

transforming lives and communities worldwide

AGENDA FOR SYNOD

2011



CHRISTIAN
REFORMED
CHURCH

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June 10-16, 2011
Van Noord Arena
Calvin College
Grand Rapids, Michigan

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Synod 2011 begins its sessions on Friday, June 10, at 9:00 a.m. in the Van Noord Arena at Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan. Madison Square CRC, also in Grand Rapids, will serve as the convening church. The pastor of the convening church, Reverend David H. Beelen, will serve as the president pro-tem until synod is duly constituted and its four officers have been elected. Rev. Beelen will also deliver the message at the synodical Service of Prayer and Praise that will be held Sunday, June 12, 2011, at 11:00 a.m. at Madison Square CRC, 1434 Madison Square Ave. SE, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

All delegates and advisers to synod are encouraged to take time to listen to the audio orientation for synod, accessed on the synod website at www.crcna.org/synod. There will be a reception for first-time delegates and advisers on Thursday, June 9, at 7:00 p.m. Opportunity will be given to be introduced to denominational staff, agency and ministry directors, college presidents, and seminary faculty advisers during the reception.

The congregations of the Christian Reformed Church in North America are requested to remember the synodical assembly in intercessory prayers on Sundays, June 5 and 12. Let us pray that the Holy Spirit will equip the synodical delegates to serve in faith and obedience and will lead the Christian Reformed Church into new and challenging areas of ministry. May we together experience “the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:3) as we strive to know and to do the will of the Lord.

Gerard L. Dykstra
Executive Director of the CRCNA

I. Welcome

Thank you for serving as a delegate to Synod 2011. Whether you are a returning delegate or you are coming for the first time, we sincerely hope and pray that you will find synod to be a pleasant and blessed experience. You come together as disciples of Jesus Christ, as members of the CRC, and as representatives of the classes that delegated and appointed you to serve. Synod is more than just a gathering of church leaders or a governing body. It is a reflection of the church and a time for reflection and celebration of what God is doing in and through the Christian Reformed Church in North America. God has richly blessed us, and you have been given a unique privilege to serve him and his kingdom by your work at synod.

The synodical services staff, under the leadership of Ms. Dee Recker, is available to assist you in whatever way they are able. Please feel free to contact the synodical services office if you need information or have any questions before arriving by writing drecker@crcna.org, calling 800-272-5125 or 616-224-0827, or you may visit the synod website at crcna.org/synod.

II. Confidentiality of the executive sessions of synod

The Board of Trustees calls the matter of confidentiality to the attention of Synod 2011 and urges that all necessary precautions be taken to prevent violations of confidentiality.

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

III. Audio and video recordings of synod

Synod 1979 authorized the making of an official audio recording of the entire proceedings of the general sessions of synod as a way to verify the written record of the synodical proceedings. Although the general sessions of synod are recorded, executive sessions are not recorded. Delegates to synod are informed at the opening session of synod that all the general sessions are being recorded. Synod has designated that the office of the executive director be responsible for the use and storage of these materials.

The following regulations were adopted by Synod 1989 concerning audio and video recordings of synodical sessions by media representatives and visitors:

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

B. *Visitor privileges*

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

(*Acts of Synod 1989*, p. 445)

IV. Proposed daily schedule

Although each new assembly is free to alter the schedule, the following general schedule is tentatively in place for Synod 2011:

Thursday orientation

5:30 - 6:30 p.m.	Orientation for ethnic advisers, faculty advisers, and young adult advisers
7:00 - 8:00 p.m.	Reception for first-time delegates and advisers
7:30 - 8:30 p.m.	Orientation for chairs and reporters, and for alternate chairs and reporters of advisory committees

Opening Friday

9:00 - 11:00 a.m.	Opening session of synod Election of officers Finalization of committee assignments
11:15 - 12:15 p.m.	Advisory committees meet for introductions
12:15 - 1:15 p.m.	Lunch
12:15 p.m.	Orientation for officers of synod
1:30 - 3:00 p.m.	Advisory committee meetings
3:00 - 3:20 p.m.	Break
3:30 - 5:00 p.m.	Advisory committee meetings
5:30 - 6:30 p.m.	Dinner
7:00 - 9:00 p.m.	Advisory committee meetings

Saturday

8:15 - 8:45 a.m.	Opening worship
8:45 - 9:15 a.m.	Brief plenary session
9:15 - 11:45 a.m.	Advisory committee meetings
11:45 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.	Lunch
1:15 - 5:00 p.m.	Advisory committee meetings
5:30 - 6:30 p.m.	Dinner
7:00 - 9:00 p.m.	Tentative plenary session

Sunday

11:00 a.m.	Synodical worship service
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Monday – Wednesday

8:15 - 8:45 a.m.

8:45 - 11:45 a.m.

11:45 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

1:15 - 5:00 p.m.

5:30 - 6:30 p.m.

7:00 - 9:00 p.m.

Opening worship

Plenary session

Lunch

Plenary session

Dinner

Plenary session

Thursday

8:15 - 8:45 a.m.

8:45 - 11:45 a.m.

11:45 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

1:15 - 5:00 p.m.

Opening worship

Plenary session

Lunch

Proposed joint session and worship with RCA

(Final adjournment at 5:00 p.m.)

DELEGATES TO SYNOD 2011

Classis	Delegates	Alternates
Alberta North		
Ministers	Fred M. Bultman John W. Luth	Ministers Karen L. Norris Arthur L. Verboon
Elders	August Luymes Ralph Helder	Elders Co J. VanderLaan Frank Zee
Alberta South/Saskatchewan		
Ministers	Paul Verhoef Daniel T. Roukema	Ministers Curtis D. Korver Michael B. Koot
Elders	Christine D. Vanderberg Pearl Nieuwenhuis	Elders Bert Adema
Arizona		
Ministers	Jonathan Gerstner Lawrence A. Lobdell, Jr.	Ministers Jeffrey A. Dykema James A. Hildebrandt
Elders	Kenneth L. Rindels Eileen G. Moe	Elders Rodney Hugen Ken Wigboldy
Atlantic Northeast		
Ministers	William S. Johnson Alvern Gelder	Ministers Christopher A. Fluit Gregory A. Selmon
Elders	Bo Verburg Bryan Wiegens	Elders Gregory T. Huck William M. Hanchett
B.C. North-West		
Ministers	Albert Y.S. Chu Trevor G. Vanderveen	Ministers Andrew E. Beunk Johannes (Jo) Schouten
Elders	Hendrik C. Van Ryk Andy de Ruyter	Elders Joel Pel Judy Syyong
B.C. South-East		
Ministers	Bert Slofstra Paul Lomavatu	Ministers Henry Devries Colin Vander Ploeg
Elders	Rick Plantinga Chuck Gerber	Elders Norman Brouwer Tony Van Tol
California South		
Ministers	Jimmy Han Cornelius Pool	Ministers Jose F. Munoz Seong Soo Nam
Elders	Paul De Waard J. Harold Caicedo	Elders LeeVale Butler Francene J. Wunderink
Central California		
Ministers	George G. Vink Daniel J. Hutt	Ministers Andrew C.S. Narm Bruce A. Persenaire
Elders	Mark C. Humphreys Adrian J. Van Houten	Elders Douglas Vander Wall Albert Veldstra

Classis	Delegates	Alternates
Central Plains		
Ministers	Brian L. Ochsner Edward J. Laarman	Ministers John Gorter Merwin E. Rylaarsdam
Elders	Tim S. Franje Howard Vander Griend	Elders _____ _____
Chatham		
Ministers	Frederick F. Heslinga Paul J. Droogers	Ministers James R. Poelman Robert J. Loerts
Elders	Fred Smids John Krale	Elders Martin P.J. Bosveld Arie Markvoort
Chicago South		
Ministers	Gregory S. Janke Joseph M. Huizenga	Ministers Marshall T. Holtvluwer Richard R. De Vries
Elders	Hilda M. Ragon Richard D. DeBoer	Elders Clarence J. Bulthuis Sr. _____
Columbia		
Ministers	Robert J. Toornstra Carl J. Leep	Ministers Thomas A. De Does Joseph M. Kamphuis
Elders	Chad E. Werkhoven James M. Worst	Elders Ivan R. Imig Harry Visser
Eastern Canada		
Ministers	Jacob M. Van de Hoef Kenneth M. Gehrels	Ministers Harold A. Winter John H. Noordhof
Elders	Jean J.A. Lauziere Walter Neutel	Elders Jacob Rook Steven R. Eckersley
Georgetown		
Ministers	Brian P. Bosscher Stephen M. Hasper	Ministers David E. Den Haan Joshua S. Van Druenen
Elders	Cornelius Vander Kam Evan D. Cuperus	Elders Robert Vanden Berg _____
Grand Rapids East		
Ministers	Peter Jonker Elizabeth VanderHaagen	Ministers David H. Beelen Philip V. De Jonge
Elders	Cisco Gonzalez Amanda J. Roozeboom	Elders George N. Monsma, Jr. Daniel R. Miller
Grand Rapids North		
Ministers	C. James den Dulk Richard L. Pinckney	Ministers Terry D. Slachter Jerome Burton
Elders	Wayne Hubers Jay Tans	Elders Janice K. Hilbrands _____
Grand Rapids South		
Ministers	Dan A. Gritter Daniel I. Bud	Ministers Donald J. Klop Randall S. Ledebøer
Elders	Steve De Haan Paul R. LaGrand	Elders P. Herbert Advocaat _____
Grandville		
Ministers	David L. Spoelma M. Dale Fopma	Ministers Timothy A. Kuperus Philip J. Boender
Elders	Fred C. Visser James Roskam	Elders Ann Aardema Hank F. Vlaardingbroek

Classis	Delegates	Alternates
Greater Los Angeles	Ministers Bonny Mulder-Behnia Peter Kang	Ministers Paul R. Hoekstra Christina Kang
	Elders Tae H. Kim Thomas Byma	Elders Julius B. Umawing Mark Hugen
Hackensack	Ministers Sheila E. Holmes Paul J. Van Dyken	Ministers Gary Roest Joseph Yo Sug Chung
	Elders Katie R. Roelofs Kenneth J. Smith	Elders Karen J. Abbas
Hamilton	Ministers Zachary J. Olson M. Jeffery Klingenberg	Ministers Shawn R. Brix Kenneth F. Benjamins
	Elders Clarence E. Batterink Judy Cook	Elders Arie G. Van Eek Andy DeJong
Heartland	Ministers Todd M. Zuidema Kevin J. Muyskens	Ministers Greg R. Dyk J. William Van Der Heide
	Elders Byron Bulthuis LeRoy TenNapel	Elders Chuck Zomermaand Craig L. Stiemsma
Holland	Ministers Trent Walker Christopher J. De Vos	Ministers Mark A. Quist Marvin J. Hofman
	Elders Frederick J. Groen Fronse Pellebon Smith	Elders Peter Sytsma Nick Leegwater
Hudson	Ministers Paul M. Ingeneri Kooksung Kim	Ministers Benjamin Spalink Rod D. Gorter
	Elders Bernard Joustra Ernest Wiegers	Elders Gerald Bandstra Natalie S. Beattie
Huron	Ministers Rita S. Klein-Geltink Ralph S. Wigboldus	Ministers Harry J. Frielink Brian J. Bork
	Elders Keith Oosthoek John Van Donkersgoed	Elders Amanda Bakale Marguerite Ridder
Iakota	Ministers James Hoogeveen Gideon E. Wamala	Ministers John R. Lee Jeffery W. Scripps
	Elders Brad Van Surksun Dennis Kooiman	Elders Orlan Gulker
Illiana	Ministers Calvin J. Aardsma John Kostelyk	Ministers Richard T. Vanderwal Randall R. Bergsma
	Elders Carl R. Smits Marc V. Zumhagen	Elders Lawrence W. Ouwenga Gerald Kuiper
Kalamazoo	Ministers Kenneth A. Baker John M. Wanders	Ministers Philip D. Kok Ronald De Young
	Elders Laura Jager David C. Zinn	Elders David E. Kuipers

Classis	Delegates	Alternates
Lake Erie		
Ministers	Randall D. Engle Robert A. Arbogast	Ministers Benjamin W. Van Arragon Clayton Libolt
Elders	Violetta A. Diamond Florence E. Lamberts	Elders Jon Feikens Gary S. Adams
Lake Superior		
Ministers	Archie L. Vander Hart Henry G. Gunnink	Ministers Henry Vander Beek Donald G. Draayer
Elders	Don Muilenburg Doug Shank	Elders Steven J. Ahrenholz Perrin M. Werner
Minnkota		
Ministers	Joseph Vanden Akker Timothy J. Ouwinga	Ministers Randall C. Raak Timothy J. Brown
Elders	Eldon G. Bonnema David A. Mohlenkamp	Elders Chester Vander Zee
Muskegon		
Ministers	Leslie D. Van Dyke Michael D. Koetje	Ministers Bruce T. Ballast Drew K. Sweetman
Elders	Ronald D. Bielema Carol R. Spelman	Elders Ione M. Hoekenga
Niagara		
Ministers	James C. Dekker Steven J. deBoer	Ministers Gregory A. Fluit EJ de Waard
Elders	Jack de Vries Bert Witvoet	Elders Cornelis Van Soelen Louis den Bak
Northcentral Iowa		
Ministers	Russell W. Boersma Joel A. De Boer	Ministers Jonathan Spronk Harrison F. Harnden
Elders	Clarence E. Karsjens Mark F. Voss	Elders _____ _____
Northern Illinois		
Ministers	Leonard H. Meinema John R. Huizinga	Ministers Pedro Aviles Mark W. van Stee
Elders	Richard S. Wright David R. Armstrong	Elders Arnold J. Tiesman
Northern Michigan		
Ministers	Spencer M. Tuttle Jonathan W. Flikkema	Ministers Larry D. Baar Kenneth D. Koning
Elders	Gerald J. Schepers Al DeBoer	Elders Carl J. Afman
Pacific Hanmi		
Ministers	NamJoong Kang David D. Suh	Ministers Roger Y. Ryu Sung Joo Kang
Elders	Taek Ho Yang Jonathan J. Kim	Elders Hyung Ju Park Peter NakYoung Ryu
Pacific Northwest		
Ministers	Timothy B. Toeset Randolph L. Rowland	Ministers John Van Schepen Douglas Fakkema
Elders	Fred Y. Ypma Jay Hibma	Elders Linda Ackerman Jaloy E. Gustafson

Classis	Delegates	Alternates
Quinte		
Ministers	Michael W. Bootsma Daniel C. Zylstra	Ministers Kenneth R. Ritsema Kevin te Brake
Elders	Mary Hosmar Andries Batelaan	Elders Hans J.J. Van Manen Rene H. Schmidt
Red Mesa		
Ministers	W. Keith Bulthuis Stanley Jim	Ministers Michael J. Meekhof John J. Greydanus
Elders	James Litson N. Theresa Rottschafer	Elders Ronald H. Donkersloot Roselynn T. Nelson
Rocky Mountain		
Ministers	David A. Hornor Arthur B. De Bruyn	Ministers Kenneth M. Vander Horst John Terpstra
Elders	Karen Waanders Alice F. Waanders	Elders Terry M. Gray Mark Afman
Southeast U.S.		
Ministers	Felix Fernandez Stanley J. Workman	Ministers Paul G. Hackett Thomas R. Dykstra
Elders	William Karshima James L. Kelley, Jr.	Elders _____ _____
Thornapple Valley		
Ministers	Merlin N. Buwalda Thomas J. De Vries	Ministers David D. Poolman Ronald D. Goudzwaard
Elders	Ken D. Oosterhouse David Radius	Elders Chris L. Van Spronsen Kathy Miedema
Toronto		
Ministers	Joel E. Kok Robert Datema	Ministers Gary Van Leeuwen Willem J. du Plessis
Elders	David Raakman A. Henry Eygenraam	Elders Ray Scheepstra Louis Bierling
Wisconsin		
Ministers	David J. Dykstra Craig Van Hill	Ministers Douglas L. Aldrink Leslie J. Kuiper
Elders	Alan E. Blied Larry D. Gunnink	Elders Jerry W. Heinen David Katsma
Yellowstone		
Ministers	Jerry L. Blom Bradley A. Meinders	Ministers George Den Oudsten Randall D. VanOsdol
Elders	Dick C. Flikkema Mike Vyfvinkel	Elders _____ _____
Zeeland		
Ministers	Ronald D. De Young Aaron J. Vriesman	Ministers Tyler J. Wagenmaker Timothy Howerzyl
Elders	Donald Kloosterhouse Robert W. Brower	Elders Harry J. Mulder _____

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

BOARD OF TRUSTEES REPORT

The Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church in North America (the Board or BOT) presents this report as a summary of the activities carried out on behalf of synod during the interim between Synod 2010 and Synod 2011.

I. Introduction

A. General

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

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

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

(Preamble, Constitution of the Board of Trustees)

The Board, a synodically elected and appointed governing body, whose members also serve as the directors of the CRCNA-Canada Corporation and the CRCNA-Michigan Corporation, has met two times since Synod 2010 (September 2010 and February 2011) and is scheduled to meet again in May 2011. The Board's agenda normally consists of agency matters (program review, personnel appointments, focus of the agency, and so forth), polity matters (study reports, board appointments, interim committee of synod concerns), as well as normal organizational matters that come up in a complex organization such as the CRCNA. In addition, the Board oversees the work of the executive director.

Nearly all the matters addressed by the Board impact the full CRCNA as a binational church, but, in compliance with Canadian regulations governing Canadian registered charities, the Canadian trustees review and approve all actions taken by the full Board and, as necessary, address any matters that

relate directly to uniquely Canadian issues and matters of law. The Board, as synod's agent, is grateful for the opportunity to serve the entire church.

B. Membership

The members of the Board from the United States are Mr. Mark Charles (member-at-large), Rev. Peter J. DeVries (Region 5), Ms. Joan Flikkema (Region 11), Dr. R. Scott Greenway (Region 11), Rev. Sheila Holmes (Region 12), Rev. Robert A. Lyzenga (Region 9), Rev. Christian Y. Oh (member-at-large), Rev. Eleanor M. Rietkerk (member-at-large), Rev. John Rop, Jr. (Region 10), Mr. Roy Stallworth (Region 11), Rev. Angela Taylor Perry (Region 10), Rev. John Terpstra (Region 7), Mr. Gary Van Engelenhoven (Region 8), Mr. Loren J. Veldhuizen (Region 8), and Rev. Mark D. Vermaire (Region 6).

The members of the Board from Canada are Ms. Irene Bakker (member-at-large), Ms. Janette Bax (Lake Superior), Rev. Kenneth D. Boonstra (B.C. South-East), Mr. Wiebe Bylsma (Quinte), Mr. Bruce Dykstra (member-at-large), Rev. Dale Melenberg (Alberta South/Saskatchewan), Mrs. Grace Miedema (Chatham), Ms. Gayle Monsma (member-at-large), Mr. Peter Noteboom (Toronto), Mr. Gary VanArragon (Huron), Ms. Katherine M. Vandergrift (Eastern Canada), Rev. Trevor Vanderveen (B.C. North-West), and Rev. William C. Veenstra (Hamilton).

The executive director (Rev. Gerard L. Dykstra) serves ex officio as a corporate trustee and member of the Board of Trustees (without vote).

Following are the officers of the Board and respective corporations for the 2010-2011 term:

1. Board officers: Rev. M.D. Vermaire, president; Rev. K.D. Boonstra, vice president; Rev. G.L. Dykstra, secretary; Rev. S. Holmes, vice-all.
2. Corporation officers:
 Canadian Corporation: Mr. G. VanArragon, president; Rev. K.D. Boonstra, vice president; Mrs. G. Miedema, secretary.
 Michigan Corporation: Rev. M.D. Vermaire, president; Rev. R.A. Lyzenga, vice-president; Rev. G.L. Dykstra, secretary; Rev. S. Holmes, vice-all.
3. Executive Committee: Rev. K.D. Boonstra, Rev. S. Holmes, Rev. R.A. Lyzenga, Mrs. G. Miedema, Mr. G. VanArragon, and Rev. M.D. Vermaire, chair. Rev. G.L. Dykstra serves ex officio.

C. Salary disclosure

At the directive of synod, the Board reports the following salaries for levels 15 and above:

Job level	Number of positions	Compensation quartile (includes housing allowance)
20	1	2nd
19	2	2nd and 3rd
18	2	2nd
17	1	2nd

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

The Christian Reformed Church in North America
2010-2011 Salary Grade and Range Structure

Level	U.S. Range			Canadian Range		
	Minimum	Midpoint	Maximum	Minimum	Midpoint	Maximum
20	\$115,291	\$144,113	\$172,936			
19	\$103,936	\$129,921	\$155,905			
18	\$92,638	\$115,798	\$138,957	\$102,262	\$127,828	\$153,394
17	\$83,144	\$103,930	\$124,716	\$88,853	\$111,066	\$133,279
16	\$74,835	\$93,544	\$112,253	\$77,756	\$97,195	\$116,634
15	\$67,840	\$84,800	\$101,760	\$68,492	\$85,616	\$102,739
14	\$59,271	\$74,089	\$88,906	\$60,406	\$75,507	\$90,609
13	\$52,105	\$65,132	\$78,158	\$53,907	\$67,384	\$80,861

II. Activities of the Board

A. Polity matters

1. Interim appointments

On behalf of synod, the Board has ratified the following appointments made by classes:

Board	Classis	Member	Alternate	Term
Synodical Deputies	B.C. North-West	Rev. Dick Kwantes	Rev. Peter Brouwer	2013(1)
	B.C. South-East	Rev. Bert Slofstra		2013(1)
	California South	Rev. William Verhoef		2013(1)
	Georgetown	Rev. Gerald A. Koning	Rev. Matthew A. Palsrok	2013(1)
	Greater Los Angeles	Rev. Paul R. Hoekstra	Rev. Erick D. Westra	2013(1)
	Holland		Rev. Adam M.H. Barton	
	Quinte	Rev. Jake Kuipers		2013(1)
	Yellowstone	Rev. Jack Huttinga	Rev. Jerry L. Blom	2013(1)
CRWRC	Red Mesa	Mr. Caleb N. Dickson		2014(1)

2. Classes that have declared that women officebearers (ministers, elders, deacons) may not be delegated to classis

In accordance with the instructions of Synod 2007, the executive director keeps a list of those classes that, in keeping with their understanding of the biblical position on the role of women in ecclesiastical office, declare that women officebearers (ministers, elders, deacons) may not be delegated to classis. Although some of these classes have developed their own regulations regarding the permissibility of women officebearers participating in classis meetings, some classes have adopted a decision to declare that women officebearers may not be delegated to classis. A list of these classes may be obtained by contacting the office of the executive director.

3. Board nominations

a. Regional members

Whenever a new Board of Trustees member is needed from a region or when a member's first term is completed, each classis in the region is requested to submit or approve names for the position. Nominations are then prepared by the Board and are forwarded to synod for election. Generally, all first-term elections are from a slate of two nominees, and all second-term elections are from a slate of single nominees (see Rules for Synodical Procedure, VI, D, 2).

The Board recommends the following slates of nominees from various geographic regions for election to a first term:

Region 6

Mr. Kyu Paek, a member of Korean CRC of Orange County, a church located in Westminster, California, is a systems engineer at Sandia National Labs for Boeing. He has served on the Korean Ministry Team, classis executive team, and as a small group/Coffee Break ministry developer for Korean churches. Mr. Paek is currently serving as an elder for his church and has been a member on the church building committee as well as providing oversight for the English ministries of Korean CRC.

Mr. Daniel Vink is a member of First Visalia CRC in Visalia, California. He holds a master of arts degree in public administration from California State University, Fresno, and is a general manager for the Lower Tule River Irrigation District. Mr. Vink served on the synodical Committee to Study the Migration of Workers, which reported to Synod 2010. Mr. Vink has been involved in his local church as chair for a master planning and expansion committee and a long-range planning committee and has also served on the governance restructuring committee and the denominational Leadership Exchange team.

Classis Alberta North

Mr. Ronald L. Knol, a member of First CRC in Edmonton, Alberta, is a non-practicing lawyer. For the past five years, he has worked as a self-employed contractor serving as a Western Canada representative for Christian Stewardship Services. He has served his local church as elder and is currently serving as deacon. He also assists in worship by playing the organ/piano. Mr. Knol has served on various boards and committees, including roles as executive director of the Edmonton Society for Christian Education, executive director of Cornerstone Counseling, and board member of Keiskamma Canada Foundation. Currently Mr. Knol serves as chair of the board of directors for The King's University College Foundation and is on the board of directors of Rehoboth Christian Ministry Foundation. He is also serving as chair for the Classis Alberta North Safe Church Team and as a member of the Classis Alberta North Restorative Justice Task Force.

Mr. Michael Wevers, a member of West End CRC in Edmonton, Alberta, has a master of arts degree in public administration from Carleton University, Ottawa, Ontario. Mr. Wevers served as an assistant to the Deputy Minister of Finance in Alberta and currently is retired. He has served the church in various terms as elder and deacon and currently is a member of the Staff Relations Committee at West End CRC. Mr. Wevers has also served as chair for the Reformed Youth of Northern Alberta and is an inaugural member of Classis Alberta North's first Classical Youth Ministry Committee.

Classis Huron

Rev. Vicki Cok is the pastor of Waterloo CRC in Waterloo, Ontario. Rev. Cok holds M.Div. and Th.M. degrees from Calvin Theological Seminary and has previously served as pastoral intern at Palo Alto

CRC, in Palo Alto, Illinois, and as pastoral resident at Church of the Servant CRC, in Grand Rapids, Michigan. She served on the search committee for the Director of Denominational Ministries in 2006 and as a delegate to Synod 2008. Currently Rev. Cok is a member of the board of trustees of the Institute for Christian Studies, Toronto, on which her term will expire this summer.

Dr. Darren Roorda is the senior pastor of preaching and administration for Community CRC in Kitchener, Ontario. He holds a D.Min. degree from Trinity International University and an M.Div. degree from Calvin Theological Seminary. Dr. Roorda has participated in Sustaining Pastoral Excellence Peer Learning Groups, which focused on “Pastors of Large Churches” and the “Mono-Ethnic to Multi-Ethnic Church.” He has served on the Classical Home Missions Committee in addition to serving on a pastoral advisory committee and a ministers conference planning committee for Emmanuel Bible College. Dr. Roorda was a delegate to Synod 2010.

Classis Niagara

Mr. Sylvan Gerritsma is a member of Jubilee Fellowship CRC in St. Catharines, Ontario, where he has served as council vice president and president as well as chair of the pastorate. Mr. Gerritsma holds a bachelor of arts degree from Dordt College. He has been a member of the synodical Committee to Study War and Peace, and he has been a synodical delegate four times. Mr. Gerritsma served on the board of the Institute for Christian Studies and as president of the board of the Christian Labour Association. Currently he is a member of the board of *Christian Courier*.

Mr. John TeBrake is a member of Bethany CRC, Fenwick, Ontario, where he has served as elder and as chair of council and on various committees. Mr. TeBrake is retired as executive director of the Niagara Peninsula Children’s Centre, a region-wide rehabilitation facility for children and youth with physical and/or speech and language disabilities. Currently he is involved in local programs such as Meals on Wheels and provides respite for caregivers of people with Alzheimer’s and other forms of dementia. Mr. TeBrake has a time-limited contract with the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee to do accounting consulting with respect to the Haiti Earthquake Relief program. He served as a delegate to Synod 2005 and currently is a member of the board of directors of Brain Injury Community Re-entry Niagara and of the board of directors of Tanguay Place, a regional residence for people with severe physical and/or developmental disabilities.

In addition, the Board recommends the following single nominee from a geographic region for election to a first term:

Classis Lake Superior (Canadian congregations only)

Rev. Harold De Jong, a member of First CRC in Thunder Bay, Ontario, is a retired pastor and the stated clerk of Classis Lake Superior. He holds a B.D. degree from Calvin Theological Seminary, an M.Th. degree from Acadia Divinity College, and a master of arts

degree from Fuller School of World Missions. Rev. De Jong has served as a pastor in the United States, Nigeria, and Zambia and as an elder in his local church. While in Nigeria with Christian Reformed World Missions, he served on the Liaison Committee Between Mission and Church and as Field Secretary/Director.

The Board recommends the following nominees from various classes or geographic regions for election (ratification) to a second term: Rev. John Terpstra (Region 7), Mr. Loren J. Veldhuizen (Region 8), Rev. Sheila Holmes (Region 12), Mrs. Grace Miedema (Classis Chatham), and Mr. Wybe Bylsma (Classis Quinte).

Mr. Roy Stallworth (Region 11) and Rev. Kenneth D. Boonstra (Classis B.C. South-East) have both moved from their respective regions and are unable to complete their respective terms. The Board of Trustees will submit nominees for Region 11 and Classis B.C. South-East by way of the BOT Supplement to synod.

b. At-large members

At-large members for the Board (a total of six) are also appointed directly by synod and exist to help create balance and/or provide expertise on the Board.

The Board recommends the following slate of nominees for a Canada at-large position for election to a first term:

Ms. Trixie Ling, a member of First CRC of Vancouver, British Columbia, is a graduate student in the school of Public Policy at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver. She holds a bachelor of arts degree in politics, history, and economics from The King's University College. Previously Ms. Ling served on the board of Micah Challenge Canada. Currently she serves on the board of governors at The King's University College and is chair of the board of Co:Here Housing Initiative (a non-profit housing organization in Vancouver).

Ms. Elaine Yu is the English ministry coordinator at Immanuel CRC (a Chinese congregation) in Richmond, British Columbia. She is highly involved in the church as a member of several committees, including serving as head of the education committee and head of the fellowship and small groups committee. Ms. Yu has served as an ethnic adviser to synod and is a member of the Church Development Team and the Safe Church Team of Classis B.C. North-West. She holds a Th.M. degree from Regent College, Vancouver, including experience as a teaching assistant to Professor John Stackhouse. Ms. Yu currently serves on the curriculum design team at Regent College.

4. Annual report on gender and ethnic diversity on denominational boards

The BOT reports that there has been no progress this past year in the makeup of gender and ethnic diversity in board composition. There are presently 207 board members serving on eight denominational boards. Out of the 207 board members combined, 58 (28%) are women and 24 (12%) are persons of color. The 2010-2011 board term shows a *decrease* of 5 women and a *decrease* of 4 persons of color on the boards over the previous year.

5. Ethnic advisers to synod

The policy for the appointment of ethnic advisers to synod follows:

At each synod, up to seven members, but not less than two, from various ethnic communities in the CRC will serve as advisers to synod. The position of ethnic adviser is continued “as long as the number of ethnic minority delegates is fewer than twenty-five, after which it shall be discontinued. The BOT should appoint as many ethnic advisers as are needed to reach twenty-five, except that no more than seven (and no fewer than two) shall be appointed.”

At this writing the number of ethnic minority delegates appointed to Synod 2011 by classes is 21. To round out that number to reach twenty-five, the BOT appointed the following persons to serve as ethnic advisers to synod on an as-needed basis (* indicates service in 2010):

Pastor Gianni Gracia
* Mrs. Alice Rivers

* Mr. Thurman Rivers
Ms. Gavy Tran

6. Young adult advisers to synod

In an effort to engage youth and young adults (18-26 year olds) in the current issues faced by our denomination, Synod 2011 will be blessed by the participation of young adult advisers to the deliberations of synod. These advisers bring a valuable and unique perspective to the issues we face as a denomination by listening, observing, engaging delegates during advisory committee meetings, and offering their input on matters on the agenda of synod. The BOT has appointed the following persons to serve as young adult advisers to Synod 2011 (* indicates service as a youth observer in 2010):

* Mr. Mark Eekhoff
* Ms. Elizabeth Jennings

Mr. John Kloosterman
* Mr. Robert Van Lonkhuyzen

7. Joint Synod 2011 session with the Reformed Church in America
General Synod

In Spring 2010 a partnership was formed between the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRC) and the Reformed Church in America (RCA) to collaborate on a shared Synod Business Process System—a way of conducting roll call, voting, balloting, report sharing, and other matters of synodical business. As a result of this new partnering, the RCA offered to move their synod location and meeting dates in 2011. They will be meeting on the campus of Calvin College, using the same floor setup, hardware, and technology as the CRC. The IT staff from both denominations will be working together throughout both synod meetings to ensure that all systems run smoothly for this our inaugural year of the “Synod Bus.”

The change in venue and dates of the RCA synod to immediately follow the CRC synod provided an opportunity for the two denominations to explore the possibility of sharing an afternoon (final session of the CRC synod and second session of the RCA general synod) to celebrate our work together, collaboration, and partnerships. The following purpose statement for the proposed joint session was identified: “A celebration of the partnering and cooperation of the CRC and RCA for the sake of a joint Reformed witness in North America.”

It is with this purpose in mind that the Board of Trustees recommends that Synod 2011 approve the proposal for a joint session of the delegates to Synod 2011 of the CRCNA and the delegates to General Synod 2011 of the Reformed Church in America on Thursday, June 16, 2011.

8. Agency presentations at synod

Synod 1995 adopted a three-year rotation cycle for agency presentations at synod. The following roster for agency presentations is scheduled for Synod 2011:

- Back to God Ministries International
- Christian Reformed Home Missions
- Christian Reformed World Missions

9. Judicial Code Committee

The Judicial Code Committee hears appeals from actions taken by a classis or by an agency of the Christian Reformed Church in such cases where the actions are alleged to violate the Church Order or the agencies' mandates. The procedures followed by the Judicial Code Committee are set forth in Church Order Supplement, Article 30-c. The committee's nine members include people with legal expertise and both clergy and non-clergy. Members are from different parts of the United States and Canada.

One member of the Judicial Code Committee is completing a one-year extension of a second term. We are grateful to Mr. Gordon Vander Leek for his contributions and faithful service (including two years as chair) to the life of the church during his years on the committee.

On behalf of the committee the Board presents the following slate of nominees for election to the Judicial Code Committee:

Ms. Laura B. Bakker is a member of Plymouth Heights CRC in Grand Rapids, Michigan, where she has served as chair of council. Currently she is serving as the chair of its properties committee and also serves on the endowment fund committee. Previously Ms. Bakker has served on the Calvin College board, the promotions committee of the Kalamazoo County Bar Association, the administrative council for Third CRC, Kalamazoo, Michigan, and the promotions committee for Ada Christian School. Ms. Bakker holds a bachelor of arts degree in economics from Calvin College and a J.D. degree from Thomas Cooley Law School. She presently is employed as a contract research attorney for the Michigan Court of Appeals.

Ms. Pamela Hoekwater is a member of Eastern Avenue CRC in Grand Rapids, Michigan, where she has served as deacon. She holds a J.D. degree from the Notre Dame School of Law and a B.S.W. degree from Calvin College. She is presently employed as an attorney. Ms. Hoekwater has served on the classis renewal committee for Classis Grand Rapids East and on the Grand Rapids Christian Schools Focus Planning Committee. In addition, she has served as district board president for Evergreen Christian School in Grand Rapids.

10. Proposed revisions to the Constitution and Bylaws of the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA

Denominational boards and synodical standing committees of the CRC, in addition to the denomination's legal counsel, have reviewed proposed revisions to the Bylaws of the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA, which are now before synod for approval. The proposed changes are indicated by strikethrough and underline in Appendix A.

11. Office of Deacon Task Force

Synod 2010 adopted a proposal regarding the review of the office of deacon as a result of an overture to synod. The mandate for the work of the task force is worded as follows:

That synod instruct the Board of Trustees to appoint a task force to review the articles of the Church Order relating to the office of deacon at the church and major assemblies, as well as recommend resources that encourage revitalization of the diaconate and its role in the community. The intent of the review would be to encourage, empower, and educate churches and broader assemblies to structure their diaconal ministry in ways that

- allow for effective coordination of ministry efforts that transform the community and the church, as members minister in and with their community. This harnesses "God gifts" in the community for community benefit. The gifts of churches and their members, as well as the gifts lying dormant in the community, need to be stewardly. Church resources can be leveraged in amazing ways if they harness latent community gifts. Helping neighbors steward their resources is another pathway to heart change, significant living, opening conversations, and relationships that draw people to Jesus as Savior, Redeemer, and King.
- select leadership based on gifts commensurate with the office and vision for ministry.
- lead church members to exercise their gifts and so enhance their own faith walk as they minister with community, nation, and world.
- establish terms of deacon tenure that provide for consistent ministry oversight, implementation, and coordination.
- address the place and role of deacons at the broader assemblies.

Grounds:

- a. The current structure and tradition do not address the ministry context or the expectations of the equality of office established in Church Order Article 2.
- b. The mandate in the charge to deacons is difficult to fulfill given the current language in the Church Order.
- c. Past efforts to address this (i.e., asking for stronger classical diaconal committees) have not resulted in churches being the agents of transformation in their communities.

(Acts of Synod 2010, p. 829)

The BOT appointed the following individuals to the task force and reports that they have begun the work before them:

Dr. Mariano Avila
Rev. Roy Berkenbosch
Rev. Richard A. Jones
Ms. Greta Luimes

Mr. Andrew Ryskamp (staff adviser)
Ms. Bonnie Smith
Ms. Lori Wiersma
Mr. Terry Woodnorth, chair

12. Creation Stewardship Task Force

Synod 2010 adopted a proposal regarding appointing a task force to identify a biblical and Reformed perspective of our position on creation stewardship as a result of an overture to synod and a Creation Care report by the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA. The complete decision of synod for the work of the task force is found in the following:

That synod instruct the BOT to assemble a task force that will report to Synod 2012, to identify a biblical and Reformed perspective of our position on creation stewardship, including climate change, applicable to this millennium, for congregations, society, and our global gospel partners.

Grounds:

- a. *Our World Belongs to God*, paragraph 51—“We commit ourselves to honor all God’s creatures and to protect them from abuse and extinction, for our world belongs to God”—makes clear our responsibility to address this concern.
- b. Sufficient relevant material already exists from which we may draw to create such a position statement.
- c. A great deal of the science on this subject elicits widely varying opinions that often retard any active response.
- d. There is an urgent need to focus on the biblical and Reformed perspective so that we may unify our community around common ground and enable the formulation of concrete positive action strategies.

(Acts of Synod 2010, p. 872)

The BOT appointed the following individuals to the Creation Stewardship Task Force and reports that they have met and are taking on the work before them:

Dr. Thomas Ackerman	Mr. Peter Vander Meulen (staff adviser)
Dr. Tom Bruulsema	Ms. Amy Vander Vliet
Mr. Ted Charles	Dr. Gerry Van Kooten
Dr. Calvin B. DeWitt, chair	Ms. Cindy Verbeek
Ms. Anoushka Martil	Mr. Joel Visser
Dr. Mary VandenBerg	

13. Young Adult Summit Proposal

The CRC’s Leadership Exchange hosted a forum for young adults in fall 2010, from which came a proposed Young Adult Summit for the purpose of engaging the young adults of our denomination in matters that are before the church. The BOT presents the Young Adult Summit Proposal (Appendix B and its Addendum) for endorsement by the delegates to Synod 2011.

14. Diversity in Leadership Planning Group Report

Upon the request of Synod 2009 that the BOT be “relentless and faithful advocates in promoting multiethnic communication, dialogue, and leadership development at the denominational, classical, and congregational levels,” the Board instructed the executive director to convene an ethnically inclusive group to develop a statement of vision and strategy for increasing multiethnic representation within the leadership of the denomination. The Diversity in Leadership Planning Group presented

their report to the BOT in February 2011 for adoption and is now before synod for endorsement. You will find it as Appendix C to this report.

15. Report of the Process for Significant Structural Changes Task Force

In response to the report and recommendations of the Task Force to Develop Guidelines for Proposed Structure Changes, Synod 2010 instructed the BOT to develop a process by which significant structural changes would be made and to report that process to synod (see *Acts of Synod 2010*, p. 861). The report and recommendations of the BOT appointed task force adopted by the BOT are found in Appendix D. The BOT presents the report to synod as the Board's response to the request of Synod 2010.

16. Leadership Exchange

Mr. Chris Pullenayegem, the director of the Leadership Exchange, has been focusing his time on the future plans for the Exchange. His work is guided by the Leadership Exchange Governing Board, and he reports to the executive director of the CRCNA. Responses to the Exchange have been very positive, and Mr. Pullenayegem is actively engaged in conversations with pastors, churches, educators, and leaders across North America. The current focus of the Exchange is to develop leaders among young adults, ethnic communities, business professionals, and the classical regions of our denomination. The aim is to build leaders who are reproducing disciples of Christ, servants of his body, and transformational agents of his kingdom.

Mr. Pullenayegem leads a very diverse team of part-time staff who coordinate these different areas of ministry. As they enter their second year of ministry, plans are under way to roll out programs that will begin to address some of the leadership gaps that were identified in year one. Perhaps the best way of describing the direction and focus of the Exchange would be to present a snapshot of a preferred future. They envision

- local congregations having one or more leadership catalysts/facilitators who will evaluate leadership needs, facilitate training, and mobilize leaders in various areas such as marketplace ministry, young adults, officebearers, Christian education, missional outreach, and so forth. In this context, the pastor then becomes an equippier—more than a provider of services—and elders lead with clarity of vision and as stewards of that vision. The hoped-for result is a strong mentoring and disciple-making culture entrenched in the life and ministry of the local church evidenced by small groups intentional about reproducing disciples with the pastor leading the way.
- CRC lay leaders engaging in the marketplace, leading workplace ministries, speaking into and shaping business culture, engaging in the public sphere, serving on community boards/agencies, and engaging in community life.
- young adult leaders crossing generational boundaries and engaging and influencing postmodern culture via other young adults in non-traditional forms of worship and Christian conversations, breaking down “church walls” so that the church can be “in the world.”

- new and emerging ethnic leaders taking their place in the CRC and giving leadership to their communities as ministry catalysts. These leaders will be bridge builders from their community to the local church.
- leaders who are apprentices of Jesus, servants of the body of Christ influencing others to live transformationally.

17. Publications and services

a. *Yearbook*

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

The *Yearbook* is published each January and reflects denominational and local-church information up to approximately August 31 of the calendar year preceding publication.

Among some of the statistics printed in the *Yearbook* are the total number of members (baptized and confessing) in a local congregation, number of families, number of professing members over eighteen years of age, total number of professing members, total number of baptized members, and total number of members received from other CRCs through evangelism and from other denominations.

The core database that stores *Yearbook* data is used for many purposes, such as calculating ministry shares and pension assessments, mailing list requests, updating the list of churches on the CRC website, and handling requests for information that is not published in the *Yearbook*.

To better serve the churches and members by providing the most up-to-date data available, plans for an online version of the *Yearbook* are still being considered. Present budget restrictions have delayed the process, but it is hoped that an online version will be available in the near future, allowing for the data accessible by subscribers to be the most current available.

b. *Church Order and Its Supplements*

The updated *Church Order and Its Supplements 2010* booklet reflects the updates adopted by Synod 2010. The latest version, updated by the Office of Synodical Services, was made available to the churches in early fall 2010. The *Rules for Synodical Procedure* portion of the previous booklet was removed from the printed version of the Church Order and is available only in electronic format on the Synodical Resources web page.

c. *Agenda for Synod and Acts of Synod*

The publication of the *Agenda for Synod and Acts of Synod* is the responsibility of the director of synodical services under the direction of the executive director. As in previous years, some decisions needed to be made about which material properly belonged in the *Agenda for Synod*. Erring on the side of grace seemed more appropriate than

erring on the side of rigid regulation. Synod itself will finally decide in all cases whether the material is properly on its agenda.

d. Resources available on the Christian Reformed Church website

With the greater use of electronic media and a significant decline in requests for printed material, the CRCNA website (www.crcna.org) has become a valuable tool for congregations and their staff in accessing denominational resources. The website is regularly updated, and the information and forms provided are the most current available.

e. *Manual for Synodical Deputies*

The *Manual for Synodical Deputies* is distributed to synodical deputies, their alternates, and stated clerks of classes. A revision of the manual was completed in Summer 2010 by the Office of Synodical Services, reflecting the decisions of Synod 2010. Anyone desiring to read a copy of this tool for the classes may download a copy from the stated clerk web page at www.crcna.org/pages/classis_clerks.cfm.

B. *Program matters*

A good deal of the Board of Trustees' (BOT) work relates to the ministry programs, personnel, and finances of the denomination. The program and personnel details are reported to synod by way of the reports of the agencies and this section of the BOT's report in this agenda. Additional information regarding financial matters is contained in Appendix I to this Board of Trustees Report as well as in the *Agenda for Synod 2011—Financial and Business Supplement* that is distributed at synod. The final budget and the ministry share request will be presented to synod by way of synod's finance advisory committee.

The BOT provides denominational oversight on behalf of synod throughout the year. The office of the executive director serves as the primary link between the BOT and the denomination's ministries. He is assisted in this work by the director of Canadian ministries (DCM), the director of denominational ministries (DDM), and the director of finance and administration (DFA). The Ministries Leadership Team (MLT), under the leadership of the DDM, is the interagency administrative team that has responsibility for implementation of the Ministry Plan of the Christian Reformed Church (formerly the Denominational Ministries Plan), the collaboration of the agencies, strategic planning for the ministries of the church, and the review of program matters. The MLT, convened by the DDM, is composed of the six agency directors and the directors of the Network and the Office of Race Relations.

The program and financial matters that were processed by the Board from July through February are presented to synod as information. Any matters that require action by synod are identified within the body of this report.

1. Ministry Plan of the Christian Reformed Church (formerly Denominational Ministries Plan)

The Board of Trustees is mandated by synod to lead in developing and implementing the Ministry Plan of the Christian Reformed Church (formerly Denominational Ministries Plan) that provides strategic direction for the agencies and institutions of the Christian Reformed Church. The plan provides a framework for the Board's supervision of the

management of the agencies; the planning, coordinating, and integrating of their work; and the integration of the respective missions of the denomination's educational institutions into the denominational ministry program.

The Ministry Plan focuses on biblical and theological identity and the core values that unite us in ministry. A section of the Ministry Plan, the Identity Statement, is presently under revision by a BOT appointed task force. This task force will do an in-depth study of what compels people to belong to the CRC today and will propose a new statement to the Board in the near future.

In order to effectively implement the Ministry Plan throughout our ministries, the Board has adopted a tool widely used in business, government, and non-profit organizations, called the Balanced Scorecard. Our own term for it is the Ministry Plan Scorecard (MPS). The MPS gives us the means to ensure that all of our ministries are pulling together in a coordinated, collaborative way to fulfill the plan's ten objectives. The MPS is operational at the agency and ministry level, and ministries align their own plans and targets with both its content and format. Consequently the Board is better able to use the plan as a dynamic instrument for oversight of our ministries.

The Ministry Plan Scorecard has served to focus the ministries on common objectives. This effort has served the church well and continues to raise the awareness of our responsibilities around service *to* the churches as well as serving *for* the churches. Such efforts have led to greater emphasis on our denominational priority of creating and sustaining healthy local congregations so that we may become even more effective in our purpose of transforming lives and communities worldwide.

2. The Network: Connecting Churches for Ministry

The Network: Connecting Churches for Ministry, directed by Rev. Michael Bruinooge, was launched in spring 2009. It is a denominational initiative to help congregations more quickly get the answers, tools, and resources they need for ministry. Through nearly fifty online networks and discussion forums, the Network demonstrates that often the best help comes from peers and neighbors. These networks and forums make it possible for ministry leaders to connect with others in CRC churches across North America who have similar roles or passions. In addition to having an online presence, the Network is currently testing a model of regional resourcing that uses part-time consultants to assist congregations in a variety of ways. These individuals will advocate for congregations, refer them to appropriate resources, and facilitate conversations among classical leaders, mission professionals, and volunteers that foster locally appropriate, collaborative ministry.

The Network was formed to add strength and momentum to the CRC's denominational priority of creating and sustaining healthy congregations. Read more about the ministry of the Network in the more complete report contained in Appendix E.

3. CRC agency, institution, and specialized ministry reports

Each year the Board of Trustees submits a *unified* report to synod composed of individual parts provided by the agencies, educational

institutions, and ministries of the Christian Reformed Church. The individual reports of the CRC ministries appear in the following pages of this *Agenda for Synod*.

These reports paint a picture of the ministry of the Christian Reformed Church at home and around the world. As you read the material, we invite you to praise God for ministry opportunities and for the many fine people who faithfully serve the church.

4. Appointment of the director of Christian Reformed Home Missions

The search process for a director of Christian Reformed Home Missions to replace the interim director, Mr. Ben Vandezande, has been completed, and the Board is pleased to announce that it has appointed and ratified on behalf of synod Rev. Moses Chung. Rev. Chung will begin serving in his role as director on May 1, 2011. It is appropriate that synod acknowledge Rev. Chung's appointment when he is introduced at synod. His curriculum vitae is found in Appendix F.

5. Resignation of the director of Safe Church Ministry

The Board of Trustees accepted the resignation of Ms. Beth Swagman as the director of Safe Church Ministry at its February 2011 meeting. Ms. Swagman has served the church faithfully and well. She was instrumental in establishing the Office of Abuse Prevention (now Office of Safe Church Ministry) more than 16 years ago and has led it with passion, determination, and grace. We praise God for her and for her faithful service to the CRC.

At the present time the denominational leadership is working with the Safe Church Ministry Advisory Council to assure a smooth and effective transition for a new director.

6. Report of the Task Force to Examine the Mandates of the Committee for Contact with the Government (CCG) and the Office of Social Justice and Hunger Action (OSJ)

The task force appointed at the request of Synod 2010 to review and update the mandates of the Committee for Contact with the Government and the Office of Social Justice submitted their report to the BOT. The Boards asks that synod approve the revised mandates of the Committee for Contact with the Government (CCG) and the Office of Social Justice and Hunger Action (OSJ) as found in Appendices G and H.

C. *Financial matters*

In order to assure that synod has the most up to date and accurate information, detailed financial data will be included in the *Agenda for Synod 2011—Business and Financial Supplement* that will be distributed to the delegates at the time synod convenes. This supplement will include financial disclosure information, agency budgets for fiscal year 2012 (July 1, 2011 – June 30, 2012), and the recommended ministry-share amount for the year 2012. In addition, synod will be asked to approve a schedule for one or more above-ministry-share offerings for the ministries of the denomination, a quarterly offering for CRWRC (in lieu of ministry-share support), and a listing of new requests for accredited agency status for recommendation to the churches. Additional financial information and/or recommendations will also be included in the supplementary report.

1. Ministry-share program

Synod 2009 requested that the executive director, through the office of Denominational Advancement, encourage and educate the churches regarding participation in the ministry-share system and resulting ministry. Over the past two years a team of people from the CRC communication and advancement offices, with the assistance of a professional communications consultant group, have been developing a strategic plan to enhance education and communication with churches about the importance and value of our ministry share system. As a result, new educational initiatives and materials have been developed and additional materials and processes are being developed to enhance ministry-share awareness and participation.

2. Pension Trustees Board matters

The Board of Trustees heard from representatives of the Pension Trustees of synod in February regarding proposed changes to the pension plans that are being presented to Synod 2011 for approval. Specifics about the changes can be found within the report on Pensions and Insurance in this *Agenda for Synod 2011*. The Board wishes to communicate its endorsement of the proposed changes to the ministers' pension plans that are before the delegates to synod.

3. Christian Reformed Church Foundation

The Christian Reformed Church Foundation began in the early 1990s, when several Christian Reformed Church members and the CRCNA executive director of ministries began the Fellowship Fund to support uniquely denominational programs and needs. Synod 1996 approved a binational Christian Reformed Church Foundation, now a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) organization in the United States. Its counterpart is the tax-exempt registered charity Canadian Christian Reformed Foundation. Both the binational and Canadian foundations have their own bylaws and board of directors.

Since the Foundation's inception, it has distributed funds received to various offices and agencies of the CRCNA or to closely affiliated organizations, including the Timothy Institute, Partners Worldwide, and CRC agencies such as Back to God Ministries International and Christian Reformed Home Missions. The Foundation in 2005 received funds from the Canadian Sea to Sea across Canada ride and is distributing those funds with the guidance of Home Missions to church growth projects across Canada. Similarly, in 2008 the Foundation was given approximately \$360,000 of the funds received through the Sea to Sea ride across the United States and parts of Canada, and distributed those funds to organizations with poverty alleviation ministries. Churches and organizations received \$5,000 or \$10,000 grants to fund their programs.

Under the leadership of Dr. Peter Harkema, director of denominational advancement, and the Foundation Board of Directors, the Foundation remains committed to strengthening the ministries of the CRC that contribute to the implementation of the Ministry Plan of the Christian Reformed Church. The Foundation seeks financial support for new ideas and programs that fall outside the mandates of the denominational agencies and are not funded through budgets of synod, classes, or agencies.

Currently the Foundation is raising funds for the Leadership Exchange and the Network: Connecting Churches for Ministry.

The Christian Reformed Church Foundation does not offer estate planning services but partners with Barnabas Foundation in the United States and with Christian Stewardship Services in Canada to help families make planned gifts and develop estate plans.

III. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Rev. Mark D. Vermaire, chair of the Board of Trustees; Rev. Gerard L. Dykstra, executive director; and members of the executive staff as needed when matters pertaining to the Board of Trustees are discussed.

B. That synod approve all requests for privilege of the floor by the BOT, agencies, educational institutions, standing committees, and study committees of synod contained within the reports to Synod 2011.

C. That synod approve all requests for special offerings for the agencies, ministries, and educational institutions of the CRC that are contained within the reports to Synod 2011.

D. That synod approve the interim appointments made by the Board for synodical deputies and alternate synodical deputies (II, A, 1), as well as to the agency and institution boards as needed.

E. That synod by way of the ballot elect members for the Board of Trustees from the slates of nominees presented (II, A, 3).

F. That synod by way of the ballot reappoint to a second term members for the Board of Trustees from the slate of nominees presented (II, A, 3).

G. That synod approve the proposal for a joint session of the delegates to Synod 2011 of the CRCNA and the delegates to General Synod 2011 of the Reformed Church in America on Thursday, June 16, 2011 (II, A, 7).

H. That synod by way of the ballot appoint a member to the Judicial Code Committee (II, A, 9).

I. That synod adopt the proposed revisions to the Constitution and By-laws of the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA as presented in Appendix A (II, A, 10).

J. That synod endorse the Young Adult Summit Proposal as found in Appendix B and its Addendum (II, A, 13).

K. That Synod 2011 endorse the Diversity in Leadership Planning Group report as found in Appendix C (II, A, 14).

L. That synod express gratitude to the Diversity in Leadership Planning Group members for their work.

M. That synod receive the report of the Process for Significant Structural Changes Task Force (Appendix D) as the Board's response to the request of Synod 2010 (II, A, 15).

N. That synod consider the following recommendations from the Chaplaincy and Care Ministry:

1. That synod urge parents, the youth and education ministries in our churches, and Christian schools to encourage our young people to prayerfully consider a wide range of ministry options, including chaplaincy ministries and other specialized Christian vocations.
2. That synod urge churches to pray regularly for chaplains who walk daily with people in crisis situations, have significant influence in secular institutions, and serve in difficult and sometimes dangerous situations—especially those who are separated from home and family by military deployment.
3. That synod urge churches and classes to welcome chaplains at their regular meetings (some classes have appointed a “chaplain of the day” for each meeting) and to explore with them how to use their training and gifts to benefit the care ministries of the local church.

O. That synod encourage Christian Reformed churches, classes, and educational institutions to sponsor events to celebrate Disability Week from October 10 through 16, 2011.

Grounds:

1. Specific and intentional events that recognize the importance of breaking down barriers and including people with disabilities will remind God’s people of the welcome our Lord gives to all of his people (Luke 14:15-24) and will encourage them to press on toward becoming a community in which every member knows that he or she is indispensable (1 Cor. 12:12-27).
2. This date coincides with the denominational schedule for offerings, which assigns the third Sunday in October to Disability Concerns.
3. The Bible calls God’s people to be a caring community as the covenant people of God. In 1985 the CRC committed itself as a denomination to eliminate barriers of architecture, communication, and attitude “in order to use the gifts of all people in our life together as God’s family.” Although our Lord Jesus calls all of his people to ministry in his church, the church has not always made it possible for people with disabilities to participate fully and sometimes has isolated them and their families.

P. That synod encourage churches, classes, and CRC institutions to celebrate All Nations Heritage Week from September 26 through October 2, 2011, with an invitation to celebrate All Nations Heritage Sunday with special services on October 2, 2011 (see *Agenda for Synod 2011*, p. 315).

Grounds:

1. The struggle against prejudice, discrimination, and racism needs to be balanced by celebrating and affirming God’s gift of unity in diversity through our Savior and Lord Jesus Christ (cf. Ephesians 2). The congregations that also celebrate World Communion Sunday can find a meaningful Christian Reformed way of celebrating All Nations Heritage Sunday by combining both celebrations.

2. The financial support our ministry receives from the All Nations Heritage Sunday celebrations dramatically increases Race Relations' ability to award scholarships and grants to promote leadership of people of color in the life of our denomination.

Q. That synod recognize Rev. Moses Chung's appointment to be the new director of Christian Reformed Home Missions and that Rev. Chung be permitted to address synod to extend his personal greetings (II, B, 4).

R. That synod approve the revised mandates of the Committee for Contact with the Government and the Office of Social Justice and Hunger Action (Appendices G and H, respectively; II, B, 6).

S. That synod receive as information the condensed financial statements for the agencies and educational institutions (see Appendix I).

Board of Trustees of the
Christian Reformed Church in North America
Gerard L. Dykstra, executive director

Appendix A

Constitution and Bylaws of the Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church in North America

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

Note: Terms and designations are important in this constitution and the accompanying bylaws. The terms *agency* and *agencies* exclude the committees and educational institutions unless specifically stated to the contrary.

PREAMBLE

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

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

To carry out this mission, the synod of the Christian Reformed Church in North America (hereinafter *synod*) has created the Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church in North America and such agencies, committees, and institutions as are listed in its bylaws. These agencies, committees, and institutions function primarily within Canada and the United States, where the Christian Reformed Church is committed to being a binational

denomination. Each organizational entity and each national expression of the Christian Reformed Church in North America makes its own unique contribution to God's mission in the world as the whole denomination strives to live the fullness of the gospel.

Article I Name

The name of this organization is the Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church in North America (hereinafter *the Board*). The Board is a synodically appointed body and its members serve also as the directors of the CRCNA-Canada Corporation and the CRCNA-Michigan Corporation.

Article II Purposes

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

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

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

Article III Functions

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

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

- A. Implement all matters committed to it by the specific instruction of synod, carrying out all necessary interim functions on behalf of synod, and execute all synodical matters that cannot be postponed until the next synod.

B. Lead in the development and implementation of a denominational ministries plan that reflects the biblical and Reformed mission commitment of the Christian Reformed Church. The denominational ministries plan provides a framework for the Board's supervision of the management of the agencies, the planning, coordinating, and integrating of their work, and for the integration of the respective missions of the denomination's educational institutions into the denominational ministry program.

C. Present to synod a unified report of all the agencies, committees, and educational institutions, as well as a unified budget inclusive of all agencies, committees, and educational institutions.

D. Serve synod with analyses, reviews, and recommendations with respect to the programs and resources of the denomination. In its discharge of this responsibility, the Board shall require reports from all the agencies, committees, and educational institutions.

E. Adjudicate appeals placed before it by the agency boards and committees. Such appeals shall be processed in accordance with the bylaws of the Board and the provisions of the Church Order. Appeals that deal with an action of the Board may be submitted to synod for adjudication.

F. Discharge all responsibilities incumbent upon directors of the Christian Reformed Church in North America, a Michigan not-for-profit corporation (CRCNA-Michigan), and the Christian Reformed Church in North America, a federally registered charity corporation (CRCNA-Canada) organized under the laws of Canada.

G. Serve as the Joint-Ministries Management Committee (JMMC), which is responsible for any joint-venture agreements between the CRCNA-Michigan and CRCNA-Canada. Members of the Board also serving as directors of CRCNA-Canada are responsible for joint-venture agreements between CRCNA-Canada and the agencies and committees of the denomination that are not registered as Canadian charities.

H. Approve all joint-ministry agreements between or among agencies and committees.

Article IV Membership

A. Nomination and election of members

The membership of the Board shall consist of not more than thirty (30) persons, each of whom shall be a member in good standing of a Christian Reformed church. Twelve (12) members shall each be elected from a designated geographic area in the United States, and twelve (12) members shall each be elected from a designated geographic area in Canada. There shall be six (6) members-at-large, three (3) elected from Canada and three (3) from the United States. The membership shall be divided into three (3) groups of ten persons each. At each annual meeting of synod, a group of members shall be elected by synod from a slate of nominees prepared in accordance with the provisions of Article V below for a term of office to expire on the first day of the month following the third annual meeting of synod after their election.

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

B. Ex officio members of the Board and members of the corporate entities

By virtue of the office, the executive director of the Christian Reformed Church in North America shall be a nonvoting member of the Board, and for legal purposes shall be a voting director of the CRCNA-Canada and the CRCNA-Michigan Corporations.

Article V

Election of Members

Members of the Board shall be elected by the synod of the Christian Reformed Church in North America in the manner described below.

Promptly after each synod, the executive director shall notify each classis within all synodical regions that have a member whose term expires at the following synod. This notice shall alert each classis in the region to nominate one or more persons to fill each vacancy on the Board and to submit its nomination(s) to the executive director by November 1. The Board shall

prepare a slate of nominees for presentation to synod. Normally, the slate shall be composed of persons who were nominated by the classes in a region.

If the procedure described above does not produce a sufficient number of persons who in the judgment of the Board meet the criteria for maintaining the synodically required diversity of Board members, the Board may add other names to the list of nominations submitted to synod for election.

In preparing nominations, the Board shall

A. Adhere to the synodical policy that no more than one-half the members of the Board shall be ministers of the Word.

B. Take into account applicable synodical policies that may be adopted from time to time, including, but not limited to, policies with respect to diversity, age, gender, ethnic representation, and specific expertise.

C. Develop and implement rotation cycles for the regions so that, as much as possible, fair representation is achieved.

Article VI

Term

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

Article VII

Officers, Meetings, and Committees

A. Officers

The CRCNA-Canada Corporation shall elect its officers from among the members of the Board elected from Canadian regions. The U.S. members of

the Board from the CRCNA-Michigan Corporation shall elect ~~it's~~ the CRC-NA-Michigan Corporation's officers from among the members of the Board elected from U.S. regions except that the executive director also shall function as the secretary of that corporation. The Board shall elect its own officers from among the officers of the two corporations except that the executive director shall function as secretary of the Board.

B. Meetings

The Board shall meet as often as it deems necessary to fulfill its purpose but no fewer than three (3) times annually. The CRCNA-Canada Corporation shall also meet no fewer than three (3) times annually. The CRCNA-Michigan Corporation may meet as needed for legal purposes with only those members elected from regions within the United States and the executive director.

C. Committees

The Board shall designate its own committees.

Article VIII Amendments

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

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

First approved in 1993

Revised in 1996

Revised in 2001

Revised (editorially only) in 2005

Revised in 2006

Revised in 2008 (reference to alternate members removed)

Proposed in 2011

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

I. Introduction

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

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

- A. The Board shall carry out its work by organizing itself into such committees as it deems necessary.
- B. To fulfill the functions described in the constitution, the Board shall
1. Lead in the development and implementation of a ministry plan of the Christian Reformed Church ~~denominational ministries plan~~, which will serve to guide the agencies, committees, and educational institutions in the fulfillment of their respective mandates. The ministry plan of the Christian Reformed Church ~~denominational ministries plan~~ provides a framework for the Board's supervision of the management of the agencies, the planning, coordinating, and integrating of their work, and for the integration of the respective missions of the denomination's educational institutions into the denominational ministry program. The Board may amend the ministry plan of the Christian Reformed Church ~~denominational ministries plan~~ from time to time as need arises.
 2. Secure the participation of the directors of the agencies, the presidents of the educational institutions, and the chairpersons or designated representatives of all agency boards, committees, and educational institutions in developing and implementing the ministry plan of the Christian Reformed Church ~~denominational ministries plan~~. Such designated representatives shall be members, preferably officers, of the boards or committees that designate them. On such occasions the directors, presidents, and chairpersons or designated representatives shall have the privilege of the floor but not the right to vote.
 3. Serve synod with analyses, reviews, and recommendations with respect to the programs and resources of the denomination. To that end, as well as for purposes of general oversight, the Board shall require reports from the boards of agencies, committees, and educational institutions.
 4. Require coordination and unity from the agencies, committees, and institutions in the fulfillment of their respective mandates in order to achieve effective and efficient ministries as they carry out the mission of the CRCNA.
 5. Require that all synodically commissioned and directed work be done in such a manner that scriptural standards are maintained and the constitution and bylaws of the Board are observed in all aspects of the work.
 6. Approve all new ministry directions and major expansions of the agencies and committees in the light of the ministry plan of the Christian Reformed Church ~~denominational ministries plan~~ and other denominational priorities.
 7. Approve policies and goals for the unified ministry of the Christian Reformed Church as expressed in the ministry plan of the Christian Reformed Church ~~denominational ministries plan~~.
 8. Require all agencies, committees, and educational institutions periodically to review their board size, composition, and structure. The Board

may require agencies or committees to combine their activities to achieve greater effectiveness and better stewardship of resources.

9. Adjudicate appeals placed before it by the agencies, committees, and educational institutions. Such appeals shall be processed in accordance with the rules stated in these bylaws (Section VI) and the provisions of the Church Order.
10. Nominate a qualified candidate for the position of executive director to synod for appointment.
11. Endorse in its report to synod the nominations for the following positions:
 - a. President of Calvin College.
 - b. President of Calvin Theological Seminary.
 - c. Editor in chief of *The Banner*.

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

12. Approve appointments to the following positions and submit them to synod for ratification:
 - a. The directors of the agencies (or their title equivalents).
 - b. The director of Canadian ministries (DCM).
 - c. The director of denominational ministries (DDM).
 - d. The director of finance and administration (DFA).
 - e. Position(s) responsible for theological content of ~~ERC Publications'~~ Faith Alive Christian Resources' products.
 - f. Any other position as synod may direct.
13. Ratify the appointments of agency staff members whose appointments are not subject to synodical ratification (e.g., associate-directors, senior administrative staff members, specialized ministry directors, and editors).
14. Provide for the establishment of a Ministry Council (MC) Ministries Leadership Team (MLT).
15. Attend to such church-polity issues as need to be addressed and render such advice to study committees the Board deems necessary, or as requested of it between the meetings of synod.
16. Prepare and distribute the *Agenda for Synod*, the *Acts of Synod*, the *Yearbook*, and such other official publications as synod shall authorize.
17. Make all arrangements related to the convening of synod.
18. Prepare an annually updated survey of ministers' compensation for distribution to all councils for their guidance as a supplement to the Guidelines for Ministers' Salaries, adopted by Synod 1970.
19. Administer the denominational address list.

