

Council of Delegates Supplement

I. Polity matters

A. Council of Delegates membership (Committee 1)

1. Council of Delegates members completing service as of June 30, 2019

The COD delegate from Classis Kalamazoo, Mr. Kevin TenBrink, is moving from the region and is unable to continue service on the board. The COD is grateful for the contributions he has provided during his tenure.

2. Council of Delegates nominees

The COD presents the following recommendations for appointment of new members to a first term:

a. Canada at-large nominee

The COD recommends that synod appoint Ms. Melissa Van Dyk as a Canada at-large member for a first term of three years.

Ms. Melissa Van Dyk is a member of First CRC, Vancouver, British Columbia. She is employed as an assistant manager at Hastings Chaplaincy and Outreach at Union Gospel Mission. Ms. Van Dyk has served as treasurer and board chair for Diaconal Ministries Canada and as treasurer for the British Columbia leadership development network. She has also served as secretary for the local Strata Council. Currently she is serving a second term as deacon and as council treasurer; she is also a team representative for a recreational soccer league.

b. Classical delegate nominee

The COD recommends that synod appoint Rev. Michael D. Koetje as the Classis Kalamazoo delegate for a first term of three years.

Rev. Michael D. Koetje is pastor of Westwood CRC in Kalamazoo, Michigan. Rev. Koetje previously served on the Calvin College Board of Trustees and as stated clerk of Classis Muskegon. In addition, Rev. Koetje served as a church counselor, a church visitor, and a member on the student aid committee. Currently Rev. Koetje serves as chair of the Classis Kalamazoo interim committee. As an elder and a pastor, he has served many years on local church councils, worship committees, and renewal lab teams.

B. Corporation officers and executive committee of the Council of Delegates (Committee 1)

At its recent meeting the COD members from their respective corporations and the full Council of Delegates elected the following to serve as officers in 2019-2020:

1. CRCNA Canada Corporation

President: Mr. Andy de Ruyter
 Vice president: Rev. Donald G. Draayer
 Secretary: Ms. Aaltje van Grootheest
 Treasurer: Ms. Gloria Melenberg

2. CRCNA U.S. Corporation

President: Rev. Paul R. De Vries
 Vice president: Rev. Sheila E. Holmes
 Secretary: Ms. Elsa Fennema
 Treasurer: Mr. Timothy Bosscher

3. Back to God Ministries International Canada Corporation

President: Mr. Andy de Ruyter
 Vice president: Rev. Donald G. Draayer
 Secretary: Rev. B. Bernard Bakker
 Treasurer: Ms. Gloria Melenberg

4. Back to God Ministries International U.S. Corporation

President: Rev. Paul R. De Vries
 Vice president: Rev. Sheila E. Holmes
 Secretary: Ms. Elsa Fennema
 Treasurer: Mr. Timothy Bosscher

5. Council of Delegates executive committee and officers

Chair: Rev. Paul R. De Vries
 Vice chair: Mr. Andy de Ruyter
 Secretary: Ms. Aaltje van Grootheest
 Treasurer: Mr. Timothy Bosscher
 Ms. Laurie Harkema
 Ms. Susan B. Hoekema
 Rev. Michelle J. Kool
 Ms. Ashley Medendorp

C. *Bible Translations Committee membership (Committee 5)*

The COD took action in May as a follow-up to the recommendation in the COD Report to synod that synod “establish a standing committee of the Council of Delegates for the purpose of reviewing Bible translations for potential use in the CRCNA” (see *Agenda for Synod 2019*, p. 36). Subject to establishment of such a committee by synod, the COD recommends (1) that the denominational representative to serve as convener be appointed through the office of the director of ministries and administration and (2) that synod appoint the following persons to serve on the Bible Translations Committee: Dr. Mariano Avila, Dr. Amanda W. Benckhuysen, Rev. Mary S. Hulst, Dr. William T. Koopmans, and Dr. Sarah Schreiber.

D. Bivocational Task Force report (Committee 3)

The Financial Shalom Project of the CRC—funded by a \$1 million grant from Lilly Endowment’s National Initiative to Address Economic Challenges Facing Pastoral Leaders—resulted in a request by the Council of Delegates that the executive director appoint a special team to look into the role and experience of bivocational pastors with the following mandate:

The task of this ad hoc committee is to explore the challenges and opportunities for bivocational pastors in the CRC by listening to those within and beyond the CRC in bivocational situations (both pastors and congregational leaders), identifying the opportunities of such situations, and by addressing the challenges (to preparation, to the individual, to the congregation, to the denomination). Areas of specific focus could include reconsideration of items in our Church Order to facilitate normalization of bivocational ministry, improvements in denominational databases related to ministerial status, and the like. As a result, a series of recommendations would be provided to the Council of Delegates.

The report of the ad hoc committee was reviewed by the COD in May and resulted in the following recommendation to synod:

That synod appoint a task force, continuing the work of the Bivocational Task Force as reported in Appendix A, to examine and provide guidelines for understanding what it means to be a pastor today and report to Synod 2022. The new task force will be mandated to give consideration to matters such as the following:

1. Pastorate definition (pastor, commissioned pastor, and bivocational)
2. Funding balance (clearly defined “proper support”; see Church Order Supplement, Art. 15) between church, classis, pastor, and the like
3. Educational requirements
4. Classical oversight
5. Cultural differences

Grounds:

- a. A compelling biblical, theological, and historical case supporting ministry is needed.
- b. The report provides sufficient examples of issues needing review and of possible options for remedies.
- c. Consideration of educational requirements is needed in light of bivocational pastorates—with consideration of the pathways leading to either an M.Div. degree/ordination or approval as a commissioned pastor.
- d. Clearly defined guidelines would provide justice for pastors in varying cultures.

E. Consideration of the title classis (Committee 1)

Upon receiving, as information, the report by the Classis Renewal Advisory Team addressing the request of Synod 2018 (see *Agenda for Synod 2018*, p. 454) to consider a new title for the assembly *classis*, the COD recommends the report in Appendix B to synod for its consideration.

F. *Communications re matters in the Agenda for Synod 2019* (Committee 6)

1. Overture 10 from Classis Hackensack re provision of legal counsel to assist congregations with immigration

The COD Global Missions Ministries Committee served the Council of Delegates with advice regarding Overture 10 in the *Agenda for Synod 2019* (pp. 513-14). In response to this advice, the COD adopted the following for consideration by synod:

That Synod 2019 receive the COD document “Assisting Immigrant Churches” (*Agenda for Synod 2019*, pp. 101-10) in its consideration of a response to Overture 10 from Classis Hackensack. This document was developed in response to Synod 2018’s instruction that the executive director “work with the appropriate agencies and ministries to explore the potential processes and resources necessary to facilitate enfolding immigrant churches into the CRCNA” (*Acts of Synod 2018*, p. 459). In particular, the following text from the “Assisting Immigrant Churches” document (*Agenda for Synod 2019*, p. 103) responds to the concerns of Overture 10:

When visas are required, past experience has shown it is best to have this taken care of by the local church, and when necessary, the classis. The reason for this is that the motive for seeking the visa remains tied directly to the local position, and local leaders develop ownership of what sometimes is a challenging process; moreover, each case is specific to the individual. While costs are sometimes involved, local churches unable to address financial challenges should rely on their classes. In certain situations, support from the denomination (e.g., Financial Shalom funds) may be available as needed.

2. Overture 11 from Classis Iakota re funding, support, and care for Resonate Global Mission missionaries through individual classes

Upon recommendation of the COD Global Missions Ministries Committee, the Council of Delegates adopted the following in response to Overture 11 in the *Agenda for Synod 2019* (p. 514), for consideration by synod:

The overture’s intention to better serve missionaries is commendable in that it seeks to limit their travel and logistic time by concentrating their support in particular classes. However, on the basis of research and current practice, the COD finds that the overture is not flexible enough in that it would *require* that all Resonate missionaries be supported by a classis or an adjoining classis. A better solution would be to *encourage* classes to take a larger proactive role in supporting new or current Resonate missionaries without *requiring* a classis or adjoining classes to raise *all* the support for missionaries.

Grounds:

- a. Missionaries already have rich relationships with individuals and churches that they will not want to give up if assigned to a particular classis to raise all their support.
- b. There is some concern as to whether a classis (let alone adjoining classes) could successfully compel their churches to support Resonate Global Mission missionaries.

- c. There is concern as to the capacity of some classes to fully support Resonate missionaries in addition to church planters, campus ministers, and other regional mission work.
- d. More and more support comes from individual donors who may not be limited to a region.
- e. Resonate is improving home service practices through a review initiated in fall 2018.

G. Report of the Addressing the Abuse of Power Committee (Committee 4)

The COD endorses the report of the Addressing the Abuse of Power Committee, mandated to bring recommendations to Synod 2019 “regarding how the CRCNA can best address patterns of abuse of power at all levels of the denomination” (*Acts of Synod 2018*, pp. 523-24). The COD presents the report in Appendix C for consideration by synod.

II. Program and finance matters

A. Program matters

1. Appointment of director of Faith Formation Ministries (Committee 5)

With thanks to God for providing qualified leaders in the CRC, it was a privilege for the Council of Delegates in May to ratify the appointment of Rev. Dr. Christopher J. Schoon as director of Faith Formation Ministries. Rev. Schoon will begin in his role in early June 2019.

2. Raise Up Global Ministries (Committee 6)

The Council of Delegates acknowledged the appointment by the Raise Up Global Ministries board of Ms. Joyce (Sam) Huizenga as the new Raise Up Global Ministries director. The COD also acknowledged and thanked Dr. Gary J. Bekker for his years of service with Raise Up Global Ministries. Dr. Bekker will be recognized by synod during its testimonial banquet.

Acting in its corporation members function, the COD also appointed the directors for the Raise Up Global Ministries board, an annual task of the COD.

3. Church planting evaluation (Committee 6)

The COD endorsed the establishment of a Transfunctional Collaborative Church Planting Team that will offer direction in setting, achieving, and implementing Resonate Global Mission’s church planting goals. The team membership will consist of leaders representing the five ministry priorities of the CRCNA (faith formation, servant leadership, global mission, mercy and justice, and gospel proclamation and worship), as well as representative leaders from Calvin Theological Seminary. This team will present the following by way of report to the COD in October 2019:

- a. A clear denominational vision for church planting with one-, five-, and ten-year goals offered.
- b. Resources of time, talent, and treasure needed for the achievement of stated goals.
- c. A strategy of diverse church planting models and support structures for planters, parent churches, and classes, differentiated in contextual approach and assessment.

4. Updated report regarding safe church ministry goals (Committee 4)

The Office of Safe Church Ministry provided a preliminary report to synod in response to the directive of Synod 2018 to “report annually through the Council of Delegates to synod regarding the number and names of classes with and without Safe Church teams, and the number of congregations with and without Safe Church teams and policies” (*Acts of Synod 2018*, p. 476; also *Agenda for Synod 2019*, pp. 207-208). The Council of Delegates shares further updates in response to this directive in Appendices D1 and D2.

5. U.S. Committee for Guidance and Support of the Office of Social Justice (Committee 4)

As an update to the report provided for synod in the *Agenda for Synod 2019*, pp. 45-46, regarding the adopted mandate and composition of a U.S. Committee for Guidance and Support of the Office of Social Justice, committee members were appointed by the COD in May. It is hoped that the committee will soon be convened and begin their task of supporting the Office of Social Justice.

B. *Finance matters* (Committee 7)

1. The COD approved the unified budget for the denominational entities, inclusive of the individual budgets of the agencies, the educational institutions, the denominational offices, the Loan Fund, and the Special Assistance Funds of the CRC as presented to the COD Support Services Committee in the report of the COD Budget Review Team.
2. The COD recommends that synod approve a ministry share of \$346.48 per adult member (age 18 and over) for calendar year 2020, reflecting no change to the overall rate from the calendar year 2019 level.
3. New policies and initiatives of the Council of Delegates

In its governance role on behalf of synod and the denomination, the COD recognized the need for adding to existing policies of the board. Thus the Council of Delegates adopted a new Cash Holdings Policy to clarify classifications of contributions to the denomination’s institutions, agencies, and ministries.

The COD also adopted an addition to the Individual Equity Statement within the Philosophy of Compensation Policy for CRCNA staff. The addition to the policy will provide opportunity for exceptions to be considered and, if approved, reported to the COD.

The COD approved the following motion related to Synod 2016’s instruction to reduce the institutional footprint (*Acts of Synod 2016*, p. 858): to instruct staff to further explore the direction of radical remodeling of the U.S. offices facility and repurposing the property, and report back to the October COD meeting with estimated project costs and supporting revenue, as well as projections upon project completion for ongoing facility expenses and potential revenue.

4. The denominational salary grid

The COD recommends that Synod 2019 adopt the salary grid included below for use in fiscal year 2019-2020. The grid reflects the new salary structure adopted by the Council of Delegates.

2019-2020 Salary Grade and Range Structure

Level	U.S. Range		Canadian Range	
	Minimum	Target	Minimum	Target
E1	\$148,000	\$185,000		
E2	\$133,559	\$166,949	\$127,261	\$159,076
E3	\$113,186	\$141,482	\$111,514	\$139,392
H	\$95,920	\$119,900	\$95,580	\$119,475
I	\$81,288	\$101,610	\$81,924	\$102,405
J	\$68,888	\$86,110	\$70,218	\$87,773
K	\$58,380	\$72,975	\$60,185	\$75,232
L	\$49,474	\$61,843	\$51,586	\$64,482

5. The COD recommends that synod ratify the following denominational agencies, institutions, and ministries, as well as the denominationally related agencies, and recommend them to the churches for one or more offerings, and that World Renew be recommended to the churches for one offering per quarter because the agency receives no ministry-share support.

a. Denominational agencies recommended for one or more offerings

Back to God Ministries International

Calvin College

Calvin Theological Seminary

Congregational Services Ministries

- 1) *The Banner*
- 2) Centre for Public Dialogue
- 3) Chaplaincy and Care Ministry
- 4) Disability Concerns
- 5) Faith Formation Ministries
- 6) Indigenous Ministries (Canada)
- 7) Pastor Church Resources
- 8) Race Relations
- 9) Safe Church Ministry
- 10) Office of Social Justice
- 11) Worship Ministries

Raise Up Global Ministries

Resonate Global Mission

World Renew—one offering per quarter because the agency receives no ministry-share support

- b. Denominationally related or affiliated ministries recommended for one or more offerings

Communities First Association
 Diaconal Ministries Canada
 Dynamic Youth Ministries
 1) GEMS
 2) Calvinist Cadet Corps
 3) Youth Unlimited
 Friendship Ministries
 Partners Worldwide

6. The COD informs synod that it has approved the renewal of the following accredited agencies for offerings in the churches for 2020—year three in a three-year cycle of support (2018-2020). Guidelines adopted by Synod 2002 require an application by nondenominational agencies and synodical approval every three years. Synod indicated that, in the intervening years, agencies are to submit updated financial information and information regarding any significant programmatic changes. Each nondenominational agency requesting approval submitted the required materials for consideration.

The COD recommends that synod ratify the following nondenominational agencies recommended for financial support but not necessarily for one or more offerings:

- a. United States

- 1) Benevolent agencies

Bethany Christian Services
 Hope Haven
 The Luke Society
 Mississippi Christian Family Services
 Pine Rest Christian Mental Health Services
 QuietWaters Ministries (Bethesda Foundation, Inc., dba QuietWaters Ministries)

- 2) Educational agencies

Ascending Leaders
 CLC Network (Christian Learning Center)
 Christian Schools International
 Christian Schools International Foundation (for textbook development)
 Dordt University
 Elim Christian Services
 Friends of ICS (U.S. Foundation of Institute for Christian Studies)
 ITEM (International Theological Education Ministries, Inc.)
 Kids Hope USA
 The King's University (through the U.S. Foundation)
 Kuyper College
 Langham Partnership
 Redeemer University College (through the U.S. Foundation)
 Rehoboth Christian School

Tent Schools International
 Trinity Christian College
 Zuni Christian Mission School

3) Miscellaneous agencies

Association for a More Just Society
 Audio Scripture Ministries
 Bible League International
 The Center for Public Justice
 Crossroads Prison Ministries
 InterVarsity Christian Fellowship/USA
 Mission India
 Talking Bibles International
 World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC)
 Wycliffe Bible Translators, Inc.

b. Canada

1) Benevolent agencies

Beginnings Family Services
 Indwell

2) Educational agencies

Dordt University
 EduDeo Ministries
 Institute for Christian Studies
 The King's University
 Kuyper College
 Redeemer University College
 Trinity Christian College

3) Miscellaneous agencies

A Rocha Canada
 Bible League – Canada
 Canadian Council of Churches
 Cardus (Work Research Foundation dba Cardus)
 Citizens for Public Justice (CJL Foundation)
 Dunamis Fellowship Canada
 Evangelical Fellowship of Canada
 Gideons International in Canada (dba ShareWord Canada)
 Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship of Canada
 OneBook (Global PartnerLink dba OneBook)
 Shalem Mental Health Network
 World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC)
 Wycliffe Bible Translators of Canada, Inc.

7. New request for inclusion on the list of nondenominational agencies approved for offerings

The Council of Delegates recommends that synod ratify inclusion of the following organization on the accredited agency list:

United States

The Colossian Forum

Ground: The goal of the Colossian Forum is to contribute to the reversal of the exodus from the church by equipping leaders to engage divisive cultural issues in ways that are far more interesting than the wider culture in its fragmentation. They do so by drawing on tradition-specific practices, confessions, and resources that cultivate in believers the virtues they need to engage “wicked problems” productively (see the *Wicked Problems* short video at colossianforum.org/wicked-problems).

8. Ministers’ pension assessment

The COD recommends that synod take note of the following actions of the Pension Trustees endorsed by the Council of Delegates at its May meeting:

- a. The three-year average salary to be used to determine retirement benefits beginning in 2020 for ministers of the Word in the United States is \$54,054 and in Canada is \$56,140.
- b. That the 2020 per-member assessment for the Canadian Plan remain \$42.96 and that the Canadian per-participant assessment remain \$9,840. Similarly, that the 2020 per-member assessment for the U.S. Plan remain \$37.20 and the U.S. per-participant assessment remain \$7,704.

9. Summary of denominational investments and compliance with investment policy

Synod 1998 approved a number of measures dealing with investment guidelines and disclosures. The COD’s response to these requests is found in Appendix E.

III. Recommendations

A. That synod express its gratitude to Mr. Kevin TenBrink for his contributions to the board during his service (COD Supplement section I, A, 1).

B. That synod by way of the ballot elect delegates to the Council of Delegates from the nominations as presented (COD Supplement section I, A, 2).

C. That, subject to its establishing a Bible Translations Committee, synod (1) approve that the denominational representative to serve as convener be appointed through the office of the director of ministries and administration and (2) appoint the following persons to serve on the committee: Dr. Mariano Avila, Dr. Amanda W. Benckhuysen, Rev. Mary S. Hulst, Dr. William T. Koopmans, and Dr. Sarah Schreiber (COD Supplement section I, C).

D. That synod appoint a task force, continuing the work of the Bivocational Task Force as reported in Appendix A, to examine and provide guidelines for understanding what it means to be a pastor today and report to Synod 2022. The new task force will be mandated to give consideration to matters such as the following (COD Supplement section I, D and Appendix A):

1. Pastorate definition (pastor, commissioned pastor, and bivocational)
2. Funding balance (clearly defined “proper support”; see Church Order Supplement, Art. 15) between church, classis, pastor, and the like
3. Educational requirements
4. Classical oversight
5. Cultural differences

Grounds:

- a. A compelling biblical, theological, and historical case supporting ministry is needed.
- b. The report provides sufficient examples of issues needing review and of possible options for remedies.
- c. Consideration of educational requirements is needed in light of bivocational pastorates—with consideration of the pathways leading to either an M.Div. degree/ordination or approval as a commissioned pastor.
- d. Clearly defined guidelines would provide justice for pastors in varying cultures.

E. That synod consider and respond to the report by the Classis Renewal Advisory Team addressing the request of Synod 2018 (see *Agenda for Synod 2018*, p. 454) to consider a new title for the assembly *classis* (COD Supplement section I, E and Appendix B).

F. That synod receive the COD document “Assisting Immigrant Churches” (*Agenda for Synod 2019*, pp. 101-10) in its consideration of a response to Overture 10 from Classis Hackensack. This document was developed in response to Synod 2018’s instruction that the executive director “work with the appropriate agencies and ministries to explore the potential processes and resources necessary to facilitate enfolding immigrant churches into the CRCNA” (*Acts of Synod 2018*, p. 459). In particular, the following text from the “Assisting Immigrant Churches” document (*Agenda for Synod 2019*, p. 103) responds to the concerns of Overture 10 (COD Supplement section I, F, 1):

When visas are required, past experience has shown it is best to have this taken care of by the local church, and when necessary, the classis. The reason for this is that the motive for seeking the visa remains tied directly to the local position, and local leaders develop ownership of what sometimes is a challenging process; moreover, each case is specific to the individual. While costs are sometimes involved, local churches unable to address financial challenges should rely on their classes. In certain situations, support from the denomination (e.g., Financial Shalom funds) may be available as needed.

G. That synod consider the following as it develops a response to Overture 11 (COD Supplement section I, F, 2):

The overture’s intention to better serve missionaries is commendable in that it seeks to limit their travel and logistic time by concentrating their support in particular classes. However, on the basis of research and current practice, the COD finds that the overture is not flexible enough in that it would *require* that all Resonate missionaries

be supported by a classis or an adjoining classis. A better solution would be to *encourage* classes to take a larger proactive role in supporting new or current Resonate missionaries without *requiring* a classis or adjoining classes to raise *all* the support for missionaries.

Grounds:

1. Missionaries already have rich relationships with individuals and churches that they will not want to give up if assigned to a particular classis to raise all their support.
2. There is some concern as to whether a classis (let alone adjoining classes) could successfully compel their churches to support Resonate Global Mission missionaries.
3. There is concern as to the capacity of some classes to fully support Resonate missionaries in addition to church planters, campus ministers, and other regional mission work.
4. More and more support comes from individual donors who may not be limited to a region.
5. Resonate is improving home service practices through a review initiated in fall 2018.

H. That synod take note of the COD's endorsement of the report of the Addressing the Abuse of Power Committee and consider and respond to the following recommendations contained within the report (COD Supplement section I, G and Appendix C):

1. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Ms. Kathy Vandergrift and Ms. Patricia Van Reenen, cochairs, when matters pertaining to the report of the Addressing the Abuse of Power Committee are discussed.
2. Training of pastors

That synod mandate the Council of Delegates to form a committee to develop a training program on abuse of power. The committee shall include members from the offices of Candidacy, Pastor Church Resources, Safe Church Ministry, Calvin Theological Seminary, and Calvin College (because of available expertise). The training program shall

- be a requirement for all persons entering vocational ministry in the CRC.
- focus on dynamics of power within the variety of pastoral relationships, boundaries, tools for positive use of power and influence, and tools for preventing harmful use of power and influence.
- be widely available and presented as enabling effective ministry (not as an impediment to entering ministry).
- take into account the cultural diversity within CRC churches.

3. Code of conduct

That synod mandate the committee appointed by action in Recommendation 1 to draft a code of conduct for all employed ministry staff within the CRC. The draft code of conduct will be presented to Synod 2020 for approval. The code of conduct shall be

- signed by all ministry personnel who are employed by the CRCNA, local churches, and classes.

- reviewed annually, as part of annual evaluations.
- included in the Supplement to the Church Order, with links to relevant Church Order articles.

4. Prevention of abuse in CRCNA offices

That synod mandate the Council of Delegates to review the adequacy of the training provided to CRCNA staff, the adequacy of the provisions for support to a complainant, and mechanisms to avoid potential conflicts of interest in the process for dealing with complaints. A review should be informed by careful listening to persons who found the processes helpful and persons who did not.

5. Training at classis and local levels

a. That synod encourage all classes to develop a strategy to train officebearers and key church leaders to be alert to power dynamics within the communities they serve and to be equipped to prevent abuse of power. The goal of the strategy is to ensure that all officebearers receive initial training and refreshment through ongoing educational initiatives. An effective strategy will include the following:

- appropriate training resources
- reasonable time allocation for training
- acknowledgment and monitoring of completion of training

b. That synod encourage all classes to monitor implementation of the training strategy and to consider adopting policies to include completion of training and safe church policies in the regular review of credentials or as a requirement for being seated at a classis meeting.

c. That synod mandate the executive director to develop, in cooperation with Safe Church Ministry, Pastor Church Resources, Calvin College, and others, a resource toolkit for training officebearers and leaders, readily accessible through the CRC website and Faith Alive Christian Resources.

6. Strengthening Safe Church Ministry

a. That synod mandate the executive director to oversee the development of appropriate measures for responding effectively to emotional abuse. Such measures will include definition, inclusion in relevant CRC policies, and appropriate responses through restorative practices and the safe church advisory panel process.

b. That synod mandate the executive director to oversee a review of the adequacy of safe church policies for follow-up in reported cases that involve church leaders. Findings and actions taken by the executive director shall be reported to the Council of Delegates to ensure that the CRCNA is exercising due diligence to prevent repeat occurrences or transfer of abusive leaders to other churches. The review shall consider best practices in church abuse ministry.

c. That synod mandate the Council of Delegates to examine in detail the potential for conflicts of interest in current safe church procedures and to evaluate the need for and

benefits of using outside experts to deal with situations that have a high potential for conflicts of interest.

