revisions also paid close attention to suggestions made by legal counsel both in Canada and the U.S.

3. In 1996, in no small part because of the fact that the revised guidelines were not ready for inclusion in the printed agenda for synod and appeared only in the supplement to the agenda, delegates felt ill prepared to deal with this complex matter. The officers of synod moved the provisional approval of the guidelines with the additional recommendation that the Pastoral Ministries Board be instructed to engage in their further "refinement" in order to "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" (*Acts of Synod 1996*, p. 563).

C. *Observations*

1. We recognize the ethnic and cultural diversity of our denomination, which means that the guidelines will have to be modified and adapted to each region and/or cultural group in order to meet the needs of these churches.

2. While emotional/psychological and spiritual abuse are real and its consequences are frequently devastating, we nevertheless are of the opinion that at this time we do not have a sufficiently clear definition to include these types of behavior in the description of what might constitute ungodly conduct. We therefore encourage the executive director, Ms. Beth Swagman, to assist the churches in articulating a working definition of this type of abuse that will enable us to minister effectively to both victims and perpetrators.

3. The churches will wish to note that with respect to all matters of admonition and discipline, including allegations of abuse, the Church Order is our guide on the manner in which we are to exercise our ministry. The guidelines supplement the Church Order.

4. Prior to adopting the guidelines in any geographical area it is wise to consult legal counsel in order to check for compliance with local law. When the guidelines have been adopted, it is critical to apply them consistently to guard against legal consequences.

D. *Recommendations*

1. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Rev. Charles Terpstra, chairman, and Ms. Beth Swagman, executive director, when the Abuse Guidelines are discussed.

—Granted

2. That synod approve the revised Guidelines for Handling Allegations of Abuse Against a Church Leader as found below:

Procedures and Guidelines for Handling Abuse Allegations Against a Church Leader

(*Note:* All new and revised material is in italics.)

A. *Why a procedure for handling abuse allegations is necessary*

1. Many allegations of child abuse surface after a child reaches adulthood. This happens when an adult survivor of child abuse becomes separated from a*n* abuser in adulthood. Sometimes in adulthood the adult survivor comes to recognize the behavior done to him/her as abusive.

2. Sadly, because some church leaders have been unaware of child-abuse reporting laws and procedures, some victims have been placed at risk, some abusers have gone unnoticed, and some have not been reported to local authorities.

3. Insurance companies that handle liability policies for churches may require reasonable policies and procedures that could reduce the risk of abuse and the costly civil litigation that can, and often does, result.

4. Costly civil litigation also results in an enormous toll on the emotional well-being of the litigants and the churches they attend. Church members are often divided in their support of litigants, and they may be uncertain how to respond with Christian concern toward litigants.

5. *Such a procedure is a tangible expression of the church's desire to secure justice and healing for all parties involved when allegations of abuse are made.*

   In developing and implementing a procedure to handle abuse allegations, two great tensions exist. First, tension exists because the church wants to respond to the horror contained in the allegations and at the same time wants to protect the character, office, and family of someone who may be accused of abuse. Second, tension exists when the church wants its members to stay out of civil court and to resolve disputes in an ecclesiastical manner. *Some, however, believing that the church's* procedure *for resolution is* biased in favor of the accused, choose the civil courts for redress.

   Currently the majority of abuse allegations are addressed by local councils/consistories who attempt to follow the principles of Matthew 18:15-17. This approach is sound. At the same time the consistory/council must recognize in applying these principles that a face-to-face meeting between the accused and the accuser may not be immediately advisable. When the abused is forced to face one who has dealt inappropriately with him/her, the abused may feel like a victim once again. Therefore, abused people have been unwilling to come forward with their stories even though their silence means that they cannot experience significant healing in their own lives and that an abusive spiritual leader continues to serve in a position of authority.

   The guidelines below are designed to make it easier for people to come forward with their allegations of abuse. There are a set of guidelines for adults and another set for children. Both provide direction to the church for an appropriate and speedy handling of abuse allegations. The guidelines for adults require the formation of an advisory panel constituted by the local classis. This panel, composed of people with expertise in the dynamics of abuse, will be an invaluable help to the local church and to all parties involved. We encourage all classes to form an advisory panel and remind them that the office of Abuse Prevention is available for any assistance needed to accomplish this.

   In both procedures it is still the local consistory that must make a decision based on information received, and a number of factors must be considered when a consistory makes that decision. Confession, repentance, forgiveness, and healing are significant ingredients in this process. Because forgiveness is at the heart of the Christian gospel, the church is sometimes tempted to believe that these matters have been resolved when forgiveness has been declared. However, if forgiveness is declared in the absence of heartfelt confession and sincere repentance, neither party is assisted. The abused experience resentment because their concerns have been dismissed so lightly; the abusers are not held accountable for their actions or the consequences of those actions and may go on to abuse again.

   Even when forgiveness is appropriately granted, decisions still remain about whether or not a person may continue to serve in a position of responsibility and trust in the church. When the accused is an officebearer, the Church Order gives

guidance in terms of suspension/deposition; when the accused is a church leader (but not an officebearer), the same kind of questions must be considered. Thus, council members should be knowledgeable about abuse. Members of the classical advisory panel are able to assist local councils when these matters are discussed even in the case of children, where the panel is not convened.

Confession, repentance, and forgiveness are not the end of this matter but are the beginning of a healing process. Abuse, even the allegation of abuse, is accompanied by a great deal of pain, which permanently changes people's lives. The church in its guidelines and in its continuing ministry must facilitate healing for all parties involved. It is our prayer that the following guidelines will better equip the church to evaluate specific allegations of abuse so justice and healing may be realized.

B. *Guidelines*

Member churches and classes should be allowed some freedom in defining *church leader*. A member church or classis may use the definition of *church leader* that is consistent 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 that might constitute ungodly conduct, misuse of power, sexually inappropriate behavior, and so forth:

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.

Various procedures may 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 procedure to follow. The following, *but not necessarily mutually exclusive*, procedures *are available to* the consistory/council acting as an adjudicatory body 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 to follow the Judicial Code as outlined in Church Order Supplement, Article 30-c. 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 described in Church Order Supplement, Article 30-c. Here, too, 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 allegations of abuse arise and 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, however, the alleged offender has the right to meet the accuser and to receive the specific charges in writing. *Once an alternative has been selected, the council/consistory is to assure that the accuser and the accused are informed about their rights and responsibilities under that alternative.*

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 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. (See Footnote 4, a for important information.) The executive committee (or its equivalent), after consulting with one another (no one of those consulting may be implicated by the victim) and after reviewing the alternatives, *should* notify the classical abuse-response team to convene an advisory panel (composed of members of the classical abuse-response team) regarding the allegation. The advisory panel should be convened *as soon as possible* 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 an advisory-panel meeting will be held. The advisory panel chooses the location and the time for the meeting. The accuser and witnesses should be available for the meeting. No public mention of the meeting 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 well as any report of the advisory panel. If the consistory/council chooses, it may have two representatives observe the hearing panels of the advisory panel. All matters of confidentiality apply to the consistory/council observers.

e. The advisory panel should receive all the information presented to it by the accuser, 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 an advisory panel meeting 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 accused should appear before the panel within seven days after the accuser does. 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 (or its equivalent) of the council of the alleged abuser's church. This meeting should be convened within *one week* of the advisory panel's formulation of its summary. Members of the advisory panel should contact the accuser orally or in writing with the panel's findings.

j. The executive committee (or its equivalent) of the council should convene the consistory within *one week* 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 *seven days* 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 *seven days*, 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. *If the accused acknowledges the allegations, the council should be convened as soon as possible to initiate steps of discipline by following Church Order Articles 82 and 83. Both the accused and the accuser should be notified in writing of the pastoral-care and church-discipline steps taken at this meeting.* When the council decides either to suspend or *depose* from office, *it* should inform the congregation in writing of this action.

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 *as soon as possible* to initiate appropriate steps of discipline. *When the accused is a church leader (but not an officebearer), the person should be removed from duty or position as soon as possible.* 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.

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 abuse against a church leader by a minor child should be reported to an appropriate agency outside the church, such as Child Protective Services, Children's Aid, or the local police authorities. The appropriate police 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. Church leaders should be aware of the child-abuse reporting laws in their locality.

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 *council*/consistory, which should deliberate and dispose of the matter according to Church Order Articles 82 *and* 83. *Subject to the best interest of the abused, the council/consistory should notify the congregation in writing of the admission of wrongdoing, in a manner which protects the confidentiality of all parties. Such disclosure should not exceed the scope of the admission and should be factual and pastoral.*

   Subject to the best interests of the abused child, the *consistory should notify the congregation in writing*, in a manner which protects the confidentiality of all parties, of the admission of wrongdoing against a child. 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. The primary reason for denying a face-to-face meeting should be that such a meeting would be materially detrimental to the minor. 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 actions 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) *As soon as possible* 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, *the* council should *notify the congregation of* the facts as known at the time; *the council should not convey any of the particulars relating to the alleged victim's allegations.*

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 his/her own 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. The primary reason for denying a face-to-face meeting should be that such a meeting would be materially detrimental to the minor. 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 actions 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 such 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. When criminal proceedings have concluded, the council should promptly revisit the matter. This should occur whether the result is conviction, acquittal, or dropped charges. If 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.

   If prosecution results 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 and restoration of offenders.

4. Five important footnotes regarding both sets of guidelines

   a. These 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. If the allegations are ungodly conduct, abuse of office, and so forth, 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) may be given but only 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 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 their 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. Negligent failure to follow the guidelines as adopted could be a basis for potential liability.

e. Denominational personnel should not serve on either an abuse-response team or an advisory panel.

—*Adopted*

3. That synod declare the above to be synod's response to Overtures 25, 26, 27, and 28.

—*Adopted*

4. That synod strongly urge classes to work with the director of Abuse Prevention in constituting an abuse-response team and providing the necessary support for churches within their jurisdiction in making use of these guidelines.

—*Adopted*

Synod expresses its gratitude to Classis Lake Erie for its thorough study and suggested revisions of the Abuse Guidelines.