20. Review the program, aims, and goals of any applicant nondenominational organization requesting synodical financial support and provide synod with a recommendation with respect thereto.
21. Enforce the provisions of the constitution; have the power to recommend to synod amendments to the constitution and the bylaws as it deems appropriate; and approve or disapprove amendments to the bylaws of each agency, committee, and educational institution that have been adopted by such agency, committee, or institution. The Board shall also require the maintenance of a Policies and Procedures Board Reference Manual, containing adopted policies and procedures, for the reference of Board members, agencies, and educational institutions.

C. The Board staff

1. The chief executive staff officer of the Board shall be the executive director who shall be appointed by synod from a single nomination provided by the Board. The specific functions and responsibilities of the executive staff officer is more fully described in the position description. (Cf. Rules for Synodical Procedure, III, A Board Reference Manual)
2. The Board shall establish guidelines for, supervise and annually evaluate the work of the executive director and provide advice with respect to the discharge of official duties.

D. The accountability of the Board shall be exercised as follows:

1. It shall present a full report of its actions to each synod.
2. It shall make periodic evaluations of its own programs and goals and shall submit appropriate recommendations to synod.
3. It shall, through its trustees or on their behalf, present regular reports to the constituent classes of the regions its trustees represent.

III. The Christian Reformed Church in North America-Canada Corporation (CRCNA-Canada)

A. Description

The CRCNA-Canada Corporation is the legal agent in Canada for the synod of the Christian Reformed Church. The directors of the CRCNA-Canada Corporation shall be elected in the manner, and for such terms of office, as prescribed in the constitution of the Board.

B. Functions

1. CRCNA-Canada directors shall perform all the functions required of a federally registered charity in Canada and as directed by the synod of the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
2. CRCNA-Canada directors shall be responsible for providing governance oversight for denominational ministries specific to Canada.

IV. The Christian Reformed Church in North America-Michigan Corporation (CRCNA-Michigan)

A. Description

The CRCNA-Michigan Corporation is the legal agent in the United States for the synod of the Christian Reformed Church. The directors of the CRCNA-Michigan Corporation shall be elected in the manner, and for such terms of office, as prescribed in the constitution of the Board.

B. Functions

1. CRCNA-Michigan Corporation directors shall perform all the functions required of a 501, C, (3) charity in Michigan and as directed by the synod of the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
2. CRCNA-Michigan shall be responsible for providing governance oversight for denominational ministries within the framework of relationships described in the constitution.

V. Agencies, committees, and educational institutions of the Christian Reformed Church in North America

A. Ministry program agencies

1. Back to God ~~Hour~~/CRC-TV Ministries International
2. Christian Reformed Home Missions
3. Christian Reformed World Missions
4. Christian Reformed World Relief Committee
5. CRC Loan Fund Inc., U.S.
6. Faith Alive Christian Resources
7. U.S. Board of Pensions
8. Canadian Pension Trustees

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

B. Standing committees and ministry support functions

1. Standing Committees
 - a. ~~Synodical Ministerial~~ Candidacy Committee
 - b. ~~Interchurch~~ Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee
 - c. Historical Committee
 - d. Judicial Code Committee
 - e. Sermons for Reading Services Committee
 - f. Such additional committees as synod may appoint
2. Ministry support functions – Denominational Offices
 - a. Chaplaincy Ministries and Care Ministry
 - b. Committee for Contact with the Government
 - c. Disability Concerns
 - d. Financial Services
 - e. Human Resources Office

- f. Information Services Technology
- g. The Network
- h. Pastor-Church Relations
- i. Product Services Proservices
- j. Race Relations
- k. Abuse Prevention Safe Church Ministry
- l. ServiceLink
- m. Social Justice and Hunger Action
- n. Urban Aboriginal Ministries

C. *Educational institutions*

1. Calvin College
2. Calvin Theological Seminary

VI. General appeals

A. Appeals submitted by employees of the CRCNA or one of the agencies shall be directed first to the person or board whose decision is being appealed and then, if necessary, to successive levels of administration and authority. When the appeal is filed in the administrative line of authority, the successive levels go up to and include the office of the executive director. No appeal dealing with an administrative decision shall be submitted to an agency board until the administrative channel has been followed. In the event that an appeal is submitted to an agency board, the following regulations shall apply:

1. The decision of an agency board concerning an intra-agency or intra-committee appeal is binding except under the following conditions:
 - a. The matter being appealed has ramifications beyond that agency.
 - b. The matter being appealed concerns the personal performance of directors appointed by the Board or concerns the personal performance of agency appointees whose appointments are ratified by the Board.
 - c. The matter being appealed falls within the provisions of the Grievance Appeal Procedure as approved by the Board.
 - d. The matter being appealed falls within the provisions of the Employment-Termination Appeals Procedure as approved by the Board and synod.
2. In the event of an involuntary termination of employment, an appeal may be filed only according to the specific provisions of the Employment-Termination Appeals Procedure as identified in point five (5) below.
3. The Board's right to hear and adjudicate appeals notwithstanding, the appeal procedure outlined in one (1) and two (2) above does not affect any right of appeal provided in Church Order Article 30 and Church Order Supplement, Articles 30-b and 30-c (commonly known as the Judicial Code Committee provisions).
4. The decision of the Board on an appeal dealing with an interagency administrative matter is binding. If the Board judges that an appeal regards a policy matter, the decision of the Board may be appealed to synod for adjudication.

5. The Board's right to hear and adjudicate appeals notwithstanding, the appeal procedure outlined in point four (4) above does not affect any right of appeal provided in Church Order Article 30 and Church Order Supplement, Articles 30-b and 30-c. Furthermore, appeals that deal with the termination of employment shall be dealt with according to the regulations of the Employment-Termination Appeals Procedure, as approved by synod (*Acts of Synod 1995*, pp. 584-87) and as amended from time to time.

B. An appeal submitted by a member of an agency board or by a member of a committee pertaining to actions of his or her own board or committee shall be made in the following manner:

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

VII. Amendments to the bylaws

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

A. Proposed amendments shall be presented to the executive director in writing at least sixty (60) days prior to the meeting date of the Board at which the amendments are to be considered. Copies of such proposed amendments shall be mailed to each member of the Board and each agency or committee at least thirty (30) days prior to the meeting.

B. Representatives from each agency, each committee, and the ~~Ministry-Council (MC)~~ Ministries Leadership Team (MLT) shall be given an opportunity to present written comments concerning a proposed amendment at the meeting of the Board prior to its vote on the proposed amendment.

C. Any amendment to these bylaws must be adopted by the Board, which shall then submit such amendment to the next synod for ratification.

First approved in 1993

Revised in 1996

Revised in 2001

Revised (editorially only) in 2005

Revised in 2006

Proposed in 2011

Appendix B

Young Adult Summit Proposal

I. Background

In recent years the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRC) has recognized the need to retool and refocus its efforts to attract and retain young people in the denomination. According to a 2007 survey by the Calvin College Center for Social Research, the median age in the CRC has risen from 44 years old in 1987 and 50 in 2002, to 52 years old in 2007 (www.calvin.edu/admin/csr/projects/crc150/2007_Congregant_Survey_final.pdf). The appointment of young adult advisers to synod is one important initiative targeting young adults, but significant structural barriers remain to young adult membership and participation. We seek to support denominational efforts to expand young adult engagement in the life of the church, both at the congregational level and on the classical and denominational levels. We believe that young adults who are passionate about the church desire new and innovative ways to connect with each other, with their congregations, and with the denomination as a whole. In fact, the 2007 survey also found that respondents ages 18 to 29 gave statistically greater average health ratings to their congregations than those 30 to 69 years old. For that reason we are proposing the creation of a new Young Adult Summit that can contribute to the development of a vibrant, multigenerational denomination in which people of all ages have the opportunity to worship God and serve him and his people.

The idea for a Young Adult Summit was first proposed by the young adult advisers attending Synod 2010, and the initiative is now being developed by the young adult leadership team working with Mr. Chris Pullenayegem and Mr. Ken Kruihoff at the CRC's Leadership Exchange.

II. Goals

1. This initiative will provide a visible, accountable voice for the young adults of our denomination—a voice that longs to be heard independent of the existing network of Christian colleges. Each summit will provide a vision statement and action plan to guide efforts during the period between summits.
2. This initiative will spark interest in church government among the CRC's young adults and offers a less intimidating introduction to and training in church polity and procedure.
3. This initiative will help foster an institutional pathway for young adult input on the CRC and its work with young adults, particularly as they transition from adolescence to greater involvement in the full life of the church.
4. This initiative will help connect young adults with their peers from across the denomination (and the world) for mutual learning, support, and fellowship.
5. This initiative will provide an opportunity for young leaders to be disciplined, mentored, trained, and developed on an ongoing basis. It will

also facilitate discussion about new ways for young adults to be involved in the life of the denomination. We envision the summit as a catalyst for ongoing work rather than an end goal.

6. Many churches today struggle with retaining young adults, and we believe engagement and full participation will help demonstrate the relevance of involvement in an organized Christian community.

III. Structure

The summit will bring together 1-2 young adult representatives from each classis. While the summit will draw primarily on individuals in the 18 to 30 age range, we want to emphasize that the classification *young adult* is fluid and references both age and role in the social and church communities. Congregational demographics and local patterns of inclusion or exclusion that reference age will also inform contextual discussions of young adult engagement and participation in the church community.

The key output of each summit will be a vision statement and action plan outlining young adults' vision for the CRC and their place in it, top methods and mechanisms for realizing this vision, and practical ways of implementing this vision during the three-year summit interim period. As necessary, each summit will also produce written statements on contemporary issues (e.g., the adoption of the Belhar Confession) so that a young adult perspective can be conveyed to synod and the denomination more broadly.

Items proposed for discussion at the summit will be submitted to the leadership team six months in advance. The team will compile and distribute these items in an agenda, which will also include reports on the implementation of the past three-year action plan. The 2012 summit agenda will significantly draw from the "Young Adults in the Church" document (found at www.mediafire.com/?c200vdx8vbke6) developed by participants at the Leadership Exchange-sponsored roundtable in August 2010.

Summit proceedings will adapt the *Rules for Synodical Procedure* to fit the more flexible and extemporaneous modus operandi of today's young adults. Summit officers, elected at the beginning of each summit, will form the nucleus of a leadership team responsible for implementing the action plan during each three-year summit interim. This will include scheduling smaller local and regional meetings for summit representatives and young adults, encouraging online networking and discussion, and working with summit representatives to convey young adult perspectives to denominational leaders (including synod delegates during years when summits are not held). Summit officers will also oversee planning for the next summit. Possible collaboration and/or overlap between summit leadership and synod's young adult adviser initiative should be considered.

During the summit small groups (6-10 people, assigned by classis affiliation) will meet to discuss their vision for young adult involvement in the CRC. A summary of key thoughts, drawn from the past discussion session, will be distributed before each group session to promote cross-group pollination of ideas; after the final discussion sessions, group leaders will meet with the summit leadership team to compile this input into a final document. As appropriate, representatives will also meet in groups analogous to synodical committees to discuss pressing issues before synod. Young adult advisers

and/or other young adult leaders can then bring this feedback before the appropriate synodical committee during its deliberations. In addition, some unstructured discussion time will be scheduled to allow representatives to deliberate on issues not in the agenda. Like synodical delegates, summit attendees would have access to faculty advisers from Calvin Theological Seminary (or other Reformed colleges).

Young adult representatives will serve as liaisons to their home congregations, both gathering feedback from their peers about young adults' perceptions of the CRC and working to implement the action plan on a local level. In this way the Young Adult Summit can also act as an information-gathering opportunity, allowing CRC leaders to "take the temperature" of young adults in the CRC.

A key element connecting the Young Adult Summit with the broader denomination would be a mentorship program, potentially facilitated by the Leadership Exchange. Intentionally pairing summit representatives with local mentors will encourage deeper young adult engagement in local congregations and promote shared learning and spiritual growth. This effort will complement existing mentorship programs (such as those for seminarians) and respond to widespread desire in the denomination for faith formation through intentional intergenerational relationships.

IV. Schedule

Synod 2012 is scheduled to discuss both the Belhar Confession and the final report of the synodical Faith Formation Committee. Both are issues that young adults are highly passionate and eager to debate and would, therefore, help encourage young adults' participation in this new initiative. Consequently, we propose holding the inaugural summit in 2012. Thereafter, the Young Adult Summit will be held every three years, with the date and place to overlap with the date and location of synod. The summit will last three days, with the final day coinciding with the first full day of synod—the timing of which will encourage cross-event engagement and facilitate formal dialogue between summit representatives and synodical delegates. The sample schedule below is intentionally flexible, to allow organizers and participants to identify topics that are most relevant.

Sample Schedule

Day 1

8 am: Breakfast

9 am: Opening worship

11 am: Plenary session – YALT members/summit organizers review the history of the Young Adult Summit initiative and discuss long-term goals. Representatives will also elect summit officers.

12:30 pm: Lunch

1:30 pm: Small group discussion. Members meet and begin discussing their vision for young adult involvement in the CRCNA.

3:30 pm: Leadership development workshops

5:30 pm: Dinner

6:30 pm: Synodical committee issue discussion (e.g., work of the Faith Formation Committee)

8:30 pm: Worship

Day 2

8 am: Breakfast

9 am: Plenary session – Summit leadership presentation on key issue.

11 am: Lunch

12 pm: Mass service project in the community

5 pm: Dinner

6:30 pm: Small group discussion session: evaluation of previous three-year action plan/methods of implementing next three year plan.

8 pm: Synodical committee topics discussion

9:30 pm: Open-mic coffeehouse-type event

Day 3

8 am: Breakfast

9 am: Presentation(s) from denominational officials (e.g., executive director, Home Missions/campus ministry, CRWRC)

11 am: Unstructured discussion time. Participants will have had a previous opportunity to suggest topics for discussion and then will lead small group discussion on those topics.

12:30 pm: Lunch

1:30 pm: Plenary session – Final discussion of action plan and other topical statements

6 pm: Closing worship

V. Costs

The summit will include a minimum of 47 delegates and a maximum of 94 (1-2 per classis), emphasizing diversity of age, ethnicity, and geography. If necessary, organizers will identify additional ethnic representatives to complement the roster of classical representatives. Additional personnel (the summit planning team, faculty advisers and mentors, and operational and technical support) will bring summit attendance up to 120 people at the outer limit. Following the policy for young adult advisers, expenses for travel, lodging, and meals will be paid for by the denomination.

Synod 2012 is being held at Redeemer University College, Ancaster, Ontario.

1. Transportation

The summit will adopt a travel policy similar to that for synodical delegates.

Three major airports serve the Ancaster area: Toronto, Ont.; London, Ont.; and Buffalo, N.Y. Airport-to-venue transportation will also be required; hiring shuttle vans from Redeemer University College is one option. While flights into Buffalo involve crossing the border, Redeemer personnel recommend using it because its location and size make arranging shuttles more convenient. In addition, recommending Buffalo for U.S. points of departure should save anywhere between \$80-\$200 per ticket. (See Table 1.)

A significant number of summit representatives will be able to drive. Grand Rapids and Ottawa are both about six hours away; Chicago is an eight-hour drive. As with synod delegates, summit representatives who drive will receive the standard IRS/Canada Revenue Agency car reimbursement rate: 2011 IRS rate – 51 cents/mile; 2009 Canada Revenue Agency – average 52 cents/kilometer.

Table 1. Priced during January 2011 for June 2011 travel.

Destination	Toronto, Ont.	Buffalo, N.Y.	London, Ont.
Departure Point			
Chicago	\$340	\$265	\$700
Minneapolis	\$540	\$380	\$600
Seattle	\$590	\$380	\$790
Vancouver	\$615	\$800	\$600
Los Angeles	\$600	\$400	\$650
Tampa	\$455	\$540	\$590
Washington, D.C.	\$515	\$200	\$520
Boston	\$370	\$160	\$580
Edmonton	\$500	\$800	\$480
PEI	\$400	\$900	\$830

2. Room and board (see also the Addendum to this proposal)

Redeemer University College’s maximum capacity is 450 people. Assuming a total of 260 synod delegates, advisers, and staff, there should be sufficient room to house summit representatives and mentors at Redeemer. If necessary, summit representatives may need to sleep more than two people to a room; finding additional accommodations is also a possibility.

3. Technology and meeting space

At all stages, summit leadership will emphasize use of electronic and video formats, which are both environmentally friendly and frequently used by young adults; this includes encouraging all representatives to bring their laptops for use during the summit. Summit organizers will work with synod planners and Redeemer personnel to identify meeting space that can accommodate technology usage.

VI. Recommendation

That Synod 2011 endorse the Young Adult Summit Proposal. Furthermore, we desire your prayers for the success of this summit and its impact on our beloved church.

The Young Adult Leadership Team of the
 Leadership Exchange
 Colin Conrad
 Rodolfo Galindo
 Mark Hilbelink
 John Hwang
 Elizabeth Jennings
 Ken Kruithoff
 Chelsey Munneke
 Amy Vander Vliet

Addendum

Additional Information Regarding Proposed Room and Board

A. Lodging

Because synodical delegates will fill all available lodging space at Redeemer, Young Adult Summit representatives will room at Mohawk College, a nearby school in Hamilton, Ontario, often used by Redeemer when extra lodging is needed. The two campuses are approximately a 10-minute drive apart, and shuttle bus services can easily be arranged. There are also a number of nearby hotels, but lodging there would be more expensive than campus lodging.

B. Dining

Dining services and/or catering space are available at Redeemer, with the capacity to serve both synod and young adult summit attendees simultaneously. Lunch options range from approximately \$9 - \$12 per person, and supper options range from approximately \$10 - \$17 per person. Young Adult Summit organizers will work with synod organizers and Redeemer personnel to identify the most efficient, cost-effective options. Offering breakfast options at Mohawk College would be more convenient for summit attendees—costs range from \$6.25 - \$9.50 per person.

Estimated total dining costs: \$4,620 (100 summit representatives + support personnel).

C. Meeting space

Meadowlands Fellowship CRC is within walking distance of Redeemer's campus and is a top candidate for meeting space, particularly because it offers a combination of worship space and small group meeting space. Other options include Immanuel CRC, which is within walking distance of the Mohawk campus, and New Hope Church or First Hamilton CRC, both within 10 minutes' driving distance of Mohawk and about 20 minutes' driving distance of Redeemer.

Appendix C

Report of the Diversity in Leadership Planning Group

I. Introduction

This report is a response to a mandate given by Synod 2009 to the Board of Trustees (BOT):

To instruct the executive director to convene an ethnically inclusive group to develop a statement of vision and strategy for increasing multiethnic representation within the leadership of the denomination and report to Synod 2010.

Ground: We believe the current structure of denominational leadership does not adequately address the fundamental concerns regarding advancement of people of color at all levels of congregational and denominational life.

(Acts of Synod 2009, p. 589)

Additional reasons provided by the members of the Diversity in Leadership Planning Group include the following:

- Increasing multiethnic representation in denominational leadership is our calling as followers of Jesus Christ.
- Our negative track record on this issue requires immediate attention.

II. Background

In the synodical advisory committee discussions and on the floor of synod in 2009, it was expressed that our denomination has not adequately followed biblical principles regarding multiethnic diversity, especially in light of the changing demographic in North America, and that CRC leadership in particular has not reflected this reality. As a result, the executive director was mandated the task of convening a task force that would develop a statement of vision and strategy to address this issue (*Acts of Synod 2009*, p. 588-89).

The Synodical Committee on Race Relations (SCORR), instituted in 1971 and later named the Office of Race Relations in 1995, has for years carried out antiracism training and raised awareness about issues of racism and diversity. However, this has not translated into a significant increase in the percentage of multiethnic leadership in the denominational offices. The percentage of people of color in positions of leadership level 14 and above is far short of the goal of 25 percent by 2011 called for in the Ministry Plan Scorecard. It is also noted that Synod 2005 made a decision encouraging “each classis to include at least one ethnic minority person in its synodical delegation beginning with Synod 2006” (*Acts of Synod 2005*, p. 748). At Synod 2010, only 7 classes (15%) complied with this decision. Clearly, we as a denomination have not taken seriously enough our call to increase multiethnic leadership so as to make it a reality.

As its primary point of reference, the task force used the study committee report approved by Synod 1996, “God’s Diverse and Unified Family” (GDUF), along with two other key documents, the Report Regarding Diversity in Administrative Positions (February 2007) and the Diversity Plan developed for the Board of Trustees by the executive director in (May 2007). What is especially troubling is that many good recommendations have been made; however, they unfortunately have not been followed through nor implemented. This was highlighted as an issue that the denomination has to pay particular attention to if it is serious about increasing diversity in the denomination. The task force struggled with the question of whether the present time would be any different.

A thorough process was followed—a process that included a survey for increasing multiethnic participation within the leadership structures of the CRCNA, completed by senior leadership in the denomination regarding attitudes and perceptions with respect to multiethnic leadership. The information received from the survey of the senior leadership was very insightful, and it provided a critical analysis of the landscape within the current leadership structure of the denomination. It also identified several potential barriers to multiethnic diversity at the senior leadership levels. The task force has worked through a myriad of documents, activities, and perspectives and, as a result, strongly proposes the following recommendations for the BOT.

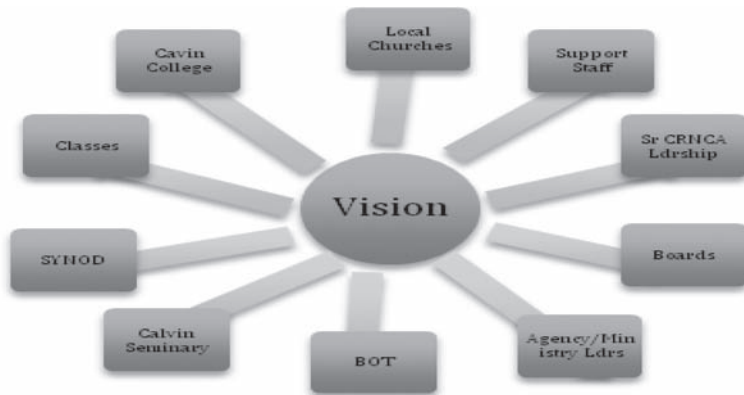
III. Recommendations

A. Statement of vision

1. That the BOT adopt the following Statement of Vision to address the issue of increasing multiethnic representation within the leadership of the denomination:

A multiethnic, multicultural leadership that models the report approved by Synod 1996, *God's Diverse and Unified Family* (GDUF).

2. It is essential that this vision for denominational leadership have an impact on every denominational entity, as illustrated in the following (for illustrative purposes only):



- B. That the BOT adopt each of the following strategies for implementing the vision. It is essential to first note that in planning and implementing these strategies everyone involved must be alert to two all-encompassing and necessary features that need to be embraced with regard to each one: (1) creating a culture of inclusion in the denominational offices and structures, and (2) assigning definite lines of accountability with clear responsibilities and timelines and with direct overall oversight by the executive director and Board of Trustees.

1. Hiring of senior leadership

- a. All future hires will be made in accordance with the CRCNA's diversity objectives and its goal of 25 percent racial minority leaders in CRCNA positions of senior leadership (level 16 and above).
- b. Timeline – This strategy shall be implemented immediately.

2. Recruitment

- a. The director of Human Resources and the director of Race Relations will be jointly responsible to develop a comprehensive plan for the identification and recruitment of multiethnic leadership in senior denominational positions and will both be accountable for the implementation of this plan. The plan shall include the following:

- 1) Identification
 - a) Identify those who have significant contacts with and in the ethnic minority communities.
 - b) Establish and maintain an active pool of potential candidates.
 - c) Develop and utilize a denomination-wide survey to help people recognize their potential.
- 2) Recruitment of potential candidates for leadership
 - a) Promote an environment of hospitality in the denominational offices in coordination with senior agency and ministry personnel through interagency celebrations, formation of small groups, and regular social gatherings.
 - b) Develop a contact system beyond the CRC.
 - c) Communicate the ministry opportunities and challenges—not just job requirements.
 - d) Establish funded internships.
- b. Timeline – The plan shall be developed by July 2011, with implementation to take place immediately following. Monitoring and accountability will be carried out in the annual performance evaluations of the directors of Human Resources and Race Relations after September 2011.
3. Equal opportunity Human Resources
 - a. The office of Human Resources will undergo a thorough assessment of all human resources (HR) policies and practices with the purpose of ensuring an equitable, transparent, and bias-free HR system with regard to job descriptions, recruitment and hiring practices, orientation and training, supervision, performance evaluations, promotions, professional development, and the like.
 - Transparent policies and practices will reduce the perception of “who you know matters more than what you know.” They will also help build a broader understanding regarding qualifications and competencies for denominational positions.
 - The dynamics between the dominant culture and minority representation must be recognized and anticipated, with an emphasis on the blessings and benefits of doing so.
 - b. Competencies, performance evaluations, and supervision policies especially need to be defined to ensure equal opportunity and promote diversity and inclusion.
 - c. This assessment will be done in consultation with the Office of Race Relations, with recommendations for changes in policies and practices to come jointly from the directors of Human Resources and Race Relations.
 - d. Timeline – To begin as soon as possible and be completed by August 2011.

4. Job descriptions

- a. All job descriptions for senior positions will be reviewed and finalized by an ad hoc committee made up of the directors of Human Resources and Race Relations, the ED or DDM, and the appropriate representative of the agency or specialized ministry involved.

It is important to realize that the job descriptions used in filling positions can contain barriers to diversity. Often such impediments are unintended and yet may limit the pool of potential candidates. Requirements such as ordination, certain levels of education, experience, and so forth may not be necessary and yet may prevent qualified candidates from applying. These obstacles need to be identified and removed.

- b. This ad hoc committee will have the authority to make any other changes or recommendations that might remove barriers to people of color.
- c. Timeline – This strategy shall be implemented immediately.

5. Senior leadership practice

- a. All senior leaders will incorporate and promote equitable diversity practices in their hiring, communication, and management processes. These practices are to be incorporated into performance objectives and appraisals of their staff. Senior leaders will also be held accountable, by way of their annual performance evaluations, of ensuring that they and their staff adhere fully to multiethnic diversity practices and promotion.

The commitment of senior leadership to diversity and equity must be a core value of the organizational practices. Its importance must be communicated throughout the organization to all staff levels in a variety of ways.

- b. The composition of regional ministry teams working at the direction of senior staff shall make every effort to further the CRCNA's diversity objectives and its goal of 25 percent representation on all such teams, with staff held accountable as indicated above.
- c. An assessment of how these strategies are being accomplished will be carried out jointly by the directors of Race Relations and Human Resources.
- d. Timeline – The external assessment will be done and the performance evaluations of senior leadership will begin to monitor equitable diversity practices in line with this strategy after September 2011.

6. Coaching and mentoring

- a. A system of mutual mentoring for all new staff will be established in the denominational offices with a focus on multiethnic leadership, inclusion, and diversity practices. Mentors shall come from a pool of people with the necessary experience and endorsed by the directors of Human Resources and Race Relations.

The development of a culture of *mutual* mentoring is essential so that people of color are considered equal partners in the learning process. This would help dispel the false perception that they are the ones that always need mentoring.

- b. This system will be developed by the Office of Race Relations in consultation with the director of Human Resources and all senior leadership in the denomination. It will include
 - 1) the assignment of a mentor (in conversation with such persons) to every new staff member.
 - 2) mentor and mentee training opportunities and resources (retreats, conferences, courses, peer groups, and so forth).
- c. Timeline – To begin in September 2011.

7. Professional development

- a. All senior leaders will be required to participate in a mandatory series of cross-cultural diversity education and training at least once each year, with an evaluation that will be built into their annual performance review.
 - Diversity education and training is a crucial component of creating equitable environments within organizations and of achieving diversity in leadership.
 - This will help to build and foster a culture of care, equity, and inclusiveness.
 - This shall include both internal (Office of Race Relations) and external training.
- b. The director of Race Relations will be responsible to develop and coordinate this training.
- c. Timeline – Implementation to begin no later than July 2011.

8. Organizational structure

- a. The director of Race Relations will be appointed as a permanent voting member on the Ministries Leadership Team (MLT) with all the rights and privileges as the other directors on the team.
 - This demonstrates that people of color are meaningfully involved in the decision-making process of the organization.
 - It also ensures that multiethnic diversity and equitable practices are given high priority, remain a core value, and are integrated into all the deliberations and planning processes of the MLT.
- b. Timeline – To be implemented immediately.

9. Nominations for denominational leadership

- a. All search committees for senior positions will be staffed in accordance with the CRCNA's diversity objectives and its goal of 35 percent minority membership on all such committees.
 - 1) These will include people who represent the rank and file of the church and who may not have prior involvement with or full knowledge of the agency, provided they have a passion for the CRC and the agency's ministry.
 - 2) Search committee members will receive appropriate antiracism training, and all members of search committees will sign off on the *God's Diverse and Unified Family* report.
- b. The nomination processes for agency boards and committees, specialized ministry advisory councils, and the Board of Trustees will make every effort to further the CRCNA's diversity objectives and its goal of ensuring that a minimum of 35 percent minority representation will be submitted to each region, and a minimum of 35 percent minority representation will be on the nomination slate submitted by the Office of Synodical Services to the BOT.
 - 1) Antiracism guidelines from the GDUF report will be integrated into the request for nominations. Classes will also be asked to review these guidelines before approving nominations and sending them to the Office of Synodical Services.
 - 2) All members of boards and committees of the denomination will receive appropriate antiracism training, and all members of boards and committees will sign off on the GDUF report.
- c. Timeline – This strategy shall be implemented by June 2012.

C. That the BOT appoint a task force that includes as many members of the Diversity in Leadership Planning Group as possible to (1) develop a statement of vision and strategy that encourages local congregations and regions to reflect the communities within which they find themselves, to (2) revisit the mandate and mission of the Office of Race Relations and the Race Relations Advisory Council, and to (3) assign this group the following mandate:

To make recommendations that reaffirm and expand the mission and mandate of both the Office of Race Relations and the Race Relations Advisory Council in line with the strategies adopted, providing added accountability, empowering the Office of Race Relations to engage collaboratively with all denominational agencies, boards, and councils, and ensuring that the denominational commitment to ethnic diversity will be strengthened and move forward. The contribution of the Office of Race Relations is indispensable and will have an impact on the denominational system as a whole.

From our discussions and recommendations it is evident that the mandate and mission of both the Office of Race Relations and the Race Relations Advisory Council must be revisited, in light of the compelling need the denomination faces to ensure justice and accountability, and in light of the ever-increasing ethnic diversity in society and the denomination.

Diversity in Leadership Planning Group
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Appendix D Process for Significant Structural Change Task Force Report

I. Our mandate

Synod 2010 adopted the following mandate for the BOT-appointed task force:

to develop a process by which *significant structural changes* would be made and report the process to Synod 2011.

(*Acts of Synod 2010*, p. 861)

II. Background

Following is a brief overview of the matter of *significant structural change* as addressed by the BOT and synod to date:

A. Synod 2009 made the request that the BOT “develop guidelines on how to involve the broader church community, especially through synod, in consideration of significant structural changes that affect the ministries and congregations of the CRCNA” (*Acts of Synod 2009*, p. 615).

B. The BOT responded to synod’s request with a report to Synod 2010 (*Agenda for Synod 2010*, pp. 51-54). In that report, the BOT did three things:

1. Defined *significant structural changes* as “any alterations in the mandate of the BOT or the mandate of the CRC agencies and/or ministries as established by synod, or any alteration to specific instructions given to the BOT by synod.”
2. Recognized that the BOT already seeks a broad communication and ownership of its work through broad membership at the BOT, communication between BOT members and their respective classis or region, the publication of BOT Highlights made available to stated clerks of classes, and so forth.
3. Suggested ways for the BOT to improve communication with the churches, classes, and synod: setting aside time at the February BOT meet-

ing to intentionally address the impact on churches, classes, and ministries of matters on the synod agenda, allow for a more formal BOT report at synod, and request the presence of BOT executive committee members at synod.

C. Synod 2010 adopted the above items (see *Acts of Synod 2010*, pp. 861-62) and added the instruction named above in the task force's mandate.

III. Process for making significant structural changes

A. Review of pertinent sections from the Constitution and Bylaws of the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA

The following excerpts are taken from the Constitution and Bylaws of the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA and serve as background to the work of the task force.

1. Constitution of the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA

a. The Constitution of the Board of Trustees sets out the purpose of the BOT through Article II.

- Transact matters assigned to it by synod.
- Supervise the management of the agencies and committees established by synod.
- Cooperate with the educational institutions toward integrating the missions of the institutions with the denominational ministry program.

b. To do this it will

- lead in developing and implementing a denominational ministries plan.
- assure collaboration among agencies, committees, and educational institutions.
- exercise general oversight and authority as prescribed by the by-laws.

c. Article VII, paragraph C, authorizes the BOT to designate its own committees.

d. The Constitution may be amended by synod upon the recommendation of the BOT or by way of an overture to synod, which need not be first considered by the BOT.

2. Bylaws of the Board of Trustees

a. Article I states that the bylaws are designed to implement the provisions of the constitution of the BOT.

b. Article II, A indicates that the BOT is authorized to organize itself in such committees as it deems necessary to carry out its work.

c. Article II, B states that to fulfill the functions described in the constitution, the Board shall

- (4) require coordination and unity from the agencies, committees, and institutions in the fulfillment of their respective mandates in order to achieve effective and efficient ministries as they carry out the mission of the CRCNA.

- (5) require that all synodically commissioned and directed work be done in such a manner that scriptural standards are maintained and the constitution and bylaws of the Board are observed in all aspects of the work.
 - (6) approve all new ministry directions and major expansions of the agencies and committees in the light of the denominational ministries plan and other denominational priorities.
 - (7) approve policies and goals for the unified ministry of the CRCNA as expressed in the denominational ministries plan.
 - (8) . . . the Board may require agencies or committees to combine their activities to achieve greater effectiveness and better stewardship of resources.
 - (21) . . . and approve or disapprove amendments to the bylaws of each agency, committee and educational institution that have been adopted by such agency, committee, or institution.
- d. Article V of the bylaws defines who the agencies, committees, and educational institutions of the CRCNA are.
 - e. Article VI details how the bylaws may be amended.

B. *Observations*

1. We recognize that in CRC history significant changes have arisen from a number of sources. The kinds of significant changes we are addressing may originate with an overture to synod from a classis or a congregation, from the BOT during the course of its work on behalf of synod, or from the respective CRC agency board or advisory committee in their desire to work more effectively; thus synod may mandate a significant change in structure.
2. At present, there is not a formal process by which to make the kind of significant structural changes described to Synod 2010. That may be because of the differences of opinion regarding what constitutes a *significant* structural change. The discussion about such changes arose because of concerns expressed by Synod 2009 regarding a written report on the new Network (*Acts of Synod 2009*, p. 615). Synod 2009's concerns prompted the BOT to clarify by way of report to Synod 2010 a mutual understanding of what significant structural change entails.
3. The task force also observed that there will always be a degree of healthy tension around such changes. We have built into our system of government some healthy "checks and balances." This means that what one assembly deems as a *significant change* may not be considered so by another assembly. In such circumstances we look to synod as the final adjudicator.

C. *Process*

As we consider a process for developing significant structural change, we believe it is important to reiterate that Synod 2010 recognized such changes as "any alterations in the mandate of the BOT or the mandate of the CRC

agencies and/or ministries as established by synod, or any alteration to specific instructions given to the BOT by synod” (*Acts of Synod 2010*, p. 861).

Typically, we would envision that the agency most directly involved would formally approach the BOT through its board requesting the significant structural change. It is also possible that synod may mandate, or the BOT could be a catalyst for suggesting, a significant structural change.

The BOT would handle these requests or mandates by way of its executive committee, which includes the executive director. The executive committee would enter into conversation with the board or boards of the agency or agencies per their request, as a result of a BOT initiative, or as mandated by synod. At some point, the executive committee would broaden the conversation to include the full BOT and any others who would have helpful insight or input into the change being requested.

When the BOT comes to a decision about the request for significant structural change, they would bring the recommendation to synod by way of the BOT report. In turn, this information would be available to all the classes and churches by way of the *Agenda for Synod*. Any church or classis could then submit a formal communication or overture to synod based on the report in the *Agenda for Synod*. When synod makes a final decision about the significant structural change, the BOT would proceed to implement the decision according to synod’s decision.

Throughout this process, it is the desire of the BOT to engage the broadest possible voice in making such significant structural changes. In particular, we would like to note that the BOT never acts independently about such significant changes but always acts within the system of “checks and balances” established in our denomination.

Appendix E

The Network: Connecting Churches for Ministry (Rev. Michael Bruinooge, interim director)

I. Introduction

In the fall of 2008, the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA endorsed an initiative by the executive director, Rev. Gerard L. Dykstra, to mobilize denominational resources for congregational health and vitality—focusing on congregations, listening to them, advocating for them, and better connecting them. The aim was to do this primarily through regional and other networks, so the resulting ministry came to be called simply “The Network.”

The Network finds ways for congregations to quickly get the answers, resources, and support they need—whether online, by phone, in person, or via regional networks and teams. Because it operates on the premise that the best ministry help often comes from peers and neighbors, it aims to better connect local church leaders with each other as well as with other partners in ministry. The Network does not provide and administer so much as connect, facilitate, and mobilize by tapping the resources the CRC already has. The goal is to break down isolation between congregations, foster peer and regionalized approaches to ministry, and reduce obstacles in the way of creative ministry.

The Network's four strategies related to connecting churches for ministry are to

- convene groups for the purpose of sharing of best practices, networking, and training.
- use the Internet and new technologies to develop networks of learning.
- use regional networks and teams to connect churches, plan collaboratively, and contextualize ministry.
- simplify access to denominational resources by creating new points of contact for churches and integrating the services provided.

The first three years for the Network (July 1, 2009 – June 30, 2012) are a time for learning—a time to test hypotheses, values, and projects; observe the impact of strategies, and generate case studies of healthy congregational practices. In everything it does, the Network intends to be an advocate for the local church.

The Network gives thanks to God for the pastors, ministry staff, and volunteers of the Christian Reformed Church with whom it is privileged to serve, using grants, peer learning, technology, social networking, volunteers, and regional networks.

II. Ministries of the Network

A. *The Network online*

A good part of the Network's early "connecting" work has taken place on the Internet. The Network has created a variety of online peer networks on the CRCNA website (www.crcna.org/network). These online networks are places where ministry leaders can connect with each other—where, for example, elders can learn from other elders, and worship leaders from other worship leaders. The Network online was launched in early February 2010. Approximately one year later, there were 108,000 visits, 462,000 page views (with an average visit of 4.25 minutes, about double that of other CRCNA-related websites), 2,822 comments posted by users, and 1,850 registered members—those who created an account in order make comments.

Of the almost 50 networks and forums, 13 have a "guide"—a person who assembles content for the visitor and monitors discussion. The guided networks are designed for ministry leaders in the local church or classis. Thus there are guided networks for pastors, elders, deacons, youth leaders, mission teams, Sunday school teachers, administrators, technology staff, classis leaders, worship teams, small group leaders, disability concerns leaders, and Safe Church teams. For each group, an attempt has been made to identify a basic body of knowledge related to the role, as well as to inspire conversation around everyday questions and issues that arise in the context of the local church.

The Network thanks the CRC Office of Communications for developing the online concept and for its ongoing collaboration in sustaining it. The Network is also grateful to the volunteer network guides and discussion forum hosts who enable this ministry to be provided at a low cost to the denomination.

B. Regional resource networks

Another Network project is to foster regional resource networks for congregations in Canada and the United States. In last year's report to synod, these networks were described as standing committees functioning in defined geographical areas. However, as Network staff listened to churches, it became clear that such an approach would be unwelcome and would ultimately fail. So it was decided instead to test a model of regional resourcing that uses part-time consultants in smaller geographical areas to assist congregations in a variety of ways. The pilot test of this role is just beginning, and three facets of this role have been identified.

- to refer individuals and congregations to ministry ideas, tools, and resources, whether found locally, regionally, or binationally
- to facilitate conversations between classis leaders, local pastors, lay leaders, or representatives of CRC agencies and their partners—conversations that advance specific ministries, enhance coordination, address sensitive issues, or plan how to assist churches contextually in their ministries
- to coordinate the delivery of coaching and related resources to the churches

Clearly, this approach must collaborate with and enhance the ministries and structures that are already in place—particularly those of classes and of CRC ministry agencies that are already organized regionally, such as Christian Reformed Home Missions.

C. Enhanced agency coordination of services to congregations

Another Network initiative is to coordinate the services that CRC ministry agencies and offices offer to congregations. Several projects are involved in this initiative:

- Improve telephone access to CRC resources so that callers from churches get even quicker answers to their questions and needs.
- Host monthly meetings in Burlington and Grand Rapids for staff with direct responsibility for communication with classes and congregations.
- Develop a much improved database of congregations that includes not only statistical information but also a record of key congregational actions and interactions with denominational and classical personnel.

The goal is to encourage recognition of the unique history, priorities, and interests of each CRC congregation.

D. Youth ministry

The denomination does not have its own youth ministry office, having for many years directed congregations to the ministry resources of its independent partner, Dynamic Youth Ministries (DYM), which is made up of the Calvinist Cadet Corps, GEMS Girls' Clubs, and Youth Unlimited. As a result, the Network is being asked to serve as the CRC's connection point with DYM. In addition, the Network sponsors an interagency task force on youth ministry.

E. Sustaining Congregational Excellence

In July 2007 a new denominational program, Sustaining Congregational Excellence (SCE; www.crcna.org/sce), began encouraging and walking alongside smaller CRC congregations to foster health in their ministries.

SCE programming is intended primarily for churches with 150 active, professing members or less. Of 1,055 CRC congregations overall, 63 percent fall into this category. As of December 2010, 68 percent of smaller Canadian churches and 58 percent of smaller U.S. churches had participated in SCE in some way.

SCE offers five types of grants—Health and Renewal (HR), Technology and Equipment (TE), Technology and Equipment Training, Coaching for Churches, Coaching for Pastors—and regional learning events for congregational leaders and a multimedia preaching seminar.

Health and Renewal grants allow congregations to create and design a project that fits their ministry setting. Many appreciate the freedom this offers versus a one-size-fits-all approach. The HR projects have resulted in wonderful stories of renewed hope, life-giving encounters, strengthened relationships, stronger leadership, successful outreach, engaged youth, and encouraged pastors. One hundred and twenty-four HR grants have been awarded, launching ministries such as community gardens, Hip Hop for inner-city youth, online classes for all ages, outreach to female inmates, after-school programs, leadership training, a focus on prayer, and more.

Technology and equipment purchased with SCE funds benefit smaller congregations in significant ways. For example, having equipment function properly during a worship service enhances worship and reduces stress levels for those in leadership. Often, receiving a TE grant is a church's first step toward other SCE opportunities. TE grants have been awarded to over 300 congregations. This past year additional grants were offered to churches for training in the use of technology or equipment.

There are two coaching options within SCE—one for the pastor and one for the pastor and a ministry leader. The second option was somewhat of an experiment and has proven to be quite successful. Currently there are 25 such coaching relationships underway.

Each year SCE holds a number of regional learning events. These events bring leaders from 12 smaller congregations together for mutual learning, support, and encouragement. A variety of topics related to congregational health are presented in a creative and interactive format. Attendees share best practices, meet with denominational personnel, and are given tools to apply in their ministries. To date, 254 congregations have attended a learning event.

Just prior to the annual synod, SCE and Calvin Theological Seminary's (CTS) Center for Excellence in Preaching host a multimedia preaching seminar. Fifteen pastors attend the week-long class in Grand Rapids.

Some quotes from participants offer a glimpse into their SCE experience:

- “The learning event gave me a pocket-full of dreams and ideas.”
- “I feel much encouraged in my small church.”
- “The SCE grant was simply instrumental in changing the momentum of this congregation, and people wanted to be a part of it.”
- “The greatest reward the congregation has experienced from the project is an awakening and revival of the men of the church.”
- “SCE was an awesome journey. So much so, our church plans to continue some of the things we were able to start because of the grant.”

E. Sustaining Pastoral Excellence

The goal of Sustaining Pastoral Excellence (SPE; www.crcna.org/spe) is to support and encourage pastors as they lead their congregations. Interest remains very high after nine years of operation. In November 2010, over sixty pastors who had never been involved in an SPE peer learning group gathered with current peer group coordinators to hear what it was all about. At the end of the day, one pastor expressed the sentiment of most: "I need this!"

To date, over 65 percent of CRC pastors have been in a peer learning group. The groups design their own learning and activities. For the great majority of pastors, the impact has been significant. They report healthier relationships, reduced feelings of isolation, a renewed sense of calling, meaningful collegial relationships, and better boundaries. One peer group participant reported, "The greatest benefit the congregations have received has been in the renewal and refreshment their pastors have received. We are better pastors because of what this grant has allowed us to do."

SPE provides two programs specifically for pastors' spouses: peer groups and a biennial conference. The most recent conference was held in Vancouver, British Columbia, in April 2010. About 100 spouses attended the "Come to the Living Water" event. By the end of the conference many were asking when the next one would take place. Said one participant, "Thank you for an incredible 48 hours of encouragement, love, fun, laughter, and challenge. It has made me feel like a woman of value."

Spouses' peer groups have not been as popular as hoped, but for the approximately 120 spouses in the 14 groups, they are very important.

Twice a year, the SPE/CTS course, "The Theology and Practice of Pastoral Ministry," is offered—once at Calvin Theological Seminary (CTS) and once offsite. Initially, this course was entirely funded by SPE, but increasingly CTS is covering the expenses so that in 2012 the course will be able to continue without SPE funding. One of the 180 students who have taken the course said, "It encourages me to see how others are practicing ministry. It reminds me of the support and encouragement of others—the cloud of witnesses."

In December 2010, the results of the third SPE survey of pastors and councils was published. The report is extensive and contains valuable information. One interesting finding among many is that "pastors gave SPE high marks overall for its contribution to their ministry, to themselves personally, and to the denominational culture overall." The entire report can be seen at www.crcna.org/pages/spe_surveys.cfm.

One of the ways in which SPE supports and encourages pastors and their spouses is by hosting learning events. To date, 48 pastor couples (pastor and spouse) have attended. One participant wrote, "Thank you so much for providing this event. Blessing and refreshing those in church leadership blesses the church, the kingdom."

Finally, a new SPE training tool is being developed for congregations that will address the role of search committees and be published in early 2012.

Since 2003, SPE has been funded by a generous grant from Lilly Endowment, Inc. That funding ends in December 2011. Synod 2010 mandated the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA to explore options for continued funding to sustain and continue to offer SPE programming for pastors and pastors' spouses in 2012 and beyond.

G. *ServiceLink* (www.crcna.org/pages/serviceLink_front.cfm)

ServiceLink is a program that promotes and facilitates the meaningful involvement of volunteers in the life and work of Christian Reformed congregations—and their service through CRC ministries and their partner agencies. It does this through recruiting and equipping volunteers, matching their gifts with opportunities, and working with agency and ministry staff for effective placements. Additionally ServiceLink partners with the denomination and with volunteers' local churches to find ways they can continue to serve upon their return.

The end of December 2010 marked more than 15 years in which ServiceLink has served the denomination by placing volunteers in ministry, providing opportunities not only for service but also for learning how the Christian Reformed Church is transforming lives and communities worldwide.

The year 2010 was also the beginning of something new for ServiceLink. After 14 years of working exclusively with Canadian churches, it became a binational program, opening a second office in the Grand Rapids denominational building. Within a short time, a growing list of American individuals and groups began to be placed in service, and a strong partnership with agencies and churches developed. During 2010 the binational program assisted in the placement of almost 480 volunteers, most of whom served overseas in some capacity—a reason to give thanks to God.

Volunteers in 2010 included a psychologist assisting with the CRC's earthquake response in Haiti; 32 groups serving with both the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC) and Christian Reformed World Missions (CRWM) in various countries around the world, some in construction projects, others in long-term partnerships, and others in prayer ministry; a husband and wife team working at a medical clinic in Tanzania with CRWRC; and a young adult working with special needs children in Nicaragua with CRWM.

Hearing the testimony of volunteers brings depth to the ServiceLink story. Following are two testimonials, one from a volunteer and the other from field staff who hosted a prayer ministry team:

- “Hard questions abound in Haiti, and giving answers is at times even harder, but I would not trade this month for anything. I know it was the most intense month of my life—both as a believer and in my profession. I have been a believer for more than 35 years, but I have never felt so close to God. Repeatedly he showed me his presence.”
- “I think this was one of the most rewarding visiting team experiences we have ever had—both for us and the national leaders we work with. Prayer seemed to break down the “us/them” barriers in ways that other sorts of teams have been unable to do.”

In reflecting on the past year, ServiceLink is thankful for so many willing and gifted volunteers and for the privilege we have to serve them on behalf of the Christian Reformed Church.

Appendix F Curriculum Vitae

Moses Chung

Personal Description

Born in Incheon, South Korea

Immigrated to the United States of America in 1984

Married to Eunae Joung; they have two children

Educational History

- 2006 - present D.Min. (Missional Leadership Cohort program), Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, California
- 1999 M.Div., Calvin Theological Seminary, Grand Rapids, Michigan
- 1993 B.A. (double major in history and music), Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan
- 1991 Off-campus semester program, Yonsei University, Seoul, Korea

Work History

- 2010 Retreat speaker, young adults of Kyushu regional churches, Japan
- 2009 - present Board member of Calvin College
- 2009 Coordinated and translated for Dr. Alan J. Roxburgh for National Pastors Conference on Missional Church and Leadership, Seoul, Korea
- Coordinator of (nationwide) think-tank group on missional conversation in Korea
- Project leader of Korean national team for Allelon International Mission in Western Culture Project
- 2008 - present First editorial board member of *Christianity Today*, Korea (CTK)
- 2008 Participated as Korean representative in Allelon International Consultation for Mission in Western Culture Project, Zambia
- 2007 - present Associate pastor, Sooyoungro Presbyterian Church, Busan, Korea (30,000+ people in Sunday attendance)
- Planning director of ministries
 - Team leader of executive administration and ministry teams (responsible for leading and managing 120 pastors and 50 administrative staff)
 - Regular preaching responsibilities
 - Pastoral leadership for young couples' ministry
- 2003 - 2007 Associate pastor, New Life Community Church (Reformed Church in America), Artesia, California
- Pastoral worship leader for Sunday contemporary worship

- Planted and led a worshipping congregation, Chrysalis— People on the Way, an experimental and alternative church community
 - Started and led New Worship Gathering (NWG), a service designed for postmodern/emerging population in Southern California
- 2003 - 2006 Board member of advisory council for the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship
- 2002 - 2007 Member of Sesquicentennial Committee of the Christian Reformed Church
- 2003 Christian Reformed Church synodical delegate
- 2001 - 2003 Alternate member of the CRCNA Board of Trustees
- 1999 - 2003 Minister of discipleship, First Christian Reformed Church of Bellflower, California
- Primary responsibility for the discipleship (small groups), evangelism, and prayer ministries
 - Regular preaching responsibilities
 - Retreat leader for various groups
 - Led seminars such as “Rock ‘N’ Roll, MTV, and the Christian Youth,” “Constructing a ‘Life Map’,” “The Worship Leader and Leading Worship”
- 1997 - 1999 Student pastor, Korean Bible Church, Ann Arbor, Michigan
- Pastor for college students and young adults
- 1998 Coordinated and translated for Dr. William Romanowski at the national Contemporary Christian Music Conference, Seoul, Korea
- 1996 - 1997 Intern Pastor, Dong-An Presbyterian Church, Seoul, Korea
- Participated in various ministries such as leading a Bible study for beginners in faith, starting and leading an English-language Bible study, planning concerts and special worship services
 - Worship leader for Sunday contemporary service (800+ in attendance, mostly college students and young adults)
 - Weekly columnist for an FM contemporary Christian music radio program, Christian Broadcasting System (CBS), Seoul, Korea
 - Translated for the Christian rock group Petra’s world tour (3 Korea concerts, around 4,000 in attendance)
- 1992 - 1996 Youth pastor, Korean immigrant churches in Michigan and California

Additional Skills

Fluent bilingual/bicultural in English and Korean

Studied and played classical and acoustic guitar since 1983

Appendix G

Mandate of Committee for Contact with the Government Operating as the Christian Reformed Centre for Public Dialogue¹

I. Preamble

The Justice ministry of the Committee for Contact with the Government (CCG) was founded in 1968.² Its work is rooted in a vision that the Christian Reformed churches in Canada have a prophetic opportunity and responsibility, indeed a calling, to interact with Canadian society and governments on the significant and pressing issues of the day. The synod of the Christian Reformed Church has consistently recognized the importance of Canadian CRC interaction with governments. This commitment to Canadian justice ministry has persisted through various structural changes in the denomination and is affirmed in the current structure. Synod 2000 adopted a governance proposal that recognized the “enduring significance” of a set of core values,³ including the following:

As a binational church we need to be sensitive to the uniqueness of ministry in both countries. In the Canadian context the CRC needs to address and/or be involved in social justice issues, ministry with poor and aboriginal peoples, interchurch relations, and interaction with governments.⁴

The CRCNA-Canada Corporation (Canada-Corp), in seeking to address the calling to these aspects of Canadian ministry, directs the CCG to serve the church by adhering to the following mandate:

II. Tasks

1. Through the office of the director of Canadian ministries (DCM), recommend to the Canada-Corp how the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) within Canada may effectively address all relevant levels of Canadian government on significant and pressing issues of the day from an integrally biblical, theological, and confessional perspective, expressed in terms of a Reformed worldview, emphasizing wherever possible the official positions of the CRCNA as determined by synod. Such recommendations will ordinarily be detailed in an annual plan and may include
 - a. proposed position papers, briefs, and submissions to appropriate levels of government.
 - b. proposed strategies for communicating with the congregations on significant and pressing issues of the day.
 - c. proposed strategies for communicating with the government and the congregations on significant and pressing issues for which positions have been developed.

¹ As approved by the CRCNA-Canada Corporation in session, September 23, 2010.

² A complete history of the CCG and its mission is detailed in *Our Political World Belongs to God: A brief history of the Committee for Contact with the Government*. This document is available from the CCG office.

³ *Agenda for Synod 2000*, p. 57.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 58.

2. The CCG must inform the Christian Reformed churches in Canada about issues it seeks to address as contained in its annual plan and elicit responses to its draft proposals, briefs, and submissions, thereby seeking to establish a broad consensus before recommending positions or actions.
3. When matters of urgency arise, and in cases where a legislature's timetable may bring closure to the issue before the CCG has the opportunity to consult with the churches and the Canada-Corp (in its regular semi-annual session), government contact on the matter may proceed if the following criteria are met:
 - a. All members of the CCG agree on the advisability of the proposed action and on the substance of the submission under consideration.
 - b. The DCM and the officers of the Canada-Corp, after consultation with members of the Canada-Corp,⁵ agree on the need for immediate action and the content of the proposed submission.
4. In the preparation of recommendations and draft presentations and submissions, the CCG will engage in the following:
 - a. Consult widely within the binational context of the CRC with a view to exchanging information and, where appropriate, to join in combined action.
 - b. Consult and collaborate in the Canadian ecumenical social justice context in the interest of deeper research and advocacy impact.
 - c. Consult and collaborate closely with our partners in the Reformed Church in America, Regional Synod of Canada.
 - d. In addition to the work of consultation, the CCG will work cooperatively and consultatively by creating task forces, under the direction of the CCG, to address specific issues.
 - e. In cooperation with the Justice and Reconciliation Mobilizer and other CRCNA partners, raise awareness and educate members and leaders as part of an incremental effort to cultivate a justice consciousness among the CRC in Canada.
5. The CCG will draft appropriate responses to positions advocated by others that do not reflect a Reformed worldview.

III. Accountability

As part of the Canadian Ministries Office of the CRCNA, the CCG and the Centre for Public Dialogue are accountable to the Canada-Corp through the office of the DCM. Under the provisions of the tasks outlined above the CCG will

- a. present an annual plan detailing budget proposals and recommended research, advocacy, and constituency education plans to the DCM.
- b. engage in regular communication for accountability purposes with the DCM.

⁵ Such consultation will be done via email.

Appendix H

Mission and Mandate of the Office of Social Justice and Hunger Action

I. Mission statement

The Office of Social Justice and Hunger Action (OSJ) exists to lead and equip the CRC in carrying out its transforming mission to “pursue God’s justice and peace,” as stated in its “Denominational Mission/Vision Statement.”

II. Mandate

The OSJ is mandated to encourage and assist the CRCNA—its leaders, agencies, institutions, and members—to better “live justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God” (Mic. 6:8).

It focuses primarily on the systemic causes of poverty, hunger, and powerlessness, as well as those social injustices to which synod or the Board of Trustees (BOT) has directed it.

Its leadership and equipping consists primarily of

- *raising awareness and educating* members and leaders about issues of justice that relate to root causes of poverty, hunger, powerlessness, and those social justice issues that synod or the BOT have identified as priorities.
- *identifying, creating, and encouraging the use of* methods of worship and modes of living out our faith that express justice as a core personal and corporate value for Reformed Christians.
- *raising the voice* of the CRCNA in advocacy for and with those who suffer injustice, through action alerts to our members, participation in advocacy coalitions, and public statements when appropriate.

III. Scope and accountability

It is a CRC denominational ministry accountable to the Board of Trustees through the director of denominational ministries and the executive director of the CRCNA.

It collaborates closely with the CRC’s Centre for Public Dialogue in Canada in awareness-raising, education, and advocacy, as well as with other coalitions for public action in Canada, the United States, and around the world.

IV. Selecting justice issues

No single office can adequately raise awareness, do education, and promote advocacy for the entire range of social justice issues. Consequently, in selecting a limited number of social justice issues to address, we consider the following primary criteria:

- a. Is this an issue or action that is important to the integrity, faith, and life of our church and our society?
- b. Does this issue arise from a biblical theme?
- c. Is this issue consistent with the OSJ’s mandate?
- d. Does it strengthen or support existing ministry at any of the following levels?

- denominational
- CRC Centre for Public Dialogue
- congregational and/or regional
- individual daily work ministry

e. Is it aligned with CRC goals, values, and ministry priorities?

Additional criteria:

- f. Is this a binational issue (i.e., Canada and U.S.)?
- g. Does it respond to a specific confessional or synodical declaration or statement?
- h. Is it part of a larger Christian movement, or can we forge significant cooperation with other followers of Christ and people of faith?
- i. Do we have grassroots expertise and input from those affected by the situation?
- j. How likely is it that we can forge a broad-based agreement to deal with this issue?
- k. Does the CRCNA have a current or historical connection or relationship with those affected by the issue being proposed?

Note: A core issue would normally meet all five of the primary criteria—and possibly one or more of the additional criteria. These criteria, however, are not all of equal weight and are to be used more as guidelines in the decision-making process rather than as rigid mechanical screens.

Appendix I

Condensed Financial Statements of the Agencies and Institutions

Back to God Ministries International Balance Sheet (000s)

	-----June 30, 2010-----				Total
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	
Cash	\$ 1,629		278		1,907
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	3,650	-	598	99	4,347
Receivables & Advances	529	-	-	-	529
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	-	-	-	-	-
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	-	-	-	-	-
Equities	-	-	-	-	-
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-
Property (nonoperating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	541	-	-	-	541
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	6,349	-	876	99	7,324
Accounts Payable	448	-	-	-	448
Notes/Loans Payable	478	-	-	-	478
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	881	-	-	-	881
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	1,807	-	-	-	1,807
Net Assets	\$ 4,543	-	876	99	5,518
Footnotes:					
Note 1: List details of property not in use.					
Note 2: List details of designations.					
Note 3: List details of restrictions.	Isaac Jen endowment fund and Media Reach Fund.				
Note 4: List details of restrictions.	Permanently restricted endowment funds.				

**Back to God Ministries International
Income and Expenses (000s)**

		Fiscal 08-09 Actual		Fiscal 09-10 Actual
INCOME:				
Ministry Share	\$	3,622	\$	3,650
% of Total Income		40.1%		38.7%
Other Gift Income:				
Above Ministry Share	\$	3,954	\$	3,802
Estate Gifts	\$	1,483	\$	1,578
Total Gift Income		5,437		5,380
% of Total Income		60.2%		57.0%
Other Income:				
Tuition & Sales	\$	-	\$	-
Grants-Animation	\$	-	\$	-
Miscellaneous	\$	(30)	\$	403
Total Other Income		(30)		403
% of Total Income		-0.3%		4.3%
TOTAL INCOME		9,029		9,433
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
English	\$	2,468	\$	2,182
FTEs		10		11
International	\$	5,050	\$	4,113
FTEs		13		14
Education			\$	104
FTEs				2
Total Program Service \$	\$	7,518	\$	6,399
Total Program Service FTEs		23		27
% of Total \$		72.3%		71.8%
% of Total FTEs		67.6%		73.0%
Support Services:				
Management & General	\$	957	\$	948
FTEs		4		4
Plant Operations	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Fund-raising	\$	1,923	\$	1,566
FTEs		7		6
Total Support Service \$		2,880		2,514
Total Support Service FTEs		11		10
% of Total \$		27.7%		28.2%
% of Total FTEs		32.4%		27.0%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$	10,398	\$	8,912
TOTAL FTEs		34		37
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	\$	(1,369)	\$	521

**Calvin College
Balance Sheet (000s)**

	-----June 30, 2010-----				Total
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	
Cash	\$ 1,187	-	-	-	1,187
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	31,372	-	-	-	31,372
Inventory	666	-	-	-	666
Prepays & Advances	1,086	-	-	-	1,086
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	19,797	-	3,757	18,780	42,334
Equities	55,506	-	10,535	52,656	118,697
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-
Property (nonoperating)	6,132	-	1,164	5,817	13,113
PP & E	233,176	-	-	-	233,176
Other	1,828	-	-	-	1,828
Total Assets	350,750	-	15,456	77,253	443,459
Accounts Payable	6,837	-	-	-	6,837
Notes/Loans Payable	139,882	-	-	-	139,882
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	6,397	-	-	-	6,397
Deferred Income	1,096	-	-	-	1,096
Other	38,405	-	-	-	38,405
Total Liabilities	192,617	-	-	-	192,617
Net Assets	158,133	-	15,456	77,253	250,842
Footnotes:	<p>Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.</p> <p>Note 2: List details of designations.</p> <p>Note 3: List details of restrictions.</p> <p>Note 4: List details of restrictions.</p> <p>Over 1,157 accounts for instruction, scholarships, grants, research, public service, student services, etc., funded by outside sources.</p> <p>Endowed gifts.</p>				

**Calvin College
Income and Expenses (000s)**

	Fiscal 08-09 Actual	Fiscal 09-10 Actual
INCOME:		
Ministry Share	\$ 2,603	\$ 2,693
% of Total Income	2.2%	2.2%
Other Gift Income:		
Above Ministry Share	\$ 2,450	\$ 2,702
Estate Gifts	\$ 12	\$ 7
Total Gift Income	<u>2,462</u>	<u>2,709</u>
% of Total Income	2.1%	2.2%
Other Income:		
Tuition & Sales	\$ 113,408	\$ 115,093
Grants	\$ -	\$ -
Miscellaneous	\$ 1,121	\$ 2,734
Total Other Income	<u>114,529</u>	<u>117,827</u>
% of Total Income	95.8%	95.6%
 TOTAL INCOME	 <u>119,594</u>	 <u>123,229</u>
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):		
Program Services:		
Education	\$ 100,720	\$ 103,834
FTEs	612	594
	\$ -	\$ -
	-	-
	\$ -	\$ -
	-	-
	\$ -	\$ -
	-	-
	\$ -	\$ -
	-	-
	\$ -	\$ -
	-	-
Total Program Service \$	<u>\$ 100,720</u>	<u>\$ 103,834</u>
Total Program Service FTEs	612	594
% of Total \$	85.0%	85.3%
% of Total FTEs	76.1%	76.3%
Support Services:		
Management & General	\$ 7,743	\$ 7,542
FTEs	76	72
Plant Operations	\$ 7,179	\$ 7,357
FTEs	78	76
Fund-raising	\$ 2,796	\$ 2,944
FTEs	38	36
Total Support Service \$	<u>17,718</u>	<u>17,843</u>
Total Support Service FTEs	192	184
% of Total \$	15.0%	14.7%
% of Total FTEs	23.9%	23.7%
 TOTAL EXPENDITURES	 <u>\$ 118,438</u>	 <u>\$ 121,677</u>

**Calvin Theological Seminary
Balance Sheet (000s)**

	-----June 30, 2010-----				Total
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	
Cash	\$ 1,028	-	1	-	1,029
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	205	-	2,689	-	2,894
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	25	-	2	-	27
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	-	-	514	-	514
Equities	-	-	1,067	-	1,067
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-
Property (nonoperating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	11,820	-	-	-	11,820
Other	-	-	2,542	-	2,542
Total Assets	13,078	-	6,815	-	19,893
Accounts Payable	280	2,353	2	-	2,635
Notes/Loans Payable	-	292	-	-	292
Capital Leases	-	45	-	-	45
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	124	-	-	-	124
Other	-	-	2,788	-	2,788
Total Liabilities	404	2,690	2,790	-	5,884
Net Assets	\$ 12,674	(2,690)	4,025	-	14,009
Footnotes:					
Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.	NOT INCLUDED ABOVE: Endowment, Annuity and Trust funds \$24,732M, Annuity payable \$219M; Any balance due to other funds for these assets is included under "other" as unrestricted in Ag. Desig.				
Note 2: List details of designations.	Accounts payable: Early retirement and post retirement liabilities. Notes/Loans Payable: Net student loan receivables and liabilities.				
Note 3: List details of restrictions.	Donor designated, program, scholarship, grants, and construction pledges.				
Note 4: List details of restrictions.					

**Calvin Theological Seminary
Income and Expenses (000s)**

		Fiscal 08-09 Actual		Fiscal 09-10 Actual
INCOME:				
Ministry Share	\$	2,876	\$	2,992
% of Total Income		43.3%		47.5%
Other Gift Income:				
Above Ministry Share	\$	867	\$	706
Estate Gifts	\$	-	\$	-
Total Gift Income		867		706
% of Total Income		13.1%		11.2%
Other Income:				
Tuition & Sales	\$	2,056	\$	1,851
Grants	\$	801	\$	725
Miscellaneous	\$	39	\$	31
Total Other Income		2,896		2,607
% of Total Income		43.6%		41.3%
TOTAL INCOME		6,639		6,305
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
Instructional	\$	2,880	\$	2,651
FTEs		29		29
Public Service	\$	62	\$	59
FTEs		1		1
Academic Support	\$	1,300	\$	927
FTEs		4		4
Student Services	\$	577	\$	520
FTEs		4		4
Student Aid	\$	567	\$	268
FTEs		2		2
	\$	-	\$	-
		-		-
Total Program Service \$	\$	5,386	\$	4,425
Total Program Service FTEs		40		40
% of Total \$		73.7%		71.1%
% of Total FTEs		76.9%		76.9%
Support Services:				
Management & General	\$	676	\$	922
FTEs		7		7
Plant Operations	\$	531	\$	446
FTEs		1		1
Fund-raising	\$	713	\$	431
FTEs		4		4
Total Support Service \$		1,920		1,799
Total Support Service FTEs		12		12
% of Total \$		26.3%		28.9%
% of Total FTEs		23.1%		23.1%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$	7,306	\$	6,224
TOTAL FTEs		52		52
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	\$	(667)	\$	81

**Consolidated Group Insurance - U.S.
Balance Sheet (000s)**

	-----December 31, 2010-----				Total
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	
Cash	\$ 216	-	-	-	216
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	971	-	-	-	971
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	403	-	-	-	403
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	2,027	-	-	-	2,027
Equities	-	-	-	-	-
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-
Property (nonoperating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	3,617	-	-	-	3,617
Accounts Payable	39	-	-	-	39
Notes/Loans Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	584	-	-	-	584
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	623	-	-	-	623
Net Assets	\$ 2,994	-	-	-	2,994
Footnotes:					
Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.					
Note 2: List details of designations.					
Note 3: List details of restrictions.					
Note 4: List details of restrictions.					