7. Policy on non-disclosure agreements

That synod direct the executive director to do the following:

- review the history of the use of nondisclosure agreements within the CRCNA to draw learnings from it, be transparent about its frequency, and contribute to greater public accountability
- develop a policy with criteria for the use of NDAs that limits their use to cases in which it is clearly in the best interests of the victim and the church and not acceptable when solely motivated by protection of the reputation of the church and its leaders. The policy should include a provision for some form of review by an independent party before final signature by the two main parties.
- develop good practices and protocols on the use of NDAs for distribution to classes and councils when faced with situations that might lead to the use of a nondisclosure agreement
- develop a reporting and accountability mechanism to monitor practices going forward

8. Funds for counseling services

- a. That synod encourage all classes to take measures to ensure that survivors of abuse within their classis have access to appropriate counseling services.
- b. That the annual report of each classis for the CRC *Yearbook* include information about a counseling fund or other arrangements to ensure access to counseling services for abuse survivors.

9. Abuse prevention resources for culturally diverse churches

That synod mandate the executive director to give a high priority to providing information about existing policies and mechanisms for abuse prevention and response in forms that use the language, examples, and styles of learning that are culturally appropriate for the Korean, Latino, Chinese, African-American, and Indigenous communities, through Safe Church Ministry and Pastor Church Resources. In each context, the tools shall be developed with input from members of the community to ensure they will be accessible and useful for members of the community.

10. Recordkeeping

That synod mandate the Council of Delegates and executive director to put in place a system of recordkeeping of cases that come to the attention of all levels of church authority, to allow for the analysis of patterns and trends over time, without compromising the confidentiality of individual persons. Collection of data should include some record of responses and outcomes, as well as reporting of incidents.

11. Creating a culture that prevents abuse of power

- a. That synod affirm the following as core values for the culture within the CRC:

- mutual respect for every person as created by God and equally responsible to respond to God's call to use their gifts for God's mission in the world, including the ongoing work of building God's church
 - an understanding of servant leadership that emphasizes mutual submission as a corrective to the hierarchical tendencies within our culture
 - mutual accountability through checks and balances built into governing structures
- b. That synod affirm the importance of care in the use of language within church assemblies, with attention to the impact of language that harms the ability of others to fully exercise their gifts and calling.
- c. That synod refer this report to the Classis Renewal Advisory Group to consider how the role of regional pastors and church visitors might be strengthened to foster a respectful culture and support churches with early assistance in situations that may give rise to concerns about abuse of power.
- d. That synod mandate the Council of Delegates to establish a team that would act as a guardian of our commitment to foster a culture characterized by respect for all and mutual service. Consideration should be guided by the following features, which draw on good practices in other sectors of society for preventing and responding to all forms of abuse of power:
- The mandate would include the use of a range of measures designed to allow early intervention in response to complaints, including mediation, conflict resolution, and restorative justice tools.
 - The mandate would include concerns about abuse of power that may cross lines between the denomination, classes, and individual churches. The team might serve an "ombudsperson" role within the internal human resources system and for cases that cross jurisdictions, without violating CRC governance of the local church by the local council.
 - Position holders outside the "chain of command" within the established organizational and management structure would help to foster confidence because they are "independent" but accountable through reporting to the Council of Delegates and through their ability to bring issues to the attention of the Council of Delegates if needed.
 - The role of the team would be reviewed after three years for effectiveness, as part of the follow-up to this report.

12. Implementation

That synod mandate the Council of Delegates to ensure implementation by

- monitoring progress at each meeting of the COD.
 - making necessary adjustments in specific plans.
 - reporting to synod each year on progress made toward specific objectives and toward the general goal of creating a culture in which abuse of power is not tolerated and any incidents are dealt with in a way that contributes to the healing of broken relationships.
- l.* That synod take note of the annual report provided regarding classes that have implemented a Safe Church team, and progress by the remaining classes; also reported is the

number of congregations that have Safe Church teams and policies (COD Supplement section II, A, 4 and Appendices D1 and D2).

J. That synod receive the agencies and institutional unified budget as information and approve a ministry share of \$346.48 for calendar year 2020 (COD Supplement sections II, B, 1-2).

K. That synod adopt the 2019-2020 denominational salary grid for senior positions as proposed (COD Supplement section II, B, 4).

L. That synod adopt the following recommendations with reference to agencies requesting to be placed on the recommended-for-offerings list:

1. That synod ratify the list of above-ministry share and specially designated offerings for the agencies and institutions of the CRC and denominationally related ministries, and recommend these to the churches for consideration (COD Supplement section II, B, 5).
2. That synod ratify the list of nondenominational agencies, previously accredited, that have been approved for calendar year 2020 (COD Supplement section II, B, 6).
3. That synod ratify inclusion of the following organization on the accredited agency list (COD Supplement section II, B, 7):

United States

The Colossian Forum

Ground: The goal of the Colossian Forum is to contribute to the reversal of the exodus from the church by equipping leaders to engage divisive cultural issues in ways that are far more interesting than the wider culture in its fragmentation. They do so by drawing on tradition-specific practices, confessions, and resources that cultivate in believers the virtues they need to engage “wicked problems” productively (see the *Wicked Problems* short video at colossianforum.org/wicked-problems).

H. That synod take note of the COD’s endorsement of the following actions of the Pension Trustees (COD Supplement section II, B, 8):

1. The three-year average salary to be used to determine retirement benefits beginning in 2020 for ministers of the Word in the United States is \$54,054 and in Canada is \$56,140.
2. That the 2020 per-member assessment for the Canadian Plan remain \$42.96 and that the Canadian per-participant assessment remain \$9,840. Similarly, that the 2020 per-member assessment for the U.S. Plan remain \$37.20 and the U.S. per-participant assessment remain \$7,704.

Council of Delegates of the
Christian Reformed Church in North America
Paul R. De Vries, chair

Appendix A

Bivocational Task Force Report

I. Background

In January 2017, to begin the Financial Shalom Project, the CRC received a \$1 million grant from Lilly Endowment's National Initiative to Address Economic Challenges Facing Pastoral Leaders. The CRCNA also contributed \$500,000 to the project. The project's intent is to provide support through grants and financial education in order to bring financial shalom for our pastors and candidates.

John Bolt (director of finance and operations) and Holly Small (project manager of Financial Shalom) help to lead the project. The Financial Shalom Advisory Team is made up of Danjuma Gibson (Calvin Theological Seminary professor), Steve Kabetu (Resonate Global Mission-Canada), David Koll (director of Candidacy), Al Postma (Classis Renewal director), Geoff Vandermolen (director of Vocational Formation at CTS), John Bolt, and Holly Small.

During the course of their work, the advisory team discussed the reality of crushing financial stress that many pastors face. The only way these pastors can survive financially is to have another job, but the CRC culture has not given itself well to this. Conversations on bivocational ministry led to a gathering on the topic. On April 24-25, 2018, approximately fifty people (bivocational pastors, church planters, church leaders, and CTS representatives) gathered to discuss "What Is the Future of Bivocational Ministry in the CRCNA?" A report was written to explain what was discussed and shared during the gathering. One surprise discovery during the gathering and in the report was that many pastors find that bivocational arrangements fit in well with their ministry design and their Reformed perspective. They are bivocational by choice rather than by need.

Steve Timmermans, executive director, presented the report to the Council of Delegates, who in turn asked him to appoint a special team to look into the role and experience of bivocational pastors, according to the following mandate:

The task of this ad hoc committee is to explore the challenges and opportunities for bivocational pastors in the CRC by listening to those within and beyond the CRC in bivocational situations (both pastors and congregational leaders), identifying the opportunities of such situations, and by addressing the challenges (to preparation, to the individual, to the congregation, to the denomination). Areas of specific focus could include reconsideration of items in our Church Order to facilitate normalization of bivocational ministry, improvements in denominational databases related to ministerial status, and the like. As a result, a series of recommendations would be provided to the Council of Delegates.

II. Team introductions

A team of eight persons formed and began meeting in fall 2018:

Aaron Au pastors Avenue Church—a four-year-old church plant near the inner city of Edmonton, Alberta. Aaron played violin for the Edmonton Symphony but has now moved to .75 FTE with his church because of the needs of the church and his family.

Ryan Goding is pastor of Summit Community CRC in Farmington, Maine. The church began in 2007/2008 and is now organized. Ryan works full-time as a manager of a local bank in Farmington that is in close proximity to the church.

Sharon Jim served as synodical committee leader on race relations at CRCNA headquarters while her husband, Stanley, attended Calvin Theological Seminary. She formerly worked at Rehoboth Christian School for seventeen years and is now employed with the U.S. Probation office in Gallup, New Mexico. Sharon has been licensed to exhort in Classis Red Mesa since 2011 and works with other commissioned pastors and licensed preachers in her staff role with the classis's Leadership Development Network program.

David Koll has served as director of Candidacy since 2008. Before then, he pastored churches in Anaheim, California, for 14 years, and in eastern Michigan for 13 years.

Denise Posie is the director of Leadership Development in the CRCNA and works with women and ethnic leaders. She has served in the denominational office for six years, with Pastor Church Resources and the Reformed Leadership Initiative. She pastored Immanuel CRC in Kalamazoo, Michigan, from 1999-2012. She has a business background and worked for IBM and General Motors.

Jose Rayas is an ordained pastor at Valley Ridge Community CRC—an emerging church in Socorro, Texas, near El Paso. When he started the church, he worked fulltime for Texas A&M, which paid for his health insurance. He has an engineering background, and he now does consulting work in this bivocational setting.

Holly Small has served as project manager of the Financial Shalom Project since 2016. She is from a family of CRC pastors. Her dad is a retired pastor, and her brother and sister (Rob Byker and Lora Copley) serve as pastors in Classis Red Mesa.

Geoff Vandermolen has been a pastor in the CRC for 20 years—ten years as a church planter in Calgary, and ten years as a church pastor in Toronto and London, Ontario. He has been serving at Calvin Theological Seminary since July 2016 in the Vocation Formation office.

III. Initial report to COD

Bivocational ministry is understood by the task force as any arrangement in which a pastor gains financial support from more than one employer. This may mean working in a part-time or full-time capacity in what is often referred to as a “secular” occupation while also leading a church or church plant. It may mean working in more than one “ordainable” ministries (e.g., a local church plus a hospital chaplaincy). And it may mean working as a pastor less than full-time, with an employed spouse providing a portion of (or even the whole of) a livable income.

The task force has assumed that its task is to offer a positive case for the practice of bivocational ministry. Each person on the team, in fact, has been predisposed to this perspective and is eager to help the CRCNA find its way in supporting the practice.

The team identified and reflected on the following six items in its meetings and subgroup sessions:

1. Church Order requirements

One current deterrent in the practice of bivocational ministry is the bias of the Church Order against bivocational ministry. Bivocational is seen as “an exception” requiring the approval of classis, and the use of this exceptional arrangement is prescribed as limited (see Church Order Article 15 and its Supplement). Addendum A provides a proposed revision of Church Order Article 15, along with reflections on other Church Order matters that could be reviewed.

2. Theological basis for bivocational ministry

Our task force recognized that our CRCNA cultural bias against bivocational ministry is strong and well-developed. As such, the perspectives are supported by understandings of Scripture and history that need to be challenged. Addendum B provides a thumbnail discussion of the need to develop a compelling biblical, theological, and historical case supporting bivocational ministry.

3. Practices of the denomination

Because our practice has been heavily tilted toward traditional fulltime vocational ministry, a grand variety of denominational practices need to be reviewed as we move toward greater use of bivocational ministry. These practices include healthcare benefits, pension plans, family leave, and various administrative practices. Addendum C reflects on these challenges.

4. Contextualization between the United States and Canada

We recognize that there are contextual differences between the United States and Canada. As our team is composed of persons who are serving and have served in both the U.S. and Canadian contexts, we have been able to engage this topic openly. In fact, the topic has occasioned some robust conversation and some healthy introspection.

One major factor we identified and discussed was the benefit of universal health care in Canada. This is a significant benefit for pastors engaging in bivocational ministry in Canada. Our discussion included issues of justice, and we reflected on points where the responsibility of the church and the government intersect and/or are distinct.

As a team, we lament the injustice of situations in which insurance and pension benefits are not present for pastors. We also recognized, however, that this topic is complicated and that there may be potential unintended consequences of any denominational policy regarding healthcare requirements.

We also discussed the reality that the costs of living, the needs and availability of health care and other benefits, and the abilities of communities of faith to provide these vary significantly from place to place. In this regard, the contexts are regional as well as national.

5. Educational matters

Our team identified another set of concerns under the category of “educational matters.” Although we universally appreciate and support our tradition of a well-trained clergy, we recognize that our educational standards for minister of the Word present significant challenges for many persons seeking ordination to pastoral ministry, including those who engage in bivocational ministry.

In part, these challenges are being well addressed through the greater use of the office of commissioned pastor. Developments in the use of this office have facilitated the ability of a person to discern and develop ministry gifts before investing in the significant cost and effort of attaining a master of divinity degree. These developments also open the door to persons who do vocational ministry while engaging in another vocation. And in many cases that other vocation supports the pastor and family as they engage in ministry.

One challenge in this regard, however, is that engaging in a ministry as well as in an income-producing vocation, along with taking on an educational plan toward a masters of divinity degree, requires a lot of effort and can be very stressful. Ministry—whether church planting or in other settings—is stressful and demanding on its own. The point in this portion of our report is to wonder if some educational expectations can be lifted. Might a review of our traditional curriculum for pastors help to refocus our training in a way that relieves some stress for persons preparing for and engaging in ministry? And might a review actually serve to bring greater focus to the mission and work of the church?

Related to this issue is that of educational delivery systems. We wonder about how effective regional Leadership Development Networks (LDNs) have been in our system of preparation. We wonder if there are ways in which LDNs could be reformatted and refocused for greater effectiveness. Concerns and reflections regarding the education of pastors relative to bivocationality are addressed further in Addendum D of this report.

6. Supporting a cultural change

Perhaps the most significant practical matter our task force has recognized relates to cultural change that needs to take place in the CRCNA. Many of the denominations and ministries in North America are far ahead of us in normalizing bivocationality for ministers. In many contexts bivocationality is seen as natural, a definite advantage to ministry, and a clearly biblical construct. Addendum E in our report offers four pages of reflection by one of our subteams, shared with and enhanced by thoughts from our full team. Addendum E encourages the advancement of awareness and support of the practice of bivocational ministry through the use of storytelling in our denominational communication tools, articles reflecting on the biblical foundations of bivocational ministry, and cohort groups of persons interested in and practicing bivocational ministry.

IV. Concluding thoughts

It is our hope and desire as a task force that this report will serve as a tool for the CRC executive director and the COD to use in reflecting on and promoting the bivocational approach to pastoral ministry. We believe it is biblically based and a tremendously effective way to expand and serve the church. We also believe that the stresses of ministry itself, and the particular challenges of bivocationality, merit the attention of our church leadership and support structures.

Addendum A: Church Order Statements re Bivocational Pastors
Addendum B: Theological Basis for Bivocational Ministry
Addendum C: Practices of the Denomination
Addendum D: Educational Matters for Bivocational Pastors
Addendum E: CRCNA Culture Surrounding Bivocational Ministry

Addendum A Church Order Statements re Bivocational Pastors

I. Church Order Article 15 and Its Supplement

Note: Italicized text indicates changes from the current Church Order.

Current Article 15

Each church through its council shall provide for the proper support of its minister(s). By way of exception and with the approval of classis, a church and minister may agree that a minister obtain primary or supplemental income by means of other employment. Ordinarily the foregoing exception shall be limited to churches that cannot obtain assistance adequate to support their minister.

—Cf. Supplement, Article 15

Proposed Article 15

Each church through its council, *as it issues a call to a minister of the Word for any of a variety of possible ministries*, shall attend to the proper support of its minister(s).

—Cf. Supplement, Article 15

Current Supplement, Article 15

“Proper Support” Defined

Proper support of a church’s minister is to include an adequate salary, medical insurance, a housing provision, payment to the denomination’s ministers’ pension plan, a continuing education stipend, and other employment-related items.

(*Acts of Synod 2004*, p. 611)

Guidelines for Churches Whose Ministers Receive Salary Support from Other Employment

1. The church is responsible for a total compensation package proportionate to the time spent in ministry to the church (forty-eight hours equals full-time). The compensation package shall ordinarily be based on synodically stated minimum salary, fringe benefits, and housing costs.
2. Since the compensation package includes a percentage allowance for health insurance, the minister is expected to secure adequate health insurance for the minister and the minister’s family.
3. The value of the parsonage provided by the congregation may be used for part or all of the compensation package.
4. The minister shall receive pension credits in the Ministers’ Pension Fund proportionate to the percentage of time devoted to the duties of the church. Eligibility for full pension credit may be secured if full contribution to the Ministers’ Pension Plan is made.
5. The nature and amount of time of the task(s) other than ministry shall be specified. The average amount of time expended upon the total of the ministerial and nonministerial tasks shall not exceed sixty hours per week.

(*Acts of Synod 1987*, p. 572)

Proposed Supplement, Article 15

Proper support of a church’s minister is to include an adequate salary, medical insurance, a housing provision, payment to *an appropriate pension or retirement plan*, a continuing education stipend, and other employment-related items.

To “attend to” proper support does not imply that the calling church is responsible to provide any of these items of support. Rather, the calling church is responsible to ensure that the pastor has a plan that addresses these items. In many traditional ministries the local church itself accepts these responsibilities in order to facilitate full-time ministry service. In other settings—such as church planting, various forms of chaplaincy, declining churches, multipoint ministries, and so on—the financial plan will include income and benefits provided by a variety of potential sources. The financial plan should be reviewed and signed by a classis representative when a call to bivocational ministry is made or when a pastor and church decide to change their financial arrangement to include bivocationality.

Note: The content of the current points 1 and 2 is addressed in the second paragraph of the proposed Church Order Supplement, Article 15 (above). The text of current points 3, 4, and 5 would become points 1, 2, and 3 in the proposed guidelines (below), as follows, with a couple of changes proposed in *italics*.

Guidelines for Churches in Conversations with Pastors about “Proper Support”

1. The value of the parsonage provided by the congregation may be used for part or all of the compensation package.
2. The minister shall receive pension credits in the *denominational* Ministers’ Pension Fund proportionate to the percentage of time devoted to the duties of the church. Eligibility for full pension credit may be secured if full contribution to the Ministers’ Pension Plan is made.
3. The nature and amount of time of the task(s) other than ministry shall be specified. The average amount of time expended upon the total of the ministerial and nonministerial tasks shall not *normally* exceed sixty hours per week.

II. Other matters for consideration

The task force had good consensus supporting most of what is presented above. We had considerable discussion about the need to have classis approve financial plans for bivocational ministry. We ended up agreeing together that one strength of our polity is mutual accountability, and we believe it is healthy to express this accountability through ensuring that pastors and congregations are in agreement regarding financial arrangements.

Some other Church Order matters may require discussion and adjustment.

- What should happen when a bivocational pastor serves in two different CRC congregations?
- What should happen if and when a bivocational pastor serves in a CRC congregation and in a congregation from another denomination (see the “loan provision” in Church Order Article 13-c)?
- How does “joint supervision” occur in various bivocational situations (see Church Order Article 13-b)?
- What matters should be stated in the Letter of Call, and how do church visitors help local churches ensure that a pastor is sufficiently supported without becoming burned out?

The Bivocational Task Force recommends that the COD move forward to advance the suggested changes in Church Order Article 15 and its Supplement, and work to advance the discussion of these other matters.

Addendum B

Theological Basis for Bivocational Ministry

The CRC needs a statement providing a solid biblical, historical, theological, and yet broad perspective of bivocational pastoral ministry.

I. Considerations

- Brief history concerning the historical church and the CRC with regard to bivocational ministry.
- A description of the CRC's traditional belief and practice regarding bivocational pastors, and the needs of our current cultural context.
- What does God say to the body of Christ globally with regard to bivocational pastors?
- Why is bivocational ministry practice helpful to the mission of God?
- How then shall we respond denominationally, classically, and locally to what God says regarding bivocational pastors?
- What accountability structures will be in place to ensure that we do what we believe and say we will do in connection with bivocational pastors?
- Can we challenge our "sacred/secular" thinking regarding callings, and see the way to obedient responses to God in whatever the circumstances demand?
- Can we see and articulate the advantages of bivocational ministry for the mission of the church and the engagement of all members in the mission (rather than supporting an unhealthy perspective such as "It is the minister's job" and the resulting "consumer church" paradigm)?

II. Recommendations

A. Calvin Theological Seminary professor Cory Willson is one person who could be enlisted to write such a document.

B. A variety of resources currently exist that can help articulate a new view of bivocational ministry. For example, the following websites:

- Mennonite USA—"Biblical and Theological Support for Bivocational Ministry"; mennoniteusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/BiblicalAndTheologicalSupport.pdf
- Northern Seminary—"The Art of Bivocational: Theology on Mission" podcast; seminary.edu/the-art-of-bi-vocational-theology-on-mission-podcast/
- Bivocational and Small Church Leadership Network; bscln.net/ministry-description/bivocational-pastor-job-description/
- Understanding Bivocational Ministry; nph.com/vcmedia/2419/2419936.pdf
- "A Bivocational Minister Warns against Bivocational Ministry"; christiancentury.org/blogs/archive/2013-08/bi-vocational-minister-warns-against-bi-vocational-ministry

C. SEND Institute's 2018 "Survey Findings of Bivocational Church Planters" study is illustrative. Contact Holly Small (hsmall@crcna.org) if you would like to receive a copy of the PowerPoint presentation.

D. Video presentations from speakers at “What Role Will Bivocational Ministry Play in the Future of the CRCNA?” See network.crcna.org/pastors/resources-bivocational-ministry-gathering-last-month

Addendum C Practices of the Denomination

Overview

The ongoing development of bivocational ministries presents new questions and issues for our practices of supporting ordained pastors. The reality is that many of these practices are already under stress, and greater expansion of bivocational ministry is bound to add even more stress.

To begin a list of systemic practices in need of review, we offer the following:

1. Our pension plan for ministers is built on the assumption of ministry being done by full-time ordained ministers of the Word. What will happen if and when a team of part-time or even volunteer ministers of the Word serve in a given congregational ministry setting?
2. Health insurance programs and coverage in the United States continue to change and evolve. In Canada the universal health care provision removes some of those challenges as they pertain to ordained ministers, yet there may be other factors of compliance and provision of benefits that present their own complexities.
3. The support currently offered by the denominational ministries and offices tilts toward maintaining a pension plan for ministers of the Word and an insurance plan for ordained and nonordained staff. Our church culture is already shifting toward greater use of commissioned pastors, and many of them feel overlooked when it comes to pension and insurance help. A growing cadre of bivocational ministers of the Word and commissioned pastors may create needs for administrative support that we have not yet even imagined.

Among the denominational practices that will need review:

- The appropriateness of our current Letter of Call.
- Assumptions and rules regarding moving expenses for pastors.
- Definitions of “adequate support” and expected benefits for persons employed as pastors.
- Our record keeping with regard to a minister’s placement and employment positions that are not approved as “ordainable.”

Our task force looked into and reflected on these matters in three ways:

1. Meeting with Kevin Cummings of Buiten and Associates Insurance Co.

The attendees were John Bolt, Holly Small (both of the CRCNA), Kevin Cummings, and Ally Flinski (both of Buiten and Associates). Various matters were discussed as presented below.

- a. The question was presented regarding options to provide bivocational pastors a supplemental insurance similar to AFLAC. The following are notes shared by Kevin.
- b. Big Picture – the Affordable Care Act is constantly evolving. There are many unknowns in health care.

- Individual Mandate is changing. On January 1, 2019, the pressure to carry health insurance will go away. Yet we should still advocate for making sure people have insurance.
- The law of the land in the U.S. today
 - Provides subsidies based on household income.
 - 138 percent of federal poverty level or below would qualify a person for Medicaid.
 - Buiten's first recommendation is to see if pastors qualify for Medicaid.
 - Medicaid programs that are geared to getting people back to work (State of Michigan has put in some work requirements).
 - Subsidies – people who are 138% to 400% of poverty level are eligible for subsidies.
- Marketplace – majority of plans are sold on the marketplace.
- Open enrollment period: Nov. 1 – Dec. 15 for elective period. Plans begin on Jan. 1. Insurance rates are released in October. People can come in on open enrollment or a qualified event.

c. Challenges

- The individual market is restricted and confusing.
- Available individual plans vary from state to state.
 - Aetna and Cigna and other companies dropped out of ObamaCare plans in Michigan.
 - Michigan has four or five options.
- Some states have only one option available.
- Since the Trump administration, the subsidies have dried up. Rates have gone up substantially.
- Individual plans—the price and the coverage are worse than in the group plans. A bivocational pastor who needs to get individual coverage has to pay a hefty price for plans that “aren't attractive.”

d. Option A: short-term insurance

- This insurance is to bridge people; the goal is to get them to the marketplace.
- Pros: Inexpensive.
- Cons: Doesn't cover preexisting conditions. Every six months starts a new contract. So if a condition arises in the first six months, it won't be covered during the next six months. Also, people are clueless to what's included.
- Short-term insurance is a possibility but not a long-term solution.

e. Option B: supplemental insurance – also referred to as gap insurance

- Supplemental programs—indemnity-based products
- No restrictions on what the money is used for
- Reimbursed a dollar amount
- Helps with critical illness/catastrophic events – bigger dollar payouts
- Supplemental insurance is the fastest-growing insurance option on the market.