Rev. John Tenyenhuis leads the assembly in prayer, remembering the victims of abuse and Ms. Swagman as she deals with the pain inflicted by abuse in our churches.

II. Race Relations

A. *Material:* Pastoral Ministries Report, pp. 193-95

B. *Observations*

The Christian Reformed Church in response to growing racial tensions experienced in the U.S. gave birth to SCORR in 1971 with the following mandate: "To design, organize, and implement programs which the denomination, churches, and members can effectively use to eliminate racism, both the causes and effects, within the body of believers and throughout the world."

For twenty-six years the Christian Reformed Church faithfully attempted to fulfill the mandate that synod gave to this ministry. We rejoice and give glory to God for the blessings we have experienced, especially in the growing diversity of persons in the Christian Reformed Church. We also recognize that a great deal of work remains to be done in the area of racial reconciliation. Today the world experiences ethnic and racial tensions at unprecedented levels. The church has not been immune to some of these tensions. We believe that in the light of these conditions the ministry of racial reconciliation has to take a greater role and priority in the ministries of the Christian Reformed Church. Race Relations, in its report, "calls on the churches and classes 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" (*Agenda for Synod 1997*, p. 195). We therefore urge synod to increase its efforts and its commitment toward the advancement of racial reconciliation.

C. *Recommendations*

1. That synod remind the churches through the general secretary's office and direct the agencies to fulfill the mandate given by Synod 1996's recommendation contained in the study-committee report "Biblical and Theological Principles for the Development of a Racially and Ethnically Diverse Family of God."

   Ground: In the present sociopolitical environment both in the U.S. and Canada, people tend to view cultural and racial diversity as a problem to be solved rather than to embrace it as a gift to be cherished.

   —*Adopted*

(The report of Advisory Committee 5 is continued in Article 71.)

ARTICLE 66

The general secretary introduces and welcomes Dr. Jack B. Lowndes from the Lord's Day Alliance, Atlanta, Georgia, and Rev. John Schaal. Dr. Engelhard expresses sympathy to Rev. Schaal in the death of his wife, Grace.

ARTICLE 67

The executive director of ministries introduces Mr. John De Haan, executive director of CRWRC-U.S., who briefly addresses synod. He informs the delegates of the internal structural changes CRWRC has implemented. In closing he expresses gratitude for the leadership of the various agencies in working together to enable the Christian Reformed Church to become a flourishing church, and he thanks the delegates for the opportunity to serve. Dr. Borgdorff also introduces Mr. Wayne deJong, executive director of CRWRC-Canada, who addresses synod. Mr. deJong was appointed to this position by Synod 1996. He informs the delegates of the work of CRWRC-Canada, and he thanks them for financial support and prayers for CRWRC. He reads II Corinthians 3:10-12, from which the theme for CRWRC is taken. The president of synod responds.

ARTICLE 68

The afternoon session is adjourned; Elder Henry Washington leads in closing prayer.

THURSDAY EVENING, June 19, 1997
Twelfth Session

ARTICLE 69

Rev. Emmett Harrison announces *Psalter Hymnal* 544, "Lead Me, Guide Me." He reads from John 15:1-8 and leads in opening prayer. Delegates sing *Psalter Hymnal* 508, "Jesus, with Your Church Abide."

ARTICLE 70

Advisory Committee 11, Inclusive Language for God, Rev. Henry P. Kranenburg reporting, presents the following:

Inclusive Language for God

A. Materials

1. Report of the Committee to Study Inclusive Language for God, pp. 265-372
2. Overture 10, p. 439
3. Overture 11, pp. 439-42
4. Overture 38 (additional material), pp. 552-53
5. Communication 7, p. 496
6. Communication 8, p. 559

B. Observations

1. Introduction

The advisory committee, early in its discussion of the report from the Committee to Study Inclusive Language for God (the report), expressed its appreciation for the thorough and careful study presented in the report, especially in view of the complexity of the issues it considers. The advisory

committee also recognizes that, while the report does not claim to answer all questions related to the matter of inclusive language for God, it fulfills the committee's mandate

> to examine the biblical, confessional, theological, cultural, and pastoral dimensions of the use of inclusive language for God. The study should be sensitive to the linguistic and literary issues involved. The results of the study should provide clear advice to the church concerning significance and limits of inclusive language for God.
>
> (*Acts of Synod 1994*, pp. 496-97)

The committee offers the following observations to help clarify some of the matters that came up in its discussion of the report and its recommendations.

2. Context

In studying the background of the report, the advisory committee noted that the basic content of the guidelines presented late in the report does not go in any new directions either from what previous synods have said or from the comments and concerns identified in the Board of Publications' report in 1991. A reading of the 1991 report and recommended guidelines by the Board of Publications reveals such concerns as proportional use of gendered language, intentional use of biblical female imagery for God, and non-use of female pronouns and gendered designations for God. In addition, Synod 1992 gave specific guidelines which were reaffirmed by Synod 1994. The guidelines of the present committee once again reflect the guidelines of 1992.

The advisory committee also notes that inclusive language for God often arises in the context of the hurt suffered by men and women because of male abuse of power and authority. The report acknowledges that some people in such circumstances experience the use of masculine gendered language for God as aggravating their pain. The report and the advisory committee grieve over the hurt and its causes and address this matter with pastoral advice.

The report notes that the equality of men and women is an issue often associated with the issue of inclusive language for God. The report distinguishes between the two issues and states that the equality of men and women, reinforced by the use of inclusive language for humans, does not necessitate the use of inclusive language for God.

3. Additional material

The advisory committee was supplied with the following additional material by study-committee members in response to the question "Is the patriarchal presentation of God in the Old Testament culturally relative and incidental?" and passes this material on to synod for information.

a. Organic inspiration implies that the Holy Spirit providentially prepares the cultural elements which inform inspired Scripture so that Scripture infallibly communicates what God wills. Suzerainty treaties, covenants, law codes, and circumcision are examples of cultural practices incorporated into the biblical text and given abiding transcultural status in the history of redemption. Divine accommodation to culture does not mean that cultural forms frustrate or distort God's self-revelation in Scripture.

b. It is not true that the patriarchal presentation of God is an inevitable reflection of patriarchal culture. Almost all ancient Near-Eastern cultures were patriarchal, but most worshiped male and female deities, and a few even worshiped a female deity as the high god. A gender-inclusive representation of God was culturally quite possible in the Old Testament. The fact that God is exclusively masculine in the Old Testament is almost as striking a contrast to ancient religion as monotheism is.

c. The fact that the masculine presentation of God is constant throughout Scripture, becoming more focused in God as Father in the New Testament, which contains proportionally less direct feminine imagery for God than the Old Testament does, is internal biblical evidence that this presentation of God is not culturally relative. (Constancy throughout Scripture is one criterion in Reformed hermeneutics of an aspect of revelation which is universal and not temporary or applicable only to some cultural settings.)

The following corrections of Scripture references should also be noted:

- Page 314: Scripture references re "Spirit" should be I Samuel 19:20, 23, not II Samuel.
- Page 314: Ezekiel 11 should also include verse 5. This would then be another instance of *ruach* used as a feminine noun, and the number "thirty-five" a few lines above should be "thirty-six."
- Page 325: line 13: Psalm 89:5 should be 89:26.
- Page 326: line 7: Luke 2:42 should be 2:49.

4. Matters of clarification

Since the report is lengthy, complex, and tightly reasoned, the advisory committee offers the following observations:

a. The term "contemporary inclusive language for God" refers to the broad gender-egalitarian and/or gender-neutral approach advocated in mainstream academic and ecclesiastical discussions. In general, this means the regular practice of eliminating the predominance of masculine language for God by using gender-inclusive language (cf. report, pp. 267-68). The term "gendered language for God" refers to either any biblical or contemporary inclusive use of masculine, feminine, or neuter language for God.

b. The term "personal designator" is a new term used by the report as a way to help classify the type of language used. The term is intended to include names, titles, and any non-figurative common nouns and should be read as such.

c. There is a distinction between discussing the biblical presentation of God using masculine language (linguistic assessment) and the actual gender of God (theological interpretation), and this distinction needs to be kept in mind. Although we may not understand why God, in self-revelation, chose to use masculine personal designators, we do acknowledge that this is the case.

d. The heart of the matter has to do with the fact that Christianity is a revealed religion. The two pillars on which the conclusions of the report are based are these: accepting God's self-revelation and not claiming the authority to name God, who is the revealer of his own name. As one author has said, "... the Bible is not a record of humankind's evolving consciousness about God. Rather, it is God's words about himself spoken to people and through people." Therefore, the challenge is not to change our language for God but to understand the way in which God has revealed himself.

e. The intent of the guidelines is not to legislate every way in which gendered language for God is used but to provide for the CRC and its agencies guidelines by which we will work and speak about the God who has revealed himself in Scripture. There is implicit in the guidelines a sense of trust in the Spirit-led wisdom of those who use gendered language for God.

C. Recommendations

1. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Mrs. Mirth Vos (chair), Dr. John Cooper (reporter), and Dr. Al Wolters as representatives of the study committee.

—Granted

2. That synod recommend this study report to the churches as a sound and helpful analysis of gendered language for God as found in Scripture and in contemporary inclusive-language practices.

—Adopted

3. That synod declare that the endorsement or use of contemporary inclusive language for God—i.e., the broad gender-egalitarian and/or gender-neutral approach advocated in mainstream academic and ecclesiastical discussions (cf. the report, pp. 267-68)—is unacceptable to the Christian Reformed Church.

Grounds:

a. Contemporary inclusive language for God presents a significantly different view of God than the language of Scripture does.
b. It confuses, undermines, or conflicts with the church's confessional-doctrinal understanding of the Trinity and the person of Christ.
c. It involves faulty linguistic, exegetical, and theological reasoning.
d. It presupposes views of Scripture or employs methods of interpreting Scripture that are incompatible with the church's confession about the nature and authority of Scripture.
e. It is spiritually dangerous in refusing to accept God as he has revealed himself.

—Adopted

The following negative vote with statement is registered:

Because I believe that speaking of God is an awesome thing and that human beings should be properly reticent in laying down rules for God and because I believe that this recommendation is likely to be used against people who in good faith are trying to understand and praise God, I vote no and register my negative vote.