**Consolidated Group Insurance - U.S.
Changes in Net Assets (000s)**

	2009 Actual	2010 Actual
ADDITIONS:		
Ministry Share	\$ -	\$ -
% of Total Income	0.0%	0.0%
Other Gift Income:		
Above Ministry Share	\$ -	\$ -
Estate Gifts	\$ -	\$ -
Total Gift Income	-	-
% of Total Income	0.0%	0.0%
Other Income:		
Participant Premiums	\$ 10,785	\$ 10,382
Grants	\$ -	\$ -
Miscellaneous	\$ 198	\$ 167
Total Other Income	10,983	10,549
% of Total Income	100.0%	100.0%
TOTAL ADDITIONS	10,983	10,549
DEDUCTIONS (FTE = Full-Time Employee):		
Program Services:		
Claims Expense	\$ 9,303	\$ 10,328
FTEs	-	-
Insurance Premiums	\$ 818	\$ 855
FTEs	-	-
TPA & PPO Fees	\$ 628	\$ 550
FTEs	-	-
	\$ -	\$ -
	\$ -	\$ -
	\$ -	\$ -
	\$ -	\$ -
Total Program Service \$	\$ 10,749	\$ 11,733
Total Program Service FTEs	-	-
% of Total \$	97.7%	97.5%
% of Total FTEs	0.0%	0.0%
Support Services:		
Management & General	\$ 251	\$ 297
FTEs	3	3
Plant Operations	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	-	-
Fund-raising	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	-	-
Total Support Service \$	251	297
Total Support Service FTEs	3	3
% of Total \$	4.3%	4.3%
% of Total FTEs	100.0%	100.0%
TOTAL DEDUCTIONS	\$ 11,000	\$ 12,030
TOTAL FTEs	3	3
NET ADDITIONS / (DEDUCTIONS)	\$ (17)	\$ (1,481)

Employees' Retirement Plan - Canada (in Canadian \$)
Balance Sheet (000s)

	December 31, 2010				Total
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	
Cash	\$ 153	-	-	-	153
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	-	-	-	-	-
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	-	-	-	-	-
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	336	-	-	-	336
Equities	2,327	-	-	-	2,327
GICs / Stable Asset Fund	176	-	-	-	176
Property (nonoperating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	2,992	-	-	-	2,992
Accounts Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Forfeitures Due Agencies	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	-	-	-	-	-
Net Assets	\$ 2,992	-	-	-	2,992
Footnotes:					
Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.					
Note 2: List details of designations.					
Note 3: List details of restrictions.					
Note 4: List details of restrictions.					

Employees' Retirement Plan - Canada (in Canadian \$)
Changes in Net Assets (000s)

	2009 Actual	2010 Actual
ADDITIONS:		
Ministry Share	\$ -	\$ -
% of Total Income	0.0%	0.0%
Other Gift Income:		
Above Ministry Share	\$ -	\$ -
Estate Gifts	\$ -	\$ -
Total Gift Income	-	-
% of Total Income	0.0%	0.0%
Other Income:		
Employer Contributions	\$ 190	\$ 196
Participant Contributions	\$ 13	\$ 21
Miscellaneous	\$ 406	\$ 261
Total Other Income	609	478
% of Total Income	100.0%	100.0%
TOTAL ADDITIONS	609	478
DEDUCTIONS (FTE = Full-Time Employee):		
Program Services:		
Distributions	\$ 184	\$ 340
FTEs	-	-
FTEs	-	-
FTEs	-	-
FTEs	-	-
FTEs	-	-
FTEs	-	-
FTEs	-	-
FTEs	-	-
Total Program Service \$	\$ 184	\$ 340
Total Program Service FTEs	-	-
% of Total \$	100.0%	99.4%
% of Total FTEs		
Support Services:		
Management & General	\$ -	\$ 2
FTEs	-	-
Plant Operations	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	-	-
Fund-raising	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	-	-
Total Support Service \$	-	2
Total Support Service FTEs	-	-
% of Total \$	0.0%	0.6%
% of Total FTEs		
TOTAL DEDUCTIONS	\$ 184	\$ 342
TOTAL FTEs	-	-
NET ADDITIONS / (DEDUCTIONS)	\$ 425	\$ 136

**Employees' Savings Plan United States
Balance Sheet (000s)**

	December 31, 2010				Total
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	
Cash	\$ -	-	-	-	-
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	-	-	-	-	-
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	-	-	-	-	-
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	4,068	-	-	-	4,068
Equities	14,864	-	-	-	14,864
GICs / Stable Asset Fund	2,839	-	-	-	2,839
Property (nonoperating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	21,771	-	-	-	21,771
Accounts Payable	34	-	-	-	34
Forfeitures Due Agencies	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	34	-	-	-	34
Net Assets	\$ 21,737	-	-	-	21,737
Footnotes:					
Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.					
Note 2: List details of designations.					
Note 3: List details of restrictions.					
Note 4: List details of restrictions.					

**Employees' Savings Plan United States
Changes in Net Assets (000s)**

		2009 Actual		2010 Actual
ADDITIONS:				
Ministry Share	\$	-	\$	-
% of Total Income		0.0%		0.0%
Other Gift Income:				
Above Ministry Share	\$	-	\$	-
Estate Gifts	\$	-	\$	-
Total Gift Income		-		-
% of Total Income		0.0%		0.0%
Other Income:				
Contributions	\$	1,513	\$	1,451
Grants	\$	-	\$	-
Miscellaneous	\$	3,656	\$	2,304
Total Other Income		5,169		3,755
% of Total Income		100.0%		100.0%
TOTAL ADDITIONS		<u><u>5,169</u></u>		<u><u>3,755</u></u>
DEDUCTIONS (FTE = Full-Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
Distributions	\$	1,691	\$	537
FTEs		-		-
FTEs	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs	\$	-	\$	-
Total Program Service \$	\$	1,691	\$	537
Total Program Service FTEs		-		-
% of Total \$		84.3%		60.8%
% of Total FTEs		0.0%		0.0%
Support Services:				
Management & General	\$	315	\$	346
FTEs		1		1
Plant Operations	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Fund-raising	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Total Support Service \$		315		346
Total Support Service FTEs		1		1
% of Total \$		15.7%		39.2%
% of Total FTEs		100.0%		100.0%
TOTAL DEDUCTIONS	<u><u>\$</u></u>	<u><u>2,006</u></u>	<u><u>\$</u></u>	<u><u>883</u></u>
TOTAL FTEs		<u><u>1</u></u>		<u><u>1</u></u>
NET ADDITIONS / (DEDUCTIONS)	<u><u>\$</u></u>	<u><u>3,163</u></u>	<u><u>\$</u></u>	<u><u>2,872</u></u>

FAITH ALIVE CHRISTIAN RESOURCES
Balance Sheet (000s)

	-----June 30, 2010-----				Total
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	
Cash	\$ 282	-	24	-	306
CDs, Time Deposits		-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	538	-	-	-	538
Inventory	1,978	-	-	-	1,978
Prepays & Advances	11	-	-	-	11
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	-	-	-	-	-
Equities	2,454	-	-	-	2,454
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-
Property (nonoperating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	280	-	-	-	280
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	5,543	-	24	-	5,567
Accounts Payable	820	-	-	-	820
Notes/Loans Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	57	-	-	-	57
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	877	-	-	-	877
Net Assets	\$ 4,666	-	24	-	4,690
Footnotes:					
Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.					
Note 2: List details of designations.	Funds for new curriculum development cost.				
Note 3: List details of restrictions.	Leadership project.				
Note 4: List details of restrictions.					

FAITH ALIVE CHRISTIAN RESOURCES
Income and Expenses (000s)

		Fiscal 08-09 Actual		Fiscal 09-10 Actual
INCOME:				
Ministry Share	\$	1,090	\$	1,024
% of Total Income		19.5%		18.7%
Other Gift Income:				
Above Ministry Share	\$	309	\$	357
Estate Gifts	\$	-	\$	-
Total Gift Income		309		357
% of Total Income		5.5%		6.5%
Other Income:				
Tuition & Sales	\$	4,038	\$	3,503
Grants	\$	197	\$	249
Miscellaneous	\$	(30)	\$	349
Total Other Income		4,205		4,101
% of Total Income		75.0%		74.8%
TOTAL INCOME		5,604		5,482
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
Banner	\$	1,326	\$	1,289
FTEs		3		4
Education	\$	3,393	\$	3,149
FTEs		19		19
World Literature	\$	326	\$	364
FTEs		2		3
Teacher Training	\$	140	\$	145
FTEs		1		1
	\$	-	\$	-
	\$	-	\$	-
	\$	-	\$	-
Total Program Service \$	\$	5,185	\$	4,947
Total Program Service FTEs		25		26
% of Total \$		85.6%		86.0%
% of Total FTEs		92.6%		92.9%
Support Services:				
Management & General	\$	869	\$	808
FTEs		2		2
Plant Operations	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Fund-raising	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Total Support Service \$		869		808
Total Support Service FTEs		2		2
% of Total \$		14.4%		14.0%
% of Total FTEs		7.4%		7.1%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$	6,054	\$	5,755
TOTAL FTEs		27		28
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	\$	(450)	\$	(273)

**Home Missions
Balance Sheet (000s)**

	-----June 30, 2010-----				Total
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	
Cash	\$ 1,041	-	-	-	1,041
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	212	-	-	513	725
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	-	-	-	-	-
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	-	635	-	-	635
Equities	327	1,319	125	150	1,921
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-
Property (nonoperating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	27	-	-	-	27
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	1,607	1,954	125	663	4,349
Accounts Payable	306	-	-	-	306
Notes/Loans Payable	24	-	-	-	24
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	232	-	-	-	232
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	562	-	-	-	562
Net Assets	\$ 1,045	1,954	125	663	3,787
Footnotes:					
Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.					
Note 2: List details of designations.	Mission Trg Fund: \$772; Hawaii: \$1,460; Other: \$2,049;				
Note 3: List details of restrictions.	NA Trng: \$49; Can Legacy: \$68; Other: \$9				
Note 4: List details of restrictions.	Short term loan: \$507; Emergin Leader Trust: \$155.				

**Home Missions
Income and Expenses (000s)**

		Fiscal 08-09 Actual		Fiscal 09-10 Actual
INCOME:				
Ministry Share	\$	3,665	\$	3,683
% of Total Income		68.2%		62.4%
Other Gift Income:				
Above Ministry Share	\$	1,430	\$	1,360
Estate Gifts	\$	300	\$	195
Total Gift Income		1,730		1,555
% of Total Income		32.2%		26.3%
Other Income:				
Tuition & Sales	\$	-	\$	-
Grants	\$	147	\$	119
Miscellaneous	\$	(170)	\$	547
Total Other Income		(23)		666
% of Total Income		-0.4%		11.3%
TOTAL INCOME		5,372		5,904
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
	\$	-	\$	-
		-		-
	\$	-	\$	-
		-		-
	\$	-	\$	-
		-		-
Ministry Teams	\$	6,363	\$	5,424
FTEs		26		26
Ministry Devel & Planning	\$	907	\$	700
FTEs		6		5
FTEs	\$	-	\$	-
		-		-
Total Program Service \$	\$	7,270	\$	6,124
Total Program Service FTEs		32		31
% of Total \$		79.3%		79.0%
% of Total FTEs		74.4%		83.8%
Support Services:				
Management & General	\$	895	\$	730
FTEs		3		2
Plant Operations	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Fund-raising	\$	1,005	\$	897
FTEs		8		4
Total Support Service \$		1,900		1,627
Total Support Service FTEs		11		6
% of Total \$		20.7%		21.0%
% of Total FTEs		25.6%		16.2%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$	9,170	\$	7,751
TOTAL FTEs		43		37
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	\$	(3,798)	\$	(1,847)

**Loan Fund
Balance Sheet (000s)**

	-----June 30, 2010-----				Total
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	
Cash	\$ 9,390	-	-	-	9,390
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	25,214	-	-	-	25,214
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	-	-	-	-	-
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	-	-	-	-	-
Equities	-	-	-	-	-
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-
Property (nonoperating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	34,604	-	-	-	34,604
Accounts Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Notes/Loans Payable	28,384	-	-	-	28,384
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	28,384	-	-	-	28,384
Net Assets	\$ 6,220	-	-	-	6,220
Footnotes:					
Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.					
Note 2: List details of designations.					
Note 3: List details of restrictions.					
Note 4: List details of restrictions.					

**Loan Fund
Income and Expenses (000s)**

		Fiscal 08-09 Actual	Fiscal 09-10 Actual
INCOME:			
Ministry Share	\$	-	\$ -
% of Total Income		0.0%	0.0%
Other Gift Income:			
Above Ministry Share	\$	-	\$ -
Estate Gifts	\$	-	\$ -
Total Gift Income		-	-
% of Total Income		0.0%	0.0%
Other Income:			
Tuition & Sales	\$	-	\$ -
Grants	\$	-	\$ -
Miscellaneous	\$	1,905	\$ 1,598
Total Other Income		1,905	1,598
% of Total Income		100.0%	100.0%
TOTAL INCOME		1,905	1,598
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):			
Program Services:			
Loan Interest	\$	1,245	\$ 972
FTEs		1	1
	\$	-	\$ 250
		-	1
	\$	-	\$ -
		-	-
	\$	-	\$ -
		-	-
	\$	-	\$ -
		-	-
	\$	-	\$ -
		-	-
Total Program Service \$	\$	1,245	\$ 1,222
Total Program Service FTEs		1	1
% of Total \$		82.5%	82.2%
% of Total FTEs		50.0%	50.0%
Support Services:			
Management & General	\$	265	\$ 264
FTEs		1	1
Plant Operations	\$	-	\$ -
FTEs		-	-
Fund-raising	\$	-	\$ -
FTEs		-	-
Total Support Service \$		265	264
Total Support Service FTEs		1	1
% of Total \$		17.5%	17.8%
% of Total FTEs		50.0%	50.0%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$	1,510	\$ 1,486
TOTAL FTEs		2	2
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	\$	395	\$ 112

Ministers' Pension Fund and Special Assistance Fund - Canada
Balance Sheet (000s) in Canadian \$

	-----December 31, 2010-----				
	Pension	S.A.F			Total
Cash	\$ 3,043	295	-	-	3,338
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	165	4	-	-	169
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	-	-	-	-	-
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	6,752	-	-	-	6,752
Equities	21,701	-	-	-	21,701
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-
Property (nonoperating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	31,661	299	-	-	31,960
Accounts Payable	78	-	-	-	78
Notes/Loans Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	78	-	-	-	78
Net Assets	\$ 31,583	299	-	-	31,882
Footnotes:					
Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.					
Note 2: List details of designations.					
Note 3: List details of restrictions.					
Note 4: List details of restrictions.					

Ministers' Pension Fund and Special Assistance Fund - Canada
Changes in Net Assets (000s) in Canadian \$

	MPF 2009 Actual	MPF 2010 Actual	SAF 2009 Actual	SAF 2010 Actual
ADDITIONS:				
Ministry Share	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 36	\$ 39
% of Total Income	0.0%	0.0%	97.3%	95.1%
Other Gift Income:				
Above Ministry Share	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Estate Gifts	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Total Gift Income	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
% of Total Income	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Other Income:				
Participant Assessments	\$ 2,094	\$ 2,186	\$ -	\$ -
Grants	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Miscellaneous	\$ 3,809	\$ 2,489	\$ 1	\$ 2
Total Other Income	\$ 5,903	\$ 4,675	\$ 1	\$ 2
% of Total Income	100.0%	100.0%	2.7%	4.9%
TOTAL ADDITIONS	5,903	4,675	37	41
DEDUCTIONS (FTE = Full-Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
Distributions	\$ 2,291	\$ 2,254	\$ 12	\$ 8
FTEs	-	-	-	-
FTEs	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Total Program Service \$	\$ 2,291	\$ 2,254	\$ 12	\$ 8
Total Program Service FTEs	-	-	-	-
% of Total \$	82.6%	81.1%	100.0%	100.0%
% of Total FTEs	0.0%	0.0%		
Support Services:				
Management & General	\$ 483	\$ 526	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	1	1	-	-
Plant Operations	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	-	-	-	-
Fund-raising	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	-	-	-	-
Total Support Service \$	483	526	-	-
Total Support Service FTEs	1	1	-	-
% of Total \$	17.4%	18.9%	0.0%	0.0%
% of Total FTEs	100.0%	100.0%		
TOTAL DEDUCTIONS	\$ 2,774	\$ 2,780	\$ 12	\$ 8
TOTAL FTEs	1	1	-	-
NET ADDITIONS / (DEDUCTIONS)	\$ 3,129	\$ 1,895	\$ 25	\$ 33

Ministers' Pension Fund and Special Assistance Fund - United States
Balance Sheet (000s)

	-----December 31, 2010-----				
	Pension	S.A.F			Total
Cash	\$ 3,089	166	-	-	3,255
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	246	-	-	-	246
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	-	-	-	-	-
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	13,753	-	-	-	13,753
Equities	65,593	-	-	-	65,593
Diversified / Alternative	8,700	-	-	-	8,700
Property (nonoperating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	209	-	-	-	209
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	91,590	166	-	-	91,756
Accounts Payable	47	9	-	-	56
Notes/Loans Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	47	9	-	-	56
Net Assets	\$ 91,543	157	-	-	91,700
Footnotes:					
Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.					
Note 2: List details of designations.					
Note 3: List details of restrictions.					
Note 4: List details of restrictions.					

Ministers' Pension Fund and Special Assistance Fund - United States
Changes in Net Assets (000s)

	MPF 2009 Actual	MPF 2010 Actual	SAF 2009 Actual	SAF 2010 Actual
ADDITIONS:				
Ministry Share	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 95	\$ 78
% of Total Income	0.0%	0.0%	97.9%	98.7%
Other Gift Income:				
Above Ministry Share	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Estate Gifts	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Total Gift Income	-	-	-	-
% of Total Income	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Other Income:				
Participant Assessments	\$ 4,729	\$ 4,861	\$ -	\$ -
Grants	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Miscellaneous	\$ 16,062	\$ 10,381	\$ 2	\$ 1
Total Other Income	20,791	15,242	2	1
% of Total Income	100.0%	100.0%	2.1%	1.3%
TOTAL ADDITIONS	20,791	15,242	97	79
DEDUCTIONS (FTE = Full-Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
Distributions	\$ 7,577	\$ 7,977	\$ 102	\$ 124
FTEs	-	-	-	-
Total Program Service \$	\$ 7,577	\$ 7,977	\$ 102	\$ 124
Total Program Service FTEs	-	-	-	-
% of Total \$	88.5%	89.8%	100.0%	100.0%
% of Total FTEs	0.0%	0.0%		
Support Services:				
Management & General	\$ 984	\$ 908	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	1	2	-	-
Plant Operations	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	-	-	-	-
Fund-raising	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
FTEs	-	-	-	-
Total Support Service \$	984	908	-	-
Total Support Service FTEs	1	2	-	-
% of Total \$	11.5%	10.2%	0.0%	0.0%
% of Total FTEs	100.0%	100.0%		
TOTAL DEDUCTIONS	\$ 8,561	\$ 8,885	\$ 102	\$ 124
TOTAL FTEs	1	2	-	-
NET ADDITIONS / (DEDUCTIONS)	\$ 12,230	\$ 6,357	\$ (5)	\$ (45)

INCLUDED IN DENOMINATIONAL SERVICES

**Specialized Ministries
Income and Expenses (000s)**

		Fiscal 08-09 Actual		Fiscal 09-10 Actual
INCOME:				
Ministry Share	\$	2,649	\$	2,664
% of Total Income		78.6%		80.6%
Other Gift Income:				
Above Ministry Share	\$	474	\$	463
Estate Gifts	\$	-	\$	5
Total Gift Income		474		468
% of Total Income		14.1%		14.2%
Other Income:				
Tuition & Sales	\$	185	\$	163
Grants	\$	-	\$	-
Miscellaneous	\$	61	\$	12
Total Other Income		246		175
% of Total Income		7.3%		5.3%
TOTAL INCOME		3,369		3,307
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
Chaplaincy Services	\$	139	\$	223
FTEs		1		1
Race Relations	\$	384	\$	418
FTEs		3		3
Pastor-Church Relations	\$	620	\$	533
FTEs		3		3
Safe Church Ministry	\$	174	\$	184
FTEs		1		1
Disability Concerns	\$	250	\$	204
FTEs		2		2
Social & Restorative Justice	\$	580	\$	476
FTEs		4		4
Ministries in Canada	\$	941	\$	997
FTEs		4		4
Total Program Service \$	\$	3,088	\$	3,035
Total Program Service FTEs		18		18
% of Total \$		98.4%		98.7%
% of Total FTEs		94.7%		94.7%
Support Services:				
Management & General	\$	9	\$	4
FTEs		-		-
Plant Operations	\$	-	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Fund-raising	\$	40	\$	37
FTEs		1		1
Total Support Service \$		49		41
Total Support Service FTEs		1		1
% of Total \$		1.6%		1.3%
% of Total FTEs		5.3%		5.3%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$	3,137	\$	3,076
TOTAL FTEs		19		19
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	\$	232	\$	231

\$ Lilly grant

**Network, Sustaining Cong. and Pastoral Excellence, Volunteer Services
Income and Expenses (000s)**

	Fiscal 08-09 Actual		Fiscal 09-10 Actual
INCOME:			
Ministry Share	\$ 655	\$	815
% of Total Income			
Other Gift Income:			
Above Ministry Share	\$ -	\$	-
Estate Gifts	\$ -	\$	-
Total Gift Income	-		-
% of Total Income			
Other Income:			
Tuition & Sales	\$ -	\$	-
Grants	\$ -	\$	-
Miscellaneous	\$ 191	\$	234
Total Other Income	191		234
% of Total Income			
TOTAL INCOME	846		1,049
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):			
Program Services:			
Network for Congregations	\$ 12	\$	285
FTEs	1		1
Sust. Pastoral Excellence	\$ 276	\$	291
FTEs	1		1
Sust. Congregational Excel.	\$ 643	\$	530
FTEs	1		1
Volunteer Services	\$ 191	\$	234
FTEs	2		3
Total Program Service \$	\$ 1,122	\$	1,340
Total Program Service FTEs	5		6
% of Total \$	100.0%		100.0%
% of Total FTEs	100.0%		100.0%
Support Services:			
Management & General			
FTEs			
Plant Operations			
FTEs			
Fund-raising			
FTEs			
Total Support Service \$	-		-
Total Support Service FTEs	-		-
% of Total \$			
% of Total FTEs			
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$ 1,122	\$	1,340
TOTAL FTEs	5		6
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	\$ (276)	\$	(291)

\$ Lilly grant

**Synodical Administrative Services
Balance Sheet (000s)**

	June 30, 2010				Total
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	
Cash	\$ 2,647	-	1,072	-	3,719
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	1,708	-	-	-	1,708
Inventory	145	-	-	-	145
Prepays & Advances	151	-	-	-	151
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	15,640	-	-	-	15,640
Equities	-	-	-	-	-
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-
Property (nonoperating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	10,557	-	-	-	10,557
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	30,848	-	1,072	-	31,920
Accounts Payable	1,490	-	-	-	1,490
Notes/Loans Payable	19,273	-	-	-	19,273
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	20,763	-	-	-	20,763
Net Assets	\$ 10,085	-	1,072	-	11,157
Footnotes:					
Note 1: List details of property currently in use.	Canadian Cash Concentration and Netting for Interest Program.				
Note 2: List details of designations.					
Note 3: List details of restrictions.	Includes: \$602,000 Leadership Exchange, \$377,000 of Lilly SPE2 grant; \$66,000 of AOYC; and \$27,000 other.				
Note 4: List details of restrictions.					

**Synodical Administrative Services
Income and Expenses (000s)**

		Fiscal 08-09 Actual		Fiscal 09-10 Actual
INCOME:				
Ministry Share	\$	2,817	\$	2,899
% of Total Income		56.3%		72.6%
Other Gift Income:				
Above Ministry Share	\$	1,294	\$	24
Estate Gifts	\$	-	\$	-
Total Gift Income		1,294		24
% of Total Income		25.9%		0.6%
Other Income:				
Tuition & Sales	\$	-	\$	-
Grants	\$	-	\$	-
Services & Misc	\$	889	\$	1,068
Total Other Income		889		1,068
% of Total Income		17.8%		26.8%
TOTAL INCOME		5,000		3,991
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
Synodical Services & Grants	\$	1,678	\$	1,370
FTEs		5		5
Communications	\$	405	\$	457
FTEs		3		3
CRC Plan	\$	145	\$	4
FTEs		1		-
Sea to Sea payout	\$	1,749	\$	-
FTEs		1		-
Leadership Exchange	\$	1	\$	143
FTEs		-		1
Total Program Service \$	\$	3,978	\$	1,974
Total Program Service FTEs		10		9
% of Total \$		74.8%		62.8%
% of Total FTEs		62.5%		60.0%
Support Services:				
Management & General	\$	889	\$	871
FTEs		4		4
D.D.M.	\$	190	\$	203
FTEs		1		1
Fund-raising (Foundation)	\$	261	\$	95
FTEs		1		1
Total Support Service \$		1,340		1,169
Total Support Service FTEs		6		6
% of Total \$		25.2%		37.2%
% of Total FTEs		37.5%		40.0%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$	5,318	\$	3,143
TOTAL FTEs		16		15
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	\$	(318)	\$	848

incls \$1,374 Sea to Sea



**Synodical Administrative Services (Agency Services)
Income and Expenses (000s)**

		Fiscal 08-09 Actual	Fiscal 09-10 Actual
INCOME:			
Ministry Share	\$	- \$	-
% of Total Income		0.0%	0.0%
Other Gift Income:			
Above Ministry Share	\$	- \$	-
Estate Gifts	\$	- \$	-
Total Gift Income		-	-
% of Total Income		0.0%	0.0%
Other Income:			
Tuition & Sales	\$	3,976 \$	3,332
Grants	\$	- \$	-
Services & Misc	\$	5,605 \$	5,725
Total Other Income		9,581	9,057
% of Total Income		100.0%	100.0%
TOTAL INCOME		9,581	9,057
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):			
Program Services:			
Advancement	\$	494 \$	502
FTEs		10	9
Finance & Payroll	\$	2,028 \$	2,003
FTEs		24	23
IT and Phones	\$	1,429 \$	1,491
FTEs		11	9
Human Resources	\$	458 \$	394
FTEs		3	3
Coordinated Services	\$	224 \$	227
FTEs		2	2
Proservices	\$	3,976 \$	3,332
FTEs		15	15
<hr/>			
Total Program Service \$	\$	8,609 \$	7,949
Total Program Service FTEs		65	61
% of Total \$		89.9%	87.8%
% of Total FTEs		95.6%	95.3%
Support Services:			
Management & General			
FTEs			
Plant Operations/Debt Serv.	\$	972 \$	1,108
FTEs		3	3
Fund-raising (Foundation)			
FTEs			
Total Support Service \$		972	1,108
Total Support Service FTEs		3	3
% of Total \$		10.1%	12.2%
% of Total FTEs		4.4%	4.7%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$	9,581 \$	9,057
TOTAL FTEs		68	64
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	\$	- \$	-

**World Missions
Balance Sheet (000s)**

	-----June 30, 2010-----				Total
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	
Cash	\$ 1,308	-	298	-	1,606
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	1,509	6	-	3	1,518
Inventory	16	-	-	-	16
Prepays & Advances	-	-	-	-	-
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	173	1,035	185	540	1,933
Equities	173	1,035	185	540	1,933
Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-
Property (nonoperating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	517	-	-	-	517
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	3,696	2,076	668	1,083	7,523
Accounts Payable	725	164	-	-	889
Notes/Loans Payable	619	-	-	-	619
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	192	-	-	-	192
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-
Other	1,342	-	-	-	1,342
Total Liabilities	2,878	164	-	-	3,042
Net Assets	\$ 818	1,912	668	1,083	4,481
Footnotes:					
Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.					
Note 2: List details of designations.	Resettlement fund \$1,000 - Legacy fund \$99 - Insurance fund \$66 - Endowment/annuities \$165 - Japan note \$587				
Note 3: List details of restrictions.	Restricted Gifts, missionary support, and program support.				
Note 4: List details of restrictions.	Endowments.				

**World Missions
Income and Expenses (000s)**

		Fiscal 08-09 Actual	Fiscal 09-10 Actual
INCOME:			
Ministry Share	\$	4,602	\$ 4,931
% of Total Income		35.2%	36.0%
Other Gift Income:			
Above Ministry Share	\$	6,853	\$ 6,794
Estate Gifts	\$	1,125	\$ 655
Total Gift Income		7,978	7,449
% of Total Income		61.0%	54.4%
Other Income:			
Tuition & Sales	\$	-	\$ -
Grants	\$	-	\$ -
Miscellaneous	\$	489	\$ 1,323
Total Other Income		489	1,323
% of Total Income		3.7%	9.7%
TOTAL INCOME		13,069	13,703
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):			
Program Services:			
Africa	\$	3,992	\$ 3,584
FTEs		29	29
Eurasia	\$	2,965	\$ 2,452
FTEs		24	24
Latin America	\$	4,357	\$ 3,717
FTEs		27	27
Global/other Int'l program	\$	-	\$ -
FTEs		-	-
Education	\$	682	\$ 930
FTEs		8	8
	\$	-	\$ -
		-	-
Total Program Service \$	\$	11,996	\$ 10,683
Total Program Service FTEs		88	88
% of Total \$		84.6%	84.1%
% of Total FTEs		85.4%	85.4%
Support Services:			
Management & General	\$	1,004	\$ 839
FTEs		5	5
Plant Operations	\$	-	\$ -
FTEs		-	-
Fund-raising	\$	1,172	\$ 1,185
FTEs		10	10
Total Support Service \$		2,176	2,024
Total Support Service FTEs		15	15
% of Total \$		15.4%	15.9%
% of Total FTEs		14.6%	14.6%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$	14,172	\$ 12,707
TOTAL FTEs		103	103
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)	\$	(1,103)	\$ 996

**Christian Reformed World Relief Committee
Balance Sheet (000s)**

	-----June 30, 2010-----				Total
	Unrestr.	(note 2) Ag. Desig.	(note 3) Temp. Restr.	(note 4) Perm. Restr.	
Cash	\$ -	474	10,848	-	11,322
CDs, Time Deposits	-	-	-	-	-
Marketable Securities	-	-	-	-	-
Receivables & Advances	1,355	2,968	-	-	4,323
Inventory	-	-	-	-	-
Prepays & Advances	1,044	886	-	-	1,930
Investments (note 1):					
Bonds	-	23	-	-	23
Equities	-	1,239	2,224	23	3,486
Partnerships	500	-	-	-	500
Property (nonoperating)	-	-	-	-	-
PP & E	309	-	115	-	424
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	3,208	5,590	13,187	23	22,008
Accounts Payable	1,673	-	-	-	1,673
Notes/Loans Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Leases	-	-	-	-	-
Annuities Payable	284	-	-	-	284
Deferred Income	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	1,957	-	-	-	1,957
Net Assets	\$ 1,251	5,590	13,187	23	20,051
Footnotes:					
Note 1: List details of property not currently in use.					
Note 2: List details of designations.	7-year term endowments as stipulated by board = \$2,133 Disaster relief gifts for specific sites = \$3,457				
Note 3: List details of restrictions.	Mission home = \$115; Purpose-restricted gifts = \$12,254; 7-year term endowments as stipulated by donors = \$818				
Note 4: List details of restrictions.	Pure endowments = \$23.				

**Christian Reformed World Relief Committee
Income and Expenses (000s)**

		Fiscal 08-09 Actual		Fiscal 09-10 Actual
INCOME:				
Ministry Share	\$	-	\$	-
% of Total Income		-		-
Other Gift Income:				
Above Ministry Share	\$	14,721	\$	23,536
Estate Gifts	\$	1,447	\$	869
Total Gift Income		<u>16,168</u>		<u>24,405</u>
% of Total Income		51.3%		62.0%
Other Income:				
Tuition & Sales	\$	-	\$	-
Grants	\$	14,140	\$	14,440
Miscellaneous	\$	1,224	\$	508
Total Other Income		<u>15,364</u>		<u>14,948</u>
% of Total Income		48.7%		38.0%
TOTAL INCOME		<u><u>31,532</u></u>		<u><u>39,353</u></u>
EXPENSES (FTE = Full Time Employee):				
Program Services:				
Overseas programs	\$	12,748	\$	12,441
FTEs		32		30
North America programs	\$	1,690	\$	1,350
FTEs		7		9
Disaster relief programs	\$	1,582	\$	13,914
FTEs		14		19
Above-budget relief costs	\$	12,925	\$	-
FTEs		-		-
Education	\$	1,320	\$	1,218
FTEs		11		9
	\$	-	\$	-
	\$	-	\$	-
	\$	-	\$	-
	\$	-	\$	-
	\$	-	\$	-
Total Program Service \$		<u>30,265</u>		<u>28,923</u>
Total Program Service FTEs		64		67
% of Total \$		88.8%		89.0%
% of Total FTEs		75.3%		71.3%
Support Services:				
Management & General		1,886		1,716
FTEs		6		6
Plant Operations		-		-
FTEs		-		-
Fund-raising		1,917		1,855
FTEs		15		21
Total Support Service \$		<u>3,803</u>		<u>3,571</u>
Total Support Service FTEs		21		27
% of Total \$		11.2%		11.0%
% of Total FTEs		24.7%		28.7%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES		<u><u>34,068</u></u>		<u><u>32,494</u></u>
TOTAL FTEs		<u><u>85</u></u>		<u><u>94</u></u>
NET INCOME / (EXPENSE)		<u><u>(2,536)</u></u>		<u><u>6,859</u></u>

REPORT OF AGENCIES, INSTITUTIONS, AND MINISTRIES

Introduction

Each year the Board of Trustees submits a *unified* report to synod composed of individual parts provided by the agencies, educational institutions, and ministries of the Christian Reformed Church. The individual reports appear in alphabetical order using the name of the agency, educational institution, or ministry. Supplementary reports may be provided, if needed, at the time that synod convenes.

Writing these reports is an exercise of accountability that is appropriate in our life together as a denomination. Much of what is written is provided as information for synod. Some of the material provides a background for decisions that synod will be asked to make. In either case, these reports are the story of how God is blessing our ministry through the agencies of the Christian Reformed Church. As you read the material, we invite you to join us in thanksgiving for ministry opportunities and for the many fine people who serve on your behalf at home and around the world.

Gerard L. Dykstra
Executive Director of the CRCNA

I. Introduction

Back to God Ministries International (BTGMI) is the media ministry of the Christian Reformed Church in North America. BTGMI operates with the following mandate:

The mission of Back to God Ministries International is to lead the church into international media witness through media programming and related activities that communicate the Reformed faith in response to the need for conversion, discipleship, and cultural transformation.

Using a variety of media tools that effectively communicate the message of God's redemptive work within specific cultural contexts, Back to God Ministries International continues to fulfill its mission—to evangelize and disciple every person within media reach. Building strong local ministry partnerships, our goal is kingdom transformation—every aspect of personal and community life lived under the lordship of our risen and ruling Savior!

II. Ministries of Back to God Ministries International

Through media, Back to God Ministries International proclaims the story of God's unfailing love worldwide. Seeking to be fluent within the cultures where its voice is heard, BTGMI employs ministry leaders who broadcast in their native languages. We are blessed to work with gifted leaders who provide direction in the production of culturally relevant programs and related ministry in order to present Jesus Christ and help people grow in faith.

The work of BTGMI is empowered by a vision of building the church by communicating the life-embracing story of God's redemptive work. Operating in ten major world languages, in the past year BTGMI has brought the good news of Christ to people in at least 189 countries via radio, television, print and digital media, the Internet, and telephone messaging. Each year BTGMI receives approximately 6 million contacts from seekers yearning to believe and believers seeking to grow. Networks of prayer partners pray regularly for those who respond to our media outreach. Staff and trained volunteers worldwide offer discipleship, spiritual guidance, and prayer, and they help connect seekers to local churches. More than 640 volunteers worldwide assist the work in various ways.

In the midst of challenging financial times, BTGMI continues strategic use of resources to develop new media initiatives. This includes new programming in the Hindi language, helping us reach a younger generation for Christ throughout northern India. In addition, we are building a growing number of listener communities in India as well as Indonesia, where more than 13,500 people gather for worship, education, and encouragement. Social networking systems have multiplied our ability to connect with people for sharing the gospel. A new international ministry center in Brazil is enabling us to expand ministry partnerships for training and outreach throughout Latin America.

A new website, BackToGod.net, helps the church engage in media witness worldwide and provides information and links to all ten language ministries.

A. *Arabic ministry*

Back to God Ministries International maintains a cooperative ministry with Words of Hope (the media ministry of the Reformed Church in America) and Middle East Reformed Fellowship (MERF) for electronic media ministry to Arabic-speaking people. The joint ministry maintains production studios and discipleship centers in Larnaca, Cyprus; Cairo, Egypt; and Beirut, Lebanon. Our partnership with MERF allows BTGMI to pursue broadcasting in the context of holistic mission. In addition to broadcasting, MERF also trains church leaders, supports church plants, and provides relief support. MERF director Rev. Victor Atallah provides leadership for BTGMI Arabic broadcast ministry.

To more effectively reach younger Muslim listeners, our Arabic media staff developed a new, more interactive approach for our daily half-hour broadcast. The new program and coordinating website have created increased opportunities to respond to questions of faith and life via a growing text-messaging ministry. A young man and his cousin from Yemen—a country closed to the gospel—sent a message saying that our broadcasts “manifested true knowledge, its light overcoming the darkest night.”

B. *Chinese ministry*

The Chinese ministry, led by Rev. Jimmy Lin and his media team, provides programming and discipleship through eight programs and six coordinating websites that give people in China access to the gospel. China is on the verge of having more Internet users than any country on earth. The Internet is an increasingly important delivery system for Chinese programming. Through social networking sites nearly 9,000 Chinese-speaking people are receiving daily encouragement from God’s Word and increasing the traffic to our evangelistic websites. Additional avenues of media distribution for the Chinese ministry include print, CDs, and DVDs.

BTGMI continues to work with ministry partners in mainland China to duplicate and distribute discipleship materials to people throughout this vast country. One web user from eastern China emailed to say that she forwards the Chinese Today to at least 90 other people each day. Pray that these doors will continue to remain open and more Chinese people will come to know Christ.

C. *English ministry*

Rev. Steven Koster gives leadership to BTGMI English outreach (ReFrame Media). He and his media team produce eight unique ministries designed to reach a growing and diverse audience of various ages and at various steps in their faith journey—in North America and around the world (see also ReFrame-Media.com).

1. *Church Juice*—a web-based ministry to connect with media volunteers, many of them younger church members who assist the media ministries of their congregations. The goal of this new ministry is to empower local churches to use media effectively to minister within their congregation and to reach out to their communities. For information about how *Church Juice* can assist your congregation, visit ChurchJuice.com.
2. *Today*—daily devotions that provide both evangelistic and discipleship content. BTGMI celebrated 60 years of producing *Today* by giving the booklet a

new, updated design. We continue to print and distribute 350,000 bimonthly devotional booklets, and we have increased the more cost-effective electronic distribution of *Today* through email, podcast at ThisIsToday.net, Facebook, and RSS feed. *Today* is distributed worldwide, including approximately 5,000 printed and distributed bimonthly in Nigeria. Churches can also place an automatic daily link from ThisIsToday.net to their own websites.

3. *Think Christian*—a web-based ministry that receives an average of 14,325 hits each month. ThinkChristian.net is a collaborative blog that seeks to engage people in conversations about the intersection of Christianity and culture. A team of writers post articles to guide a discussion that helps visitors “think Christian” from a Reformed perspective in their daily lives. The site receives worldwide traffic, with a large number of visitors coming from Great Britain and Australia.
4. *Groundwork*—recognizing the changing listening needs of today’s audiences, ReFrame Media and Words of Hope (RCA) combined resources to launch a new half-hour audio program that proclaims the Christian faith. *Groundwork* explores Scripture in depth from a Reformed perspective. The program is hosted by Rev. David Bast (Words of Hope) and Dr. Robert Heerspink (BTGMI) and includes an interactive website and Facebook page for listeners to comment or leave prayer requests.
5. *Spotlight*—a simplified English program that uses a limited vocabulary, basic grammar, and a slowed delivery rate to target an international audience of those who speak English as a second language. BTGMI continues to partner with Words of Hope in the production of *Spotlight*. In addition to radio broadcasting, listeners increasingly are connecting to the program through the *Spotlight* website. Several areas of significant traffic are in Eastern Europe and Southeast Asia. Churches with a heart for reaching out to international neighbors may contact rbasselin@crcna.org for information about establishing *Spotlight* English Clubs, providing practical tools for teaching English as a second language, and serving as a bridge for interacting with people in their local communities.
6. *Walk the Way*—a daily one-minute audio and companion video program. *Walk the Way* offers a brief story or point to consider and directs listeners to the *Walk the Way* website where additional Christian resources are available. This radio program is meant to engage younger adults in thinking through the implications and claims of the gospel of Christ. *Walk the Way* is now carried on more than 660 media outlets throughout North America. During 2010 its Facebook page increased from 517 fans to more than 10,000, resulting in more than 1,000 interactions each month with people discussing the program’s central faith questions.
7. *Kids Corner*—a radio program now heard on approximately 440 stations in North America and through the Internet at KidsCorner.net. *Kids Corner* is a significant outreach to children, who can listen to programs and request music CDs, bookmarks, and other attractive disciple-making tools. There is also a section on the website to help parents become spiritual mentors to their children. Families and church education leaders are encouraged

to send for information about our children's Bible study correspondence program, a tool for helping children become lifelong disciples of Jesus.

8. *Under the Radar*—a music-based program that combines the best “undiscovered” and underplayed music from Christian artists, along with interviews and stories, in order to share the gospel. The program airs on 150 broadcast outlets, providing a unique niche in Christian programming. Its Facebook page reached 6,000 fans in just four months, and our goal is to reach 10,000 fans before the end of March 2011.

D. *French ministry*

The main focus of the French ministry is in Africa, Haiti, and parts of Europe where the population includes French-speaking immigrants from Africa. Rev. Paul Mpindi, a native of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, gives leadership to this ministry along with a team of 35 indigenous staff members and more than 165 international volunteers. Joining Rev. Mpindi in radio programming is his wife, Mrs. Charlotte Mpindi, who hosts a popular program devoted to a biblical perspective on women's issues pertinent to the African context.

In July 2010 Rev. Mpindi led a two-day training conference for 8,000 pastors and church leaders in Africa. As a result, several pastors signed on as volunteers to provide weekly pastoral counseling to listeners who respond to our ministry. Reports from our ministry centers in Africa indicate that many of the participants, who have very little opportunity for pastoral and biblical training, continue to use our Bible study by correspondence resources.

Before the earthquake in Haiti brought a halt to our discipleship program in this country, our Haitian staff—in partnership with Christian Reformed World Missions—had developed a team of 37 volunteers working with 900 Bible study enrollees. Some of the volunteers and students lost their lives, and all who survived were affected by the devastation. But as people looked for ways to rebuild their lives, their urgency to understand drew them back to God's Word. We praise God that the program has more than tripled over the last year, with more than 3,000 students now participating. In November 2010, the Haitian staff celebrated the graduation of 147 participants who completed the first stage of the Bible study by correspondence program.

E. *Ministry in Hindi and related languages*

Back to God Ministries International entered into partnership with Words of Hope and Good Books Ministries in 2009, moving our media witness for the first time into northern India and the Himalayan region. Broadcasts in the Hindi language are translated in four local languages, reaching remote villages and places that are closed to the gospel. We distribute Bible study correspondence materials and produce a family magazine with daily devotions to help disciple listeners who contact our media mission teams. In addition we provide leadership training for production and discipleship staff in the region.

Under the leadership of Mr. Stephen Paul, we launched a new radio program this past year, designed to reach younger listeners, with good response. Sarojini sent the following message: “After listening to your Hindi radio program, I have accepted Jesus Christ as my personal Savior and have decided to spread the gospel my whole life. This is my desire, that my family

members, friends, and relatives may know Jesus Christ and come to him. Please remember me every day in your prayers.”

F. Indonesian ministry

BTGMI works in partnership with the Indonesian Christian Church, an established denomination of 300,000 committed to the Reformed faith. Rev. Untung Ongkowidjaya leads a team that produces six radio programs, publishes five devotional booklets bimonthly (targeting different age groups), and maintains an active Internet ministry. Two television programs, *Evergreen House* for children and *Gema Kasih Indonesia* for adults, are broadcast on key stations in Indonesia and Papua.

In partnership with Christian Reformed World Missions, the Indonesian ministry has provided leadership training for 142 “Listener Community” coordinators. These leaders have established listener groups who gather monthly for fellowship, prayer, and Bible study in rural areas where radio broadcasting is the main source of spiritual nurture. Nearly 600 participants are learning God’s Word through our Bible study correspondence program.

G. Japanese ministry

Rev. Masao Yamashita gives leadership to the Japanese media ministry. All seven audio programs are broadcast on the Internet and one is available by cell phone delivery. Highly advanced cell phone technology allows for providing daily devotions by text message to more than 17,000 subscribers.

The Japanese ministry developed and hosts an active website that offers the opportunity for Internet users to engage staff in online social networking conversations. Several annual events are held to allow isolated listeners to gather for face-to-face encouragement and Bible instruction.

Although the official government statistics identify only 1 percent of the Japanese population as Christian, informal surveys indicate the total number to be closer to 6 percent. In the past year we celebrated six known baptisms of people who came to faith through our Japanese ministry.

H. Portuguese ministry

Ministry leader Rev. Hernandes Lopes brings a wealth of theological and media experience to our Portuguese outreach. He continues to host the TV program *Verdade e Vida (Truth and Life)* and provides leadership for BTGMI radio, television, telephone, print, and Internet ministry in Brazil. The completion of our new media center opened doors for expanded partnerships with the Presbyterian Church of Brazil and Mackenzie Presbyterian University.

The Presbyterian Church of Brazil continues to be a significant partner in this ministry, helping to fund television programs and providing support for a telephone ministry that reaches nearly 120,000 people each month. Local churches also partner with us to distribute (in 2010) 720,000 copies of a special Christmas/Advent devotional booklet.

I. Russian ministry

Rev. Sergei Sosedkin gives leadership to the Russian media ministry. Rev. Sosedkin divides his time between North America and Russia, where he is able to engage in live radio broadcasting as well as personal contact with listeners who respond to this ministry. The Russian ministry has three primary delivery sources: radio broadcasting, Internet, and print media

conducted in collaboration with several Russian Christian periodicals. Short-wave broadcasting of Rev. Sosedkin's program covers all of Russia and Russian-speaking countries in Eastern Europe, with live call-in programs occurring weekly in Moscow and St. Petersburg. A partnership with a new online radio program enables us to provide a Reformed perspective to listeners in Siberia, reaching at least 50,000 listeners each month. We continue to partner with a Christian blogger who writes for our Russian website, reaching a younger audience with the gospel's transforming message.

BTGMI's Russian ministry staff are located in both St. Petersburg and Moscow, with some discipleship work carried out in St. Petersburg in cooperation with Christian Reformed World Missions. Rev. Sosedkin and his Russian staff have also established an excellent working relationship with St. Petersburg Christian University, often conducting classes there in the effective use of media in church settings. The Internet site not only ministers to people within the country of Russia but increasingly is becoming a point of contact with Russian speakers around the world.

We recently received a letter from a prisoner in northern Russia who discovered our Christian radio broadcast from Estonia. "Before I got into prison, I never heard the gospel, never read the Bible," he wrote. "Thanks to your broadcast, I learned about salvation in Jesus Christ and I trusted him as my Lord and Savior. I'm looking forward to my release, since I'll finally get a chance to go to a church. Thank you so much for your ministry. You've made a huge difference in my life."

J. Spanish ministry

Rev. Guillermo Serrano gives leadership to the Spanish-language ministry. More than 400 radio stations and 130 television stations carry BTGMI Spanish programming, including a TV series for children aired in four countries. Our broadcast ministry reaches Central and South America as well as Spain. In addition, broadcasts within North America reach Spanish-speaking populations north of the Mexican border. We also produce *Cada Dia*, a daily devotional available online and in print.

Communication workshops are an effective way to build relationships with radio and TV station managers in Latin America, many of whom are not Christian. By providing technical training for station personnel, we offer a much-needed service and make connections with stations who then offer to air our programs for free.

BTGMI Spanish media programs are produced and distributed from the new ministry center in Campinas, Brazil. Staff and volunteers in seven countries provide follow-up and discipleship with those who respond to our ministry.

K. Korean ministry

Back to God Ministries International continues to partner with the Korean Council (organized group of Korean CRC churches) to produce a bilingual Korean-English *Today*. Initiated in 2008, production has grown from 7,000 to 10,000. The Korean-English *Today* not only nurtures Korean-speaking members of the Christian Reformed Church but is an effective evangelism tool both in North America and beyond.

L. *Cooperative organizations*

Back to God Ministries International cannot carry out its mission unilaterally. Strong partnerships create synergy for mission and allow resources to be invested wisely. BTGMI works cooperatively with many organizations, including

- Christian Reformed World Missions—joint ministry in Haiti, Indonesia, Japan, Russia, Mexico, and Nigeria.
- Korean Council—publication of Korean-English *Today* devotionals.
- Christian Reformed Home Missions and Christian Reformed congregations—media outreach assistance for new church plants as well as established congregations who wish to employ the use of electronic media for ministry.
- CRWRC—diaconal training for Listener Community leaders in Indonesia.
- CRC Proservices—publication of selected materials.
- Words of Hope—partnership in the production of two English programs: *Spotlight* and *Groundwork*; additional partnerships in Hindi and Arabic ministries.
- Middle East Reformed Fellowship—media outreach to the Arabic-speaking world.
- Timothy Leadership Training Institute—leadership training in Indonesia and other potential ministry sites.
- Reformed denominations worldwide—major joint-ministry partnerships in Japan (Reformed Church in Japan), Brazil (Presbyterian Church of Brazil), and Indonesia (Indonesian Christian Church).
- Crossroad Bible Institute—discipleship ministry through a Bible study correspondence program.

III. The Back to God Ministries International board

A. *Function*

Back to God Ministries International is governed by a regionally representative board that meets three times a year to set policy and to evaluate the work of the staff.

B. *Officers of the board*

The board officers of BTGMI are Rev. Bruce Persenaire, president; Rev. Gerrit Bomhof, vice president; Mrs. Carol Woltjer, secretary; and Mr. Harry Boessenkool, treasurer.

C. *Board member nominees*

Region 1

Mr. Ben Langelaar, a member of Trinity CRC in Abbotsford, British Columbia, is retired from a career in banking with the Royal Bank of Canada. He has served on council within his church and on the boards of numerous organizations, most recently on the board of Elim Housing Society.

Mr. John Vegt is a member of First CRC in New Westminster, British Columbia. He retired as an audit partner with KPMG Vancouver. Mr. Vegt has served on council in his church and on various boards of many

organizations, and he is presently serving on the board of Hope Haven Canada Ministries.

Region 10

Ms. Linda LeMahieu is a member of Hillcrest CRC in Hudsonville, Michigan, and is retiring this year from a career as librarian at Hudsonville Christian Middle School. She has served on numerous committees and ministries of her church, including service as director of the church school program.

Ms. Cynthia (Cindi) Veenstra is a member of Immanuel CRC in Kalamazoo, Michigan, and is an information systems and marketing consultant. She has served on numerous boards, including the Calvin College Board of Trustees. In addition, Ms. Veenstra has experience in international ministry in the Philippines.

Region 11

Dr. Derk Oostendorp, a member of Plymouth Heights CRC in Grand Rapids, Michigan, is a retired CRC world missionary, having served in Mexico and the Dominican Republic. He has also served as the Christian Reformed World Missions director for Latin America. Dr. Oostendorp’s board experience includes service on the board of Calvin College and Seminary.

Rev. Reggie Smith is an ordained pastor serving Roosevelt Park Community CRC in Grand Rapids, Michigan. He has served on the board of CRC Home Missions and has taught courses in urban missions and in cross-cultural evangelism at Calvin Theological Seminary and at Western Theological Seminary. Rev. Smith is a frequent contributor to the *Today* devotional ministry.

D. Salary disclosure

The following information is provided to synod as requested:

Job level	Number of positions	Compensation quartile (includes housing allowance)
18	1	2nd
16	5	1st, 2nd, and 3rd
15	2	3rd and 4th

IV. Recommendations

A. That Rev. Bruce Persenaire, president, and Dr. Robert C. Heerspink, director of Back to God Ministries International, be given the privilege of the floor when BTGMI matters are discussed.

B. That synod by way of the ballot ratify the election and reelection of board members from the slates of nominees presented.

Note: Recommendations on financial matters are included in the report of the denominational Board of Trustees and will be presented to synod by way of the Finance Advisory Committee.

Back to God Ministries International
Robert C. Heerspink, director

I. Introduction

This report reflects information derived from, and actions taken at, the October 2010 and the February 2011 meetings of the Calvin College Board of Trustees.

Board officers elected for 2010-2011 are Mr. Bastian A. Knoppers, chair; Mr. Ronald Baylor, vice-chair; Ms. Thelma Venema, secretary; Ms. Darlene K. Meyering, assistant secretary (executive associate to the president); and Dr. Henry DeVries, treasurer (vice president for administration, finance, and information services).

Note: Mr. Knoppers resigned from the Calvin College Board of Trustees in February 2011. The board elected Mr. Scott A. Spoelhof as the new chair.

II. General college matters

The October 2010 meeting included the appointments of trustees to board committees for each division of the college, as well as appointments to the executive committee and to six college standing committees. The gathering also included a comprehensive workshop on Reformed identity led by Dr. Susan Felch, professor of English and member of the board's Task Force on Reformed Identity and Mission.

The February 2011 meeting was spent conducting nineteen faculty interviews for reappointment or for tenure, hearing committee reports, and comprehensively discussing academic freedom and the Reformed confessions. The board also attended the annual faculty awards dinner for the presentation of the Presidential Award for Exemplary Teaching and three other new faculty awards. Ms. Joan Flikkema of the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA attended the board meetings as an observer.

III. Faculty

A. Faculty Interviews

Nineteen faculty interviews were the highlight of the February 2011 meeting. Nine interviews were conducted for reappointments with tenure (see Recommendations), and ten were conducted for two- or three-year regular reappointments.

B. Presidential Award for Exemplary Teaching

Mr. Lawrence R. Herzberg, professor of Japanese and Chinese languages, was presented the nineteenth annual Presidential Award for Exemplary Teaching. This award is given to a tenured professor whose Christian commitment is readily apparent in exemplary teaching in the classroom. In addition, a cash award is provided for educational opportunities and life experiences that will enrich the recipient's teaching and scholarship.

Four additional teaching awards were also presented at the dinner: the Award for Innovative Teaching to Ms. Irene Konyndyk, French; the Award for Advising and Mentoring to Mr. Edward G. (Ned) Nielsen, engineering; the Award for Community-Based Teaching to Mr. Gerard Fondse, Jr., English; and the From Every Nation Award for Excellence in Teaching to Dr. Stephanie L. Sandberg, communication arts and sciences.

IV. Election of college trustees

A. Regional trustees

Board members from the following regions are completing their second three-year terms. Nominees will be presented to the classes in these regions for vote and the results presented to synod for ratification. We are grateful for the service of retiring members Dr. Alyce Oosterhuis (Regions 1 and 2) and Dr. Mary Poel (Region 7).

Regions 1 and 2

Rev. Naji Umran, B.A., University of Victoria; M.Div., Regent University; M.Div., Calvin Theological Seminary.

Rev. Umran currently serves as associate pastor and minister to youth at Kelowna CRC in British Columbia, where he is involved in worship, preaching, prayer, men's studies and accountability groups, seniors, fellowship, pastoral care, and outreach in co-leadership with his wife, Rev. Anne Zaki, also a graduate of Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary. Rev. Umran served as resident pastor and minister to youth for six years at Church of the Servant CRC (Grand Rapids), while also working at Calvin College in campus outreach and discipleship. He was a member of the Classical Renewal and Mission Team for Classis Grand Rapids East, and he served as a student recruiter for Calvin Theological Seminary for one year. Rev. Umran studied clinical pastoral education at Pine Rest Christian Hospital and at St. Mary's Hospital, both in Grand Rapids, Michigan. From 2000-2002 he lived in Egypt, where he served as interim youth pastor as well as interim pastor (one year each) at Heliopolis Community Church while serving as librarian at the Modern English School, both in Cairo. Rev. Umran volunteered in hospital chaplaincy (Spectrum Health—Blodgett Hospital, Grand Rapids, Mich.) and for the Student Planning Committee of Calvin Theological Seminary, coled inner-city missions projects in Vancouver and Victoria, British Columbia, and served as a Sunday school and youth leader and small group leader for InterVarsity Christian Fellowship at the University of Victoria.

Ms. Margaret Verboon, B.A., Calvin College; MBA, University of Alberta.

Margaret Verboon (Zhang Pan), a member of Maranatha CRC in Edmonton, Alberta, was born in the Philippines to Chinese parents and is married to Rev. Art Verboon, pastor of Maranatha CRC in Edmonton, Alberta. She earned a B.A. in China and then graduated from Calvin College with a B.A. in business. Ms. Verboon went on to earn her master's degree in business at the University of Alberta. She has a strong background in administration and finance and currently serves as chair of international education at the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology (NAIT), working with international students and faculty, having previously served on the NAIT Board of Governors. Ms. Verboon represents Classis Alberta North as a member of the Cuban Connection Committee. She has been active in various aspects of church education.

Region 7

Dr. Philip J. Brondsema, B.S., Calvin College; Ph.D., University of Wisconsin.

Dr. Brondsema has a degree in organic chemistry and has spent the majority of his career in the field of research for new products and design at Dow Chemical Company in Midland, Michigan, from 1983-2005. During this time

he became the research and design tech services group leader and business development leader. In 2008 he moved to Houston, Texas, as senior project leader and now serves as global project steward for the Houston-based Celanese Chemical Company. Dr. Brondsema is the author of six U.S. patents with expertise in technology development, business development, marketing, and regulatory, risk, and liability management. He has served as an elder at Midland (Mich.) Reformed Church—three years as vice president—and currently is serving as an elder at Hope CRC (Houston, Tex.) with two years as vice president. Dr. Brondsema served on the board of Midland (Mich.) Christian School, was a member and treasurer of The Tract League for twenty years, and a member of the Calvin College Engineering Advisory Council for twelve years. He presently is a member of the Calvin College Parent Council. In 2004, Dr. Brondsema was the recipient of the Calvin Alumni Association Outstanding Service Award.

Dr. Bryan Scott Kamps, B.S., Calvin College; Bachelor of Nursing and M.D., University of New Mexico; M.D. with further study at Michigan State University and McLaren Regional Medical Center.

Dr. Kamps was born in Houston, Texas, and later moved with his family to Rehoboth, New Mexico, where he attended Rehoboth Christian School. He attended Calvin College, where he graduated with a degree in biology and chemistry and went on to study nursing at the University of New Mexico before attending medical school at the University of New Mexico, School of Medicine. Dr. Kamps' medical studies continued in Grand Rapids through Michigan State University and at McLaren Regional Medical Center (Flint, Mich.), where he completed his training in orthopedic surgery. He has been an orthopedic surgeon at Rehoboth McKinley Christian Health Care Services in Gallup, New Mexico, since 1995, interrupted by assignments at U.S. military hospitals in Tuzla, Bosnia; Bagram, Afghanistan; and Landstuhl, Germany. Dr. Kamps is a member of Rehoboth (N. Mex.) CRC. He served as a deacon at Fellowship CRC in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Dr. Kamps has served Rehoboth CRC as an elder, catechism teacher, youth leader, member of the praise team, and member of the committee to build a new parsonage.

B. Alumni trustees

The second term for Mr. Ronald Baylor expires in 2011. The Trusteeship Committee will present nominees for election to fill this position by way of the Calvin College Supplement report to Synod 2011.

C. At-large trustees

The first terms for Ms. Christine Metzger and Dr. Jack Veltkamp expire in 2011. They are both eligible for a second term. The board recommends these two members for reelection.

V. Finance

The board proposed the tuition and room and board rates for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2012. The proposal calls for an increase of 2.8 percent in the tuition rate and in the room and board rate, and an increase of approximately \$500,000 in financial aid compared to 2010-2011.

	2010/2011	2011/2012	Increase
Tuition	\$24,645	\$25,340	\$695
Required Fees	225	225	—
Room & Board (21)	8,525	8,760	235
TOTAL	\$33,395	\$34,325	\$930

Note: The total increase from 2010/2011 to 2011/2012 is \$150 less than the increase from 2009/2010 to 2010/2011. The final 2011/2012 budget will be adopted at the May board meeting when fall enrollment numbers are more certain.

VI. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to the chair of the board, Mr. Scott A. Spoelhof, and to the president of the college, Dr. Gaylen J. Byker, when matters pertaining to education are presented.

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

1. Patrick M. Bailey, M.S., *associate* professor of computer science
2. David L. Dornbos, Ph.D., *associate* professor of biology
3. Kristin Kobes DuMez, Ph.D., *associate* professor of history
4. Matthew C. Halteman, Ph.D., *associate* professor of philosophy
5. Phillip M. Hash, D.Ed., *associate* professor of music
6. Youngkhill Lee, Ph.D., *professor* of recreation
7. Matthew D. Lundberg, Ph.D., *associate* professor of religion
8. F. Corey Roberts, Ph.D., *associate* professor of German
9. J. Aubrey Sykes, Ph.D., professor of engineering

C. That synod by way of the printed ballot reappoint members and ratify the results of the elections held in the classes for the Calvin College Board of Trustees.

Note: Recommendations on financial matters are included in the report of the denominational Board of Trustees and will be presented to synod by way of the Finance Advisory Committee.

Calvin College Board of Trustees
Thelma Venema, secretary

The Calvin Theological Seminary Board of Trustees presents their report to Synod 2011 with gratitude to God for his provision this past year. The seminary has experienced God's faithfulness and looks toward the future with hope and anticipation.

I. Board of Trustees

The board met in plenary sessions in October 2010 and February 2011.

The board officers are Rev. Kevin Adams, chair; Dr. Henk Van Andel, vice-chair; and Ms. Susan Keesen, secretary.

The board recommends that synod reappoint trustee Rev. Paul De Vries, who has completed one term of service and is eligible for a second term.

Completing their terms on the board are Rev. Kevin Adams, Rev. Richard Hamstra, Rev. James Poelman, Rev. William Renkema, and Dr. Henk Van Andel. We are grateful for their service to the seminary. The following nominees were submitted to classes in their respective regions for voting at the spring meetings. The results of those elections will be presented for ratification to Synod 2011.

Region 2

Rev. Michelle Gritter is a pastor of Lantern Community Church in Calgary, Alberta, where she has served for eight years. She received an M.Div. degree from Calvin Theological Seminary and is currently in the process of earning a master's degree in counseling.

Rev. Victor Ko is currently a church planter in Edmonton, Alberta, where he pastors the mosaicHouse Community Church. He previously served congregations at Third CRC in Kalamazoo, Michigan, and at The River Community CRC in Edmonton. He has served the wider CRC denomination as a Multiethnic Conference Committee member, as an ethnic adviser at synod, and with Home Missions for Classis Kalamazoo. A native of Seoul, Korea, and raised in the United States, he speaks both Korean and English. He received an M.Div. degree from Calvin Theological Seminary.

Region 4

Rev. Craig Hoekema is the pastor of Living Hope CRC in Sarnia, Ontario. He has committee experience working on outreach, worship, education, and pastoral care, as well as experience serving his local classis. He graduated from Calvin Theological Seminary with an M.Div. degree.

Rev. Jeff Klingenberg is a pastor at Ancaster CRC in Ancaster, Ontario, where he serves as director of youth and young adult ministry. He has a master's degree in pastoral counseling and also graduated from Calvin Theological Seminary with an M.Div. degree. Rev. Klingenberg presently serves on the McMaster University Chaplaincy Committee for Classis Hamilton. He has formerly served as a pastor at Bradenton CRC in Bradenton, Florida, and as a youth director at West Leonard CRC in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Region 6

Mr. Hyung Joon Kim has been a member of Orange Korean CRC in Fullerton, California, for many years and has served as elder for most of those

years. He has been involved in the broader work of the Christian Reformed Church as a board member of the Synodical Committee on Race Relations and also as a regional representative for Korean churches with Christian Reformed World Missions.

Dr. Ronald Vander Molen is a member of Modesto CRC in Modesto, California. He earned a Ph.D. in European history at Michigan State University and is currently emeritated from California State University, Stanislaus. Dr. Vander Molen has previously served on the Calvin Theological Seminary Board of Trustees and as president of his church council.

Region 9

Rev. Steven Koster is the director of ReFrame Media, the English-language ministry of Back to God Ministries International. He received an M.Div. degree from Calvin Theological Seminary and an M.A. in telecommunications from Michigan State University. He also serves as an adjunct pastor and as an elder in his church council at Faith CRC in Tinley Park, Illinois. As part of the media ministry of ReFrame, he and his wife maintain a marriage and family ministry called *Family Fire*.

Rev. William Sytsma is the pastor at New Life CRC in Highland, Indiana. He received an M.Div. degree from Calvin Theological Seminary and a D.Min. from Gordon-Conwell. He has previously served as a pastor and as a director of youth ministries in churches in the Grand Rapids, Michigan, area. He has experience as a preaching mentor and as a leader in peer learning groups through the Sustaining Pastoral Excellence program of the CRC.

Region 10

Rev. Joel Boot is the pastor of Ridgewood CRC in Jenison, Michigan. A graduate of Calvin Theological Seminary, he has served on the CRC Board of Publications and on the Calvin Theological Seminary Board of Trustees. Rev. Boot also has served several times as a delegate and officer at synod.

Rev. Tim De Jonge is a chaplain at Hospice of Holland, called to that position by Harderwyk CRC. He is currently serving as a church visitor to four churches in Classis Holland. Rev. De Jonge is a graduate of Calvin Theological Seminary and previously served as a pastor at Faith CRC in Holland.

Regional at-large

According to CTS board membership bylaw modifications recently approved by the CRCNA BOT, where a specific region is served by more than one representative, the second candidate from that region may be recruited by the board as a single nominee for the position of regional at-large member. As the board's work expands and as needs for persons with specific skill sets are identified, it has become increasingly difficult to fill those needs by way of the normal classical nominating structure. The new bylaws allow the seminary board to fill board positions by recruiting persons who can fill those needs from regions that are normally represented by two board members.