- Insurance companies can't enroll pastors in Medicaid. The individual person has to do this.
- If you lose Medicaid, then it's a qualified event.

f. Buiten Insurance's opinion and recommendations

- First option is Medicaid—If pastor qualifies for Medicaid, then it's best to get that.
- Supplemental insurance is an option (and a better option than short-term insurance) BUT should not be the only insurance that a bivocational pastor has.
- Exchanges are age-rated—a bivocational pastor might run into more expenses depending on age.
- If there is a pastor whose church does not offer health insurance, then we need to make sure that the pastor goes to the exchange.
- Conduct a survey of bivocational pastors to find out how many need health care coverage.
 - If uninsured, find out the reasons why.
 - How many pastors would be eligible for coverage?
 - How many hours worked – define hours worked – only for those who work 10-30 hours (not eligible for Reformed Benefits Association coverage).
- Kevin is available to speak with the group if we have further questions.

2. Reflections by Holly and Jose

a. Federal Labor Standards Act

- The Act does not require that a part-time employee receive vacation, sick, or holiday pay.
- Not clear as to what point a part-time employee would qualify for medical insurance.
- Labor laws do not reflect what bivocational pastors do. There are no requirements for benefits of any kind.

b. It may be beneficial to conduct a survey of bivocational pastors

- Committee first needs to be clear about what we mean by the word *bivocational*. Include that definition in the survey. The term can carry different meanings for different people.
- Ask bivocational pastors a variety of practical questions:
 - How do you split time between your places of employment?
 - Income?
 - Benefits provided?
 - How do you solve medical insurance benefits? Would you be interested in supplemental insurance from the denomination?
- Ask bivocational pastors for feedback related to their personal experience:
 - What things are lacking in the CRCNA for bivocational pastors?
 - How do you suggest changing or improving what is lacking in our churches?
- Enlist the help of leaders from ethnic minority groups in the CRCNA (Consejo Latino, Black and Reformed, Classes Ko-Am and Hanmi, Classis Red Mesa) and Resonate Global Mission to help conduct the survey.
- Important to use existing groups and for them to become the owners and drivers

c. Other items to consider

- Does being a bivocational pastor change the opportunities for sabbatical leave?
- How can a bivocational pastor get the time necessary to attend church/denominational meetings? Will this cause a difficulty getting a full synodical complement? What about participation in denominational boards/work?

3. Input from *Yearbook* staff regarding record-keeping complexities

The following email is illustrative of the concerns that exist:

Holly:

As a follow-up to our conversation this morning (and also from a conversation I had with Dee) regarding bivocational pastors, I wanted to share the following information.

Al Mulder, the stated clerk of Classis Grand Rapids East, recently brought to our [*Yearbook* staff] attention that there are a few pastors in Classis GR East who have more than one position listed in their Minister History in the Connections database. He indicated that some of these positions should not be listed in minister history since they are not part of their official call; positions that were not approved as being consistent with the calling of a minister of the Word. When we talked with Dee [Synodical Services] about this, she concurred.

However, Connections does not at this time have the capacity to enter non-called positions for ministers of the Word. As we discussed, it would be beneficial to have some way to track ministers who are bivocational. Some of them serve in other ministries to which they haven't been specifically called; others have blue- or white-collar jobs to supplement their income.

One of the examples I gave you was Eric Kas. Eric was called by Oakdale Park CRC (Classis Grand Rapids East) as a church planter with Good News Gatherings. Obviously, that is a position that would be listed in his Minister History. He also works for Safe Church Ministry (but he was not called to that position). We currently have the Safe Church position listed in his minister history, but it technically should not be. But for various reasons, it would be valuable to record that role somewhere in Connections and be able track it.

Two other examples include a full-time pastor of a church who also works in retail, and a pastor who has four "jobs," only one of which is recorded in Connections.

Since the Council of Delegates mandated an ad-hoc task force reviewing possibilities and challenges of bivocational pastorates, and because you are on this task force, Dee asked me to send you this email to explain the restrictions we have in recording bivocational positions in Connections. It certainly would be helpful to have these recorded in Connections with a way to run reports for those pastors who are bivocational.

Hopefully this will help in exploring ways to accomplish this!

—Karen

Addendum D

Educational Matters for Bivocational Pastors

I. Aaron Au's email

(Aaron is the pastor of Avenue Church in Edmonton, Alberta.)

A couple of thoughts ahead of our video conference this Thursday regarding the educational component of this bivocational discussion (based on my experience). You'll notice some thoughts stray into the area of polity as well:

- As someone who has an M.Div. from an accredited Baptist seminary here in Edmonton, I found the EPMC program extremely helpful. The ability to do the majority of the work over distance made it possible to still work as a symphony musician while laying the groundwork for the church plant. The required courses, including the first trip to Grand Rapids, were very useful in getting me oriented with Reformed theology, history, and polity.
- The EPMC coursework fulfilled the requirements of my classis (my contextualized learning plan) so that I could be examined for ordination as a commissioned pastor. This coincided with the launch of Avenue Church in 2014.
- After launch, I was working bivocationally as a violinist with the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra and as the pastor of Avenue Church. I also was aware of the language requirements (two courses each of Greek and Hebrew), additional interviews, and Bible exams that were outstanding if I were to become ordained as a minister of the Word.
- By the fall of 2017, I was working 3/4 time as a pastor and the other 1/4 (unpaid) was given to me to be at home with our new son. Because my wife was on maternity leave at the time, I started work on my first Greek course (distance through an accredited seminary in Canada). While the workload was heavy, I did mostly manage to keep up. Then, when my wife returned to her part-time work in Jan. 2018, I found I could no longer keep up. The rigors of pastoring, parenting, and schoolwork proved to be too much.
- Let me preface this next section by saying this: I see the value of learning biblical languages. I very much see the value in ensuring that a CRC pastor is well-versed in Reformed theology, history, and polity through the EPMC coursework. I appreciate the flexibility the office of commissioned pastor allows someone like me to help launch and to serve a church family, even though I was missing a few requirements for the office of minister of the Word.

What I've been struggling with is that one day, Lord willing, Avenue Church will move from an emerging to established church. When that happens, my ability to serve the church I helped launch will be hampered by my status as a commissioned pastor. Of course there are provisions in Art. 23 to work around this, but in the end these are all still "workarounds." (Someone might also suggest pursuing Art. 7 as a way to become a minister of the Word, but I for one don't want to have to try and define what "extraordinary qualities" actually means. This may be a topic that the team looking at polity can look into some more.)

As a solo commissioned pastor of a church plant of almost five years, I've had many of the same duties of a minister of the Word in performing official acts of ministry and leading a team and congregation and being engaged at classis. The challenge has been with the bivocational piece: I've found that I haven't had enough time to complete my outstanding EPMC requirements, especially the language component given all of my other responsibilities. In other words, I feel that I've been serving Avenue Church in many of the ways a minister of the Word would, but I've also been so busy doing that that I haven't had a chance to complete the requirements to actually become a minister of the Word! And when Avenue Church becomes organized, I won't be able to continue serving as a commissioned pastor without some workarounds. (Again, I'm straying into questions of polity here!)

I'm not suggesting that the educational requirements, especially in the area of biblical languages, need to be changed at this point, but could it perhaps be time that be re-examined? Given that more and more pastors will be bivocational (in emerging and established churches), and given that there may be more people coming to serve via the route I've come in to the CRC (outside seminary training, EPMC, commissioned pastor), are the language requirements in their current form still what is best? Is it still the common wisdom that two courses each of Greek and Hebrew are what is required to adequately equip the preacher? Are there other ways, using some of the newer technology and software for instance, of ensuring language competency without the burden (time and financial) of four language courses?

I don't have any answers—just questions that have emerged on my journey!

Thanks for considering my rather lengthy note. I look forward to continuing the conversation!

Grace and peace,
Aaron

II. Questions to consider

- Are the language requirements in their current form still what is best?
 - Given that more and more pastors will be bivocational (in emerging and established churches).
 - Given that there may be more people coming to serve the CRCNA via the routes of outside seminary training, EPMC, commissioned pastor, LDN, etc.
- Is it still the common wisdom that two courses each of Greek and Hebrew are what is required to adequately equip the preacher?
- Are there other ways, using some of the newer technology and software for instance, of ensuring language competency without the burden (time and financial) of four language courses?
- Will the increase in the use of bivocational pastors increase the ordination of commissioned pastors in comparison to ordained ministers with a master of divinity degree?

Addendum E

CRCNA Culture Surrounding Bivocational Ministry

I. Reflections by bivocational pastors

- A. *Ryan Goding*—pastor of Summit Community CRC in Farmington, Maine
- CRC culture is new to Ryan. Has been with the CRC since his ordination in 2008. Ryan joined the CRCNA through the Leadership Development Network (LDN) and Pastor Bill Johnson (who is ordained in the CRC but pastors a Baptist church in Pittsfield, Maine).
 - Ryan has an outsider's perspective, which is helpful to the conversation.
 - He began bivocational ministry because it was helpful and practical at that time. His wife was pregnant at the time, and they had only a handful of contacts when they moved to Farmington.
 - There was not any ability for him to not be bivocational. It had to be that way. Being bivocational gave him the tools and resources to get on the ground and begin the work.
 - "It would have been very restrictive for us if I had to go through the normal ministry channels and then not be able to work full-time in some other capacity and to receive their health care too," he wrote. The timing was right in order for him to serve the church.
 - Bivocationality was one piece of the pie.
 - There is value in bivocational ministry that goes beyond being practical.
 - It redeems what work is in the eyes of congregants. Work is more than a paycheck.
 - It builds contacts and relationships with people in the community.

Obstacles to bivocational ministry include the following:

1. Church assumptions about a pastor's time
 - Some churches function under the assumption that they own the pastor and have a monopoly on his or her time. If a pastor took a second job, then there would be time when he/she would be unavailable to minister to the congregants.
 - Latent compartmentalization of time.
2. Church Order
 - Church or classis will sometimes not allow a pastor to have a second vocation.
3. Pride
 - Sign of defeat if the church cannot pay their pastor enough.
 - Churches far too often link their success with whether or not they have the financial resources to pay a full-time minister.
 - A traditional church that is in decline may not want their pastor to go out and get another job as it is viewed as failure.
4. Pastor feels at capacity already
 - Pastor may not want to become bivocational because he or she already feels at capacity with the commitments of the church.
5. The word *bivocation* carries different connotations

- Divergent reasons why pastors are pursuing bivocational ministry
 - Circumstance—short-term necessity to help pastor’s financial situation
 - Missional choice
 - Which stories are shared?
6. Skewed approach to church and vocation
- CRCNA is living off borrowed capital of previous generations under its one-size-fits-all approach to church and vocation.
 - Approach worked when church was the center of town square, and the center of life and culture of the community. This is no longer culturally effective in rural New England.
 - Have to figure out how to speak the language of people who are around us. Free people up who have a sense of mission that transcends the four walls of the church building and start interacting with people. This is the pattern of the apostles. Why would it be a condescension for pastors to go out and do the same?

B. Mark Van Andel—Resonate Global Mission, local mission leader, Great Lakes Region; pastor of Hesed Community Church in Detroit, Michigan

Mark writes: “I appreciated the questions that you posed as you engaged with this work. As you noted, some churches enter into the questions of bivocationality from a grieving perspective as they are no longer able to pay their ministers due to diminished giving, etc. Others (like myself) enter into it because of other convictions (keeps me involved in community outside of church walls, allows me to work with financially limited persons, and makes my life more reproducible as a disciple-maker). I also encounter many faith communities in immigrant or ethnic populations who operate with a bivocational assumption due to financial limitations of the congregation. The issue of education is a major one in this area of ordination and compensation. If we desire to grow our ministries with those in financially challenged communities, we need to explore other avenues for leadership development, as you noted in the report.”

C. Rick Abma—Neighborhood Life Ministry in Lacombe, Alberta

Rick writes: “This is necessary work as I see it from my perspective. The ministry we lead is a network instead of an organization, and it has a \$95,000 budget that is made up of coffee sales, consulting, teaching/preaching, and good ol’ fashioned fundraising. I am not much of a writer (certainly not good at grant writing) and wish you would interview me instead. In the meantime, here are some reflections:

- Church Order requirements—not sure if this is directly pertaining to Church Order, but let me say that “categories” seem to get in the way. Church Order has tried to find a category for me, and it does nothing but cause problems . . . The church that holds my credentials once asked if I was planning on planting a church, since they put me in the ‘church planting’ category and sent mail and asked questions regarding that category. It was disruptive. Still today, the denomination asks ‘How many attend worship each week,’ which is irrelevant to my situation. These are just a couple of examples that lead to the issue of only having certain metrics to run with that are not always honoring of the ministry.
- Theological basis for bivocational—Good work on this. One challenge is the identity question; I am always asked, “How is business going?” even though I moved into this

community as a full-time pastor 17 years ago and now have had a bivocational role for the past five years. The general public inside and outside the church have difficulty identifying with the bivocational pastor, which can limit the leader's ability to help people be on mission. I wonder if the apostle Paul was asked how tent-making was going as much as I am asked how coffee sales are going . . . not much I can do about that.

- Those who stray from the full-time ministry role can be seen as “illegitimate” unless carefully rooted in the community of believers at some local level. Bivocational can be a tough gig, but some of my friends who have been forced into it are finding it refreshing in the end; it conjured up a sense of refreshment when the bivocational setting created opportunities to help connect with the majority of our population who are not connected to any faith community/church.
- Education—It seems that in all the conversation about education, discipleship gets lost. In a room of 300 clergy at a Home Missions conference years ago (Florida), only a handful could testify to having been ‘discipled.’ I would suggest that educational requirements could be replaced with discipleship requirements . . . just a thought.
- Storytelling is a great way to go. I was told that stories (if told well) get to the heart, as Jesus did so well, and they are hard to argue against. Stories help move us toward the well of living water, especially if we were walking away, as opposed to facts/stats and numbers that teach us if we are on one side of the fence or the other.”

D. Jose Rayas—pastor at Valley Ridge CRC, an emerging church in Socorro, Texas, near El Paso

Jose writes: “The following statement is helpful: ‘Although the bivocational pastor has two incomes, he is fully the pastor of the church and should not be considered “part-time.” He is to tend all the pastoral duties of the church. Usually that would mean serving in a smaller church.’ I believe this captures part of the reality of bivocational ministries—that regardless of the source of income, the pastor is fully the pastor of the church and thus is fully responsible for his flock.”

E. Allen Kleine-Deters—pastor of The Bridge, a new missional community plant in Niagara Falls, Ontario

Allen writes: “For almost thirty years I was paid to be in full-time staff ministry—first as a youth pastor, then as a church planter, and then as an ordained senior pastor of an established church. Then God did something unexpected. He called my wife and me back into church planting, but this time as a bivocational pastor. At first I looked at bivocational work as a stepping-stone to full-time ministry work. You know, eventually the church would grow to be able to support my full-time salary.

“I no longer believe that or even want it to happen. Even if the church could support a full-time pastor, I would not want to change anything. This was affirmed to me at the BIVo conference in Denver, Colorado, hosted by the Missio organization that I attended with my wife a couple of years ago. Both my wife and I believe a healthy answer to empowering all the saints as ministers is to keep the budget simple and less stressed by putting significant monies toward full-time staff.

“There are many benefits to ministering bivocationally. First, you are more able to decentralize ministry to the people and their passions and callings. People know I work at numerous things, so involvement by all is crucial to develop inroads to the community. Everyone expects to do their part. Second, I have more ‘street cred.’ I have a part-time job at a local cigar shop. Some of my best networking among businesspeople and locals takes place in that shop. God has used this place to make incredible connections and help me gain respect by the local community. Even the owner of the shop has come to faith. Our group even met in the shop on

Sunday evenings until we outgrew it. I'm also a blues musician and have been able to connect with locals playing in the pubs and third spaces. God has opened incredible doors through this.

“And, yes, my wife does work. She works 60-percent time at a school as a resource teacher. Before she got that job, she started her own tutoring business for special needs children and found it rewarding although not so financially sustaining.

“Another benefit is freedom. I believe it was Hugh Halter (author *BiVo*, *Brimstone*, *Tangible Kingdom*) who said, “You only teach and preach to the level your salary will allow,” or something like that. Again I go back to the value of decentralizing the ministry of the church. When leaders are bivocational, teaching, evangelism, discipleship, and crisis management are decentralized. Those who are gifted, willing, and able, participate. And this freedom allows you to model the behavior of missional life and engage your community in a deeper way.

“I have come to learn that my calling as a pastor is not necessarily equated with a salary—or even the profession, for that matter. To me, that's incredibly freeing—not to mention that it also keeps me on my knees trusting in God's provision.”

II. Response/action items

Our approach should not be a top-down one in which the denomination says, “We support this, and all churches need to follow suit.” Rather, this needs to begin at the grassroots level and filter up organically, where the denomination responds to the grassroots movement by building structures that support it rather than stifle it. In response, we ask:

How do we generate movement from the grassroots level so that we can have buy-in from the churches, prompting the denomination to come in and support this effort?

A. *Communication Strategy: Tell Stories—Give a Better Narrative*

- “Let's win people before we build the structures.”
- People need to buy-in to a new paradigm before anything else can help.
- CRC can benefit from hearing the stories of how ministry has occurred through bivocational opportunities—and perhaps would not otherwise have occurred if bivocational ministry were not available.
- Telling the stories of how bivocational ministry can be successful and how it can be helpful in different contexts.
- How and where to communicate?
 - Via various channels—articles in the *Banner*, seminars, webinars, events at classes, videos—to reach as wide an audience as possible
 - Who are we communicating to, and through what channels?
 - Communication should be structured to meet the audience receiving it.
 - Conference audiences
 - Denominational leadership
 - Pastors
 - Classes
 - Congregations
- Be honest about the realities on the ground.
 - Ministry was never intended to be a country-club experience.
 - There are some practical concerns with feeding your family and taking care of expenses and doing what's necessary to get the work done.

- The disposition with which we approach today's realities can make all the difference. Pastors can do their work begrudgingly (or as if it has to be a certain way), or they can take a different disposition and see the work as "an opportunity to be conformed to the image of Christ."

B. Thoughtful articulation of a theology of work for this new paradigm

- A misguided/misleading theology of work factors into all of the obstacles/barriers for bivocational pastors.
 - Latent compartmentalization in our thought process between sacred/secular work.
- What is ministry, and what does it mean to be called?
- Theology needs to be gospel-centric—this is what ministry looks like in the scriptures, and this is the call of ministry. Perhaps we have drifted away from the call and we focus too much on maintaining a vocation.
 - Has to be rooted in the gospel and not just the pragmatism of ministry.
 - Mission first rather than vocation first. Build on top of the gospel foundation.
 - Influence churches to think through the perspectives provided by these lenses.

C. Conversations focused on what it means for the kingdom of God to advance and what that may look like in this emerging culture

- Move conversation away from the paradigm in which a church's success is linked to membership numbers and money.
 - Difficult for people to get out of this space
- Change the language and concepts -- pastors and other leaders realizing that ministry is mission not vocation
- One mission that consists of different facets
- Ryan's job at the bank does not diminish his authority or impact. Instead, it is complementary and part of what it means to be a pastor.
 - Ryan places a high value on how he interacts with the public and serves the people. This reflects on him as a pastor. Customers come in and ask for prayer.
 - He does not see himself operating in different spheres, where pastoral work is defined as sacred and banking work is secular. Rather, he has one mission that is not defined by one type of vocation or the other . . . it transcends those limitations.
- We need to start with this mentality. Anything that is less than or would limit a sense of calling will diminish the impact of bivocational ministry.
 - If you are just there to get a paycheck, you are not going to last long in bivocational ministry.
 - If the pastor's mindset is "I have to do this because I need health care" or "I have to do this because the church can't pay me enough," then the pastor will get frustrated and walk away.
 - If the pastor's mentality aligns with "This is my calling, and I'm going to serve God in whatever I do," then that's a mission-focused mentality.

D. Resources are helpful but do not change people's hearts

- Stories and Scriptures change people's hearts.
- The reality is that if a pastor is committed to bivocational ministry, he/she will do it.
 - Workshops can just be time-consuming—to add a workshop to something a bivocational pastor is already committed to doing, it does not add much value.

- Workshops could be best for pastors who might be on the fence about bivocational ministry and want to explore the benefits and drawbacks.
- Pastors are constantly making value decisions every moment of the day.
 - “Is this worth my physical, spiritual, emotional energy?”
- The tyranny of the good may prevent or limit what is best.
- The resources would have to be super valuable.
 - They could not be a reiteration of something that people are already doing, or already know about, or are already engaged in.
- The committee proposal has to be valuable to those receiving it.
 - People are not going to adopt it, if they do not see the value in it.

Appendix B

Classis Name Change Report

Submitted by the Classis Renewal Advisory Team

This report includes (1) the background to the request regarding a name change for *classis*, (2) a list of key considerations from our analysis, and (3) an addendum with further information from a survey conducted as part of this assignment. Since our team was asked to provide analysis, not recommendations, our guiding principle was simply to provide as much helpful information as possible to assist synod in considering its response to the request that the name *classis* be changed (Overture 10, Synod 2018).

I. Background

Following is an overture to Synod 2018 that prompted the task given to the Classis Renewal Advisory Team:

Classis Eastern Canada overtures synod to change the title *classis* to *regional assembly*.

Grounds:

1. The word *classis* is an old Latin European word that communicates to very few people in our North American society outside of Reformed churches. In fact, increasingly it does not communicate to people within Reformed churches. As such, in order to be hospitable when speaking with a group of people (e.g., a congregation), the word requires explanation every time it is used. *Note:* Our denomination's website uses the words *regional assemblies* to explain the word *classes*: www.crcna.org/ministries (accessed April 5, 2017).
2. The word *classis* is confusing, since it may sound like a homophone for the plural (educational) *classes*.
3. The plural of *classis*, the word *classes*, is also confusing, especially in print, where it is a homograph for educational *classes*.
4. The phrase *regional assembly* is self-explanatory and is descriptive.
5. The phrase *regional assembly* conveys both a geographical reality (generally, part of the reality of what a classis is) and an ecclesiastical reality (more importantly, what a classis is).
6. While adapting to the new term would require administrative changes in our denomination (print and web resources, etc.), it would be a worthwhile change because changing to the new title would communicate better in our broader society and so remove a barrier in our mission to proclaim Jesus to all.

(*Agenda for Synod 2018*, pp. 314-15)

Synod 2018 responded to the overture with the following decision:

That synod instruct the Council of Delegates to refer Overture 10 to the Classis Renewal Advisory Team or another appropriate body for analysis, including potential costs involved in a change.

Grounds:

- a. The financial and legal ramifications involved in making this change are unclear.
- b. More conversation needs to happen about what terminology would communicate clearly and effectively while remaining sensitive to our history.
- c. The phrase *regional assembly* may not be the most appropriate title given current developments such as the proposed definition of a classis and the movement of congregations to classes that are not in their geographical region.

(*Acts of Synod 2018*, p. 454)

The Classis Renewal Advisory Team took the following actions to respond to the task:

1. Survey: We developed a survey regarding this overture and sent it to the stated clerks of all 48 classes. We received 280 responses, with at least one response from 26 out of the 48 classes. The most responses from one single classis was 40 (14% of the total responses). While the data is helpful, we want to emphasize the caution that this data reflects only the views of those who responded, not necessarily the entire membership of the CRC.
2. Costs: In conversation with the CRC's director of communications and marketing, we learned that the direct costs associated with a name change to the CRCNA would be minimal. The majority of costs would be borne by the classes themselves.
3. In two meetings, we reflected on the discussion and its place in our denominational conversations, and we focused on analyzing the survey results.

II. Key considerations

The Classis Renewal Advisory Team recommends that the Council of Delegates and synod consider the following when discussing its response regarding the request that the name *classis* be changed. These items are not presented in any specific order.

1. The survey we conducted, while informative, should not be considered a definitive voice.
2. The survey provides responses that do not represent a unified voice either for or against changing the name *classis*. This remains true across various demographic lines such as age, years of membership in the CRC, church office, and so forth—both denomination-wide and within any given classis.
3. We heard from at least one person an encouragement to either change the name or keep it the same, but to just make a decision quickly so the CRC can get back to “more important matters.” This sentiment was a common theme. We note that this is not to say a name change is unimportant, but this is an argument toward not amplifying the importance by spending significant energy pushing either for or against a name change.
4. Anxiety within the denomination may cause the importance and impact of either changing the name or keeping it the same to be overstated on either side.
5. We sense an ongoing tension between historical identity and inclusiveness in the context of growing diversity. Some expressed fear that changing the name would decrease a sense of belonging for those with a long denominational history, while others expressed a fear that keeping the name *classis* would inhibit the sense of belonging for new members. We would not anticipate this tension being resolved by either changing the name or keeping it the same. This discussion on the name *classis* may simply be one specific conversation that enters into a larger denominational conversation on what it means to be in community together.
6. In the discussion, being clear on who is served by a name change and who is served by keeping the name the same will be valuable.
7. The function of classis is more important than its name; changing a name is easier than changing a culture. The need for supporting the health of classis will remain, regardless of the name.