Clayton G. Libolt (Lake Erie)

4. That synod adopt for the Christian Reformed Church and its agencies the following Guidelines for the Use of Gendered Language for God, which result from the report:

Note: The comments and illustrations as well as the succinct summary of the guidelines found in the report (pp. 363-70) provide useful and relevant advice for the implementation of the guidelines.

Guidelines for the Use of Gendered Language for God

A. Basis for the guidelines

Holy Scripture is the only infallible source from which we can know God's particular self-disclosure in human history. Scripture is the norm for our understanding of God's special revelation in the history of redemption through Jesus Christ and of his general revelation in creation and providence. Thus it is the source and norm for the way God's people speak of him and to him.

B. Principles that govern gendered language for God

1. Christians ought to speak of God in the way that Scripture speaks of God, not only in the words it uses but also in the meaning those words convey and in the overall pattern of language it presents. Translations of Scripture ought to be as faithful to the original meaning as possible within the standard vocabulary and syntax of the language of translation.

2. Language for God that does not come explicitly from Scripture but is based on general revelation or arises from the experience of God's people or from theological reflection must faithfully reflect and unfold the biblical presentation of God, not alter, undermine, or replace it.

3. Consistent with 1 and 2 above, Christians' language for God ought to be sensitive to the needs and tasks of God's people—to be healed from the effects of sin and evil, to engage people and cultures for Christ, and to stand against the dynamics of the world that conflict with God's will.

C. Guidelines

1. Use primarily the standard biblical names, titles, and other designations for God.

God's people must honor and continue as a regular and normal practice to use the standard divine names and titles disclosed within the progressive revelation of Scripture as the primary designators for God and forms of address to God. Principal among them in English are *God* (*El* and *elohim* and their variations, *theos*), *Lord*, (*Yahweh*, *Adonai*, *Kurios*), *Father* (as synonymous with God), and the triune name *Father, Son, and Holy Spirit*. *Father* is especially appropriate as a title/name and as a term of address in prayer because of the teaching and example of Jesus and because of its distinctive significance in New Testament revelation. Other standard titles or personal designa-

tors for God include *the Almighty, King, Judge, Savior, Shepherd, Creator,* and *Redeemer*. There are no feminine names, titles, or other personal designators for God in Scripture (with the possible exception of *Spirit* in the Old Testament—cf. report, pp. 313-14, 366-67), so no feminine terms should be used in these ways.

2. Use the variety of biblical language for God.
   Following Scripture's standard pattern of primary language for God, the people of God are encouraged to use the Bible's wide variety of secondary language for God, including feminine imagery and figures of speech such as *midwife* and *mother*, terms for God from nature such as *rock* and *fire*, and words for inanimate objects such as *shield* and *fortress*, always striving to retain the biblical meaning of such language.

3. Use masculine pronouns (and other gendered elements of language) appropriately.
   Since the personal designators for God in Scripture are masculine, it is linguistically necessary and appropriate to use masculine pronouns (and other linguistic elements and structures that reflect personal gender, in languages where they occur) for God. Since there are no feminine personal designators for God in Scripture (with the possible exception of *Spirit* in the Old Testament), it is linguistically inappropriate to use feminine pronouns (and other linguistic structures that imply personal gender) for God.

4. Use extrabiblical language for God that conforms to biblical language.
   Christians may use language not found in Scripture, including feminine language, to speak of God provided that its extrabiblical status is recognized; that it is not intended to alter, correct, or detract from the normative character of biblical language; that it faithfully reflects, elaborates, or illustrates the meaning of the biblical language; and that its frequency of use accords with its secondary and dependent status.

5. Recognize that some contexts may require flexibility.
   The standard language of the people of God ought to reflect the principles and patterns embodied in these guidelines. However, as is generally the case when Christians seek to apply the teachings of Scripture, there may be special circumstances and activities which call for flexible application of these guidelines (cf. report, pp. 357, 368-69). Spirit-led good judgment oriented to the broad pattern of Scripture must guide the use of language for God in activities such as pastoral counseling, personal devotions, evangelism, poetry, and art, where some flexibility may be appropriate and necessary, as long as the exceptions do not undermine the rule.

Grounds:

a. These guidelines are derived from the biblical, theological, and pastoral analysis of the study-committee report for inclusive language for God (*Agenda for Synod 1997*, pp. 265-372).

b. These guidelines provide clear advice to the church concerning the significance and limits of gendered language for God.

—*Adopted*

5. That synod approve the following nine points of pastoral advice:

   a. That congregational leaders promote the education of their members about the nature of gendered language for God in Scripture and the synodically adopted guidelines for the use of gendered language so that false ideas about the relationship of God to gender are corrected and biblically shaped linguistic practices are fostered.

   b. That congregational leaders use Scripture's wide variety of language for God, including feminine imagery, in worship and other congregational contexts, with fidelity to synodical guidelines and sensitivity to their congregations' needs and concerns.

   c. That poets, hymnodists, preachers, liturgists, and church educators write and publish material that employs a variety of language for God, including feminine imagery, according to synodical guidelines.

   d. That the church and its members exercise sound judgment so that the manner and circumstances of their use of legitimate biblical feminine imagery and gender-neutral language for God are not misunderstood as promoting contemporary inclusive language for God.

   e. That the church warn its members of the false teachings and spiritually dangerous aspects of many kinds of contemporary feminism, feminist theology, and promotions of contemporary inclusive language for God.

   f. That the church deal pastorally with those of its members who favor the gender-inclusive language for God rejected by this report. Inclusive language for God is a complex issue which is in part motivated by legitimate complaints about gender injustice and harm and is supported by arguments which, though faulty, do not always involve unorthodox theology, unconfessional views of Scripture, or resistance to God.

   g. That the church (1) acknowledge that many people—males and especially females—have been hurt in various ways by male abuse of power and authority and therefore are attracted to inclusive language for God and (2) seek to minister the gospel to these people in ways that are effective for their emotional, relational, and spiritual healing.

   h. That the church proclaim in word and deed the biblical understanding of human gender and gender relations so that both its female and male members fully experience that they are equal in imaging God, equal in Christ, and equally gifted by the Holy Spirit to be prophets, priests, and kings, whatever the differences in their God-given natures and roles.

   i. That the church call upon its members to promote justice and well-being for women and men wherever false notions of gender and sinful gender relations have caused injustice and harm.

—*Adopted*

6. That synod declare the above to be its response to Overtures 10, 11, and 38 and to Communications 7 and 8.

—*Adopted*

7. That synod recognize, with thanks, the extensive work of the study committee, declare the committee's mandate fulfilled, and discharge the committee.

—*Adopted*

ARTICLE 71

(The report of Advisory Committee 5 is continued from Article 65.)

Advisory Committee 5, Pastoral Ministries, Rev. Homer G. Samplonius reporting, presents the following:

Race Relations

A. *Material:* Pastoral Ministries Report, pp. 193-95

B. *Recommendations* (continued from Article 65, II)

2. That synod instruct the executive director of ministries' office to work actively with agency boards, agency staff, and classical interim committees to appoint ethnic-minority members so that all CRC boards and staff reflect the ethnic diversity of the Christian Reformed Church and that the EDM provide a progress report for Synod 1998.

   Ground: Synod 1996 called for equitable representation and meaningful participation of ethnic and minority persons in leadership and other influential roles at all levels of denominational life.

—*Adopted*

3. That synod, through the general secretary's office, urge the churches to use all classical and denominational resources "to witness publicly against racism, prejudice, and related unemployment, poverty, and injustices and in defense of all people as imagebearers of God."

   Ground: As imagebearers of God, all people, regardless of color or ethnic origin, are equally endowed with dignity and crowned with glory and are assigned by the Creator their share in the dominion over his creation.

—*Adopted*

4. That synod, through the general secretary's office, urge the local churches to increase their financial support for the ongoing work of racial reconciliation.

   Ground: An increased commitment to the ministry of racial reconciliation requires a higher level of financial support for the implementation of these efforts.

—*Adopted*

ARTICLE 72

The evening session is adjourned; delegates kneel for the closing prayer, offered by Rev. Alfred Luke, director of Race Relations.

Note: As part of the discussion on Race Relations, Mr. Bing Goei, one of the ethnic advisers for synod, made the following speech, which is reproduced below at the request of a delegate and with the permission of the chair:

Mr. Chairman,

The elder delegate from Classis Quinte asked why we are having such a difficult time getting to where we want to be. The advisory committee has observed that for twenty-six years we have said that we have faithfully worked at race relations, and yet we continue to have incidents like the one we had this Monday, when we were embarrassed because we did not see the fruit of our efforts in the board and committee membership nominations that were presented.

My comments are made with a heavy heart, but they are comments that I feel I must make. Why has the Christian Reformed Church taken so long to get to where it ought to be? The answer, Mr. Chairman, is this: we have leadership in our denomination that blatantly disregards the directives of synod. Mr. Chairman, I submit to you that our synods have made many declarations and have often urged that our agencies and our agency boards should reflect the diversity that is the wonderful gift of the Holy Spirit to us, but we continue to see disregard for that principle.

When I worked in the denominational building at 2850 Kalamazoo Avenue, Mr. Chairman, I saw the creative abilities of our leaders to get what they wanted, when they wanted it, when it was important for them.

We have a denominational goal that we believe synod has adopted because it was called to do so by God and by his Word. When we have leaders that do not follow that directive, God cannot bless us, and that is why we continue to struggle with achieving diversity. I want to share with you, Mr. Chairman, that what I am saying has merit.

In 1993 synod said to the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA that it might enlarge the Board with three at-large members to increase Board diversity. In 1994 the action taken to that directive to increase diversity was this: three persons were elected—two were female and white, and one was a representative from Western Canada and white.

In 1997 the Pastoral Ministries Board, which oversees the work of the Race Relations division and which, we had hoped, would be the board most sensitive to our needs, presented ten names for nominations. Not one was a person from an ethnic-minority community within the denomination.