The board recommends the following single nominee for the position of regional at-large member from Region 10:

Mr. Myles Kuperus founded and is the president of a highly successful transportation company and will bring his extensive experience in

administration to the board. He will also assist CTS in connecting to the community with his experience as a Christian philanthropist. He has served his local church, Hillcrest CRC in Hudsonville, Michigan, as an elder, and he has served the wider denomination as a member of the Social Justice committee board. He has a strong commitment to the Christian Reformed Church and is passionate about Calvin Theological Seminary and the training of the next generation of pastors who will serve the church.

II. Administration

The seminary administration includes Dr. Cornelius Plantinga, Jr., president; Rev. Duane K. Kelderman, vice president for administration; and Dr. David Rylaarsdam, acting vice president for academic affairs. Dr. Ronald J. Feenstra serves as the director of the Ph.D. program; Dr. Donald E. Byker as the director of ministry formation; Mr. Philip Vanden Berge as chief financial officer; and Rev. Richard Sytsma as dean of students, director of alumni relations, and international student advisor.

III. Faculty

The seminary's faculty continues to serve the church in numerous ways. Although teaching and preparing students for various forms of ministry continues to lie at the heart of their work, members of the faculty also provide education and counsel to many local congregations and broader assemblies, preach regularly, publish scholarly books and articles, attend significant conferences, and in various ways seek to stay attuned to developments in ministries in the Christian Reformed Church and the church of Christ worldwide.

The board addressed the reappointment of three faculty members subject to ratification by Synod 2011:

John M. Rottman, professor of preaching with tenure
Mary L. Vanden Berg, associate professor of systematic theology
John D. Witvliet, professor of worship (part-time)

The board acknowledged the years of faithful service of Dr. Cornelius Plantinga, Jr., and approved conferring upon him the title of President, *emeritus*, effective upon completion of his tenure as President, and the board requests that Synod 2011 acknowledge this action with gratitude to God.

IV. Program highlights

Rev. Jul Medenblik begins his term as president in August 2011 but has been available for limited service to CTS in the current year. President Plantinga and president-elect Medenblik are working together to provide for a smooth transition this summer.

Mr. Matthew Cooke has been appointed as the new director of admissions. We are grateful for Mr. Cooke's experience in admissions and student life at Calvin College and look forward to his leadership in admissions at the seminary.

The board of CTS is grateful for strong enrollment numbers this past year with 103 new students, including 50 M.Div. students!

In addition, we are grateful for partnerships with congregations and pastors in the training of our students. Nine of our 18 Mentored Ministries Group leaders this year are area pastors: Rev. Mike Abma, Rev. Ruth Boven,

Rev. Erica Dekker, Rev. Lynn Barger Elliott, Rev. Donald Klop, Rev. Daniel Mouw, Rev. William Renkema, Rev. Reggie Smith, and Rev. David Struyk.

President Plantinga has completed a rewrite of *A Sure Thing*, a Faith Alive Christian Resources course for high school students.

Why not study Ephesians in Ephesus? Fourteen students from the seminary and three from Calvin College took the seminary's first international January interim travel course in 2010 in Turkey taught by Professor Weima.

The January 2011 interim included students traveling to Managua, Nicaragua, for a J-term course led by professor Mariano Avila and titled "A Biblical Perspective on Shalom and Its Meaning for Contemporary Holistic Ministry," and to Granite Springs, California, for a J-term course led by Rev. Kevin Adams and titled "Gospel Preaching in a Mission Context."

The board is grateful to pastors and others for recommending great students for Facing Your Future! This past summer 34 high school students experienced theological education at CTS and ministry in Paterson, New Jersey; Tualatin, Oregon; and Toronto, Ontario.

In 2010 congregations collected special offerings of over \$100,000 to support Facing Your Future and the Ministry Incentive Plan (a revolving student loan fund). Praise the Lord!

V. Students 2010-2011

The composition of the seminary's student body indicates a growing national and ethnic diversity. The following statistics suggest the impact the seminary is having beyond the Christian Reformed Church:

Christian Reformed students: 161

Non-Christian Reformed students: 133

International students (other than Canadian): 55

Programs:

M.Div.: 130

M.A.: 34

M.T.S.: 14

Th.M.: 51

Ph.D.: 36

* EPMC: 14

Certificate/Diploma: 7

Unclassified: 8

Auditors: 2

Male students: 233

Female students: 61

* Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy

VI. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Rev. Kevin Adams, chair, and Rev. Paul De Vries, trustee, when seminary matters are presented.

B. That synod by way of the printed ballot ratify the election and reelection of trustees from the slates of nominees presented.

C. That synod approve the following faculty reappointments:

John M. Rottman, professor of preaching with tenure
Mary L. Vanden Berg, associate professor of systematic theology
John D. Witvliet, professor of worship (part-time)

D. That Synod 2011 acknowledge with gratitude to God the years of faithful service of Dr. Cornelius Plantinga, Jr., and take note that the Board of Trustees of Calvin Theological Seminary has conferred upon him the title of President, *emeritus*, effective upon completion of his tenure as president.

E. That synod approve two offerings for Calvin Theological Seminary (the Facing Your Future program and the Ministry Incentive Plan).

Note: Recommendations on financial matters are included in the report of the denominational Board of Trustees and will be presented to synod by way of the Finance Advisory Committee.

Calvin Theological Seminary Board of Trustees
Susan Keesen, secretary

I. Introduction

A. *Our mandate*

Home Missions shall give leadership to the CRC in its task of bringing the gospel to the people of Canada and the United States, drawing them into fellowship with Christ and his church. This mandate has these aspects:

- a. Encourage and assist churches, classes, and regions in the work of developing and sustaining missional churches.
- b. Initiate, support, and guide church planting and development in cooperation with local churches, classes, and regions.
- c. Initiate, support, and guide educational ministries in cooperation with local churches and classes.

(Home Missions Order, Article 2; June 2, 2008)

B. *Home Missions' mission and vision*

Home Missions pursues its mandate in the context of the denominational priority "to create and sustain congregations for the purpose of transforming lives and communities worldwide" by "creating and sustaining healthy churches" (section IV, G, 2008-2009 Home Missions Ministries Plan Scorecard Budget).

Mission – Christian Reformed Home Missions has recently changed its mission statement as follows:

To transform individuals and communities by catalyzing and cultivating gospel movements.

Values – Home Missions has recently revised the values that guide its work as follows:

- Missional Focus: Giving priority to gospel practices that measurably impact communities.
- Collaborative Leadership: Assuming a posture of mentorship that walks alongside partners to coach, encourage, and develop.
- Intentional Reconciliation: Working for diversity, justice, and unity.
- Kingdom Building Partnerships: Forming bridges between local, regional, interagency, and ecumenical partners.
- Expectant Prayer: Discerning God's leading in all our activities.
- Intergenerational Engagement: Employing particularly next-generation leadership and learning from the *edges* of ministry.

C. *Renewing communities together*

Home Missions' mandate is to provide leadership so that Christian Reformed churches are part of the movement of the Holy Spirit, who works in neighborhoods and communities in the lives of people with the power of the gospel, so that lives and communities are transformed. It is especially through local churches and missional communities where this power is expressed.

We see our work as part of the global mission of God, in which he is working not only in North America but throughout the world with the same power of the gospel.

“ReNEW COMMUNITIES TOGETHER” is the new tagline for Home Missions. This tagline summarized well the essence of our ministry and priorities:

- New: We focus on working with partners to help start new communities of churches and campus ministries to engage the gospel in North America.
- Communities: We want to start new churches and ministries that impact the communities of which they are a part, so that there is both a partnership and a transformation that takes place in the context of these new communities.
- Together: Home Missions works together with local partners in churches and classes to start new congregations and campus ministries. Home Missions does not plant churches, it works with partners to do so. We also work in tandem with other CRC agencies and ministries to accomplish this.
- Re-New: We eagerly work alongside leaders and congregations to renew their sense of their place in God’s mission. We do that in partnership with other ministries and agencies.

Home Missions has been through a time of transitions since September 2009. During this transition, we have focused on the following four themes:

1. Develop a fresh focus and strategic plan for the organization and have clear priorities.
2. Work toward a balanced budget and grow revenue. Home Missions has made significant progress to reduce its deficit and to begin the process of growing revenue from diverse sources in order to fund ministries.
3. Work with partners, agencies, and local partners as the way Home Missions does its work. Significant progress has been made in partnering with classes and local congregations, as well as with CRC agencies such as Christian Reformed World Missions.
4. Develop and carry out a plan for leadership succession in senior positions within Home Missions. Recently a new director has been appointed. An advancement director is expected to be in place by spring 2011.

We are excited to have the new Christian Reformed Home Missions director, Rev. Moses Chung, in place after being interviewed and ratified in February 2011 by the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA on behalf of synod (see *Acts of Synod 2010*, p. 821). A primary goal of the preceding interim period has been to transition the organization to a place where a new director can take on fresh leadership going into the next chapter of Home Missions’ ministry. We are enthusiastic about the vision of Rev. Chung and his capacity to provide leadership in a variety of ways that are essential to the well-being of Home Missions.

D. Partnering

1. Partnering with local churches and classes

Home Missions has always done its best work in partnership with local churches and classes. We are leveraging our unique strengths while

integrating the abilities of local churches, CRC agencies, and others to move the mission forward. By working in partnership, we often serve in two ways: (1) catalyzing new ministries and (2) strengthening existing ministries and leaders.

2. Partnering with other agencies

We are actively cultivating partnerships within the CRC. Home Missions works with each of the CRC agencies in order to serve churches together. In addition, Home Missions is actively exploring broader partnerships with CR World Missions in the areas of advancement and developing shared approaches to ministry.

3. Partnering with the Reformed Church in America

Home Missions continues to collaborate with the Reformed Church in America (RCA). Our relationship with the RCA continues to grow as we focus on the areas of church multiplication, leadership development, and church revitalization.

In all of these efforts, we are working to play a key role in the denominational effort to “create and sustain healthy congregations for the purpose of transforming lives and communities worldwide.”

II. Ministries of Christian Reformed Home Missions

A. *Home Missions priorities*

Together with other agencies, churches, and classes, we pursue our mandate of providing leadership to the church in its task of sharing the gospel in North America, working to

- multiply new churches and campus ministries. Home Missions plays a catalytic role working with partners to launch new churches and campus ministries, so that 300 churches and 10 campus ministries are launched by 2020.
- cultivate diverse missional leaders. Home Missions will cultivate missional leaders on every level, from various generations, backgrounds, and cultural contexts so that missional leaders are identified, assessed, and coached to launch new churches and campus ministries; and pastors and other CRC leaders assess their leadership capacities.
- help churches discover their place in God’s mission. We hope to see 300 churches go through a process of self-assessment in order to discern their place in God’s local and global mission. Home Missions offers regionally based coaching networks so that leaders and ministries have coaching for their journey.

A key Home Missions strategy is the development of “clusters”—local groups of ministry leaders intentionally connecting with each other for the growth of the mission. Usually based in geographic regions, clusters are environments in which ministries and leaders gather to live and work out the gospel’s mission calling in their context. Frequently, often monthly, pastors and leaders in each cluster meet together to pray, to support each other, and to talk about ways to share resources that will make an impact on their communities together.

1. Church planting and development

The Home Missions Bi-National Church Planting and Development Team is charged with the task of visioning, resourcing, and connecting local churches, classes, and regions to establish and develop church planting movements. Churches, classes, and regions plant churches—Home Missions does not. However, we are partners in establishing a church planting movement culture—a culture that seeks to be broader, deeper, and more diverse than ever.

Following are highlights of events and partnerships:

a. Exponential church conference in Orlando, Florida

The Exponential Conference, held in April 2010, is the largest annual church planter gathering in North America. Prior to the conference, the Home Missions church planting team, along with the RCA Church Multiplication team, held a cooperative training event. This pre-conference generated a great deal of interest (around 70 persons from each denomination attended) and concluded with a challenging address by Mr. Rich DeVos.

Again in 2011, we partnered with the RCA at the Exponential pre-conference. The environment of the conference has been a springboard for additional work and support of church planting in both denominations. We are journeying together—not just with this pre-conference effort but other trainings and collaborations as well.

b. Reformed Church in America boot camp

As another example of greater cooperation and shared working arrangements, Rev. Jul Medenblik, church planting goal specialist, and Rev. Kris Vos of Crossroads Church in Schererville, Indiana, were presenters at the recent RCA *Thrive* boot camp. Boot camp is an intensive training in church planting.

2. Educational mission

Denominational campus ministries are placed at the gateways of leadership in our culture. They call college students—our future leaders—to consider God’s mission in their own pursuits and to seek the nurture of God’s church.

a. Campus ministries

On campuses across North America, students, staff, and faculty are gathering together to grow in faith, build community, and engage God’s world. Christian Reformed Campus Ministry seeks to bear witness to the renewing grace of Jesus Christ in a beautifully diverse but complicated world.

Campus ministry foundational documents, a current list of campus ministry locations, and a list of the personnel serving in those locations can be found at www.crcna.org/pages/crhm_campusministry.cfm.

The Christian Reformed Church is involved in campus ministry on campuses in Canada and the United States. As of January 2010, twenty-three campus ministries are supported by Home Missions’ partnership-assistance grants. They are

Chicago State University (Black)
 Dalhousie University
 Fanshawe College
 Ferris State University
 Iowa State University (Korean)
 Kennedy-King Community College
 McMaster University
 Michigan State University
 Passaic County Community College
 Queen's University
 University of Alberta
 University of British Columbia (Okanagan)

University of Calgary
 University of Guelph
 University of Iowa
 University of Northern British Columbia
 University of Toronto
 University of Waterloo
 University of Western Ontario
 Western Michigan University
 Wilfred Laurier University
 William Paterson University
 York University

Regular campus ministry activities include weekly Bible studies for students and faculty; one-on-one counseling; large group worship and/or teaching events; small group discussions; social activities; leadership formation; special lectures and retreats; and, in some cases, a Sunday student worship service on campus. Although many of these gatherings are small, others include hundreds of students.

In addition to financial support, campus ministries are supported and resourced in other ways such as visioning, coaching, and leadership.

b. Educational mission leadership

Through the work of the Christian Reformed Campus Ministry Association, Home Missions supports annual campus ministry conferences, regional campus ministry gatherings, and other leadership development activities. The agency also supports the CRC's ongoing work toward developing and refining the vision and goals of CRC campus ministry across North America.

Thanks to the generosity of the Kenneth and Jean Baker Emerging Leaders Scholarship Fund, Home Missions offers the Emerging Leaders program—a key strategy for developing new leaders for the church. Through this program, student leaders can receive part-time funding to actively assist in leadership activities for a campus ministry.

c. Educational mission support for Red Mesa schools

Home Missions assists the Red Mesa Christian Schools Association. The association fosters mutually beneficial programs of support (internal and external staff development and donor development) for all of the Red Mesa schools.

B. *Home Missions' regional and ethnic teams*

Home Missions strongly believes that the local congregation is the primary agent of the kingdom of God in the mission of God. For that reason, we have always distributed our significant leadership into local communities in order to be next door and available to these primary agents. We work in partnership with these regional and ethnic leaders to accomplish what we see as the strategic priorities of Home Missions. By working through regional and ethnic leaders, Home Missions' presence reflects the reality that agencies and classes partner together through regional entities in order to serve the local congregation.

In the past year, there has been a significant move toward the formation of mission leadership teams in each of the regions. These teams are made up of leaders who have a sense of apostolic vision for the mission of God and how

local congregations can flourish through that. Many of them are engaged in developing clusters of leaders, of pastors of existing congregations and new churches and campus ministries, in order to gather to discern how the Spirit is moving and working in their context. These clusters are for discernment, imagination of multiplication strategies, growing of leaders, and development of new resources.

The current Home Missions regional leaders are

- Rev. Peter Kelder, Central U.S.
- Rev. Adrian Van Giessen, Eastern Canada
- Mr. Drew Angus, Eastern U.S.
- Rev. Ben Becksvoort, Great Lakes
- Rev. Jerry Holleman, West Central U.S.
- Rev. Peter Holwerda, West Coast
- Rev. Martin Contant, Western Canada

The current Home Missions ethnic leaders are

- Rev. Robert Price, Black Ministries
- Rev. Javier Torres, Hispanic Ministries
- Rev. Tong Park, Korean Ministries
- Rev. Stanley Jim, Native American Ministries

The work of Home Missions gets unique expression through the contextualized work of regional and ethnic leaders distributed throughout the denomination. Together with mission leadership teams, they provide the impetus to catalyze gospel movements.

One of the most striking accents of Home Missions' work is its intentionality to work inter-culturally with various people groups so that the whole gospel comes to all people in all contexts. CRHM is especially excited when the majority of the leadership roles in new churches, for example, include persons representing various cultures throughout the world.

Home Missions' ethnic leaders have formed an Ethnic Ministry Council to provide leadership in this effort. They are focusing especially on how to foster, nurture, and flourish multiethnic ministries in congregations and communities throughout the CRC. We are excited about the potential of growing our multiethnic ministry through this resource and by partnering with others who share this vision.

The Home Missions regional and ethnic teams, together with the teams that they work with and their partners, have a goal to accomplish the following:

- The churches of each classis plant a minimum of one church or one campus ministry every two years.
- Annually identify and recruit and assess 40 ethnic leaders for leadership development as potential for missionary pastors.
- Each mission leadership team will have at least three clusters that have an active church planting strategy in place.

We are thankful that we are able to cultivate a growing partnership with the Reformed Church in America in this church multiplication effort. Already we do many things together, rather than create parallel systems. In the future, we hope to work more intentionally, especially as we recruit,

assess, train, and equip church planters, campus ministries, and missional pastors.

We are also engaged in a partnership with other agencies in order to explore the potential for a global Coffee Break movement. Significant interest is being shown in various countries around the world for this method of Bible study as a key form of discipleship in their context.

Specialists on the regional teams give leadership to small group development, spiritual formation and prayer, and leadership development. Capacity to serve the churches and classes of the regions has increased significantly as regional leaders and teams experience the synergy of teamwork.

Specialized goal leaders who focus on church planting and mission-focused churches bring expertise, passion, and leadership to the work of Home Missions. We are blessed and well served by these leaders as, through their commitment and ownership for Christ’s mission, the CRCNA in North America is mobilized for mission and many workers are added for the harvest.

Home Missions’ prayer and small group ministry developers connect and supply resources to churches and ministries through consultation with and training of church leaders and members. As part of their role on regional teams, these developers interact with pastors, councils, ministry team leaders, and other leaders to model and promote renewed vision and relationship-based ministry in missional small groups.

Prayer and small group ministry includes leadership and training events in small groups, Coffee Break, Story Hour, Little Lambs, prayer, and evangelism.

The regional teams also serve one another with “best practices” in addition to the overall efforts of CRHM as a unified and distributed organization. Home Missions is beginning to experience the benefit of receiving “leadership from the edge.”

The chart below shows how grants are allocated in Ministry Year (MY) 2011:

Church planting	
New churches	<u>1,389,005</u>
Subtotal	\$1,389,005
Mission-focused churches	
Churches	53,000
Mission-focused smaller churches	<u>64,220</u>
Subtotal	\$117,220
Heritage churches	
Heritage	<u>14,330</u>
Subtotal	\$14,330
Leadership	
Leadership Development Networks	<u>58,076</u>
Subtotal	\$58,076
Educational Mission	
New Mexico schools	265,310
Campus ministry grants	335,102
Emerging leadership initiative	<u>34,000</u>
Subtotal	\$634,412
Total grant budget	\$2,213,043

C. *Home Missions' collaborative efforts*

Home Missions supports a program of emerging leaders in campus ministries and partners with Calvin Theological Seminary to support ministry internships on campuses. Calvin College partners with Home Missions' campus ministry to cosponsor an annual academic and mission-focused lecture tour on major university campuses throughout North America.

Home Missions partners with Calvin Theological Seminary and Kuyper College to offer an online education program to bring accredited education to mission students, directed by Dr. Gary Teja. Home Missions also partners with Calvin Theological Seminary, MOPS (Mothers of Preschoolers) International, National Coalition of Men's Ministries, the denominational Prayer Leaders Network, and the Classical Renewal Ministries Team to assist efforts in prayer, small groups, and evangelism.

In addition, Home Missions is actively partnering with CRWRC in the regional ministry teams and is working more closely with World Missions in communications and fundraising efforts in North America.

D. *CRC evangelizing growth*

Numerical growth is one measure of mission effectiveness. By God's grace, the Christian Reformed Church added 3,089 through evangelism in 2009, compared to 3,252 persons in 2008, 3,293 persons in 2007, and 3,287 persons in 2006.

The reported membership of the Christian Reformed Church totals 255,706 (*Yearbook 2011*, p. 151), compared to 262,588 last year, despite the fact that member additions (10,565 persons) were higher than reported member decline (9,038 persons). Factors other than members added or lost also affect the total membership number. For example, not all congregations report their membership numbers.

E. *Stories of lives changed through Home Missions' ministries*

God is at work through Home Missions' diverse ministries to change lives with the power of the gospel in North America! Following are some examples from the past year:

- In Philadelphia, inner-city church plant *Spirit and Truth Fellowship* brings the good news to a struggling community every day of the week, through worship and community activities. This church is also at the center of a growing holistic community-based local renewal effort that includes other Home Missions-supported ministries and partnerships with a health care clinic and other local agencies.
- Twenty-four university students in Canada and the United States received new Home Missions emerging leaders grants at the start of the fall semester. One of these students, Ms. Kim Visser, was an emerging leader at Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario, this past year. She says, "Having a leadership role in this ministry really changed my life, and I feel like I grew a lot this year, not only as a leader, but as a personal follower of God."

E. *New ministry development*

The CRC goal of increasing our capacity to plant twenty-five churches a year is in response to the potential harvest in North America. These new churches need our prayers of intercession—prayers that the Lord would

send laborers to the harvest field. From a denominational perspective, ten to twenty new churches are needed annually to offset the loss created by congregational merges, closures, and departures. From a kingdom perspective, adding twenty to thirty new churches annually would aid the massive challenge to reach the more than 200 million unchurched and under-churched people in Canada and the United States.

In ministry year 2011, Home Missions partnered with local classes and parent churches to establish the following 18 new churches:

New work: Ministry year 2011

Location	Ministry	Ministry leader	Start date
Austin	TX Missio Dei	Richard Villarreal	2011
Bothel	WA The Well	Chris Fulkerson	2010
Dallas	TX Church of Wholly Offering	Young Ryul Ki	2010
Davis	CA Christ Church of Davis	Eric Dirksen	2010
Denver	CO The Table	Craig Broek	2011
Grand Rapids	MI Square Inch Church/Resid	Steve DeRuiter	2010
Iowa City	IA Iowa City CPD	Jung Ho Suh	2010
Jenison	MI Alive	Terry Scholten	2011
Jersey City	NJ Jersey City Mission	Jose Vasquez	2010
Lincoln	NE Northern Lighthouse – staff	Ryan Dudley	2010
Milton	ON Milton CPD	John Bouwers	2011
Newton	IA New Life Prison	Rick Admiraal	2011
New York	NY Dwell Church - staff	Peter Armstrong	2010
Philadelphia	PA Grace & Peace Community	Rob Whitmire	2010
Seattle	WA Roots Church/Resid	Simon Cunningham	2010
St. Thomas	ON St Thomas CPD	Beth Fellingner	2010
Tracy	WA Lord's Grace Korean Church	Boosik Kong	2010
Waterloo	IA New Straightway Church	Reginald Haywood	2010

III. Recruitment and training

A. Leadership development networks

Home Missions has worked hard to train and raise up the next generation of diverse missionaries and ministry leaders. During ministry year 2011 and in partnerships with classes, Home Missions supplied grants to twelve leadership development networks (LDNs). LDNs are an in-ministry training program lasting approximately three to four years and are available in Spanish or English. Current locations are as follows:

Ministry	Location	Leader
Chinook Mentoring Ministries	Calgary	AB recruiting
Greater Chicago LDN	Chicago	IL Pedro Aviles
Antioch LDN	Grand Rapids	MI Dave Beelen
BC LDN	Kamloops,	BC Wilma Vander Leek
Logos LDN	Long Beach	CA Daniel Mendez
S. CA Training Prog	Moreno Valley	CA Al Breems
Seacoast LDN	North Hampton	NH Brent Averill
Pine Tree LDN	Pittsfield	ME Bill Johnson
Puget Sound LDN	Puget Sound	WA Ben Katt
Sierra LDN	Sacramento	CA Paul Vander Klay
Midwest LDN	Sioux Falls	SD Jim Hoogeveen
EC LDN	Toronto	ON Norm Sennema

B. *Assessment center*

Over the past few years, the church planting team has seen a need to focus on and engage Calvin Theological Seminary students who have been interested in learning more about their giftedness for church planting. In 2009, Home Missions had the opportunity to assess six persons. In June 2010, we assessed fifteen persons (most of them CTS students).

IV. Board matters

A. *Board membership*

The Board of Christian Reformed Home Missions is mandated by synod to guide and carry out the denominational Home Missions program. The board includes twelve regionally based members (matching CRCNA regions), with the primary functions of governance and strategic direction. Five at-large board members balance expertise, gender, racial diversity, and clergy or nonclergy requirements set by the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA.

Four board members are completing their first term and are eligible for reappointment to a second three-year term: Mr. David Harlow (Region 3), Rev. Larry Baar (Region 10), Mr. James Jones (at-large), and Rev. Roger Ryu (at-large). Mr. Silas Krabbe (at-large – young adult) has elected not to be nominated for reappointment to a second term on the Home Missions board.

The following nominee from the respective region was submitted to the classes for vote, and the results are being forwarded to synod for ratification of a first three-year term:

Region 7

Rev. Joy Engelsman has served as pastor of First CRC in Denver, Colorado, since 2004. She was born and raised on the mission field in Nigeria and graduated from Calvin College with a degree in English and communications. Rev. Engelsman moved to Denver, where she worked first as a teacher and then spent ten years with Youth for Christ, producing youth events and writing curricula to train young people in evangelism. In response to God's call into ministry, she pursued an M.Div. degree from Denver Theological Seminary. She completed the EPMC program at Calvin Theological Seminary and is now ordained as a minister of the Word in the CRC. Rev. Engelsman served two terms on the board of Christian Reformed World Missions. She is deeply committed to Jesus Christ and to sharing the good news.

B. *Board officers*

The officers of the Board of Home Missions are Mr. Rodney Huguen, president (who is completing his term this year); Mr. James Jones, vice president; Ms. Beth Fylstra, secretary; Mr. Harley Verbeek, treasurer; and Rev. John Van Sloten, vice all.

The officers of the Canada board for 2010-11 are Mr. David Harlow, president; Rev. Harvey J. Roosma, vice president; Rev. John Van Sloten, treasurer; and Mr. Michael Talsma, secretary.

C. *Salary disclosure*

Executive persons are being paid within the approved salary ranges.

Job level	Number of positions	Compensation quartile (includes housing allowance)
18	1	2nd
15	10	2nd

D. *Financial gifts*

Home Missions' revenues from ministry share increased 5 percent (\$18,000) totaling \$3,683,000. Above-ministry-share gifts (non-estate) decreased 4.9 percent to \$1,360,000, and estate gifts experienced a decrease of \$105,000 (35%). Conference and registration fees were flat at \$110,000. Revenues from reserves were up \$723,000. Overall, total revenue was up \$532,000. Home Missions is very grateful for the support of all ministry partners this year and gives thanks to God for them and their support through faithfulness in praying and giving.

E. *Personnel*

Mr. Ben Vandezande has served as the interim director of Christian Reformed Home Missions for nearly three years. He has provided leadership for the agency during this time of transition and reports to the CRC director of denominational ministries, Ms. Sandy Johnson, as well as to the Home Missions board. Rev. Moses Chung, newly appointed Home Missions director, was scheduled to take on his leadership responsibilities effective May 1, 2011.

Mr. Ben Van Houten continues as senior writer of Home Missions, Ms. Laura Posthumus serves as a bridge person in the new regional advancement strategy, and Ms. Irene Helmholdt is our website manager. Rev. Jack Stulp, who has been involved in church relations and is in his 53rd year of ministry in the CRC, stepped down from his role this spring. Ms. Kristie Schrotenboer serves as administrative assistant.

Rev. Allen Likkel retired from his role as director of ministry teams effective November 30, 2010. There is a transition in place and a recruitment of a new director. Mr. Ben Vandezande presently serves as an interim director of ministry teams, and Ms. Lois Haagsma provides leadership in supervising the grant and administration program.

F. *Communications*

Home Missions uses a variety of means to communicate with its audiences. The Internet has become an increasingly important part of the communications mix. Home Missions' website (www.crhm.org) provides resources and equips churches through print and electronic publications, as well as providing communications and resources from the regional and ethnic teams. Several publications, such as newsletters and fundraising letters and other materials, are sent to churches, individuals, and staff by way of email. The website is also used to convey news, prayer needs, and other information. The site is updated weekly with news stories, resources, and other information.

Worship bulletins and related materials in English and Spanish are available to the churches for Easter and Reformation Day, when many churches receive an offering for Home Missions. Three *On a Mission* newsletters and

several other promotional materials were published. Home Missions used the “Church at Work” pages of *The Banner* to communicate stories of God’s mission work throughout North America. In addition, biweekly ministry stories are posted to www.crcna.org and distributed through the *CRC News* e-newsletter. Material for the Prayer Guide and for bulletin announcements are also provided.

Home Missions board members and board alternates receive a monthly e-newsletter called *First Friday Focus*. Church planters and other CRC pastors receive the monthly *Pastor’s Memo* e-newsletter, written by the Home Missions director.

Home Missions also collaborated with World Missions on two campaigns for churches this year. The first, “Pray to the Lord of the Harvest,” was a 28-day prayer initiative that included daily prayer requests and a brochure sent to all churches. The second, “From the Cross, Through the Church, to the World,” was an Easter-to-Pentecost campaign that included devotions, litanies, children’s worship materials, and an activity guide for families.

V. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Rev. James Jones, board vice president; and Rev. Moses Chung, director of Home Missions, when matters pertaining to Christian Reformed Home Missions are discussed.

B. That synod by way of the ballot ratify the election of board members for a first three-year term.

C. That synod by way of the ballot reelect board members to a second three-year term.

D. That synod encourage all Christian Reformed churches to recognize Easter Sunday and Reformation Day Sunday as significant opportunities to receive an offering for Christian Reformed Home Missions.

Home Missions considers it both a challenge and a privilege to join in God’s mission with Christian Reformed congregations, ministry agencies, and schools.

Note: Recommendations on financial matters are included in the report of the denominational Board of Trustees and will be presented to synod by way of the Finance Advisory Committee.

Christian Reformed Home Missions
Ben Vandezande, interim director

I. Introduction

Christian Reformed World Missions (CRWM) supports and unites a diverse family of Christian Reformed churches in international missions to witness to the good news of God's kingdom. We encourage Christian Reformed participation in Spirit-led mission with churches and other organizations around the world so that together we proclaim the gospel to more and more people who have not heard it, healthy churches emerge, and the kingdom of God is advanced. Our key areas of action:

- Mobilize the Christian Reformed churches and their members for greater missions involvement.
- Strengthen the Christian Reformed churches and international partners in our mutual capacity for Christian life and mission.
- Participate in global networks and movements to advance the reign of Christ.

II. Ministries of Christian Reformed World Missions

A. *Ministry that by God's grace and power is transforming lives and communities worldwide*

Through Christian Reformed World Missions (CRWM), the Christian Reformed Church sends over 60 career households and many more partner missionaries serving in several organizations, for a general total of over 200 missionaries. Through partnerships, our work extends to more than 30 countries. Some of the many tasks of CRWM missionaries include

- evangelism and church planting
- leadership training and development
- discipling
- Christian education
- teacher and literacy training
- organizing regional networking centers
- community development and micro-enterprise
- internships
- service learning teams

We give thanks for what the Lord has accomplished through World Missions missionaries and partners in the past year, and we look forward to what he will bring about in the coming year. Following are some highlights:

- The Spirit has moved more than 9,080 people to commit their lives to Christ.
- Nearly 70 new worshiping communities have been established.
- Over 2,000 people participated in CRWM-related formal pastoral and theological training.
- Over 6,300 people participated in CRWM-related leader development programs.
- Eleven new missionaries were appointed by CRWM and are serving in countries such as Romania, Cameroon, Austria, Lithuania, and Guatemala.

- Eighty-four teachers and administrators served in international schools through World Missions.
- Seventy-five volunteers served through Christian Reformed World Missions in various countries.

B. Ministry to and with local congregations

CRWM’s Missions Education and Engagement Team walks alongside local congregations to enhance their vision for global outreach. Through resources, training, and consultation, the team assists local church leaders in stimulating a deeper vision for an involvement in missions. CRWM works with these leaders to help them discover and grow their church’s participation in the Great Commission. Through this process they see churches that are focused, intentional, and excited about their response to God’s plan for the world and the work of the church.

C. Collaborative efforts

World Missions has increasingly engaged in synergistic ministry, especially with other agencies of the Christian Reformed Church. For example, World Missions and Home Missions put in place a leadership team to guide and explore and identify Global Choice Points and to create a common vision and communication strategy around a single global mission focus. World Missions, CRWRC, and Back to God Ministries International work together in Haiti as Sous Espwa (Source of Hope) in church, school, and community and in follow-up on French-language radio broadcasts. CRWM partners with Calvin College in their semester in China program. World Missions, Home Missions, and Faith Alive are working on a global use of the Coffee Break Program.

Strengthening seminaries and other formal theological schools remains a high priority for CRWM. These schools cannot possibly train the vast number of pastors already serving in congregations throughout the world. To meet the need of training this very large group of people, CRWM participates in the Timothy Leadership Training Institute (TLTI). Working with TLTI enables us to nurture biblically trained leaders to serve new believers and their congregations. This sort of collaboration results in more effective and longer lasting ministry.

D. Recognition of service

Each year, World Missions recognizes missionary employees and office staff who are celebrating significant anniversaries of service. In December 2010, World Missions honored the following for their years of service to the Lord through World Missions:

Years of service	Name	Location
5 years	Mariano Avila	CRWM Office
	Patricia Harris	Philippines
	Zachary King	Haiti
	Sharon Segaar-King	Haiti
	Jennifer Le Mahieu	Haiti
	Wayne (Lynn) Ten Harmsel	Pastorate, China
10 years	Gary (Galya) Timmerman	Russia
15 years	Joel (Jeannie) Huysler	Nicaragua

20 years	Everdine Smith Stephen (Sandra) Brauning Luis (Ana) Pellecer Steven Van Zanen	Mali Dominican Republic Pastorate, CRWM Office, Regional Office-Miami Pastorate, Romania, Lithuania, CRWM Office Pastorate, Philippines CRWM Office Nigeria, Liberia, Regional Office-Grand Rapids Japan Mexico Liberia, Mali
25 years	Dwayne (Gladys) Thielke Dorothy Wallinga	
30 years	Ronald Geerlings Larry (Ruth) Spalink Jan (Darlene) Van Ee	
35 years	Larry (Ann) Vanderaa	

E. *Sharing stories*

The following stories provide just some of the ways in which God has used his servants over the past year.

1. Asia: Coffee Break leadership workshop draws a crowd—Japan

During Japan’s long holiday week in May 2010, Christian Reformed World Missions missionaries Jeong and Misook Gho traveled to Fukuoka City on Kyushu Island to lead a Coffee Break leadership workshop. Excitement heightened as people saw how God could work through them and the Coffee Break ministry.

Following registration, the Ghos and the other co-organizers realized they had far more than the 60 people they were planning on—they had 98. The participants came from 14 local churches and represented four different denominations—the Reformed Church in Japan (RCJ), the Church of Jesus Christ, the Association of Japanese Baptist, and several Independent churches.

“The major goal for us was to bring people from various backgrounds together. This was the first effort outside of the present partner in Japan, the RCJ,” Jeong says. Many of the participants had never heard of Coffee Break before they came to the workshop. Yet, as they learned about the program, they were encouraged by its potential.

“Small group ministry is a brand-new concept to many Japanese churches. Cooperation between denominations and missions organizations is not a common thing. We hoped that the Coffee Break workshop would leave a great impression on everyone that we could work together for the glory of God,” Jeong says. “Through the conference, many of them realized what they were missing—the marvelous small group fellowship with other Christians in Christ Jesus, the joy of discovering the Word of God by themselves, and the great possibility for evangelism.”

2. Europe: A leader with a dream—Ukraine

“Arpie is a big man with a big heart and big dreams,” says George deVuyst, a CRWM missionary serving in Ukraine. “Having been a ‘homeless hooligan’ as a teenager, Arpie has a passion for helping the less fortunate. He has a dream to unite Christian business owners and bring God’s transformation to all aspects of Ukrainian society.”

Arpie is one of fifteen church leaders from Baptist, Reformed, and Charismatic denominations involved in the first Timothy Leadership Training (TLT) session held in Ukraine. He, like many of the leaders, is

excited about TLT's potential to strengthen his pastoral skills and lead a larger community into deeper fellowship with Christ.

In Ukraine, children without a family are sent to big orphanages. After they turn 16 or 17 years old, they are no longer able to live in the orphanage. With no place to go and no adult to help them find a job or a place to live, many of them end up on the streets. That is where Arpie steps in. He is building a large house and inviting teenagers, with no place to go, to live with him and his family. He dreams of filling his home, telling such teenagers of God's love for them and teaching them skills to live on their own.

His neighbors have already noticed something different about the way he lives. Whenever they ask him why his life is so different, he always points to Jesus, sharing how Jesus has changed his life. His neighbors have asked him to start a church so that they can learn more about God and what he might mean for them. Arpie has embraced the challenge, using TLT to strengthen his leadership skills. His prayer is that God will build him up to draw others to him.

3. East and South Africa: Training today's teachers for tomorrow's leaders

CRWM has started field-testing its new Educational Care program and, as of January 2011, has the first one ready for use. This idea for a training program developed out of a conversation Mr. Albert Hamstra, CRWM's special projects director, had with Rev. Mwaya Wa Kitavi, CRWM's East and South Africa regional director.

"Mwaya mentioned that it would be a good idea to have a Timothy Leadership Training program for teachers," says Hamstra. "We [CRWM] started talking to other people, to the Timothy Institute, and others—and the interest just grew."

In many places in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, Christian school administrators and teachers want to teach from a Christian perspective but have few materials and little training to do so. To address this need, Hamstra gathered educators to create a biblically based training curriculum called Educational Care. Educational Care has six modules: biblical worldview, student learning styles, developing student gifts, discipline, leadership in a Christian school, and the purpose and value of one's school. Each module involves a five-day workshop.

Like TLT, each workshop starts with broad principles and ends with participants making action plans to use what they have learned. Although Education Care is still in the beginning stages, it is already making an impact. A teacher who was part of a field-testing training in Kenya said, "I have come to realize that everything in the world is God's property. I now see God in every child and each person." May this teacher's words be repeated by many of her colleagues!

4. West Africa

A CRWM missionary was approaching a new pocket of nomadic Fulani believers that had stopped to rest under some shade. Soon an older Fulani man stepped out of the woody area, clapped his hands and said, "I came at just the right time—you can explain your religion to me."

They began discussing Islam and Christianity. When the missionary asked the man why he followed Muhammad, the Fulani man told

him that while Jesus was a major prophet, Mohammad superseded him because he came later. The missionary then asked him who was coming back on judgment day. The Fulani man responded, “Jesus, of course,” and explained that Jesus would raise Muhammad from the dead.

“If Jesus is the only one coming back, doesn’t that make him the last and final prophet?” the missionary asked. Then the Fulani man smiled and went away saying, “You have given me much to think about.”

Several months later, the Fulani man became a Christian. He received a copy of the Scriptures, but since he could not read, he found a local imam [Muslim leader] to read to him. Others began joining the reading circle. Soon people began complaining that the imam was spending more time reading the Christian Scripture than the Quran. The group has become a bit more secretive with their reading since then, but their meetings continue.

5. Latin America: From drug lord to Christ follower—Mexico

Antonio comes from the Pacific Coast town of Mazatlan, Mexico. When he was 11 years old, his father moved the family to Los Angeles, California. That is when Antonio’s life began to develop along two incongruent paths.

By day he studied hard and was a good student. Because he read and absorbed learning, he developed a fluid and informed style of communication. He delved into English, history, science, and music, and eventually completed a college degree. However, at night and during his spare time, Antonio wandered into the drug culture. He regularly smoked marijuana and snorted cocaine. Because some of his family members grew marijuana, it was easy to obtain and sell at school. Antonio was developing into a small-time drug lord.

Kenia testifies that she and Antonio have been happily married for eight years, but there were seven difficult years before that. Though Kenia knew that Antonio was promiscuous and involved in drugs, she married him anyway. Eventually the initial flare and fun of their relationship turned into anger, discouragement, and bitterness. Kenia asked Antonio for a divorce.

Although the Lord was there all the time, he made himself known at this precise moment. On three separate occasions, in rapid-fire succession, Christian men witnessed to Antonio. Their words challenged Antonio and Kenia to visit an evangelical church to see if what they said was true. Not long after, Antonio accepted Christ and exchanged his pistol for a pocket Bible.

Today Antonio and Kenia have a happy marriage and three sons. They are studying together at All Nations Seminary in Juarez, Mexico, in preparation for future ministry. Meanwhile, they are leading three Bible study cell groups in Juarez. Antonio does not let the drug violence in Juarez stop or inhibit his witness. He boldly says that the same God who protected the saints of old sends his angels to watch over him today.

6. Transformational Networks: Dancing—Nicaragua

“I am not good at dancing,” shares Mr. Joel Huyser, CRWM missionary in Nicaragua. “Yet for the past few months I feel like I am dancing. Since January, I have been devoting 75 percent of my time to working

on *transformation networks*. We have tentatively described our vision this way: 'We see gospel-shaped people and communities joining together in a movement to make our global village a radically better place to live for everyone.'

"Did you notice that word *movement*? That is the nasty word that makes this uncomfortably similar to dancing. Nurturing a movement is all about doing and joining in with others who are already *doing*. Sometimes it takes the willingness to be the 'lone nut.' Often there is no pre-determined script.

"In July 2010, Ms. Susan Van Lopik from CRWRC and I convened a gathering of about forty people in Grand Rapids, Michigan, for a conversation around the themes of network weaving, community, church, and transformation. This gathering included church planters, community developers, youth, and business people. Important values emerged from our July gathering that will continue to shape our work.

"Since this meeting, Susan and I have been working with a launch team, not to start yet another 'program' but to connect groups doing similar things in different places. CRCNA-related ministries are effectively transforming lives and communities both in North America and in other countries.

"Maybe we could do more to nudge kingdom linkages to another level—linkages between business people and church planters, churches and their neighborhoods, community developers and educators, artists and pastors, Christians in the majority world and Christians in North America, Reformed and Pentecostal Christians.

"Perhaps we might even dare to pray and work for a day when gospel-shaped people and communities would join together in a movement to make our global village a radically better place to live for everyone. Growing the kingdom truly will be a multi-generational, interdisciplinary, cross-cultural leap of faith—and that is like dancing."

7. Hope Rising

Worldwide Christian Schools (WWCS) and Christian Reformed World Missions are coming together in support of Colegios Cristianos Reformados (COCREF), an association in the Dominican Republic made up of 21 Christ-centered schools and over 5,000 students. COCREF's mission is to serve the most disadvantaged population in the nation, providing children in need with access to quality, Christ-centered schooling.

Ms. Gladis González is just one example of how COCREF schools are bringing hope, a Christian worldview, and a future to children who would most likely have little opportunity for an education or a life beyond their village. Gladis was born in a small town in the interior of the Dominican Republic, surrounded by small sugarcane villages. She attended COCREF schools as a child, and it was there that she learned of God's love for her and committed her life to Christ. She worked hard, graduated from high school with honors, and, with the help of a scholarship, enrolled in a university where she studied modern languages.

Today Gladis teaches English, French, and Spanish in one of the Christian schools she attended. Her love of learning and her gratitude to God are evident in the joy she brings to her classes each day. She says,

"I am part of the teaching staff here for the glory and honor of my beloved Lord!"

Although 70 percent of school funding comes from within the Dominican Republic, more funds are needed to continue the school programs. COCREF has been unable to raise teacher salaries for the past six years, and each year around 30 percent of the teachers leave for higher paying jobs.

WWCS (U.S.A.), CRWM (U.S.), and COCREF hope to change that through Hope Rising—a student-sponsorship program. Through Hope Rising, one sponsor is connected with one student, one family at a time, and one school at a time. Already 27 out of the first school's 82 eligible students have sponsors.

8. Prayer Missions International: Serving through prayer

"Prayer has always been a significant emphasis of my ministry," says Rev. Jon DeBruyn, a retired CRC pastor. In 2002, he received a grant to focus on the topic "developing a prayer church." While visiting with a Baptist pastor in Oregon, DeBruyn immediately became interested in the church's yearly prayer missions trip to Vietnam. The concept stayed with him, and two years later he went on his first prayer missions trip—a trip that has led to even more overseas prayer opportunities.

During his first prayer mission trip to Guadalajara, Mexico, Rev. DeBruyn was struck by the process and meaning behind their trip. This experience prompted him to begin Prayer Missions International (PMI), developing similar prayer mission opportunities for CRCNA ministries in countries around the world.

CRWM and PMI have partnered together to host prayer teams in Nicaragua and Guatemala, and they have scheduled more prayer trips to Nigeria, the Dominican Republic, and Mexico for the winter and spring of 2011.

Although every prayer mission trip has a unique "flavor," the general schedule of each one is the same. Each day begins with a group devotional time and a time to pray specifically for one or two team members. Afterward the group heads out to a ministry center to meet and pray over the people who are working there.

"The people we meet are genuinely appreciative that we focus on this vitally important spiritual activity," said Rev. DeBruyn. "We have also noted that there is a special bond as we pray together with our brothers and sisters from the local country. Although we may not always understand each other's language, as we stand together before God, there is a deep comradeship that has been experienced and articulated."

III. Placement, learning, and care

A. Placement

CRWM's Placement, Learning, and Care (PLC) department connects members of the CRC with mission opportunities around the world. Currently these opportunities include career appointments, short-term assignments, and positions with partner organizations. Partner missionaries are appointed for a year at a time and usually serve in teaching positions.

Through our partnership with Calvin Theological Seminary, we provide cross-cultural internships for several students each summer. These

internships place seminarians alongside our career missionaries and their national ministry partners, providing those with interest in missions with a valuable learning experience.

We also work with Youth Unlimited (YU) to engage the youth of the CRC in missions. We participate in YU's biennial convention for high school students, and we work together to promote opportunities for young people.

B. Learning

Our orientation program for career and partner missionaries has been revamped. To better serve career missionaries, we outsource part of their training to organizations that specialize in missionary orientation and debriefing. This provides a more professional and comprehensive orientation that better meets the needs of our career missionaries.

CRWM-specific orientation in Grand Rapids for career and partner missionaries has also been updated and focuses on CRWM-specific issues as well as orienting new missionaries to the role of CRWM personnel. General sessions are held on conflict management, support-raising, spiritual self-care, relationship issues, and other topics relevant to cross-cultural living.

The establishment of a binational denominational volunteer management office (ServiceLink) is now a reality. CRWM works closely with ServiceLink in areas of recruitment, placement, and orientation of all volunteers. Volunteer short-term missionaries now attend orientation via the ServiceLink office, with responsibility for this orientation shared among CRWM, CRWRC, and ServiceLink staff.

C. Care

The Care component of PLC's ministry consists primarily in providing logistical assistance (travel, visas, car rental, and many other practical services) as well as pastoral and medical consultation and support. CRWM maintains eight duplex units in Grand Rapids for use by missionaries on home service and other visitors, based upon availability. Pastoral and medical services are provided by retired volunteers with expertise in these areas.

IV. Board matters

A. CRWM new board nominations

Region 1

CRWM is requesting a one-year extension to the term of Ms. Jacoba (Ko) Spykma. This extension will give Ms. Spykma a full six years on the CRWM board instead of five years. The one-year extension has been approved by Classis B.C. North-West.

U.S. at-large

Rev. Eduardo González is a member of Sunshine Community CRC in El Paso, Texas. He holds a B.A. in theology, an M.A. in missions from Calvin Theological Seminary, a B.S. in engineering, and an M.B.A. in business management. He is presently serving as associate pastor at Sunshine Community on loan to Juarez, Mexico, as a theology professor at All Nations Seminary and San Pablo Presbyterian Seminary. Rev. González currently serves on the Form of Subscription Revision Committee II reporting to Synod 2011. He volunteers twice a year as a missionary and teacher to Cuba through

CRWM. For part of his career he served as a plant manager of two factories in Mexico.

Rev. Gianni Gracia is a member of Covenant CRC in Sioux Center, Iowa, and serves as a pastor reaching out to the Hispanic communities in Sioux Center, Orange City, Rock Valley, and Hull, Iowa. He has worked as a consultant with the Reformed Church in America and the CRC as both groups support Hispanic ministry in his area. Rev. Gracia collaborates with the Center for Assistance Service and the Advocacy and Liaison Group, organizations that advocate for immigration reform and human rights of the undocumented population before local police and other law enforcement departments. His work also includes discipling young people from Dordt and Northwestern Colleges.

The following nominees are completing their first term on the board and are being recommended for a second three-year term: Rev. Derek Bouma (Region 4), Dr. Kojo Quartey (Region 11), and Ms. Lauren Yoon (Region 12).

B. Salary information

Job level	Number of positions	Compensation quartile (includes housing allowance)
18	1	3rd
17	1	3rd
16	2	3rd and 4th

V. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the president of World Missions-Canada, Mrs. Jacoba (Ko) Spyksma; the president of World Mission-U.S.A., Mr. Colin Watson; and the director of World Missions, Dr. Gary J. Bekker, the privilege of the floor when matters pertaining to Christian Reformed World Missions are addressed.

B. That synod elect by way of the printed ballot those slates of nominees presented for election or for ratification to the Board of World Missions.

C. That synod along with the Board of Trustees encourage all Christian Reformed churches to recognize Pentecost Sunday as a significant opportunity to pray for and to take an offering for Christian Reformed World Missions.

Note: Recommendations on financial matters are included in the report of the denominational Board of Trustees and will be presented to synod by way of the Finance Advisory Committee.

Christian Reformed World Missions
Gary J. Bekker, director

I. Introduction

“Wow, how come I didn’t know about this? That’s exciting!” This is the most common response CRWRC staff hear when they have a chance to sit down with church leaders over a cup of coffee. So please get a cup of coffee to enjoy as you read some of the highlights of the ministry you asked CRWRC to carry out on your behalf over the past year.

CRWRC’s mission is to “reach out in God’s name to people, both in North America and around the world, who struggle with poverty, hunger, disaster, and injustice, to help them find lasting ways to improve their lives.” There are three main aspects to this ministry: community development, disaster response and rehabilitation, and justice education in North America and around the world.

One of the unique characteristics of this ministry with people living in abject poverty is that CRWRC depends on your regular financial donations to carry it out and does not receive CRC ministry shares. CRWRC’s work is unique in this way and in other notable ways as well. Following are a few of those:

- CRWRC works in 4,500 communities—over four communities for every congregation in the Christian Reformed denomination—to help people in poverty recognize the God-given giftedness and resources they already have that can transform their lives and communities.
- CRWRC is one of just a few Christian development agencies that take a purely asset-based approach to ministry—when CRC congregations and individuals support CRWRC, the ministry does not need to “sell” projects or give “handouts.” It focuses on communities as a whole—CRWRC’s work is “(w)holistic” development.
- CRWRC provides international leadership in a number of Christian alliances that address poverty and disasters, working in both strong coordination with other international groups and advocating for just public policy and good governance.
- In 2010, CRCs and individuals gave \$16.4 million to help people living in poverty in developing countries through CRWRC, plus more than \$8 million for Haiti earthquake relief. In addition, CRWRC received \$14.4 million more ministry dollars through partnerships and collaborations that provided matching funds, grants, and other resources. In all, your financial support for CRWRC in 2010 was leveraged at a ratio of about 2:1.
- Coordination with other CRC agencies is helping to grow strong ministry networks in countries where we minister together, as well as creating fresh initiatives in Muslim outreach, and support for regional networks in the United States and Canada.

The networks, coalitions, and organizations CRWRC collaborates with to help multiply CRC resources for greater impact include ACCORD, Action by Churches Together, the Alliance to End Hunger, the Barnabas Foundation, the Canadian Christian Relief and Development Association, Canadian Churches in Action, the Canadian Council for International Cooperation, the Canadian Council for Refugees, the Canadian Council of Christian Charities,

the Canadian Foodgrains Bank, the Christian Community Development Association, Christian Stewardship Services, Communities First Association, Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability, Foods Resource Bank, the Integral Alliance, InterAction, Kairos Canada, the Manitoba Council for International Cooperation, Micah Challenge-U.S. and -Canada, the Micah Network, National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster, the Ontario Council for International Cooperation, the Saskatchewan Council for International Cooperation, and South-Asia Partnership Canada. Look for these highlights as you read the specifics of this report.

The ministry year has not been free from challenges. CRWRC invites you to dialogue and plan with us at local, classical, and synodical levels as we address these issues over the next year.

- An outpouring of donations for the Haiti earthquake response provided CRWRC with unprecedented disaster funding on that field. Helping organizations and people in need transition from relief projects to long-term transformation that is owned by communities is a challenge that we continue to lead.
- The global economic downturn reduced CRWRC’s ability to fund our eighty-six national Christian partner organizations at previous levels. CRWRC was forced to end our work in Ecuador and drew our work in the Philippines to an early end. A gap in funding from the Canadian International Development Agency forced us to dip into reserve funds and to reduce budgets. We are learning to collaborate even more systematically and are amazed as the impoverished communities that we work with do once more what they have been accustomed to—adjust to difficult circumstances with resilience.
- In years such as this, when international disasters attract lots of resources, domestic disasters receive less support. A commitment to “stand firm” in local disaster response and in the hard work of long-term development is the support CRWRC needs from our denomination.

CRWRC cherishes your prayer support. Pray for justice in the many places where evil is both pervasive and prevalent. Continue to support CRWRC with your offerings. Without CRWRC’s work building the strong organizational foundations that help communities develop their leadership abilities and resources, local ministries have a weak base to build on. The work of CRWRC is critical not only to ending poverty but also in building the capacity of the local church for ministry.

In 2012 the CRC and synod will celebrate 50 years of local and worldwide ministry with people living in poverty through CRWRC. It is an amazing privilege to represent the CRC as we fight to end poverty through the vital witness of a Christ-centered church.

II. Ministries of CRWRC

A. *International community transformation*

CRWRC’s core ministry involved developing communities through 3,642 volunteers, 87 staff, 86 partner organizations, and the generosity of thousands of individuals, families, and churches over the past year. The result?

CRWRC's life-changing programs reached more than 1.7 million people living with poverty and loss. What an amazing testimony this is to the One who commands us to love our neighbors and care for his children all over the world!

CRWRC's community development programs address the needs of people living in poverty by first assessing their assets and then building on them. In 4,500 communities, CRWRC confronts people's greatest needs first—whether those are better health, increased nutrition, good hygiene, improved agriculture practices, literacy, civil rights training, leadership development, savings and loan groups, animal husbandry, or spiritual growth. By working through our 86 Christian partners, CRWRC builds a strong, enduring presence at the community level while increasing those partners' capacities for both neighborhood outreach and organizational management. Through this holistic strategy that is integrated into participants' daily lives, CRWRC helps entire communities lift themselves out of poverty.

Free A Family[®], a pledge (or faith-promise) program that improved the lives of more than 4,200 poor families in 2010, is another unique way that CRWRC works in holistic, integrated ways to address poverty. It is said that it takes a village to raise a child: through **Free A Family**[®] supporters are able to help a child and the village that is raising him or her at the same time. **Free A Family**[®] supports CRWRC's development activities in a specific region through a representative family. The program's supporters receive updates about a real family in their region while entire communities benefit from more nutritious food, clean water, improved health, and increased income through CRWRC and our partners.

B. HIV and AIDS response

CRWRC launched the three-year "Embrace AIDS" campaign in 2007 to raise \$3 million for HIV and AIDS programs around the world. With these funds, CRWRC expanded existing AIDS projects and introduced new programs in more regions of the world where this deadly disease is devastating the poor and at-risk people it works with. Today CRWRC is working to stop the spread and impact of HIV and AIDS in 19 developing countries. More than 110,000 people (including 67,000 women) are involved in life-changing projects in 16 of these countries because of your generous financial support, which raised \$3.6 million by December 2010. With these resources, youth groups have been established for support and accountability; livelihoods are improving through income-generating activities; nutrition and food security activities are improving the health of people infected and affected by HIV and AIDS; stigma and discrimination have been reduced; and churches are actively engaging in the fight. That's exciting!

While the official Embrace AIDS Campaign ended in 2010, CRWRC will continue its HIV and AIDS programs, developing and integrating new projects into our core international programming as part of our ongoing holistic approach to community development. And we will continue to mark the significance of HIV and AIDS work in 2011 and beyond through an annual Embrace AIDS Sunday in the spring and through World AIDS Day on December 1.

HIV and AIDS are not going away anytime soon—they will affect the majority of the people we work with, and their survivors, for generations to

come. CRWRC will continue to embrace AIDS by working with our partner churches and organizations to care for orphans and at-risk children, minister to those who are sick or dying, and educate people about abstinence, behavior change, and faithfulness. We ask that with us you remain faithful to embracing those affected by AIDS.

C. Church-based community transformation

1. In the United States

The CRWRC Connections program links CRC congregations to CRWRC's work through church and ministry partnerships, congregational and worship resources, the 16:15 training program, and the Champion Network. In addition, CRWRC is a charter and funding partner of the Communities First Association (CFA), created in 2009 to contract CRWRC's development work in North America by building a community development movement among CRC and non-CRC churches and organizations.

Through CFA, CRWRC helped 120 Christian Reformed leaders engage their communities and encourage transformational change in 2010. In addition, CFA has trained and coached 330 leaders who are praying for and transforming an increasing number of communities around the country—200 communities and growing strong.

2. In Canada

CRWRC's Connections team links CRC individuals and congregations to CRWRC's work. This is supported by the deacons of the Christian Reformed Church and by passionate individuals called "CRWRC Champions." Through these committed individuals in Canada and the United States, churches are encouraged to partner with CRWRC staff and programs, learn about global poverty and hunger, and support CRWRC's ministry with their prayers and financial gifts.

In addition, CRWRC-Canada encourages congregations to consider sponsoring refugee families who are newly arrived. CRWRC is one of only a handful of refugee sponsorship agreement holders with the Canadian government. Last year 63 families were welcomed to Canada under CRWRC's auspices.

D. Justice education and advocacy

1. In North America

CRWRC works in collaboration with the Office of Social Justice and Hunger Action to increase the capacity of CRC congregations to engage in Bible-based, justice-related activities. Last year, the Congregational Justice Mobilization Program in the United States provided churches with 20 justice-oriented workshops, was active on seven college campuses, and engaged 97 small groups in justice learning and action. In addition, 55 churches in the United States and Canada advocated with their government representatives for follow-through on the United Nations Millennium Development Goals in the "Show of Hands" campaign. In Canada, CRWRC specifically called on CRC individuals to advocate with their elected officials around the issue of refugee reform. The government

heard our concerns and responded by changing legislation to address some of these issues.

2. Around the world

Biblical justice-building is an integral value in CRWRC's global ministry as we challenge the systems and structures that keep people in poverty. In 2010 CRWRC remained focused on issue-specific programming such as land rights for subsistence farmers and women's inheritance law, and continued to integrate values such as human dignity and godly image-bearing into each project we do in impoverished communities. In many underdeveloped nations, civil unrest, political instability, and military action make CRWRC's training programs in peace-building and reconciliation a necessity in pursuing lasting peace and a key to the overall effectiveness of our development work. We also continued to explore new ways to encourage advocacy in our international programs.

Each year, CRWRC supports new justice projects around the globe. In one area, a review of a human trafficking pilot project indicated that 21 local anti-trafficking committees were formed and 16 probable trafficking incidents were averted as a result of our intervention. CRWRC is also funding a civic education program in Uganda to help citizens prepare for upcoming federal elections. The program teaches community members about their human rights and civic responsibilities. Community women in this program were especially encouraged by learning about their rights in the home as well. Through pilot projects like these, CRWRC continues to integrate justice learning and action into all of our work.

E. *Service Learning*

CRWRC's Service Learning Program creates collaborative learning opportunities between North Americans and local communities in the countries where we work. It is exciting to witness how God uses these opportunities to build relationships and encourage everyone involved.

1. With the development of the Canadian CRWRC Service Learning office in 2010, the CRWRC Service Learning program is establishing a collaborative working relationship with the denominational ServiceLink program and the World Missions volunteer program.
2. The CRWRC Service Learning program placed 362 non-disaster volunteers in opportunities of learning during 2010. These volunteers contributed 71,115 hours of service. Work teams and individuals traveled to Haiti, Honduras, Nicaragua, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Malawi, Mozambique, Zambia, Senegal, Niger, Nigeria, the Philippines, Cambodia, Laos, and Bangladesh. Individual volunteer opportunities contributed in meaningful ways to CRWRC programs that address the following Millennium Development Goals (MDG): MDG 1, eradicating poverty and hunger; MDG 3, empowering women and girls; MDG 6, combating HIV and AIDS, malaria, and other diseases; and MDG 7, ensuring environmental sustainability. CRWRC hosted learning tours in 2010 that focused on creation care in Kenya as well as on HIV and AIDS in Kenya and Uganda. Tour participants learned more about programs in their own local communities and heard stories from those who are caring for God's creation or living with HIV and AIDS abroad. In the past year, more post-graduate

students have sought longer-term internships with CRWRC than in previous years.

3. The number of U.S. churches who committed to developing long-term international partnerships through CRWRC also increased last year. CRWRC Service Learning assisted these churches with orientations and planning as part of their partnerships.
4. One CRWRC Service Learning project, the Bridger Program, creates collaborations between overseas communities and North Americans on team, volunteer, discovery tour, and partnership visits to the field. CRWRC Bridgers build our partner's capacities to mobilize community volunteers and use international volunteers effectively through Volunteer Management Capacity Training. Funding cutbacks in 2010 resulted in program reductions that resulted in a renewed focus on existing Bridger positions.

F. *Disaster Response*

1. International disaster response

The number of natural and human disasters that occurred in 2010 was significant. Most were caused by drought, chronic food insecurity, storms, earthquakes, or conflicts. CRWRC was and continues to be active in responding to many of these disasters. Among 24 countries where CRWRC provided emergency relief last year, nearly one-half of the beneficiaries (46%) live in sub-Saharan Africa, and another one-third (36%) are in Asia. Almost one-half of CRWRC international relief efforts (43%) were in response to drought and chronic food insecurity. In all, nearly 700,000 disaster survivors grabbed a lifeline from CRWRC—food, food security interventions, water, shelter, access to medical care, trauma counseling, and hope.

The 2010 Haiti earthquake was a phenomenal disaster that took 250,000 lives and left another one million survivors homeless. The subsequent outpouring of compassion to help Haitians recover was also phenomenal. CRWRC received more than \$11.5 million to respond to the emergency and long-term needs of earthquake survivors. More than \$6.6 million of that total was given by individuals, families, and churches. The remaining \$4.9 million was leveraged in part through CRWRC's memberships, as in the Canadian Foodgrains Bank, and through partnerships such as the ACT Alliance.

In the past year CRWRC's Haiti response provided emergency food supplies to 23,000 people; 3,500 families received shelter tarps; 1,400 families received toolkits; and 2,300 families received emergency funds. CRWRC constructed 22 temporary community latrines, dug 19 clean water wells, and provided water filtration units to two hospitals. Our most significant response was the construction of new earthquake and hurricane resistant wood-frame homes for 831 families. We also trained 18 people in counseling for trauma recovery. These counselors then assisted more than 1,800 people. In addition, the Christian community development partners of the CRC organization in Haiti called *Sous Espwa* ("Source of Hope") have received \$361,000 to help them rebuild their ministries.

CRWRC's Haiti earthquake response expenses in 2010 were funded by \$4 million (34%) of the donations received for that purpose. This includes \$681,494 (17%) for food aid; \$1.3 million (34%) for non-food items including temporary shelter and support for *Sous Espwa* partners; \$401,280 (10%) for water, sanitation, and hygiene; \$145,772 (4%) for psycho-social support and education; \$1.1 million (29%) for home reconstruction; and \$258,748 (7%) for program management. The remaining \$7.5 million designated for CRWRC Haiti Earthquake response will remain available in coming years as CRWRC continues home reconstruction and livelihood restoration programs, and as *Sous Espwa* continues earthquake recovery work with local partners.

In Kenya, CRWRC has been addressing chronic food shortages since well before recent conflicts began in 2006. In the past year, more than 110,000 people living in drought- and violence-prone areas received emergency food aid through CRWRC, including displaced families and residents of their host communities. CRWRC partnered with a variety of organizations, the Reformed Church of East Africa, the Anglican Church of Kenya, and the Kenyan Red Cross Society, to implement these projects. Funds for food aid and project expenses were in large part provided by the Canadian Foodgrains Bank.

In mid-2010 CRWRC responded to catastrophic flooding in Pakistan with more than \$2 million in donations from our supporters, and then leveraged additional funds from other organizations. CRWRC met the immediate food and shelter needs of 8,000 flood-affected families in northwestern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province and, subsequently, expanded to help an additional 5,500 families in Rahim Yar Khan as floodwaters flowed south. CRWRC, in collaboration with its local partner, the Interfaith League Against Poverty (ILAP), and other aid agencies distributed 4,825 tents, 6,000 blankets, 8,065 hygiene kits, 8,065 mosquito nets, 8,065 kitchen sets including stoves and dishes, 7,915 gas cylinders (for fuel stoves), 100 tool kits, and 8,000 water cans to families devastated by the flood.

CRWRC is continuing to help Pakistan flood survivors recover and rebuild in 2011, including a transition from relief aid to cash- and food-for-work programs that will help Pakistani survivors clear silt from the soil, repair roads, and rebuild tertiary irrigation canals. To help restart livelihoods, CRWRC will distribute seeds, tools, livestock, and provide small business loans. In addition, we will build flood resistant homes, repair latrines, and restore water supplies. The Pakistani people were devastated by last summer's monsoon, and CRWRC is determined to make a significant impact in working with them—even more so because through it God's love will be evident even here.

2. Disaster Response Services (North America)

While flooding in Pakistan caught the world's attention over the summer, spotty but devastating floods also buffeted parts of the United States and Canada. Disaster Response Services (DRS) responded to those who were affected by floodwater in communities across North America while continuing to address needs remaining after Hurricanes Ike and Katrina.

We are grateful to our volunteers and supporters who have given their time, talent, and finances to make this work possible.