8. There is a general sense from respondents that it is not necessarily inhospitable to ask people to learn new terminology as they join a new community. This sentiment was also expressed by some who identified themselves as new to the Christian Reformed Church. Regardless of the name, the work of classis will need to be explained to people new to the church. Further, for new believers, there are many more challenging biblical and theological expressions that require explanation (e.g., drinking the blood of Christ).
9. *Classis* has become a term that we use to refer to the meeting, the group of churches, and the collective ministry (one could say, “At classis it was decided that the classis should be doing things that better support ministry within our classis”). This adds a layer of complexity to discussion about the name, showing that it could be difficult to find a name that encompasses all these uses, if that is desired.
10. There is a lot of change happening in the church right now. We may want to be careful not to lock ourselves into a new name prematurely while these various changes are emerging and solidifying.
11. The survey results reveal a general impression that a name change would not greatly affect (either negatively or positively) the work and witness of either the congregations or the classes themselves. Classis is a more secondary ministry structure that creates space for congregations and other specific ministries to do collective ministry.
12. If the name is changed, the financial costs to be borne by classes are not clear and would not be uniform across the denominational spectrum. Classes that are incorporated as nonprofit organizations would probably see greater financial cost than those less formally organized, particularly if they saw a need to adjust their legal documents. Estimates from respondents ranged from \$0 to \$60,000, while most seemed to be in the range of a few thousand dollars. The costs borne by the denominational ministries, agencies, and governance would be minimal.
13. Many respondents noted that if classis needs a name change, then the same is equally true of its parallel governance bodies (synod, council).

As you can see, these considerations lack a unified sense of direction. Whether synod decides to change the name or keep it the same, the Classis Renewal Advisory Team would equally affirm either decision.

Classis Renewal Advisory Team

Priya Andrade
Chris DeVos
Felix Fernandez
Lori Fieber
Jeremy Oosterhouse
John Park
Albert Postma
Kristen Rietkerk
Tim Soerens
Steve Zwart

Addendum Further Information

A. *Other Denominations*

While the following is not an exhaustive list, it shows some of the language used by denominations that have an ecclesial structure somewhat similar to that of the CRCNA.

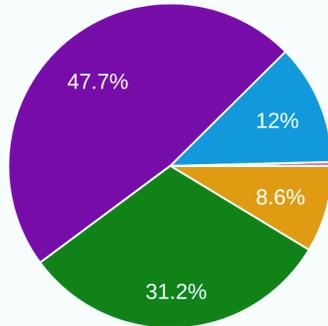
Denomination	Local Governance	Regional Governance (one or two layers)	National Governance
Christian Reformed Church in North America	Church Council	Classis	Synod
Reformed Church in America	Consistory	Classis and Regional Synod	General Synod
United Church of Christ	Church Council	Association and Conference	General Synod
The Episcopal Church	Parish and Diocese	Province	General Convention
United Methodist Church	Local Church/District	Annual Conference and Jurisdictional Conference	General Conference
Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod	Local Church	District	National Convention
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America	Local Church	Synod and Region	Churchwide Assembly
Evangelical Covenant Church	Local Church	Regional Conference	Annual Meeting
Presbyterian Church (USA)	Session	Presbytery and Synod	General Assembly
Presbyterian Church in America	Session	Presbytery	General Assembly
United Church of Canada	Communities of Faith	Regional Council	Denominational Council
Anglican Church of Canada	Parish and Diocese	Province	General Synod
The Presbyterian Church in Canada	Session	Presbytery and Synod	General Assembly
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada	Local Church	Synod	National Convention

B. *Information from survey*

1. Respondent Demographics

Age

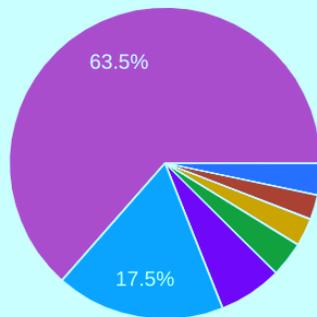
266 responses



18 or under – 0.0%
 19-25 – 0.0%
 26-34 – 8.6%
 35-49 – 31.2%
 50-64 – 47.7%
 65-79 – 12%
 80+ – 0.4%

I have been part of the CRC for ____ years:

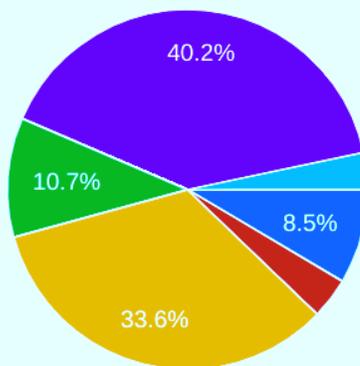
274 responses



<1 – 3.3%
 1-4 – 2.6%
 5-9 – 2.9%
 10-14 – 3.6%
 15-24 – 6.6%
 25-40 – 17.5%
 40+ – 63.5%

I am currently a:

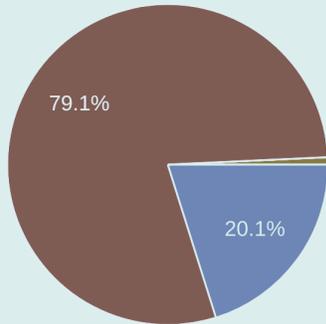
271 responses



Church Member – 8.5%
 Church Staff – 3.7%
 Elder – 33.6%
 Deacon – 10.7%
 Minister of the Word – 40.2%
 Commissioned Pastor – 3.3%

Gender

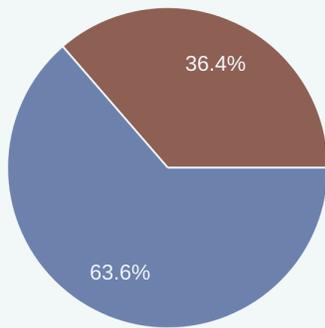
273 responses



Female – 20.1%
Male – 79.1%
Prefer not to say – 0.7%

Do you serve, or have you served, in a classis role?

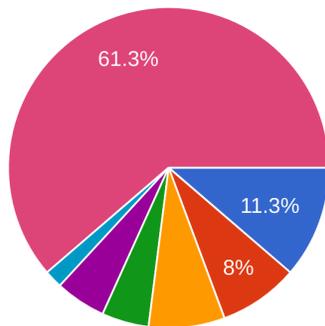
275 responses



Yes – 63.6%
No – 36.4%

How many times have you been to a classis meeting?

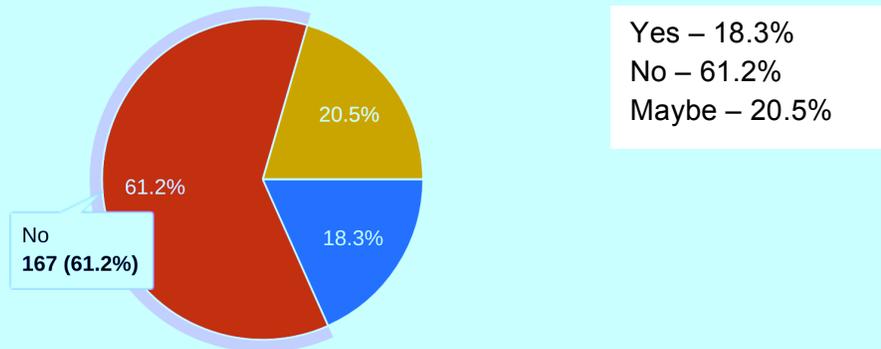
274 responses



0 – 11.3%
1 – 8%
2 – 7.7%
3 – 4.7%
4 – 5.1%
5 – 1.8%
6+ – 61.3%

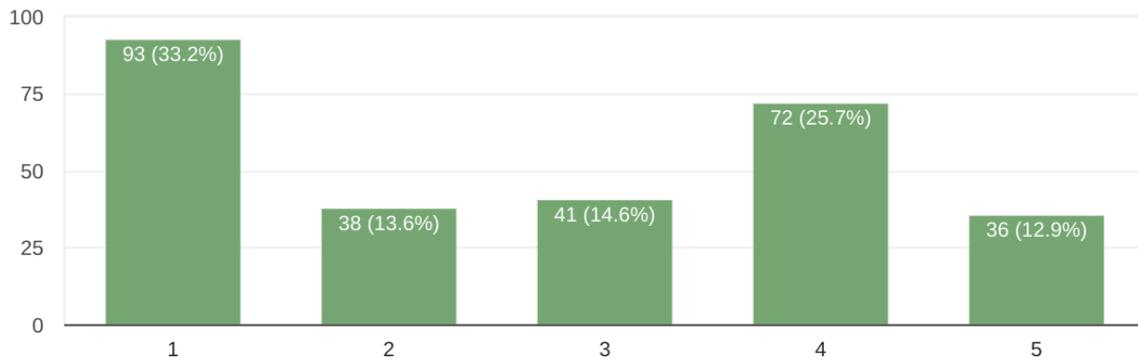
If there was a name change, would you expect to be personally involved in administering it?

273 responses



How necessary do you think it is to change the name of classis (whether it is to Regional Assembly or something else)?

280 responses



1: Not necessary at all
5: Absolutely necessary

Averages:

Overall: 2.71

Women: 3.16

Ethnic Minority: 3.09

Ages 25-34: 2.43

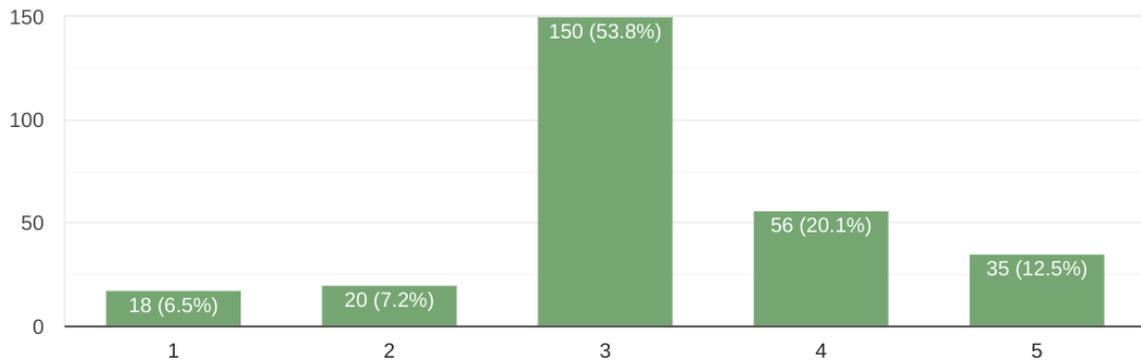
Ages 65+: 3.39

Ministers of the Word: 2.67

Non-Ministers of the Word: 2.75

What type of impact might a name change have on the ministry of CHURCHES in your classis?

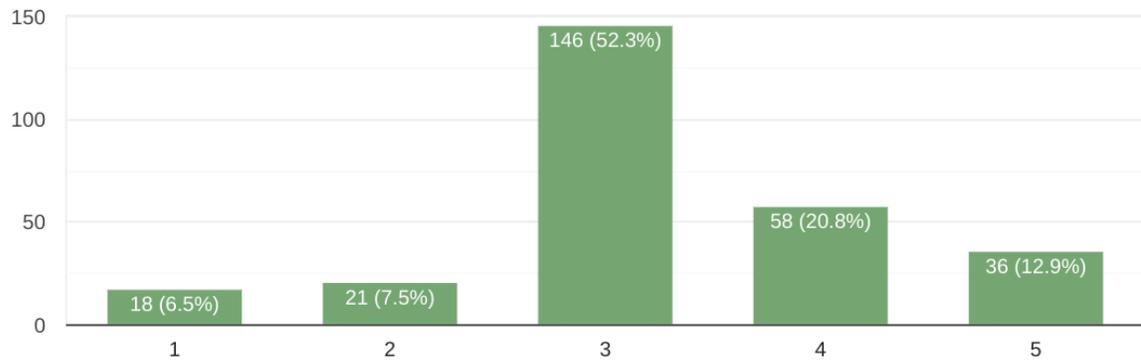
279 responses



1: Negative Impact
5: Positive Impact

What type of impact might a name change have on the ministry of your CLASSIS?

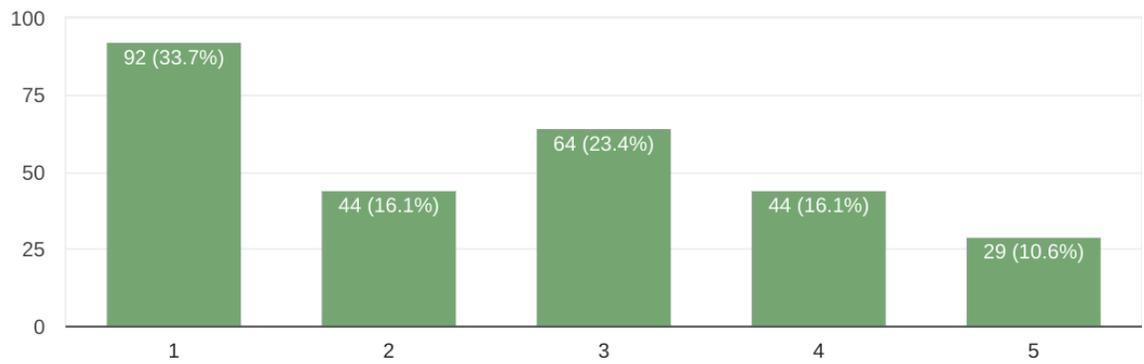
279 responses



1: Negative Impact
5: Positive Impact

If classis had a different name, I would have a better understanding of its function

273 responses



1: Strongly No
5: Strongly Yes

Of those in the CRC 9 years or less, the average response to this is 2.5, in line with the overall average of 2.53.

The following wordcloud was developed by including every response to the question “If the CRC was a brand new denomination, and it was completely up to you to give *classis* a name, what would you name it?” The size of the text is related to the number of respondents with that submission.



The following wordcloud was developed by including the responses to the question “Why would you choose this name?” regarding the response to the previous question. This only shows words that occurred five or more times, and omits words such as *because*. Font size is based on frequency of word occurrence. Many of these responses were short phrases or sentences.



Appendix C

Addressing the Abuse of Power Committee

Executive Summary

Power can be used to serve God and others; it can also be misused and do great harm to others and the community. Abuse of power can take many forms. All of them have serious impacts, including spiritual impacts—especially when they occur within the church family. This report combines scriptural reflection, research, and learning from experience to better understand the dynamics and impacts of abuse of power within the church family. With Jesus as our model for exercising the power of love, rather than the love of power, this report focuses on listening, learning, and caring for those who are most affected when power is abused.

Abuse of power happens within all communities, including the Christian Reformed Church. Effective prevention and response require focused attention and intentional actions at all levels of the church, from the local church to the denominational offices. Appropriate actions include strengthening awareness and training, assistance and restoration for persons who have been abused, appropriate discipline, and accountability.

This report describes the complex interrelationships within the CRC that need to be considered to develop effective measures to prevent abuse, end the silencing and minimization of abuse when it happens, and engage in practices that can restore broken relationships.

In a close community like the CRC, addressing abuse of power requires checks and balances within our systems of governance. This report examines available evidence of patterns of abuse within the CRC, what is presently being done to prevent and respond to abuse, and gaps in our policies and practices. The analysis draws on what is known about good practices in abuse prevention in church communities. Based on this analysis, the report addresses systemic gaps from training to accountability.

Recommendations for action include a strategy for training at all levels, including measures to ensure that all employed ministerial staff will have some training. A code of conduct is recommended to articulate common expectations about respectful behavior within our complex set of relationships. Recommended measures to improve our response to abuse include greater recognition of the harm done through emotional and verbal abuse, improved vigilance to prevent repeat occurrences, reducing the use of nondisclosure agreements, incorporating more restorative practices, and improved monitoring and reporting for greater accountability.

Outline of Report

- I. Introduction and mandate
- II. Biblical foundation and pastoral theology
 - A. *Learning from Scripture*
 - B. *Implications of Jesus' model for pastoral practice*
- III. Understanding abuse of power
- IV. Understanding abuse of power within the CRC
 - A. *Evidence and indicators of patterns of abuse of power within the CRC*
 - B. *Understanding cultural factors that relate to abuse of power in the CRC*
 - C. *Understanding abuse of power and cultural diversity within the CRC*
- V. Preventing and responding to abuse of power
- VI. Measures to strengthen prevention of abuse of power
 - A. *Strengthening prevention through training for pastors*

- B. *Strengthening prevention through a code of conduct/code of ethics*
 - C. *Strengthening prevention of abuse of power within the CRCNA offices*
 - D. *Strengthening prevention through the screening process for appointment to leadership positions in the CRCNA*
 - E. *Strengthening prevention through training for officebearers and leaders in classes and local churches*
- VII. Measures to strengthen responses to abuse of power
- A. *Strengthening response to abuse of power through Safe Church Ministry*
 - B. *Strengthening response to abuse of power by ending secrecy in nondisclosure agreements*
 - C. *Strengthening response to abuse of power through funds for counseling survivors*
 - D. *Strengthening response to abuse through culturally appropriate resources for culturally diverse churches*
 - E. *Strengthening response to abuse of power through increased accountability*
- VIII. Creating a culture that does not enable or tolerate abuse of power
- IX. Implementation
- X. Recommendations
- Addendum: Budget Implications of Addressing the Abuse of Power Committee Recommendations

I. Introduction and mandate

Abuse of power can happen in all social, cultural, and religious groups. The damaging impacts of abuse within the CRC were drawn again to the attention of synod in 2018. Pastoral concern to prevent harm and restore broken relationships motivated the establishment of this committee and our work to prepare the following report.

At the recommendation of its Advisory Committee 4, Congregational Services I, in response to an overture to “address patterns of abuse of power,” Synod 2018 instructed the Council of Delegates, in consultation with the executive director,

to appoint a small team to bring recommendations through the Council of Delegates to Synod 2019 regarding how the CRCNA can best address patterns of abuse of power at all levels of the denomination.

Grounds:

1. It is necessary for us to continue to examine and update how best to protect all people against abuse, including the abuse of power, especially at the local level.
2. Requiring the appointed team to report in 2019 does not delay action unnecessarily long.
3. The appointed team should find new measures that will extend the actions of previous synods in protecting persons who are vulnerable.
4. Overture 2, along with the work now begun by Pacific Northwest and other classes, should be able to provide the appointed team a helpful start for their consideration (i.e., requiring training of all pastors in the area of awareness of abuse of power).
5. We are not equipped as an advisory committee, nor as delegates on the floor of synod, to discern the best way forward regarding Church Order or steps that might be possible or effective.

(Acts of Synod 2018, pp. 523-24)

The mandate adopted by the Council of Delegates for an ad hoc team reporting to the COD is as follows:

To provide suggested goals and methods for the CRCNA to address patterns of abuse of power at all levels of the denomination. In developing the suggested goals and methods, the ad hoc team shall consider the grounds synod provided with the instruction.

Synod 2018 and our committee accepted the basic description of the issue of abuse of power in Overture 2 to Synod 2018 (see crcna.org/synodresources or *Agenda for Synod 2018*, pp. 282-307). In its work our committee focused on strategies and specific measures that could be implemented by synod to prevent abuse of power and improve the response to those who suffer harm as a result of abuse of power. As well as the grounds provided by Synod 2018, the committee offers to Synod 2019 a reflection on the biblical foundations for both prevention and pastoral response to abuse.

Synod 2018 explicitly asked the committee to build on and not repeat previous reports and recommendations, including recommendations adopted by Synods 2010, 2014, and 2016. The committee reviewed those reports, affirmed them, and recommends them to the churches for implementation. We then focused attention on gaps in current policies and on practical recommendations to advance implementation. The committee also carefully considered the intent of synod to include all forms of abuse of power, which is broader in scope than the safe church issues that prompted the earlier reports. This report responds to the repeated call during Synod 2018 to also address the deeper factors that contribute to incidents of abuse and that cause harm to members of the body of Christ within the CRC.

II. Biblical foundation and pastoral approach

A. *Learning from Scripture*

If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death— even death on a cross!

(Phil. 2:1-8)

The word of the LORD came to me: “Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel; prophesy and say to them: ‘this is what the Sovereign LORD says: Woe to you shepherds of Israel who only take care of yourselves! Should not shepherds take care of the flock? You eat the curds, clothe yourselves with the wool and slaughter the choice animals, but you do not take care of the flock. You have not strengthened the weak or healed the sick or bound up the injured. You have not brought back the strays or searched for the lost. You have ruled them harshly and brutally. So they were scattered because there was no shepherd, and when they were scattered they became food for all the wild animals.

(Ezek. 34:1-5)

The Scriptures are not silent about abuse of power and its destructive impacts. King David's manipulation of events for a selfish sexual encounter with Bathsheba and its consequences are described in detail (2 Sam. 11-12). The Lord, speaking through Ezekiel, confronted the shepherds of Israel about the damage done by their abuse of power (Ezek. 34). These are just two examples of damage done to the abused and consequences for the abuser. In the first case, David was disciplined; in the second, the Lord says the shepherds of Israel will be held accountable and removed from their positions.

In contrast to these stories, Jesus' ministry is a positive model for exercising power. The full power of God is available to him; but instead of manipulating events for his own benefit, Jesus uses power to bring life for others—for individuals and for the world. In Philippians 2, Paul describes how Jesus exercised power. He did not use power to take control of the people he was sent to love and redeem. In a very profound way Jesus demonstrated God's use of power by becoming human like us in order to serve us. The life of Jesus is an example of love and power—but not love of power. The love of power destroys people and communities. The power of love builds and restores people and communities.

Power, understood as relational human capital, can be used to benefit the possessor or do for others what they cannot do for themselves or might have difficulty doing by themselves. Jesus did for us what we could not do for ourselves. In doing so, Jesus serves as a model for our use of power. Our use of power can also be life giving, life limiting, or death dealing. The biblical witness is clear in its intent for the use of power: it should be used in service to the other and not for "selfish ambition or vain conceit" (Phil. 2:3). Power is most safely employed when, in humility, we value others above ourselves. The ministry of Jesus includes many stories in which Jesus shows restraint in using his legitimate authority to judge or condemn others; instead Jesus uses his power to restore life to others.

Jesus' model of using power for restoration is remarkably different from what was modeled by the religious leaders around him. The restoration that abuse survivors desire was missing in the approach taken by the religious leaders, but it was found in the way Jesus used power to restore dignity and honor. Survivors have often found the church's leadership and its structures as unsupportive and thus causing further harm. Unfortunately those who disclose abuse often experience the negative use of power to bring a person down rather than the positive use of power to be understood and find safety and restoration.

Power must be propelled by the Christian love ethic. Using personal and communal power to serve the other (the most vulnerable or the "least of these" among us) is consistent with and demonstrates the love of God. The synoptic witnesses are clear that our love of God is inseparably connected to the way we treat other people.¹ Jesus works against the established power of the religious rulers and instead loves people in such a way that their dignity is restored and they can return to a rightful place in the community.

B. Implications of Jesus' model for pastoral practice

Misused power has the ability to steal, hurt, and destroy. Instead of a life of faith lived out in gratitude, a survivor is thrust into a life of guilt and shame. As a result, a survivor naturally questions the reality of grace. Marian Lovelace captures the spiritual impacts of abuse in the church:

¹ See Matthew 22:35-40; Mark 12:28-34.

You stole my unquestioned belief in my Heavenly Father's love;
 You stole the preciousness of solitude in God's presence.
 You stole the joy of coming together to share Eucharist
 You stole my reverence for the deep meaning of a church family.
 You stole my ability to be quiet and hear God's voice.
 You stole my belief in the phrase "God answers prayers."
 You stole the joy I felt in calling myself "Christian."²

The experience of survivors is a starting point for ministry. Care for people whose spiritual well-being, lives, and bodies have been broken by abuse of power needs to be at the center of discussions about church polity, the theology of abuse, and local church programs. If the harm done is minimized, abstract policy statements may appear godly and reflect the letter of the law but fail to live out the spirit of the law and deny the power of God to transform lives.³ If abuse occurs within the church, the Christian response should include taking responsibility to recognize the abuse, hold the perpetrator(s) and enabler(s) of abuse accountable, and use the appropriate authorities and resources within and outside of the church to begin the process of healing and restoration. All abuse within the church, whether it is physical, sexual, emotional, or verbal abuse, is also spiritual abuse and has spiritual impacts for the church as the family of God. This also needs to be considered in a Christian response.

To deny our power at all levels of the church is to live in an illusion, and it is sinful. Denying one's power reflects an attempt to abdicate one's responsibility to God and neighbor. We are called to use power to exercise grace; consider the effects of the abuse of power on individuals, congregations, and the denomination; and practice restoration. Each member plays a part in providing safety and recovery within the institutional church.

The Christian Reformed Church could be a positive public witness in our current society, with the focus on #MeToo and #ChurchToo, by following Jesus' model for using power in life-giving and faith-affirming ways. As a committee, we hope that the recommendations in this report will encourage the church to be a bearer of shalom. With Christ as our model, we minister to all members of the church, move toward the practical outcomes of his teaching, and anticipate its integration at all levels within the CRC.

III. Understanding abuse of power

The term *abuse of power* is often defined as "misusing power to harm another person, or using power and influence for personal gain at the expense of another person." This captures the core in a wide range of types of abuse, from bullying and harassment to emotional abuse, physical abuse, and sexual assault. It focuses attention on the misuse of a position, authority, or influence to take advantage of, manipulate, or control another person. In the church context, abuse of power draws attention to the responsibility of those with power to be mindful of the dynamics of relationships in which the other party has less power and may be vulnerable to undue influence or manipulation.