My brother Peter Borgdorff stated before dinner that it is difficult to get our boards to become diverse if the classes don't help us in attaining that goal. He stated that half of the board members are selected by the classes, and I asked, "What about the other half?" We have never said that we wanted 100 percent membership on any board. Dr. Borgdorff said that it is difficult to make agencies become more diverse in their staffing because they do their own hiring.

There really is a simple solution. If diversity is a commitment and a call that we as the CRC believe God calls us to do, let us then include in agency directors' job-performance evaluations their ability to develop a diverse staff. And if they can't produce diversity, let us find people who can. If we believe that God calls us to do that, then it is important for us to find people who can do it.

Mr. Chairman, when I was thinking about making these remarks, I was terribly afraid to make them because I have respect for the people that are our leaders. But God was kind to me. In some way he helped me turn to a decision of synod that basically said what I have just said to you today. According to the *Acts of Synod 1974*, synod, in adopting a recommendation from the board of SCORR regarding justice in our hiring practices and in our purchasing policies, adopted the following ground: "Synod holds its boards and agencies responsible to carry out a directive from synod."

Mr. Chairman, it is time for us to walk our talk. It is time for us to believe what Scripture says in Revelation 5:9-10: "You're 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, and you have made them to be a kingdom and priest to serve our God." We who are members of the CRC, who love the CRC, who are not part of the Dutch heritage that is so rich in the CRC, want to serve our God. We have attempted for over twenty-six years to make it a reality, and I plead with you, Mr. Chairman, and with this synod that it is time for us to make some strong decisions.

If diversity is really what we want, it is not that hard for us to get there. We just have to make that commitment, and we just need to have the people who can make that commitment a reality. But if that is not what we want, then say so. It is too painful, it is too insulting, to be sitting here before a ballot which contradicts everything this denomination has said so often and contradicts what Scripture says to us in Revelation 7:9-10. We must want to be what God wants us to be. We continue to pray "Let your kingdom come; let your will be done on earth as it is in heaven," and Revelation 7:9-10 tells us that heaven is made up of a multitude of people too numerous to count—from *every* nation, from *every* tribe, from *every* language, from *every* people.

Mr. Chairman, I plead with synod, please help us as a denomination to be blessed by God and to reflect the wonderful, diverse family of God.

FRIDAY MORNING, June 20, 1997
Thirteenth Session

ARTICLE 73

Elder Ken Byl reads from Psalm 1 and leads in opening prayer. He announces *Psalter Hymnal* 487, "How Sweet the Name of Jesus Sounds."

The roll call indicates that Rev. Kenneth A. Baker (Classis Kalamazoo) is absent. Rev. James A. Molenbeek replaces Rev. Leslie D. Van Dyke (Classis Muskegon). He rises to express agreement with the forms of unity.

The vice president assumes the chair.

ARTICLE 74

Advisory Committee 6, Financial Matters, Elder Durk De Jong reporting, presents the following:

I. Board of Trustees

A. Materials

1. Board of Trustees Supplement (Sections X and XI, I-0)
2. *Agenda for Synod 1997—Financial and Business Supplement*

B. Recommendations

1. That synod approve direct billing rather than ministry shares as the way of funding ministers' pensions and that synod include an additional amount of $2.00 per confessing member to the amount directly billed each congregation in order to fund chaplains' pensions. (For 1998, each congregation's directly billed amount will be $16.00 per confessing member—$14.00 for ministers' pensions and $2.00 for chaplains' pensions.)

—Adopted

2. That synod approve the per confessing member ministry share for 1998 totaling $227.43, broken down as follows:

The Back to God Hour	$30.97
CRC TV	11.11
Calvin College	25.14
Calvin Theological Seminary	22.20
CRC Publications	
World Literature Ministries	2.29
Home Missions	51.05
World Missions	48.17
Pastoral Ministries	10.15
Denominational Services	16.25
Fund for Smaller Churches	7.85
Ministers' Pension Funds	0.00
Special Assistance Fund	2.25
	$ 227.43

—Tabled

3. That synod approve the following list of denominational and denominationally related agencies recommended for one or more offerings:

   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 Student Loan Fund
      CRC Publications
      World Literature Ministries—above-ministry-share needs
      CR Home Missions—above-ministry-share needs
      CR World Missions—above-ministry-share needs
      CR World Relief—one offering per quarter because CRWRC receives no ministry-share support
      Pastoral Ministries—above-ministry-share needs
      1) Abuse Prevention
      2) Chaplaincy Ministries
      3) Disability Concerns
      4) Pastor-Church Relations
      5) Race Relations
      a) Above-ministry-share needs
      b) Multiracial Student Scholarship Fund

   b. Denominationally related agency

      United Calvinist Youth
      1) GEMS Girls' Clubs (formerly Calvinettes)
      2) Calvinist Cadet Corps
      3) Early Teen Ministry
      4) Youth Unlimited/Young Calvinist Federation

—Adopted

4. That synod approve the list of nondenominational agencies recommended for financial support but not necessarily for one or more offerings (see Section X, C).

   United States agencies

   a. Miscellaneous agencies

      American Bible Society
      Audio Scripture (formerly PRM International)
      Crossroad Ministries
      Faith, Prayer and Tract League
      Friendship Ministries
      Gideons International
      International Bible Society
      InterVarsity Christian Fellowship
      Lord's Day Alliance
      Metanoia Ministries

Mission 21 India
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 Mental Health Services

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
The King's University College (through the U.S. Foundation)
Trinity Christian College
Westminster Theological Seminary, California
Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia
Worldwide Christian Schools

Canadian agencies

a. Miscellaneous agencies

Canadian Bible Society
Evangelical Fellowship of Canada
Friendship Groups—Canada
Gideons International—Canada
International Bible Society
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
Institute for Christian Studies
Redeemer Reformed Christian College

Reformed Bible College
The King's University College
Trinity Christian College
Worldwide Christian Schools—Canada

—*Adopted*

5. That synod approve the following proposed salary ranges for 1998:

	Proposed U.S. 1998 Range			Proposed Canadian 1998 Range		
Levels	Min	Midpoint	Max	Min	Midpoint	Max
20	$68,295	$85,369	$102,443	$87,974	$109,967	$131,961
19	62,138	77,671	93,206	76,319	95,399	114,479
18	56,950	71,187	85,424	66,501	83,126	99,752
17	52,573	65,717	78,860	58,219	72,774	87,329
16	48,911	61,138	73,366	51,287	64,109	76,930
15	45,841	57,302	68,762	45,478	56,848	68,217
14	40,239	50,298	60,358	40,570	50,711	60,853
13	35,540	44,425	53,310	36,447	45,558	54,670

Note: The shaded areas are not currently in use.

—*Adopted*

7. That the Ministers' Pension Plan be amended to allow for the withdrawal of ministers age 55 or older who are transferring their membership and ministerial credentials to another denomination or another church group.

—*Adopted*

8. That synod approve the following final average salaries recommended for computing 1998 pension amounts in the U.S. and Canada: $31,736 (U.S.) and $33,600 (Canada).

—*Adopted*

II. The Back to God Hour

A. *Material:* The Back to God Hour Supplement, Section II, as follows:

The Back to God Hour Board presents the following two recommendations to synod in response to recommendations coming from the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA:

1. That synod not accede to the Board of Trustees' recommendation to reallocate to other agencies or institutions a portion of the Back to God Hour/"Faith 20" ministry share approved by Synod 1996.

   Grounds:

   a. This recommendation was made without a proper evaluation of the effectiveness and efficiency of the use of the current financial resources available to each of the agencies or institutions, and it fails to consider how each agency may be hindered in carrying out its ministry mandate effectively if the proposed reallocation should be approved.
   b. Approval of this Board of Trustees' recommendation would create a problematic precedent with regard to making ex post facto adjustments to budgetary decisions of a previous synod.
   c. Approval of this Board of Trustees' recommendation would create an ethical dilemma and foster added constituency mistrust in our church-

government process because it would effectively override the intended giving decisions of many churches and individuals by redirecting designated contribution dollars without prior donor knowledge or approval.

2. That synod restore the Back to God Hour/"Faith 20" ministry-share request for fiscal year 1997-1998 as originally presented to the Ministries Coordinating Council.

   Grounds:

   a. The proposed Board of Trustees' ministry-share recommendation includes allocation changes made very late in the process without a proper evaluation of the effectiveness and efficiency of the use of the current financial resources available to each of the agencies, and the proposed budget recommendation fails to consider how each agency may be hindered in carrying out its ministry mandate effectively if the proposed reallocation should be approved.
   b. The Back to God Hour Board completed its budget process for fiscal year 1997-1998 in good faith under a "no increase in ministry share" mandate, as directed by the Board of Trustees. Synod's approval of the current ministry-share recommendation proposed by the Board of Trustees would have the effect of appearing to ratify an after-the-fact, change-of-rules budget process caused by a Board of Trustees' decision at the end of the process to reallocate some of the Back to God Hour/"Faith 20" budgeted ministry share to other agencies or institutions.
   c. Approval of this ministry-share recommendation would reduce ministry share for The Back to God Hour/"Faith 20" for calendar year 1998 even below the amount budgeted for the previous calendar year, a decision which may result in eliminating certain mission programs of The Back to God Hour.

B. *Recommendation*

That synod deny the appeal of The Back to God Hour set forth in The Back to God Hour Supplement, Section II.

Ground: The reallocation of ministry shares is responsive to the instruction of Synod 1996 as reflected in the following:

> 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.
>
> (*Acts of Synod 1996*, p. 507, Art. 44, VII, B, 1)

—*Adopted*

Committee note: The advisory committee urges the agencies to be mindful of this instruction of Synod 1996 in the development of their financial plans and annual budgets and in the formulation of their ministry-share requests.

III. Calvin College

A. *Material:* Calvin College Supplement, Section II, as follows:

As requested by the Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church in North America (BOT-CRCNA), Calvin College (the college) requested that its ministry-share allocation for 1998 be the same as its allocation for 1997. By a divided vote, the Ministries Coordinating Council (MCC) recommended that ministry share for the college already allocated by synod for calendar year 1997 be reduced for the second half of the year and that the college ministry share for all of 1998 be reduced as well. In February 1997 the Board of Trustees of Calvin College requested the BOT-CRCNA not to implement the request of the Ministries Coordinating Council to cut the college ministry-share allocation. The BOT-CRCNA denied this request. The college board now appeals to synod this decision of the BOT-CRCNA and asks that synod restore the college ministry share already allocated for the second half of calendar year 1997 and grant the same ministry share for all of 1998.