One aspect of CRWRC's disaster work is Rapid Response—these volunteers are ready to go on short notice and do hard, dirty work. Last year DRS sent Rapid Response teams to Colfax, Iowa; Nashville, Tennessee; Milwaukee, Wisconsin; and Rhode Island. In some cases local CRC members worked alongside DRS volunteers, serving their neighbors in need and learning more about CRWRC in the process. DRS volunteers also cleaned-up after Hurricane Igor in Newfoundland and assisted with flood response in New Brunswick. Both of these Canadian projects provided opportunities to partner with other Christian organizations such as Mennonite Disaster Services and Samaritan's Purse. In all, DRS Rapid Response volunteers stripped, cleaned, and sanitized 175 homes in eastern Canada in 2010.

DRS also provided Needs Assessment services to disaster-affected communities in 2010. These volunteers interviewed survivors, listening to their experiences, taking note of their hopes and dreams, and documenting their unmet needs. DRS assigned twelve needs-assessment teams to flood-affected communities from Rhode Island to Texas, assisting a total of 20,821 households.

CRWRC's primary focus in domestic disaster response is housing reconstruction, which is accomplished by a group of about 1,800 skilled, willing volunteers who commit to spending an average of three weeks on a construction site. DRS typically makes a 12-month commitment to a hurting community and then provides volunteers with housing, tools, food, and management. In 2010, DRS rebuilt disaster-damaged homes in Cedar Rapids, Iowa (flooding, 2008); Munster, Indiana (flooding, 2008); Kenner, Louisiana (Hurricane Katrina, 2005); Lake Charles, Louisiana (Hurricane Rita, 2005); Slidell, Louisiana (Hurricane Katrina, 2005); Biloxi, Mississippi (Hurricane Katrina, 2005); and Galveston, Texas (Hurricane Ike, 2008). These teams contributed a total of 142,109 volunteer hours and repaired or rebuilt 140 homes.

DRS also partnered with two faith-based organizations in American Samoa in 2010 after a tsunami struck the Pacific island late in 2009. DRS volunteers helped with recovery planning and construction estimates, and then worked alongside volunteers from the Church of the Brethren and Mennonite Disaster Services to rebuild many of the island's homes.

The Groups Program is another DRS initiative that is helping communities recover from disaster. In 2010, more than 1,850 volunteers in the Groups Program worked 113,108 hours to help repair 454 homes. This included returning groups from congregations in Toronto and Chicago who committed to significant rebuilding projects near Slidell, Louisiana. Groups of volunteers also helped rebuild the Salt Lake City, Utah, Cambodian CRC that was destroyed by arsonists in 2007. This year that congregation began to worship in their completed building. Praise God!

III. Human resources management

CRWRC's Human Resources (HR) management function provides HR support to functional and ministry teams, including but not limited to recruitment and selection, performance management, employee relations,

HR systems and advisory support for team leaders in their region, and international disaster response HR responsibilities.

The HR team continues to focus on achieving gender and racial diversity. CRWRC is committed to the process of gender mainstreaming with the goal of gender equality. As part of its gender plan, CRWRC regularly tracks goals both for the number of men and women in leadership positions, staff perception about their team's commitment to gender equality, and the participation of men and women in decision-making. In our most recent survey, 83 percent of staff agreed or strongly agreed that their team was committed to CRWRC's gender policy, and 93 percent felt that men and women participated equally as decision makers. In addition, 52 percent of leadership positions (those with a Job Level of 14 or higher) are held by women.

Annual performance reviews are routine for all CRWRC staff, as well as an annual internal team self-assessment survey that analyzes team health, celebrates accomplishments, and critically reviews team growth areas. CRWRC is thankful for all of its human resources which are a critical avenue through which we provide for communities in need around the globe.

IV. Board matters

An important support to CRWRC's ministry is its board. The primary function of the board is to set CRWRC's vision and mission and to encourage and track the accomplishment of that vision.

The CRWRC governance structure is made up of delegates from the classes, in addition to up to twenty-seven members at-large, which constitute the Board of Delegates of CRWRC. The delegates are a vital communication link with classes and churches. They select seven-member national boards for both the United States and Canada. The two boards together form the fourteen-member Joint Ministry Council, which provides governance for CRWRC as a whole.

A. Board of Directors of CRWRC-Canada

Mr. Dennis Jurjens, president
Mr. Bill Van Geest, vice president
Ms. Gerda Kits, secretary
Mr. Ben Van Hoffen, treasurer
Mr. Francisco Angulo
Mr. Quentin Nanninga
Rev. Roy Berkenbosch, pastoral adviser

B. Board of Directors of CRWRC-U.S.

Mr. Paul Wassink, president
Mr. Stan Cole, vice president
Ms. Carol Ackerman, secretary
Ms. Nancy Visser, treasurer
Ms. Jodi Koeman
Mr. Roy Zuidema
Rev. Thea Leunk, pastoral adviser

V. Salary disclosure

In accordance with synod's mandate to report the executive levels and the percentage of midpoint, CRWRC reports the following:

Job level	Number of positions	Compensation quartile (includes housing allowance)
18	2	2nd
16	4	1st

VI. Detailed financial information

Detailed financial information and budgets will be submitted to synod by way of the *Agenda for Synod 2011—Financial and Business Supplement*.

VII. Resource development

As noted in the introduction, CRC churches and donors contributed \$24.5 million to people living in disaster and poverty through CRWRC in 2010, which was leveraged into nearly \$40 million in programming through grants, partnerships, and other collaborations. Despite the challenges of raising funds for ministry during a near-global recession, God provided for people in need through your generosity in 2010. That is amazing!

Last year, CRWRC received a total of \$39,353,246 from all sources in the United States and Canada. \$24.5 million of this funding came from our churches and individual donors. Just over \$4 million was received through government grants, and more than \$5.6 million came from the Canadian Foodgrains Bank for emergency relief aid. CRWRC also received more than \$4.5 million in grants from organizations in North America, Europe, and elsewhere, and about \$500,000 from its investments.

CRWRC directed \$12.4 million of its 2010 financial resources toward core international development programs, and nearly \$14 million went to disaster response—the lion's share designated for Haiti earthquake recovery. More than \$1.3 million was used for community development in North America, and another \$1.2 million went toward constituent education.

CRWRC uses about 10 percent of its resources for general management and fundraising purposes—meaning that 90 percent or more of the money you give to CRWRC goes toward helping people who live in poverty. CRWRC finished 2010 with a \$7.3 million surplus that is mainly designated for Haiti earthquake response. These funds will be spent in Haiti over the next several years.

Thank you for taking time to sit down with CRWRC over a cup of coffee today to review just a few of the highlights of the unique, challenging ministry you entrusted to us in 2010. Through CRWRC, the Christian Reformed Church is "reaching out in God's name to people, both in North America and around the world, who struggle with poverty, hunger, disaster, and injustice, to help them find lasting ways to improve their lives."

VIII. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Mr. Paul Wassink, president of CRWRC-U.S.; Mr. Dennis Jurjens, president of CRWRC-Canada; Mr. Andrew Ryskamp, director of CRWRC-U.S.; and Ms. Ida Kaastra-Mutoigo,

director of CRWRC-Canada, when CRWRC matters are discussed and need to be addressed.

B. That synod commend the work of mercy carried on by CRWRC, and urge the churches to take at least four offerings per year in lieu of ministry share support.

C. That synod, by way of the ballot, elect members for the CRWRC Board of Delegates.

D. That synod appoint Rev. Dong-il Kim to serve an additional three-year term (2011-2014) as board delegate from Classis Pacific Hanmi.

Grounds:

1. It is difficult to find qualified persons in Classis Pacific Hanmi to serve as representatives to the board.
2. The classis leadership desires to learn more about the ministry of CRWRC and to mobilize the Korean churches for this ministry.
3. Classis Pacific Hanmi believes that Rev. Kim is the person best qualified to continue as its representative to the CRWRC Board.

E. That synod appoint Rev. Roy Berkenbosch, CRWRC-Canada member at-large, pastoral adviser, to serve an additional one-year term through June 2012.

Grounds:

1. Two other delegates are retiring this year from Classis Alberta North, where Rev. Berkenbosch is also located; thus, it would be prudent for him to continue on the board to provide continuity and orientation to the new delegates in this classis.
2. Rev. Berkenbosch has been a key participant in ongoing dialogue regarding staff and board matters because of his knowledge of CRWRC; his continued input on these matters will be important during the coming year.
3. CRWRC will benefit greatly from Rev. Berkenbosch's involvement with the Micah Network and other key organizations with whom CRWRC is affiliated.

Note: Recommendations on financial matters are included in the report of the denominational Board of Trustees and will be presented to synod by way of the Finance Advisory Committee.

Christian Reformed World Relief Committee
Andrew Ryskamp, director, CRWRC-U.S.
Ida Kaastra-Mutoigo, director, CRWRC-Canada

I. Introduction

The Christian Reformed Church Loan Fund, Inc., U.S., was organized by Synod 1983 with a directive to assist organized Christian Reformed churches in the financing of capital improvements. The Loan Fund operates exclusively in the United States. The board of directors of the Loan Fund oversees the loan approval process, the determination of interest rates, and the setting of Loan Fund policies. The board also establishes interest rates for Investment Certificates sold—primarily to members, classes, churches, and agencies of the CRCNA.

II. Board of directors

The terms of Mr. Ronald Haan and Mr. Calvin Jen expire on June 30, 2011. Mr. Haan has served for two terms, and Mr. Jen was appointed in the fall of 2007 to complete the term of a resigned board member and is not eligible for reappointment.

The remaining members of the board of directors are Mr. Jon Swets (2012), Mr. James Zoetewey (2012), Ms. Christina Bouwer (2013) and Rev. Chad Steenwyk (2013).

The board requests that synod appoint two members to a three-year term from the following slates of nominees:

Position 1

Ms. Andrea P. Karsten is a member of Cascade Fellowship CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan, where she serves on the congregational life committee and as a GEMS counselor. She also is active on the Kingdom Advisors group and the finance committee of Ada Christian School. Ms. Karsten currently serves on the board of directors of the Barnabas Foundation and is a past member of the foundation board of the Christian Counseling Center. She is a graduate of Calvin College and Western Michigan University and presently is vice president of investments for Wells Fargo Advisors in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Mr. Kenneth J. Stienstra is a member of Brookside CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan, where he has served as elder, deacon, and council chair, as well as an elder delegate to Classis Thornapple Valley. He is a member of the Calvin College Business Drive committee and has also served Habitat for Humanity and Degage Ministries. Mr. Stienstra is a graduate of Calvin College and is currently the senior vice president in commercial lending for United Bank of Michigan, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Position 2

Mr. Thomas J. Sinke is a member of Boston Square CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan, where he has served as an elder and Cadet counselor. He has also served on the board of directors of the Christian Learning Center, including four years as its president. Mr. Sinke is a graduate of Calvin College and the University of Michigan, and he is currently senior associate for A.M.D.G. Architects, Inc., Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Mr. Bradley Vander Meer is a member of Trinity CRC, Grandville, Michigan, where he has served as a deacon, church treasurer, finance committee member, and Christian education committee team leader. He has also served

as a long-time member of the Grandville Rotary Club. Mr. Vander Meer is a graduate of Hope College and is a self-employed certified public accountant.

III. Growth of operations

A. The Loan Fund is eligible to sell investment certificates to investors in twenty-three states: Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Montana, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, Ohio, South Dakota, Texas, Washington, and Wisconsin. Efforts continue to add other states with CRC populations, if the cost of registration is reasonable.

B. At the close of the 2010 fiscal year (June 30, 2010), a total of \$28,384,363 in interest-bearing investment certificates held by investors was outstanding. Interest rates vary from 1.30 percent to 5.20 percent, with a time-weighted average of 2.76 percent. The variance in interest rates reflects market conditions at the time the certificates were issued.

C. Since its inception in 1983, the Loan Fund has originated over 180 loans totaling \$59.1 million to churches across the United States. As of June 30, 2010, \$25,214,336 in loans was outstanding. Loan delinquencies do occur from time to time, but they are closely monitored and are minimal. As of June 30, 2010, there were no impaired loans. The Loan Fund maintains a loan loss reserve to cover potential losses.

D. Growth of operations is also reflected in the following data:

	2008	2009	2010
Cash and equivalents	\$7,910,852	\$8,743,731	\$9,390,298
Loans and accounts receivable	\$28,008,863	\$28,678,662	\$25,214,336
Equipment and software, less depreciation	\$16,825	\$8,413	\$0
Total	\$35,936,540	\$37,430,806	\$34,604,634
Certificates payable	\$30,224,010	\$31,322,756	\$28,384,363
Net assets	\$5,712,530	6,108,050	\$6,220,271
Total liabilities and net assets	\$35,936,540	\$37,430,806	\$34,604,634

E. A summary of the audited financial report as of June 30, 2010, appears in the *Agenda for Synod 2011—Financial and Business Supplement*.

IV. Sources of funding

Funds for the Loan Fund operations are derived from the following sources:

- The sale of investment certificates in those states where legal approval to offer them has been obtained.
- Gifts and bequests made to the corporation.
- An unsecured line of credit with a bank that permits borrowing up to \$2 million. The Loan Fund currently does not have any amounts outstanding on this line of credit.

V. Staff

The Loan Fund is served by Mrs. Alice M. Damsteegt (87.5% of full-time), and Mr. David E. Veen, who was appointed full-time director, succeeding Mr. Carl A. Gronsman, who retired in December 2010.

VI. Recommendations

A. That the Loan Fund's director or any members of the board of directors of the Christian Reformed Church Loan Fund, Inc., U.S., be given the privilege of the floor when matters pertaining to the Loan Fund are discussed.

B. That synod by way of the ballot elect two board members from the nominees provided to serve on the board of directors of the Christian Reformed Church Loan Fund, Inc., U.S.

Christian Reformed Church Loan Fund, Inc., U.S.
David E. Veen, director

I. Introduction

The mission of Faith Alive Christian Resources (Faith Alive) is “to provide resources that call people to follow Jesus Christ by helping them to understand, experience, and express the good news of God’s kingdom that transforms lives and communities worldwide.”

The core values that we have identified for our work are the following:

- Our resources are biblical, relevant, high quality, and stewardly.
- Our resources will faithfully reflect the worldview and interpretation of Scripture articulated in the Reformed confessions.
- We will treat each other and those we serve with love and respect.
- Our organizational structure, working environment, and resources will consistently reflect an antiracist perspective.

These statements undergird our work as we attempt to develop and distribute resources that serve the Christian Reformed Church and the church of Jesus Christ worldwide. The ministry of publishing is becoming an ever-greater challenge as we work in a contemporary world that is rapidly changing, and Faith Alive must change if it is to become a vibrant and relevant ministry to the church and the world.

The choices Faith Alive faces involve not so much technical change of adjusting this or that piece of the budget or this or that product line. We are engaging in adaptive change. It is change that is not simply an extension of the way things have always been done. It is change that embodies a new way of doing some things. Our three-part plan for growth embodies these key strategic intents:

- Focus our core competency in Sunday school curriculum and release two new innovative projects in Fall 2011—one year ahead of schedule.
- Find and develop new sources of revenue through new product development and new imprints, new distribution channels, sublicensing, and global expansion.
- Initiate cost reduction strategies designed to create long-term gains.

As you will see in this report, we are making significant strides in each area, but we still have much work to accomplish. Curriculum publishing represents over half of Faith Alive’s ministry revenue. The curriculum market is rapidly changing. As existing curricula age, sales decline, demanding a fresh new curriculum initiative to capture the loyalty and imagination of Reformed churches.

At the same time, Faith Alive must reduce its dependency on curricula and develop new categories and new distribution channels that can help sustain its ministry during declines in the curriculum category. Faith Alive must find and develop fresh voices, expand its distribution into retail channels, and grow its global impact.

We must do so as cost effectively as possible, always finding ways to do more with less, and continually asking how we can create elegantly simple processes that reduce costs and bring ministry to market faster.

It is a challenging time for publishing. Thankfully, we do not walk the road alone.

We are assured by this: Faith Alive is called to this time and this place to do God's work within the limits of who we are—both as individuals and as an organization. God asks that we give our very best in the field that we have been given to work. Our call is not to someone else's field, but to our field. And with God's help, we will produce fruit. In the words of the apostle Paul,

You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everybody. You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts. (2 Cor. 3:2-3, NIV)

The following is a summary of the work, governance, and administrative developments of our ministry during the past year. We look to synod for suggestions that may help us provide better service to Christian Reformed churches so that they can enhance their ministries.

II. Faith Alive ministry

A. Periodicals Department

1. *The Banner*

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

The every-household *Banner* continues to be well received by a vast majority and wide variety of CRC members. Reader financial support of the magazine has also remained very high. Annual fundraising efforts in 2010 again met with excellent results despite the barely rebounding economy in both Canada and the United States.

An independent marketing survey completed in December 2009 revealed that *The Banner* continues to be widely read and enjoys a good relationship with its readers. Here are some specifics:

- Ninety-four percent report reading the magazine (same as 2006 survey): 26 percent read it cover to cover; 42 percent look through it, stop, and read several articles; 26 percent vary in what they read from issue to issue.
- Overall satisfaction with *The Banner* has increased from the 2006 survey: 49 percent are very satisfied; 31 percent somewhat satisfied; 6 percent neither satisfied nor dissatisfied; 7 percent somewhat dissatisfied; 7 percent very dissatisfied (but note that this last number has risen from 1% in 2006).
- The two highest reasons people give for reading *The Banner* are: (1) "informs me about what is going on in the CRC" (93% reported this); and (2) it "informs me about the work of the agencies and ministries of the CRC" (79% reported this). (Respondents were allowed to choose all answers that applied.)

The recent market survey also shows clearly that more and more CRC members are interested in, and expect to find, a robust web presence for

The Banner. So this year we have expanded our online presence (www.the-banner.org) in a variety of ways. While we wish to be careful not to erode the quality of the print magazine in any way, we do recognize the need to communicate effectively with a more diverse audience. Here is how we have expanded the site to date:

- We have increased both the quantity and, in many cases, the length of news stories.
- We are posting fresh news stories, reviews, and features weekly.
- Readers can now provide feedback to each article online.
- The Tuned In section now offers more reviews and reader contributions.
- Web content is cross-linked with CRC News on the denominational homepage (www.crcna.org) and to other online sources.
- Links to recommended further reading are included where desirable.
- Photos and artwork from the print magazine now appear online.

We have also boosted our presence on Facebook and Twitter. In the future we hope to add a few other features to the website as well, such as

- bilingual “corners” on the site for Korean, Hispanic, and Chinese readers.
- enhanced marketing ad space that will allow more dynamic content, such as videos.

The editor of *The Banner*, Rev. Robert De Moor, continues to provide the overall leadership for the magazine on a 60 percent FTE basis. He also serves as pastor of preaching and administration for West End CRC in Edmonton, Alberta. This arrangement continues to work well.

Managing editor Joyce Kane, though officially retired from her position with *The Banner*, continues to fulfill many of her managerial duties on a part-time basis. The rest of her responsibilities have been taken over by Faith Alive Editorial Department editors and administrative assistants. That arrangement also continues to work well. The present editorial staff consists of the following persons:

- Robert De Moor, editor (.6 FTE)
- Joyce Kane, managing editor (.3 FTE)
- Gayla Postma, news editor (1 FTE)
- Kristy Quist, Tuned In editor (.25 FTE)
- Sandy Swartzentruber, copy editor (as required)
- Jena Vander Ploeg, features editor (.75 FTE)
- Jonathan Wilson, web editor (.25 FTE)

A representative sample of articles that received the most response during the past year includes several that appeared in *The Banner's* In My Humble Opinion (IMHO) column, a place where readers air opinions on a variety of topics related to the CRC and Christian living. We are encouraged by that, as we seek to promote an ongoing “kitchen table” dialogue among church members about important issues facing the church. Those articles include the following:

- "Our Discomfort with the Belhar" by Bryan Berghoef (IMHO, December 2010)
- "A Modest Proposal" by Bob De Moor (True Confessions, December 2010) and "Adopt the Belhar" by Peter Borgdorff (True Confessions, November 2010)
- "In All Honesty" (Editorial re: Islam, November 2010)
- "Is Separation Always a Sin?" by Timothy Palmer and "Most Separation IS Sin" by Esteban Lugo (IMHO, September and October 2010)
- "Muslim, Christian Roommates Find Common Ground at Calvin College" (News, June 2010)
- "Young and Undocumented" interview by Adrianna Oudman (May 2010)
- "Ending the U.S. Embargo on Cuba" by Catherine Cooper (IMHO, April 2010)

Although we receive thanks regularly for many individual articles, readers expressed particular appreciation for the following:

- "The Not-So-Golden Years" by Andrew Kuyvenhoven (October 2010)
- "The Case for Christian Education" by James K.A. Smith (August 2010)
- "Shaping a Youth-Friendly Church" by Anita Plat Kuiken and Pieter Pereboom (June 2010)
- "Baby Blues" by Heather Peters (Relating, August 2010)
- "Young and Undocumented" interview by Adrianna Oudman (May 2010)
- "Reading the Bible Well" by Aminah Al-Attas Bradford and Mary Hulst (January 2010)

2. *Voice of the Reformed*

For a number of years, synod has helped fund *Voice of the Reformed*, a monthly periodical published by the CRC Korean Council through a ministry-share allocation to Faith Alive. The purpose of this publication is to provide a bridge between the Anglo and Korean CRC communities. Accordingly, the magazine often includes translations of articles and news stories from *The Banner*.

B. *Editorial Department*

The goal of this department is to be the first-stop resource provider for CRC and RCA churches and a significant resource provider for other churches in the Reformed/Presbyterian tradition.

1. Curricula

a. For children

Developing and producing church-school curriculum materials (for Sunday school, catechism classes, adult small groups, and so on) continues to be the major activity of our publishing ministry.

The most important activity of this ministry is publishing curriculum for children. The *Walk With Me* curriculum and the *Kid Connection* curriculum (intended for smaller churches) are currently our flagship curricula. A total of about 2,000 churches, 650 of them CRC, use at least

one of these curricula. *Walk With Me*, now in its sixth year, is currently performing below expectations, largely due to the economy. *Kid Connection*, now in its fourth year, will be complete this year. Sales are lagging just slightly behind budget, also due to a depressed U.S. economy.

The number of new curriculum customers added each year (over 500) is slightly above the number of drops. Research shows that churches that drop our curricula do so for a variety of reasons, but primarily they state “a desire for something new and different” as the main reason for change. Other denominational publishers are experiencing similar trends. This, combined with an increasingly competitive market, will prove challenging in the coming years. Growth will come through an expansion of distribution channels (attracting and retaining new customers) and through innovation. It is not enough to create a “new and improved” curriculum. Faith Alive must reinvent curriculum by establishing a new vision of faith formation in the local church.

With two still excellent and widely-used but aging curricula, it was time for Faith Alive to develop this new vision for Sunday school curricula as well as provide new and innovative material for churches that maintain a healthy Sunday school ministry. So this summer we are releasing two new curricula:

DWELL is a new Sunday school curriculum that gives kids time and space to meet God . . . marvel at God’s redemption plan . . . and find their own place in God’s story. In a high-speed world, *DWELL* provides kids with less noise and more time to experience God. It is a graded curriculum that offers kids and their leaders opportunities to worship and to wonder into God’s story as they live out of it together. *DWELL* also invites families to take a more active role in nurturing their children’s faith.

WE is a series of ten events (per year) that guide an intergenerational group through the whole sweep of God’s story, from Genesis to Revelation. *WE* challenges churches to think about education in a new way. What happens, for example, when people of all ages gather around the same table to learn together? What happens when grandmothers have conversations with teenagers and when four-year-olds talk about their faith with thirty-somethings? What happens when we live into God’s story together, following the path of God’s mission to renew creation? *WE* also includes an at-home faith nurture component that encourages families, couples, and individuals to dig into Scripture, talk together, and “do” together during the week.

b. For youth

Faith Alive’s youth curricula endeavor to teach the fundamental doctrines of our church in a way that speaks to today’s teens. We publish several resources to support this ministry:

- On the Heidelberg Catechism we offer *Questions Worth Asking*, a two-year course with a cutting-edge pedagogy, and *HC and Me*, a two-year course that incorporates more traditional pedagogy.
- On the Belgic Confession we offer *Believe It*, which explores this important confession in an interactive small group format.

- Several short-term courses for youth explore such topics as world religions, worship, and Bible literacy.

Additionally, this summer Faith Alive will release a course for young adults that will be especially helpful to those preparing for public profession of faith. *Deep Faith* is a revised and updated edition of Neal Plantinga's study *A Sure Thing*. It is adaptable for individual mentoring, small group study, or classroom use.

This year we also introduced a new online edition of a popular Bible study series (revised and updated with new content) that will be a great resource for youth leaders. *52 Great* is an online series of student-led Bible studies on various topics and Scripture passages.

c. For people with intellectual disabilities

The board of Friendship Ministries, an independent ministry, continues to raise funds to support the development and marketing of resources and program support for people with intellectual disabilities. Faith Alive partners with Friendship Ministries by publishing and distributing its resources. The basic curriculum for this program is a three-year curriculum called *Friendship Bible Studies*. In the past year, Faith Alive and Friendship Ministries also completed a course on the Psalms called *God Cares How I Feel*.

d. For people with visual impairments

Working with Pathways International, a ministry in Minneapolis, our staff continues to expand the list of Faith Alive resources available in Braille. A small ministry-share amount is designated for this work.

e. Training and consulting

Synod 2006 provided for some ministry-share dollars to support a Sunday school training and consulting coordinator. In December 2007, Ms. Jolanda Howe was hired by Faith Alive to facilitate training and support and to encourage networking opportunities among church educators and teachers.

Beginning in 2009, the training focus shifted from regional events to online efforts. Webinars, curriculum blogs, videos, and web meetings now allow us to connect with churches across North America to provide them with convenient and free training and support.

In 2010, Ms. Howe became more involved in broader denominational efforts to support Sunday school leaders. She currently serves as the guide for the CRC's Sunday School Network and is a candidate for credentialing as part of the pilot group for the credentialing process developed by the Staff Ministry Committee. She hopes that becoming credentialed in church education will allow her to help other CRC church educators and children's ministry directors through the process.

2011 will be an exciting year for Faith Alive—with the launch of two new resources, much of the training efforts will focus on supporting churches as they transition to the DWELL or WE curriculum, and on providing regional events and online support for churches that are eager for a new approach to faith nurture. Ms. Howe will also work closely with the Association of Christian Reformed Educators (ACRE)

as Faith Alive continues to provide access to broader training opportunities and free resources for leadership development.

2. Adult discipleship

Believing that a growing faith among adults is a key to all faith nurture in the church, Faith Alive has produced an array of practical resources geared to the needs of adult ministry in churches today.

- a. Bible Studies—In addition to the always-popular traditional Bible studies in the large *Discover Your Bible* series, Faith Alive has this year released several inductive Bible studies geared toward a younger audience. This new series, called *Infuse*, now includes *Esther*, *Jonah*, *Matthew*, and *Colossians*. Coming soon are *Acts*, *Christmas*, and *Psalms*.
- b. Parenting—Realizing that parents need support as they nurture the faith of their children, Faith Alive published *Home Grown*. Components include the *Home Grown Parent Handbook*, a small group study guide, and a DVD that includes video clips of real parents answering tough parenting questions. It is our prayer that this resource will help and inspire countless parents and pay huge spiritual dividends in years to come.
- c. Evangelism—Another important element of adult discipleship is how churches encourage their members to be missionally and incarnationally involved in their communities. *Don't Invite Them to Church* by Karen Wilk encourages churches and individuals to enter into neighborhood ministry. Appropriate for individual reading, small group study, or all-church programs, this resource contains practical suggestions for how to “love your neighbor.”
- d. Devotions—To encourage the daily practice of personal prayer, we have published a prayer book that follows the form of the traditional daily office. *Seeking God's Face*, written and compiled by Philip Reinders with a foreword by Eugene Peterson, has been very well received and is selling well. For more traditional devotional reading, Jim Schaap's *Honest to God* and Howard Vanderwell's *Living and Loving Life* provide powerful fuel for the prayerful heart.
- e. Square Inch—To stimulate adults to engage in important conversations going on in the church today, we are expanding our Square Inch imprint with additional titles this year:
 - *150: Finding Your Place in the Psalms* by Kevin Adams
 - *Leaving Egypt: Finding God in the Wilderness Places*
 - *A Geography of Grace* (working title) by Joel VanDyke and Kris Rocke

Additional Square Inch titles are also in development.

- f. With the anticipated approval of the new joint translation of the Heidelberg Catechism, and with a mandate from the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA, Faith Alive has begun a planning process with the RCA and the PCUSA, and with significant involvement from Back to God Ministries International, for a video-based all-church study of the

Heidelberg Catechism. Current plans call for an intergenerational (high school through adult) small group study with a strong video component, as well as resources for worship, preaching, and individual study.

3. Worship resources

- a. *Reformed Worship*—This quarterly journal continues to provide churches with solid resources for their worship planning. There are approximately 4,200 subscribers, many from denominations other than the CRC. Thanks to a grant from the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship, back issues of the magazine are available to the general public online. The two most recent issues are available online for subscribers only. In 2011 *Reformed Worship* underwent a redesign to reach out to younger readers and refresh the magazine's print presence.
- b. New hymnal—Synod 2007 approved the development of a bi-denominational hymnbook, now titled *Lift Up Your Hearts: Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs*, developed in cooperation with the Reformed Church in America (RCA). The editorial committee, made up of equal membership from the CRC and RCA, is now getting close to producing a final list of songs and hymns to be included. We plan to submit that list to Synod 2012, asking synod to endorse *Lift Up Your Hearts* as an approved hymnal for the CRC. The hymnal is scheduled for release in June 2013.

Faith Alive has worked with the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship to produce some precursor songbooks to *Lift Up Your Hearts* called *Contemporary Songs for Worship*, *Hymns for Worship*, and *Global Songs for Worship*. In January 2012 we plan to release the largest resource of Psalms for worship ever produced in North America. Titled *For All Seasons: The Complete Book of Psalms for Worship*, this resource should prove useful to a wide variety of denominations and individuals.

- c. Children and Worship—We continue to work with RCA staff to coordinate support for the Children and Worship program used in many of our churches.

C. World Literature Ministries

1. Introduction and overview

World Literature Ministries (WLM) publishes and distributes biblical Christian literature in several languages—primarily Spanish. The Spanish line of products is published under the imprint *Libros Desafío*. The literature is intended to introduce its readers to and nurture them in a Reformed view of faith and life. Most of the books are translated works from English books in doctrine or biblical studies and are intended for church leaders.

Two significant changes have greatly improved the future of WLM. Mr. Jan Dijkman was hired as director in 2008, and Rev. Alejandro Pimentel was hired as associate editor in 2009. Going forward, Mr. Dijkman will focus his efforts on developing new publishing opportunities and opening new markets for WLM products while Rev. Pimentel will provide critical editorial support. With these two additions WLM is well positioned for ministry growth. Key publishing highlights include

- *Esta es mi Biblia*, the first children’s title of *Libros Desafío*, to be followed by other children’s titles. We have decided to do a large print run (8,000 copies); six of the 25 distributors have already ordered more than 1,200 copies. At the time of writing this report the title is forecasted to arrive before mid-September in Grand Rapids.
- publication of the Greek course for beginners, *Griego para Sancho* (equivalent to “Greek for dummies”), written by the dean of the seminary in Medellín (Colombia), has been released and was printed at Buena Semilla in Colombia.
- a book on hermeneutics: *El texto que interpreta el autor*.

In addition, WLM has signed a publishing partnership with Andamio Publishers in Spain. Through this agreement WLM will become the exclusive distributor of Andamio titles in the Americas, giving WLM access to co-publishing series like “The Bible Speaks Today” (editors John Stott and Alec Motyer) in Spanish and co-publishing some new titles.

Andamio’s active catalog has over 100 titles, but their sales are inferior to those of WLM’s *Libros Desafío* line. Most of the titles in their catalog are written by well-known Spanish authors or are Spanish translations of titles from InterVarsity Press.

Through this agreement, WLM has already sold over 10,000 copies of books in Latin America.

2. Korean literature

Several years ago, Faith Alive transferred all publishing in the Korean language to the Korean Council. The Korean Council has moved aggressively in translating and publishing resources, most of them Bible studies from the *Discover Your Bible* series, into Korean. The council works closely with a Korean publisher, called *CRC Publications*, in distributing these materials in Korea. It has also formed relations with people in China to publish and distribute some of these materials in China.

The Korean Council has published other important CRC materials into Korean, such as the Church Order and the Heidelberg Catechism.

D. Marketing and Customer Service Departments

The functions performed by the Marketing Department include promotion, public relations and communications, sales of *Banner* ads, market research and analysis, and sales forecasting.

Although our print catalog remains a key vehicle for communicating with churches about our products, the web and email have become very important in recent years.

As of December 1, 2010, the number of website orders was up 15 percent from 2009. From January to November 2010, the website generated over \$470,000 in sales, which is up 29 percent from 2009.

Other communication channels include direct mail, conferences, print and web-based advertising, publicity, and order enclosures.

In February 2011, Faith Alive once again switched to a new e-commerce system (our last website conversion was in 2009). The reason for this change was to ensure that the e-commerce system could interact with our new inventory system. The benefits will be

- a site that’s easier to navigate (with drop-down menus).
- quick order forms (great for curriculum customers).
- more efficient ordering of electronic products and e-books.
- the verification of credit card funds prior to purchase.

Faith Alive promotes its curricula to a wide variety of Reformed and Presbyterian churches. As indicated in the chart below, Faith Alive’s publishing ministry is much broader than the Christian Reformed Church. More than half of Faith Alive’s accounts and sales for English-language products are to non-CRC customers.

Denomination	Active customers	% of total	Sales	% of total
CRC	819	22	\$1,043,688	45
RCA	573	15	353,078	15
PC(USA)	845	23	386,471	17
Bookstores/schools/ distributors	346	9	208,387	8
Other	1,169	31	353,502	15
Total	3,752	100	\$2,345,126	100

Faith Alive’s customer service team continues to provide excellent service to our customers. In a recent survey, respondents gave this department a 9.02 rating on a 10-point scale for their service.

E. Personnel

The Faith Alive staff team is made up of just over thirty employees. Our staff is organized into five departments and an administrative office.

Publishing Leadership Team (PLT) is a management group made up of the director, Mr. Mark Rice, and representatives from the following departments: Mrs. Jena Vander Ploeg, Periodicals (*The Banner*); Rev. Leonard Vander Zee and Ms. Ruth Vander Hart, Editorial; Mr. Chad Kruiuzenga, Marketing; Ms. Jane Hilbrand, Customer Service/Operations; Ms. Alina Pellecer, Customer Service; and Mr. Michael Dykema, Financial Services.

E. Finances

The Faith Alive Christian Resources board remains firmly committed to the goal that Faith Alive’s ministry should be, as nearly as possible, financially self-supporting. However, it recognizes that projects may be undertaken (either because our board believes they are necessary or because synod requests them) that cannot be financially self-supporting. This has been traditionally true for our World Literature Ministries department. We also receive ministry-share dollars for the every-household *Banner*. Given the trend in recent years of churches changing curriculum frequently and its impact on our financial base, the long-term finances of our ministry will be strained. Work has already begun on a long-term financial analysis of Faith Alive, and plans are in place for the development of new curriculum, new publishing models, and increased distribution channels.

Faith Alive submits (for synod’s information) reviewed financial statements for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2010, and the budget for fiscal year 2012. These reports have been submitted to the denominational director of finance and administration for placement in the *Agenda for Synod 2011—Financial and Business Supplement*.

III. Board organization, membership, governance, and other administrative matters

A. Organization

A board of up to eighteen delegates, one from each CRC region, and up to six at-large delegates (three from the Reformed Church in America) elected by synod governs Faith Alive. The board ordinarily meets three times annually in September, February, and April. Each member of the board serves on one of three councils: Administrative, Editorial, or *The Banner*.

B. Officers

The officers of the Faith Alive board through June 2011 are Rev. Pieter Pereboom, president; Mr. Kenneth Baker, vice-president; Ms. Wilma Wiersma, secretary; and Mr. Tom Prince, treasurer.

C. Nominations of board members

1. Regional delegates

The following slates of nominees are being presented for vote at the spring classis meetings. The results of the vote will be presented to synod for ratification.

Region 2

Mr. Co Vanderlaan is a member of West End CRC in Edmonton, Alberta. Recently retired, Mr. Vanderlaan spent 40 years as national director of the Christian Labour Association of Canada and three years as executive director of the Progressive Contractors Association of Canada. Retired as of January 2011, he has served on several boards and committees, including the Christian Schools International board (where he oversaw curriculum development, contracts, and a \$20 million benefit development program), the board of trustees and senate of The King's University College, and numerous government committees and school boards in Ontario and Alberta. Mr. Vanderlaan is currently chair of the West End CRC council and has taught several catechism and church school classes.

Rev. Cameron Fraser has been a pastor for over 25 years and is currently pastor of First CRC in Lethbridge, Alberta. He received his B.A. from Edinburgh College. He also holds a Th.M. from Westminster Theological Seminary and a D.Min. from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. Rev. Fraser has served on numerous ministerial and pro-life societies, including the classical ministries committee and the Canadian Ministries Board. He has also served three times as a synodical delegate. He is the author of two books, a contributor on two others, and a regular contributor to several publications, including *APC News* (Scotland).

Region 9

Ms. Laura Venhuizen is a member of First CRC in Waupun, Wisconsin. She holds a B.A. in education from Goshen College. Her teaching experience includes two years at a Christian Schools International school and years of experience teaching Sunday school and catechism and in leading youth ministry at her local church. Ms. Venhuizen currently works both as a stay-at-home mom and at Central Wisconsin Christian School as their librarian. She has served on numerous committees and has led ministry efforts including VBS, a MOPS steering committee, a ministerial search

committee, and Tuition Reduction Incentive Programming for school support. Ms. Venhuizen has also been a contributor to *Reformed Worship*.

Mr. Robert Deckinga is a member of Faith CRC in Tinley Park, Illinois. He holds a B.A. from Calvin College and an M.A. in education administration from St. Xavier's University in Chicago. After teaching junior high school for seventeen years, Mr. Deckinga became principal at Southwest Chicago Christian Schools in Oak Lawn, Illinois. He has also served as a city-wide administrator for Chicago Public Schools and was appointed the director of school intervention, working in the lowest performing schools in Chicago, attempting to have them removed from academic probation. Other experience includes serving as elder, deacon, and church school superintendent for his church. Mr. Deckinga understands curriculum, kids, and ministering to cultures and environments beyond the CRC.

Region 10

Rev. Drew Sweetman is the pastor of Spring Lake (Mich.) CRC. As a former youth pastor, he has a deep love for the discipleship ministry of the church and a passion to see people follow Jesus more fully. Qualifications include a B.A. from Trinity Christian College and an M.Div. from Western Theological Seminary. Past experience includes board memberships with the South Holland Little League, president of council, and serving on the Classis Muskegon ministries leadership team.

Dr. David Schuringa is a member of Harderwyk CRC in Holland, Michigan. He is a skilled administrator and effective communicator with a deep love for the Reformed faith and is currently serving as president of Crossroads Bible Institute. Dr. Schuringa is an ordained Christian Reformed pastor with numerous degrees. He received his B.A. in theology from Calvin College and has received two master's degrees from Westminster Theological Seminary and a Th.M. from Calvin Theological Seminary. His doctorate, in the area of homiletics, is from Kampen Theological University. Before leading Crossroad Bible Institute, Dr. Schuringa's full-time work included serving as pastor of three different churches. He also was professor of practical theology for eight years at Westminster Seminary in California. Dr. Schuringa's committee and board appointments are extensive. He currently serves on the advisory board for the Billy Graham Institute for Prison Ministry, on the board of directors for the Council of Reformed Charities, and on the CRC synodical Faith Formation Committee.

2. At-large delegate

Rev. William Harris is pastor of New Hope Community Church in Kincheloe, Michigan. He received a B.A. in political science from Wright State University in 1991 and an M.Div. from Grace College and Seminary in 2002. In 2007, Rev. Harris enrolled within the Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy program at Calvin Theological Seminary (CTS) in conjunction with his master of theology degree and as a precursor to ordained ministry. As part of his graduate studies, Rev. Harris spent a year-long residency as chaplain at Bronson Methodist Hospital in Kalamazoo, Michigan. His time at CTS has afforded him several opportunities to engage in conversations with faculty and students, as well as African-American CRC members around the country. From both ministry and

non-ministry experiences, Rev. Harris has had the privilege of interacting with diverse groups of individuals (e.g., ethnic, socioeconomic, political, educational, and religious). Engaging in dialogue among diverse people groups has become a keen area of interest as well as an increasing skill.

Ground: Rev. Harris's background, experience, and resultant perspective uniquely complements the Faith Alive board and serves its composition requirements.

3. RCA delegate

Rev. Dustyn Keepers grew up in Iowa and was a member of Hope Reformed Church in Spencer, Iowa, until her ordination in March 2010. She attended Northwestern College as a Christian education major with a youth ministry emphasis, and went on to attend Western Theological Seminary, graduating in 2009. While at Western, Rev. Keepers worked as a teaching assistant and research assistant to Dr. J. Todd Billings in systematic theology for two years. She also had the unique opportunity to receive extra training in the Hebrew language and served as a teaching assistant and instructor for the Hebrew program, co-teaching introduction to Hebrew for three years and an advanced summer Hebrew intensive twice. Rev. Keepers is currently serving at North Holland Reformed Church as the pastor of discipleship.

Rev. Donald C. Rowe is the pastor of outreach and discipleship at Calvary Reformed Church in Ripon, California. He oversees all aspects of Christian discipleship for adults, with a particular emphasis on small group ministry. Rev. Rowe has written numerous curricula for the small group ministry at Calvary, including several that include a video teaching component. He has a passion for teaching, writing, and reaching those who are far from a relationship with Jesus. This ties in with the second part of his job title at Calvary, as Rev. Rowe develops outreach projects that are multi-generational, community impacting, and missional. He has led several outreach and church planting programs around the world, from San Francisco to Mozambique.

4. RCA alternate completing the second term of another RCA delegate

The Faith Alive board recommends that Rev. Tom Grabill serve an additional three-year term on the Faith Alive Christian Resources board.

Ground: Tom served the Faith Alive board as an alternate for many years, joining the board full-time in February 2010 to complete Rev. George Brown's term after he resigned. That appointment (Rev. Brown's second term) ends in May 2011. It is within the bounds of CRCNA board procedure that an alternate completing another board member's term be asked to serve an additional term.

5. Delegates eligible for a second term

The following Faith Alive board delegates are completing their first term and are eligible for a second three-year term: Mrs. Donna Huisjen (Region 11) and Mr. Ron Chu (at-large).

D. Proposal for a standing committee on worship in the CRC

1. The present situation

- After the production of the 1987 *Psalter Hymnal*, Dr. Emily Brink, on the staff of CRC Publications, served as director of an official worship office augmented with a synodically recognized Liturgical Committee.
- In 1994, synod adopted the position that liturgies and liturgical forms could be freely created by the congregations as long as they fit certain guidelines, diminishing the need for a synodical standing committee.
- When CRC Publications was then experiencing some financial issues, the liturgical committee was discontinued.
- At present there is no office or person assigned the specific task of supporting the worship of CRC churches outside of providing print resources.
- At present Rev. Joyce Borger serves as Music and Worship Editor at Faith Alive Christian Resources. Her main task at present is to prepare the new *Lift Up Your Hearts* hymnbook and songbooks leading up to it. Though Faith Alive receives assignments from synod from time to time, there is no committee to work with and no individual mandated to take the leadership in these denominational projects.
- While we appreciate the work of the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship and the collaborative publication of such widely used resources as the *Worship Sourcebook*, their primary responsibility is not to provide worship leadership in the CRC. Presently there is no office or agency with the direct responsibility to give leadership in worship in the CRC.
- There is an increasing diversity of worship in the churches. While this can indeed be healthy, it can also introduce the danger of liturgical anarchy, a loss of distinctively Reformed worship, and a loss of the adhesion of an important “glue” that might hold us together in our increasingly fragmented denomination.

2. Proposal

- a. We propose that a CRC Worship Committee be reconstituted to provide leadership and support to churches in the crucial area of worship. This committee would be made up of eight to ten members representing a broad constituency of churches in the denomination. Care would have to be taken that it reflect the ethnic, cultural, and geographical diversity that can also represent such unique settings as church plants, small to large churches, and rural and urban congregations. Such a committee could not enforce specific worship forms and practices in congregations. It could, however, be a creative center for worship, offering liturgies, forms, guidelines, and other worship resources to the churches. In this way, such a committee would help the CRC discover more unity at its heart in the practices of Christian worship.

Among its tasks would be

- writing, updating, and e-publishing a variety of liturgies, prayers, and forms that can be used in worship and on other occasions (e.g., forms for sacraments, ordination, weddings, and so forth).
 - providing leadership in worship by offering guidelines and principles for worship in the churches.
 - overseeing a denominational worship website that would include suggestions for worship specifically related to the CRC (seasonal liturgies, sacramental liturgies, prayers, litanies, music resources, advice on worship planning, links to helpful articles, and other resources). This website would complement the work of the websites of *Reformed Worship*, Calvin Institute of Christian Worship, and the Network.
 - coordinating the worship resources of all the agencies, thus using expertise wisely and saving resources.
 - providing a place for churches to contact with questions about and resources for worship.
 - maintaining ecumenical contacts related to worship (in consultation with the CRC Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee), especially with other Reformed bodies.
- b. We propose that Faith Alive Christian Resources be designated as the administering agency for this reconstituted CRC Worship Committee and receive funding to carry out this task.
- Faith Alive has the experience and the staff capacity to carry out this task, but it lacks the mandate and the funds.
 - Faith Alive is unique among the agencies in that it is not a “program agency”—its funds come overwhelmingly from sales of its products. The staff position of editor of worship and music, for example, is funded by the sales of worship and music products (such as the upcoming hymnal).

E. Proposal regarding confessions in the back of the new hymnal

The Faith Alive board asks synod to approve the following recommendation:

That the new hymnal *Lift Up Your Hearts* not include the full text of the Reformed confessions in the back of the hymnal as in the *Psalter Hymnal*. Instead Faith Alive will publish the confessions in a separate bound volume.

Grounds:

1. One of the important features of this hymnal is a broad array of types of hymns and styles of music. Since we want the hymnal to be comparable in size to the *Psalter Hymnal*, we simply do not have the space for the confessions.
2. Few churches make use of the confessions from the hymnal. The hymnal is designed primarily as a *liturgical* resource rather than as an *educational* resource.
3. Publishing a hymnal without the confessions will increase its potential to be an ecumenical hymnal, while publishing the parts together would restrict that potential.

4. Publishing the confessions (hopefully in their newly approved translation) in a separate bound volume allows for greater flexibility of use in classroom and personal study and for ease of incorporating any changes or additions in the future.

F. Relationships with other organizations

During the past few years, Faith Alive has placed an increased emphasis on developing relationships with other Christian organizations in an effort to increase the impact of our ministry and to enable us to broaden the range of resources we offer. Many of these relationships have proven to be very helpful. Following are some of the more significant relationships:

- Reformed Church in America (RCA)—One of the most significant developments in recent years was the agreement to enter into a full partnership with the RCA whereby Faith Alive Christian Resources is the resource provider for the RCA. This agreement was implemented on December 1, 2004, and has been working well.
- Presbyterian Church (USA) (PCUSA)—Several years ago we formed a partnership with the Presbyterians for Renewal organization within the PCUSA. This organization, serving over 3,000 evangelical congregations, is a copublisher of the *Walk With Me* curriculum. The PCUSA carries our *Friendship* curriculum and our *Kid Connection* curriculum.
- We work closely with the Association of Presbyterian Church Educators on their annual conference. We also partner with the nascent Association of Christian Reformed Educators.
- Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC)—Our entire catalog, along with an endorsement letter from the general secretary of the EPC, and numerous other promotional materials, are sent to the churches of this denomination.
- Christian Schools International—We meet regularly with staff members from this organization to discuss shared resources, plans, and other pertinent issues. We also work together on collaborative marketing efforts, providing each other with access to their customer lists for appropriate titles.
- Dynamic Youth Ministries (DYM)—We also meet twice annually with the staff of DYM to discuss plans and opportunities for collaboration.
- Baker Book House—We periodically copublish books with this publisher (for example, *Seeking God's Face*, released in 2010).

G. Use of Faith Alive Resources by CRC churches

Most CRC churches make extensive use of the many resources offered by Faith Alive. In fact, about 95 percent of CRC churches are on our customer list. Approximately 70 percent of CRC churches use one or more of our curricula for children. While these percentages are high in comparison to many denominations, decreasing loyalty to denominational resources and an increasingly competitive curriculum marketplace will place pressure on Faith Alive to create innovative, new approaches to curriculum publishing and find ways to retain and expand its customer base and its distribution channels. CRC churches place a high value on ensuring that their children are being taught using curriculum written from a Reformed perspective, but they are finding other methods to accomplish this by not necessarily using

the Reformed curricula Faith Alive offers—*Walk With Me* and *Kid Connection*. At the same time we are encouraged that Faith Alive curricula are being positively received by churches from other denominations as high quality, easy-to-use curricula.

H. Antiracism

Faith Alive continues to be an active participant in the effort of the CRC to respond to synod’s directive to initiate a significant response to the issue of racism in the CRC. Faith Alive employees voluntarily participate in bi-weekly gatherings aimed at understanding each other and our perspectives on racism in an open, non-threatening environment. Faith Alive also has an antiracism team which reviews staffing levels, job descriptions, and postings to ensure Faith Alive’s hiring and staffing efforts are consistent with its antiracism policies.

The Faith Alive board also has an active antiracism team committed to achieving the following vision approved by the board: “The Faith Alive board covenants to become an antiracist community by respecting and valuing cultural diversity as a God-given asset of the human family.”

I. Salary disclosure

Faith Alive, in accord with the action taken by synod, submits the following annual compensation data:

Job level	Positions	Compensation quartile (includes housing allowance)
18	1	1st
17	2	1st and 2nd
15	1	3rd

IV. Report of the Committee to Propose a Combined RCA/CRC Translation of the Three Reformed Standards

As part of the planning for the bi-denominational hymnal, it was noted that the RCA and CRC have differing versions of the three Reformed standards (the Belgic Confession, Heidelberg Catechism, and Canons of Dort). This divergence has also hampered the commitment of Faith Alive to serve as “official resource provider” to both denominations. Therefore, with the approval of the two denominational offices, a small committee was formed by Faith Alive Christian Resources to work toward a common translation of the confessions. The theologians on the committee brought an uncommon expertise in their familiarity with the confessions and their aptitude with the original languages. The members are Dr. Lyle Bierma, Calvin Theological Seminary; Dr. Todd Billings, Western Theological Seminary; Dr. Eugene Heideman, retired RCA theologian and denominational leader; and Rev. Leonard Vander Zee, editor in chief, Faith Alive.

Faced with a formidable task, and without knowing the possible barriers, the committee soon found that all participants were eager to work out differences in the confessional texts, and a spirit of uncommon unity and commitment pervaded its work. The committee decided that it would not undertake a totally new translation but would work from the present translations in the two denominations. However, where there were discrepancies, the committee consulted the original languages to resolve the textual differences. In addition, there were some places in which it was judged that the translation

needed improvement, and this, again, was done by looking back to the original language documents.

After the committee was well into its work, it was contacted by a similar committee that had just been formed in the Presbyterian Church (USA) (PCUSA) to do a fresh translation of the Heidelberg Catechism. They asked to see our work and, after studying it for a time, felt that doing a translation of their own was no longer necessary. Over time, they offered some suggestions for further improvement, many of which were readily accepted. Hence, the new translation will also be recommended for adoption in the PCUSA, making it a truly ecumenical document.

After completing its work in spring 2010, Faith Alive Christian Resources recommended the translations to Synod 2010 for approval in the CRC. Synod decided the following:

1. That synod reaffirm the goal of achieving a common text of the three forms of unity as important for increasing cooperation and partnership between the RCA and the CRC.
2. That synod allow additional time to consider these changes (also recommended in several overtures) to provide members and the churches an opportunity to re-engage the confessions and to create healthy conversations about our core beliefs, as well as to evaluate the proposed changes.
3. That synod request the ED to instruct the task force to provide the churches with an updated copy of the proposed revision of the confessions for review by July 1, 2010 (an electronic version).
4. That synod encourage councils and congregations to study this proposed revision and communicate their responses to the task force prior to October 1, 2010.
5. That synod request the Board of Trustees to direct the task force, after considering these responses, to prepare a final draft of the three confessions to be posted online and sent to the churches by November 1 and printed in the *Agenda for Synod 2011* for adoption by Synod 2011.
6. That synod affirm the approach of the task force with respect to gender usage for humanity and God, using gender-inclusive terms in references to humankind and reducing the number of male pronouns for God when it can be done with felicity.

Ground: This is consistent with previous synodical decisions (*Acts of Synod 1997*, pp. 687-94) and the protocol used by Faith Alive Christian Resources.

7. That synod affirm the use of the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) for direct quotations from Scripture within the Belgic Confession and Heidelberg Catechism.

Grounds:

- a. The NRSV is a synodically approved version for the CRC.
 - b. The NRSV is widely used in the RCA.
 - c. The NIV is in the process of revision.
8. That synod declare that the above recommendations are its response to Overtures 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, and 25.

(*Acts of Synod 2010*, pp. 819-20)

In response to the above actions of Synod 2010, the new translation was published on the CRC website (with some minor revisions), and the churches were invited to comment with a deadline of October 1, 2010. The committee was grateful to receive over forty responses, some in great detail, including exhaustive work from the only living committee member of the 1975 Heidelberg Catechism translation committee.

With these responses, the committee met again, October 12-13, 2010, and were joined by Dr. Dawn Devries of Union Presbyterian Seminary in Virginia, and Dr. David Stubbs of Western Theological Seminary in Holland, Michigan, who officially represented the PCUSA in discussions of the Heidelberg Catechism. The committee discussed all the suggestions from the churches, in addition to suggestions from committee members. The proposed translation now before synod is the fruit of their work (see Appendices A-D).

Since this is a joint translation from three denominations, each with their own polity and process for approval, it is not feasible to make any further changes. Hence, the proposal before Synod 2011 requests *adoption of the translation with no further amendments*.

V. Recommendations

A. The Faith Alive Christian Resources board requests that synod grant the privilege of the floor to the following people when matters of Faith Alive are discussed:

For the board

Rev. Pieter Pereboom, president
Mr. Mark Rice, director

For *The Banner*

Rev. Robert De Moor, editor in chief

For the Editorial Department

Rev. Leonard Vander Zee, Editor in Chief
Ms. Joyce Borger, Worship and Music Editor

B. That Faith Alive serve as the administering agency for a reconstituted synodical standing CRC Worship Committee.

Grounds:

1. The CRC needs to provide better leadership and to resource the churches in the crucial area of worship.
2. While worship is central to church life and mission, there is no designated agency or office to support that ministry in the CRC.
3. While the Calvin Institute for Christian Worship can certainly be an important partner in this endeavor, it cannot devote its resources exclusively to the CRC, as it is funded as an ecumenical institute.

C. That this CRC Worship Committee, like other standing committees, be funded by the Synodical Services Office. The funds would cover staff support (.20 FTE) as well as travel and other costs (\$15,000 annually) for the committee. (The committee would meet twice a year in person and other times as necessary via phone or Internet.)

Grounds:

1. Faith Alive does not have the financial resources to take on this role on its own, since it is not constituted as a "program agency." Instead, Faith Alive relies on sales of its products for its income.
2. Faith Alive does have the staff capacity and experience to lead and support such a committee if it is supported financially by the denomination.

D. That synod by way of the ballot ratify the elections and reappointments of members to the Faith Alive Christian Resources board from the nominees presented.

E. That synod approve that the new hymnal *Lift Up Your Hearts* not include the full text of the Reformed confessions in the back of the hymnal as in the *Psalter Hymnal*. Instead Faith Alive will publish the confessions in a separate bound volume.

Grounds:

1. One of the important features of this hymnal is a broad array of types of hymns and styles of music. Since we want the hymnal to be comparable in size to the *Psalter Hymnal*, we simply do not have the space for the confessions.
2. Few churches make use of the confessions from the hymnal. The hymnal is designed primarily as a *liturgical* resource rather than as an *educational* resource.
3. Publishing a hymnal without the confessions will increase its potential to be an ecumenical hymnal, while publishing the parts together would restrict that potential.
4. Publishing the confessions (hopefully in their newly approved translation) in a separate bound volume allows for greater flexibility of use in classroom and personal study and for ease of incorporating any changes or additions in the future.

F. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Rev. Leonard Vander Zee and Dr. Lyle Bierma for the discussion of the new translation of the three Reformed standards.

G. That Synod 2011 adopt the new translation of the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort as presented (see Appendices A-D) for use in the CRC.

Grounds:

1. This new proposed translation preserves the best from our previous excellent translations and includes changes that will expand their impact by providing a common text for three Reformed and confessional denominations.
2. This translation has now benefited from taking into account the many responses and suggestions of churches and individuals since the proposal before Synod 2010.
3. A common translation of the confessions will greatly help the mission of Faith Alive as an official resource provider to the RCA, as well as generally increase cooperation and partnership between the two denominations.
4. The participation of the PCUSA in the Heidelberg Catechism translation will make it a truly ecumenical document, especially in anticipation of the celebration of the Heidelberg Catechism's 450th anniversary in 2013.

H. That synod thank Faith Alive and the translation committee for their diligent work and dedication to the confessions translation project.

Note: Recommendations on financial matters are included in the report of the denominational Board of Trustees and will be presented to synod by way of the Finance Advisory Committee.

Faith Alive Christian Resources
Mark Rice, director

Appendix A

Introduction for the Reformed Confessions Translation

The following translation of the Three Reformed Standards is the result of the work of a joint task force formed by the Reformed Church in America (RCA) and the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRC). In addition, the Presbyterian Church (USA) (PCUSA) participated in the joint translation of the Heidelberg Catechism. The task force was commissioned to produce a common text for the Reformed confessions, building upon the work of the previous translations from the CRC and RCA denominations. Since a separate introduction will introduce each confession, this general introduction gives a statement of principles used for coming to a common translation.

The task force did not attempt a wholesale retranslation of the confessions but, rather, used the texts of previously approved RCA and CRC translations as a starting point. Where the translations diverged, or where subsequent scholarship called into question both previous translations, the task force returned to the original language documents to resolve textual differences. Sometimes this resolution involved opting for the previous RCA, PCUSA, or CRC translation; at other times, the task force developed a fresh translation from the original text.

Some divergences in previous translations had to do with gender usage for humanity and God. The task force adopted the following approach in these cases: in references to humankind, all references to *men* or other exclusive terms have been changed to *human* or to a similar gender-inclusive term. With regard to language about God, the task force sought to reduce the number of male pronouns for God when it could be done with felicity but did not attempt to eliminate them altogether. Several principles guided this process. On the one hand, excessive repetition of the male pronoun for *God* was avoided. On the other hand, excessive repetition of the word *God* as a substitute for the pronoun *him* was also avoided. In addition, when the elimination of a male pronoun for *God* would obscure the theological point of the passage, the pronoun was retained. These principles echo the protocol used by Faith Alive Christian Resources.

For direct quotations from Scripture within the Belgic Confession and the Heidelberg Catechism, the task force used the New Revised Standard Version. In the Canons of Dort, because the text of this confession depends on the particular seventeenth-century biblical translations used at the Synod of Dort, the Scripture quotations are translations from the original Latin and do not always correspond to current versions.

This joint translation does not erase all differences remaining between the denominations regarding the confessions. For example, wherever an action of the general synod of one denomination has made a modification of the confession (as with the Belgic Confession, Article 36), it is noted in the text. The discrepancy is not resolved, but simply preserved. Nevertheless, for both denominations, this translation represents a step forward in cooperation and partnership.

Note: Changes from the most recently approved CRC translations are highlighted, *with the exception of* changes in the use of pronouns for God, as explained above. Further changes made after Synod 2010, and the church's responses, are underlined. In many cases where words or phrases are *both* highlighted *and* underlined, the joint translation shows that the committee reverted to the formerly approved CRC text.

Appendix B

The Belgic Confession

Introduction to the Belgic Confession

The oldest of the doctrinal standards of the Christian Reformed Church and the Reformed Church in America is the Confession of Faith, popularly known as the Belgic Confession, following the seventeenth-century Latin designation "Confessio Belgica." "Belgica" referred to the whole of the Netherlands, both north and south, which today is divided into the Netherlands and Belgium. The confession's chief author was Guido de Brès, a preacher of the Reformed churches of the Netherlands, who died a martyr to the faith in the year 1567. During the sixteenth century the churches in this country were exposed to terrible persecution by the Roman Catholic government. To protest against this cruel oppression, and to prove to the persecutors that the adherents of the Reformed faith were not rebels, as was laid to their charge, but law-abiding citizens who professed the true Christian doctrine according to the Holy Scriptures, de Brès prepared this confession in the year 1561. In the following year a copy was sent to King Philip II, together with an address in which the petitioners declared that they were ready to obey the government in all lawful things, but that they would "offer their backs to stripes, their tongues to knives, their mouths to gags, and their whole bodies to the fire," rather than deny the truth expressed in this confession.

Although the immediate purpose of securing freedom from persecution was not attained, and de Brès himself fell as one of the many thousands who sealed their faith with their lives, his work has endured and will continue to endure. In its composition the author availed himself to some extent of a confession of the Reformed churches in France, written chiefly by John Calvin, published two years earlier. The work of de Brès, however, is not a mere revision of Calvin's work, but an independent composition. In 1566 the text of this confession was revised at a synod held at Antwerp. In the Netherlands it was at once gladly received by the churches, and it was adopted by national synods held during the last three decades of the sixteenth century. The text, not the contents, was revised again at the Synod of Dort in 1618-19 and adopted as one of the doctrinal standards to which all officebearers in

the Reformed churches were required to subscribe. The confession is recognized as one of the best official summaries of Reformed doctrine.

The text of Article 36 is presented in two forms in this edition because the Christian Reformed Church in 1938 and 1985 decided to revise it from the original text in order to set forth what it judged to be a more biblical statement on the relationship between church and state, and to eliminate language that denounced "Anabaptists, other anarchists . . ." and so on. The Reformed Church in America has not made any amendments to the Belgic Confession. However, when the Reformed Church in America adopted the Belgic Confession in 1792 as one of the three confessional Standards of Unity, it also adopted the Explanatory Articles that reconciled the statements in the three standards and the Church Order of Dort with the situation in which it existed in the newly independent United States of America. With regard to Article 36 dealing with the relation of church and state, it stated that "whatever relates to the immediate authority and interposition of the Magistrate in the government of the Church, and which is introduced more or less into all the national establishments in Europe, is entirely omitted in the constitution now published." With regard to the harsh words about Anabaptists and others in Article 36, the RCA stated that "in publishing the Articles of Faith, the Church determined to abide by the words adopted in the Synod of Dordrecht, as most expressive of what she believes to be truth; in consequence of which, the terms alluded to could not be avoided. But she openly and candidly declares that she by no means thereby intended to refer to any denomination of Christians at present known, and would be grieved at giving offence, or unnecessarily hurting the feelings of any person."

Proposed Version

Article 1: The Only God

We all believe in our hearts
and confess with our mouths
that there is a single
and simple
spiritual being,
whom we call God—

eternal,
incomprehensible,
invisible,
unchangeable,
infinite,
almighty;
completely wise,
just,
and good,
and the overflowing source
of all good.

Article 2: The Means by Which We Know God

We know God by two means:

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

since that universe is before our eyes

like a beautiful book

in which all creatures,

great and small,

are as letters

to make us ponder

the invisible things of God:

God's eternal power and divinity,

as the apostle Paul says in Romans 1:20.

All these things are enough to convict humans

and to leave them without excuse.

Second, God makes himself known to us more clearly

by his holy and divine Word,

as much as we need in this life,

for God's glory

and for our salvation.

Article 3: The Written Word of God

We confess that this Word of God

was not sent nor delivered "by human will,"

but that "men and women moved by the Holy Spirit,
spoke from God,"

as Peter says.¹

Afterward our God—

with special care

for us and our salvation—

commanded his servants, the prophets and apostles,

to commit this revealed Word to writing.

God, with his own finger,

wrote the two tables of the law.

Therefore we call such writings

holy and divine Scriptures.

¹ 2 Pet. 1:21

Article 4: The Canonical Books

We include in the Holy Scripture the two volumes of the Old and New Testaments.

They are canonical books with which there can be no quarrel at all.

In the church of God the list is as follows:

In the Old Testament,

the five books of Moses—

Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy;

the books of Joshua, Judges, and Ruth;

the two books of Samuel, and two of Kings;

the two books of Chronicles, called Paralipomenon;

the first book of Ezra; Nehemiah, Esther, Job;

the Psalms of David;

the three books of Solomon—

Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song;

the four major prophets—

Isaiah, Jeremiah*, Ezekiel, Daniel;

and then the other twelve minor prophets—

Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah,

Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk,

Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi.

In the New Testament,

the four gospels—

Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John;

the Acts of the Apostles;

the fourteen letters of Paul—

to the Romans;

the two letters to the Corinthians;

to the Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians;

the two letters to the Thessalonians;

the two letters to Timothy;

to Titus, Philemon, and to the Hebrews;

the seven letters of the other apostles—

one of James;

two of Peter;

three of John;

one of Jude;

and the Revelation of the apostle John.

* "Jeremiah" here includes the Book of Lamentations as well as the Book of Jeremiah.

Article 5: The Authority of Scripture

We receive all these books
and these only
as holy and canonical,
for the regulating, founding, and establishing
of our faith.

And we believe
without a doubt
all things contained in them—
not so much because the church
receives and approves them as such
but above all because the Holy Spirit
testifies in our hearts
that they are from God,
and also because they
prove themselves
to be from God.

For even the blind themselves are able to see
that the things predicted in them
do happen.

Article 6: The Difference Between Canonical and Apocryphal Books

We distinguish between these holy books
and the apocryphal ones,
which are the third and fourth books of Esdras;
the books of Tobit, Judith, Wisdom, Jesus Sirach, Baruch;
what was added to the Story of Esther;
the Song of the Three Children in the Furnace;
the Story of Susannah;
the Story of Bell and the Dragon;
the Prayer of Manasseh;
and the two books of Maccabees.

The church may certainly read these books
and learn from them
as far as they agree with the canonical books.
But they do not have such power and virtue
that one could confirm
from their testimony
any point of faith or of the Christian religion.
Much less can they detract
from the authority
of the other holy books.

Article 7: The Sufficiency of Scripture

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

For since the entire manner of service
which God requires of us
is described in it at great length,
no one—
 even an apostle
 or an angel from heaven,
 as Paul says—²
ought to teach other than
what the Holy Scriptures have
already taught us.

For since it is forbidden
to add to the Word of God,
or take anything away from it,³
it is plainly demonstrated
that the teaching is perfect
and complete in all respects.