² Poem titled "Stolen, Not Lost" by Marian Lovelace from *Responding to Clergy Misconduct: A Handbook by Marie Fortune* (Seattle, Wash.: Faith Trust Institute, 2009).

³ See 2 Corinthians 3:4-6; 2 Timothy 3:1-5.

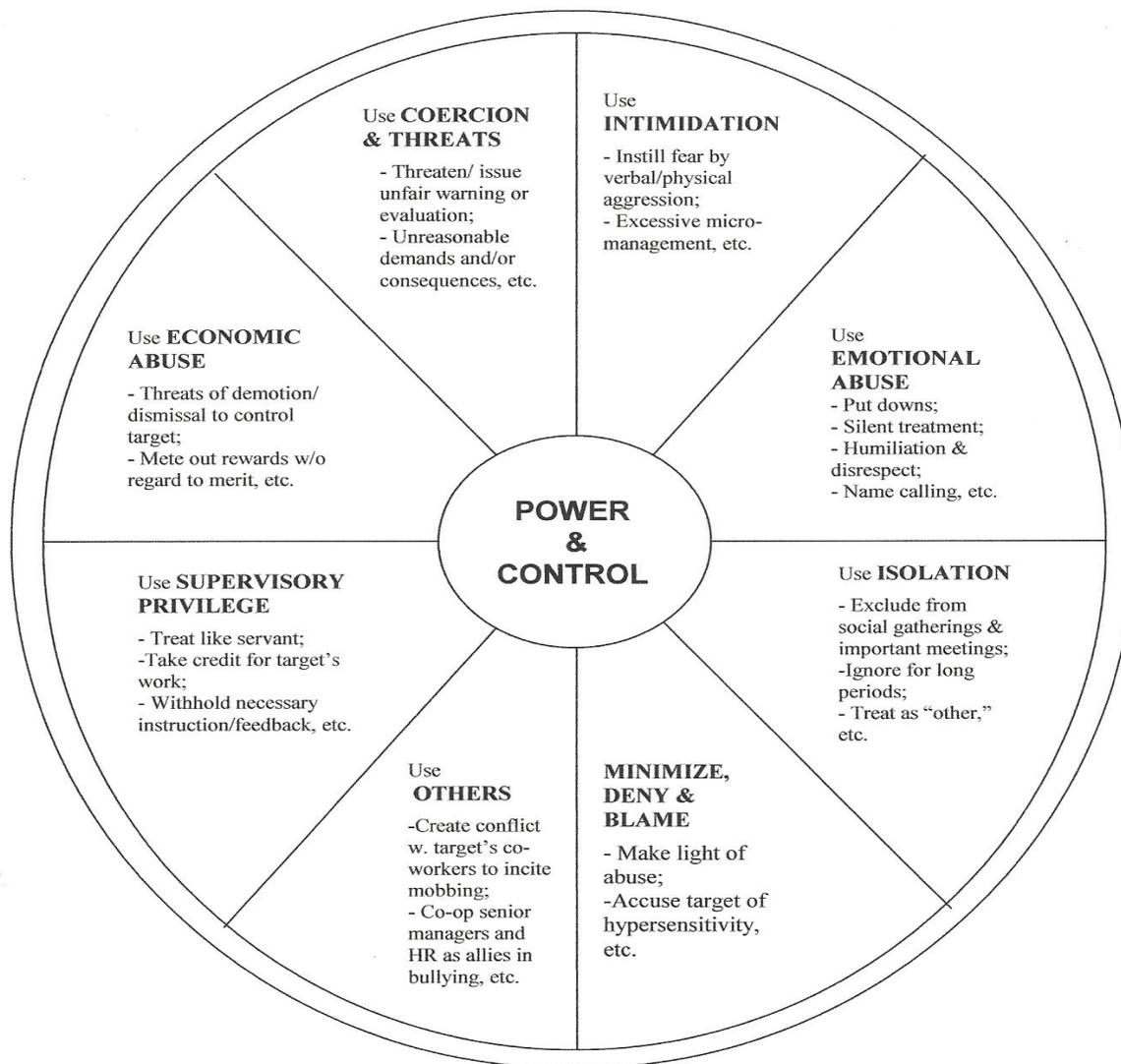
Power can be used positively or negatively as articulated by Andy Crouch in his highly regarded book *Playing God: Redeeming the Gift of Power*. This is also reflected in the following typology developed by Rollo May:

- *Exploitative* power dominates by force and coercion.
- *Manipulative* power controls by more subtle and covert psychological means.
- *Competitive* power is ambiguous since it can be used constructively where parties are relatively equal but is destructive where they are unequal (as in most pastoral relationships).
- *Nutritive* power sustains and empowers.
- *Integrative* power takes the freedom of others seriously and seeks to harness the other person's (potential) strengths.⁴

To better understand the relationship between different forms of abuse of power, it is helpful to use a tool such as the Power and Control Wheel, which has been adapted for different contexts. Power, depicted at the center of the wheel, is present in all relationships. The wheel illustrates various behaviors that can be unconsciously or consciously used by those with power to gain unfair advantage or to harm others. The more these behaviors are evident in a relationship, the greater the risk for abuse and potential violence.

⁴ See Andy Crouch, *Playing God: Redeeming the Gift of Power* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, c. 2013). The typology of Rollo May, from his book *Power and Innocence: A Search for the Sources of Power* (1972) is used by Kat Litchfield to analyze power dynamics in *Tend My Flock: Sustaining Good Pastoral Care* (London: Canterbury Press, c. 2006), pp. 36-42.

WORKPLACE POWER AND CONTROL WHEEL*



* This graphic was adapted by Patricia G. Barnes (<http://abusergoestowork.com>) from the Duluth Model Power and Control Wheel, a tool created 30 years ago by domestic violence advocates to help explain the phenomenon of domestic violence. See: <http://www.theduluthmodel.org/wheelgallery.php>

IV. Understanding abuse of power within the CRC

The reality of abuse of power within the CRC community is recognized. During deliberations at Synod 2018 delegates were asked to raise their hands if they had personal knowledge of sexual abuse, one form of abuse of power. A large majority raised hands. Whenever abuse is discussed at synod, many delegates speak from painful knowledge of cases within their experience. In 2010 synodical delegates engaged in a time of repentance for the

collective failure to respond adequately to cases of physical and sexual abuse in our denomination.

A. *Evidence and indicators of patterns of abuse of power within the CRC*

In 1989 a survey and study of abuse within the CRC concluded that the prevalence of abuse within the CRC is similar to its prevalence in society. Twenty-eight percent of respondents reported experiencing at least one of the three forms of abuse considered in the survey: 12 percent reported physical abuse; 13 percent, sexual abuse, and 19 percent, emotional abuse. Reported cases by gender indicated women victims accounted for 85 percent of sexual abuse, 78 percent of emotional abuse, and 77 percent of physical abuse. The majority of physical and emotional abusers were family members; that was not true of reported sexual abusers. While this study named *abuse of power* as a central element of all forms of abuse, it did not use that terminology in the survey.⁵

While the existence of cases of abuse of power is widely recognized, accurate data about the patterns of abuse does not exist. Most incidents of abuse of power are not officially reported. Many are dealt with at the local level, and records are not kept. Reported incidents are not tracked in any systemic way. There is no sharing of data, central recordkeeping, or analysis of incidents for patterns or trends. The committee discerned patterns of abuse through careful listening and confirming common experiences in different places and parts of the CRC.

There are indications of a wide range of types of abuse. The Office of Pastor Church Resources, for example, reports an increase in requests for advice and workshops to deal with bullying and emotional abuse. Cyberbullying and personal attacks through social media are increasing within the CRC, as well as in society. Abuse of office, sexual misconduct, and “ungodly conduct”—the generic term in the Church Order—are found as the reasons for removal of pastors, other officebearers, and hired staff from their positions each year, but more specific records are not kept. A repeated complaint from churches is that they find out about previous patterns of abuse by a pastor only after a repeat incident, because there are no notations on personnel records and churches do not share that information when a pastor is called to a different church. There have been legal actions against individual CRC churches and classes for failure to adequately respond to cases of abuse. Records are not kept, and there are no available statistics or analyses of these cases. The committee notes that reporting and learning from analysis are important for healing within churches and for effective prevention.

Patterns that warrant more attention also emerge from the experience of Safe Church Ministry. The Safe Church Ministry office responds to enquiries about a wide range of abuse issues. However, the approved protocol for responding to abuse, the Advisory Panel Process, is limited to allegations of physical or sexual abuse against a church leader. Data provided by the Safe Church Ministry office over the past three years indicate an increase in significant incidents of physical, sexual, and emotional abuse: 42 situations in 2016, 46 in 2017, and 76 in 2018. The incidents range from inappropriate contact and harassment to sexual abuse by a pastor. A majority of enquiries relate to current incidents, while a few seek help for the impacts of past experiences. In 2017 three classes used the Advisory Panel Process to respond to allegations of sexual abuse by church leaders, and each of them resulted in discipline of a pastor.

⁵ Committee to Study Physical, Emotional, and Sexual Abuse (Report 30), *Agenda for Synod 1992*, pp. 313-385 (available at calvin.edu/library/database/crcnasynod/1992agendaacts.pdf).

The Safe Church Ministry office responds to calls with advice, but it does not have a mandate to follow-up and does not have records of whether further action was taken. This is true even in cases that might be considered violations of the law if they were reported to the police. In cases of child abuse, callers are informed of mandatory reporting requirements. It is important to respect the agency of the complainant to report or not report an incident, but it is also important for the church to identify patterns of abuse early in order to effectively respond and prevent additional harm within the community.

An overview of enquiries to Safe Church Ministry reveals patterns that are commonly identified in available research on abuse within churches:

- denial and minimization of the seriousness of what was done
- silencing the victim in order to protect the reputation of the leader or church
- not officially reporting incidents, including ones that might be considered assault or sexual assault under current laws
- leaving the church because of failure to respond when abuse was named

B. Understanding cultural factors that relate to abuse of power in the CRC

Abuse of power is a relationship issue. Relationships within the CRC warrant particular care because many of them cross the boundaries of different kinds of relationships: friends, birth families, extended families, close-knit church families, officebearer to member relationships, pastor to member relationships, pastor to governing body relationships, and professional relationships such as counselling and pastoral care. Church councils were identified in the 2010 Abuse Task Force report as the critical link for effective action. They find themselves in tension between supporting the pastor, depending on the pastor's leadership, and having to call the same pastor to account in complicated and sensitive situations. Pastors need to differentiate and establish boundaries to manage multiple roles. Church councils and congregations need to recognize the many different layers of the pastor's role and support them in setting boundaries.

The CRC places strong value on loyalty to family and church and on honoring and following leaders and authority figures. High priority is given to defending the reputation of "our church," with a tendency to suppress individual members who bring forward uncomfortable evidence that could threaten that reputation. Trust and reluctance to question leaders with charisma is common in all churches and is identified in the literature on abuse prevention in churches. It is difficult to call popular leaders to account, and group-think in close cultures and council rooms tends to rally behind leaders, leaving individuals who find the courage to disclose abuse of power easily marginalized. Stories indicate a pattern of leaving the church rather than speaking up. The committee also heard that "spiritual" and pious language are frequently used to manipulate others in cases of abuse of power within the church.

Pastors and other ministry personnel can also be vulnerable to abuse of power, particularly in contexts where churches are under stress and individual lay leaders assume control to save "their church." Abuse of power by lay leaders puts pastors in vulnerable positions under our current systems of governance. The committee also heard about experiences of abuse of power by pastors from other pastors. The contexts include internships, senior pastor/associate pastor relations, and dynamics between pastors at classis or synod. Harm can be done when the line between appropriate exercise of authority and abuse of power is crossed. This speaks to the importance of training and access to avenues to address issues early with restorative practices.

The committee also heard of cases in which staff within the CRCNA office have been subjected to harassment, name-calling, and attacks on their personal and spiritual integrity by elders from individual churches. The behavior goes beyond disagreements over specific actions or policies to harmful personal attacks. These cases present complexities in relation to our governing structures, especially in the context of the current focus on being responsive to local churches.

Resolving differences and related power struggles can be challenging in a culture that puts a high premium on right beliefs and direct links between beliefs and personal life. Conformity is valued, and tolerance for diversity in the way members understand their God-given callings is not high. The CRC's theological commitment to restorative justice as the way to acknowledge harm done to others and repair broken relationships has not permeated its culture.

These cultural factors can contribute to situations in which people enable abuse of power but concurrently want to deny that it happens in "our church." Close communities like the CRC require intentional checks and balances within all levels of governance in order to effectively prevent and respond to abuse of power. The recommendations of this committee are designed to strengthen those checks and balances.

C. Understanding abuse of power and cultural diversity within the CRC

Addressing abuse of power in institutions that want to respect cultural diversity requires a nuanced understanding of power in the context of diversity. Definitions that originate in the dominant culture can be perceived as lacking respect for cultural expressions of piety in another culture. Forcing a dominant cultural understanding on another culture can be received as another form of "abuse of power." As Christians committed to covenant relations, this issue requires that we discern together how best to walk with God in our personal and church lives and how to publicly witness to God's vision for healthy relationships within and between all cultures. That means careful attention and nuance in multicultural settings.

The committee recognized that including persons from diverse backgrounds in the "small group" required by our mandate would be important but could never be adequate on its own, might be perceived as tokenism, and could leave out important voices. To be more effective, the committee decided to meet with various identified subgroups within the CRC to discuss how abuse of power is understood within each community and what would be effective strategies to prevent and respond to it.

The short time frame allowed for our work made this a challenge. Some members of the committee listened to concerns voiced by some members of CRC churches that work in Korean, Chinese, Latino, African-American, and Indigenous communities. While more discussion and more voices need to be heard, some common patterns were identified, and some suggestions are included for moving forward.

The committee heard some common patterns in the experiences shared:

- Abuse is hidden because of reluctance to talk about it within the church.
- Members who are experiencing abuse do not know where to get help.
- High respect and deference to charismatic leaders, authority figures, and elders silences those with less power.
- Protecting the church and its reputation gets priority over the needs of persons who have been abused.

The committee heard that in some cultural contexts older women serve as “go-to” listeners and advisers for those who experience abuse, but they have limited institutional power to effect change. In other contexts, such as Indigenous churches, the long history of abuse of power, often by those who also brought the gospel message, has left whole communities feeling powerless. Leaders and parents, suffering the impacts of abuse themselves, struggle with limited resources to address continuing patterns of abusive relationships.

In some contexts, such as in Chinese and Korean churches, different life experiences by immigrant parents and children born in North America contribute to misunderstandings that can lead to abuse of power. In emerging culturally diverse churches, as well as in older churches, there are incidents of powerful lay members both taking advantage of their positions within the church and engaging in abusive treatment of pastors. In each cultural context boundaries between what is acceptable behavior and what is disrespectful behavior need to be discussed and clarified because they change over time.

1. Culturally diverse churches and abuse of institutional power

In addition, the committee heard that some culturally diverse churches within the CRC experience a different kind of abuse of power that could be described as abuse of institutional power. Established churches and leaders from the dominant culture who “know how things are done around here” have power within our system of governance that can do harm to persons from minority cultures who are struggling to find their place within the CRC. The committee heard about situations where those who know the Church Order by heart use it as a weapon to dismiss, marginalize, or silence concerns being raised by minority members and leaders who do not know the Church Order. This leaves them feeling powerless and expected to conform to the “way it has always been done.”

It was also noted that positions of influence within the CRC, such as those of regional pastors and church visitors, are not often held by young people, women, or members of minority cultures whose experience might make them alert to abuse of institutional power. When minority members are part of “emerging churches,” the potential for abuse of power is heightened because they have no identified place within the structures that have significant power to determine their future. The business and “good order” motifs in CRC culture can squash those who are struggling when it is used to “fix” problems without a deep understanding of the context.

2. Suggestions for addressing abuse of power within different cultural contexts

The committee heard that it is a good time to address abuse of power within culturally diverse communities. Opening up the subject to foster discussion and increased transparency was perceived as positive, particularly for younger members of these communities. Creating a culture that actively engages young people in the life of the church is a shared goal for all churches in the CRC; preventing abuse—one element of that culture—is a common goal, but will require training methods that fit each cultural context.

There was positive response to the suggestion of establishing mechanisms that have some distance from established lines of authority, with a mandate to hear concerns about possible abuse of power and to intervene early to prevent situations’ being entrenched and more destructive within close communities.

At the level of the local church, effective strategies will include the following:

- intentional steps to talk about abuse of power, reject secrecy, and promote transparency
- using specific contextual stories, without names, to show that abuse of power is real and to foster discussion
- helping local churches to inform their members and to create local policies they can use easily
- inclusion of minority voices in the development of resources and response teams

At the level of classis and the denomination, effective strategies will include the following:

- training that includes examples from specific cultural contexts and opportunities for continuing education and awareness for all church leaders within classes
- training leaders from the dominant culture to be aware of the dynamics of cultural power before they engage with church communities that have a different culture
- finding practical solutions to the “weaponization of the Church Order” within the CRC
- establishing a “place to go” to get help early to resolve situations that suggest abuse of power and to prevent them from becoming more destructive within the community
- appointing more young people, women, and minority leaders as regional pastors and church visitors with training to be alert to and assist early in situations that include concerns about abuse of power. Perhaps positions could be designated to cross the typical geographic boundaries in order to respond more effectively to equally important factors such as cultural difference, gender issues, and generational divides.

Additional discussions within culturally diverse church communities will be held to further inform this work so that the CRC can include culturally sensitive strategies in the implementation phase.

V. Preventing and responding to abuse of power

The serious impact of abuse of power warrants more effective action to prevent it and to respond appropriately when it occurs. That was articulated in Overture 2 and accepted by Synod 2018. It was noted that many of the actions recommended by Synod 2010 and reinforced by Synods 2014 and 2016 have not been implemented. Year after year, synod has passed recommendations for classes and churches to take identified actions to prevent abuse, such as establishing safe church teams. Synod 2018 took note of the fact that many churches still do not have in place the basic tools for preventing and responding to abuse.

There has been some progress. Early results of a *Yearbook* survey for 2019 suggest modest improvement. At this time 760 churches have responded, out of a total 1062 churches who received the survey. Out of the 760 respondents,

- 86 percent have a written safe church or abuse prevention policy.
- 36 percent have protocols in place for responding to church leader misconduct.
- 28 percent have a safe church team or committee.

- 16 percent require training for pastors, elders, and deacons regarding the use and potential abuse of power associated with their position.
- 7 percent use a prevention program with children and youth (Safe Church recommends *Circle of Grace*).

Reports from classes indicate that, with 48 classes reporting, 12 have an active safe church team and 28 are working toward an active team. Eight classes did not answer the question; five provided a name of a contact who provides leadership for safe church within the classis.

So, while the issue is being addressed to varying degrees in some CRC churches, many still do not have training, policies, or protocols in place for addressing abuse of power. The committee reviewed previous decisions, explored reasons for lack of implementation, and identified gaps for a more systemic approach that would be more effective.

The implications of our covenantal, locally based form of governance were considered in order to present practical options for action. Failures to take abuse seriously by one part of the church body affect other parts. The committee heard about the following pattern, for example: Church X puts a focused effort into preventing and responding to abuse. They call a new pastor, and only later do they learn about a history of abuse that was not part of the record when the pastor was called. This amounts to breaking covenant between churches as much as does holding beliefs that are not consistent with CRC creeds, but there is no accountability for such violations of covenantal relationship within the CRC community.

Persons who have experienced abuse of power within the CRC and have been silenced and shunned legitimately feel their covenant relationship with the CRC was broken when they disclosed the abuse. The committee heard stories of people leaving the CRC because of failures to handle abuse cases well, including significant numbers in individual churches in some cases, but there is no tracking of that pattern.

The committee heard evidence of victims being re-victimized or sidelined as appeals of their cases were processed by the Judicial Code Committee and synod as matters between pastors and classes, while the victims were talked about but their voices were no longer heard. This practice breaks the covenant relationship between an individual and the CRC at a critical point when a person should be able to count on all levels of the CRC for support and healing. It also violates the basic principles of restorative justice, which the CRC has officially endorsed.

All of these considerations weighed on the committee. This led to a focus on strategic actions that synod and the CRCNA can take within their spheres of influence to exercise due diligence in prevention, in dealing with allegations of abuse, and in responding to those who have been affected. The recommendations below are designed to strengthen policies and mechanisms that can provide more checks and balances within our covenantal community to prevent abuse to the best of our ability and to respond more effectively when it does happen.

VI. Measures to strengthen prevention of abuse of power

Given the serious harm done when power is abused, the first priority is to take all feasible measures to prevent abuse of power. This includes creating conditions that foster respectful relationships, with special attention to the dynamics of relationships between those with power by virtue of position or influence and those who are vulnerable to being unduly influenced by

those in positions of power. The goal is to create a culture that does not tolerate abuse of power or enable it through actions or failures to act.

A growing body of research on good practices in prevention of abuse within churches highlights the following components:

- broad-based awareness
- training of leaders
- using codes of conduct for accountability
- strong, independent processes for dealing with complaints

The CRC is making significant progress in two of these areas: broad-based awareness and an advisory panel process for dealing with complaints of physical and sexual abuse. The committee, in keeping with the directions of synod, focused attention on two big gaps in the CRC: the training of leaders and a code of conduct that provides a clear basis for enhanced accountability. The committee reviewed what is presently done with regard to training, screening, and other preventive strategies and makes the following recommendations.

A. Strengthening prevention through training for pastors

Seminaries in general deal with the issue of abuse of power in two ways. First, many seminaries have written policies on abuse of power and screen seminary students before admission. Policies also provide protocols for reporting when abuse occurs within the seminary. Second, some seminaries offer courses in which one of the objectives is learning to deal with abuse of power issues. This is typically covered in courses on pastoral care, spiritual formation, or ethics.

Calvin Theological Seminary informed the committee that psychological testing of applicants is extensive and that topics related to abuse of power are covered in various courses, such as Bible study, pastoral theology, systematic theology, and leadership in ministry. Training continues through the Vocational Formation program and by way of case studies in the Capstone course. Mandatory reporting is included in the pastoral care class; CRC Church Order is taught in the church polity class; and voluntary town halls are hosted with Safe Church Ministry staff.

However, not all CRC ministers attend Calvin Theological Seminary; training varies in other seminaries; and some pastors do not attend seminary. So it is not simple to discern what training pastors have. Therefore an effective training program for pastors in the CRC will need to take into account the various paths into ministry. There are at least five ways to enter ministry in the CRC:

1. Pastors are ordained after graduation from Calvin Theological Seminary and obtain credentials through a process managed by the CRCNA.
2. Commissioned pastors are called by a particular church for specific ministries. They are encouraged to take a certification program at Calvin Theological Seminary.
3. The Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy (EPMC), for persons seeking ordination who are graduates of seminaries other than Calvin Theological Seminary, requires one semester at the seminary to fulfill candidacy requirements.

4. Under Article 8 of the Church Order, a pastor who is ordained in another denomination (besides the RCA) may be examined and ordained in the CRC through a *colloquium doctum* at the classis level.
5. Under Article 7 of the Church Order, persons with extra special gifts and a calling for ministry can be examined and ordained through a process within their classis.

Currently there is no requirement for training to understand power dynamics and to respond to abuse of power that would apply to all paths into ministry within the CRCNA. The committee identified the following options to ensure that all pastors receive training:

1. Inclusion in the curriculum of Calvin Theological Seminary and in the required class on church polity in the EPMC program.
2. Required training at the level of classis for commissioned pastors and ordained pastors who come into the CRC through Articles 7 and 8.

Recommendation 1 – Training for pastors

That synod mandate the Council of Delegates to form a committee to develop a training program on abuse of power. The committee shall include members from the offices of Candidacy, Pastor Church Resources, Safe Church Ministry, Calvin Theological Seminary, and Calvin College (because of available expertise). The training program shall

- be a requirement for all persons entering vocational ministry in the CRC.
- focus on dynamics of power within the variety of pastoral relationships, boundaries, tools for positive use of power and influence, and tools for preventing harmful use of power and influence.
- be widely available and presented as enabling effective ministry (not as an impediment to entering ministry).
- take into account the cultural diversity within CRC churches.

B. Strengthening prevention through a code of conduct/code of ethics

Codes of conduct are used by many professional groups (i.e., doctors, psychologists, social workers, lawyers, and teachers) to provide a guideline or standard for expected behavior in the exercise of their profession. Various denominations also have either a ministerial code of conduct or code of ethics.

A code of conduct provides clarity about the attitudes and behaviors that parishioners can expect from a pastor or from ministry staff in the practice of ministry. The behaviors and ethical practices described in the code are essential for healthy and safe ministry, with significant implications for the recipients of ministry, those in ministry roles, and the church. The code provides guidance for both the parishioner and the pastor/ministry staff, thereby encouraging accountability. A code of conduct is different from the Covenant for Officebearers, which describes beliefs and doctrine but does not include descriptions of behavior.

The Bible is the ultimate guide for Christian living, but it does not provide specific guidance for day-to-day decision making in ministry. Church Order Article 83 provides general guidance by calling for special discipline of officebearers who are “guilty of neglect or abuse of office, or in any way seriously deviate from sound doctrine and godly conduct.” A code of conduct would

supplement the Church Order by providing more specific guidance and a common standard of expectations for ministry staff, councils responsible for their supervision, and recipients of ministry within the CRC.

