Calvin Board Stands by Homosexuality Statement

After its October meeting, the Calvin College board of trustees said it regrets the confusion and distress caused by its recent statement about homosexuality, but it did not withdraw the statement as the faculty had requested.

The board’s statement, written in May and issued in August, said that “advocacy by faculty and staff, in and out of the classroom, for homosexual practice and same-sex marriage is unacceptable.”

That touched off a significant controversy, as faculty felt college policy had been unilaterally changed without normal processes and that academic freedom and same-sex marriage was unacceptable.

The response from the board to that request read, in part, “Although we did not intend the (2009) statement to change existing policy, we understand why many felt it did.” But the statement was not withdrawn.

The board also reaffirmed that its position reflects the Christian Reformed Church’s position on homosexuality—that homosexual orientation is not a sin, but homosexual practice is.

It also called for the formation of a new “Special Committee of Board Members” to revisit the 2009 statement, to investigate how to better articulate the college’s position.

That didn’t seem to clear up the confusion. “People were trying to find out the status of the 2009 memo,” said Karin Maag, who serves as vice chair of the Calvin faculty senate. “[College] president [Gaylen] Byker seemed to indicate that the May 2009 memo is still in effect.”

Still, faculty seemed encouraged by the board’s willingness to discuss the issue.

“I think it’s healthy to take things more slowly, in the sense that a snap decision was made in May, so let’s not make another snap decision,” Maag said.

The board’s committee will also study whether synod (the church’s annual leadership meeting) should decide if the CRC’s position on homosexuality is a doctrinal issue.

Calvin College, a liberal arts school located in Grand Rapids, Mich., is owned by the Christian Reformed Church.

—Christian Bell

Plantinga to Step Down from Seminary

After serving for 10 years as president of Calvin Theological Seminary, Rev. Cornelius Plantinga Jr. announced to the seminary board of trustees his intention to step down after the 2010-2011 academic year.

The school, located in Grand Rapids, Mich., is the official seminary of the Christian Reformed Church.

Plantinga expressed a desire to have more time to write and said that he and his wife “have prayed earnestly about this decision and have made it freely and joyfully,” adding, “I’ll leave my post with satisfaction.”

During Plantinga’s tenure as president, the seminary saw an increase in its enrollment and fund-raising, as well as several changes, most notably the implementation of a new curriculum.

At a meeting of the CRC’s Board of Trustees in September, Plantinga reported, “The seminary is thriving. We’ve made big changes in curriculum. I don’t think I’ve started a year when the atmosphere is as good as it is now.”

Plantinga plans to remain associated with the seminary, but details have not yet been determined.

—Christian Bell

Rev. Andrew K. Chun

1970-2009

Rev. Andrew K. Chun, a genial and gifted pastor, leading churchman, champion of the poor, and witness for Christ, died July 15, following a heart attack. He was 39.

Born in Seoul, South Korea, Chun immigrated to the U.S. at age 7. He received his Master of Divinity degree from Calvin Theological Seminary in 1997 and was ordained into the Christian Reformed ministry that year.

He served congregations in Michigan, California, and New Jersey. His sudden death ended a promising career all too soon.

Chun was fluent in both Korean and English, and was at home in both cultures. He was deeply concerned about the plight of the poor and the downcast and was an encouragement to many.

His gifts served both his classis and the denomination. He was a member of the Faith Formation Committee, the board of Calvin Theological Seminary, and had a seat on the denominational Judicial Code Committee.

Chun is survived by his wife, Sarah, and their three children, ages 7 to 2.

—Louis M. Tamminga

For more on the life and ministry of Rev. Chun, please visit www.thebanner.org. In addition to being posted online, further information on recently deceased ministers is available each year in the front pages of the Christian Reformed Church’s annual Yearbook.