The price of education is a critical issue for the college in the light of competition with comparable regional institutions and its desire to keep education affordable for CRC students. Though Calvin retains a low rate of tuition compared to other regional institutions, the college remains overly dependent on tuition revenues (87 percent). The living trust received by the college through ministry shares has remained flat for the last eight years. Consequently, the denominational contribution has become a smaller percentage of the college budget each year.

The timing of the cuts recommended by the BOT-CRCNA is particularly difficult to justify for at least three reasons:

1. The college is presently engaged in a major effort to strengthen its ties with the denomination, the agencies, the seminary, and each classis and congregation. To begin to withdraw denominational support just as this effort gets fully underway would be counterproductive and unwise.

2. The college has just announced a major increase in denominational grant amounts for CRC students and special subsidies for Canadian students. The total grant money is equal to the entire ministry-shares allocation the college would have received if the BOT-CRCNA had not made cuts. If approved, ministry-share cuts would negatively affect tuition rates.

3. The college and the seminary have recently reached a tentative agreement that the seminary, which has been paying significantly less than 1 percent of the cost of operating the computer and communication systems on the combined campuses (even though it has approximately 7 percent of the combined faculties and 7 percent of the combined operating budgets), will pay the college an additional amount each year to cover a greater portion of the cost of supplying computer and communication services to the seminary. It is especially inappropriate at this time to cut funds allocated to the college and give additional funds to the seminary so that the seminary can

pay the college a more appropriate share of the costs that are now paid primarily with college-student tuition dollars.

Therefore, the Board of Trustees of Calvin College requests that the recommendation to cut the college ministry-share allocation decided upon by the BOT-CRCNA not be approved and implemented.

It is moved that synod grant the privilege of the floor to Dr. Gaylen J. Byker, president of Calvin College.

—*Adopted*

B. Recommendations

1. That synod deny the appeal of Calvin College re 1997 ministry shares as set forth in the Calvin College Supplement.

—*Defeated*

2. That synod deny the appeal of Calvin College re 1998 ministry shares as set forth in the Calvin College Supplement, Section II.

Ground: The reallocation of ministry shares is responsive to the direction of Synod 1996 (see Acts of Synod 1996, p. 507).

—*Adopted*

The following negative vote is registered: Daniel J. Brink (Greater Los Angeles).

Recommendation 2 (Section I above) is taken from the table.

2. That synod approve the per confessing member ministry share for 1998 totaling $ 227.43, broken down as follows:

The Back to God Hour	$30.97
CRC TV	11.11
Calvin College	25.14
Calvin Theological Seminary	22.20
CRC Publications	
World Literature Ministries	2.29
Home Missions	51.05
World Missions	48.17
Pastoral Ministries	10.15
Denominational Services	16.25
Fund for Smaller Churches	7.85
Ministers' Pension Funds	0.00
Special Assistance Fund	2.25
	$ 227.43

—*Adopted*

IV. CRC Loan Fund

A. Material: CRC Loan Fund, Inc., U.S. Report, pp. 178-80

B. Recommendations

1. That synod take note of the retirement of Mr. Harry J. Vander Meer on February 28, 1997, and the appointment of Mr. Jack Heinen as interim executive director along with his duties as director of finance for Christian Reformed Home Missions.

—*Adopted*

2. That Mr. Jack Heinen, interim 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.

—*Adopted*

V. Fund for Smaller Churches

A. *Material:* Fund for Smaller Churches Report, pp. 181-83

B. *Recommendations*

1. The FSC Committee requests that the secretary and treasurer of FSC be consulted on matters pertaining to FSC when considered by synod and its advisory committee. In the absence of either, it requests that the same privilege be granted to other members of the committee present at synod.

—*Granted*

2. That the minimum salary for ministers serving U.S. churches receiving assistance from FSC be set at $28,800 ($27,700 for 1997) and that the Canadian minimum salary be set at $31,680 ($28,800 x 110%) ($30,470 for 1997). See 11 below.

3. That the annual service increment be adjusted from a flat $100 per year (for up to thirty years) to the following scale: $100 per year of service for years 1-10; $150 per year of service for years 11-20; and $200 per year of service for years 21 and more.

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).

5. That automobile expenses be reimbursed at the rate of 32 cents a mile (32 cents per kilometer in Canada) times the percentage of ministry-share reduction (see *Acts of Synod 1987*, pp. 560-63).

6. That instead of the 20 percent of salary allowance previously granted to recipient churches, an allowance of $4,000 be granted each congregation which provides its minister with health/dental/life insurance. Insurance coverage for the pastor and family is mandatory for congregations receiving FSC assistance.

7. That salary allowance for stated supply be increased from $350 (1997) to $365 per week, effective January 1, 1998.

8. That the contribution toward the minister's salary in congregations receiving assistance from FSC be increased so that it is not less, and if possible more, than $365 per communicant member for 1998.

9. That congregations in the U.S. receiving assistance from FSC increase the payment of the Social Security/Medicare offset to their pastor from $2,630 to at least $2,675, effective January 1, 1998.

10. That FSC churches in the U.S. be assisted in the Social Security /Medicare offset with an increase from 10 percent of salary subsidy to a flat $2,000 for 1998.

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 communicant member contribution rate established for the U.S. churches for 1998 ($365 x 110% = $401.50 per member).

    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.

12. That the continuing-education allowance for pastors in smaller churches remain at $350 for 1998. 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.

13. That the Christian-education allowance be increased from $600 to $800 for each dependent child attending a Christian school, grades K-12, in 1998.

14. That the 1998 ministry share for the Fund for Smaller Churches be set at $7.85 per communicant member.

15. That Recommendations 2-14 be approved.

—*Adopted*

VI. Pensions and Insurance

A. *Material:* Pensions and Insurance Report, pp. 208-13

B. *Recommendations*

1. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to members of the Canadian Pension Trustees and the U.S. Board of Pensions and Insurance 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 1997 and 1998 as housing allowance for United States income-tax purposes (IRS Ruling 1.107-1) but only to the extent that the pension is used to rent or provide a home.

—*Adopted*

3. That for 1998 synod designate the assessment rate for participants in the ministers' pension plans who are not the only or first pastor in a CRC congregation as the amount determined by the independent actuary to be the "average annual cost per active minister." For ministers in Canada, this amount in 1998 is $3,796, and for ministers in the United States it is $3,073.

—*Adopted*

VII. Response to Overture 20: Appoint a Committee to Study the Biblical Grounds for Using a Quota-Based System

A. *Material:* Overture 20, pp. 450-54

B. *Recommendation*
That synod not accede to Overture 20.

Grounds:
1. There have been numerous studies by past synods of the ministry-share system.
2. Practical budgeting by denominational agencies would be difficult under a faith-promise-based system.
3. There are already provisions in previous synodical decisions for ministry-share reductions for smaller churches.

—*Adopted*

This recommendation is also the committee's response to Communication 9, received from Classis California South, which endorsed Overture 20 and urged its passage.

—*Granted*

VIII. Response to Overture 33: Instruct U.S. Ministers' Pension Fund Committee to Provide Options of a Defined-Benefit or a Defined-Contribution Plan

A. *Material:* Overture 33, pp. 485-86

B. *Recommendation*
That synod not accede to Overture 33.

Ground: The Canadian and U.S. pension-fund trustees have already decided to review the design of the plans, including aspects of defined-benefit and defined contribution features.

—*Adopted*

IX. Response to Overture 34: Instruct Pension Committees to Modify Guideline re Reimbursement for Final Moving Expense

A. *Material:* Overture 34, p. 487

B. *Recommendation*
That synod not accede to Overture 34.

Ground: The BOT, in session on May 2, 1997, reviewed this matter. After such review and discussion, the BOT requested that the staff research the matter in sufficient depth to provide the BOT an adequate understanding of present and past policy and make informed judgments as to any changes which may be indicated.

—*Adopted*

Note: Synod will be informed of any future developments in this regard.

X. Response to Overture 35: Instruct Pension-Fund Trustees to Factor in Permitted Ministry-Share Reductions for Smaller Churches

A. *Material:* Overture 35, pp. 487-88

B. *Recommendation*
That synod not accede to Overture 35.

Grounds:

1. The Ministers' Pension Plan is a defined pension plan, meaning that there is both a promise and an obligation to pay defined benefits to ministers and their dependents in the future. We cannot both make this promise and, at the same time, not provide the means for its payment, or fail to provide amounts adequate to do so.
2. The church has consistently viewed its obligation to fund the pension costs of all first and only pastors as a communal responsibility to be shared equally by all members. Accordingly, small congregations will pay proportionally smaller amounts for pensions, and larger congregations will pay larger amounts, in proportion to the number of members.

—*Adopted*

The president reassumes the chair.