A code of conduct can also provide guidance on aspects of contemporary ministry that were not envisioned in biblical times. For example, the handling of information is becoming more important in all walks of life; the church is no exception. Pastors are often confidants, and they are encouraged to guard confidences carefully.

A code of conduct is especially helpful when it is difficult to determine right from wrong or when the boundaries within relationships are not clear or overlap. For example, a pastor frequently has dual roles within a church, such as pastor, friend, and confidant. The ministry role of a pastor can be blurred if a pastor is distracted by a friendship role. Codes articulate boundaries of behavior as well as expectations for behavior. They provide clear markers as to behavior that is prohibited and behavior that is expected.

Recommendation 2 – Code of conduct/code of ethics

That synod mandate the committee appointed by action in Recommendation 1 to draft a code of conduct for all employed ministry staff within the CRC. The draft code of conduct will be presented to Synod 2020 for approval. The code of conduct shall be

- signed by all ministry personnel who are employed by the CRCNA, local churches, and classes.
- reviewed annually, as part of annual evaluations.
- included in the Supplement to the Church Order, with links to relevant Church Order articles.

C. *Strengthening prevention of abuse of power within the CRCNA offices*

The committee reviewed the policies, training, reporting, accountability, and dispute resolution processes that apply to employees of the CRCNA. The CRCNA policies prohibit a wide range of abusive behaviors and provide access to a complaint process, appeal process, and dispute resolution process. While the committee heard anecdotal stories, it did not have time for a thorough review of the outcomes of CRCNA practices to assess their effectiveness.

Two areas were identified for possible improvement:

1. Training and continuing education about the dynamics of power.
2. Naming someone in an ombudsman-type role with a primary mandate to support a complainant through established processes, with no conflict of interest in other roles or perceived bias toward protecting the reputation of the CRCNA.

Recommendation 3 – Preventing abuse of power in the CRCNA

That synod mandate the Council of Delegates to review the adequacy of the training provided to CRCNA staff, the adequacy of the provisions for support to a complainant, and mechanisms to avoid potential conflicts of interest in the process for dealing with complaints. A review should be informed by careful listening to persons who found the processes helpful and persons who did not.

D. Strengthening prevention through the screening process for appointment to leadership positions in the CRCNA

The committee made enquiries regarding CRCNA practice in screening candidates for senior leadership positions with regard to awareness of dynamics of power, awareness of boundaries in unequal power situations, and awareness of responsibilities to create a culture that does not tolerate any form of abuse. During the course of our work, the CRCNA was able to include these matters in a review of current practice and in a call for proposals that was already under way. The CRCNA has now retained a consulting service that will include awareness of power dynamics and prevention of abuse in testing and interview processes for leadership candidates.

E. Strengthening prevention through training for officebearers and leaders in classes and local churches

The committee benefited from a parallel initiative under way in Classis Pacific Northwest to develop an effective strategy to prevent abuse of power at the classical level. Synod 2010 adopted recommendations for training at the local church level, but these have not been implemented widely. To encourage implementation, the committee considered a suggestion that questions related to Safe Church Ministry and training on abuse of power should be just as important as other questions that are part of the process for reviewing the credentials of churches within a classis. Such questions might include the following:

1. Does your church have a current safe church policy? If so, what is the date of the latest review of the policy?
2. What is the name of the church representative on the classis safe church team?
3. Have officebearers received training to prevent abuse of power in the exercise of their duties?

If churches cannot provide this information when they come to classis, they can be offered support to develop a policy, receive training, and report to the classical interim committee on their progress. This is a practical way in which classes can encourage the most basic elements of abuse prevention in all churches.

The committee noted that Classis Pacific Northwest has adopted a requirement of four hours of training annually for officebearers on issues of abuse, boundaries, ethics, and the impact of pornography. They recommend that pastors pursue an additional four hours per year of training for self and soul care.

With regard to general awareness-raising, the committee affirms recommendations made by previous synods and resources available from Safe Church Ministry and Pastor Church Resources.

Recommendation 4 – Training at classis and local levels

1. That synod encourage all classes to develop a strategy to train officebearers and key church leaders to be alert to power dynamics within the communities they serve and to be equipped to prevent abuse of power. The goal of the strategy is to ensure that all

officebearers receive initial training and refreshment through ongoing educational initiatives. An effective strategy will include the following:

- appropriate training resources
 - reasonable time allocation for training
 - acknowledgment and monitoring of completion of training
2. That synod encourage all classes to monitor implementation of the training strategy and to consider adopting policies to include completion of training and safe church policies in the regular review of credentials or as a requirement for being seated at a classis meeting.
 3. That synod mandate the executive director to develop, in cooperation with Safe Church Ministry, Pastor Church Resources, Calvin College, and others, a resource toolkit for training officebearers and leaders, readily accessible through the CRC website and Faith Alive Christian Resources.

VII. Measures to strengthen responses to abuse of power

“Anyone who may have been victimized by people in power
needs to know that the church of Jesus is their refuge and champion.”
—Pastor John Ortberg ⁶

The committee considered measures to strengthen responses to abuse of power in ways that mutually hold each other accountable within the covenantal body of Christ known as the CRC and lead to healing and to the restoration of broken relationships where possible.

A. *Strengthening response to abuse of power through Safe Church ministry*

The committee considered the need to strengthen current safe church policies and practice in the following areas:

1. Adding emotional abuse to the definition of abuse that guides the advisory panel process, to be more consistent with the inclusive definition that is used in education and preventive strategies.
2. Follow-up on enquiries that involve church leaders, with respect for the choice and agency of the complainant, to help ensure that patterns of abuse are not allowed to continue, with potential risk to others. Evidence shows that persons who have continuing support are more likely to take the step of reporting the abuse. Reporting and accountability are essential elements of an effective strategy.
3. Addition of an ombudsman-like role that would include monitoring all incidents within the CRC to better discern patterns of abuse and considering the potential for conflict of interest when staff are involved with both the claimant and the decision-making body in a situation. The committee noted that questions about perceived conflicts of interest have been raised frequently in the history of Safe Church Ministry.

⁶ Ortberg, John. Blog titled “Observations on the *Chicago Tribune* article re: Willow Creek Leadership,” April 2, 2018. Available at johnortberg.com/observations-on-the-chicago-tribune-article-re-willow-creek-leadership/

4. Consideration of the option of calling in outside experts to deal with situations that involve a high potential for conflicts of interest because of the many complex relationships within the close CRC community. There are now a growing number of parachurch agencies with expertise in handling situations involving allegations of abuse; they could provide more impartial discernment without perceptions of being biased in favor of one of the parties.
5. Increasing avenues for survivors of abuse to be part of training, response, and monitoring mechanisms to help ensure that input from those who have suffered abuse is considered.

Most situations that come to the attention of Safe Church Ministry involve a mix of emotional abuse and physical or sexual abuse. Rarely in church circles does physical or sexual abuse occur without significant emotional abuse; in some cases, the emotional abuse is more significant to the claimant than the physical or sexual abuse. It is impossible to separate all abuses into distinct categories. It is not helpful for claimants, when they find the courage to come forward and disclose their story, to find out that only the evidence about physical and sexual abuse will be taken seriously by the church council in making its decision. It is even more devastating when a case is dismissed on grounds that the sexual misconduct was not considered serious enough to warrant discipline, and yet the emotional abuse that caused serious harm to the claimant has no weight in the final decision making.

Further, excluding emotional abuse is inconsistent with the CRC's commitment to restorative justice. Restorative practices do not make artificial divisions between the types of abuse that contributed to the harm done. They start with clarifying the harm done, of all kinds, and then move to address the harm in a holistic way toward restoring broken relationships. One cannot restore broken relationships by treating emotional abuse as less important than physical or sexual abuse in a Christian approach to abuse response.

The exclusion of emotional abuse has been raised a number of times by members involved in the work of Safe Church Ministry, but it has been dismissed on the grounds it could not be defined. Work in abuse response has advanced enough, however, to develop a working definition of emotional abuse for the purposes of use in Safe Church Ministry, especially in restorative practices. Many secular governments have found adequate definitions for including emotional abuse in laws; ongoing exclusion by the CRC would therefore be a poor public witness. Churches should lead in abuse response rather than lag behind the helpful advances of secular approaches.

The committee heard a suggestion that spiritual abuse should also be included in the advisory panel process because it is always involved in abuse that happens within the church family and it does as much damage as physical and sexual abuse. While there are more definitional challenges involved for including this in an advisory panel process, further development of a more comprehensive approach should include spiritual abuse.

Recommendation 5 – Strengthen safe church practices

1. That synod mandate the executive director to oversee the development of appropriate measures for responding effectively to emotional abuse. Such measures will include definition, inclusion in relevant CRC policies, and appropriate responses through restorative practices and the safe church advisory panel process.
2. That synod mandate the executive director to oversee a review of the adequacy of safe church policies for follow-up in reported cases that involve church leaders. Findings and

actions taken by the executive director shall be reported to the Council of Delegates to ensure that the CRCNA is exercising due diligence to prevent repeat occurrences or transfer of abusive leaders to other churches. The review shall consider best practices in church abuse ministry.

3. That synod mandate the Council of Delegates to examine in detail the potential for conflicts of interest in current safe church procedures and to evaluate the need for and benefits of using outside experts to deal with situations that have a high potential for conflicts of interest.

B. *Strengthening response to abuse of power by ending secrecy in nondisclosure agreements*

The role of secrecy in many cases of abuse of power was recognized by Synod 2018. Questions about the use of nondisclosure agreements (NDAs) to settle cases were examined by the committee. The term *nondisclosure agreement* refers to a legal contract between parties that requires the parties not to disclose information covered by the agreement, along with other elements of a settlement. Nondisclosure agreements have been and are used within the CRC, but there is no available record, statistical analysis, or evaluation of their use.

In practice, the confidentiality requirements in NDAs constrain the ability of survivors to process their experiences. Not being allowed to speak about what happened can hinder the healing process. NDAs also create barriers for healing processes between a survivor and the church community because they silence potential agents of reconciliation. NDAs are also critiqued for protecting the reputation of the offender and/or the church while the survivor continues to deal with the impacts. NDAs are sometimes initiated by a claimant or done with full, free, and informed agreement; in many cases, however, claimants feel pressured into them to protect the reputation of the church. If claimants refuse, they may face judgment, accusations of not being willing to forgive, or ostracism as disloyal to the church. In some cases, survivors later regret having signed an NDA, but there is no recourse. There may be cases in which an NDA can avoid a lengthy and damaging adversarial court process; in such situations, the option of restorative justice processes can also be considered.

For the church, NDAs can prevent identification of patterns of abuse and can contribute to repeated offenses or to covering up a culture of abuse. Silencing abuse prevents understanding within the larger church community. Exposure and public accountability are required in order to shift a culture that enables or tolerates abuse of power. Awareness of the negative impacts of NDAs in the church context has grown in recent years. Good practice now suggests reducing or abolishing the use of NDAs as one of the strategies for responding to incidents of abuse.

Recommendation 6 – Policy on nondisclosure agreements

That synod direct the executive director to do the following:

- review the history of the use of nondisclosure agreements within the CRCNA to draw learnings from it, be transparent about its frequency, and contribute to greater public accountability
- develop a policy with criteria for the use of NDAs that limits their use to cases in which it is clearly in the best interests of the victim and the church and not acceptable when solely motivated by protection of the reputation of the church and its leaders. The policy should include a provision for some form of review by an independent party before final signature by the two main parties.

- develop good practices and protocols on the use of NDAs for distribution to classes and councils when faced with situations that might lead to the use of a nondisclosure agreement
- develop a reporting and accountability mechanism to monitor practices going forward

C. Strengthening response to abuse of power through funds for counseling survivors

Synod 2010 recommended that classes establish funds to ensure that survivors of abuse can access counseling as needed. Some classes have established such funds, and some churches have partnerships with counseling agencies that include counseling for survivors of abuse.

Many classes have not taken this action.

Recommendation 7 – Funds for counseling services

1. That synod encourage all classes to take measures to ensure that survivors of abuse within their classis have access to appropriate counseling services.
2. That the annual report of each classis for the CRC *Yearbook* include information about a counseling fund or other arrangements to ensure access to counseling services for abuse survivors.

D. Strengthen response to abuse through culturally appropriate resources for culturally diverse churches

The committee heard that members in culturally diverse churches who are experiencing abuse of power do not know where to get help. Including them in existing programs and measures within the CRC requires transposition of existing resources into the languages used in their communities, with examples that reflect their cultural context, and approaches to learning that fit with their ministries.

Recommendation 8 – Abuse prevention resources for culturally diverse churches

That synod mandate the executive director to give a high priority to providing information about existing policies and mechanisms for abuse prevention and response in forms that use the language, examples, and styles of learning that are culturally appropriate for the Korean, Latino, Chinese, African-American, and Indigenous communities, through Safe Church Ministry and Pastor Church Resources. In each context, the tools shall be developed with input from members of the community to ensure they will be accessible and useful for members of the community.

E. Strengthening response to abuse of power through increased accountability

Exposure of abuse is now widely recognized as a significant element of effective prevention strategies. Reporting and analysis are also important for the healing process within churches and for learning from individual cases to protect others. More victims and families are willing to be named publically in order to ensure that offenders do not re-offend. In the current Canadian and U.S. contexts, minimizing abuse, silencing victims, and ignoring or burying evidence is not only unethical; it is more likely to lead to serious damage to reputation than greater transparency. At the same time the CRC needs to ensure that due process is followed

for all the parties involved. The public demand for greater accountability by all institutions for failure to take adequate measures to prevent or respond to cases of abuse of power is evidence of God working through nonchurch means. It would be wise for the CRCNA to review its current practices with regard to accountability.

Recommendation 9 – Strengthen accountability

That synod mandate the Council of Delegates and executive director to put in place a system of recordkeeping of cases that come to the attention of all levels of church authority, to allow for the analysis of patterns and trends over time, without compromising the confidentiality of individual persons. Collection of data should include some record of responses and outcomes, as well as reporting of incidents.

VIII. Creating a culture that does not enable or tolerate abuse of power

“A culture that silences its members from speaking with each other about suspected abuse is one where abuse will almost always flourish.”

—Basyle Tchividjien, director, GRACE: Godly Response to Abuse in Christian Environments.⁷

Q. What is God’s will for you in the sixth commandment?

A. I am not to belittle, insult, hate, or kill my neighbor—
not by my thoughts, my words, my look or gesture,
and certainly not by actual deeds—
and I am not to be party to this in others;
rather I am to put away all desire for revenge. . . .

—Heidelberg Catechism, Q. and A. 105

The role of church culture in enabling abuse of power is well documented in research on abuse prevention in the church context. Culture refers to an organization’s values and default behaviors, including unspoken and unwritten patterns of acceptance and response to practices.

Research on prevention of bullying and verbal abuse, for example, provides quantitative as well as qualitative evidence of the difference that bystanders can make in the culture within a school, a virtual network, or public space.

Given the close community of the CRC, proactive measures are warranted to develop a culture that does not tolerate abuse of power or enable it. The culture within the CRC was also on the agenda of the CRC’s Task Force Reviewing Structure and Culture. It addressed factors within the culture that were a barrier to collaboration between “silo” ministries and departments, along with recommending major changes in structure and management positions. The challenges of changing culture permeated their annual reports. Their final report recognized that, in the time they had, they were not able to pay adequate attention to broader cultural dynamics within the CRC. Culture shifts are a long-term and complex process.

⁷ Tchividjien, Basyle. “Walls of Silence: Protecting the Institution over the Individual,” article on website of GRACE: Godly Response to Abuse in Christian Environments, netgrace.org/resources/2018/11/11/walls-of-silence-protecting-the-institution-over-the-individual.

It is important to repeatedly reinforce the CRC core value of mutual respect for all persons as equally created and called by God to be agents of reconciliation within God's world, as articulated in *God's Diverse and Unified Family*. Language is an important element that can both positively affect or erode a church culture in relation to abuse of power. In addition, mechanisms and processes can be built into governing systems to draw early attention to patterns of behavior that contribute to abuse of power. With that in mind, the committee makes the following recommendations to begin a longer process of intentional care to create a culture that prevents abuse of power.

Recommendation 10 – Creating a culture to prevent abuse of power

A. That synod affirm the following as core values for the culture within the CRC:

- mutual respect for every person as created by God and equally responsible to respond to God's call to use their gifts for God's mission in the world, including the ongoing work of building God's church⁸
- an understanding of servant leadership that emphasizes mutual submission as a corrective to the hierarchical tendencies within our culture
- mutual accountability through checks and balances built into governing structures

B. That synod affirm the importance of care in the use of language within church assemblies, with attention to the impact of language that harms the ability of others to fully exercise their gifts and calling.

C. That synod refer this report to the Classis Renewal Advisory Group to consider how the role of regional pastors and church visitors might be strengthened to foster a respectful culture and support churches with early assistance in situations that may give rise to concerns about abuse of power.

D. That synod mandate the Council of Delegates to establish a team that would act as a guardian of our commitment to foster a culture characterized by respect for all and mutual service. Consideration should be guided by the following features, which draw on good practices in other sectors of society for preventing and responding to all forms of abuse of power:

- The mandate would include the use of a range of measures designed to allow early intervention in response to complaints, including mediation, conflict resolution, and restorative justice tools.
- The mandate would include concerns about abuse of power that may cross lines between the denomination, classes, and individual churches. The team might serve an "ombudsperson" role within the internal human resources system and for cases that cross jurisdictions, without violating CRC governance of the local church by the local council.
- Position holders outside the "chain of command" within the established organizational and management structure would help to foster confidence because they are "independent" but accountable through reporting to the Council of Delegates and

⁸ See paragraphs 10, 11, 29, and 39 of *Our World Belongs to God*, along with the biblical texts cited with these paragraphs. See also *God's Diverse and Unified Family*, a synodically approved statement, and the Belhar Confession, with associated biblical texts.

through their ability to bring issues to the attention of the Council of Delegates if needed.

- The role of the team would be reviewed after three years for effectiveness, as part of the follow-up to this report.

IX. Implementation

The mandate of the committee established by Synod 2018 is to recommend more specific goals and action steps “to address patterns of abuse of power at all levels of the denomination.” The timeframe of one year is too short to develop all the details for measures such as training programs. Implementation of adopted recommendations is a continuing challenge in the area of abuse prevention. The committee considered what kind of structure might lead to more effective action.

Recommendation 11 – Ensuring implementation

That synod mandate the Council of Delegates to ensure implementation by

- monitoring progress at each meeting of the COD.
- making necessary adjustments in specific plans.
- reporting to synod each year on progress made toward specific objectives and toward the general goal of creating a culture in which abuse of power is not tolerated and any incidents are dealt with in a way that contributes to the healing of broken relationships.

The Council of Delegates is encouraged to include selected members of the advisory committees of the related ministry areas in its implementation plans. These include Safe Church Ministry, Pastor Church Resources, Disability Concerns, and Classis Renewal.

X. Recommendations

This section is a summary of recommendations made throughout the report.

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Ms. Kathy Vandergrift and Ms. Patircia Van Reenen, cochairs, when matters pertaining to the report of the Addressing the Abuse of Power Committee are discussed.

B. *Training of pastors*

That synod mandate the Council of Delegates to form a committee to develop a training program on abuse of power. The committee shall include members from the offices of Candidacy, Pastor Church Resources, Safe Church Ministry, Calvin Theological Seminary, and Calvin College (because of available expertise). The training program shall

- be a requirement for all persons entering vocational ministry in the CRC.
- focus on dynamics of power within the variety of pastoral relationships, boundaries, tools for positive use of power and influence, and tools for preventing harmful use of power and influence.
- be widely available and presented as enabling effective ministry (not as an impediment to entering ministry).
- take into account the cultural diversity within CRC churches.

C. Code of conduct

That synod mandate the committee appointed by action in Recommendation 1 to draft a code of conduct for all employed ministry staff within the CRC. The draft code of conduct will be presented to Synod 2020 for approval. The code of conduct shall be

- signed by all ministry personnel who are employed by the CRCNA, local churches, and classes.
- reviewed annually, as part of annual evaluations.
- included in the Supplement to the Church Order, with links to relevant Church Order articles.

D. Prevention of abuse in CRCNA offices

That synod mandate the Council of Delegates to review the adequacy of the training provided to CRCNA staff, the adequacy of the provisions for support to a complainant, and mechanisms to avoid potential conflicts of interest in the process for dealing with complaints. A review should be informed by careful listening to persons who found the processes helpful and persons who did not.

E. Training at classis and local levels

1. That synod encourage all classes to develop a strategy to train officebearers and key church leaders to be alert to power dynamics within the communities they serve and to be equipped to prevent abuse of power. The goal of the strategy is to ensure that all officebearers receive initial training and refreshment through ongoing educational initiatives. An effective strategy will include the following:
 - appropriate training resources
 - reasonable time allocation for training
 - acknowledgment and monitoring of completion of training
2. That synod encourage all classes to monitor implementation of the training strategy and to consider adopting policies to include completion of training and safe church policies in the regular review of credentials or as a requirement for being seated at a classis meeting.
3. That synod mandate the executive director to develop, in cooperation with Safe Church Ministry, Pastor Church Resources, Calvin College, and others, a resource toolkit for training officebearers and leaders, readily accessible through the CRC website and Faith Alive Christian Resources.

F. Strengthening Safe Church Ministry

1. That synod mandate the executive director to oversee the development of appropriate measures for responding effectively to emotional abuse. Such measures will include definition, inclusion in relevant CRC policies, and appropriate responses through restorative practices and the safe church advisory panel process.
2. That synod mandate the executive director to oversee a review of the adequacy of safe church policies for follow-up in reported cases that involve church leaders. Findings and actions taken by the executive director shall be reported to the Council of Delegates to

ensure that the CRCNA is exercising due diligence to prevent repeat occurrences or transfer of abusive leaders to other churches. The review shall consider best practices in church abuse ministry.

3. That synod mandate the Council of Delegates to examine in detail the potential for conflicts of interest in current safe church procedures and to evaluate the need for and benefits of using outside experts to deal with situations that have a high potential for conflicts of interest.

G. Policy on non-disclosure agreements

That synod direct the executive director to do the following:

- review the history of the use of nondisclosure agreements within the CRCNA to draw learnings from it, be transparent about its frequency, and contribute to greater public accountability
- develop a policy with criteria for the use of NDAs that limits their use to cases in which it is clearly in the best interests of the victim and the church and not acceptable when solely motivated by protection of the reputation of the church and its leaders. The policy should include a provision for some form of review by an independent party before final signature by the two main parties.
- develop good practices and protocols on the use of NDAs for distribution to classes and councils when faced with situations that might lead to the use of a nondisclosure agreement
- develop a reporting and accountability mechanism to monitor practices going forward

H. Funds for counselling services

1. That synod encourage all classes to take measures to ensure that survivors of abuse within their classis have access to appropriate counseling services.
2. That the annual report of each classis for the CRC *Yearbook* include information about a counseling fund or other arrangements to ensure access to counseling services for abuse survivors.

I. Abuse prevention resources for culturally diverse churches

That synod mandate the executive director to give a high priority to providing information about existing policies and mechanisms for abuse prevention and response in forms that use the language, examples, and styles of learning that are culturally appropriate for the Korean, Latino, Chinese, African-American, and Indigenous communities, through Safe Church Ministry and Pastor Church Resources. In each context, the tools shall be developed with input from members of the community to ensure they will be accessible and useful for members of the community.

J. Recordkeeping

That synod mandate the Council of Delegates and executive director to put in place a system of recordkeeping of cases that come to the attention of all levels of church authority, to allow for the analysis of patterns and trends over time, without compromising the confidentiality

of individual persons. Collection of data should include some record of responses and outcomes, as well as reporting of incidents.

K. Creating a culture that prevents abuse of power

1. That synod affirm the following as core values for the culture within the CRC:
 - mutual respect for every person as created by God and equally responsible to respond to God's call to use their gifts for God's mission in the world, including the ongoing work of building God's church
 - an understanding of servant leadership that emphasizes mutual submission as a corrective to the hierarchical tendencies within our culture
 - mutual accountability through checks and balances built into governing structures
2. That synod affirm the importance of care in the use of language within church assemblies, with attention to the impact of language that harms the ability of others to fully exercise their gifts and calling.
3. That synod refer this report to the Classis Renewal Advisory Group to consider how the role of regional pastors and church visitors might be strengthened to foster a respectful culture and support churches with early assistance in situations that may give rise to concerns about abuse of power.
4. That synod mandate the Council of Delegates to establish a team that would act as a guardian of our commitment to foster a culture characterized by respect for all and mutual service. Consideration should be guided by the following features, which draw on good practices in other sectors of society for preventing and responding to all forms of abuse of power:
 - The mandate would include the use of a range of measures designed to allow early intervention in response to complaints, including mediation, conflict resolution, and restorative justice tools.
 - The mandate would include concerns about abuse of power that may cross lines between the denomination, classes, and individual churches. The team might serve an "ombudsperson" role within the internal human resources system and for cases that cross jurisdictions, without violating CRC governance of the local church by the local council.
 - Position holders outside the "chain of command" within the established organizational and management structure would help to foster confidence because they are "independent" but accountable through reporting to the Council of Delegates and through their ability to bring issues to the attention of the Council of Delegates if needed.
 - The role of the team would be reviewed after three years for effectiveness, as part of the follow-up to this report.

L. Implementation

That synod mandate the Council of Delegates to ensure implementation by

- monitoring progress at each meeting of the COD.
- making necessary adjustments in specific plans.