Therefore we must not consider human writings—
 no matter how holy their authors may have been—
equal to the divine writings;
nor may we put custom,
nor the majority,
nor age,
nor the passage of times or persons,
nor councils, decrees, or official decisions
above the truth of God,
 for truth is above everything else.

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

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

“Do not receive into the house
or welcome anyone
who comes to you
and does not bring this teaching.”⁵

² Gal. 1:8

³ Deut. 12:32; Rev. 22:18-19

⁴ 1 John 4:1

⁵ 2 John 10

Article 8: The Trinity

In keeping with this truth and Word of God
we believe in one God,
who is one single essence,
in whom there are three persons,
really, truly, and eternally distinct
according to their incommunicable properties—
namely,
 Father,
 Son,
 and Holy Spirit.

The Father
is the cause,
origin,
and source of all things,
 visible as well as invisible.

The Son
is the Word,
the Wisdom,
and the image
 of the Father.

The Holy Spirit
is the eternal power
and might,
 proceeding from the Father and the Son.

Nevertheless,
this distinction does not divide God into three,
since Scripture teaches us
that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit
each has a **distinct** subsistence
distinguished by characteristics—
yet in such a way
that these three persons are
only one God.

It is evident then
that the Father is not the Son
and that the Son is not the Father,
and that likewise the Holy Spirit is
neither the Father nor the Son.

Nevertheless,
these persons,
thus distinct,
are neither divided
nor fused or mixed together.

For the Father did not take on flesh,
nor did the Spirit,
but only the Son.

The Father was never
without the Son,
nor without the Holy Spirit,
since all these are equal from eternity,
in one and the same essence.

There is neither a first nor a last,
for all three are one
in truth and power,
in goodness and mercy.

Article 9: The Scriptural Witness on the Trinity

All these things we know
from the testimonies of Holy Scripture
as well as from the effects of the persons,
especially from those we feel within ourselves.

The testimonies of the Holy Scriptures,
which teach us to believe in this Holy Trinity,
are written in many places of the Old Testament,
which need not be enumerated
but only chosen with discretion.

In the book of Genesis God says,
“Let us make humankind in our image,
according to our likeness.”
So “God created humankind in his image”—
indeed, “male and female he created them.”⁶
“See, the man has become like one of us.”⁷

It appears from this
that there is a plurality of persons
within the Deity,
when God says,
“Let us make humankind in our image”—

and afterward God indicates the unity
in saying,
“God created.”

It is true that God does not say here
how many persons there are—
but what is somewhat obscure to us
in the Old Testament
is very clear in the New.

For when our Lord was baptized in the Jordan,
the voice of the Father was heard saying,
“This is my Son, the Beloved;”⁸
the Son was seen in the water;
and the Holy Spirit appeared in the form of a dove.

So, in the baptism of all believers
this form was prescribed by Christ:
Baptize all people “in the name
of the Father,
and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.”⁹

In the Gospel according to Luke
the angel Gabriel says to Mary,
the mother of our Lord:

“The Holy Spirit will come upon you,
and the power of the Most High will overshadow you;
therefore the child to be born will be holy;
he will be called Son of God.”¹⁰

And in another place it says:
“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,
the love of God,
and the communion of the Holy Spirit
be with all of you.”¹¹

[[“There are three that testify in heaven,
the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit,
and these three are one.”]¹²

In all these passages we are fully taught
that there are three persons
in the one and only divine essence.
And although this doctrine surpasses human understanding,
we nevertheless believe it now,
through the Word,
waiting to know and enjoy it fully
in heaven.

Furthermore,
we must note the particular works and activities
of these three persons in relation to us.

The Father is called our Creator,
by reason of his power.

The Son is our Savior and Redeemer,
by his blood.

The Holy Spirit is our Sanctifier,
by living in our hearts.

This doctrine of the holy Trinity
has always been maintained in the true church,
from the time of the apostles until the present,
against Jews, Muslims,
and certain false Christians and heretics,
such as Marcion, Mani,
Praxeas, Sabellius, Paul of Samosata, Arius,
and others like them,
who were rightly condemned by the holy fathers.

And so,
in this matter we willingly accept
the three ecumenical creeds—
the Apostles', Nicene, and Athanasian—
as well as what the ancient fathers decided
in agreement with them.

⁶ Gen. 1:26-27

⁷ Gen. 3:22

⁸ Matt. 3:17

⁹ Matt. 28:19

¹⁰ Luke 1:35

¹¹ 2 Cor. 13:14

¹² 1 John 5:7—following the better Greek texts, the NRSV and other modern translations place this verse in a footnote.

Article 10: The Deity of Christ

We believe that Jesus Christ,
according to his divine nature,
is the only Son of God—
eternally begotten,
not made or created,
for then he would be a creature.

He is one in essence with the Father;
coeternal;
the exact image of the person of the Father
and the “reflection of God’s glory,”¹³
being like the Father in all things.

Jesus Christ is the Son of God
not only from the time he assumed our nature
but from all eternity,
as the following testimonies teach us
when they are taken together.

Moses says that God created the world;¹⁴
and John says that all things were created through the Word,¹⁵
which he calls God.

The apostle says that God created the world through the Son.¹⁶
He also says that God created all things through Jesus Christ.¹⁷

And so it must follow
that the one who is called God, the Word, the Son, and Jesus Christ
already existed before creating all things.
Therefore the prophet Micah says
that Christ's origin is "from ancient days."¹⁸
And the apostle says
that the Son has "neither beginning of days
nor end of life."¹⁹

So then,
he is the true eternal God,
the Almighty,
whom we invoke,
worship,
and serve.

¹³ Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:3

¹⁴ Gen. 1:1

¹⁵ John 1:3

¹⁶ Heb. 1:2

¹⁷ Col. 1:16

¹⁸ Mic. 5:2

¹⁹ Heb. 7:3

Article 11: The Deity of the Holy Spirit

We believe and confess also
that the Holy Spirit proceeds eternally
from the Father and the Son—
neither made,
nor created,
nor begotten,
but only proceeding
from the two of them.

In regard to order,
the Spirit is the third person of the Trinity—
of one and the same essence,
and majesty,

and glory,
with the Father and the Son,
being true and eternal God,
as the Holy Scriptures teach us.

Article 12: The Creation of All Things

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

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

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

God has also created the angels good,
that they might be messengers of God
and serve the elect.

Some of them have fallen
from the excellence in which God created them
into eternal perdition;
and the others have persisted and remained
in their original state,
by the grace of God.

The devils and evil spirits are so corrupt
that they are enemies of God
and of everything good.
They lie in wait for the church
and every member of it
like thieves,
with all their power,
to destroy and spoil everything
by their deceptions.

So then,
by their own wickedness
they are condemned to everlasting damnation,
daily awaiting their torments.

For that reason
we detest the error of the Sadducees,
who deny that there are spirits and angels,
and also the error of the Manicheans,
who say that the devils originated by themselves,
being evil by nature,
without having been corrupted.

Article 13: The Doctrine of God's Providence

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

Yet God is not the author of,
and cannot be charged with,
the sin that occurs.
For God's power and goodness
are so great and incomprehensible
that God arranges and does his works very well and justly
even when the devils and the wicked act unjustly.

We do not wish to inquire
with undue curiosity
into what God does that surpasses human understanding
and is beyond our ability to comprehend.
But in all humility and reverence
we adore the just judgments of God,
which are hidden from us,
being content to be Christ's disciples,
so as to learn only what God shows us in the Word,
without going beyond those limits.

This doctrine gives us unspeakable comfort
since it teaches us
that nothing can happen to us by chance
but only by the arrangement of our gracious
heavenly Father,
who watches over us with fatherly care,
sustaining all creatures under his lordship,

so that not one of the hairs on our heads
(for they are all numbered)
nor even a little bird
can fall to the ground
without the will of our Father.²⁰

In this thought we rest,
knowing that God holds in check
the devils and all our enemies,
who cannot hurt us
without divine permission and will.

For that reason we reject
the damnable error of the Epicureans,
who say that God does not get involved in anything
and leaves everything to chance.

²⁰ Matt. 10:29-30

Article 14: The Creation and Fall of Humanity

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

But when they were in honor
they did not understand it²¹
and did not recognize their excellence.
But they subjected themselves willingly to sin
and consequently to death and the curse,
lending their ear to the word of the devil.

For they transgressed the commandment of life,
which they had received,
and by their sin they separated themselves from God,
who was their true life,
having corrupted their entire nature.

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

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

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

“The light shines in the darkness,
and the darkness did not overcome it.”²²

Here John calls the human race “darkness.”

Therefore we reject everything taught to the contrary
concerning human free will,
since humans are nothing but the slaves of sin
and cannot do a thing
unless it is given them from heaven.²³

For who can boast of being able
to do anything good by oneself,
since Christ says,

“No one can come to me
unless drawn by the Father who sent me”²⁴

Who can glory in their own will
when they understand that “the mind of the flesh
is hostile to God”²⁵

Who can speak of their own knowledge
in view of the fact that “those who are unspiritual
do not understand the gifts of God’s Spirit”²⁶

In short,
who can produce a single thought,
knowing that we are not able to think a thing
about ourselves,
by ourselves,
but that “our competence is from God”²⁷

And therefore,
what the apostle says
ought rightly to stand fixed and firm:
“God works within us
both to will and to do
according to God’s good pleasure.”²⁸

For there is no understanding nor will conforming to God's understanding and will apart from Christ's involvement, as he teaches us when he says, "Apart from me you can do nothing."²⁹

²¹ Ps. 49:20

²² John 1:5

²³ John 3:27

²⁴ John 6:44

²⁵ Rom. 8:7

²⁶ 1 Cor. 2:14

²⁷ 2 Cor. 3:5

²⁸ Phil. 2:13

²⁹ John 15:5

Article 15: The Doctrine of Original Sin

We believe

that by the disobedience of Adam original sin has been spread through the whole human race.³⁰

It is a corruption of the whole human nature—
an inherited depravity which even infects small infants
in their mother's womb,
and the root which produces in humanity
every sort of sin.

It is therefore so vile and enormous in God's sight
that it is enough to condemn the human race,
and it is not abolished
or wholly uprooted
even by baptism,
seeing that sin constantly boils forth
as though from a contaminated spring.

Nevertheless,
it is not imputed to God's children
for their condemnation
but is forgiven
by his grace and mercy—
not to put them to sleep
but so that the awareness of this corruption
might often make believers groan
as they long to be set free
from the "body of this death."³¹

Therefore we reject the error of the Pelagians
who say that this sin is nothing else than a matter of imitation.

³⁰ Rom. 5:12-13

³¹ Rom. 7:24

Article 16: The Doctrine of Election

We believe that—

all Adam's descendants having thus fallen
into perdition and ruin
by the sin of Adam—

God showed himself to be as he is:
merciful and just.

God is merciful

in withdrawing and saving from this perdition those who,
in the eternal and unchangeable divine counsel,
have been elected and chosen in Jesus Christ our Lord
by his pure goodness,
without any consideration of their works.

God is just

in leaving the others in their ruin and fall
into which they plunged themselves.

Article 17: The Recovery of Fallen Humanity

We believe that our good God,

by marvelous divine wisdom and goodness,
seeing that Adam and Eve had plunged themselves in this manner
into both physical and spiritual death
and made themselves completely miserable,
set out to find them,
though they,
trembling all over,
were fleeing from God.

And God comforted them,
promising to give them his Son,
born of a woman,³²
to crush the head of the serpent,³³
and to make them blessed.

³² Gal. 4:4

³³ Gen. 3:15

Article 18: The Incarnation

So then we confess

that God fulfilled the promise
made to the early fathers and mothers
by the mouth of the holy prophets
when he sent the only and eternal Son of God
into the world
at the time appointed.

The Son took the “form of a slave”
and was made in “human form,”³⁴
truly assuming a real human nature,
with all its weaknesses,
except for sin;
being conceived in the womb of the blessed virgin Mary
by the power of the Holy Spirit,
without male participation.

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

Therefore we confess
(against the heresy of the Anabaptists
who deny that Christ assumed
human flesh from his mother)
that Christ “shared the very flesh and blood of children”;³⁵
being the “fruit of the loins” of David “according to the flesh,”³⁶
“descended from David” according to the flesh,³⁷
the “fruit of the womb” of the virgin Mary;³⁸
born of a woman;³⁹
the seed of David;⁴⁰
the “root of Jesse”;⁴¹
descended from Judah,⁴²
having descended from the Jews according to the flesh;
descended from Abraham—
having assumed descent from Abraham and Sarah,
and was “made like his brothers and sisters,”
yet without sin.⁴³

In this way Christ is truly our Immanuel—
that is: “God with us.”⁴⁴

³⁴ Phil. 2:7

³⁵ Heb. 2:14

³⁶ Acts 2:30

³⁷ Rom. 1:3

³⁸ Luke 1:42

³⁹ Gal. 4:4

⁴⁰ 2 Tim. 2:8

⁴¹ Rom. 15:12

⁴² Heb. 7:14

⁴³ Heb. 2:17; 4:15

⁴⁴ Matt. 1:23

Article 19: The Two Natures of Christ

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

Thus his divine nature has always remained uncreated,
without beginning of days or end of life,⁴⁵
filling heaven and earth.

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

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

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

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

⁴⁵ Heb. 7:3

Article 20: The Justice and Mercy of God in Christ

We believe that God—

who is perfectly merciful

and also very just—

sent the Son to assume the nature

in which the disobedience had been committed,

in order to bear in it the punishment of sin

by his most bitter passion and death.

So God made known his justice toward his Son,

who was charged with our sin,

and he poured out his goodness and mercy on us,

who are guilty and worthy of damnation,

giving to us his Son to die,

by a most perfect love,

and raising him to life

for our justification,

in order that by him

we might have immortality

and eternal life.

Article 21: The Atonement

We believe

that Jesus Christ is a high priest forever

according to the order of Melchizedek—

made such by an oath—

and that he presented himself

in our name

before his Father,

to appease his Father's wrath

with full satisfaction

by offering himself

on the tree of the cross

and pouring out his precious blood

for the cleansing of our sins,

as the prophets had predicted.

For it is written

that "the punishment that made us whole"

was placed on the Son of God

and that "by his bruises we are healed."

He was "like a lamb that is led to the slaughter";

he was "numbered with the transgressors"⁴⁶

and condemned as a criminal by Pontius Pilate,

though Pilate had declared

that he was innocent.

So he paid back

what he had not stolen,⁴⁷

and he suffered—

“the righteous for the unrighteous,”⁴⁸
in both his body and his soul—
in such a way that
when he **sensed** the horrible punishment
required by our sins
“his sweat became like **great** drops of blood
falling **down** on the ground.”⁴⁹
He cried, “My God, my God,
why have you **forsaken** me?”⁵⁰

And he endured all this
for the forgiveness of our sins.

Therefore we rightly say with Paul that
we know nothing “**except Jesus Christ** and him crucified”;⁵¹
we “**regard everything as loss**
because of the surpassing value
of knowing Christ Jesus our Lord.”⁵²
We find all comforts in his wounds
and have no need to seek or invent any other means
to reconcile ourselves with God
than this one and only sacrifice,
once made,
which renders believers perfect
forever.

This is also why
the angel of God called him Jesus—
that is, “Savior”—
because he would save his people
from their sins.⁵³

⁴⁶ Isa. 53:4-12

⁴⁷ Ps. 69:4

⁴⁸ 1 Pet. 3:18

⁴⁹ Luke 22:44

⁵⁰ Matt. 27:46

⁵¹ 1 Cor. 2:2

⁵² Phil. 3:8

⁵³ Matt. 1:21

Article 22: The Righteousness of Faith

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

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

Therefore,
to say that Christ is not enough
but that something else is needed as well
is a most enormous blasphemy against God—
for it then would follow
that Jesus Christ is only half a Savior.
And therefore we justly say with Paul
that we are justified “by faith alone”
or “by faith apart from works.”⁵⁴

However,
we do not mean,
properly speaking,
that it is faith itself that justifies us—
for faith is only the instrument
by which we embrace Christ,
our righteousness.

But Jesus Christ is our righteousness
in making available to us all his merits
and all the holy works he has done
for us and in our place.
And faith is the instrument
that keeps us in communion with him
and with all his benefits.

When those benefits are made ours,
they are more than enough to absolve us
of our sins.

⁵⁴ Rom. 3:28

Article 23: The Justification of Sinners

We believe
that our blessedness lies in the forgiveness of our sins
because of Jesus Christ,
and that in it our righteousness before God is contained,
as David and Paul teach us
when they declare those people blessed
to whom God grants righteousness
apart from works.⁵⁵

And the same apostle says
that we are “justified by his grace as a gift,
through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”⁵⁶
And therefore we cling to this foundation,
which is firm forever,
giving all glory to God,
humbling ourselves,
and recognizing ourselves as we are;
not claiming a thing for ourselves or our merits
and leaning and resting
on the sole obedience of Christ crucified,
which is ours when we believe in him.

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

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

Therefore everyone must say with David:
“Lord, do not enter into judgment with your servant,
for no one living is righteous before you.”⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Ps. 32:1; Rom. 4:6

⁵⁶ Rom. 3:24

⁵⁷ Ps. 143:2

Article 24: The Sanctification of Sinners

We believe that this true faith,
produced in us by the hearing of God’s Word
and by the work of the Holy Spirit,
regenerates us and makes us new creatures,⁵⁸
causing us to live a new life⁵⁹
and freeing us from the slavery of sin.

Therefore,
far from making people cold
toward living in a pious and holy way,
this justifying faith,
quite to the contrary,
so works within them that
apart from it

they will never do a thing out of love for God
but only out of love for themselves
and fear of being condemned.

So then, it is impossible
for this holy faith to be unfruitful in a human being,
seeing that we do not speak of an empty faith
but of what Scripture calls
“faith working through love,”⁶⁰
which moves people to do by themselves
the works that God has commanded
in the Word.

These works,
proceeding from the good root of faith,
are good and acceptable to God,
since they are all sanctified by God’s grace.
Yet they do not count toward our justification—
for by faith in Christ we are justified,
even before we do good works.
Otherwise they could not be good,
any more than the fruit of a tree could be good
if the tree is not good in the first place.

So then, we do good works,
but not for merit—
for what would we merit?
Rather, we are indebted to God for the good works we do,
and not God to us,
since God “is at work in us, enabling us both
to will and to work for his good pleasure”⁶¹—
thus keeping in mind what is written:
“When you have done all that you were ordered to do,
say, ‘We are worthless slaves;
we have done only what we ought to have done.’”⁶²

Yet we do not wish to deny
that God rewards good works—
but it is by grace
that God crowns these gifts.

Moreover,
although we do good works
we do not base our salvation on them;
for we cannot do any work
that is not defiled by our flesh
and also worthy of punishment.
And even if we could point to one,
memory of a single sin is enough
for God to reject that work.

So we would always be in doubt,
tossed back and forth
without any certainty,
and our poor consciences would be tormented constantly
if they did not rest on the merit
of the suffering and death of our Savior.

⁵⁸ 2 Cor. 5:17

⁵⁹ Rom. 6:4

⁶⁰ Gal. 5:6

⁶¹ Phil. 2:13

⁶² Luke 17:10

Article 25: The Fulfillment of the Law

We believe
that the ceremonies and symbols of the law have ended
with the coming of Christ,
and that all foreshadowings have come to an end,
so that the use of them ought to be abolished
among Christians.
Yet the truth and substance of these things
remain for us in Jesus Christ,
in whom they have been fulfilled.

Nevertheless,
we continue to use the witnesses
drawn from the law and prophets
to confirm us in the gospel
and to regulate our lives with full integrity
for the glory of God,
according to the will of God.

Article 26: The Intercession of Christ

We believe that we have no access to God
except through the one and only Mediator and Intercessor,
"Jesus Christ the righteous,"⁶³
who
therefore was made human,
uniting together the divine and human natures,
so that we human beings might have access to the divine Majesty.
Otherwise we would have no access.

But this Mediator,
whom the Father has appointed between himself and us,
ought not terrify us by his greatness,
so that we have to look for another one,
according to our fancy.
For neither in heaven nor among the creatures on earth
is there anyone who loves us
more than Jesus Christ does.

Although he was “in the form of God,”
Christ nevertheless “emptied himself,”
taking “human form” and “the form of a slave” for us;⁶⁴
and he made himself “like his brothers and sisters
in every respect.”⁶⁵

Suppose we had to find another intercessor.

Who would love us more than he who gave his life for us,
even though “we were his enemies”?⁶⁶

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

Who has as much of these as he who is seated
at the right hand of the Father,⁶⁷

and who has “all authority
in heaven and on earth”?⁶⁸

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

So, the practice of honoring the saints as intercessors
in fact dishonors them
because of its misplaced faith.

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

We should not plead here
that we are unworthy—

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

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

he says to us that Jesus Christ
was made like “his brothers and sisters in every respect,
that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest”
to purify the sins of the people.⁶⁹

For since he suffered,
being tempted,
he is also able to help those
who are tempted.⁷⁰

And further,
to encourage us more
to approach him
he says,

"Since, then, we have a great high priest
who has passed through the heavens,
Jesus, the Son of God,
let us hold fast to our confession.
For we do not have a high priest
who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses,
but we have one who in every respect has been tempted,
as we are,
yet without sin.
Let us therefore approach
the throne of grace
with boldness,
so that we may receive mercy
and find grace,
to help in time of need."⁷¹

The same apostle says that
we "have confidence to enter the sanctuary
by the blood of Jesus."
"Let us approach with a true heart
in full assurance of faith...."⁷²

Likewise,
Christ "holds his priesthood permanently....
Consequently, he is able for all time to save
those who approach God through him,
since he always lives
to make intercession for them."⁷³

What more do we need?
For Christ himself declares:
"I am the way, and the truth, and the life.
No one comes to the Father
except through me."⁷⁴
Why should we seek
another intercessor?

Since it has pleased God
to give us the Son as our Intercessor,
let us not leave him for another—
or rather seek, without ever finding.
For, when giving Christ to us,
God knew well that we were sinners.

Therefore,
in following the command of Christ
we call on the heavenly Father
through Christ,
our only Mediator,
as we are taught by the Lord's Prayer,

being assured that we shall obtain
all we ask of the Father
in his name.

⁶³ 1 John 2:1

⁶⁴ Phil. 2:6-8

⁶⁵ Heb. 2:17

⁶⁶ Rom. 5:10

⁶⁷ Rom. 8:34; Heb. 1:3

⁶⁸ Matt. 28:18

⁶⁹ Heb. 2:17

⁷⁰ Heb. 2:18

⁷¹ Heb. 4:14-16

⁷² Heb. 10:19, 22

⁷³ Heb. 7:24-25

⁷⁴ John 14:6

Article 27: The Holy Catholic Church

We believe and confess

one single catholic or universal church—

a holy congregation and gathering
of true Christian believers,

awaiting their entire salvation in Jesus Christ
being washed by his blood,
and sanctified and sealed by the Holy Spirit.

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

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

For example,
during the very dangerous time of Ahab
the Lord preserved for himself seven thousand
who did not bend their knees to Baal.⁷⁵

And so this holy church
is not confined,
bound,
or limited to a certain place or certain people.

But it is spread and dispersed
throughout the entire world,
though still joined and united
in heart and will,
in one and the same Spirit,
by the power of faith.

⁷⁵ 1 Kings 19:18

Article 28: The Obligations of Church Members

We believe that

since this holy assembly and congregation
is the gathering of those who are saved
and there is no salvation apart from it,
people ought not to withdraw from it,
content to be by themselves,
regardless of their status or condition.

But all people are obliged
to join and unite with it,
keeping the unity of the church
by submitting to its instruction and discipline,
by bending their necks under the yoke of Jesus Christ,
and by serving to build up one another,
according to the gifts God has given them
as members of each other
in the same body.

And to preserve this unity more effectively,
it is the duty of all believers,
according to God's Word,
to separate themselves
from those who do not belong to the church,
in order to join this assembly
wherever God has established it,
even if civil authorities and royal decrees forbid
and death and physical punishment result.

And so,
all who withdraw from the church
or do not join it
act contrary to God's ordinance.

Article 29: The Marks of the True Church

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

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

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

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

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

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

As for those who can belong to the church, we can recognize them by the distinguishing marks of Christians: namely by faith, and by their fleeing from sin and pursuing righteousness, once they have received the one and only Savior, Jesus Christ.

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

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

As for the false church, it assigns more authority to itself and its ordinances than to the Word of God; it does not want to subject itself to the yoke of Christ;

it does not administer the sacraments
as Christ commanded in his Word;
it rather adds to them or subtracts from them
as it pleases;
it bases itself on humans,
more than on Jesus Christ;
it persecutes those
who live holy lives according to the Word of God
and who rebuke it for its faults, greed, and idolatry.

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

Article 30: The Government of the Church

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

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

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

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

By this means
everything will be done well
and in good order
in the church,
when such persons are elected
who are faithful
and are chosen according to the rule
that Paul gave to Timothy.⁷⁶

⁷⁶ 1 Tim. 3

Article 31: The Officers of the Church

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

So **all** must be careful
not to push themselves forward improperly,
but must wait for God's call,
so that they may be assured of their calling
and be certain that **they are**
chosen by the Lord.

As for the ministers of the Word,
they all have the same power and authority,
no matter where they may be,
since they are all servants of Jesus Christ,
the only universal bishop,
and the only head of the church.

Moreover,
to keep God's holy order
from being violated or despised,
we say that everyone ought,
as much as possible,
to hold the ministers of the Word and elders of the church
in special esteem,
because of the work they do,
and be at peace with them,
without grumbling, quarreling, or fighting.

Article 32: The Order and Discipline of the Church

We also believe that
although it is useful and good
for those who govern the churches
to establish and set up
a certain order among themselves
for maintaining the body of the church,
they ought always to guard against deviating
from what Christ,
our only Master,
has ordained
for us.

Therefore we reject all human innovations
and all laws imposed on us,
in our worship of God,
which bind and force our consciences
in any way.

So we accept only what is proper
to maintain harmony and unity
and to keep all in obedience
to God.

To that end excommunication,
with all it involves,
according to the Word of God,
is required.

Article 33: The Sacraments

We believe that our good God,
mindful of our crudeness and weakness,
has ordained sacraments for us
to seal his promises in us,
to pledge good will and grace toward us,
and also to nourish and sustain our faith.

God has added these to the Word of the gospel
to represent better to our external senses
both what God enables us to understand by the Word
and what he does inwardly in our hearts,
confirming in us
the salvation he imparts to us.

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

Moreover,
we are satisfied with the number of sacraments
that Christ our Master has ordained for us.
There are only two:
the sacrament of baptism
and the Holy Supper of Jesus Christ.

Article 34: The Sacrament of Baptism

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

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

By it we are received into God's church
and set apart from all other people and alien religions,
that we may wholly belong to him
whose mark and sign we bear.
Baptism also witnesses to us
that God, being our gracious Father,
will be our God forever.

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

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

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

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

So ministers,
as far as their work is concerned,
give us the sacrament and what is visible,
but our Lord gives what the sacrament signifies—
namely the invisible gifts and graces;
washing, purifying, and cleansing our souls
of all filth and unrighteousness;
renewing our hearts and filling them
with all comfort;
giving us true assurance
of his fatherly goodness;
clothing us with the “new self”
and stripping off the “old self”
with its practices.”⁷⁸

For this reason we believe that
anyone who aspires to reach eternal life
ought to be baptized only once
without ever repeating it—
for we cannot be born twice.
Yet this baptism is profitable
not only when the water is on us
and when we receive it
but throughout our
entire lives.

For that reason we reject the error of the Anabaptists
who are not content with a single baptism
once received
and also condemn the baptism
of the children of believers.
We believe our children ought to be baptized
and sealed with the sign of the covenant,
as little children were circumcised in Israel
on the basis of the same promises
made to our children.

And truly,
Christ has shed his blood no less
for washing the little children of believers
than he did for adults.

Therefore they ought to receive the sign and sacrament
of what Christ has done for them,
just as the Lord commanded in the law that
by offering a lamb for them
the sacrament of the suffering and death of Christ
would be granted them
shortly after their birth.
This was the sacrament of Jesus Christ.

Furthermore,
baptism does for our children
what circumcision did for the Jewish people.
That is why Paul calls baptism
the “circumcision of Christ.”⁷⁷

⁷⁷ Matt. 28:19

⁷⁸ Col. 3:9

⁷⁹ Col. 2:11

Article 35: The Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper

We believe and confess
that our Savior Jesus Christ
has ordained and instituted the sacrament of the Holy Supper
to nourish and sustain those
who are already **regenerated** and ingrafted
into his family,
which is his church.

Now those who are born again have two lives in them.
The one is physical and temporal—
they have it from the moment of their first birth,
and it is common to all.

The other is spiritual and heavenly,
and is given them in their second birth—
it comes through the Word of the gospel
in the communion of the body of Christ;
and this life is common to God’s elect only.

Thus, to support the physical and earthly life
God has prescribed for us
an appropriate earthly and material bread,
which is as common to all **people**
as life itself.

But to maintain the spiritual and heavenly life
that belongs to believers,
God has sent a living bread
that came down from heaven:
namely Jesus Christ,
who nourishes and maintains
the spiritual life of believers
when eaten—
that is, when appropriated
and received spiritually
by faith.

To represent to us
this spiritual and heavenly bread
Christ has instituted
an earthly and visible bread as the sacrament of his body

and wine as the sacrament of his blood.
He did this to testify to us that
just as truly as we take and hold the sacrament in our hands
and eat and drink it with our mouths,
by which our life is then sustained,
so truly we receive into our souls,
for our spiritual life,
the true body and true blood of Christ,
our only Savior.
We receive these by faith,
which is the hand and mouth of our souls.

Now it is certain
that Jesus Christ did not prescribe
his sacraments for us in vain,
since he works in us all he represents
by these holy signs,
although the manner in which he does it
goes beyond our understanding
and is incomprehensible to us,
just as the operation of God's Spirit
is hidden and incomprehensible.

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

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

This banquet is a spiritual table
at which Christ communicates himself to us
with all his benefits.
At that table he makes us enjoy himself
as much as the merits of his suffering and death,
as he nourishes, strengthens, and comforts
our poor, desolate souls
by the eating of his flesh,
and relieves and renews them
by the drinking of his blood.

Moreover,
though the sacraments and what they signify are joined together,
not all receive both of them.
The wicked certainly take the sacrament,
to their condemnation,
but do not receive the truth of the sacrament,
just as Judas and Simon the Sorcerer both indeed
received the sacrament,
but not Christ,
who was signified by it.
He is communicated only to believers.

Finally,
with humility and reverence
we receive the holy sacrament
in the gathering of God's people,
as we engage together,
with thanksgiving,
in a holy remembrance
of the death of Christ our Savior,
and as we thus confess
our faith and Christian religion.
Therefore none should come to this table
without examining themselves carefully,
lest by eating this bread
and drinking this cup
they "eat and drink judgment against themselves."⁸⁰

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

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

⁸⁰ 1 Cor. 11:29

Article 36: The Civil Government

We believe that

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

For that purpose God has placed the sword
in the hands of the government,
to punish evil people
and protect the good.

[RCA only*

And the government's task is not limited
to caring for and watching over the public domain
but extends also to upholding the sacred ministry,
with a view to removing and destroying
all idolatry and false worship of the Antichrist;
to promoting the kingdom of Jesus Christ;
and to furthering the preaching of the gospel everywhere;
to the end that God may be honored and served by everyone,
as he requires in his Word.]

[CRC only**

And being called in this manner
to contribute to the advancement of a society
that is pleasing to God,
the civil rulers have the task,
subject to God's law,
of removing every obstacle
to the preaching of the gospel
and to every aspect of divine worship.

They should do this
while completely refraining from every tendency
toward exercising absolute authority,
and while functioning in the sphere entrusted to them,
with the means belonging to them.

They should do it in order that
the Word of God may have free course;
the kingdom of Jesus Christ may make progress;
and every anti-Christian power may be resisted.]

Moreover everyone,
regardless of status, condition, or rank,
must be subject to the government,
and pay taxes,

and hold its representatives in honor and respect,
and obey them in all things that are not in conflict
with God's Word,
praying for them
that the Lord may be willing to lead them
in all their ways
and that we may live a peaceful and quiet life
in all piety and decency.

[RCA only***

And on this matter we reject the Anabaptists, anarchists,
and in general all those who want
to reject the authorities and civil officers
and to subvert justice
by introducing common ownership of goods
and corrupting the moral order
that God has established among human beings.]

* The Reformed Church in America retains the original full text, choosing to recognize that the confession was written within a historical context which may not accurately describe the situation that pertains today.

**Synod 1958 of the Christian Reformed Church replaced the aforementioned paragraph with the following three paragraphs (in brackets).

***The RCA retains this final paragraph of the original Article 36, choosing to recognize that the confession was written within a historical context which may not accurately describe the situation that pertains today. Synod 1985 of the CRC directed that this paragraph be taken from the body of the text and placed in a footnote.

Article 37: The Last Judgment

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

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

They will be summoned there
“with the archangel’s call
and **with** the sound of God’s trumpet.”⁸¹

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

And as for those who are still alive,
they will not die like the others
but will be changed **“in the twinkling of an eye”**
from **perishable** to **imperishable**.⁸²

Then the books (that is, the consciences) will be opened,
and the dead will be judged
according to the things they did in the world,⁸³
whether good or evil.

Indeed, all people will give account
of all the idle words they have spoken,⁸⁴
which the world regards
as only playing games.

And then the secrets and hypocrisies of **all people**
will be publicly uncovered
in the sight of all.

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

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

The evil ones will be convicted
by the witness of their own consciences,
and shall be made immortal—
but only to be tormented
in “the eternal fire
prepared for the devil and his angels.”⁸⁵

In contrast,
the faithful and elect will be crowned
with glory and honor.

The Son of God will **profess** their names⁸⁶
before God his Father and the holy and elect angels;
all tears will be wiped from their eyes;⁸⁷
and their cause—
at present condemned as heretical and evil
by many judges and civil officers—
will be acknowledged as the cause of the Son of God.

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

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

⁸¹ 1 Thess. 4:16

⁸² 1 Cor. 15:51-53

⁸³ Rev. 20:12

⁸⁴ Matt. 12:36

⁸⁵ Matt. 25:41

⁸⁶ Matt. 10:32

⁸⁷ Rev. 7:17

Appendix C

The Canons of Dort

Introduction to the Canons of Dort

The Decision of the Synod of Dort on the Five Main Points of Doctrine in Dispute in the Netherlands is popularly known as the Canons of Dort. It consists of statements of doctrine adopted by the great Synod of Dort, which met in the city of Dordrecht in 1618-19. Although this was a national synod of the Reformed churches of the Netherlands, it had an international character, since it was composed not only of Dutch delegates but also of twenty-six delegates from eight foreign countries.

The Synod of Dort was held in order to settle a serious controversy in the Dutch churches initiated by the rise of Arminianism. Jacob Arminius, a theological professor at Leiden University, questioned the teaching of Calvin and his followers on a number of important points. After Arminius's death, his own followers presented their views on five of these points in the Remonstrance of 1610. In this document and in later more explicit writings, the Arminians taught election based on foreseen faith, the universal application of Christ's atonement available to all who freely choose to accept it, limited human depravity, the resistibility of God's grace, and the possibility of a fall from salvation. In the Canons the Synod of Dort rejected these views and set forth the Reformed teaching on these points with the purpose of offering a deeper assurance of salvation to believers in accordance with the teaching of the Scriptures.

The Canons are thus unique among the Reformed confessions because of their original purpose as a judicial decision on the doctrinal points in dispute during the Arminian controversy. The original preface called them a "judgment, in which both the true view, agreeing with God's Word, concerning the aforesaid five points of doctrine, is explained, and the false view, disagreeing with God's Word, is rejected." The Canons also have a narrower scope than the Belgic Confession and the Heidelberg Catechism in that they do not cover the whole range of doctrine but focus on the five points of doctrine in dispute.

Although in form there are only four points in the Canons of Dort, we speak properly of five points, because the Canons were structured to correspond to the five articles of the 1610 Remonstrance. Main Points Three and Four were combined into one, always designated as Main Point Three/Four. Each of the main points consists of a positive and a negative part, the former being an exposition of the Reformed doctrine on the subject, the latter a repudiation of the corresponding errors. While the Reformed Church in America does not give confessional status to the Rejection of Errors, it nevertheless recognizes that the rejections help interpret the Canons by highlighting the specific errors addressed.

The biblical quotations in the Canons are translations from the original Latin and so do not always correspond to current versions. Though not in the original text, subheadings have been added to the positive articles and to the conclusion in order to facilitate study of the Canons.

Proposed Version

The First Main Point of Doctrine

Divine Election and Reprobation

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

Article 1: God's Right to Condemn All People

Since all people have sinned in Adam and have come under the sentence of the curse and eternal death, God would have done no one an injustice if it had been his will to leave the entire human race in sin and under the curse,

and to condemn them on account of their sin. As the apostle says: “The whole world is liable to the condemnation of God” (Rom. 3:19), “All have sinned and are deprived of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23), and “The wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23).

Article 2: The Manifestation of God’s Love

But this is how God showed his love: he sent his only begotten Son into the world, so that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life (1 John 4:9, John 3:16).

Article 3: The Preaching of the Gospel

In order that people may be brought to faith, God mercifully sends **messengers** of this very joyful message to the people and **at the time he wills**. By this ministry people are called to repentance and faith in Christ crucified. For “how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without someone preaching? And how shall they preach unless they have been sent?” (Rom. 10:14-15).

Article 4: A Twofold Response to the Gospel

God’s **wrath** remains on those who do not believe this gospel. But those who do accept it and embrace Jesus the Savior with a true and living faith are delivered through him from God’s **wrath** and from destruction, and receive the gift of eternal life.

Article 5: The Sources of Unbelief and of Faith

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

Article 6: God’s Eternal Decree

The fact that some receive from God the gift of faith within time, and that others do not, stems from his **eternal decree**. For “all his works are known to God from eternity” (Acts 15:18; Eph. 1:11). In accordance with this **decree** God graciously softens the hearts, however hard, of **the elect** and inclines them to believe, but by a just judgment God leaves in their wickedness and hardness of heart those who have not been chosen. And in this especially is disclosed to us God’s act—unfathomable, and as merciful as it is just—of distinguishing between people equally lost. This is the well-known **decree** of election and reprobation revealed in God’s Word. **The wicked, impure, and unstable distort this decree to their own ruin**, but it provides holy and godly souls with comfort beyond words.

Article 7: Election

Election is God’s unchangeable purpose by which he did the following: Before the foundation of the world, by sheer grace, according to the free good pleasure of his will, God chose in Christ to salvation a definite number of particular people out of the entire human race, which had fallen by its

own fault from its original innocence into sin and ruin. Those chosen were neither better nor more deserving than the others, but lay with them in the common misery. God did this in Christ, whom he also appointed from eternity to be the mediator, the head of all those chosen, and the foundation of their salvation.

And so God decreed to give to Christ those chosen for salvation, and to call and draw them effectively into Christ's fellowship through the Word and Spirit. In other words, God decreed to grant them true faith in Christ, to justify them, to sanctify them, and finally, after powerfully preserving them in the fellowship of the Son, to glorify them.

God did all this in order to demonstrate his mercy, to the praise of the riches of God's glorious grace.

As Scripture says, "God chose us in Christ, before the foundation of the world, so that we should be holy and blameless before him with love; he predestined us whom he adopted as his children through Jesus Christ, in himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, by which he freely made us pleasing to himself in his beloved" (Eph. 1:4-6). And elsewhere, "Those whom he predestined, he also called; and those whom he called, he also justified; and those whom he justified, he also glorified" (Rom. 8:30).

Article 8: A Single Decree of Election

This election is not of many kinds, but one and the same for all who were to be saved in the Old and the New Testament. For Scripture declares that there is a single good pleasure, purpose, and plan of God's will, by which he chose us from eternity both to grace and to glory, both to salvation and to the way of salvation, which God prepared in advance for us to walk in.

Article 9: Election Not Based on Foreseen Faith

This same election took place, not on the basis of foreseen faith, of the obedience of faith, of holiness, or of any other good quality and disposition, as though it were based on a prerequisite cause or condition in the person to be chosen, but rather for the purpose of faith, of the obedience of faith, of holiness, and so on. Accordingly, election is the source of every saving good. Faith, holiness, and the other saving gifts, and at last eternal life itself, flow forth from election as its fruits and effects. As the apostle says, "He chose us" (not because we were, but) "so that we should be holy and blameless before him in love" (Eph. 1:4).

Article 10: Election Based on God's Good Pleasure

But the cause of this undeserved election is exclusively the good pleasure of God. This does not involve God's choosing certain human qualities or actions from among all those possible as a condition of salvation, but rather involves adopting certain particular persons from among the common mass of sinners as God's own possession. As Scripture says, "When the children were not yet born, and had done nothing either good or bad . . . , she (Rebecca) was told, "The older will serve the younger." As it is written, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated" (Rom. 9:11-13). Also, "All who were appointed for eternal life believed" (Acts 13:48).

Article 11: Election Unchangeable

Just as God is most wise, unchangeable, all-knowing, and almighty, so the election made by him can neither be suspended nor altered, revoked, or annulled; neither can God's chosen ones be cast off, nor their number reduced.

Article 12: The Assurance of Election

Assurance of their eternal and unchangeable election to salvation is given to the chosen in due time, though by various stages and in differing measure. Such assurance comes not by inquisitive searching into the hidden and deep things of God, but by noticing within themselves, with spiritual joy and holy delight, the unmistakable fruits of election pointed out in God's Word—such as a true faith in Christ, a childlike fear of God, a godly sorrow for their sins, a hunger and thirst for righteousness, and so on.

Article 13: The Fruit of This Assurance

In their awareness and assurance of this election, God's children daily find greater cause to humble themselves before God, to adore the fathomless depth of God's mercies, to cleanse themselves, and to give fervent love in return to the One who first so greatly loved them. This is far from saying that this teaching concerning election, and reflection upon it, make God's children lax in observing his commandments or carnally self-assured. By God's just judgment this does usually happen to those who casually take for granted the grace of election or engage in idle and brazen talk about it but are unwilling to walk in the ways of the chosen.

Article 14: Teaching Election Properly

By God's wise plan, this teaching concerning divine election was proclaimed through the prophets, Christ himself, and the apostles, in Old and New Testament times. It was subsequently committed to writing in the Holy Scriptures. So also today in God's church, for which it was specifically intended, this teaching must be set forth with a spirit of discretion, in a godly and holy manner, at the appropriate time and place, without inquisitive searching into the ways of the Most High. This must be done for the glory of God's most holy name, and for the lively comfort of God's people.

Article 15: Reprobation

Moreover, Holy Scripture most especially highlights this eternal and undeserved grace of our election and brings it out more clearly for us, in that it further bears witness that not all people have been chosen but that some have not been chosen or have been passed by in God's eternal election—those, that is, concerning whom God, on the basis of his entirely free, most just, irrevocable, and unchangeable good pleasure, made the following decree:

to leave them in the common misery into which, by their own fault, they have plunged themselves; not to grant them saving faith and the grace of conversion; but finally to condemn and eternally punish those who have been left in their own ways and under God's just judgment, not only for their unbelief but also for all their other sins, in order to display his justice.

And this is the **decree** of reprobation, which does not at all make God the author of sin (a blasphemous thought!) but rather its fearful, irreproachable, just judge and avenger.

Article 16: Responses to the Teaching of Reprobation

Those who do not yet actively experience within themselves a living faith in Christ or an assured confidence of heart, peace of conscience, a zeal for child-like obedience, and a glorying in God through Christ, but who nevertheless use the means by which God has promised to work these things in us—such people ought not to be alarmed at the mention of reprobation, nor to count themselves among the reprobate; rather they ought to continue diligently in the use of the means, to desire fervently a time of more abundant grace, and to wait for it in reverence and humility. On the other hand, those who seriously desire to turn to God, to be pleasing to God alone, and to be delivered from the body of death, but are not yet able to make such progress along the way of godliness and faith as they would like—such people ought much less to stand in fear of the teaching concerning reprobation, since our merciful God has promised **not to** snuff out a smoldering wick or break a bruised reed.* However, those who have forgotten God and their Savior Jesus Christ and have abandoned themselves wholly to the cares of the world and the pleasures of the flesh—such people have every reason to stand in fear of this teaching, as long as they do not seriously turn to God.

*Isaiah 42:3

Article 17: The Salvation of the Infants of Believers

Since we must make judgments about God's will from his Word, which testifies that the children of believers are holy, not by nature but by virtue of the gracious covenant in which they together with their parents are included, godly parents ought not to doubt the election and salvation of their children whom God calls out of this life in infancy.

Article 18: The Proper Attitude Toward Election and Reprobation

To those who complain about this grace of an undeserved election and about the severity of a just reprobation, we reply with the words of the apostle, "Who are you, O man, to talk back to God?" (Rom. 9:20), and with the words of our Savior, "Have I no right to do what I want with my own?" (Matt. 20:15). We, however, with reverent adoration of these secret things, cry out with the apostle: "Oh, the depths of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways beyond tracing out! For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor? Or who has first given to God, that God should repay him? For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen" (Rom. 11:33-36).

Rejection of Errors

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

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

I

Who teach that the will of God to save those who would believe and persevere in faith and in the obedience of faith is the whole and entire decision of election to salvation, and that nothing else concerning this decision has been revealed in God's Word.

For they deceive the simple and plainly contradict Holy Scripture in its testimony that God does not only wish to save those who would believe, but that he has also from eternity chosen certain particular people to whom, rather than to others, he would within time grant faith in Christ and perseverance. As Scripture says, "I have revealed your name to those whom you gave me" (John 17:6). Likewise, "All who were appointed for eternal life believed" (Acts 13:48), and "He chose us before the foundation of the world so that we should be holy . . ." (Eph. 1:4).

II

Who teach that God's election to eternal life is of many kinds: one general and indefinite, the other particular and definite; and the latter in turn either incomplete, revocable, conditional, or else complete, irrevocable, and absolute. Likewise, who teach that there is one election to faith and another to salvation, so that there can be an election to justifying faith apart from a nonconditional election to salvation.

For this is an invention of the human mind, devised apart from the Scriptures, which distorts the teaching concerning election and breaks up this golden chain of salvation: "Those whom he predestined, he also called; and those whom he called, he also justified; and those whom he justified, he also glorified" (Rom. 8:30).

III

Who teach that God's good pleasure and purpose, which Scripture mentions in its teaching of election, does not involve God's choosing certain particular people rather than others, but involves God's choosing, out of all possible conditions (including the works of the law) or out of the whole order of things, the intrinsically unworthy act of faith, as well as the imperfect obedience of faith, to be a condition of salvation; and it involves his graciously wishing to count this as perfect obedience and to look upon it as worthy of the reward of eternal life.

For by this pernicious error the good pleasure of God and the merit of Christ are robbed of their effectiveness and people are drawn away, by unprofitable inquiries, from the truth of undeserved justification and from the simplicity of the Scriptures. It also gives the lie to these words of the apostle: "God

called us with a holy calling, not in virtue of works, but in virtue of his own purpose and the grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time” (2 Tim. 1:9).

IV

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

For this smacks of Pelagius, and it clearly calls into question the words of the apostle: “We lived at one time in the passions of our flesh, following the will of our flesh and thoughts, and we were by nature children of wrath, like everyone else. But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in transgressions, made us alive with Christ, by whose grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with him and seated us with him in heaven in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages we might show the surpassing riches of his grace, according to his kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith (and this not from yourselves; it is the gift of God) not by works, so that no one can boast” (Eph. 2:3-9).

V

Who teach that the incomplete and **conditional** election of particular persons to salvation occurred on the basis of a foreseen faith, repentance, holiness, and godliness, which has just begun or continued for some time; but that complete and **nonconditional** election occurred on the basis of a foreseen perseverance to the end in faith, repentance, holiness, and godliness. And that this is the gracious and evangelical worthiness, on account of which the one who is chosen is more worthy than the one who is not chosen. And therefore that faith, the obedience of faith, holiness, godliness, and perseverance are not fruits or effects of an unchangeable election to glory, but indispensable conditions and causes, which are prerequisite in those who are to be chosen in the complete election, and which are foreseen as achieved in them.

This runs counter to the entire Scripture, which throughout impresses upon our ears and hearts these sayings among others: “Election is not by works, but by him who calls” (Rom. 9:11-12); “All who were appointed for eternal life believed” (Acts 13:48); “He chose us in himself so that we should be holy” (Eph. 1:4); “You did not choose me, but I chose you” (John 15:16); “If by grace, not by works” (Rom. 11:6); “In this is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son” (1 John 4:10).

VI

Who teach that not every election to salvation is unchangeable, but that some of the chosen can perish and do in fact perish eternally, with no decision of God to prevent it.

By this gross error they make God changeable, destroy the comfort of the godly concerning the steadfastness of their election, and contradict the Holy

Scriptures, which teach that “the elect cannot be led astray” (Matt. 24:24), that “Christ does not lose those given to him by the Father” (John 6:39), and that “those whom God predestined, called, and justified, he also glorifies” (Rom. 8:30).

VII

Who teach that in this life there is no fruit, no awareness, and no assurance of one’s unchangeable election to glory, except as conditioned upon something changeable and contingent.

For not only is it absurd to speak of an uncertain assurance, but these things also militate against the experience of the saints, who with the apostle rejoice from an awareness of their election and sing the praises of this gift of God; who, as Christ urged, “rejoice” with his disciples “that their names have been written in heaven” (Luke 10:20); and finally who hold up against the flaming arrows of the devil’s temptations the awareness of their election, with the question “Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen?” (Rom. 8:33).

VIII

Who teach that it was not on the basis of his just will alone that God decided to leave anyone in the fall of Adam and in the common state of sin and condemnation or to pass anyone by in the imparting of grace necessary for faith and conversion.

For these words stand fast: “He has mercy on whom he wishes, and he hardens whom he wishes” (Rom. 9:18). And also: “To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given” (Matt. 13:11). Likewise: “I give glory to you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding, and have revealed them to little children; yes, Father, because that was your pleasure” (Matt. 11:25-26).

IX

Who teach that the cause for God’s sending the gospel to one people rather than to another is not merely and solely God’s good pleasure, but rather that one people is better and worthier than the other to whom the gospel is not communicated.

For Moses contradicts this when he addresses the people of Israel as follows: “Behold, to Jehovah your God belong the heavens and the highest heavens, the earth and whatever is in it. But Jehovah was inclined in his affection to love your ancestors alone, and chose out their descendants after them, you above all peoples, as at this day” (Deut. 10:14-15). And also Christ: “Woe to you, Korazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! for if those mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes” (Matt. 11:21).

The Second Main Point of Doctrine

Christ's Death and Human Redemption Through It

Article 1: The Punishment Which God's Justice Requires

God is not only supremely merciful, but also supremely just. This justice requires (as God has **revealed in** the Word) that the sins we have committed against his infinite majesty be punished with both temporal and eternal punishments, of soul as well as body. We cannot escape these punishments unless satisfaction is given to God's justice.

Article 2: The Satisfaction Made by Christ

Since, however, we ourselves cannot give this satisfaction or deliver ourselves from God's **wrath**, God **in boundless** mercy has given us as a guarantee his only begotten Son, who was made to be sin and a curse for us, in our place, on the cross, in order that he might give satisfaction for us.

Article 3: The Infinite Value of Christ's Death

This death of God's Son is the only and entirely complete sacrifice and satisfaction for sins; it is of infinite value and worth, more than sufficient to atone for the sins of the whole world.

Article 4: Reasons for This Infinite Value

This death is of such great value and worth for the reason that the person who suffered it is—as was necessary to be our Savior—not only a true and perfectly holy **human**, but also the only begotten Son of God, of the same eternal and infinite essence with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Another reason is that this death was accompanied by the experience of God's **wrath** and curse, which we by our sins had fully deserved.

Article 5: The Mandate to Proclaim the Gospel to All

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

Article 6: Unbelief, a Human Responsibility

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

Article 7: Faith God's Gift

But all who genuinely believe and are delivered and saved by Christ's death from their sins and from destruction receive this favor solely from God's grace—which God owes to no one—given to them in Christ from eternity.

Article 8: The Saving Effectiveness of Christ's Death

For it was the entirely free plan and very gracious will and intention of God the Father that the enlivening and saving effectiveness of his Son's costly

death should work itself out in all **the elect**, in order that God might grant justifying faith to them only and thereby lead them without fail to salvation. In other words, it was God's will that Christ through the blood of the cross (by which he confirmed the new covenant) should effectively redeem from every people, tribe, nation, and language all those and only those who were chosen from eternity to salvation and given to him by the Father; that **Christ** should grant them faith (which, like the Holy Spirit's other saving gifts, he acquired for them by his death). It was also God's will that **Christ** should cleanse them by his blood from all their sins, both original and actual, whether committed before or after their coming to faith; that he should faithfully preserve them to the very end; and that he should finally present them to himself, a glorious people, without spot or wrinkle.

Article 9: The Fulfillment of God's Plan

This plan, arising out of God's eternal love for **the elect**, from the beginning of the world to the present time has been powerfully carried out and will also be carried out in the future, the gates of hell seeking vainly to prevail against it. As a result, the **elect** are gathered into one, all in their own time, and there is always a church of believers founded on Christ's blood, a church which steadfastly loves, persistently worships, **and here** and in all **eternity** **praises** him as her Savior who laid down his life for her on the cross, as a bridegroom for his bride.

Rejection of the Errors

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

I

Who teach that God the Father appointed his Son to death on the cross without a fixed and definite plan to save anyone by name, so that the necessity, usefulness, and worth of what Christ's death obtained could have stood intact and altogether perfect, complete and whole, even if the redemption that was obtained had never in actual fact been applied to any individual.

For this assertion is an insult to the wisdom of God the Father and to the merit of Jesus Christ, and it is contrary to Scripture. For the Savior speaks as follows: "I lay down my life for the sheep, and I know them" (John 10:15, 27). And Isaiah the prophet says concerning the Savior: "When he shall make himself an offering for sin, he shall see his offspring, he shall prolong his days, and the will of Jehovah shall prosper in his hand" (Isa. 53:10). Finally, this undermines the article of the creed in which we confess what we believe concerning the Church.

II

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

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

III

Who teach that Christ, by the satisfaction which he gave, did not certainly merit for anyone salvation itself and the faith by which this satisfaction of Christ is effectively applied to salvation, but only acquired for the Father the authority or plenary will to relate in a new way with humanity and to impose such new conditions as he chose, and that the satisfying of these conditions depends on **human free choice**; consequently, that it was possible that either all or none would fulfill them.

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

IV

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

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

V

Who teach that all people have been received into the state of reconciliation and into the grace of the covenant, so that no one on account of original sin is liable to condemnation, or is to be condemned, but that all are free from the guilt of this sin.

For this opinion conflicts with Scripture which asserts that we are by nature children of wrath.

VI

Who make use of the distinction between obtaining and applying in order to instill in the unwary and inexperienced the opinion that God, as far as he is concerned, wished to bestow equally upon all people the benefits which are gained by Christ’s death; but that the distinction by which some rather than others come to share in the forgiveness of sins and eternal life depends on their own free choice (which applies itself to the grace offered indiscriminately) but does not depend on the unique gift of mercy which effectively works in them, so that they, rather than others, apply that grace to themselves.

For, while pretending to set forth this distinction in an acceptable sense, they attempt to give the people the deadly poison of Pelagianism.

VII

Who teach that Christ neither could die, nor had to die, nor did die for those whom God so dearly loved and chose to eternal life, since such people do not need the death of Christ.

For they contradict the apostle, who says: “Christ loved me and gave himself up for me” (Gal. 2:20), and likewise: “Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? It is Christ who died,” that is, for them (Rom. 8:33-34). They also contradict the Savior, who asserts: “I lay down my life for the sheep” (John 10:15), and “My command is this: Love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for one’s friends” (John 15:12-13).

The Third and Fourth Main Points of Doctrine

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

Article 1: The Effect of the Fall on Human Nature

Human beings were originally created in the image of God and were furnished in mind with a true and sound knowledge of the Creator and things spiritual, in will and heart with righteousness, and in all emotions with purity; indeed, the whole human being was holy. However, rebelling against God at the devil’s instigation and by their own free will, they deprived themselves of these outstanding gifts. Rather, in their place they brought upon themselves blindness, terrible darkness, futility, and distortion of judgment in their minds; perversity, defiance, and hardness in their hearts and wills; and finally impurity in all their emotions.

Article 2: The Spread of Corruption

Human beings brought forth children of the same nature as themselves after the fall. That is to say, being corrupt they brought forth corrupt children. The corruption spread, by God’s just judgment, from Adam and Eve to all their descendants—except for Christ alone—not by way of imitation (as in former times the Pelagians would have it) but by way of the propagation of their perverted nature.

Article 3: Total Inability

Therefore, all people are conceived in sin and are born children of wrath, unfit for any saving good, inclined to evil, dead in their sins, and slaves to sin. Without the grace of the regenerating Holy Spirit they are neither willing nor able to return to God, to reform their distorted nature, or even to dispose themselves to such reform.

Article 4: The Inadequacy of the Light of Nature

There is, to be sure, a certain light of nature remaining in all people after the fall, by virtue of which they retain some notions about God, natural things, and the difference between what is moral and immoral, and demonstrate a

certain eagerness for virtue and for good outward behavior. But this light of nature is far from enabling humans to come to a saving knowledge of God and conversion to him—so far, in fact, that they do not use it rightly even in matters of nature and society. Instead, in various ways they completely distort this light, whatever its precise character, and suppress it in unrighteousness. In doing so all people render themselves without excuse before God.

Article 5: The Inadequacy of the Law

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

Article 6: The Saving Power of the Gospel

What, therefore, neither the light of nature nor the law can do, God accomplishes by the power of the Holy Spirit, through the Word or the ministry of reconciliation. This is the gospel about the Messiah, through which it has pleased God to save believers, in both the Old and the New Testaments.

Article 7: God's Freedom in Revealing the Gospel

In the Old Testament, God revealed this secret of his will to a small number; in the New Testament (now without any distinction between peoples) God discloses it to a large number. The reason for this difference must not be ascribed to the greater worth of one nation over another, or to a better use of the light of nature, but to the free good pleasure and undeserved love of God. Therefore, those who receive so much grace, beyond and in spite of all they deserve, ought to acknowledge it with humble and thankful hearts. On the other hand, with the apostle they ought to adore (but certainly not inquisitively search into) the severity and justice of God's judgments on the others, who do not receive this grace.

Article 8: The Earnest Call of the Gospel

Nevertheless, all who are called through the gospel are called earnestly. For urgently and most genuinely God makes known in the Word what is pleasing to him: that those who are called should come to God. God also earnestly promises rest for their souls and eternal life to all who do come and believe.

Article 9: Human Responsibility for Rejecting the Gospel

The fact that many who are called through the ministry of the gospel do not come and are not brought to conversion must not be blamed on the gospel, nor on Christ, who is offered through the gospel, nor on God, who calls them through the gospel and even bestows various gifts on them, but on the people themselves who are called. Some in self-assurance do not even entertain the Word of life; others do entertain it but do not take it to heart, and for that reason, after the fleeting joy of a temporary faith, they relapse; others choke the seed of the Word with the thorns of life's cares and with the pleasures of

the world and bring forth no fruits. This our Savior teaches in the parable of the sower (Matt. 13).

Article 10: Conversion as the Work of God

The fact that others who are called through the ministry of the gospel do come and are brought to conversion must not be credited to **human effort**, as though one distinguishes **oneself** by free choice from others who are furnished with equal or sufficient grace for faith and conversion (as the proud heresy of Pelagius maintains). No, it must be credited to God: just as from eternity God chose his own in Christ, so within time God effectively calls them, grants them faith and repentance, and, having rescued them from the dominion of darkness, brings them into the kingdom of his Son, in order that they may declare the wonderful deeds of **the One** who called them out of darkness into this marvelous light, and may boast not in themselves, but in the Lord, as apostolic words frequently testify in Scripture.

Article 11: The Holy Spirit's Work in Conversion

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

Article 12: Regeneration a Supernatural Work

And this is the regeneration, the new creation, the raising from the dead, and the making alive so clearly proclaimed in the Scriptures, which God works in us without our help. But this certainly does not happen only by outward teaching, by moral persuasion, or by such a way of working that, after **God's work is done**, it remains in **human** power whether or not to be reborn or converted. Rather, it is an entirely supernatural work, one that is at the same time most powerful and most pleasing, a marvelous, hidden, and inexpressible work, which is not **less** than or inferior in power to that of creation or of raising the dead, as Scripture (inspired by the author of this work) teaches. As a result, all those in whose hearts God works in this marvelous way are certainly, unfailingly, and effectively reborn and do actually believe. And then the will, now renewed, is not only activated and motivated by God, but in being activated by God is also itself active. For this reason, **people themselves**, by that grace which **they have received**, are also rightly said to believe and to repent.

Article 13: The Incomprehensible Way of Regeneration

In this life believers cannot fully understand the way this work occurs; meanwhile, they rest content with knowing and experiencing that, by this grace of God, they do believe with the heart and love their Savior.

Article 14: The Way God Gives Faith

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

Article 15: Responses to God's Grace

God does not owe this grace to anyone. For what could God owe to **those** who **have** nothing to give that can be paid back? Indeed, what could God owe to **those who have** nothing of their own to give but sin and falsehood? Therefore **those who receive** this grace **owe** and **give** eternal thanks to God alone; **those who do not** receive it either do not care at all about these spiritual things and **are** satisfied with **themselves** in **their** condition, or else in self-assurance foolishly **boast** about having something which **they lack**. Furthermore, following the example of the apostles, we are to think and to speak in the most favorable way about those who outwardly profess their faith and better their lives, for the inner chambers of the heart are unknown to us. But for others who have not yet been called, we are to pray to the God who calls things that do not exist as though they did. In no way, however, are we to pride ourselves as better than they, as though we had distinguished ourselves from them.

Article 16: Regeneration's Effect

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

As a result, a ready and sincere obedience of the Spirit now begins to prevail where before the rebellion and resistance of the flesh were completely dominant. **In this the** true and spiritual restoration and freedom of our will consists. Thus, if the marvelous Maker of every good thing were not dealing with us, **we** would have no hope of getting up from **our** fall by **our** own free choice, by which **we** plunged **ourselves** into ruin when still standing upright.

Article 17: God's Use of Means in Regeneration

Just as the almighty work by which God brings forth and sustains our natural life does not rule out but requires the use of means, by which God, according to his infinite wisdom and goodness, has wished to exercise **that** **divine** power, so also the aforementioned supernatural work by which God regenerates us in no way rules out or cancels the use of the gospel, which God **in** great wisdom has appointed to be the seed of regeneration and the food of the soul. For this reason, the apostles and the teachers who followed them taught the people in a godly manner about this grace of God, to give

God the glory and to humble all pride, and yet did not neglect meanwhile to keep the people, by means of the holy admonitions of the gospel, under the administration of the Word, the sacraments, and discipline. So even today it is out of the question that the teachers or those taught in the church should presume to test God by separating what God in his good pleasure has wished to be closely joined together. For grace is bestowed through admonitions, and the more readily we perform our duty, the more lustrous the benefit of God working in us usually is, and the better **that** work advances. To God alone, both for the means and for their saving fruit and effectiveness, all glory is owed forever. Amen.

Rejection of the Errors

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

I

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

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

II

Who teach that the spiritual gifts or the good dispositions and virtues such as goodness, holiness, and righteousness could not have resided in the **human will at creation**, and therefore could not have been separated from the will at the fall.

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

III

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

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

IV

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

For these views are opposed to the plain testimonies of Scripture: “You were dead in your transgressions and sins” (Eph. 2:1, 5); “The imagination of the thoughts of **the human** heart is only evil all the time” (Gen. 6:5; 8:21). Besides, to hunger and thirst for deliverance from misery and for life, and to offer God the sacrifice of a broken spirit is characteristic only of the regenerate and of those called blessed (Ps. 51:17; Matt. 5:6).

V

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

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

VI

Who teach that in the true conversion of **men and women** new qualities, dispositions, or gifts cannot be infused or poured into **their** will by God, and indeed that the faith [or believing] by which we first come to conversion and from which we receive the name “believers” is not a quality or gift infused by God, but only a **human act**, and that it cannot be called a gift except in respect to the power of attaining faith.

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

VII

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

For this teaching is entirely Pelagian and contrary to the whole of Scripture, which recognizes besides this persuasion also another, far more effective and divine way in which the Holy Spirit acts in human conversion. As Ezekiel 36:26 puts it: "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; and I will remove your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. . . ."

VIII

Who teach that God in regenerating people does not bring to bear that power of his omnipotence whereby God may powerfully and unflinchingly bend the human will to faith and conversion, but that even when God has accomplished all the works of grace which he uses for their conversion, they nevertheless can, and in actual fact often do, so resist God and the Spirit in their intent and will to regenerate them, that they completely thwart their own rebirth; and, indeed, that it remains in their own power whether or not to be reborn.

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

IX

Who teach that grace and free choice are concurrent partial causes which cooperate to initiate conversion, and that grace does not precede—in the order of causality—the effective influence of the will; that is to say, that God does not effectively help the human will to come to conversion before that will itself motivates and determines itself.

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

The Fifth Main Point of Doctrine

The Perseverance of the Saints

Article 1: The Regenerate Not Entirely Free from Sin

Those people whom God according to his purpose calls into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord and regenerates by the Holy Spirit, God also sets free from the **dominion** and slavery of sin, **though not** entirely from the flesh and from the body of sin **as long as they are in this life.**

Article 2: The Believer's Reaction to Sins of Weakness

Hence daily sins of weakness arise, and blemishes cling to even the best works of **saints**, giving them continual cause to humble themselves before God, to flee for refuge to Christ crucified, to put the flesh to death more and more by the Spirit of supplication and by holy exercises of godliness, and to strain toward the goal of perfection, until they are freed from this body of death and reign with the Lamb of God in heaven.

Article 3: God's Preservation of the Converted

Because of these remnants of sin dwelling in them and also because of the temptations of the world and Satan, those who have been converted could not remain standing in this grace if left to their own resources. But God is faithful, mercifully strengthening them in the grace once conferred on them and powerfully preserving them in it to the end.

Article 4: The Danger of True Believers' Falling into Serious Sins

The power of God strengthening and preserving true believers in grace is more than a match for the flesh. **Yet** those converted are not always so activated and motivated by God that in certain specific actions they cannot by their own fault depart from the leading of grace, be led astray by the desires of the flesh, and give in to them. For this reason they must constantly watch and pray that they may not be led into temptations. When they fail to do this, not only can they be carried away by the flesh, the world, and Satan into sins, even serious and outrageous ones, but also by God's just permission they sometimes are so carried away—witness the sad cases, described in Scripture, of David, Peter, and other saints falling into sins.

Article 5: The Effects of Such Serious Sins

By such monstrous sins, however, they greatly offend God, deserve the sentence of death, grieve the Holy Spirit, suspend the exercise of faith, severely wound the conscience, and sometimes lose the awareness of grace for a time—until, after they have returned to the **right** way by genuine repentance, God's fatherly face again shines upon them.