ARTICLE 75

I. Officials, appointments, and functionaries

A. *Offices*

1. General secretary: Dr. David Engelhard
2. Executive director of ministries: Dr. Peter Borgdorff
3. Director of finance and administration: Mr. Kenneth J. Horjus

B. *Functionaries*
Arrangements for synod: Mr. Donald Boender and Mr. Jeff Stob

II. Synodical deputies

Classis	Deputy	Alternate	Term Expires
Alberta North	Rev. H.G. Samplonius		2000
Alberta South	Rev. J. Corvers	Rev. A. Beukema	1999
Arizona	Rev. G.J. Kamps	Rev. F.J. Walhof	1998
Atlantic Northeast	Rev. S.J. Vander Klay	Rev. J. Vande Lune	2000
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	Rev. J.T. Medenblik	1999
Columbia	Rev. D.L. Recker	Rev. G.P. Hutt	1999
Eastern Canada	Rev. H.G. Gunnink	Rev. H.P. Kranenburg	1998
Florida	Rev. M.A. Davies	Rev. R.E. Van Hofwegen	2000
Georgetown	Rev. D. Tinklenberg	Rev. J.R. Boot	2000
Grand Rapids East	Rev. S.E. Hoezee	Rev. R. Opperwall	2000

Classis	Deputy	Alternate	Term Expires
Grand Rapids North	Rev. F.J. Van Dyk	Rev. D.A. Warners	1999
Grand Rapids South	Rev. C.D. Vander Meyden	Rev. D.A. Struyk	1997
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. J. Reiffer	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
Iakota	Rev. D.W. De Groot	Rev. C.E. Fennema	1997
Illiana	Rev. H.J. Schutt	Rev. R.J. Blauw	1999
Kalamazoo	Rev. J.H. Looman	Rev. L.J. Vander Zee	1999
Lake Erie	Rev. W.J. Dykstra	Rev. C. Libolt	1999
Lake Superior	Rev. J.G. Busscher	Rev. W.H. Kooienga	1999
Minnesota South	Rev. J.D. Buwalda	Rev. T.J. Brown	2000
Muskegon	Rev. J.A. Molenbeek	Rev. D.H. Bratt	1999
Niagara	Dr. H. Vander Plaat	Rev. J. De Jong	1999
Northcentral Iowa	Rev. D.A. Zylstra	Rev. H. Dykema	1998
Northern Illinois	Rev. P. De Jong	Rev. T.H. Douma	1997
Northern Michigan	Rev. G.L. Essenburg	Rev. R. Klimp	1998
Pacific Hanmi			
Pacific Northwest	Rev. H.A. Brink	Rev. R. Vander Ley	2000
Pella	Rev. L.J. Howerzyl	Rev. R.L. Bouwkamp	1999
Quinte	Rev. E. Gritter	Dr. W. Van Groningen	2000
Red Mesa	Rev. W.K. Bulthuis	Rev. S.A. Jim	2000
Rocky Mountain	Rev. W. Verhoef	Rev. J.P. Boonstra	2000
Thornapple Valley	Rev. G.W. Sheeres	Rev. J.C. Medendorp	1998
Toronto	Rev. H.D. Praamsma	Rev. J. Kuntz	2000
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. I	Rev. R. Slim	Rev. D.W. Vander Veen	1999
Far West U.S. 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. I	Mr. W. Weidenaar	Mr. D. Hoebeke	2000
Central U.S. II	Rev. A.L. Hoksbergen	Rev. S.D. Los	2000
Central U.S. III	Dr. A.J. Schoonveld	Rev. J.W. Uitvlugt	1998
	Mr. H. Johnson	Dr. J. Strikwerda	2000
Central U.S. IV	Mrs. K. Smith	Mrs. M.J. De Jong	1998
	Rev. D.L. Kelderman	Rev. H. Admiraal	1999
Eastern U.S.	Rev. S.J. Workman	Dr. B.A. Averill	1999
Eastern Canada I	Rev. J. Kuipers	Rev. E. Den Haan	1999
Eastern Canada II	Rev. G.H. Pols	Rev. G. Ringnalda	1998
	Mr. J.H. Vander Stoep	Mr. A. Schaafsma	1998
Western Canada	Rev. P. Brouwer	Rev. A. Beukema	2000
	Dr. W. Vanden Born	Mr. J. Lok	2000

District	Member	Alternate	Term Expires
At-large	Dr. C.J. Rottman	Mrs. M. Minnema	2000
	Mrs. J. Vander Ploeg	Mrs. S. Gronsman	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. The Back to God Hour

Region	Member	Term Expires
Far West U.S. I	Rev. A. Begay	1999
Far West U.S. II	Rev. D.V. Hays	2000
Great Plains	Mr. A. Marcus	1999
	Rev. C.J. De Ridder	1998
Central U.S. I	Mr. G.J. Vande Werken	1998
	Mrs. J. Bilthouse	2000
Central U.S. II		
Central U.S. III	Rev. H.G. Vanden Einde	1999
	Dr. R. Huizenga	2000
Central U.S. IV	Dr. E. Greenway	1999
Eastern U.S.	Mrs. E.P. Palmer	2000
Eastern Canada I	Mr. C.K. Oosthoek	1998
Eastern Canada II	Rev. H.P. Kranenburg	1999
	Rev. H. Wildeboer	2000
Western Canada	Rev. J. Kerssies	1998

C. Calvin College Board of Trustees

Region	Member	Alternate	Term Expires
Far West U.S. I	Rev. J. Dykema	Rev. J.W. De Vries	1998
	Mr. D. Van Andel	Dr. J. Van Schepen	1999
Far West U.S. II	Mr. C.A. Pasma		2000
Great Plains U.S.	Mr. R. Vander Laan	Mrs. C. Ackerman	1998
Central U.S. I	Dr. J. De Roos	Mrs. J. Van Dyke	1999
	Mr. V. Boerman	Mr. G. Baas	2000
Central U.S. II	Mrs. M. Schaafsma	Rev. K.A. Baker	2000
Central U.S. III	Mr. J. Postma	Dr. R. Brummel	2000
	Mr. B. Woltjer	Dr. P. De Young	1998
Central U.S. IV	Rev. E.J. Blankespoor	Mr. M. De Boer	2000
	Mr. R. Alderink	Mr. W. Knoester	1999
Eastern U.S.	Dr. E. Wierenga		1999
	Dr. G. Gabrielse	Mr. D. Sporn	1998
Eastern Canada I	Dr. J. Vriend	Mr. R. Datema	1998
Eastern Canada II	Mr. W. Neutel	Mrs. S. Koppendrayer	2000
Western Canada	Dr. N. Terpstra	Dr. J. Hielema	1999
Alumni	Mrs. Shirley Vogelzang Hoogstra		1998
	Dr. Tom R. DeMeester		1999
	Ms. Janice Veenstra		2000

District	Member	Alternate	Term Expires
At-large	Mrs. Grace Achterhof		1999
	Rev. Jason Chen		2000
	Mrs. Sheri Haan		1999
	Mr. Preston Kool		1998
	Mr. Milton Kuyers		1999
	Mrs. Cecilia Mereness		2000
	Mr. K. Olthoff		2000
	Mr. Thomas Page		1999
	Mrs. Elsa Prince		1998
	Dr. John Van Engen		1999
	Dr. Bill Van Groningen		1998
	Mr. M. Williams		2000

D. Calvin Theological Seminary Board of Trustees

Region	Member	Alternate	Term Expires
Far West U.S. I	Rev. D.J. Klompeen	Rev. A. Lindemulder	2000
Far West U.S. II	Rev. K.D. Koeman	Rev. J.R. Kok	2000
Great Plains U.S.	Dr. C.E. Zylstra	Dr. E. Rubingh	2000
	Dr. D. Deppe	Rev. R.D. Kramer	2000
Central U.S. I	Rev. C.R. Hoogendoorn	Rev. C.E. Bajema	1998
Central U.S. II	Rev. Y.J. Oh	Dr. M.S. Khil	1999
Central U.S. III	Rev. J.R. Boot	Rev. M.J. Hofman	1999
	Rev. G.G. Heyboer	Rev. R.C. Heerspink	1998
Central U.S. IV	Dr. L. Bierma	Dr. W.P. De Boer	1998
	Ms. N. Vander Ark	Mrs. M. Brasser	2000
Eastern U.S.	Mr. P. Steensma	Mr. J. Steen	1999
Eastern Canada I	Mr. M. Bosveld	Mr. J. Geschiere	2000
Eastern U.S. II	Rev. B.P. Velthuizen	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. M. Muller	Mr. D. Nydam	2000
	Mr. L. Dykstra	Mr. S. Jansma, Jr.	1998
	Mr. R. Vermeer	Mr. B. Knoppers	1998

E. CRC Publications

Classis	Delegate	Alternate	Term Expires
Alberta North	Mrs. C. Mahaffy	Rev. L. Burghart	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	2000
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		Rev. J.W. Jongsma	1999
Chicago South	Rev. W.R. Lenters	Mr. J. Hamilton	1999
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

Classis	Delegate	Alternate	Term Expires
Grand Rapids East	Ms. G. Goris-Stronks	Ms. J. Timmer	1997
Grand Rapids North	Mr. A. Stremler	Rev. M.J. Flikkema	2000
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. W. Van Schepen		2000
Hackensack	Mr. T. Henion	Rev. E.N. Romero	2000
Hamilton	Mrs. A. Vander Woerd		1998
Heartland	Mr. R. Wiersma	Mr. D. De Jong	1998
Holland	Mrs. C. Brummel	Mr. B. Den Boer	1999
Hudson	Mr. D. Holwerda		2000
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	Rev. L.J. Vander Zee	Rev. S.R. Van Eck	2000
Lake Erie	Dr. G. Mavrodes	Mrs. L. Miller	1998
Lake Superior	Mrs. C. Rudie	Mrs. L. Kroese	2000
Minnesota South	Ms. L. Van Beek	Mr. P. De Kam	1998
Muskegon	Ms. J. Meyers	Rev. L.D. Baar	2000
Niagara	Mr. C. Van Soelen	Rev. E. Groot-Nibbelink	2000
Northcentral Iowa	Ms. R. Verbrugge	Rev. P.W. Townsend	1998
Northern Illinois	Ms. M. Sytsma	Rev. J.F. Schuurman	1999
Northern Michigan	Mrs. B. Verbrugge	Mr. S. Loomis	2000
Pacific Hanmi			
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	2000
Red Mesa	Mrs. T. Rottschaffer	Mr. R. Slim	2000
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. E.J. Laarman	Rev. N.B. Haan	1999
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
	Mr. Dennis Bergsma		2000
Fraternal delegate	Mr. Jeff Japinga (RCA)		1999