- reporting to synod each year on progress made toward specific objectives and toward the general goal of creating a culture in which abuse of power is not tolerated and any incidents are dealt with in a way that contributes to the healing of broken relationships.

The Council of Delegates is encouraged to include selected members of the advisory committees of the related ministry areas in its implementation plans. These include Safe Church Ministry, Pastor Church Resources, Disability Concerns, and Classis Renewal.

Addressing the Abuse of Power Committee

Sherry Fakkema

Elsa Fennema, secretary

Heather Garretson

Carel Geleynse

Dajuma Gibson

Darren Roorda, staff

David Sung

Patricia Van Reenen, cochair

Kathy Vandergrift, cochair

Addendum
Budget Implications of Addressing the Abuse of Power Committee Recommendations

Training program for pastors

Content to be developed or sourced by current staff; design of course materials and production of online course materials can be done by contract:	\$25,000
Staff time for ongoing supervision, estimate:	\$10,000

Code of conduct

Development by in-house committee for approval by Synod 2020	
Design of a brief two-page document for presentation:	\$1,000

CRCNA human resources training

Modification of existing training program and staff time to deliver it:	\$10,000
Research into ombudsman function or position:	\$2,500

Resource toolkit for classis training

Content will draw on existing resources; design of online kit:	\$4,000
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Recordkeeping system

Consultant to develop system and legal review of plans:	\$5,000
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Team to guard culture

Volunteer appointments for pilot project—honoraria and travel costs:	\$3,000
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Appendix D1

Safe Church Update Regarding Synod 2018 Directives

I. Safe church in our churches

Synod 2018 affirmed recommendations from synods in the past, including the five guiding goals for Safe Church, which were developed in 2012 by safe church team leaders from across Canada and the United States and approved by Synod 2014 (*Acts of Synod 2014*, pp 559-60). In 2018, questions were added to the Annual *Yearbook* Survey to churches to track these key indicators.

Questions asked in the 2018 Annual Yearbook Survey:

1. Has your church implemented a written policy for abuse prevention?
2. Does your church include *Circle of Grace* or another abuse prevention program in its church school and youth education? (Recommended: *Circle of Grace*)
3. Does your church require training for pastors, elders, and deacons regarding the use and potential abuse of power associated with their position?
4. Does your church have protocols in place for responding to church leader misconduct? (Recommended: "Guidelines for Handling Allegations of Abuse against a Church Leader")
5. Does your church have a team or committee that regularly meets regarding abuse prevention? If yes, please list the leader's name and email address.

Of the 760 of 1,055 total churches responding to the survey:

1. 86 percent have a written safe church or abuse prevention policy.
2. 36 percent have protocols in place for responding to church leader misconduct.
3. 28 percent have a safe church team or committee.
4. 16 percent require training for pastors, elders, and deacons regarding the use and potential abuse of power associated with their position.
5. 7 percent use a prevention program with children and youth.

It's important to note that not all CRC congregations are included in this data. Also, there seem to be some discrepancies between these numbers and what our safe church coordinators on the ground report. This is the first year that this data has been requested; we trust that as churches become accustomed to tracking this data, and with better communication with our classis coordinators, this picture will become more accurate going forward. These goals represent a minimum level of commitment to abuse prevention and response, and applying these goals will help protect our churches from liability associated with abuse. A chart showing the complete data from the Annual *Yearbook* Survey is available upon request.

II. Safe church at the classis level

Synod 2018 also requested that Safe Church report to synod annually regarding classis safe church teams. The data received from the Annual Classis Survey from the total number of 48 classes at the beginning of 2019 showed the following:

- 12 reported having an *active safe church team*, defined as meeting at least twice per year (25%).
- 13 reported having no team (27%).
- 23 left the question blank (48%).
- 24 reported having a *safe church coordinator* (50%).
- 15 answered no or left the question blank (31%).
- 9 answered that they were working on this or had it on their agenda (19%).

Since that time, Safe Church Ministry staff have been working hard to connect with our classis safe church coordinators and stated clerks to get a more accurate picture of what's happening and to increase communication, which is a critical part of effective safe church ministry.

We recognize that safe church ministry looks different in different places, which is good and important because needs and contexts vary from place to place. At the same time, it's important to establish some indicators to measure progress at the classis level. Toward that end, we are working to more clearly define the terms *safe church coordinator* and *safe church team*. A classis safe church coordinator is tasked with three things: (1) connect with the churches—equipping others who are actively doing safe church ministry at the congregational level; (2) connect with the classis—building relationships within the classis and reporting regularly to classis as an integral part of the classis structure; (3) connect with Safe Church Ministry—communicating regularly for ongoing support and training, and knowing the resources available from Safe Church. A classis safe church team can consist of representatives from each church meeting regularly, or it can be a much smaller group—say, three to five people—who meet together regularly and also connect with liaisons from each church to support safe church ministry at the congregational level. Both of these team models seem to have worked well over the years.

Our most current data reflect the following information with regard to the total number of 48 classes:

- 12 are being served by both a safe church team and a coordinator (25%).
- 5 are being served by a safe church team alone (10%).
- 18 are being served by a classis coordinator alone (33%).
- 4 are being served by a point person or liaison alone (8%).
- Of the 30 classis coordinators, 13 are new positions created in the classis within the past year, and 10 are compensated for their service with either a salary or an annual stipend

A chart summarizing this data is available upon request; it represents the most current data that we have at the time of this update. We will continue to connect and work with churches and classes to maintain and update this data. And we will continue to pray for so many incredible people working behind the scenes in our classes and congregations to equip others in abuse awareness, prevention, and response. It takes all of us working together to ensure that the Christian Reformed Church is a body of Christ where the value of each person is honored and people are free to worship and grow free from abuse—and where abuse has occurred, the response is compassion and justice that foster healing.

**Safe Church Classis Teams Report
April 2019**

Classis	Safe Church Team	Safe Church Coordinator	Name of Coordinator
Region 1 - Canada West			
Classis Alberta North	No	Yes	Ken Vis
Classis Alberta South/ Saskatchewan	No	Yes	Elza Bouwman
Classis B.C. North-West	Yes	Yes	Faye Martin
Classis B.C. South-East	Yes	Yes	Faye Martin
Region 2 - Canada East			
Classis Chatham	Yes	Yes	Yvonne Lammers
Classis Hamilton	Yes	Yes	Al Karston
Classis Huron	Yes	Yes	Atie Ott
Classis Niagara	Yes	No	
Classis Toronto	Yes	Yes	Rev. Bart Velthuisen
Classis Eastern Canada	Yes	Yes	Rachel Boehm
Classis Quinte	No	Yes	Fiona DeVries
Region 3 - USA East			
Classis Atlantic Northeast	No	No	
Classis Hackensack	Yes	Yes	Rev. Meg Jenista Kuykendall
Classis Hudson	No	Yes	Richard Ostling
Classis Southeast U.S.	Yes	No	
Region 4 - Great Lakes			
Classis Thornapple Valley	No	No	
Classis Grand Rapids East	No	Yes	Pujita Sieplinga
Classis Grand Rapids North	Yes	Yes	Jeanne Maher
Classis Grand Rapids South	No	Yes	Jane Elzinga
Classis Grandville	No	Yes	Bryna Parsells
Classis Georgetown	Yes	No	
Classis Holland	No	No	
Classis Kalamazoo	No	Yes	Andrew Yonkers
Classis Muskegon	Yes	Yes	Jane Degroot
Classis Zeeland	No	Yes	Rev. Lloyd Hemstreet
Classis Lake Erie	No	No	
Classis Northern Michigan	Yes	Yes	Dave Embertson
Region 5 - USA Central			
Classis Central Plains	No	Yes	Sara Vandenberg Van Zee
Classis Northcentral Iowa	No	No	
Classis Wisconsin	No	No	
Classis Lake Superior	No	Yes	Jeff Vanderhooft
Classis Chicago South	No	No	
Classis Illiana	No	No	
Classis Northern Illinois	Yes	No	
Classis Heartland	No	Yes	Tara Boer
Classis Iakota	No	Yes	Tara Boer
Classis Minnkota	No	Yes	Roger Sparks
Region 6 - USA West			
Classis Arizona	No	Yes	Donna Lowe
Classis Red Mesa	No	No	
Classis Rocky Mountain	Yes	No	
Classis Yellowstone	No	Yes	Barb Cole
Classis California South	No	No	
Classis Greater Los Angeles	No	Yes	Annie Biggs
Classis Hanmi	No	No	
Classis Ko-Am	No	No	
Classis Columbia	No	Yes	Lori Leep
Classis Central California	No	No	
Classis Pacific Northwest	Yes	Yes	Ed and Sherry Fakkema
TOTAL Yes:	17	30	
TOTAL Classes:	48	48	
Percentage:	35%	62%	
TOTAL New Coordinators:		13	
TOTAL Paid:		10	
TOTAL Point Persons:		8	

Appendix E

Summary of Denominational Investments and Compliance with Investment Policy

Synod 1998 approved a number of measures dealing with investment guidelines and disclosures. Two of these appear on page 440 of the *Acts of Synod 1998* as follows:

That the [COD] annually provide synod and classical treasurers with a summary of all investments owned by the agencies and institutions of the CRCNA. The summary is to include groupings of investments listed in the investment policy.

That the [COD] annually provide synod with a statement that the agencies and institutions are in compliance with the investment policy; any exception to the policy will be reported.

The accompanying summary and related footnotes constitute the Council of Delegates' response to the first of these requests. In response to the second request, the Council of Delegates reports that on December 31, 2018, all of the agencies and institutions are in compliance with the denomination's investment policy, including the guidance it provides for assets received as a result of gifts or gift-related transactions.

The Council of Delegates' discussions regarding these matters included the following:

1. As requested by synod, the investment summary contains information regarding assets held by the agencies and institutions of the denomination. In addition to these investments, the denomination is responsible for the administration of investments held by various benefit plans, including retirement plans. The COD reports that assets held by the benefit plans also are in compliance with the denomination's investment guidelines.
2. As requested, the summary includes investments only. It tells nothing of the commitments, restrictions, and purposes attached to the investments. Persons interested in a full understanding of these aspects are encouraged to refer to the financial statements of the agencies and institutions on file with each classical treasurer or to direct their inquiries to the agencies and institutions themselves.

**THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH
IN NORTH AMERICA
Benefit Plans
Investment Summary
As of December 31, 2018**

	Employees' Savings Plan - U.S. in U.S. \$	Ministers' Pension Plan U.S. in U.S. \$	Special Assistance Fund U.S. in U.S. \$	Employees' Retirement Plan - Canada in Canadian \$	Ministers' Pension Plan Canada in Canadian \$	Special Assistance Fund Canada in Canadian \$	Consolidated Group Insurance Canada in Canadian \$
Categories Specified by Investment Policy:							
SHORT TERM							
CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS							
Cash, CDs, and money-market mutual funds	\$ -	\$ 6,748,920	\$ 167,816	\$ 179,608	\$ 1,259,278	\$ 470,966	\$ 139,133
FIXED-INCOME ISSUES							
Guaranteed investment contracts	-	-	-	107,538	-	-	-
Stable Asset Income Fund	3,367,524	-	-	-	-	-	-
COMMON AND PREFERRED STOCKS							
Publicly traded common, preferred, and convertible preferred stock	-	60,775,163	-	-	44,310,285	-	-
Diversified/Alternative mutual fund	5,985,480	6,561,601	-	3,624,128	-	-	-
Equity mutual funds	17,804,537	-	-	1,139,446	-	-	-
FIXED-INCOME ISSUES (LONG TERM)							
U.S. treasuries, Canadian gov't bonds, or publicly traded bonds and notes (investment grade, at least A-rated)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Bond mutual funds	6,327,860	17,775,748	-	264,235	11,167,621	-	-
REAL ESTATE INVESTMENT TRUSTS							
	-	10,392,017	-	-	2,116,893	-	-
Total	\$ 33,485,401	\$ 102,253,449	\$ 167,816	\$ 5,314,955	\$ 58,854,077	\$ 470,966	\$ 139,133

**THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH
IN NORTH AMERICA
Agencies and Institutions
Investment Summary in US\$
As of December 31, 2018**

	Back to God Ministries International	Calvin College	Calvin Theol. Seminary	Denom./Congreg. Services	CRC Foundation	Loan Fund	Resonate Global Mission	World Renew
Categories Specified by Investment Policy:								
SHORT TERM								
CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS								
Cash, Money-market mutual funds & CDs	\$ 3,089,993	\$ 7,094,629	\$ 198,273	\$ 6,245,646 (9)	\$ -	\$ 4,166,663	\$ 7,727,634	\$ 23,241,195
FIXED-INCOME ISSUES								
CRCNA Funds LLC Liquidity Fund (1)	327,091	-	-	3,317	-	-	1,198,464	27,047
Other short term	41,445	-	-	986,558	-	-	236,225	1,466,000
CRCNA FUNDS LLC BALANCED FUND (2)	3,616,385	-	-	73,789	-	-	8,171,528	8,074,420
COMMON AND PREFERRED STOCKS								
Publicly traded common, preferred, and convertible preferred stock	-	1,441,539 (3)	-	-	-	-	-	-
Equity mutual funds	580,542 (3)	74,866,182 (10)	25,342,363 (10)	5,705,078	-	-	279,355 (3)	3,000
FIXED-INCOME ISSUES (LONG TERM)								
U.S. treasuries or Canadian gov't bonds	-	61,163,738	3,009,731	4,547,454 (9)	-	-	-	-
Publicly traded bonds and notes (investment grade, at least A-rated)	-	-	-	7,702,074 (9)	-	-	-	-
Bond mutual funds	193,656 (3)	25,946,797 (12)	13,302,335 (1)	-	-	-	38,400 (3)	-
CIBC / TAL overdraft accounts	-	-	-	(19,413,913) (9)	-	-	-	-
Interagency Investments (Obligations):								
Loans to CRCNA (Denom. Services)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other Investments:								
Private equity fund	-	33,623,452	4,313,300 (4)	-	-	-	-	-
Partnerships	7,231	- (4)	-	-	-	-	-	-
Land contracts	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Hedge funds	-	6,096,222	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other alternatives	232,387	10,620,433 (11)	-	-	-	-	35,794	-
Life insurance cash value	509,238 (5)	-	-	24,053	- (5)	-	-	29,697 (5)
Common stock -- non-listed	-	2,768,480 (7)	-	-	-	-	-	-
Real estate (non-operating)	6,000 (8)	- (8)	1,050,000 (8)	-	-	-	30,447	-
Total	\$ 8,603,968	\$ 223,621,472	\$ 47,216,002	\$ 5,874,055	\$ -	\$ 4,166,663	\$ 17,717,846	\$ 32,841,359

Numbers in parentheses are footnote numbers. See the footnotes that follow.

Numbers in parentheses are footnote numbers. See the footnotes that follow.

Footnotes to the December 31, 2018, Investment Summary

1. CRCNA Funds LLC pooled/unitized fixed income account for agencies.
2. CRCNA Funds LLC pooled/unitized balanced account (fixed income 53%, equities 47%) for agencies.
3. Includes directly owned and donated publicly traded stock or mutual funds.
4. Ownership interest in private equity funds, including unrealized gains and reinvestments. Private equity groups include Venture Capital, Domestic and International Partnerships, Natural Resources, and Distressed Debt.
5. Cash value of life insurance contracts received as gifts.
6. Includes promissory notes received in the sale of real estate.
7. Includes investment in Creative Dining Services, owned jointly with Hope College.
8. Real estate received as a gift or held for investment purposes.
9. These investments, which provide security for the overdraft accounts, are part of a Canadian agency concentration/netting for interest cash management and investment program.
10. Includes equity, commodity, and hedged mutual funds.
11. Includes Tactical Tilt Allocation Fund and other alternative private equity funds.
12. Includes hedged mutual funds.

World Renew Supplement

I. Board matters

A. Canada young adult at-large members

The board of delegates of World Renew requests that synod appoint Ms. Lindsay Gustaw to a first term of three years as a Canada young adult at-large member from The King's University.

Ms. Lindsay Gustaw is a leader of the social justice club at The King's University, where she is currently studying for a B.A. in politics, history, and economics. She participated in World Renew's justice leadership tour to Ottawa, Ontario, which piqued her interest in participating on the board. Ms. Gustaw has been an active volunteer as a Sunday school teacher, an ambassador at The King's University, and a cabin leader for youth camps. She is passionate about social justice and looks forward to spreading awareness of World Renew's work with other students.

The board of World Renew requests that synod appoint Ms. Chloe Stell to a first term of three years as a Canada young adult at-large member from Redeemer University College.

Ms. Chloe Stell is a student at Redeemer University College, where she is studying for a degree in international development, urban and intercultural ministry. She is interested in promoting the ministry of World Renew, especially because it aligns with developing her communication skills and living out her passion for a ministry that encourages growth, joy, and restoration in the lives of people who are suffering. Ms. Stell has been an active volunteer at Bible camps and in youth leadership at her church. She has also served in Nepal and India as a youth volunteer. As a student delegate on the World Renew board, she values the commitment World Renew has with the local and international community and hopes to learn more about how Christian charities can make a difference in addressing injustice and poverty through practical application of the gospel to community and national contexts.

B. Canada young adult at-large member completing term

World Renew would like to recognize and thank the following young adult at-large member completing service on the board: Mr. David Schuurman (Redeemer University College).

C. U.S. young adult at-large member

The board of World Renew requests that synod appoint Ms. Leah Sweetman to a first term of three years as a U.S. young adult at-large member from Trinity Christian College.

Ms. Leah Sweetman is a student at Trinity Christian College, where she is studying Christian ministry and business. She is interested in nonprofit work, especially international community development. Ms. Sweetman has experience in child care and education. In addition, she has participated in mission trips to Nicaragua; Tanzania; and Leech Lake, Minnesota. Her desire to serve on the World Renew board is driven by the way World Renew lives out its ministry calling.

Note: Ms. Rebekah De Lange, nominee for young adult at-large member (*Agenda for Synod 2019*, p. 232), has withdrawn her nomination.

D. U.S. member-at-large nominees for appointment and reappointment

The board of delegates requests that synod appoint the following as a U.S. member-at-large delegate to a first term of three years:

Mr. Stephen Na is a member of Cambodian Fellowship CRC in Holland, Michigan, where he currently serves as an elder. He loves working with people, especially among the Cambodian community in West Michigan. He hopes to serve as a bridge between World Renew and the people of Southeast Asia. Mr. Na looks forward to using his gifts to discern the needs of people in Southeast Asia and to serve as a connection for the Cambodian church in Holland, Michigan.

Mr. Barry Haven was listed in the World Renew report to synod as a “U.S. member completing board service” (*Agenda for Synod 2019*, p. 233); however, he will be continuing on the board of delegates. The board requests that synod reappoint Mr. Haven to a second term of three years as a *member-at-large* (he served a first term as a *classical* delegate).

E. U.S. classis nominations

The board of World Renew requests that synod appoint the following as U.S. delegates to a first term of three years: Mrs. Michelle Falk (Classis Grand Rapids North), Mr. Chadd Huizenga (Classis Columbia), Ms. Winnie Jean-Louis (Classis Southeast U.S.), and Mrs. Shanti Jost (Classis Hudson).

F. U.S. members completing terms

World Renew would like to recognize and thank the following board members completing their service on the board: Mr. Harry Kuipers (Classis Grand Rapids South), Mr. Daniel L. Pell (Classis Muskegon), Mr. Howard Walhof (Classis Yellowstone), and Rev. Edward Yoon (Classis Ko-Am).

II. Recommendation

That synod, by way of the ballot, appoint and reappoint members to the World Renew Board of Delegates.

World Renew
 Carol Bremer-Bennett, director, World Renew-U.S.
 Ida Kaastra-Mutoigo, director, World Renew-Canada

Candidacy Committee Supplement

I. Candidates for minister of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church

A. *Candidates for ministry*

Each year it is a privilege to meet and interview the applicants for candidacy. The interviews for these candidates were conducted this year by teams of four or five persons. The Candidacy Committee is pleased to recommend for candidacy the forty-two persons listed below. The candidates include persons who have graduated from Calvin Theological Seminary and from other accredited seminaries. Those attending seminaries other than Calvin Theological Seminary have completed the Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy. Biographical details for each of the candidates can be found in the candidate booklet, available for download at crcna.org/candidacy.

The following recommendation is presented to synod for consideration of the candidates presented:

That synod declare the following individuals as candidates for ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church, subject to completion of all remaining (if any) requirements (the list of candidates eligible for call is available on the Candidacy Committee website: crcna.org/candidacy). Subject to synod's approval, the candidates will be presented to Synod 2019 on Wednesday, June 19, at 9:30 a.m. *Note:* Four of the forty-two names are listed by initials only at the request of the respective candidates and with permission of the Candidacy Committee.

Joel S. Altena	Seokwon (Shaun) Jung
Israel Alvarado	S.K.
Ram Aryal	Kiseok (Daniel) Kang
Seth A. Atsma	C.L.
Jonathan K. Bosma	L.L.
Christopher Bouma	Aaron Mamuyac
J.C.	Timothy J. McHugh
Luke M. Carrig	Matthew Mulder
John Cleveringa	Shawn I. Richardson
Jason D. Crossen	Kyle J. Sandison
Zack J. DeBruyne	Garrett Saul
Cara L.C. DeHaan	Terence R. Schilstra
Christopher J. Ganski	Mitchell R. Sheahan
Daniel J. Gregory	Hilary Smith
Nathan J. Groenewold	Loretta Stadt
Aaron J. Gunsaulus	Jaleesa J. Stanford
John Kyu Hahn	Brad C. Stolman
Chris S. Harper	Kathy Vana
Elizabeth L. Huizenga	Klaas J. Walhout
Mark A. Janowski	Chad E. Werkhoven
Daniel Joo	William (Bill) R. Whitt

B. Extension of candidacy

The rules of synod require that a declared candidate by one synod must request an extension of candidacy status at the following synod if a call has not been accepted. The Candidacy Committee communicates with such persons in order to determine the validity of the request and to offer words of encouragement. The Candidacy Committee recommends the following thirty persons for approval of candidacy extension:

Steven Berkenpas	Anthony Matias
Yoon Chul (Daniel) Choi	Courtney Mooney-Saldivar
Abigail DeZeeuw	Katrina J. Olson
Elisabeth A. De Vries	Jennifer L. Palkowski
Brad Diekema	Janet Arlene Ryzebol
Steven Dykstra	Ivan K. Santoso
Ben Gresik	Bailey Breanne Sarver
Robert J. Gruessing	Sharon R. Smith
Sarah Kim Hoos	Jason R. Terpstra
Jeffrey Michael Hoos	Gale Tien
Joseph Hwang	Rebecca L. Tjapkes
JungSeong (Samuel) Kim	Thomas J. Van Wyk
Noah Kruis	Nicole Veenkamp
Marcek Kuiper	Jantje Fenna (Femke) Visser-Elenbaas
Hannah Ryou Lee	Josiah Youngquist

C. Reinstatement of candidacy

Mr. Kristopher Walhout was a candidate from 2012-2016. During this time he was hopeful that he could find a call that would fit with the location and schedule of his wife, who has been in medical school and residency. By 2016, Mr. Walhout decided to withdraw from candidacy for a time until his wife finished her training. He and his wife are now preparing to go to Africa as a medical missionary and as a teaching pastor. Mrs. Walhout will serve with Worldwide Medical Mission (the medical arm of Samaritan's Purse) as an OB/GYN doctor in Kapsowar, Kenya. Mr. Walhout will teach at the Kapsowar School of Theology. He is currently working out a partnership agreement with the CRCNA through Resonate Global Mission; thus, he is requesting reinstatement of his candidacy. The Candidacy Committee is pleased to approve his request. We therefore recommend that Synod 2019 reinstate the candidacy of Mr. Kristopher Walhout.

Mr. Ryan Schreiber was a candidate from 2008-2012. He withdrew his candidacy in large part to support his wife, who was engaged in graduate studies and now teaches at Calvin Theological Seminary. During this period Mr. Schreiber also pursued an accelerated nursing degree and has been working as a nurse for the past few years. He has seen his nursing career as a form of ministry and is now taking steps to formally combine the two vocations more explicitly. He has the full support of his current church, Grace CRC in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Thus he is requesting reinstatement of his candidacy. The Candidacy Committee is pleased to approve his request and recommends that Synod 2019 reinstate the candidacy of Mr. Ryan Schreiber.

D. Correcting a clerical error

The Candidacy Committee became aware in mid-April 2019 that due to a clerical error one of the 2017 first-time candidates, Ms. Nicole Veenkamp, had not been placed on the list of recommended extended candidates to be approved by Synod 2018. To correct this error, the Candidacy Committee decided to immediately add her name to the list of current extended candidates and to include her name on the list provided in section I, B above. The committee asks synod to endorse the action of the Candidacy Committee in this matter.

II. Article 8 candidates approved

Our process for guiding pastors ordained in other denominations who wish to become ordained in the CRC is described in Church Order Article 8. Church Order Supplement, Article 8, F directs the Candidacy Committee to be intimately involved in this process and to submit for synod's review the names of those approved for Article 8 process. The Candidacy Committee has concurred on *need* for the following persons in the past year. In each case the appropriate documents are on file with the director of the Office of Candidacy.