Article 6: God's Saving Intervention

For God, who is rich in mercy, according to **the** unchangeable purpose of election does not take **the** Holy Spirit from his own completely, even when they fall grievously. Neither does God let them fall down so far that they forfeit the grace of adoption and the state of justification, or commit the sin which leads to death (the sin against the Holy Spirit), and plunge themselves, entirely forsaken by God, into eternal ruin.

Article 7: Renewal to Repentance

For, in the first place, God preserves in those saints when they fall the imperishable seed from which they have been born again, lest it perish or be dislodged. Secondly, by his Word and Spirit God certainly and effectively renews them to repentance so that they have a heartfelt and godly sorrow for the sins they have committed; seek and obtain, through faith and with a contrite heart, forgiveness in the blood of the Mediator; experience again the grace of a reconciled God; through faith adore God's mercies; and from then on more eagerly work out their own salvation with fear and trembling.

Article 8: The Certainty of This Preservation

So it is not by their own merits or strength but by God's undeserved mercy that they neither forfeit faith and grace totally nor remain in their downfalls to the end and are lost. With respect to themselves this not only easily could happen, but also undoubtedly would happen; but with respect to God it cannot possibly happen. God's plan cannot be changed; God's promise cannot fail; the calling according to God's purpose cannot be revoked; the merit of Christ as well as his interceding and preserving cannot be nullified; and the sealing of the Holy Spirit can neither be invalidated nor wiped out.

Article 9: The Assurance of This Preservation

Concerning this preservation of those chosen to salvation and concerning the perseverance of true believers in faith, believers themselves can and do become assured in accordance with the measure of their faith. By this faith they firmly believe that they are and always will remain true and living members of the church, and that they have the forgiveness of sins and eternal life.

Article 10: The Ground of This Assurance

Accordingly, this assurance does not derive from some private revelation beyond or outside the Word, but from faith in the promises of God which are very plentifully revealed in the Word for our comfort, from the testimony of "the Holy Spirit testifying with our spirit that we are God's children and heirs" (Rom. 8:16-17), and finally from a serious and holy pursuit of a clear conscience and of good works. If God's chosen ones in this world did not have this well-founded comfort that the victory will be theirs and this reliable guarantee of eternal glory, they would be of all people most miserable.

Article 11: Doubts Concerning This Assurance

Meanwhile, Scripture testifies that believers have to contend in this life with various doubts of the flesh, and that under severe temptation they do not always experience this full assurance of faith and certainty of perseverance. But God, the Father of all comfort, "does not let them be tempted beyond what they can bear, but with the temptation he also provides a way out" (1 Cor. 10:13), and by the Holy Spirit revives in them the assurance of their perseverance.

Article 12: This Assurance as an Incentive to Godliness

This assurance of perseverance, however, so far from making true believers proud and carnally self-assured, is rather the true root of humility, of childlike respect, of genuine godliness, of endurance in every conflict, of fervent prayers, of steadfastness in crossbearing and in confessing the truth, and of well-founded

joy in God. Reflecting on this benefit provides an incentive to a serious and continual practice of thanksgiving and good works, as is evident from the testimonies of Scripture and the examples of the saints.

Article 13: Assurance No Inducement to Carelessness

Neither does the renewed confidence of perseverance produce immorality or lack of concern for godliness in those put back on their feet after a fall, but it produces a much greater concern to observe carefully the ways which the Lord prepared in advance. They observe these ways in order that by walking in them they may maintain the assurance of their perseverance, lest, by their abuse of God's fatherly goodness, the face of the gracious God (for the godly, looking upon that face is sweeter than life, but its withdrawal is more bitter than death) turn away from them again, with the result that they fall into greater anguish of spirit.

Article 14: God's Use of Means in Perseverance

And, just as it has pleased God to begin this work of grace in us by the proclamation of the gospel, so God preserves, continues, and completes this work by the hearing and reading of the gospel, by meditation on it, by its exhortations, threats, and promises, and also by the use of the sacraments.

Article 15: Contrasting Reactions to the Teaching of Perseverance

This teaching about the perseverance of true believers and saints, and about their assurance of it—a teaching which God has very richly revealed in the Word for the glory of his name and for the comfort of the godly, and which God impresses on the hearts of believers—is something which the flesh does not understand, Satan hates, the world ridicules, the ignorant and the hypocrites abuse, and the spirits of error attack. The bride of Christ, on the other hand, has always loved this teaching very tenderly and defended it steadfastly as a priceless treasure; and God, against whom no plan can avail and no strength can prevail, will ensure that the church will continue to do this. To this God alone, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, be honor and glory forever. Amen.

Rejection of the Errors

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

I

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

For Holy Scripture testifies that perseverance follows from election and is granted to the chosen by virtue of Christ's death, resurrection, and intercession: "The chosen obtained it; the others were hardened" (Rom. 11:7); likewise, "He who did not spare his own son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not, along with him, grant us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? It is Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised—

who also sits at the right hand of God, and is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" (Rom. 8:32-35).

II

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

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

III

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

For this opinion nullifies the very grace of justification and regeneration as well as the continual preservation by Christ, contrary to the plain words of the apostle Paul: "If Christ died for us while we were still sinners, we will therefore much more be saved from God's wrath through him, since we have now been justified by his blood" (Rom. 5:8-9); and contrary to the apostle John: "No one who is born of God is intent on sin, because God's seed remains in him, nor can he sin, because he has been born of God" (1 John 3:9); also contrary to the words of Jesus Christ: "I give eternal life to my sheep, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand" (John 10:28-29).

IV

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

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

V

Who teach that apart from a special revelation no one can have the assurance of future perseverance in this life.

For by this teaching the well-founded consolation of true believers in this life is taken away and the doubting of the Romanists is reintroduced into the

church. Holy Scripture, however, in many places derives the assurance not from a special and extraordinary revelation but from the marks peculiar to God's children and from God's completely reliable promises. So especially the apostle Paul: "Nothing in all creation can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 8:39); and John: "They who obey his commands remain in him and he in them. And this is how we know that he remains in us: by the Spirit he gave us" (1 John 3:24).

VI

Who teach that the teaching of the assurance of perseverance and of salvation is by its very nature and character an opiate of the flesh and is harmful to godliness, good morals, prayer, and other holy exercises, but that, on the contrary, to have doubt about this is praiseworthy.

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

VII

Who teach that the faith of those who believe only temporarily does not differ from justifying and saving faith except in duration alone.

For Christ himself in Matthew 13:20ff. and Luke 8:13ff. clearly defines these further differences between temporary and true believers: he says that the former receive the seed on rocky ground, and the latter receive it in good ground, or a good heart; the former have no root, and the latter are firmly rooted; the former have no fruit, and the latter produce fruit in varying measure, with steadfastness, or perseverance.

VIII

Who teach that it is not absurd that people, after losing their former regeneration, should once again, indeed quite often, be reborn.

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

IX

Who teach that Christ nowhere prayed for an unfailling perseverance of believers in faith.

For they contradict Christ himself when he says: "I have prayed for you, Peter, that your faith may not fail" (Luke 22:32); and John the gospel writer

when he testifies in John 17 that it was not only for the apostles, but also for all those who were to believe by their message that Christ prayed: “Holy Father, preserve them in your name” (v. 11); and “My prayer is not that you take them out of the world, but that you preserve them from the evil one” (v. 15).

Conclusion

Rejection of False Accusations

And so this is the clear, simple, and straightforward explanation of the orthodox teaching on the five articles in dispute in the Netherlands, as well as the rejection of the errors by which the Dutch churches have for some time been disturbed. This explanation and rejection the Synod declares to be derived from God’s Word and in agreement with the confessions of the Reformed churches. Hence it clearly appears that those of whom one could hardly expect it have shown no truth, equity, and charity at all in wishing to make the public believe:

- that the teaching of the Reformed churches on predestination and on the points associated with it by its very nature and tendency draws the minds of people away from all godliness and religion, is an opiate of the flesh and the devil, and is a stronghold where Satan lies in wait for all people, wounds most of them, and fatally pierces many of them with the arrows of both despair and self-assurance;
- that this teaching makes God the author of sin, unjust, a tyrant, and a hypocrite; and is nothing but a refurbished Stoicism, Manicheism, Libertinism, and Turkism*;
- that this teaching makes people carnally self-assured, since it persuades them that nothing endangers the salvation of the elect, no matter how they live, so that they may commit the most outrageous crimes with self-assurance; and that on the other hand nothing is of use to the reprobate for salvation even if they have truly performed all the works of the saints;
- that this teaching means that God predestined and created, by the bare and unqualified choice of his will, without the least regard or consideration of any sin, the greatest part of the world to eternal condemnation; that in the same manner in which election is the source and cause of faith and good works, reprobation is the cause of unbelief and ungodliness; that many infant children of believers are snatched in their innocence from their mothers’ breasts and cruelly cast into hell so that neither the blood of Christ nor their baptism nor the prayers of the church at their baptism can be of any use to them; and very many other slanderous accusations of this kind which the Reformed churches not only disavow but even denounce with their whole heart.

Therefore this Synod of Dort in the name of the Lord pleads with all who devoutly call on the name of our Savior Jesus Christ to form their judgment about the faith of the Reformed churches, not on the basis of false accusations gathered from here or there, or even on the basis of the personal statements of a number of ancient and modern authorities—statements which are also often either quoted out of context or misquoted and twisted to convey a

different meaning—but on the basis of the churches’ own official confessions and of the present explanation of the orthodox teaching which has been endorsed by the unanimous consent of the members of the whole Synod, one and all.

Moreover, the Synod earnestly warns the false accusers themselves to consider how heavy a judgment of God awaits those who give false testimony against so many churches and their confessions, trouble the consciences of the weak, and seek to prejudice the minds of many against the fellowship of true believers.

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

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

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Appendix D **The Heidelberg Catechism**

Introduction to the Heidelberg Catechism

The Heidelberg Catechism (1563) was composed in the city of Heidelberg, Germany, at the request of Elector Frederick III, who ruled the province of the Palatinate from 1559 to 1576. The new catechism was intended as a tool for teaching young people, a guide for preaching in the provincial churches, and a form of confessional unity among the several Protestant factions in the Palatinate. An old tradition credits Zacharias Ursinus and Caspar Olevianus with being the coauthors of the catechism, but the project was actually the work of a team of ministers and university theologians under the watchful eye of Frederick himself. Ursinus probably served as the primary writer on the team, and Olevianus had a lesser role. The catechism was approved by a synod in Heidelberg in January 1563. A second and third German edition, each with small additions, as well as a Latin translation were published the same year in Heidelberg. The third edition was included in the Palatinate

Church Order of November 15, 1563, at which time the catechism was divided into fifty-two sections or Lord's Days, so that one Lord's Day could be explained in an afternoon worship service each Sunday of the year.

The Synod of Dort approved the Heidelberg Catechism in 1619, and it soon became the most ecumenical of the Reformed catechisms and confessions. It has been translated into many European, Asian, and African languages and is still the most widely used and warmly praised catechism of the Reformation period.

Most of the footnoted biblical references in this translation of the catechism were included in the early German and Latin editions, but the precise selection was approved by Synod 1975 of the Christian Reformed Church.

Proposed Version

LORD'S DAY 1

1 Q. What is your only comfort in life and in death?

- A. That I am not my own,¹
but belong—
body and soul,
in life and in death—²
to my faithful Savior, Jesus Christ.³

He has fully paid for all my sins with his precious blood,⁴
and has set me free from the tyranny of the devil.⁵
He also watches over me in such a way⁶
that not a hair can fall from my head
without the will of my Father in heaven;⁷
in fact, all things must work together for my salvation.⁸

Because I belong to him,
Christ, by his Holy Spirit,
assures me of eternal life⁹
and makes me wholeheartedly willing and ready
from now on to live for him.¹⁰

¹ 1 Cor. 6:19-20

² Rom. 14:7-9

³ 1 Cor. 3:23; Titus 2:14

⁴ 1 Pet. 1:18-19; 1 John 1:7-9; 2:2

⁵ John 8:34-36; Heb. 2:14-15; 1 John 3:1-11

⁶ John 6:39-40; 10:27-30; 2 Thess. 3:3; 1 Pet. 1:5

⁷ Matt. 10:29-31; Luke 21:16-18

⁸ Rom. 8:28

⁹ Rom. 8:15-16; 2 Cor. 1:21-22; 5:5; Eph. 1:13-14

¹⁰ Rom. 8:1-17

2 Q. What must you know to live and die in the joy of this comfort?

A. Three things:

first, how great my sin and misery are;¹

second, how I am set free from all my sins and misery;²

third, how I am to thank God for such deliverance.³

¹ Rom. 3:9-10; 1 John 1:10

² John 17:3; Acts 4:12; 10:43

³ Matt. 5:16; Rom. 6:13; Eph. 5:8-10; 2 Tim. 2:15; 1 Pet. 2:9-10

Part I: Misery

LORD'S DAY 2

3 Q. How do you come to know your misery?

A. The law of God tells me.¹

¹ Rom. 3:20; 7:7-25

4 Q. What does God's law require of us?

A. Christ teaches us this in summary in Matthew 22:37-40:

"You shall love the Lord your God
with all your heart,
and with all your soul,
and with all your mind.¹
This is the greatest and first commandment.

"And a second is like it:
You shall love your neighbor as yourself.²

"On these two commandments hang
all the law and the prophets."

¹ Deut. 6:5

² Lev. 19:18

5 Q. Can you live up to all this perfectly?

A. No.¹

I have a natural tendency
to hate God and my neighbor.²

¹ Rom. 3:9-20, 23; 1 John 1:8, 10

² Gen. 6:5; Jer. 17:9; Rom. 7:23-24; 8:7; Eph. 2:1-3; Titus 3:3

LORD'S DAY 3

6 Q. Did God create people so wicked and perverse?

A. No.

God created them good¹ and in his own image,²
that is, in true righteousness and holiness,³
so that they might
truly know God their creator,⁴
love him with all their heart,
and live with God in eternal happiness,
to praise and glorify him.⁵

¹ Gen. 1:31

² Gen. 1:26-27

³ Eph. 4:24

⁴ Col. 3:10

⁵ Ps. 8

7 Q. Then where does this corrupt human nature come from?

A. The fall and disobedience of our first parents,
Adam and Eve, in Paradise.¹

This fall has so poisoned our nature²
that we are all conceived and born
in a sinful condition.³

¹ Gen. 3

² Rom. 5:12, 18-19

³ Ps. 51:5

8 Q. But are we so corrupt that we are totally unable to do any good and inclined toward all evil?

A. Yes,¹ unless we are born again
by the Spirit of God.²

¹ Gen. 6:5; 8:21; Job 14:4; Isa. 53:6

² John 3:3-5

LORD'S DAY 4

9 Q. But doesn't God do us an injustice by requiring in his law what we are unable to do?

A. No, God created **human beings** with the ability to keep the law.¹ They, however, **provoked** by the devil,² **in willful** disobedience,³ robbed themselves and all their descendants of these gifts.⁴

¹ Gen. 1:31; Eph. 4:24

² Gen. 3:13; John 8:44

³ Gen. 3:6

⁴ Rom. 5:12, 18, 19

10 Q. Does God permit such disobedience and rebellion to go unpunished?

A. Certainly not. God is terribly angry **with** the sin we are born with as well as the sins we personally commit.

As a just judge, God will punish them **both** now and in eternity,¹ **having declared:**

"Cursed is everyone who does not observe and obey all the things written in the book of the law."²

¹ Ex. 34:7; Ps. 5:4-6; Nah. 1:2; Rom. 1:18; Eph. 5:6; Heb. 9:27

² Gal. 3:10; Deut. 27:26

11 Q. But isn't God also merciful?

A. God is certainly merciful,¹ **but also just.**² God's justice demands that sin, committed against his supreme majesty, be punished with the supreme penalty—eternal punishment of body and soul.³

¹ Ex. 34:6-7; Ps. 103:8-9

² Ex. 34:7; Deut. 7:9-11; Ps. 5:4-6; Heb. 10:30-31

³ Matt. 25:35-46

Part II: Deliverance

LORD'S DAY 5

12 Q. According to God's righteous judgment we deserve punishment both now and in eternity: how then can we escape this punishment and return to God's favor?

A. God requires that his justice be satisfied.¹ Therefore the claims of this justice must be paid in full, either by ourselves or by another.²

¹ Ex. 23:7; Rom. 2:1-11

² Isa. 53:11; Rom. 8:3-4

13 Q. Can we make this payment ourselves?

A. Certainly not. Actually, we increase our debt every day.¹

¹ Matt. 6:12; Rom. 2:4-5

14 Q. Can another creature—any at all—pay this debt for us?

A. No.
To begin with,
God will not punish any other creature for what a human is guilty of.¹
Furthermore,
no mere creature can bear the weight of God's eternal wrath against sin and deliver others from it.²

¹ Ezek. 18:4, 20; Heb. 2:14-18

² Ps. 49:7-9; 130:3

15 Q. What kind of mediator and deliverer should we look for then?

A. One who is a true¹ and righteous² human, yet more powerful than all creatures, that is, one who is also true God.³

¹ Rom. 1:3; 1 Cor. 15:21; Heb. 2:17

² Isa. 53:9; 2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 7:26

³ Isa. 7:14; 9:6; Jer. 23:6; John 1:1

LORD'S DAY 6

16 Q. Why must the mediator be a true and righteous human?

- A. God's justice demands
that human nature, which has sinned,
must pay for sin;¹
but a sinful human could never pay for others.²

¹ Rom. 5:12, 15; 1 Cor. 15:21; Heb. 2:14-16

² Heb. 7:26-27; 1 Pet. 3:18

17 Q. Why must the mediator also be true God?

- A. So that the mediator,
by the power of his divinity,
might bear the weight of God's wrath in his humanity
and earn for us
and restore to us
righteousness and life.¹

¹ Isa. 53; John 3:16; 2 Cor. 5:21

18 Q. Then who is this mediator— true God and at the same time a true and righteous human?

- A. Our Lord Jesus Christ,¹
who was given to us
to completely deliver us
and make us right with God.²

¹ Matt. 1:21-23; Luke 2:11; 1 Tim. 2:5

² 1 Cor. 1:30

19 Q. How do you come to know this?

- A. The holy gospel tells me.
God began to reveal the gospel already in Paradise;¹
later God proclaimed it
by the holy patriarchs² and prophets³
and foreshadowed it
by the sacrifices and other ceremonies of the law;⁴
and finally God fulfilled it
through his own beloved Son.⁵

¹ Gen. 3:15

² Gen. 22:18; 49:10

³ Isa. 53; Jer. 23:5-6; Mic. 7:18-20; Acts 10:43; Heb. 1:1-2

⁴ Lev. 1-7; John 5:46; Heb. 10:1-10

⁵ Rom. 10:4; Gal. 4:4-5; Col. 2:17

LORD'S DAY 7

20 Q. **Are all people then saved through Christ just as they were lost through Adam?**

A. No.

Only those are saved
who through true faith
are grafted into Christ
and accept all his benefits.¹

¹ Matt. 7:14; John 3:16, 18, 36; Rom. 11:16-21

21 Q. **What is true faith?**

A. True faith is

not only a sure knowledge by which I hold as true
all that God has revealed to us in Scripture;¹
it is also a wholehearted trust,²
which the Holy Spirit creates in me³ by the gospel,⁴
that God has freely granted,
not only to others but to me also,⁵
forgiveness of sins,
eternal righteousness,
and salvation.⁶
These are gifts of sheer grace,
granted solely by Christ's merit.⁷

¹ John 17:3, 17; Heb. 11:1-3; James 2:19

² Rom. 4:18-21; 5:1; 10:10; Heb. 4:14-16

³ Matt. 16:15-17; John 3:5; Acts 16:14

⁴ Rom. 1:16; 10:17; 1 Cor. 1:21

⁵ Gal. 2:20

⁶ Rom. 1:17; Heb. 10:10

⁷ Rom. 3:21-26; Gal. 2:16; Eph. 2:8-10

22 Q. **What then must a Christian believe?**

A. All that is promised us in the gospel,¹
a summary of which is taught us
in the articles of our universal
and undisputed Christian faith.

¹ Matt. 28:18-20; John 20:30-31

23 Q. What are these articles?

A. I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only begotten Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit
and born of the virgin Mary.
He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to hell.
The third day he rose again from the dead.
He ascended to heaven
and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty.
From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

LORD'S DAY 8

24 Q. How are these articles divided?

A. Into three parts:
God the Father and our creation;
God the Son and our deliverance;
and God the Holy Spirit and our sanctification.

**25 Q. Since there is only one divine being,¹
why do you speak of three:
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?**

A. Because that is how
God has revealed himself in his Word:²
these three distinct persons
are one, true, eternal God.

¹ Deut. 6:4; 1 Cor. 8:4, 6

² Matt. 3:16-17; 28:18-19; Luke 4:18 (Isa. 61:1); John 14:26; 15:26; 2 Cor. 13:14;
Gal. 4:6; Tit. 3:5-6

God the Father

LORD'S DAY 9

26 Q. What do you believe when you say,
"I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth"?

- A. That the eternal Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
who out of nothing created heaven and earth
and everything in them,¹
who still upholds and rules them
by his eternal counsel and providence,²
is my God and Father
because of Christ the Son.³

I trust God so much that I do not doubt
he will provide
whatever I need
for body and soul,⁴
and will turn to my good
whatever adversity he sends upon me
in this sad world.⁵

God is able to do this because he is almighty God⁶
and desires to do this because he is a faithful Father.⁷

¹ Gen. 1-2; Ex. 20:11; Ps. 33:6; Isa. 44:24; Acts 4:24; 14:15

² Ps. 104; Matt. 6:30; 10:29; Eph. 1:11

³ John 1:12-13; Rom. 8:15-16; Gal. 4:4-7; Eph. 1:5

⁴ Ps. 55:22; Matt. 6:25-26; Luke 12:22-31

⁵ Rom. 8:28

⁶ Gen. 18:14; Rom. 8:31-39

⁷ Matt. 7:9-11

LORD'S DAY 10

27 Q. What do you understand by the providence of God?

- A. **The** almighty and ever present power of God¹
by which God upholds, as with his hand,
heaven
and earth
and all creatures,²
and so rules them that
leaf and blade,
rain and drought,
fruitful and lean years,
food and drink,
health and sickness,
prosperity and poverty—³
all things, in fact,
come to us
not by chance⁴
but **by** his fatherly hand.⁵

¹ Jer. 23:23-24; Acts 17:24-28

² Heb. 1:3

³ Jer. 5:24; Acts 14:15-17; John 9:3; Prov. 22:2

⁴ Prov. 16:33

⁵ Matt. 10:29

28 Q. **How does the knowledge of God's creation and providence help us?**

- A. We can be patient when things go against us,¹
thankful when things go well,²
and for the future we can have
good confidence in our faithful God and Father
that nothing **in creation** will separate us from his love.³
For all creatures are so completely in God's hand
that without his will
they can neither **move nor be moved.**⁴

¹ Job 1:21-22; James 1:3

² Deut. 8:10; 1 Thess. 5:18

³ Ps. 55:22; Rom. 5:3-5; 8:38-39

⁴ Job 1:12; 2:6; Prov. 21:1; Acts 17:24-28

God the Son

LORD'S DAY 11

29 Q. Why is the Son of God called "Jesus," meaning "savior"?

A. Because he saves us from our sins,¹
and because salvation should not be sought
and cannot be found in anyone else.²

¹ Matt. 1:21; Heb. 7:25

² Isa. 43:11; John 15:5; Acts 4:11-12; 1 Tim. 2:5

30 Q. Do those who look for their salvation in saints, in themselves, or elsewhere really believe in the only savior Jesus?

A. No.
Although they boast of being his,
by their actions they deny
the only savior, Jesus.¹

Either Jesus is not a perfect savior,
or those who in true faith accept this savior
have in him all they need for their salvation.²

¹ 1 Cor. 1:12-13; Gal. 5:4

² Col. 1:19-20; 2:10; 1 John 1:7

LORD'S DAY 12

31 Q. Why is he called "Christ," meaning "anointed"?

A. Because he has been ordained by God the Father and has been anointed with the Holy Spirit¹
to be
our chief prophet and teacher²
who fully reveals to us
the secret counsel and will of God concerning our deliverance;³
our only high priest⁴
who has delivered us by the one sacrifice of his body,⁵
and who continually pleads our cause with the Father;⁶

and our eternal king⁷
who governs us by his Word and Spirit,
and who guards us and keeps us
in the freedom he has won for us.⁸

¹ Luke 3:21-22; 4:14-19 (Isa. 61:1); Heb. 1:9 (Ps. 45:7)

² Acts 3:22 (Deut. 18:15)

³ John 1:18; 15:15

⁴ Heb. 7:17 (Ps. 110:4)

⁵ Heb. 9:12; 10:11-14

⁶ Rom. 8:34; Heb. 9:24

⁷ Matt. 21:5 (Zech. 9:9)

⁸ Matt. 28:18-20; John 10:28; Rev. 12:10-11

32 Q. But why are you called a Christian?

A. Because by faith I am a member of Christ¹
and so I share in his anointing.²

I am anointed

to confess his name,³

to present myself to him as a living sacrifice of thanks,⁴
to strive with a free conscience against sin and the devil
in this life,⁵

and afterward to reign with Christ
over all creation
for eternity.⁶

¹ 1 Cor. 12:12-27

² Acts 2:17 (Joel 2:28); 1 John 2:27

³ Matt. 10:32; Rom. 10:9-10; Heb. 13:15

⁴ Rom. 12:1; 1 Pet. 2:5, 9

⁵ Gal. 5:16-17; Eph. 6:11; 1 Tim. 1:18-19

⁶ Matt. 25:34; 2 Tim. 2:12

LORD'S DAY 13

**33 Q. Why is he called God's "only begotten Son"
when we also are God's children?**

A. Because Christ alone is the eternal, natural Son of God.¹
We, however, are adopted children of God—
adopted by grace through Christ.²

¹ John 1:1-3, 14, 18; Heb. 1

² John 1:12; Rom. 8:14-17; Eph. 1:5-6

34 Q. Why do you call him “our Lord”?

A. Because—
not with gold or silver,
but with his precious blood—¹
he has set us free
from sin and from the tyranny of the devil,²
and has bought us,
body and soul,
to be his very own.³

¹ 1 Pet. 1:18-19

² Col. 1:13-14; Heb. 2:14-15

³ 1 Cor. 6:20; 1 Tim. 2:5-6

LORD’S DAY 14

**35 Q. What does it mean that he
“was conceived by the Holy Spirit
and born of the virgin Mary”?**

A. That the eternal Son of God,
who is and remains
true and eternal God,¹
took to himself,
through the working of the Holy Spirit,²
from the flesh and blood of the virgin Mary,³
a truly human nature
so that he might also become David’s true descendant,⁴
like his brothers and sisters in every way⁵
except for sin.⁶

¹ John 1:1; 10:30-36; Acts 13:33 (Ps. 2:7); Col. 1:15-17; 1 John 5:20

² Luke 1:35

³ Matt. 1:18-23; John 1:14; Gal. 4:4; Heb. 2:14

⁴ 2 Sam. 7:12-16; Ps. 132:11; Matt. 1:1; Rom. 1:3

⁵ Phil. 2:7; Heb. 2:17

⁶ Heb. 4:15; 7:26-27

**36 Q. How does the holy conception and birth of Christ
benefit you?**

A. He is our mediator¹
and, in God’s sight,
he covers with his innocence and perfect holiness
my sinfulness in which I was conceived.²

¹ 1 Tim. 2:5-6; Heb. 9:13-15

² Rom. 8:3-4; 2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 4:4-5; 1 Pet. 1:18-19

LORD'S DAY 15

37 Q. What do you understand by the word "suffered"?

- A. That during his whole life on earth, but especially at the end, Christ sustained
in body and soul
the wrath of God against the sin of the whole human race.¹

This he did in order that,
by his suffering as the only atoning sacrifice,²
he might deliver us, body and soul,
from eternal condemnation,³
and gain for us
God's grace,
righteousness,
and eternal life.⁴

¹ Isa. 53; 1 Pet. 2:24; 3:18

² Rom. 3:25; Heb. 10:14; 1 John 2:2; 4:10

³ Rom. 8:1-4; Gal. 3:13

⁴ John 3:16; Rom. 3:24-26

38 Q. Why did he suffer "under Pontius Pilate" as judge?

- A. So that he,
though innocent,
might be condemned by an earthly judge,¹
and so free us from the severe judgment of God
that was to fall on us.²

¹ Luke 23:13-24; John 19:4, 12-16

² Isa. 53:4-5; 2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 3:13

39 Q. Is it significant that he was "crucified" instead of dying some other way?

- A. Yes.
By this I am convinced
that he shouldered the curse
which lay on me,
since death by crucifixion was cursed by God.¹

¹ Gal. 3:10-13 (Deut. 21:23)

LORD'S DAY 16

40 Q. Why did Christ have to suffer death?

- A. Because God's justice and truth **require it**.¹
nothing else could pay for our sins
except the death of the Son of God.²

¹ Gen. 2:17

² Rom. 8:3-4; Phil. 2:8; Heb. 2:9

41 Q. Why was he "buried"?

- A. His burial testifies
that he really died.¹

¹ Isa. 53:9; John 19:38-42; Acts 13:29; 1 Cor. 15:3-4

42 Q. Since Christ has died for us, why do we still have to die?

- A. Our death does not pay the debt of our sins.¹
Rather, it puts an end to our sinning
and is our entrance into eternal life.²

¹ Ps. 49:7

² John 5:24; Phil. 1:21-23; 1 Thess. 5:9-10

43 Q. What further benefit do we receive from Christ's sacrifice and death on the cross?

- A. By Christ's power
our old selves are crucified, put to death, and buried with him,¹
so that the evil desires of the flesh
may no longer rule us,²
but that instead we may offer ourselves
as a sacrifice of gratitude to him.³

¹ Rom. 6:5-11; Col. 2:11-12

² Rom. 6:12-14

³ Rom. 12:1; Eph. 5:1-2

44 Q. Why does the creed add, "He descended to hell"?

- A. To assure me **during attacks of deepest dread and temptation**
that Christ my Lord,
by suffering unspeakable anguish, pain, and terror of soul,
on the cross but also earlier,
has delivered me from **hellish anguish and torment**.¹

¹ Isa. 53; Matt. 26:36-46; 27:45-46; Luke 22:44; Heb. 5:7-10

LORD'S DAY 17

45 Q. How does Christ's resurrection benefit us?

A. First, by his resurrection he has overcome death, so that he might make us share in the righteousness he obtained for us by his death.¹

Second, by his power we too are already raised to a new life.²

Third, Christ's resurrection is a sure pledge to us of our blessed resurrection.³

¹ Rom. 4:25; 1 Cor. 15:16-20; 1 Pet. 1:3-5

² Rom. 6:5-11; Eph. 2:4-6; Col. 3:1-4

³ Rom. 8:11; 1 Cor. 15:12-23; Phil. 3:20-21

LORD'S DAY 18

46 Q. What do you mean by saying, "He ascended to heaven"?

A. That Christ, while his disciples watched, was taken up from the earth into heaven¹ and remains there on our behalf² until he comes again to judge the living and the dead.³

¹ Luke 24:50-51; Acts 1:9-11

² Rom. 8:34; Eph. 4:8-10; Heb. 7:23-25; 9:24

³ Acts 1:11

47 Q. But isn't Christ with us until the end of the world as he promised us?¹

A. Christ is true human and true God. In his human nature Christ is not now on earth;² but in his divinity, majesty, grace, and Spirit he is never absent from us.³

¹ Matt. 28:20

² Acts 1:9-11; 3:19-21

³ Matt. 28:18-20; John 14:16-19

48 Q. If his humanity is not present wherever his divinity is, then aren't the two natures of Christ separated from each other?

A. Certainly not.

Since divinity is not limited and is present everywhere,¹ it is evident that Christ's divinity is surely beyond the bounds of the humanity that has been taken on, but at the same time his divinity is in and remains personally united to his humanity.²

¹ Jer. 23:23-24; Acts 7:48-49 (Isa. 66:1)

² John 1:14; 3:13; Col. 2:9

49 Q. How does Christ's ascension to heaven benefit us?

A. First, he is our advocate in heaven in the presence of his Father.¹

Second, we have our own flesh in heaven as a sure pledge that Christ our head will also take us, his members, up to himself.²

Third, he sends his Spirit to us on earth as a corresponding pledge.³ By the Spirit's power we seek not earthly things but the things above, where Christ is, sitting at God's right hand.⁴

¹ Rom. 8:34; 1 John 2:1

² John 14:2; 17:24; Eph. 2:4-6

³ John 14:16; 2 Cor. 1:21-22; 5:5

⁴ Col. 3:1-4

LORD'S DAY 19

**50 Q. Why the next words:
“and is seated at the right hand of God”?**

A. Because Christ ascended to heaven
to show there that he is head of his church,¹
the one through whom the Father rules all things.²

¹ Eph. 1:20-23; Col. 1:18

² Matt. 28:18; John 5:22-23

**51 Q. How does this glory of Christ our head
benefit us?**

A. First, through his Holy Spirit
he pours out gifts from heaven
upon us his members.¹

Second, by his power
he defends us and keeps us safe
from all enemies.²

¹ Acts 2:33; Eph. 4:7-12

² Ps. 110:1-2; John 10:27-30; Rev. 19:11-16

**52 Q. How does Christ's return
“to judge the living and the dead”
comfort you?**

A. In all distress and persecution,
with uplifted head,
I confidently await the very judge
who has already offered himself to the judgment of God
in my place and removed the whole curse from me.¹
Christ will cast all his enemies and mine
into everlasting condemnation,
but will take me and all his chosen ones
to himself
into the joy and glory of heaven.²

¹ Luke 21:28; Rom. 8:22-25; Phil. 3:20-21; Tit. 2:13-14

² Matt. 25:31-46; 2 Thess. 1:6-10

God the Holy Spirit

LORD'S DAY 20

53 Q. What do you believe concerning "the Holy Spirit"?

A. First, that the Spirit, with the Father and the Son, is eternal God.¹

Second, that the Spirit is given also to me,² so that, through true faith, he makes me share in Christ and all his benefits,³ comforts me,⁴ and will remain with me forever.⁵

¹ Gen. 1:1-2; Matt. 28:19; Acts 5:3-4

² 1 Cor. 6:19; 2 Cor. 1:21-22; Gal. 4:6

³ Gal. 3:14

⁴ John 15:26; Acts 9:31

⁵ John 14:16-17; 1 Pet. 4:14

LORD'S DAY 21

54 Q. What do you believe concerning "the holy catholic church"?

A. I believe that the Son of God through his Spirit and Word,¹ out of the entire human race,² from the beginning of the world to its end,³ gathers, protects, and preserves for himself a community chosen for eternal life⁴ and united in true faith.⁵ And of this community I am⁶ and always will be⁷ a living member.

¹ John 10:14-16; Acts 20:28; Rom. 10:14-17; Col. 1:18

² Gen. 26:3b-4; Rev. 5:9

³ Isa. 59:21; 1 Cor. 11:26

⁴ Matt. 16:18; John 10:28-30; Rom. 8:28-30; Eph. 1:3-14

⁵ Acts 2:42-47; Eph. 4:1-6

⁶ 1 John 3:14, 19-21

⁷ John 10:27-28; 1 Cor. 1:4-9; 1 Pet. 1:3-5

55 Q. What do you understand by "the communion of saints"?

A. First, that believers one and all, as members of this community, share in Christ and in all his treasures and gifts.¹

Second, that each member should consider it a duty to use these gifts readily and joyfully for the service and enrichment of the other members.²

¹ Rom. 8:32; 1 Cor. 6:17; 12:4-7, 12-13; 1 John 1:3

² Rom. 12:4-8; 1 Cor. 12:20-27; 13:1-7; Phil. 2:4-8

56 Q. What do you believe concerning “the forgiveness of sins”?

- A. I believe that God, because of Christ’s satisfaction, will no longer remember any of my sins¹ or my sinful nature which I need to struggle against all my life.²

Rather, by grace God grants me the righteousness of Christ to free me forever from judgment.³

¹ Ps. 103:3-4, 10, 12; Mic. 7:18-19; 2 Cor. 5:18-21; 1 John 1:7; 2:2

² Rom. 7:21-25

³ John 3:17-18; Rom. 8:1-2

LORD’S DAY 22

57 Q. How does “the resurrection of the body” comfort you?

- A. Not only will my soul be taken immediately after this life to Christ its head,¹ but also my very flesh will be raised by the power of Christ, reunited with my soul, and made like Christ’s glorious body.²

¹ Luke 23:43; Phil. 1:21-23

² 1 Cor. 15:20, 42-46, 54; Phil. 3:21; 1 John 3:2

58 Q. How does the article concerning “life everlasting” comfort you?

- A. Even as I already now experience in my heart the beginning of eternal joy,¹

so after this life I will have
perfect blessedness such as
no eye has seen,
no ear has heard,
no human heart has ever imagined:
a blessedness in which to praise God forever.²

¹ Rom. 14:17

² John 17:3; 1 Cor. 2:9

LORD'S DAY 23

59 Q. What good does it do you, however, to believe all this?

A. In Christ I am righteous before God and heir to life everlasting.¹

¹ John 3:36; Rom. 1:17 (Hab. 2:4); Rom. 5:1-2

60 Q. How are you righteous before God?

A. Only by true faith in Jesus Christ.¹

Even though my conscience accuses me
of having grievously sinned against all God's commandments,
of never having kept any of them,²
and of still being inclined toward all evil,³
nevertheless,
without any merit of my own,⁴
out of sheer grace,⁵
God grants and credits to me
the perfect satisfaction, righteousness, and holiness of Christ,⁶
as if I had never sinned nor been a sinner,
and as if I had been as perfectly obedient
as Christ was obedient for me.⁷

All I need to do
is accept this gift with a believing heart.⁸

¹ Rom. 3:21-28; Gal. 2:16; Eph. 2:8-9; Phil 3:8-11

² Rom. 3:9-10

³ Rom. 7:23

⁴ Tit. 3:4-5

⁵ Rom. 3:24; Eph. 2:8

⁶ Rom. 4:3-5 (Gen. 15:6); 2 Cor. 5:17-19; 1 John 2:1-2

⁷ Rom. 4:24-25; 2 Cor. 5:21

⁸ John 3:18; Acts 16:30-31

61 Q. Why do you say that
**through faith alone
you are righteous?**

- A. Not because I please God
by the worthiness of my faith.
It is because only Christ's satisfaction, righteousness, and holiness
make me righteous before God,¹
and because I can accept this righteousness and make it mine
in no other way
than through faith.²

¹ 1 Cor. 1:30-31

² Rom. 10:10; 1 John 5:10-12

LORD'S DAY 24

62 Q. Why can't our good works
**be our righteousness before God,
or at least a part of our righteousness?**

- A. Because the righteousness
which can pass God's judgment
must be entirely perfect
and must in every way measure up to the divine law.¹
But even our best works in this life
are imperfect
and stained with sin.²

¹ Rom. 3:20; Gal. 3:10 (Deut. 27:26)

² Isa. 64:6

63 Q. How can our good works
**be said to merit nothing
when God promises to reward them
in this life and the next?**¹

- A. This reward is not earned;
it is a gift of grace.²

¹ Matt. 5:12; Heb. 11:6

² Luke 17:10; 2 Tim. 4:7-8

64 Q. But doesn't this teaching
make people indifferent and wicked?

- A. No.
It is impossible
for those grafted into Christ through true faith
not to produce fruits of gratitude.¹

¹ Luke 6:43-45; John 15:5

The Holy Sacraments

LORD'S DAY 25

65 Q. It is through faith alone that we share in Christ and all his benefits: where then does that faith come from?

A. The Holy Spirit produces it in our hearts¹ by the preaching of the holy gospel,² and confirms it by the use of the holy sacraments.³

¹ John 3:5; 1 Cor. 2:10-14; Eph. 2:8

² Rom. 10:17; 1 Pet. 1:23-25

³ Matt. 28:19-20; 1 Cor. 10:16

66 Q. What are sacraments?

A. Sacraments are visible, holy signs and seals. They were instituted by God so that by our use of them he might make us understand more clearly the promise of the gospel, and seal that promise.¹

And this is God's gospel promise:
to grant us forgiveness of sins and eternal life
by grace
because of Christ's one sacrifice
accomplished on the cross.²

¹ Gen. 17:11; Deut. 30:6; Rom. 4:11

² Matt. 26:27-28; Acts 2:38; Heb. 10:10

67 Q. Are both the word and the sacraments then intended to focus our faith on the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross as the only ground of our salvation?

A. Yes!
In the gospel the Holy Spirit teaches us and by the holy sacraments confirms that our entire salvation rests on Christ's one sacrifice for us on the cross.¹

¹ Rom. 6:3; 1 Cor. 11:26; Gal. 3:27

68 Q. How many sacraments did Christ institute in the New Testament?

A. Two: holy baptism and the holy supper.¹

¹ Matt. 28:19-20; 1 Cor. 11:23-26

Holy Baptism

LORD'S DAY 26

69 Q. How does **holy baptism** remind and assure you that **Christ's one sacrifice on the cross** benefits you personally?

A. In this way:

Christ instituted this outward washing¹ and **with it** promised that,

as surely as water washes away the dirt from the body, so certainly his blood and his Spirit wash **away my** soul's impurity, that is, all my sins.²

¹ Acts 2:38

² Matt. 3:11; Rom. 6:3-10; 1 Pet. 3:21

70 Q. What does it mean to be washed with **Christ's blood and Spirit**?

A. To be washed with Christ's blood means that God, by grace, has forgiven **our** sins because of Christ's blood poured out for **us** in his sacrifice on the cross.¹

To be washed with Christ's Spirit means that the Holy Spirit has **renewed** and **sanctified us to be members** of Christ, so that more and more **we** become dead to sin and live holy and blameless lives.²

¹ Zech. 13:1; Eph. 1:7-8; Heb. 12:24; 1 Pet. 1:2; Rev. 1:5

² Ezek. 36:25-27; John 3:5-8; Rom. 6:4; 1 Cor. 6:11; Col. 2:11-12

71 Q. Where does Christ promise that we are washed with his blood and Spirit as surely as we are washed with the water of baptism?

A. In the institution of baptism, where he says:

"Go **therefore** and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."¹

"The one who believes and is baptized will be saved; but the one who does not believe will be condemned."²

This promise is repeated when Scripture calls baptism
“the water of rebirth”³ and
the washing away of sins.⁴

¹ Matt. 28:19

² Mark 16:16

³ Tit. 3:5

⁴ Acts 22:16

LORD’S DAY 27

72 Q. Does this outward washing with water itself wash away sins?

A. No, only Jesus Christ’s blood and the Holy Spirit cleanse us from all sins.¹

¹ Matt. 3:11; 1 Pet. 3:21; 1 John 1:7

73 Q. Why then does the Holy Spirit call baptism the water of rebirth and the washing away of sins?

A. God has good reason for these words. To begin with, God wants to teach us that the blood and Spirit of Christ take away our sins just as water removes dirt from the body.¹

But more important, God wants to assure us, by this divine pledge and sign, that we are as truly washed of our sins spiritually as our bodies are washed with water physically.²

¹ 1 Cor. 6:11; Rev. 1:5; 7:14

² Acts 2:38; Rom. 6:3-4; Gal. 3:27

74 Q. Should infants also be baptized?

A. Yes. Infants as well as adults are included in God’s covenant and people,¹ and they, no less than adults, are promised deliverance from sin through Christ’s blood and the Holy Spirit who produces faith.²

Therefore, by baptism, the sign of the covenant, they too should be incorporated into the Christian church and distinguished from the children of unbelievers.³

This was done in the Old Testament by circumcision,⁴
which was replaced in the New Testament by baptism.⁵

¹ Gen. 17:7; Matt. 19:14

² Isa. 44:1-3; Acts 2:38-39; 16:31

³ Acts 10:47; 1 Cor. 7:14

⁴ Gen. 17:9-14

⁵ Col. 2:11-13

The Holy Supper of Jesus Christ

LORD'S DAY 28

75 Q. How does the holy supper remind and assure you that you share in Christ's one sacrifice on the cross and in all his benefits?

A. In this way:

Christ has commanded me and all believers to eat this broken bread and to drink this cup in remembrance of him.

With this command come these promises:¹

First,

as surely as I see with my eyes
the bread of the Lord broken for me
and the cup shared with me,
so surely
his body was offered and broken for me
and his blood poured out for me
on the cross.

Second,

as surely as
I receive from the hand of the one who serves,
and taste with my mouth
the bread and cup of the Lord,
given me as sure signs of Christ's body and blood,
so surely
he nourishes and refreshes my soul for eternal life
with his crucified body and poured-out blood.

¹ Matt. 26:26-28; Mark 14:22-24; Luke 22:19-20; 1 Cor. 11:23-25

76 Q. **What does it mean
to eat the crucified body of Christ
and to drink his poured-out blood?**

A. It means
to accept with a believing heart
the entire suffering and death of Christ
and thereby
to receive forgiveness of sins and eternal life.¹

But it means more.

Through the Holy Spirit, who lives both in Christ and in us,
we are united more and more to Christ's blessed body.²

And so, although he is in heaven³ and we are on earth,
we are flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone.⁴

And we forever live on and are governed by one Spirit,
as the members of our body are by one soul.⁵

¹ John 6:35, 40, 50-54

² John 6:55-56; 1 Cor. 12:13

³ Acts 1:9-11; 1 Cor. 11:26; Col. 3:1

⁴ 1 Cor. 6:15-17; Eph. 5:29-30; 1 John 4:13

⁵ John 6:56-58; 15:1-6; Eph. 4:15-16; 1 John 3:24

77 Q. **Where does Christ promise
to nourish and refresh believers
with his body and blood
as surely as
they eat this broken bread
and drink this cup?**

A. In the institution of the Lord's Supper:

"The Lord Jesus, on the night when he was betrayed,
took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks,
he broke it and said,

'This is my body that is [broken]* for you.
Do this in remembrance of me.'

In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying,
'This cup is the new covenant in my blood;
do this, as often as you drink it,
in remembrance of me.'

For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup,
you proclaim the Lord's death
until he comes."¹

This promise is repeated by Paul in these words:

"The cup of blessing that we bless,
is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ?
The bread that we break,
is it not a sharing in the body of Christ?"

Because there is one **bread**, we who are many are one body,
for we all partake of the one **bread**.²

¹ 1 Cor. 11:23-26

² 1 Cor. 10:16-17

*The word "broken" does not appear in the NRSV text, but it was present in the original German of the Heidelberg Catechism.

LORD'S DAY 29

**78 Q. Do the bread and wine become
the real body and blood of Christ?**

A. No.

Just as the water of baptism
is not changed into Christ's blood
and does not itself wash away sins
but is simply **a divine sign and assurance¹ of these things**,
so too the **holy** bread of the Lord's Supper
does not become the actual body of Christ,²
even though it is called the body of Christ³
in keeping with the nature and language of sacraments.⁴

¹ Eph. 5:26; Tit. 3:5

² Matt. 26:26-29

³ 1 Cor. 10:16-17; 11:26-28

⁴ Gen. 17:10-11; Ex. 12:11, 13; 1 Cor. 10:1-4

**79 Q. Why then does Christ call
the bread his body
and the cup his blood,
or the new covenant in his blood,
and Paul use the words,
a participation in Christ's body and blood?**

A. Christ has good reason for these words.

He wants to teach us that
just as bread and wine nourish **the** temporal life,
so too his crucified body and poured-out blood
are the true food and drink of our souls for eternal life.¹

But more important,
he wants to assure us, by this visible sign and pledge,
that we, through the Holy Spirit's work,
share in his true body and blood
as surely as our mouths
receive these holy signs in his remembrance,²

and that all of his suffering and obedience
are as definitely ours
as if we personally
had suffered and **made satisfaction** for our sins.³

¹ John 6:51, 55

² 1 Cor. 10:16-17; 11:26

³ Rom. 6:5-11

LORD'S DAY 30

80* Q. How does the Lord's Supper differ from the Roman Catholic Mass?

A. The Lord's Supper declares to us
that **all our sins are completely forgiven**
through the **one sacrifice** of Jesus Christ,
which he himself **accomplished** on the cross once for all.¹

It also declares to us
that the Holy Spirit grafts us into Christ,²
who with his **true** body
is now in heaven at the right hand of the Father³
where he wants us to worship him.⁴

But the Mass teaches
that the living and the dead
do not have their sins forgiven
through the suffering of Christ
unless Christ is still offered for them daily by the priests.

It also teaches
that Christ is bodily present
under the form of bread and wine
where Christ is therefore to be worshiped.

Thus the Mass is basically
nothing but a denial
of the **one sacrifice** and suffering of Jesus Christ
and a condemnable idolatry.

¹ John 19:30; Heb. 7:27; 9:12, 25-26; 10:10-18

² 1 Cor. 6:17; 10:16-17

³ Acts 7:55-56; Heb. 1:3; 8:1

⁴ Matt. 6:20-21; John 4:21-24; Phil. 3:20; Col. 3:1-3

*Q&A 80 was altogether absent from the first edition of the catechism but was present in a shorter form in the second edition. The translation here given is of the expanded text of the third edition.

In response to a mandate from Synod 1998, the Christian Reformed Church's Interchurch Relations Committee conducted a study of Q&A 80 and the Roman Catholic Mass. Based on this study, Synod 2004 declared that "Q&A 80 can no longer be held in its current form as part of our confession."

Synod 2006 directed that Q&A 80 remain in the CRC's text of the Heidelberg Catechism but that the last three paragraphs be placed in brackets to indicate that they do not accurately reflect the official teaching and practice of today's Roman Catholic Church and are no longer confessionally binding on members of the CRC.

The Reformed Church in America retains the original full text, choosing to recognize that the catechism was written within a historical context which may not accurately describe the Roman Catholic Church's current stance.

81 Q. Who should come to the Lord's table?

- A. Those who are displeased with themselves because of their sins,
but who nevertheless trust that their sins are pardoned and that their remaining weakness is covered by the suffering and death of Christ, and who also desire more and more to strengthen their faith and to lead a better life.

Hypocrites and those who are unrepentant, however, eat and drink judgment on themselves.¹

¹ 1 Cor. 10:19-22; 11:26-32

82 Q. Should those be admitted to the Lord's Supper who show by what they profess and how they live that they are unbelieving and ungodly?

- A. No, that would dishonor God's covenant and bring down God's wrath upon the entire congregation.¹ Therefore, according to the instruction of Christ and his apostles, the Christian church is duty-bound to exclude such people, by the official use of the keys of the kingdom, until they reform their lives.

¹ 1 Cor. 11:17-32; Ps. 50:14-16; Isa. 1:11-17

LORD'S DAY 31

83 Q. What are the keys of the kingdom?

- A. The preaching of the holy gospel and Christian discipline toward repentance.
Both of them
open the kingdom of heaven to believers and close it to unbelievers.¹

¹ Matt. 16:19; John 20:22-23

84 Q. How does preaching the holy gospel open and close the kingdom of heaven?

- A. According to the command of Christ:

The kingdom of heaven is opened by proclaiming and publicly declaring to all believers, each and every one, that, as often as they accept the gospel promise in true faith, God, because of Christ's merit, truly forgives all their sins.

The kingdom of heaven is closed, however, by proclaiming and publicly declaring to unbelievers and hypocrites that, as long as they do not repent, the wrath of God and eternal condemnation rest on them.

God's judgment, both in this life and in the life to come, is based on this gospel testimony.¹

¹ Matt. 16:19; John 3:31-36; 20:21-23

85 Q. How is the kingdom of heaven closed and opened by Christian discipline?

- A. According to the command of Christ:

Those who, though called Christians,
profess unchristian teachings or live unchristian lives,
and who after repeated personal and loving admonitions,
refuse to abandon their errors and evil ways,
and who after being reported to the church, that is,
to those ordained by the church for that purpose,
fail to respond also to the church's admonitions—
such persons the church excludes
from the Christian community
by withholding the sacraments from them,
and God also excludes them from the kingdom of Christ.¹

Such persons,
when promising and demonstrating genuine reform,
are received again
as members of Christ
and of his church.²

¹ Matt. 18:15-20; 1 Cor. 5:3-5, 11-13; 2 Thess. 3:14-15

² Luke 15:20-24; 2 Cor. 2:6-11

Part III: Gratitude

LORD'S DAY 32

86 Q. **Since we have been delivered
from our misery
by grace through Christ
without any merit of our own,
why then should we do good works?**

- A. Because Christ, having redeemed us by his blood,
is also restoring us by his Spirit into his image,
so that with our whole lives
we may show that we are thankful to God
for his benefits,¹
so that he may be praised through us,²
so that we may be assured of our faith by its fruits,³
and so that by our godly living
our neighbors may be won over to Christ.⁴

¹ Rom. 6:13; 12:1-2; 1 Pet. 2:5-10

² Matt. 5:16; 1 Cor. 6:19-20

³ Matt. 7:17-18; Gal. 5:22-24; 2 Pet. 1:10-11

⁴ Matt. 5:14-16; Rom. 14:17-19; 1 Pet. 2:12; 3:1-2

87 Q. **Can those be saved
who do not turn to God
from their ungrateful
and unrepentant ways?**

- A. By no means.
Scripture tells us that
no unchaste person,
no idolater, adulterer, thief,
no covetous person,
no drunkard, slanderer, robber,
or the like
will inherit the kingdom of God.¹

¹ 1 Cor. 6:9-10; Gal. 5:19-21; Eph. 5:1-20; 1 John 3:14

LORD'S DAY 33

88 Q. What is involved in genuine repentance or conversion?

A. Two things:
the dying-away of the old self,
and the rising-to-life of the new.¹

¹ Rom. 6:1-11; 2 Cor. 5:17; Eph. 4:22-24; Col. 3:5-10

89 Q. What is the dying-away of the old self?

A. To be genuinely sorry for sin
and more and more to hate
and run away from it.¹

¹ Ps. 51:3-4, 17; Joel 2:12-13; Rom. 8:12-13; 2 Cor. 7:10

90 Q. What is the rising-to-life of the new self?

A. Wholehearted joy in God through Christ¹
and a love and delight to live
according to the will of God
by doing every kind of good work.²

¹ Ps. 51:8, 12; Isa. 57:15; Rom. 5:1; 14:17

² Rom. 6:10-11; Gal. 2:20

91 Q. What are good works?

A. Only those which
are done out of true faith,¹
conform to God's law,²
and are done for God's glory;³
and not those based
on our own opinion
or human tradition.⁴

¹ John 15:5; Heb. 11:6

² Lev. 18:4; 1 Sam. 15:22; Eph. 2:10

³ 1 Cor. 10:31

⁴ Deut. 12:32; Isa. 29:13; Ezek. 20:18-19; Matt. 15:7-9

The Ten Commandments

LORD'S DAY 34

92 Q. **What is God's law?**

A. God spoke all these words:

THE FIRST COMMANDMENT

"I am the Lord your God,
who brought you out of the land of Egypt,
out of the house of slavery;
you shall have no other gods before me."

THE SECOND COMMANDMENT

"You shall not make for yourself an idol,
whether in form of anything that is in heaven above,
or that is on the earth beneath,
or that is in the water under the earth.

You shall not bow down to them or worship them;
for I the Lord your God am a jealous God,
punishing children for the iniquity of parents,
to the third and fourth generation
of those who reject me,
but showing love to the thousandth generation of those
who love me and keep my commandments."

THE THIRD COMMANDMENT

"You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the Lord your God,
for the Lord will not acquit anyone
who misuses his name."

THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT

"Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy.
Six days you shall labor and do all your work.
But the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God;
you shall not do any work—
you, your son or your daughter,
your male or female slave,
your livestock,
or the alien resident in your towns.

For in six days the Lord made
the heaven and earth, the sea,
and all that is in them,
but rested the seventh day;
therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day
and consecrated it."

THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT

"Honor your father and your mother,
so that your days may be long
in the land that the Lord your God is giving to you."

THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT

"You shall not murder."

THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT

"You shall not commit adultery."

THE EIGHTH COMMANDMENT

"You shall not steal."

THE NINTH COMMANDMENT

"You shall not bear false witness
against your neighbor."

THE TENTH COMMANDMENT

"You shall not covet your neighbor's house;
you shall not covet your neighbor's wife,
or male or female slave,
or ox, or donkey,
or anything that belongs to your neighbor."¹

¹ Ex. 20:1-17; Deut. 5:6-21

93 Q. How are these commandments divided?

A. Into two tables.

The first has four commandments,
teaching us how we ought to live in relation to God.

The second has six commandments,
teaching us what we owe our neighbor.¹

¹ Matt. 22:37-39

94 Q. What does the Lord require in the first commandment?

A. That I, not wanting to endanger my own salvation,
avoid and shun
all idolatry,¹ sorcery, superstitious rites,²
and prayer to saints or to other creatures.³

That I rightly know the only true God,⁴
trust him alone,⁵
and look to God for every good thing⁶
humbly⁷ and patiently,⁸
and love,⁹ fear,¹⁰ and honor¹¹ God
with all my heart.

In short,
that I give up anything
rather than go against God's will in any way.¹²

¹ 1 Cor. 6:9-10; 10:5-14; 1 John 5:21

² Lev. 19:31; Deut. 18:9-12

³ Matt. 4:10; Rev. 19:10; 22:8-9

⁴ John 17:3

⁵ Jer. 17:5, 7

⁶ Ps. 104:27-28; James 1:17

⁷ 1 Pet. 5:5-6

⁸ Col. 1:11; Heb. 10:36

⁹ Matt. 22:37 (Deut. 6:5)

¹⁰ Prov. 9:10; 1 Pet. 1:17

¹¹ Matt. 4:10 (Deut. 6:13)

¹² Matt. 5:29-30; 10:37-39

95 Q. What is idolatry?

A. Idolatry is

having or inventing something in which one trusts
in place of or alongside of the only true God,
who has revealed himself in the Word.¹

¹ 1 Chron. 16:26; Gal. 4:8-9; Eph. 5:5; Phil. 3:19

LORD'S DAY 35

**96 Q. What is God's will for us
in the second commandment?**

A. That we in no way make any image of God¹
nor worship him in any other way
than has been commanded in God's Word.²

¹ Deut. 4:15-19; Isa. 40:18-25; Acts 17:29; Rom. 1:22-23

² Lev. 10:1-7; 1 Sam. 15:22-23; John 4:23-24

**97 Q. May we then not make
any image at all?**

A. God can not and may not
be visibly portrayed in any way.

Although creatures may be portrayed,
yet God forbids making or having such images
if one's intention is to worship them
or to serve God through them.¹

¹ Ex. 34:13-14, 17; 2 Kings 18:4-5

98 Q. **But may not images be permitted in churches in place of books for the unlearned?**

A. No, we should not try to be wiser than God. God wants the Christian community instructed by the living preaching of his Word—¹ not by idols that cannot even talk.²

¹ Rom. 10:14-15, 17; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:19

² Jer. 10:8; Hab. 2:18-20

LORD'S DAY 36

99 Q. **What is the aim of the third commandment?**

A. That we neither blaspheme nor misuse the name of God by cursing,¹ perjury,² or unnecessary oaths,³ nor share in such horrible sins by being silent bystanders.⁴

In summary,

we should use the holy name of God only with reverence and awe,⁵ so that we may properly confess God,⁶ pray to God,⁷ and glorify God in all our words and works.⁸

¹ Lev. 24:10-17

² Lev. 19:12

³ Matt. 5:37; James 5:12

⁴ Lev. 5:1; Prov. 29:24

⁵ Ps. 99:1-5; Jer. 4:2

⁶ Matt. 10:32-33; Rom. 10:9-10

⁷ Ps. 50:14-15; 1 Tim. 2:8

⁸ Col. 3:17

100 Q. **Is blasphemy of God's name by swearing and cursing really such serious sin that God is angry also with those who do not do all they can to help prevent and forbid it?**

A. Yes, indeed.¹ No sin is greater or provokes God's wrath more than blaspheming his name. That is why God commanded it to be punished with death.²

¹ Lev. 5:1

² Lev. 24:10-17

LORD'S DAY 37

101 Q. But may we swear an oath in God's name if we do it reverently?

- A. Yes, when the government demands it, or when necessity requires it, in order to maintain and promote truth and trustworthiness for God's glory and our neighbor's good.

Such oaths are grounded in God's Word¹ and were rightly used by the people of God in the Old and New Testaments.²

¹ Deut. 6:13; 10:20; Jer. 4:1-2; Heb. 6:16

² Gen. 21:24; Josh. 9:15; 1 Kings 1:29-30; Rom. 1:9; 2 Cor. 1:23

102 Q. May we also swear by saints or other creatures?

- A. No.
A legitimate oath means calling upon God as the only one who knows my heart to witness to my truthfulness and to punish me if I swear falsely.¹
No creature is worthy of such honor.²

¹ Rom. 9:1; 2 Cor. 1:23

² Matt. 5:34-37; 23:16-22; James 5:12

LORD'S DAY 38

103 Q. What is God's will for you in the fourth commandment?

- A. First,
that the gospel ministry and education for it be maintained,¹ and that, especially on the festive day of rest, I diligently attend the assembly of God's people² to learn what God's Word teaches,³ to participate in the sacraments,⁴ to pray to God publicly,⁵ and to bring Christian offerings for the poor.⁶

Second,
that every day of my life
I rest from my evil ways,
let the Lord work in me through his Spirit,
and so begin in this life
the eternal Sabbath.⁷

¹ Deut. 6:4-9, 20-25; 1 Cor. 9:13-14; 2 Tim. 2:2; 3:13-17; Tit. 1:5

² Deut. 12:5-12; Ps. 40:9-10; 68:26; Acts 2:42-47; Heb. 10:23-25

³ Rom. 10:14-17; 1 Cor. 14:31-32; 1 Tim. 4:13

⁴ 1 Cor. 11:23-25

⁵ Col. 3:16; 1 Tim. 2:1

⁶ Ps. 50:14; 1 Cor. 16:2; 2 Cor. 8 & 9

⁷ Isa. 66:23; Heb. 4:9-11

LORD'S DAY 39

**104 Q. What is God's will for you
in the fifth commandment?**

- A. That I honor, love, and be loyal
to my father and mother
and all those in authority over me;
that I submit myself with proper obedience
to all their good teaching and discipline;¹
and also that I be patient with their failings—²
for through them God chooses to rule us.³

¹ Ex. 21:17; Prov. 1:8; 4:1; Rom. 13:1-2; Eph. 5:21-22; 6:1-9; Col. 3:18- 4:1

² Prov. 20:20; 23:22; 1 Pet. 2:18

³ Matt. 22:21; Rom. 13:1-8; Eph. 6:1-9; Col. 3:18-21

LORD'S DAY 40

**105 Q. What is God's will for you
in the sixth commandment?**

- A. I am not to belittle, hate, insult, 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;¹
rather, I am to put away all desire for revenge.²

I am not to harm or recklessly endanger myself either.³

Prevention of murder is also why
government is armed with the sword.⁴

¹ Gen. 9:6; Lev. 19:17-18; Matt. 5:21-22; 26:52

² Prov. 25:21-22; Matt. 18:35; Rom. 12:19; Eph. 4:26

³ Matt. 4:7; 26:52; Rom. 13:11-14

⁴ Gen. 9:6; Ex. 21:14; Rom. 13:4

106 Q. Does this commandment refer only to murder?

A. By forbidding murder God teaches us
that he hates the root of murder:
envy, hatred, anger, vindictiveness.¹

In God's sight all such are disguised forms of murder.²

¹ Prov. 14:30; Rom. 1:29; 12:19; Gal. 5:19-21; 1 John 2:9-11

² 1 John 3:15

**107 Q. Is it enough then
that we do not murder our neighbor
in any such way?**

A. No.
By condemning envy, hatred, and anger
God wants us
to love our neighbors as ourselves,¹
to be patient, peace-loving, gentle,
merciful, and friendly toward them,²
to protect them from harm as much as we can,
and to do good even to our enemies.³

¹ Matt. 7:12; 22:39; Rom. 12:10

² Matt. 5:3-12; Luke 6:36; Rom. 12:10, 18; Gal. 6:1-2; Eph. 4:2; Col. 3:12; 1 Pet. 3:8

³ Ex. 23:4-5; Matt. 5:44-45; Rom. 12:20-21 (Prov. 25:21-22)

LORD'S DAY 41

108 Q. What does the seventh commandment teach us?

A. That God condemns all unchastity,¹
and that therefore we should thoroughly detest it²
and live decent and chaste lives,³
within or outside of the holy state of marriage.

¹ Lev. 18:30; Eph. 5:3-5

² Jude 22-23

³ 1 Cor. 7:1-9; 1 Thess. 4:3-8; Heb. 13:4

109 Q. Does God, in this commandment, forbid only such scandalous sins as adultery?

- A. We are temples of the Holy Spirit, body and soul, and God wants both to be kept clean and holy. That is why God forbids

all unchaste actions, looks, talk, thoughts, or desires,¹ and whatever may incite someone to them.²

¹ Matt. 5:27-29; 1 Cor. 6:18-20; Eph. 5:3-4

² 1 Cor. 15:33; Eph. 5:18

LORD'S DAY 42

110 Q. What does God forbid in the eighth commandment?

- A. God forbids not only outright theft and robbery, punishable by law.¹

But in God's sight theft also includes

all scheming and swindling

in order to get our neighbor's goods for ourselves,

whether by force or means that appear legitimate,² such as

inaccurate measurements of weight, size, or volume;

fraudulent merchandising;

counterfeit money;

excessive interest;

or any other means forbidden by God.³

In addition God forbids all greed⁴

and pointless squandering of his gifts.⁵

¹ Ex. 22:1; 1 Cor. 5:9-10; 6:9-10

² Mic. 6:9-11; Luke 3:14; James 5:1-6

³ Deut. 25:13-16; Ps. 15:5; Prov. 11:1; 12:22; Ezek. 45:9-12; Luke 6:35

⁴ Luke 12:15; Eph. 5:5

⁵ Prov. 21:20; 23:20-21; Luke 16:10-13

111 Q. What does God require of you in this commandment?

- A. That I do whatever I can for my neighbor's good, that I treat others as I would like them to treat me, and that I work faithfully so that I may share with those in need.¹

¹ Isa. 58:5-10; Matt. 7:12; Gal. 6:9-10; Eph. 4:28

LORD'S DAY 43

112 Q. What is the aim of the ninth commandment?

- A. That I
never give false testimony against anyone,
twist no one's words,
not gossip or slander,
nor join in condemning anyone
rashly or without a hearing.¹

Rather, in court and everywhere else,
I should avoid lying and deceit of every kind;
these are the very devices the devil uses,
and they would call down on me God's intense wrath.²
I should love the truth,
speak it candidly,
and openly acknowledge it.³
And I should do what I can
to guard and advance my neighbor's good name.⁴

¹ Ps. 15; Prov. 19:5; Matt. 7:1; Luke 6:37; Rom. 1:28-32

² Lev. 19:11-12; Prov. 12:22; 13:5; John 8:44; Rev. 21:8

³ 1 Cor. 13:6; Eph. 4:25

⁴ 1 Pet. 3:8-9; 4:8

LORD'S DAY 44

113 Q. What is the aim of the tenth commandment?

- A. That not even the slightest desire or thought
contrary to any one of God's commandments
should ever arise in our hearts.