F. Christian Reformed Board of Home Missions

Classis	Delegate	Alternate	Term Expires
Alberta North	Rev. P. Stel	Rev. R.J. Graff	1999
Alberta South	Rev. M. Reitsma	Rev. C. Pool	2000
Arizona	Mr. R. Hugen	Mr. H. Jansen	2000
Atlantic Northeast	Rev. A. Gelder	Rev. V.G. Van Ee	1999
B.C. North-West	Rev. P.F. Reinders	Rev. W. Brouwer	1999
B.C. South-East	Rev. J. Poortenga	Rev. J.R. Berry	1997
California South	Rev. R.K. Young	Mr. J. De Young	1999
Central California	Rev. B.A. Persenaire	Mr. T. Bloemhof	1999
Chatham	Rev. D.R. Tigchelaar	Rev. G.K. Haagsma	2000
Chicago South	Rev. K. Wong	Rev. D.A. Crushshon, Sr.	1999
Columbia	Rev. C. Leep	Mrs. M. Geelhood	1998
Eastern Canada	Ms. M. Buteyn	Rev. H.G. Gunnink	1998

Classis	Delegate	Alternate	Term Expires
Florida	Mr. D. Cooke	Rev. R.C. Borrego	1998
Georgetown	Ms. J. Sikkema	Rev. L.J. Doornbos	2000
Grand Rapids East	Rev. W. Vanden Bosch	Mr. J. Witte	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	2000
Greater Los Angeles	Rev. A. Vanden Akker		1997
Hackensack	Rev. J.A. Algera	Rev. P.R. De Vries	2000
Hamilton	Mrs. D. Proper	Rev. R. Vander Kooij	2000
Heartland	Rev. R.R. De Vries	Mr. A. Kramer	2000
Holland	Rev. A.L. Louwerse	Rev. F.T. Wevers	1997
Hudson	Rev. K.J. Verhulst	Mr. D. Holwerda	2000
Huron	Rev. W. De Ruiter	Mr. V. Vandermolen	2000
Iakota	Rev. A. Eising	Rev. C.J. De Ridder	1999
Illiana	Mr. A. Vanden Bosch		1999
Kalamazoo	Rev. R.D. Vanderwell		2000
Lake Erie	Rev. E.A. Harrison	Rev. W.C. De Vries	1998
Lake Superior	Rev. E.S.H. Busink	Rev. T.K. Groelsema	1999
Minnesota South	Rev. J.D. Buwalda	Mr. W. Sankey	2000
Muskegon	Rev. L.D. Van Dyke	Rev. C. Uken	1998
Niagara	Rev. J.J. Hoytema	Rev. W.H. Vander Werf	2000
Northcentral Iowa	Rev. D.J. Dykstra	Rev. G.D. Daley	2000
Northern Illinois	Rev. T.H. Douma	Rev. L.L. Schemper	1998
Northern Michigan		Mr. M. Mortenson	1999
Pacific Hanmi	Rev. I. Chang	Rev. I.C. Kim	1999
Pacific Northwest	Rev. I.S. 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	Rev. C. Vander Neut	2000
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.	2000
Advancement	Mr. H. Rozema	Mr. M. Feldkamp	2000

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		1998
Atlantic Northeast	Rev. W.G. Vis	Rev. V.G. Van Ee	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	Mr. A. Marcus		1998
Central California	Rev. J. Huttinga	Rev. P.V. De Jonge	1998
Chatham	Mr. P. Kapteyn	Mrs. M. Yselstein	2000
Chicago South	Rev. A. Van Zanten	Mr. M. Ozinga, Jr.	1999
Columbia	Rev. S.A. Drenth	Rev. P.J. Tinklenberg	1998
Eastern Canada	Mrs. W. Runia	Mr. M. Van Wyk	1998

Classis	Delegate	Alternate	Term Expires
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	Mr. D. Zylstra	Mr. J. Vander Henst	2000
Grand Rapids South	Rev. R.L. Fynewever	Rev. R.D. Bolt	2000
Grandville	Rev. L. Van Drunen	Mr. M. Geerlings	1998
Greater Los Angeles	Rev. R.B. Harris		1997
Hackensack	Dr. W. Scott	Rev. E.N. Romero	1999
Hamilton	Rev. A.C. Geleynse	Mr. T. Vande Putte	1998
Heartland	Mr. J. Kooiker	Rev. B.B. Blankers	2000
Holland	Rev. J.C. Hutt	Dr. J.M. Zinkand	1998
Hudson	Rev. J.G. Keizer	Rev. J.J. Stastny	1999
Huron	Rev. J.A. Quartel	Rev. A.A. Van Geest	1998
Iakota	Rev. L.A. Lobdell	Dr. W.H. Lammers	2000
Illiana	Rev. B.M. Madany	Rev. L.W. Van Essen	2000
Kalamazoo	Rev. G.D. Nieuwsma	Mr. D. Selles	1999
Lake Erie	Dr. G. Hettinger		1998
Lake Superior	Rev. R. Sprik	Rev. J.G. Busscher	1998
Minnesota South	Rev. D.A. Bosch	Rev. T.J. Brown	2000
Muskegon	Rev. L.P. Troast	Rev. D.H. Bratt	1999
Niagara	Rev. P.A. Heerema	Rev. D.W. Cowart	2000
Northcentral Iowa	Mr. P. Eekhoff	Rev. H. Dykema	2000
Northern Illinois	Mr. J. Bosma		1998
Northern Michigan			1998
Pacific Hanmi	Rev. D.W. Yang	Rev. C.C. Cho	2000
Pacific Northwest	Rev. R.J. De Ruiter	Mr. W. Eskes	1999
Pella	Rev. T.R. Dykstra	Rev. C.A. Heuss	1999
Quinte	Rev. E.W. Visser	Rev. R.G. Fisher	2000
Red Mesa	Mr. R. Van Dyken	Rev. R.L. Jipping	2000
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. S.J. Alsum		2000
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. J. Feenstra	Mr. H. Slomp	2000
Arizona	Mr. J. Ten Elshof	Mr. G. Andringa	2000
Atlantic Northeast	Mr. T. Woodnorth	Ms. R. Rulter	1998
B.C. North-West	Mr. W. Potma	Ms. P. De Wilde	2000
B.C. South-East	Mr. M. Van Ellenberg		1998
California South	Mr. D. Roberts	Ms. C. Hooyer	1999
Central California	Mr. L. De Ruiter	Mr. T. Greidanus, Jr.	1999
Chatham	Mr. M. De Vries		2000
Chicago South	Mr. P. Kamp	Mr. R. Van Dellen	1999
Columbia	Ms. K. Haley	Mr. M. Boersma	2000
Eastern Canada	Mr. N. Van Dyk	Mr. T. Hogeterp	1999
Florida	Mr. J. Boldenow	Mr. J. Brouwer	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. Zuidema	1999

Classis	Delegate	Alternate	Term Expires
Grand Rapids South	Mrs. M. Hooyer	Mrs. A. Ezinga	1999
Grandville		Mr. P. Wassink	1998
Greater Los Angeles	Rev. G. Varela		2000
	Mr. S. Cole		2000
Hackensack	Mrs. C. Van Ess-Dykema		1999
Hamilton	Mr. J. De Groot		2000
Heartland	Mr. M. Noteboom	Mr. G. Geels	1999
Holland	Mr. C. Hulst	Mr. C. Prins	2000
Hudson	Mr. R. Wynja	Mr. R. Comer	1998
Huron	Mr. C. Zondag	Mr. G. Lubberts	1999
Iakota	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	Mr. E. Mosher	Mr. J. Van Wyk	2000
Lake Superior, Can.			1997
Lake Superior, U.S.	Ms. M. Buss		1998
Minnesota South	Mr. D. Wieberdink	Mr. H. Klumper	1999
Muskegon		Mr. D. Drew	1998
Niagara	Mr. L. De Graaf	Ms. S. Vandenberg	1997
Northcentral Iowa	Mr. E. Olthof	Mr. D. Mattison	2000
Northern Illinois	Ms. R. Strodtman	Ms. D. Flores	1999
Northern Michigan	Mr. A. Diemer	Mr. L. Stahl	1999
Pacific Hanmi	Rev. J. Hyun		2000
Pacific Northwest	Mr. E. Kok		1997
Pella	Mr. M. Blom	Mr. G. Van Engelenhoven	2000
Quinte	Mr. P. Feddema	Mr. W. Bylsma	2000
Red Mesa	Mr. B. Hardy	Mr. J. Smart	1998
Rocky Mountain	Ms. S. Velzen	Ms. M. Anema	2000
Thornapple Valley	Mr. W. Scheringa	Mr. J. Zomerlei	1998
Toronto	Mr. H. Wieringa	Ms. M. Spoelstra	1999
Wisconsin	Mr. P. LaMaire	Mr. J. Sterk	1998
Yellowstone	Mr. M. Feddes	Mr. C. Sinnema	1998
Zeeland	Mr. S. Dykstra		2000
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)	Ms. A. Dekker	Ms. G. De Groot	1999
	Mr. P. Bulthuis	Ms. B. Hoekstra	1999
Pastoral adviser	Rev. J. Postuma	Rev. J. Koster	1999

I. Pastoral Ministries Board

Member	Alternate	Term Expires
Ms. N. de Boer	Ms. D. Algera	1998
Mr. P. Szto	Rev. J. Flores	1998
Ms. C. Topp	Ms. M. Vander Vennen	1998
Rev. R.E. Williams	Mr. W. Van Dyke	1998
Mr. J. Wilson	Ms. M. Van't Land	1998
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

Member	Alternate	Term Expires
Mr. G. Bosma	Mr. E. Westra	2000
Ms. M. Bouwma	Ms. S. Hulst	2000
Ms. M. Hollebeek	Ms. R. Oosterhof	2000
Rev. R.C. Heerspink	Mr. H. Postma	2000
Rev. P. Nicolai	Mr. H. Bosch	2000

IV. Service committees

A. Christian Reformed Church Loan Fund, Inc., U.S.

Rev. G.L. Dykstra (1998), Ms. J. Admiraal (1998), Mr. G.J. Borst (1999), Ms. A. Joseph (1999), Mr. J. Feikens (2000), Mr. C.R. Witte (2000); ex officio member: Mr. J. Heinen.

B. Fund for Smaller Churches

Mr. H.F. Eizenga (1998), Rev. L. Sikkema (1998), Mr. A. Ruiter (1999), Rev. L.W. Van Essen (1999), Mr. J. Folkerts (2000).

C. Historical Committee

Ms. S. Harger (1998), Dr. J. Bratt (1999), Rev. W.D. Buursma (2000), Dr. H. Zwaanstra (2000).