Date	Name of Applicant	Classis	Former Denomination
6/4/18	Mulder, Jeremy	Hudson	Grace Fellowship Nondenominational
6/4/18	Lee, Tae	Hudson	Korean American Presbyterian Church
8/17/18	Lee, Kwon Do	Hudson	Baek Suk Presbyterian
9/4/18	Chae, Kwan Jung	Hanmi	Presbyterian Church in Korea
9/5/18	Jeong, Amos	Ko-Am	Presbyterian Church in Korea
9/6/18	Kim, Sung Jin	Ko-Am	Presbyterian Church in Korea
9/6/18	Lee, Sung Chul	Ko-Am	Presbyterian Church in Korea
9/14/18	Lee, Seong Jun	California South	Presbyterian Church in Korea
9/18/18	Anderas, Phil	Wisconsin	Episcopal Church
11/20/19	Musungayi, J.P. Mukendi	Rocky Mountain	United Reformed Church of Congo
12/10/18	Pang, Sang (Sam)	Greater Los Angeles	Calvary Chapel
1/29/19	Selvaggio, Anthony	Atlantic Northeast	Reformed Presbyterian
1/30/19	Choi, Seon Il (Daniel)	Hudson	Presbyterian Church in Korea
2/27/2019	Kim, Do Hyeong	Lake Erie	Presbyterian Church in Korea
2/27/2019	Fairrow, Marcia	Lake Erie	United Church of Christ
3/1/2019	Saville, Michael	Atlantic Northeast	Reformed Church in America

III. Review of the Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy

Over the past year, a task force has been reviewing the current Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy (EPMC). The task force consists of members of the Candidacy Committee and representatives of Calvin Theological Seminary. This task force was mentioned in the *Agenda for Synod 2019* reports by both the Candidacy Committee and Calvin Theological Seminary. The Appendix to this report presents the work of the task force and offers two recommendations for consideration by Synod 2019.

IV. Recommendations

A. That synod declare the persons listed in section I, A as candidates for ministry in the Christian Reformed Church.

B. That synod approve the extensions of candidacy as recommended in section I, B.

C. That synod reinstate the candidacy of Mr. Ryan Schreiber and Mr. Kristopher Walhout, as described in section I, C.

D. That synod endorse the action of the Candidacy Committee in correcting a clerical error regarding the extended candidacy of Nicole Veenkamp.

E. That synod approve the action of the Candidacy Committee in declaration of *need* for the persons listed in section II for affiliation under Church Order Article 8.

F. That synod approve the following with regard to the EPMC Task Force report presented in the Appendix to this report:

1. That synod take note of the growth of the Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy (EPMC) and affirm with appreciation the need to evaluate the goals and effectiveness of the program and request that the Candidacy Committee provide an update on the survey and study to Synod 2020.
2. That synod encourage delegates to Synod 2020 to complete the EPMC Survey of Delegates that is available on the Synod Site for delegates and advisers. Delegates are requested to complete the survey by June 30, 2019.

Candidacy Committee
David R. Koll, director

Appendix

Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy (EPMC) Review and Update

In the interest of serving the church with well-formed and well-prepared ministers of the Word, the Candidacy Committee and Calvin Theological Seminary present a report on the EPMC program along with a recommendation that synod ask the Candidacy Committee to continue working with Calvin Theological Seminary to evaluate the goals and effectiveness of the EPMC program and provide a report to Synod 2020.

The formation and training of students who are annually approved by synod to become candidates for ministry in the Christian Reformed Church in North America is a key ministry purpose for the wider church. The founding of Calvin Theological Seminary in 1876 as the first institution of the Christian Reformed Church illustrates the long-standing denominational commitment to leadership and an *educated* clergy.

Educational programs change over time along with the needs of individuals and churches. At one point in our history only persons who graduated from Calvin Theological Seminary could become candidates for minister of the Word. Eventually a system developed in which persons who attended other seminaries still connected with and even moved to Grand Rapids, Michigan, to take identified, required courses at Calvin Theological Seminary.

In a report to Synod 2004, Calvin Theological Seminary reviewed the foundations of this history of training and formation as follows:

The CRC has maintained its own theological seminary for over 125 years because it understands the critical influence of seminary training on pastors' theology and practice and, consequently, on the theological unity of the denomination.

The CRC has understood that the Reformed perspective is not simply a matter of several theological propositions that can be learned in a course or two but is an organic whole reaching across all the disciplines of theological education. It is grounded in a certain view of inspiration and the nature of Scripture. It embraces a deep and wide understanding of creation, fall, redemption, and restoration that is the foundation of an all-embracing world and life view. The Reformed perspective has its own peculiar take on the nature of the church, worship, preaching, and the sacraments. This perspective animates local church practices, defines denominational policy, and shapes synodical decisions. The curriculum of Calvin Seminary has been developed through the decades to enable students to understand, practice, and pass on this vision.

(Agenda for Synod 2004, p. 159)

For a number of years there were multiple conversations and reports to synod on what came to be known as "alternate routes to ministry." The denominational discussion on these and related matters was one of various viewpoints and values. Synodical study committees were appointed and reported to Synods 2000, 2001, and 2004 (see *Agenda for Synod 2000*, p. 271; *Agenda 2001*, p. 263; *Agenda 2004*, p. 339).

Eventually synod mandated a Candidacy Committee and instructed that a dynamic partnership be formed between the Candidacy Committee and Calvin Theological Seminary (CTS). A key part of that partnership has included the development and management of the Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy. For more than ten years the Candidacy

Committee and CTS have been working together to serve the church with the EPMC in its current form.

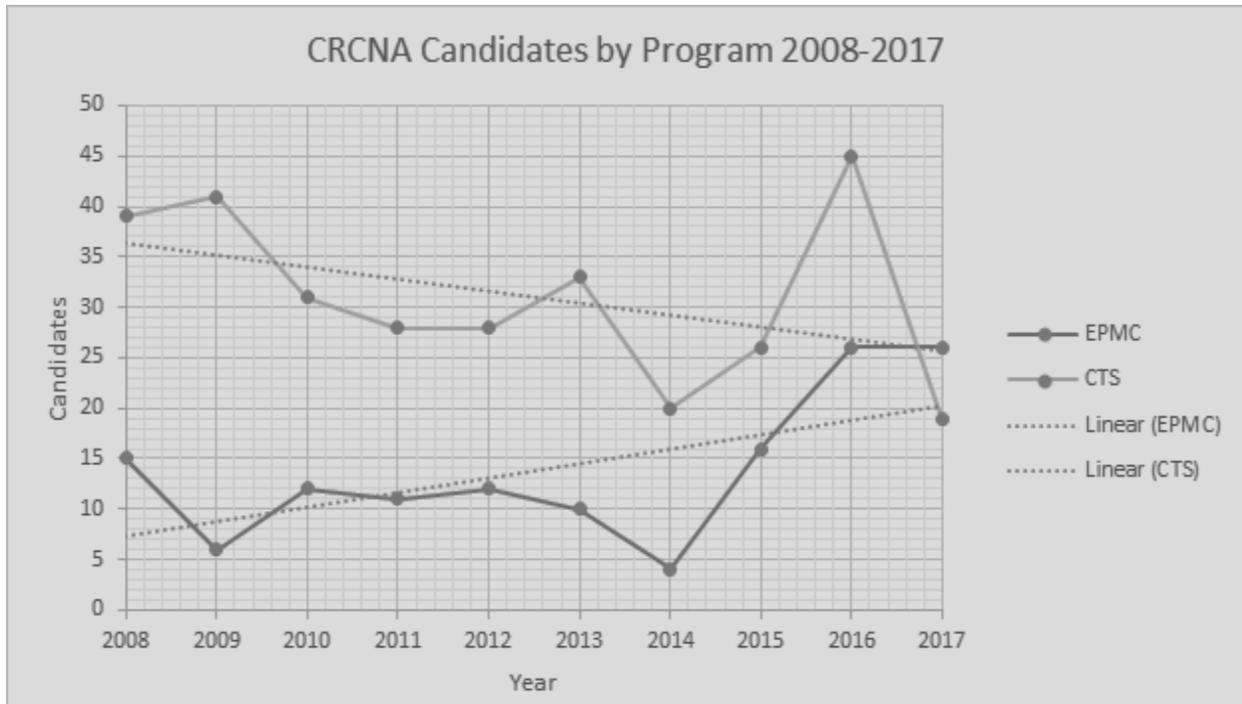
A link to the current EPMC handbook, which also identifies the current course requirements, can be accessed at calvinseminary.edu/wp-content/uploads/EPMC_Handbook.pdf.

During the past ten years, the Candidacy Committee and CTS have seen a great deal of change in educational models and delivery systems. Calvin Theological Seminary began offering a distance/hybrid M.Div. degree in 2012, which allows students to live, work, and minister where they are and still receive a Calvin Theological Seminary M.Div. degree—by means of online courses instead of the formerly required semester-long intensive classes and local mentoring.

The seminary was recently approved to offer a completely online M.A. degree in ministry leadership, so there no longer is a student in this program required to come to Grand Rapids for on-campus coursework. In addition, the distance M.Div. degree program has allowed students to begin residentially and then relocate to an internship site, or to begin in distance education and then move to finish their program in residence. Flexibility, responsiveness, and different pathways have marked recent program development at Calvin Theological Seminary. It should be noted that the landscape of seminary education has continued to change across the United States and Canada.

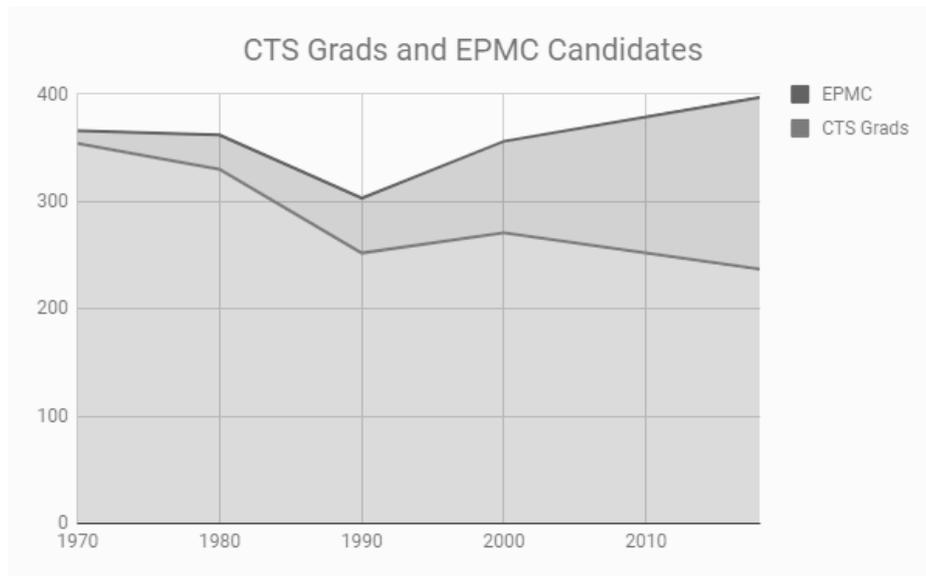
The Candidacy Committee has also developed a two-year online program to allow students to finish the required EPMC courses. A number of students have taken advantage of the availability of the EPMC program to enter into ministry in the Christian Reformed Church in North America. In fact, 2018 was the first time in Christian Reformed Church history when a majority of the candidates approved received most of their training from seminaries other than Calvin Theological Seminary.

A review of trends regarding the EPMC program and its predecessor programming shows a marked increase in EPMC program participation in the past few years. Both the Candidacy Committee and Calvin Theological Seminary would like to share the following material as part of this update.



	TOTAL Candidates	# of CTS	# of EPMC	# Can CTS/ EPMC/ Total	# US CTS/ EPMC/ Total	Other CTS/ EPMC/ Total	# Male	# Female	# Ethnic Minority
2008	53	39	14 (27%)	7/7/ 14	31/7 38	1/0/ 1	48	5 (9%)	5 (9%)
2009	47	35	12 (25%)	8/5/ 13	26/7/ 33	1/0/ 1	40	7 (15%)	2 (4%)
2010	41	31	10 (25%)	4/4/ 8	26/6/ 32	1/0/ 1	31	10 (25%)	3 (7%)
2011	42	30	12 (29%)	3/6/ 9	25/6/ 31	2/0/ 2	35	7 (17%)	11 (26%)
2012	44	31	13 (30%)	2/7/ 9	25/6/ 31	4/0/ 4	36	8 (18%)	5 (11%)
2013	50	31	19 (38%)	6/4/ 10	24/15/ 39	1/0/ 1	40	10 (20%)	12 (25%)
2014	49	23	26* (53%)	4/10/ 14	17/14/ 31	2/2/ 4	44	5 (10%)	10 (20%)
2015	44	26	18 (41%)	8/5/ 13	15/13/ 28	3/0/ 3	33	11 (25%)	6 (14%)
2016	47	28	19 (40%)	5/1/ 6	19/14/ 33	4/4/ 8	34	13 (28%)	11 (23%)
2017	39	20	19 (48%)	6/5/ 11	9/12/ 21	5/2/ 7	27	12 (31%)	10 (27%)
2018	43	19	26 (56%)	3/10/ 13	16/14/ 30	0/0/ 0	38	5 (12%)	12 (28%)

*Some candidates had more training at CTS than the basic EPMC training due to transferring to Calvin Theological Seminary when distance education became available through CTS.



Decade Trends re Ministers into the CRC

Year(s)	CTS grads	EPMC	Total cand.	% cand. from CTS	Cand. exam	Art. 7	Art. 8	Total new pastors	% new pastors from CTS	Art. 14e re-enter	Total comm. pastor	New Art. 23-a	Art. 23-b / c	Art. 23-d
Total in 70s	354	12	366	97%		1	20	387	91%					
Total in 80s	330	32	362	91%	337	17	63	442	75%	6				
Total in 90s	252	51	303	83%	293	21	139	463	54%	6				
Total in 00s	271	85	356	76%	328	49	161	566	48%	13		202		
2010	30	10	40	75%	41	0	21	61	49%	4	210	40	2	2
2011	30	12	42	71%	37	0	16	58	52%	2	237	28	1	4
2012	30	13	43	70%	34	0	12	55	55%	1	234	28	0	4
2013	31	19	50	62%	41	0	10	60	52%	1	244	28	4	1
2014	23	26*	49	47%	48	0	12	61	38%	0	253	29	0	4
2015	26	18	44	59%	42	0	13	57	46%	0	260	49	1	2
2016	28	19	47	60%	42	0	14	56	50%	1	262	37	1	4
2017	20	19	39	51%	38	0	11	49	41%	1	272	51	2	1
2018	19	24	43	44%	43	0	19	61	31%	3	275	42	0	9
2010's	237	160	397	60%	366	0	128	518	46%	13		332	11	31

*Some candidates had more training at CTS than the basic EPMC training due to transferring to Calvin Theological Seminary when distance education became available through CTS.

The following chart shows the number of candidates who have attended each of the schools (other than Calvin Theological Seminary) where students have received their primary theological education in the past three years:

Seminaries Where EPMC Candidates Earned their M.Div. 2016-2019		
Seminary	EPMC Candidates	% of Total EPMC
Western Theological Seminary	15	19%
Regent College, Vancouver, BC	8	10%
Princeton Theological Seminary, Princeton, NJ	5	6%
Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, IL	5	6%
Fuller Theological Seminary	4	5%
Reformed Theological Seminary, Orlando, FL	4	5%
Tyndale Seminary, Toronto, ON	4	5%
McMaster Divinity College	3	4%
Taylor Seminary	3	4%
Westminster Theological Seminary	3	4%
Covenant Theological Seminary	2	3%
Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, Hamilton, MA	2	3%
Grand Rapids Theological Seminary	2	3%
Sioux Falls Seminary	2	3%
Beeson Divinity School, Birmingham, AL	1	1%
Bethel Seminary, Arden Hills, MN	1	1%
Corban University	1	1%
Dallas Theological Seminary (Th.M.)	1	1%
Denver Seminary	1	1%
McCormick Theological Seminary	1	1%
Moody Theological Seminary	1	1%
Northern Seminary	1	1%
Oikos University, Oakland, CA	1	1%
Protestant Theological University, Utrecht, the Netherlands	1	1%
Providence Theological Seminary	1	1%
Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Pittsburgh, PA	1	1%
San Francisco Theological Seminary	1	1%
Seattle School of Theology and Psychology	1	1%
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Houston, TX, branch	1	1%
Talbot Theological Seminary	1	1%
Western Seminary, San Jose Campus, Los Gatos, CA	1	1%
Westminster Seminary California (Escondido, CA)	1	1%
Total	80	100%

This report is provided to update synod and the churches of the Christian Reformed Church in North America as the Candidacy Committee and Calvin Theological Seminary work on a review of the current EPMC program. The review includes surveying key ministry leaders and those who have participated in the EPMC program since 2012. A survey was sent in April 2019 to current and past EPMC students (2012 to present) as well as to Classical Ministerial Leadership Teams (CMLTs), synodical deputies and alternates, regional pastors, and classical stated clerks.

Questions Underlying This Study and Our Survey on EPMC Goals and Effectiveness

1. Is the current EPMC program adequate for the personal, professional, and theological formation of students for effective ministry in the CRCNA?
2. How can we contribute to enhanced formation of vibrant church leaders for the CRCNA?
3. What level of theological unity or cohesion do we need for a vibrant denomination, and how is this best obtained and developed through the EPMC program?
4. Who should “own” and manage the EPMC program—CTS, the CRCNA Candidacy Office, or both? (When the EPMC program began, synod said it should be both.)
5. Does our current program meet the original purpose for which it was intended?
6. Do the current number and level of required courses meet the needs of the EPMC students and/or the desire of synod for the adequate training of EPMC students?

Recommendations

In accord with this update and report, the Candidacy Committee of the Christian Reformed Church makes the following recommendations:

1. That synod take note of the growth of the Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy (EPMC) and affirm with appreciation the need to evaluate the goals and effectiveness of the program and request that the Candidacy Committee provide an update on the survey and study to Synod 2020.
2. That synod encourage delegates to Synod 2020 to complete the EPMC Survey of Delegates that is available on the Synod Site for delegates and advisers. Delegates are requested to complete the survey by June 30, 2019.

Historical Committee Supplement

Since submitting its primary report to synod in February, the Historical Committee provides the following updates.

The committee met in full session on February 11, and again on April 11, to conduct committee business. It also engaged in a higher number of informal exchanges among members than is usual in order to handle committee business responsibly.

I. Personnel

The committee has enjoyed positive interchanges with Dr. Will Katerberg since his appointment in February as interim curator of the Archives. Our chair in particular has engaged in conversations with him regarding the work of Heritage Hall, its personnel, and the vision for Heritage Hall. The committee voted that, to the extent that he is interested and available, Dr. Katerberg “be invited to join the committee’s representatives when they meet with the advisory committee of synod assigned to handle Historical Committee matters.”

II. Committee initiatives

In response to the directive of Synod 2018 that the executive director “work with the Historical Committee to institute a new practice by which we honor each congregation celebrating 150 years of ministry with a commemorative plaque” (*Acts of Synod 2018*, p. 479), the executive director referred decision-making to the Historical Committee. After contacting a number of congregations that had been in existence for that length of time, but not necessarily in the CRCNA that long, and considering other issues, the committee affirmed the policy of presenting the award only to churches in continuous existence in our denomination for 150 years. The committee will inform the executive director’s office annually of such churches and will leave all details related to presenting the plaque, preferably at a congregation’s 150th anniversary ceremony, to the executive director’s office.

Resource advice and information has been provided to representatives of several congregations planning major, imminent anniversaries.

The committee officers arranged and participated in a helpful conversation with Dr. George Harinck, veteran archivist of the Theological University of Kampen, and with Dr. Katerberg when Dr. Harinck was on campus for other matters. Dr. Harinck is also a permanent research fellow at the Van Raalte Institute and an invaluable resource on archiving Reformed materials.

The committee engaged in an extensive review of a manuscript for possible publication subvention; in doing so, it also consulted competent outside authority.

As the editorial board of the publication *Origins*, the committee discussed with editor Janet Sheeres the direction and content of future issues. The magazine has been remarkably successful as the main force in raising some \$0.5 million for the Friends of the Archives Endowment Fund. That fund has contributed to a major capital renovation and to Heritage Hall publications serving the educational mission entrusted to the Historical Committee. The committee is reviewing future possibilities for the magazine and for subsidizing future projects.

With two of its members retiring this year, the Historical Committee spent some time evaluating desirable committee expertise and assessing and recruiting people who could serve well on the committee in the future.

III. Organizational Review

The matter of organizational review has taken a significant amount of the Historical Committee's time and energy since last summer. This review has involved extensive historical examination into the minutes of the Historical Committee, the *Agendas* and *Acts of Synod*, the minutes of other Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary committees, and the respective faculty handbooks of both institutions. Why was such a review necessary? During the tenures of curators Dr. Herbert Brinks (1972-1997) and Dr. Richard Harms (1998-2016), an unwritten arrangement based on understanding and trust between the Historical Committee and its three funding agencies (Calvin College, Calvin Theological Seminary, and the CRCNA) had developed organically over time; however, in times of change, such unwritten arrangements do not transfer automatically, and that can lead to uncertainty and confusion. This happened when a new dean of the Hekman Library was appointed around the same time that Dr. Harms retired, a new curator was hired, and new members simultaneously joined the Historical Committee. Our committee and its three stakeholders agreed that a clear memorandum of understanding between us was necessary.

We can report that we have reached agreement on one crucial point. While the Historical Committee is mandated with oversight concerning the overall well-being of Heritage Hall, we do not exercise hands-on management of the daily activities of its staff and programs. We participate in matters of vision, strategic planning, finances, and programming at arm's length; and we are responsible for assuring synod in our annual report of such involvement and that matters related to Heritage Hall are going well. Thus, we and the three stakeholders' representatives agree that it is important for Heritage Hall to be served by an advisory council that harmonizes with the administrative structures of Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary and includes representatives of both institutions, the denominational office, and the Historical Committee—as well as an external member with special expertise in the material and educational purpose of the Heritage Hall collection.

We regret that we must also report that we were unable to resolve the main issue that divides us: should Heritage Hall be incorporated into the identity and administrative management of the Hekman Library of Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary? Our position that this change should *not* be made is based on the explicit decision of Synod 1969 that removed Heritage Hall (then simply known as the Archives) from its place and status as part of the college and seminary library and gave it a separate identity and status; that decision highlighted an increasing educational role for Heritage Hall. In the words of the mandate given to our committee at that time,

The Historical Committee shall gather, preserve and supervise the official Archives of the Christian Reformed Church and cultivate in the Christian Reformed Church knowledge of and appreciation for the church's history.

(Acts of Synod 1969, p. 74)

This led to the appointment of Dr. Herbert Brinks as a full-time curator in 1972. On behalf of synod, we shall continue our discussions with the administrators of the three stakeholders on the basis of that mandate.

Accordingly, we present the following recommendations.

IV. Recommendations

A. That synod approve the establishment of an advisory council for Heritage Hall to give counsel and advice to the curator and staff of Heritage Hall on matters of vision, personnel, finances, strategic planning, and programming. The advisory council will report to the Historical Committee, the executive director of the CRCNA, and the administrations of Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary. The Historical Committee remains responsible for reporting to synod on Heritage Hall and the archives.

Ground: This will provide the clarification needed.

B. That synod approve no additional changes in the governance of Heritage Hall and the archives.

Grounds:

1. It has not been established that such a change is necessary or in the best interest of Heritage Hall and the archives.
2. A synodical decision on this matter would be premature before the Historical Committee and the representatives of the funding entities resolve this matter together.

Historical Committee

John Bolt, chair

Paul Bremer

James A. De Jong, secretary

Kristin Kobes Du Mez

Overture 24: Commend the Great Lakes Catechism on Marriage and Sexuality to the Classes and Churches for Reflection and Study

I. Background

Over the last number of years, there has been much shifting of people's understanding regarding human sexuality and marriage in both the culture and churches. In addition, these important issues are more and more a source of public comment and discussion. Given this cultural climate, it is important for the church to be able to clearly articulate and instruct God's ways regarding these important issues, so that God's people can embrace his plans for them and be equipped to winsomely engage in meaningful discussion with each other and with their neighbors.

II. Overture

Classis Northcentral Iowa overtures Synod 2019 to commend the Great Lakes Catechism on Marriage and Sexuality (see *Agenda for Synod 2019*, pp. 438-44) to the classes and churches of the CRCNA for reflection and study.

Grounds:

1. As explained in the cover letter published by Dr. Branson Parler, president, Regional Synod of the Great Lakes (Reformed Church in America), there has been a need expressed, and this catechism is proposed as a tool to help address that need.¹
2. The RCA General Synod 2018 "commended the Great Lakes Catechism on Marriage and Sexuality for reflection, study, and response by the . . . RCA churches and classes as a means of deepening our understanding of the biblical teaching on human sexuality and finding a pathway forward in mission and ministry."² The CRCNA could benefit from participating in this discussion among ourselves and also our fellow Christians in the RCA.

Classis Northcentral Iowa
Steven L. Schulz, stated clerk

Note: Classis Northcentral Iowa was scheduled to meet in early March; however, winter storms caused a rescheduling of their meeting until late March, after the March 15 deadline for overtures had passed. Due to these circumstances beyond their control, Classis Northcentral Iowa's overture submitted in late March for consideration by synod is on synod's agenda.

¹ See www.bransonparler.com/blog/great-lakes-catechism-on-marriage-and-sexuality.

² *RCA Today*, June 11, 2018. See also rca.org/news/catechism-marriage-and-sexuality-be-sent-churches-and-classes.