D. Interchurch Relations Committee

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), Rev. P.W. Brouwer (2000), Rev. L.J. Hofman (2000), Ms. C. Roelofs (2000); ex officio member: Dr. D.H. Engelhard; administrative secretary: Rev. L.J. Hofman.

E. Judicial Code Committee

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), Mrs. J. Engelhard (2000), Mr. L. Veldhuizen (2000), Mr. C. Oosterhouse (2000).

F. Ministers' Pension Funds

Canadian Board of Trustees of Pensions and Insurance

Mr. A. Van Weelden (1998), Mr. J. Woudstra (1998), Mr. A. de Jong (1999), Mr. H. Schep (1999), Rev. J. Kuntz (2000).

U.S. Board of Pensions and Insurance

Mr. D. Vander Ploeg (1998), Rev. L. Van Drunen (1999), Mr. A. Walters (1999), Mr. L. Bierma (2000), Mr. W. Venema (2000).

G. Sermons for Reading Services

Rev. F. Heslinga (1998); Rev. P.D. Stadt (1999); Rev. A.C. Geleynse (1999), alternate; Mr. R. Vander Ploeg (1999), treasurer; Rev. H.A. Vander Windt (2000).

H. Youth-Ministry Committee

Mr. P. Duyst (1998), Mrs. J. Meyer (1998), Ms. W. Waller (1998), Mr. G. Bysma (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), Mr. J.K. Jackson (2000), Mr. P. Pereboom (2000); members-at-

large: Mr. S. Hielema (2000), Mr. J. Vanden Heuvel (2000); advisers: Dr. R.C. De Vries (Calvin Theological Seminary), Rev. A.E. Mulder (director of New-Church Development, Home Missions), Mr. R. Rozema (CRC Publications).

V. Study committees

A. Committee to Study Ordination and "Official Acts of Ministry" (Church Order Art. 53-b)

Dr. R.C. De Vries (chair), Rev. H. De Ruyter, Rev. R. Hofman, Dr. D.E. Holwerda, Rev. S.A. Jim, Rev. J.B. Vos; Dr. D.H. Engelhard, adviser.

B. Committee to Study Structure for Ministry in the U.S.

Dr. B.A. Averill, Mr. J. De Groat, Mrs. M.J. DeJong, Mr. R. Elgersma, Dr. R.S. Greenway, Mr. J. Kuyers, Rev. H. Numan, Dr. S. Roels, Mr. W. Terpstra, Mr. F. Velzen, Mr. W. Weidenaar; advisers: Dr. P. Borgdorff, Dr. D.H. Engelhard.

C. Committee to Examine Routes Being Used to Enter the Ordained Ministry in the CRC

Rev. B.T. Ballast, Mr. E. Benally, Dr. J. Bolt, Mr. R. den Dulk, Dr. E. Greenway, Rev. E.A. Harrison, Rev. J.T. Kim, Rev. R.E. Orellana, Ms. E.J. Scholten, Dr. B. Van Groningen; ex officio members: Dr. J.A. De Jong, Dr. D.H. Engelhard.

D. Committee to Give Direction about and for Pastoral Care for Homosexual Members

Mrs. R. Alons, Ms. M.L. Bouma, Rev. C.J. De Boer, Dr. M.D. Hugen, Dr. J. Kreeft, Rev. Y.J. Oh, Rev. H. Van Niejenhuis, Dr. R. Van Noord, Rev. G.L. Zandstra.

Recommendation:

That synod approve the membership lists of the boards and committees.

—Adopted

ARTICLE 76

President of synod Rev. Michael De Vries expresses thanks to his fellow officers—Rev. Wayne A. Brouwer, vice president; Elder George Vandervelde, first clerk; Rev. Norman L. Meyer, second clerk—for the fine cooperation and support they have given.

The vice president expresses thanks on the behalf of synod to the president for his leadership during Synod 1997.

Rev. De Vries 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 1997.

He expresses appreciation to Mr. Donald Boender, Mr. Jeff Stob, Mr. Carl Hordyk, and the staff of the Fine Arts Center for their services. He thanks the synod office staff for their excellent services—Mrs. Charlene Ezinga, Mrs. Nelvina Ilbrink, Mr. Marvin Ilbrink, Mrs. Marlene Oosterhouse, and Mrs. Thelma Schutt. He also expresses thanks to the synod newsroom persons—Mrs. Rachel Boehm Van Harmelen and Rev. Robert De Moor.

ARTICLE 77

The president addresses the assembly.

He reads from John 20:19-21: "On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you!' After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord."

Rev. De Vries describes various biblical pictures of Jesus. He focuses on Jesus as risen Lord, speaking to the disciples who are filled with fear about the unknown future. He notes the fact that Jesus came right into the disciples' midst. He did not rebuke them for their fear. Instead he said, "Shalom; this isn't a cheap promise; this gift cost me my life. As the Father sent me, I send you." He points out what a challenge this is for the church, what an amazing mission is before the church. He reminds the delegates that as they return to their homes and churches, they are in the presence of Jesus wherever God has called them. As Christians we have a big challenge. As soon as Jesus challenges us, he says, "I have a gift for you: I will breathe among you the Holy Spirit." We are not doing God's work on our own.

From time to time the church is criticized, but Rev. De Vries encourages the delegates to leave synod with renewed fervor and vigor. He says, "We have made history—probably the shortest synod we have ever had. I believe it was the most moving synod we have ever had, and I also believe it was Spirit filled. I believe the promise that God sent the Holy Spirit was evidenced here. Now we must leave, but I want you to remember that Christ is always with you."

The delegates sing *Psalter Hymnal* 405, "I Serve a Risen Savior," and Rev. De Vries offers a closing prayer, which concludes with the delegates reciting in unison the Lord's Prayer.

Synod 1997 adjourns at 11:55 a.m.

Michael De Vries, president
Wayne A. Brouwer, vice president
George Vandervelde, first clerk
Norman L. Meyer, second clerk

Attested a true copy
David H. Engelhard, general secretary

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DENOMINATIONAL MINISTRY SHARES AND RECOMMENDED AGENCIES FOR 1998

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DENOMINATIONAL MINISTRY SHARES AND RECOMMENDED AGENCIES FOR 1998

I. Denominational ministry shares

	Per professing member
Back to God Hour	$30.97
CRC TV	11.11
Calvin College*	

	Per professing member
Area 1—Grand Rapids East, Grand Rapids North, Grand Rapids South, Grandville, Thornapple Valley	$47.30
Area 2—Cadillac, Georgetown, Holland, Kalamazoo, Lake Erie, Muskegon, Zeeland	37.60
Area 3—Chicago South, Florida, Illiana, Northern Illinois, Wisconsin	30.10
Area 4—Heartland, Iakota, Lake Superior, Minnesota South, Northcentral Iowa, Pella	8.20
Area 5—Atlantic Northeast, Hackensack, Hudson	28.60
Area 6—Arizona, Columbia, California South, Central California, Greater Los Angeles, Pacific Hanmi, Pacific Northwest, Red Mesa, Rocky Mountain, Yellowstone	22.80
Area 7—Chatham, Eastern Canada, Hamilton, Huron, Niagara, Quinte, Toronto	12.40
Area 8—Alberta North, Alberta South, B.C. North-West, B.C. South-East	6.20

Calvin Theological Seminary	22.20
CRC Publications	
World Literature Ministries	2.29
Denominational Services	16.25
Denominational Building funds and operations; synodical expenses; grants; funds for standing, service, and study committees	
Fund for Smaller Churches (includes quarterly subsidies and continuing-education fund)	7.85
Home Missions	51.05

*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 professing member
Area 1, -0-; Area 2, $3.09; Area 3, $10.59; Area 4, $32.49; Area 5, $12.09; Area 6, $17.89; Area 7, $28.29; Area 8, $34.49.

Ministers' Pension Funds
Special Assistance and Moving Fund for Retired Ministers and widows 2.25
Pastoral Ministries 10.15
World Missions 48.17

II. Agencies recommended for financial support in 1998

A. Denominational agencies recommended for one or more offerings

Canadian registration#

1. Back to God Hour—above-ministry-share needs 0347708-39
   CRC TV—above-ministry-share needs
2. Calvin College—above-ministry-share needs ..... (per Schedule VIII)
3. Calvin Theological Seminary ..... (per Schedule VIII)
   a. Above-ministry-share needs
   b. Revolving Loan Fund
4. CRC Publications
   World Literature Ministries—above ministry-share needs 0590018-49
5. Home Missions—above-ministry-share needs 0549022-47
6. World Missions —above-ministry-share needs 0435081-47
7. World Relief—one offering per quarter because CRWRC receives no ministry-share support 0366443-09
8. Pastoral Ministries—above-ministry-share needs 0590018-49
   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. GEMS (Calvinettes) 0877563-49
2. Calvinist Cadet Corps 0877563-49
3. Early Teen Ministry 0877563-49
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 related to the financial support provided by Christian Reformed churches relative to these agencies:

> . . . in light of the growing number of agencies seeking recommendation for financial support, [synod] 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 causes 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 Mental Health Services

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. Audio Scripture Ministries (formerly PRM International)
3. Crossroad Bible Institute
4. Faith, Prayer and Tract League
5. Friendship Ministries
6. Gideons International
7. International Bible Society
8. Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship
9. Lord's Day Alliance of the United States
10. Metanoia Ministries
11. Mission 21 India
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. Institute for Christian Studies
4. Redeemer Reformed Christian College
5. Reformed Bible College
6. The King's University College
7. Trinity Christian College
8. 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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Acronyms in the index refer to the following:

BOT	Board of Trustees
CCRCC	Council of the Christian Reformed Churches in Canada
CO	Church Order
CR	Christian Reformed
CRC	Christian Reformed Church
CRCNA	Chrsitian Reformed Church in North America
CRHM	Christian Reformed Home Missions
CRWRC	Christian Reformed World Relief Committee
IRC	Interchurch Relations Committee
IRS	Internal Revenue Service
NAE	National Association of Evangelicals
NAPARC	North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council
REC	Reformed Ecumenical Council

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