Rather, with all our hearts
we should always hate sin
and take pleasure in whatever is right.¹

¹ Ps. 19:7-14; 139:23-24; Rom. 7:7-8

114 Q. But can those converted to God obey these commandments perfectly?

A. No.

In this life even the holiest have only a small beginning of this obedience.¹

Nevertheless, with all seriousness of purpose, they do begin to live according to all, not only some, of God's commandments.²

¹ Eccles. 7:20; Rom. 7:14-15; 1 Cor. 13:9; 1 John 1:8-10

² Ps. 1:1-2; Rom. 7:22-25; Phil. 3:12-16

115 Q. Since no one in this life can obey the Ten Commandments perfectly, why does God want them preached so pointedly?

A. First, so that the longer we live the more we may come to know our sinfulness and the more eagerly look to Christ for forgiveness of sins and righteousness.¹

Second, so that, we may never stop striving, and never stop praying to God for the grace of the Holy Spirit, to be renewed more and more after God's image, until after this life we reach our goal: perfection.²

¹ Ps. 32:5; Rom. 3:19-26; 7:7, 24-25; 1 John 1:9

² 1 Cor. 9:24; Phil. 3:12-14; 1 John 3:1-3

The Lord's Prayer

LORD'S DAY 45

116 Q. Why do Christians need to pray?

A. Because prayer is the most important part of the thankfulness God requires of us.¹ And also because God gives his grace and Holy Spirit only to those who pray continually and groan inwardly, asking God for these gifts and thanking God for them.²

¹ Ps. 50:14-15; 116:12-19; 1 Thess. 5:16-18

² Matt. 7:7-8; Luke 11:9-13

117 Q. What is the kind of prayer that pleases God and that he listens to?

A. First, we must pray from the heart to no other than the one true God, revealed to us in his Word, asking for everything God has commanded us to ask for.¹

Second, we must fully recognize our need and misery, so that we humble ourselves in God's majestic presence.²

Third, we must rest on this unshakable foundation: even though we do not deserve it, God will surely listen to our prayer because of Christ our Lord. That is what God promised us in his Word.³

¹ Ps. 145:18-20; John 4:22-24; Rom. 8:26-27; James 1:5; 1 John 5:14-15

² 2 Chron. 7:14; Ps. 2:11; 34:18; 62:8; Isa. 66:2; Rev. 4

³ Dan. 9:17-19; Matt. 7:8; John 14:13-14; 16:23; Rom. 10:13; James 1:6

118 Q. What did God command us to pray for?

A. Everything we need, spiritually and physically,¹ as embraced in the prayer Christ our Lord himself taught us.

¹ James 1:17; Matt. 6:33

119 Q. What is this prayer?

A. Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name;
Your kingdom come;
Your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And do not bring us to the time of trial,
but rescue us from the evil one.
For the kingdom
and the power
and the glory are yours forever.
Amen.^{1*}

¹ Matt. 6:9-13; Luke 11:2-4

*Earlier and better manuscripts of Matthew 6 omit the words "For the kingdom and . . . Amen."

LORD'S DAY 46

120 Q. Why did Christ command us to call God “our Father”?

- A. To awaken in us at the very beginning of our prayer what should be basic to our prayer— a childlike reverence and trust that through Christ God has become our Father, and that just as our parents do not refuse us the things of this life, even less will God our Father refuse to give us what we ask in faith.¹

¹ Matt. 7:9-11; Luke 11:11-13

121 Q. Why the words “in heaven”?

- A. These words teach us not to think of God's heavenly majesty as something earthly,¹ and to expect everything needed for body and soul from God's almighty power.²

¹ Jer. 23:23-24; Acts 17:24-25

² Matt. 6:25-34; Rom. 8:31-32

LORD'S DAY 47

122 Q. What does the first petition mean?

- A. “Hallowed be your name” means:

Help us to truly know you,¹
to honor, glorify, and praise you
for all your works
and for all that shines forth from them:
your almighty power, wisdom, kindness,
justice, mercy, and truth.²

And it means,

Help us to direct all our living—
what we think, say, and do—
so that your name will never be blasphemed because of us
but always honored and praised.³

¹ Jer. 9:23-24; 31:33-34; Matt. 16:17; John 17:3

² Ex. 34:5-8; Ps. 145; Jer. 32:16-20; Luke 1:46-55, 68-75; Rom. 11:33-36

³ Ps. 115:1; Matt. 5:16

LORD'S DAY 48

123 Q. What does the second petition mean?

- A. "Your kingdom come" means:
Rule us by your Word and Spirit in such a way
that more and more we submit to you.¹

Preserve your church and make it grow.²

Destroy the devil's work;
destroy every force which revolts against you
and every conspiracy against your holy Word.³

Do this until your kingdom fully comes,
when you will be
all in all.⁴

¹ Ps. 119:5, 105; 143:10; Matt. 6:33

² Ps. 122:6-9; Matt. 16:18; Acts 2:42-47

³ Rom. 16:20; 1 John 3:8

⁴ Rom. 8:22-23; 1 Cor. 15:28; Rev. 22:17, 20

LORD'S DAY 49

124 Q. What does the third petition mean?

- A. "Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" means:

Help us and all people
to reject our own wills
and to obey your will without any back talk.
Your will alone is good.¹

Help us one and all to carry out the work we are called to,²
as willingly and faithfully as the angels in heaven.³

¹ Matt. 7:21; 16:24-26; Luke 22:42; Rom. 12:1-2; Tit. 2:11-12

² 1 Cor. 7:17-24; Eph. 6:5-9

³ Ps. 103:20-21

LORD'S DAY 50

125 Q. What does the fourth petition mean?

A. "Give us this day our daily bread" means:

Do take care of all our physical needs¹
so that we come to know
that you are the only source of everything good,²
and that neither our work and worry
nor your gifts
can do us any good without your blessing.³

And so help us to give up our trust in creatures
and trust in you alone.⁴

¹ Ps. 104:27-30; 145:15-16; Matt. 6:25-34

² Acts 14:17; 17:25; James 1:17

³ Deut. 8:3; Ps. 37:16; 127:1-2; 1 Cor. 15:58

⁴ Ps. 55:22; 62; 146; Jer. 17:5-8; Heb. 13:5-6

LORD'S DAY 51

126 Q. What does the fifth petition mean?

A. "Forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors" means:

Because of Christ's blood,
do not hold against us, poor sinners that we are,
any of the sins we do
or the evil that constantly clings to us.¹

Forgive us just as we are fully determined,
as evidence of your grace in us,
to forgive our neighbors.²

¹ Ps. 51:1-7; 143:2; Rom. 8:1; 1 John 2:1-2

² Matt. 6:14-15; 18:21-35

LORD'S DAY 52

127 Q. What does the sixth petition mean?

A. "And do not bring us to the time of trial,
but rescue us from the evil one" means:

By ourselves we are too weak
to hold our own even for a moment.¹

And our sworn enemies—
the devil,² the world,³ and our own flesh—⁴
never stop attacking us.

And so, Lord,
uphold us and make us strong
with the strength of your Holy Spirit,
so that we may not go down to defeat
in this spiritual struggle,⁵
but may firmly resist our enemies
until we finally win the complete victory.⁶

¹ Ps. 103:14-16; John 15:1-5

² 2 Cor. 11:14; Eph. 6:10-13; 1 Pet. 5:8

³ John 15:18-21

⁴ Rom. 7:23; Gal. 5:17

⁵ Matt. 10:19-20; 26:41; Mark 13:33; Rom. 5:3-5

⁶ 1 Cor. 10:13; 1 Thess. 3:13; 5:23

128 Q. What does your conclusion to this prayer mean?

A. “For the kingdom
and the power
and the glory are yours forever” means:

We have made all these petitions of you
because, as our all-powerful king,
you are both willing and able
to give us all that is good;¹
and because your holy name,
and not we ourselves,
should receive all the praise, forever.²

¹ Rom. 10:11-13; 2 Pet. 2:9

² Ps. 115:1; John 14:13

129 Q. What does that little word “Amen” express?

A. “Amen” means:

This shall truly and surely be!

It is even more sure
that God listens to my prayer
than that I really desire
what I pray for.¹

¹ Isa. 65:24; 2 Cor. 1:20; 2 Tim. 2:13

I. Introduction

The Christian Reformed Church in North America maintains employee benefit programs that provide retirement, health, life, and disability benefits for employees of the denomination in its ministries, agencies, local churches, and other CRC organizations.

II. Board matters

The ministers' pension plans, special-assistance funds, and the employees' retirement plans are governed by the U.S. and Canadian Board of Pensions. These boards meet several times per year, usually in joint session. Separate meetings of the boards are held as needed.

Recent changes in pension regulations in Canada have presented the pension plan with funding issues, and the pension trustees have had to consider significant plan changes as outlined below. In light of this ongoing work, it is requested that synod approve that the following trustees, completing their second three-year term in 2011, serve an additional year as pension trustees to provide continuity of the plan oversight: Mr. James Clousing, of the U.S. Board of Pensions, and Ms. Claire Veenstra, of the Canadian Board of Pensions. The joint board also requests that synod appoint Mr. Harry Schep, of the Canadian Board of Pensions, to an additional two-year term.

III. Benefit-program activities

A. Ministers' pension plans

The ministers' pension plans are defined-benefit plans. Benefits paid by the plans are defined by formula, and the required funding of the plans is determined by actuarial calculations. The primary purpose of the plans is to provide retirement benefits to plan participants. The plans also provide benefits to the surviving spouses of participants as well as to any dependent children who are orphaned. In addition, long-term disability benefits are provided through an insurance product to all full-time, active participants in the plans who have furnished the information concerning compensation and housing as required by the insurance carrier.

The following is a summary of participant counts as of December 31, 2010, for each plan and in total. Participants having an interest in both plans (generally the result of having served churches in both the United States and Canada) appear in the column where their interest is the greatest.

	United States	Canada	Total
Active ministers	804	258	1,062
Retired ministers	494	128	622
Spouses and dependents	152	34	186
Withdrawn participants with vested benefits	108	21	129
Total	1,558	441	1,999

Independent actuarial firms are employed to prepare valuations of the plans. These actuarial valuations furnish the information needed to determine church and participant assessment amounts. The U.S. plan is required

to have a valuation every three years while the Canadian plan is required to submit an annual valuation to provincial regulators. Information regarding church and participant assessment amounts will be presented later in this report.

1. Portfolio balances and performance

Plan assets are invested in diversified portfolios under the management of professional investment-management firms. These firms are required to adhere to the denomination’s investment guidelines, and their performance is measured against established benchmarks and regularly reviewed by the trustees.

The plans’ actuaries have informed us that as of December 31, 2009, the actuarial liability totaled approximately \$108.9 million for the U.S. plan and \$36.9 million for the Canadian plan. These amounts reflect the present value of the plans’ obligations to all participants including active, disabled, and retired pastors, widows, and dependents.

Market value of the portfolios is summarized as follows:

	December 31, 2010	December 31, 2009
United States (U.S. \$)	\$90,913,000	\$84,370,000
Canada (Can. \$)	31,339,000	29,452,000

Dividends, interest, and appreciation in the value of the plans’ holdings provide a significant portion of the resources needed to meet the plans’ obligations to the active participants and to fund payments to retirees and beneficiaries.

2. Plan review

The pension plan has undergone several changes since separate plans for the United States and Canada were established in 1983. While the basic defined benefit form of the plan was not altered, changes were made to improve benefits provided by the plan, to clarify how the plan is administered, and to improve the protocols used to obtain funds needed to pay costs.

The more significant changes to the plans (or changes that affect them) made by recent synods include the following:

2001 Approved a variety of optional benefit forms in addition to the plan’s normal form.

Applied the plan’s 1.46 percent multiple to all service beginning January 1, 1985.

2003 Approved guidelines for part-time service.

Required payment for upgrading the interests of previously frozen participants reinstated as active members of the plans.

Acted to replace self-insured disability benefits with an insurance contract.

Changed funding protocols for all organized churches, effective January 1, 2004, to require payment of the greater of direct costs or per-member assessments.

Linked timely payment of contributions (the greater of participant or per-member costs) to the grant of credited service to first or only pastors of organized churches.

- 2004 Required that pension costs of endorsed chaplains be paid as a condition for active participation in the plan, effective January 1, 2006.

Approved rule VII for synodical procedure requiring synods to defer any proposed action concerning the plans until advised by the pension trustees.

Amended Church Order Article 15 to include specific elements of “proper support,” including payment to the denomination’s ministers’ pension plan.

- 2010 Decreased the multiplier used to determine benefit amounts from 1.46 percent to 1.3 percent for credited service beginning January 1, 2011.

Approved a change in the early retirement reduction factor to 0.5 percent from 0.3 percent per month, effective January 1, 2014.

The above changes have improved the design, administration, and financial viability of the plans.

3. Changes to the plan

The regulations governing Canadian defined benefit pension plans require that the plan maintain a minimum funding level. Multi-Employer Pension Plans were allowed 15 years to amortize the incremental contributions needed to be funded under these “solvency” rules. However, in 2007, the rules were changed to require amortizing the unfunded plan liability over a five-year period using short-term government bond rates to determine the present value of the plan’s liability unless the plan was determined to be a Specified Ontario Multi-Employer Pension Plan (SOMEPP) by the Financial Services Commission of Ontario (FSCO) and a Specified Multi-Employer Pension Plan (SMEPP) by the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA).

FSCO has questioned the status of the CRCNA plan in Canada and put forward the position that the plan needs to meet the solvency funding requirements of a non-SOMEPP. The Canadian pension trustees had requested that FSCO and the CRA declare the plan to be a SOMEPP and a SMEPP respectively. The actuary for the Canadian ministers’ pension plan has been working under the assumption that the plan should be funded as a multi-employer plan since there are over 230 individually incorporated churches acting as employers under the plan. This position assumes a 15-year funding horizon for the unfunded liability of the plan.

The Canada Revenue Agency sent a letter to the trustees in November 2010 stating that the plan does not qualify as a SMEPP. The FSCO stated that since the CRA was unable to declare the plan a SMEPP, they were likewise unable to declare it a SOMEPP.

The contribution request for the Canadian Ministers’ Pension Fund (MPF) set at Synod 2010 totaled \$2.4 million. However, if there are no

changes to the plan, the new funding regulations require a contribution of \$5.1 million in 2011. The trustees were required to present a plan of action to the FSCO that would bring the Canadian MPF in line with the funding requirements of the Canadian regulations.

In order to formulate the action plan to meet this requirement, the trustees agreed that the two plans—Canadian and U.S. Ministers’ Pension Plans—should continue to be as similar as possible following synod’s expressed desire that the plans provide an equitable retirement benefit for all CRCNA clergy.

It is against this background that the trustees propose the following recommended changes, to be effective July 1, 2011:

- a. Increase the normal retirement from age 65 to age 66.
- b. Advance the implementation of the change to the early retirement factor (from 0.3% to 0.5% per month) from January 1, 2014, to July 1, 2011.
- c. Freeze the final three-year average salary upon which benefits are calculated in Canada at the 2010 level.
- d. Change the normal form of retirement benefit from joint and survivor to single life with five years certain. (Participants can still elect to receive a joint and survivor benefit at a slightly reduced level of payment.)

To provide a transition into this benefit form change, a supplemental survivor benefit will be available to participants who retire through 2016. The spousal supplement will be based on the years of ministers’ participation in the Ministers’ Pension Plan with the following schedule.

Annual benefit for retirements

Year	\$ amount per year of credited service
7/1/2011 through 12/31/2012	\$50
1/1/2013 through 12/31/2013	\$40
1/1/2014 through 12/31/2014	\$30
1/1/2015 through 12/31/2015	\$20
1/1/2016 through 12/31/2016	\$10

These supplemental payments will be payable to the minister’s spouse at the time of the pastor’s retirement for the lesser of ten years or the remaining life of the spouse. These payments will be taken from the Special Assistance Fund (SAF). Funding for the SAF continues to be provided through ministry shares.

4. Funding

All organized churches are expected to pay church assessments determined by an amount per active professing member age 18 and older or, if greater, the direct costs of their first or only pastor’s participation in the plan. The current amount of the assessment for 2011 is \$37.32 per member in Canada and \$32.28 in the United States, and direct costs have been set at \$8,556 and \$6,696, respectively. These amounts are collected by means of monthly billings to each organized church, based on reported membership statistics.

All emerging churches and other denominational ministries that employ a minister as a missionary, professor, teacher, or in any other capacity, including organizations that employ endorsed chaplains (with the exception of chaplains serving in the military who are not yet entitled to receive any military pension benefits) are required to pay the annual cost of participation in the plan. All pension assessments, however determined, are billed monthly, and the grant of credited service for pastors is contingent on timely payment of amounts billed.

In order to meet the revised funding requirements as stated above in this report, the trustees have approved an approximate 15 percent increase in the assessment amounts. The trustees recommend the following increase in amounts, to be effective July 1, 2011:

That the church per-member amounts be set at \$37.20 in the United States and \$42.96 in Canada, and that the participant assessment amounts be set at \$7,704 and \$9,840 respectively.

It is anticipated that the above proposed increase will be enough to continue to improve the funding status of the plans according to the Canadian regulators. While circumstances could change, it is unlikely that there will be a need for further increase in the pension contribution costs for the next several years.

B. *Employees' retirement plans*

The employees' retirement plans are defined-contribution plans covering most employees of participating denominational agencies and ministries who are not ordained as ministers of the Word. In the United States, contributions are paid to the plan by participating employers in an amount up to 6 percent of compensation. An additional employer contribution of up to 4 percent of compensation is made to match employee contributions of a similar amount. In Canada, contributions of up to 9 percent are paid to the plan by participating employers. In Canada, there are no contributions made to the plan relative to matching employee contributions. In both plans, participants may make additional contributions up to the limits determined by federal regulation. Participants receive periodic statements indicating the dollar amount credited to their accounts, the value of their accounts, and the vested percentage.

Individual participants direct the investment of their account balances among several investment alternatives, including fixed-income and equity funds. The investment alternatives are currently managed for U.S. participants by J.P. Morgan Chase Trust Division, which also serves as custodian of the plan's assets, and for Canadian participants by Sun Life Financial Group.

As of December 31, 2010, the balances in these plans totaled approximately \$21,757,000 in the United States and \$2,993,000 in Canada. As of that date, there were 388 participants in the U.S. plan and 80 in the Canadian plan, categorized as follows:

	United States	Canada
Active	247	69
Inactive	141	11

C. *Consolidated Group Insurance*

Oversight of the denomination's Consolidated Group Insurance is provided by the Board of Trustees.

Consolidated Group Insurance is a denominational plan that offers health, dental, and life coverage in the United States and Canada to ministers and employees of local congregations and denominational agencies and ministries. Currently there are 1,283 participants in the program. The most significant categories of participants include 650 pastors and employees of local churches, 356 employees of denominational ministries and agencies, and 277 retirees. The plan in Canada is a fully insured plan with coverage purchased through a major health-insurance provider and is supplemental to health benefits available through government health programs. In the United States, a trust has been established to fund benefits and expenses of the plan.

Premiums charged by the plan in Canada are set by the insurance carrier. The premiums for the U.S. plan are based on overall expectations of claims and administrative expenses for the coming year.

D. *Financial disclosures*

Audited or reviewed financial statements of the retirement plans and of all of the agencies and institutions are made available each year to the treasurer of each classis with the request that they be made available to any interested party. In addition, summary financial statements are included in the *Acts of Synod*. Individualized statements are furnished to active members of the ministers' pension plans and the employees' retirement plans.

IV. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to members of the Canadian Board of Pensions and of the U.S. Board of Pensions and to Mr. John H. Bolt when insurance matters and matters pertaining to pension plans for ministers and employees are discussed.

B. That synod approve that the following trustees, completing their second three-year term in 2011, serve an additional year as pension trustees to provide continuity of the plan oversight: Mr. James Clousing, of the U.S. Board of Pensions, and Ms. Claire Veenstra, of the Canadian Board of Pensions. In addition, that synod appoint Mr. Harry Schep, of the Canadian Board of Pensions, to an additional two-year term.

C. That synod designate up to 100 percent of a minister's early or normal retirement pension or disability pension for 2012 as housing allowance for United States income-tax purposes (IRS Ruling 1.107-1) but only to the extent that the pension is used to rent or provide a home.

D. That synod approve the recommendations concerning changes in the design of the pension plans as proposed in Section III, A, 3 and 4 of this report.

Pensions and Insurance

John H. Bolt, director of finance
and administration

Chaplaincy and Care Ministry (Rev. Ron Klimp, director)

I. Introduction

Christian Reformed chaplains represent Christ and embody the grace of our Lord Jesus throughout North America and the world.

The mandate given by synod to the Office of Chaplaincy and Care Ministry is “Chaplains are called by the church to extend the ministry of Christ to persons in institutional or specialized settings.” We like to refer to our chaplains informally as “the first responders of the spiritual world in secular settings.”

The mission of the Office of Chaplaincy and Care Ministry is “to implement and regulate the denomination’s commitment to chaplaincy by recruiting, training, and endorsing persons to provide ministry in specialized settings, including military chaplains, pastoral counselors, institutional spiritual care givers, hospice care, and others called to minister in places where the institutional church is not present. The office supports and promotes the development of chaplaincy and related ministries for the denomination.”

In March 2010, Rev. Ron Klimp was appointed as director of Chaplaincy and Care Ministry. Synod 2010 approved a name change from Office of Chaplaincy Ministries to Office of Chaplaincy and Care Ministry to emphasize the importance of reconnecting chaplains and their gifts to the broader commitment of our churches to be caring communities. Rev. Herman Keizer, Jr., director emeritus of Chaplaincy Ministries, has assisted the new director, especially during the early part of this transition, so that the work of Chaplaincy and Care Ministry could move forward in a manner that integrates this ministry into the network of denominational ministries.

II. Ministries of the Office of Chaplaincy and Care Ministry

A. Ministry that is transforming lives and communities worldwide

Our chaplains work at transforming the institutions in which they serve by calling those organizations to ethical standards of care and concern, and chaplains sometimes have the opportunity for broad influence.

Currently we have seven chaplains serving as Clinical Pastoral Education Supervisors. They are instrumental in training our future chaplains as well as those of other denominations. Some serve as directors of departments in the service institution in which they are employed, and some independently manage a counseling or chaplaincy ministry. Several others serve on committees of, or are officers of, national chaplaincy or credentialing associations.

At least three of our military chaplains have received promotions this year, and some have served or are serving under the Chiefs of Chaplains in the Pentagon. We currently have four chaplains with the rank of colonel, four with the rank of lieutenant colonel (commander in the U.S. Navy), and four with the rank of major (lieutenant commander in the U.S. Navy). Two serve in the Canadian Forces. Nine of our military chaplains are currently deployed overseas, one of whom has received the U.S. Army Ranger pin and is currently deployed with a Special Forces group in Afghanistan.

B. *Ministry to and with the local churches*

All chaplains have a calling church. Most have filled the pulpit of their calling church or other area churches on numerous occasions. Many have served on the church council, at classis, and as delegates to synod. Chaplains conduct adult education classes and workshops, and they help formally and informally with pastoral care in local congregations. We intend to encourage this interaction with the local church as part of the new emphasis reflected in the title of this ministry: *Chaplaincy and Care*.

C. *Collaborative efforts*

The Office of Chaplaincy and Care Ministry collaborated with a number of agencies and organizations over the past year:

- We have been instrumental in the past few months in bringing together a number of Clinical Pastoral Education users and providers in order to discuss and facilitate a positive future for this important source of training for upcoming chaplains (and for pastors who wish to extend their pastoral care skills).
- We have also brought together a number of individuals and agencies within our denomination to focus on finding or developing a tool or resource to better assess the gifts, competencies, aptitudes, and personality traits that would suggest the “best fit” (parish ministry, church planting, missions, chaplaincy, and so forth) for an individual interested in kingdom service. We are continuing to work toward refining that objective.
- We have worked with *The Banner* and other publishers to get the stories of chaplains out to the denomination and wider church bodies.

D. *Stories to share*

Our chaplains continue to strive for excellence in their profession. In the past year *The Banner* has featured four of our chaplains and their ministry. These stories, plus video footage of military chaplaincy in Afghanistan and other information, are available on our denominational website: www.crcna.org (select Our Ministries; then select Chaplaincy and Care Ministry).

The workshop leaders for our annual Chaplains Conference in June 2011 will be storyteller and songwriter Michael Kelly Blanchard and Chaplain David Blauw. The Stories Workshop is a fun, entertaining, and practical program to enhance the way congregations and ministry groups listen to each other and care for each other’s needs. With this workshop we hope to encourage chaplains to understand the power of their personal stories and to utilize those stories to help the Christian community understand the exciting impact of chaplaincy.

Our chaplains serve in leadership roles in a variety of professional organizations, including the following: American Association of Pastoral Counselors, American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, Association for Clinical Pastoral Education, Association of Professional Chaplains, Canadian Association for Spiritual Care, C.G. Jung Institute of Chicago, College of Pastoral Supervision and Psychotherapy, Michigan Chaplains Association, and VISN 18 Chaplain Operational Board.

E. Development of future ministry

The future of chaplaincy depends on several factors beyond our control (the growth or restriction of chaplaincy positions in the military and institutional settings of the United States and Canada) and on developing an interest among younger (and older) members of our denomination who feel drawn to full-time ministry but are not sure what kinds of ministry are available or would fit well with their abilities. As a new director of this ministry, the director of Chaplaincy and Care Ministry aims to encourage chaplains to tell their rich and moving stories of interacting with men and women in crisis situations who are looking for meaning and hope. He also hopes to interact with churches and classes to help create opportunities for chaplains to tell these stories.

One of the director's concerns is the reduction of funds over the past few years for training new chaplains and encouraging new chaplaincy positions. The director has been informed that these adjustments were made by the Financial Services office based on limited use during two years of low demand (probably related to the lack of a full-time director), not reflecting any change in priorities, and that efforts are being made (already reflected in next year's budget) to restore those funds.

F. Statistics for the period of March 2010 - February 2011

1. Total chaplains: full-time, 91; part-time, 26
2. Chaplains in the United States: full-time, 78; part-time, 20
3. Chaplains in Canada: full-time, 13; part-time, 6
4. Active military chaplains: 18 in the United States; 2 in Canada; 5 in the U.S. National Guard and Reserves
5. New chaplains, 8: Evert Busink, Laurie Moll, Wendell Gelderman, Jae Kim, Wesley Willson, Steven Alsum, Marc Zumhagen, Kenneth VanSchelven
6. Retired from chaplaincy, 6: Stanley DeVries, Nola Opperwall-Galluch, Robert Geelhoed, Roger Kraker, Allen Schipper, Ronald Vredevelde
7. Military chaplains who served overseas this year: (Capt.) Jonathan Averill, (Lt.) Shawn Bootsma, (Cmdr.) Roger Bouma, (Col.) William Hensen, (Maj.) Insoon Hoagland, (Capt.) Peter Hofman, (Capt.) Antonio Illas, (Lt.) David Jeltema, (Maj.) Scott Koeman, (Maj.) Timothy Rietkerk, (Lt. Cmdr.) Doug Vrieland, (Capt.) Timothy Won

Note: These chaplains interact daily with thousands of people, often in crisis situations, who may or may not have a faith commitment or a church connection. The monetary costs of these ministry positions (estimated at over \$7 million annually) are supported mainly by the chaplains' employers at a very nominal cost to the CRCNA.

III. Recruitment and training

Over the past year Chaplaincy and Care Ministry has organized recruiting events at Calvin, Kuyper, Hope, and Trinity Colleges, and at both Calvin and Western Theological Seminaries. We expect similar events at Dordt College

and the King's University College to occur in the spring of 2011. In addition, we were invited to give a presentation at a local high school. At most of these events several of our current or retired chaplains were able to tell their stories and answer questions from students.

This development seems to represent a growing interest among educational institutions and students in "non-traditional" ministry options like chaplaincy. We currently are working with nineteen students and assisting them as needed in their education, both financially and through mentoring. Funding comes entirely from the Chaplains Development Fund. We are encouraging many of our contributors to specify this fund with their gift.

We maintain a list of persons interested in chaplaincy ministry (currently over one hundred people). Every other month the office sends job postings to these persons.

Every year (just prior to synod in June) CRC chaplains gather for a conference sponsored by Chaplaincy and Care Ministry. Since chaplains work at the margins of church and society, they relish the time they can spend with each other at the annual conference to renew friendships, learn together, and talk with fellow servants of the Lord who are living with the unique pressures, joys, and challenges that chaplaincy brings. The theme of our Chaplains Conference this year will be "Telling Our Stories" and will be shaped by a team of workshop leaders (Michael Blanchard and David Blauw) who have developed a ministry of encouraging others to understand the power of their personal stories (see workshop noted in section D. of this report).

IV. Recommendations

A. That synod urge parents, the youth and education ministries in our churches, and Christian schools to encourage our young people to prayerfully consider a wide range of ministry options, including chaplaincy ministries and other specialized Christian vocations.

B. That synod urge churches to pray regularly for chaplains who walk daily with people in crisis situations, have significant influence in secular institutions, and serve in difficult and sometimes dangerous situations—especially those who are separated from home and family by military deployment.

C. That synod urge churches and classes to welcome chaplains at their regular meetings (some classes have appointed a "chaplain of the day" for each meeting) and to explore with them how to use their training and gifts to benefit the care ministries of the local church.

Committee for Contact with the Government/Christian Reformed Centre for Public Dialogue (Mr. Mike Hogeterp, research and communications manager)

The Committee for Contact with the Government (CCG) experienced some significant changes in the time since synod last met: we opened an office in Ottawa, Ontario (July 2010), and began working under the operating name *Christian Reformed Centre for Public Dialogue*. These two outward changes are part of a long progression in CCG's efforts to present a construc-

tive voice of Christian faith in Canada's public square. For the better part of the past decade, CCG has built relationships with policy makers and shapers based on firm confessional commitments and rigorous research. From an office in Ottawa, just steps from the seat of government, the quality and consistency of dialogue with our leaders is increasing. CCG and the Centre for Public Dialogue are also well placed for broadened dialogue on citizenship and justice. Our program year now includes *learning and doing* events in which we explore the connections of justice and worship, citizenship and discipleship—and then *do* what we have learned on Parliament Hill. We look forward to working with our partners in churches and other ministries in these efforts to *seek justice and speak hope*. We invite you to dialogue with us! You can start by subscribing to *Mobile Justice*—our monthly digital newsletter at www.crcna.ca/PublicDialogue.

Disability Concerns (Rev. Mark Stephenson, director)

I. Introduction

The mission of the Office of Disability Concerns is “to bring about the full participation of all people with disabilities in the life of the church and the full participation of the church in the lives of people with disabilities.”

Our mandate is “to assist the congregations and regional bodies of the Christian Reformed Church to ensure that members with disabilities receive appropriate congregational care and participate fully in congregational life.”

The vision of Disability Concerns can be summarized briefly: “In churches, ministries, and communities, everybody belongs, and everybody serves.”

II. Ministries of Disability Concerns

A team of people from Disability Concerns assists Christian Reformed churches and ministries. This team is composed of approximately 500 people: 450 church advocates, 42 regional advocates serving 34 out of the 47 classes (names and contact information available in the classis section of the *Yearbook*), 7 agency advocates working within the CRC agencies and educational institutions, 2 part-time administrative assistants working from the CRC offices in Grand Rapids and Burlington, and our director. Regional Disability Concerns committees have been active for many years in Illinois, Michigan, Ontario, and, as of 2010, also in Alberta.

A. Ministry that is transforming lives and communities worldwide

- Disability Concerns' web and Network pages were viewed nearly 26,000 times in almost 12,000 visits during 2010 by people seeking resources for disability awareness, inclusion, starting support groups, and other matters related to disability and the church.
- We assisted Canadian congregations and individuals in contacting their Members of Parliament about C-384, a Canadian bill that would have legalized euthanasia and assisted suicide. The C-384 bill was defeated.
- Our director trained pastors and theological educators on biblical and practical ideas for including people with disabilities in church

life at a Christian Reformed World Missions conference in Kenya in August 2010.

B. *Ministry to and with the local churches*

- Synod 2010 encouraged churches to recognize Disability Week with a focus on mental health issues. To help churches prepare for that emphasis, Disability Concerns made a variety of mental health resources available to churches.
- In collaboration with Faith and Hope Ministries of Classis Quinte, we produced a free, four-part study series for small groups called *Let's Talk! Breaking the Silence Around Mental Illness in Our Communities of Faith*, downloaded about 120 times in the fall of 2010.
- In Canada and the United States, we sponsored conferences and led workshops that trained people about including people with disabilities in church life.
- Through distribution of *Breaking Barriers*, our quarterly newsletter, we gave voice to people who have no voice, shared joys and challenges, gave encouragement from one believer to another, heard cries for help, and provided stories for congregation members to learn about life with a disability. *Breaking Barriers* is available online and in print, in English and Spanish. About one-half of Christian Reformed congregations receive enough copies of the English print version for distribution to all families or individuals in the church.
- We distributed our handbook for Disability Advocates—*Everybody Belongs, Everybody Serves*—by way of more than 200 free downloads and several hundred print copies.
- We continue to help councils and care teams receive training for people with long-term challenges through sales of our booklet *A Compassionate Journey: Coming Alongside People with Disabilities or Chronic Illnesses* by John Cook.

C. *Collaborative efforts*

- We made classroom presentations at Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary.
- In addition to the work we did with World Missions this past year (see above), we have consulted with Faith Alive Christian Resources about the inclusiveness of new curriculum materials.
- Our director meets regularly with Rev. Terry DeYoung, coordinator for Disability Concerns for the Reformed Church in America. CRC and RCA Disability Concerns now publish *Breaking Barriers* together, and we are working on several other joint projects, including a recommendation to our respective synods on accessibility of the synod meetings.
- Although Friendship Ministries is not part of Disability Concerns, we work closely with this ministry on conferences, communication, and other means of resourcing congregations.
- All six CRC Specialized Ministries work together on communication, ministry measurement, and shared ministry.

D. *Stories to share*

When a church in classis Quinte offered a four-week small group study using the *Let's Talk* series, several women gathered. Participants appreciated the open and safe discussions about mental illness. One wrote in her evaluation, "I enjoyed this study because it felt like a judge-free zone, where I could open up about my daily struggles with anxiety and depression and know that I was not only helping myself but also helping to educate others about different forms of mental illness." Because several of the participants wanted to continue meeting, they are gathering regularly in a Living Room Support Group (www.livingroomsupport.org). The circle keeps widening; one of the participants of the group also started another *Let's Talk* group so that more people could benefit.

Disability Concerns has made many new connections with people through the CRC's online Network. People have been sharing ideas, commenting on articles, and encouraging one another. Ken, who has posted comments on many sections of the Network, lives with multiple sclerosis. At one point he expressed discouragement. Our director, serving as the Disability Concerns Network Guide, and a woman who calls herself "Spitfire" both responded. Here are excerpts from their exchange:

Ken: I am pretty much estranged from society and church because of illness, so I don't hold out much hope.

Mark: Ken, thanks for your note. You sound really discouraged. I can only imagine how difficult it must be to be estranged from society and church. I hope you find some good interactions through the Internet here on the Network and elsewhere, and pray that you will know God's presence with you.

Ken: What I'm saddest about is the inability to tell my story or talk about the unique wisdom that God grants us in suffering. People think I need help, but what I really need is a chance to matter to someone other than my family. I have a lot to give and have created my own witness ministry.

Spitfire: I think that writing and commenting on this site is a way to tell your story; it may have to be in small parts, but every time you share your thoughts and experiences here, you are telling your story. And in sharing, you help more people than you may ever know.

Ken reports that he is doing much better again and continues to be a regular contributor to a variety of sections on the Network.

E. *Development of future ministry*

Our development of future ministry includes the following:

- Collaboration with the Reformed Church in America Disability Concerns ministry—Our partnership with the Disability Concerns ministry of the RCA brings fruitful results for both denominations. We plan to begin distribution of a regular newsletter via email, pursue grant funding, revise our handbook for disability advocates, and develop conferences—in particular, a summer conference for Disability Concerns volunteer leaders from both denominations.

- Mental Health Task Force—This task force was formed in fall 2009 to develop resources and ministry strategies for churches. Now that we have made a variety of general resources available to churches, we are working on tools to help pastors minister well with people with mental illnesses.
- Conferences and workshops in new regions—We have helped congregations through the sponsorship of conferences and workshops in the Chicago, Grand Rapids, and southern Ontario regions for a number of years. This coming year we plan to expand to at least two additional regions of North America.

III. Recruitment and training

Disability Concerns continues to recruit committed and passionate volunteers who work for the inclusion of people with disabilities in churches, classes, and institutions. This summer we will gather volunteers from the CRC and the RCA for training and encouragement in their work.

IV. Recommendation

That synod encourage Christian Reformed churches, classes, and educational institutions to sponsor events to celebrate Disability Week from October 10 through 16, 2011.

Grounds:

1. Specific and intentional events that recognize the importance of breaking down barriers and including people with disabilities will remind God's people of the welcome our Lord gives to all of his people (Luke 14:15-24) and will encourage them to press on toward becoming a community in which every member knows that he or she is indispensable (1 Cor. 12:12-27).
2. This date coincides with the denominational schedule for offerings, which assigns the third Sunday in October to Disability Concerns.
3. The Bible calls God's people to be a caring community as the covenant people of God. In 1985 the CRC committed itself as a denomination to eliminate barriers of architecture, communication, and attitude "in order to use the gifts of all people in our life together as God's family." Although our Lord Jesus calls all of his people to ministry in his church, the church has not always made it possible for people with disabilities to participate fully and sometimes has isolated them and their families.

Pastor-Church Relations (Rev. Norman J. Thomasma, director; Rev. Cecil Van Niejenhuis, pastor/congregation consultant)

I. Introduction

The Office of Pastor-Church Relations (PCR) maintains a focus on its mandate to support pastors, staff, councils, and congregations through two basic functions—intervention and education. Over the twenty-nine years of its existence, PCR and the churches have been challenged to recognize that

while these functions remain basic, there are adjustments required because of changing culture, economic factors, and programs. This past year has increased the need to think creatively, strategically, and efficiently for maximum impact during a time of shrinking financial resources and increasing activity for the PCR staff.

The ministry of PCR involves *direct* involvement with pastors, staff, councils, and congregations as well as *extension* or cooperative activities whereby the staff of the Office of Pastor-Church Relations train and support others who in turn provide direct support to pastors, staff, councils, and congregations.

II. Ministries of the Office of Pastor-Church Relations

A. Probably the most familiar activity of the Office of Pastor-Church Relations is its direct involvement in cultivating healthier relationships within the life of congregations. This involves consultations, interventions when there are conflicts, and educational activities in which the members and leaders of congregations learn creative ways of responding to one another. To increase capacity, PCR has identified several skilled experienced practitioners who can assist with this work on a contract basis.

B. Educational and retreat activities for councils, congregations, classes, and church staff also continue to contribute to PCR's *direct* work with pastors and congregations. In many ways the educational and intervention activities are closely linked.

C. PCR *extends* its work through regional pastors in classes who provide support, encouragement, and counsel to pastors and spouses challenged by the demands of life and ministry. These pastors also assist in setting up mentor relationships for new pastors and encourage the development of support mechanisms when there are multiple staff persons within a congregation.

D. PCR continues to advance the work of mentoring new pastors. Mentoring, which begins in the seminary and continues throughout a pastor's ministry, is seen as a crucial area of pastoral growth and accountability. In partnership with Sustaining Pastoral Excellence, PCR has developed a manual to assist in stimulating conversations appropriate to the mentoring process.

E. In partnership with Sustaining Pastoral Excellence and one of its peer groups, PCR has developed a manual to assist congregational leaders in providing helpful evaluations for pastors and church staff.

F. In partnership with On Point Ministries, PCR is providing a unique pastor assessment process in the context of a wilderness retreat. Pastors on Point in summer 2011 will mark the second of these experiences, again involving eight CRC pastors.

G. Specialized Transitional Ministers (STMs) are trained to help congregations deal with challenges during the transition between pastors. Currently about 15 endorsed STMs work in close partnership with PCR. An STM steering committee consisting of Rev. Ron Bouwkamp, Rev. Ron Fyneweever, Rev. Peter Hogeterp, and Rev. Larry Slings is developing protocols for endorsement, salary guidelines, and approaches to continuing education. Some

financial assistance is available to needy churches seeking to use the services of an endorsed STM.

H. PCR's Staff Ministry Committee (SMC) supports over 1,000 non-ordained church professionals in a variety of ways. Opportunities for networking and distribution of resources are offered, and churches are increasingly requesting services pertaining to staffing issues. SMC is also piloting a credentialing process for church staff. During 2010 we noted a significant decline in the number of non-ordained staff positions in churches. We speculate there is a correlation with the economic downturn, but we have not received clear evidence to that effect.

I. On behalf of synod, PCR administers a continuing education fund for pastors and professional church staff. Grants of up to \$750 per year are awarded to pastors and staff who demonstrate the value of an educational event and/or opportunity they are pursuing. The number of applications for these funds continues to grow. It is gratifying to experience this growing interest in continuing education. Increased interest also presents a growing challenge as the committee makes decisions regarding the distribution of funds. Currently, ministry associate Mary Bouma, Rev. Harold Veldman, and Rev. Ron Bouwkamp help determine appropriate allocation of these funds.

J. In response to a request from the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA, PCR will convene an annual meeting of key stakeholders to explore ways of strengthening the continuing education expectations and opportunities for clergy in the CRCNA.

K. The Ministerial Information Service maintains a database of more than eight hundred pastor profiles as well as several hundred congregation profiles. These profiles are used by search committees of congregations looking for pastors and by pastors seeking new positions. The Office of Pastor-Church Relations, with the assistance of a volunteer committee, recommends pastoral candidates to search committees.

III. Considerations for the future

A. PCR is exploring ways to develop a *web-based* approach to the Ministerial Information Service, an approach that will provide greater freedom for communication among churches looking for pastors as well as for pastors and pastor candidates looking for churches. This venture includes a revision of the current profile forms for both pastors and congregations.

B. Conversations held with pastors and congregations over the past year have included more thought about *bi-vocational ministry*. As issues of economics and congregational size converge, this matter is gaining greater consideration. In addition, PCR, along with Christian Reformed Home Missions, is studying creative approaches to helping some congregations think about their future viability. This *Legacy Church Initiative* will gain greater definition in the coming year.

C. PCR continues to seek effective ways to build a working relationship with newly ordained pastors and church staff. Given the synodical decisions about ministry associates, we are attempting to find ways to better serve this

expanding group among the churches. We are also meeting with Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidacy students currently enrolled at Calvin Theological Seminary and are familiarizing them with the work of our office. PCR staff teach a “Reading Congregations” course at Calvin Theological Seminary for seminarians preparing for a first field assignment.

D. A significant PCR project for the coming year is the writing and production of a Pastor Search Process training tool. Like the evaluation training tool, this initiative is motivated by the significant number of requests received for help with pastor search processes.

Race Relations (Rev. Esteban Lugo, director)

The ministry of Race Relations continues to engage in its plan to promote biblical reconciliation within the church. The staff of Race Relations, along with a cadre of trained facilitators, continues to provide avenues for helping the CRC embrace its identity as God’s diverse and unified family. In 2010 we saw once again the confirming worldwide need of the ministry of reconciliation as the Office of Race Relations took the Dance of Racial Reconciliation (DORR) workshop to Nairobi, Kenya.

The Office of Race Relations has been active in helping classes and churches to understand the Belhar Confession by actively taking part in regional study conferences. Race Relations’ Canadian coordinator, Mr. Steve Kabetu, has been representing the Office of Race Relations in this crucial work.

The Office of Race Relations planned and implemented the All Nations Heritage (ANH) campaign in 2010. Please watch for information about ANH Sunday, planned for October 2, 2011, which will be sent to all the churches in June. To make our bulletin covers and inserts easily accessible, we plan to make them available through the Faith Alive website again this year. We hope that the churches take the opportunity to order their ANH materials early.

The Race Relations Scholarship program continues to encourage students who have a desire to engage in the ministry of racial reconciliation in their churches, schools, and communities. For the 2010-2011 school year, the Office of Race Relations awarded \$13,000 to thirteen students, which includes one from Calvin Theological Seminary, three from Calvin College, one from Dordt College, six from Kuyper College, one from Trinity Christian College, and one from Western Theological Seminary. When churches take an offering for the ministry of Race Relations from ANH Sunday through the end of the year, that money is earmarked for scholarships. We praise God for the generosity that the churches have shown in this area of our ministry.

In conjunction with Faith Alive Christian Resources and Christian Reformed Home Missions, the Office of Race Relations is working to develop a DVD and study guide on racial reconciliation to be distributed to our churches throughout North America. The DVD should be available in 2011.

A committee is planning the 2011 Multiethnic Conference (MEC), scheduled to be held June 10-12 on the campus of Calvin College. The conference will begin on Friday night, June 10, followed by various workshops and

other activities on Saturday. On Sunday morning participants will lift hearts in worship together, and the conference will end with a noon meal. Once again the Multiethnic Conference will coincide with the beginning of synod. In 2009 the MEC conferees loved the fellowship they had with fellow participants. When asked what the highlight of the 2009 MEC was, one person commented: “For me, it was working on and learning how to love each other the way we are—that we are a body with differences but one in Christ with a purpose and a mission to unite all God’s people regardless of nationality or color.” We pray that the 2011 conference will have the same impact.

The Office of Race Relations invites and encourages people of all ethnic backgrounds in our denomination to become involved in their churches and to make themselves available to serve on church committees, denominational committees and boards, and as delegates to synod. As members of these groups, they will not only gain valuable experience and leadership qualities but also bring their voices to influence decisions and directions that are crucial to the life of the CRC.

The denomination continues to face the challenge of placing a high value on the dignity of all persons and on the inclusiveness of multiple cultures in life together as a church, as well as on the integrity of that identity. To that end, the ministry of Race Relations continues to lead and encourage throughout the whole church. Race Relations is committed to its statement of vision and its mandate to make the CRC a truly diverse and unified family of God. We continue to attribute all the progress and success that has been made in this ministry only to the grace and goodness of God. We covet your prayers.

Safe Church Ministry (Ms. Beth A. Swagman, director)

I. Introduction

The mandate of the Safe Church Ministry is to create awareness of abuse, provide resources, conduct seminars, develop policies and protocols, train safe church teams and Claimant Advocates, and consult with church leaders and others when allegations of abuse arise. These activities revolve around two core goals: (1) reduce the risk of abuse in the church setting and (2) assist the church to respond justly and compassionately when abuse has occurred.

II. Ministries of the Safe Church Ministry

A. Ministry that transforms lives and communities worldwide

Through December 2010, Safe Church Ministry has helped 602 Christian Reformed congregations implement a child safety policy. Thousands of children are now under the protection of these policies. In addition, several non-CRC congregations sought help with child safety policy resources and training last year. More recently, non-profit organizations began seeking policy resources and training. We continue to reduce the risk of harm to children in churches and in organizations that serve the needs of children.

Since 1996, Safe Church Ministry has trained 29 safe church teams. Sixteen teams are active and provide services or resources to their classes. Thirteen of the teams are inactive. Teams have conducted 24 advisory panels around allegations of church leader misconduct. The advisory panel offers a victim an

opportunity to encounter the church as a listener and responder to the harm that occurred—often many years before. The advisory panel offers an offender an opportunity to repent and to let go of the shame and self-deception that prevents healing. The advisory panel offers a church the opportunity to be justice-seekers and reconcilers. For individuals and the church, the advisory panel can be the foundation for personal and community restoration.

Safe church teams offer support services to victims, offenders, and their families. Further, team members offer education and resources to classes and congregations. Over the past several years, eight classical teams conducted 58 council trainings and 62 trainings to congregations on child safety, the advisory panel process, or abuse prevention. Fourteen safe church teams have a *claimant advocate* to help a victim prepare for the advisory panel and to assist a church with its pastoral response. Claimant advocates assisted in five advisory panels since 2005.

Safe Church Ministry creates or promotes resources for awareness and training. Examples of these resources are *Preventing Child Abuse* (4th edition); *Responding to Domestic Violence*; *Emotional Abuse: What You Should Know*; *Questions from the Pickle Jar: Teens and Sexuality*; *Bethesda: Come to the Water*; and *Behind Closed Doors* (Christians and pornography). Through the Faith Alive Christian Resources and Safe Church Ministry websites, brochures and small-fee booklets are made available on the topics of dating violence, Internet safety, shaken baby syndrome, elder abuse, and bullying. A series of six bulletin-inserts on child abuse, domestic violence, elder abuse, the healing path, bullying, and boundaries provide a glimpse into problems that continue to plague church members and leaders, and these resources outline steps that are necessary to respond.

B. *Ministry with the local church*

In addition to the services mentioned above, Safe Church Ministry sponsored Abuse Awareness in September 2010. In the United States and Canada, 60 churches ordered abuse awareness and worship materials. Over 17,000 bulletin inserts on *bullying* and *boundaries* were distributed. Through Faith Alive, booklets were available to churches for a minimal fee to increase awareness of various forms of abuse.

This past year, several churches received training, and many churches received resources to design a child safety policy. In addition, eighteen churches have now requested resources to minister to convicted sexual offenders. Safe Church Ministry assisted these churches with the *Covenant of Conduct* that promotes ministry to the ex-offender while keeping the congregation safe.

Safe Church Ministry provides child safety policy training, church volunteer training, and other training opportunities for church members to grow in their understanding of the dynamics of abuse. In addition, Safe Church Ministry consults daily with individuals on matters related to abuse.

C. *Collaborative efforts*

Safe Church Ministry sends out resources to many non-CRC congregations and their church leaders. At training sessions and seminars, some attendees are non-CRC. The message from non-CRC communities is that we are fortunate to have services and resources that other denominations do not offer.

In the fall, Safe Church Ministry spends a class period with seminarians in their pastoral care class at Calvin Theological Seminary. Informing

seminarians of the dynamics of child abuse prepares them for the likelihood that they will encounter incidents of child abuse in their ministry.

After Synod 2009 approved the regional safe church team concept, the director conducted four advisory panel trainings with representatives from more than one classis at each training. Regional training is particularly effective because it increases the pool of trained panelists available when a need arises. Also, regional training increases networking and support among teams, and it enhances skill-building among team members. Safe Church Ministry has begun efforts to create a regional team for several classes located in the Midwest and along the East Coast of the United States.

In May 2010, Safe Church Ministry offered a conference for 22 claimant advocates. The annual conference focuses on understanding the claimant advocate's role in the advisory panel process. Important avenues to increase understanding are sharing stories, introducing effective ways to interact with the claimant, and learning more about church structure and governance (polity). At the May event, claimant advocates heard from a pastor and an elder, both of whom conveyed their church's involvement with a panel process. One message heard repeatedly is that the panel process is a significant stress on the church council and the congregation.

In October 2010, the safe church team chairpersons gathered for their annual conference, designed to offer networking and the opportunity to share best practices. The group identified key areas to develop more resources for congregations and began work on a handbook for council members, a project approved by Synod 2010 for Safe Church Ministry to develop (see *Acts of Synod 2010*, p. 866).

D. Stories to share

Abuse thrives in secrecy. Sixteen years after the Safe Church Ministry was founded, a victim still finds it difficult to disclose a story of abuse. The victim remembers the offender and knows how his or her mind works. But the greater obstacle to disclosure is the anxiety of not knowing how the church will respond or whether it will respond.

There are success stories among churches that have been called upon to respond to allegations of abuse. Councils and individual church leaders were heroic and compassionate while seeking the truth and providing pastoral care. But even stories of compassion and justice are difficult to report if we intend to afford privacy to the victim and to the offender—and their family members. As a faith community, we need to grow in our understanding of abuse so that our response becomes predictable: compassion and justice for all from all.

E. Development of future ministry

The leadership of Safe Church Ministry is in transition after the resignation of director Ms. Beth A. Swagman. In addition, prolonged budget issues have made plans for future ministry difficult. However, an increase to the Safe Church Ministry budget could create new and exciting opportunities for future ministry.

New and diverse resources for congregations are a priority. Resources on abuse awareness, restorative justice, and pastoral care need to be available in Spanish, Korean, Laotian, Vietnamese, and other languages. These resources should also be available in a variety of media forms. Unfortunately paperless

resources are more costly and time-consuming to produce. And online training opportunities are not available in every church because many churches lack the equipment and cannot afford to purchase the equipment.

Future ministry should address attitudes within the North American CRC culture that perpetuate the cycle of abuse within families and within ministry relationships. For example, church members struggle to understand the nature of the imbalance of power between a church leader and a parishioner. For example, when is a sexual relationship between a church leader and parishioner an affair, and when is it misconduct?

Safe church teams are encouraged to develop the support-person position, the claimant advocate position, and the educational ministry to foster liberal access to local resources. Safe church teams will take on greater responsibility for educating congregations and assisting church leaders to respond to abuse. Safe church teams will encourage their respective classes to implement and fund a counseling protocol for victims of abuse.

As restorative justice practices and restitution gain traction in the broader culture, Safe Church Ministry and the classical safe church teams will be faced with the challenge and the opportunity to engage in these processes for restoration of victims and offenders. To date, there are not adequate funds to develop these processes.

III. Recruitment and training

Safe Church Ministry recruited active safe church team members to become educators for churches in their respective classes. Presently, Classis Northcentral Iowa has one trained educator, Classis Pacific Northwest has two trained educators, and Classis Wisconsin has three trained educators. These educators serve as local resources for their classes, make for a cost-effective way to bring resources to the churches, can respond more quickly to shifting needs in the classis, and function as useful liaisons between the churches, classes, safe church team, and the office of Safe Church Ministry.

The role of the claimant advocate, designed to assist victims through the advisory panel process, is expanding to assist victims who seek restorative justice practices.

Safe Church Ministry will continue efforts to develop the safe church team chairperson role. The denomination has a very competent but untapped resource in these leaders.

Social Justice and Hunger Action (Mr. Peter Vander Meulen, coordinator)

I. Introduction

The Christian Reformed Church has always had a good track record on addressing hunger and poverty but has realized that more needs to be done to address the *root causes* of world hunger. Understanding that hunger is always part of a complex web of natural disasters, poverty, oppression, structural injustice, and spiritual alienation, the CRC formed the Office of Social Justice and Hunger Action (OSJ) to address these root causes.

Today the OSJ works to develop a deeper understanding of and response to God's call to "let justice flow like a river" in our personal and communal lives and in the structures of our societies, especially as it relates to hunger

and poverty. The OSJ works to educate CRC members and to encourage and support their engagement in social justice issues. The OSJ is also occasionally involved in direct advocacy.

The Office of Social Justice acts in three ways: (1) through congregational social justice contacts or groups, (2) through organizing collaborative efforts with existing denominational agencies and institutions (see summary of the Micah Challenge, below), and (3) through ecumenical efforts and partnerships. In short, this office aims to be a catalyst that energizes and organizes our denomination for more appropriate, effective, and efficient action on behalf of and with the poor and the oppressed.

II. What is social justice?

When we talk about social justice, we are referring to God's original intention for human society—a world where basic needs are met, people flourish, and peace (*shalom*) reigns. God calls us, the church, to participate in redeeming society so that all—especially the weak and vulnerable—can enjoy God's good gifts. To do this, we identify the root causes of what keeps people poor, hungry, and powerless, and then we witness and work to remove those barriers.

III. Our work

A. *We assist congregations to understand and become active in social justice issues*

1. With the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC), the OSJ has introduced a global Christian movement—the Micah Challenge—to the CRC. The Micah Challenge, endorsed by Synod 2004, encourages Christians to deepen their engagement with the poor and challenges government leaders to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The MDGs are eight measurable, time-bound targets that address poverty and hunger and their root causes. This past fall we celebrated the progress made thus far on the goals through our “Show of Hands” campaign, in which we encouraged CRC churches to trace their hands in support of the Millennium Development Goals, recommitting to five more years of work. Over 75 groups in the United States and Canada participated, resulting in over 2,500 handprints to send to our legislators.
2. The OSJ has also partnered with CRWRC to start a new movement of justice-seeking within our churches. The Congregation Justice Mobilization (CJM) project is well into its fourth year with a shared full-time coordinator. Some of the many initiatives coming out of CJM include “lunch and learn” webinars on various hot topics, fair-trade coffee fundraising for the CRC, and growing relationships with over ninety congregations. This year we added a Canadian staff person in partnership with the Centre for Public Dialogue.
3. *OSJ News* is our bimonthly newsletter for CRC justice activists. This popular newsletter is delivered electronically to over 1,500 recipients and provides a unique Christian Reformed perspective on social justice news and events. Another popular resource is *OSJ Prayers*, a weekly email list of the most pressing justice issues around the world needing prayer.

To subscribe to any of our publications, visit www.crcjustice.org and click on *Newsletters*.

4. The OSJ website (www.crcjustice.org) serves more than two thousand visitors a month. In addition to providing news and advocacy opportunities, the site supplies practical resources and helpful information to pastors, deacons, social justice committees, students, and every CRC member who wants to live the call to do justice. Another exciting online resource is justiceseekers.ning.com, a social networking website for CRC advocates to learn, speak, and act as agents of social justice.

B. In addition to our core goals of helping congregations and small groups become effective communities of salt and light, we work on education and advocacy regarding select issues important to the CRC.

1. We have added two part-time staff members to promote restorative justice projects in the United States and Canada and to further develop those already in place. Particularly in Canada there is increased emphasis on restorative practices in all areas of communal life. This increased focus on restorative justice stems from the actions of Synod 2005.

2. In Canada we continue to benefit from and support KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives. We also work with the Canadian Council of Churches Commission on Justice and Peace and the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada.

3. The OSJ was charged by Synod 2010 to help the Christian Reformed Church welcome the stranger amidst a broken immigration system. In light of that call, the OSJ's strategy includes three components:

- Increasing congregations' capacities to recognize the dynamic challenges that are faced by migrants.
- Helping congregations to remember that we are created to live in community and that throughout history God has blessed the church with opportunities to welcome strangers.
- Challenging CRC members to personally and publicly commit to take action to make their communities and nations better places to live for immigrants.

4. The OSJ has also added a part-time member of our staff to serve as Middle East Ministry Coordinator. Through our involvement in the Middle East Ministry Team, we help further the CRC's growing desire to be aware of, partner with, and stand in active solidarity with Christian communities in the Middle East. We work in partnership with Christians for Middle East Peace, the RCA, Hope Equals, and others in the service of building peace in the Middle East—especially in Palestine-Israel.

5. When appropriate for our areas of focus, we facilitate advocacy activities in Washington, D.C., and support the work of the Christian Reformed Centre for Public Dialogue (the operating name of the Committee for Contact with the Government) to do the same in Ottawa, Canada. This year such advocacy included comprehensive immigration reform, fund allocation to alleviate the effects of climate change, and travel to Cuba.

The Office of Social Justice, in collaboration with the agencies and institutions of the CRC, looks back with gratitude on a productive year. We look forward to continuing to assist members of the CRC to become salt and light in the service of God's justice and mercy.

Urban Aboriginal Ministries

The Native Healing Centre in Edmonton, Alberta; the Indian Family Centre in Winnipeg, Manitoba; and the Indian Metis Christian Fellowship in Regina, Saskatchewan—all seek to shine as beacons of God's love, light, and justice in their respective cities.

Urban Aboriginal Ministries offers a cup of cold water, a listening ear, a time for people to rest and reflect. Through the gift of hospitality seasoned by compassion and respect, this ministry welcomes people in the name of Jesus and offers his hope and healing in a culturally appropriate manner. As stated by one of the founding pastors, "The Urban Aboriginal Ministries are about presence."

Access to a safe and friendly place for fellowship is a great blessing for people living in inner-city environments. During this past year Urban Aboriginal Ministries poured more than 25,000 cups of tea and coffee for everyone who came through its doors.

Another way we offer presence is through our worship circles. Almost daily people in these ministries gather round the circle to seek their Creator and discover him together. The circle is a sacred concept in Aboriginal culture; around the circle everyone is equal and everyone has a voice. Around the circle pain is revealed and healing is found. Around the circle unity is experienced and expressed.

As one community member put it, "Here you aren't a number or just a person in a program. You really feel like you belong."

During this past year, Urban Aboriginal Ministries continued to stretch with exciting new initiatives, and it expects great things for the future.

- The Indian Family Centre in Winnipeg embarked on a leadership development initiative designed to promote Christian leadership and discipleship within the Aboriginal community. Presently three people are enrolled, and more are slated to begin in fall 2011. In summer 2011, young people from Christian Reformed congregations will be coming to the Indian Family Centre to learn about Aboriginal culture, meet people from the First Nations, and serve the community in the name of Christ.
- The Edmonton Native Healing Centre will partner in a kid's cultural camp this summer, in which sixty Aboriginal children will engage in a week-long journey of Christian aboriginal learning and discovery.
- In Regina, the Saskatchewan Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Indian Metis Christian Fellowship. Christmas celebrations were enhanced by traditional and hip-hop dance by the Chimatawa Dance Troupe of Indian Metis Christian Fellowship.

These three ministries thank the people of the Christian Reformed Church for their ongoing support. Although the legacy of residential schools has tarnished the image of God for so many, the presence of these ministries is a testimony to God's love and acceptance for all.

"When the righteous prosper, the city rejoices" (Prov. 11:10). This is our prayer, that God will prosper our ministries in such a way that the city rejoices.

STANDING COMMITTEES

I. Introduction

Synod 2004 established the Synodical Ministerial Candidacy Committee (SMCC), which is now known as the Candidacy Committee. The committee mandate is available in a document titled "Journey Toward Ordination," which is available on the Candidacy Committee website (www.crcna.org/candidacy). The members of the committee meet three times per year. As in each denominational committee, they are eligible to serve two three-year terms.

II. Committee membership

The following people currently serve on the Candidacy Committee: Rev. Peter Choi (2011/1), Rev. Henry Jonker (2011/2), Ms. Kristen Pickaart (2012/1), Rev. Melvin Jackson (2012/1), Dr. Albert Wolters (2012/2), Rev. Mary-Lee Bouma (2013/1), Rev. Ken Koeman (2013/1), Rev. Gilbert Varela (2013/1), Mr. Roy Heerema (2013/2), Dr. Duane Kelderman (ex officio as the Calvin Theological Seminary representative), Rev. Jerry Dykstra (ex officio as the ED), and Rev. David Koll (non-voting staff).

One committee member is completing a second term (Rev. Henry Jonker), and one member (Rev. Peter Choi) is completing a first term. The Candidacy Committee recommends that Rev. Peter Choi be appointed to a second three-year term, and the committee recommends that synod elect one member from the following slate of nominees to fill the vacancy:

Dr. Laverne Jordan served as an elder and as council chair at Horizon Community CRC in Highlands Ranch, Colorado. She presently serves on the classical ministerial leadership team. Dr. Jordan has a Ph.D. in counselor education and serves as dean of social sciences and humanities at Colorado Christian University.

Dr. Amanda Benckhuysen is an ordained minister of the Word who serves as assistant professor of Old Testament at the University of Dubuque Theological Seminary in Dubuque, Iowa. She has served in a variety of ministry contexts, including campus ministry, youth ministry, and church planting. Dr. Benckhuysen has also served on advisory committees for *Reformed Worship* and the Institute of Christian Worship, and she served on the synodical Committee to Study Third Wave Pentecostalism.

III. A review of the past year

Over the past year the work of the Candidacy Committee has continued with vibrancy. Synod 2010 approved 40 new candidates under Church Order Article 6 (the "seminary route" to ordained ministry) and gave extensions of candidacy to an additional 21 candidates. Synod 2010 also approved synodical deputy reports regarding 21 individuals who entered CRC ministry through Church Order Article 8 (the route for those ordained in other denominations). In addition, Synod 2010 approved reports from synodical deputies regarding 40 new positions for the office of ministry associate (Church Order Article 23). In the months since Synod 2010 met, a similar number of persons are processing through the various routes to ordained ministry.

In each of these routes to ministry, there is necessary administrative work. There is also a coordinate need for discussion regarding the best processes and policies for each of the routes. The Candidacy Committee asks for the prayers of the church as it serves in both of these tasks. The committee presents the following items of special interest for consideration by Synod 2011.

A. A review of CRC student fund practices

In order to encourage and support classes in their task of offering financial support to students preparing for ministry, the committee conducted a survey of student fund practices in the denomination over the past two years.

The survey made use of classis minutes and discovered that over the past year \$607,304 was given to 133 different students. This amounts to an average contribution of \$4.44 per CRC member, with a range in the various classes from a low of \$0.78 per member to a high of \$9.37 per member. Grants were given at an average of \$4,566 per student, with a low of \$500 and a high of \$13,650.

The complete survey report is available on the Candidacy Committee website (www.crcna.org/candidacy). It is the hope of the committee that, through the use of this report, each classical ministerial leadership team and each classis in the CRC will be prompted to take a careful, prayerful look at their practices regarding student aid. This is especially important as great disparity exists in student aid across our denomination, and economic need among those preparing for ministry is significant.

B. Ministry associate developments

1. Response to Synod 2010

Synod 2010 considered an overture from Classis Pacific Northwest asking for more clarity in the wording of Church Order Article 23. Synod referred this overture to the Candidacy Committee with the following recommendation:

That synod request that the Candidacy Committee review the wording of Church Order Article 23.

Grounds:

- a. Concerns have been raised regarding the consistent implementation of Church Order Article 23.
- b. It is important that there be clarity and consistency in the guidelines for this office.

(Acts of Synod 2010, p. 818)

The Candidacy Committee has carefully considered this matter, examining and discussing both the original overture (Overture 8, *Agenda for Synod 2010*, pp. 663-64) and the wording of Church Order Article 23. The committee observes that there is a transition under way in our use of the office of ministry associate, a transition the committee will comment on later in this report. With respect to the concerns raised in the overture, the committee judges that much of the concern regarding consistency and clarity comes from two factors: (1) a lack of careful reading of Article 23 and a resulting lack of appreciation for the distinct concerns it is addressing, and (2) a lack of appreciation for the need for flexibility in our use of the office of ministry associate.

The belief of the Candidacy Committee is that there is a useful flexibility in the current wording of Church Order Article 23 and that there should be no changes at this time. Consider the following brief descriptions of Article 23 with comments by the committee:

- a. Article 23-b refers to church planters staying in a church when the church becomes established, saying they may stay to serve the newly organized church “for a reasonable period of transition.”

The Candidacy Committee can imagine a case in which a founding church pastor (as a ministry associate) is well loved, qualified, and effective, and it would be in the best interests of the church, the pastor, and the broader church for this pastor to stay for a very long time—and this longer time would be “a reasonable period of transition” before a new pastor comes on the scene. The Candidacy Committee can also imagine a case in which the founding church pastor, although loved, respected, and effective, needs a loving nudge to broaden himself or herself for future ministry, perhaps by attending seminary. The wording of the Church Order at this point gives opportunity for the classis and the synodical deputies to give such a nudge, as they may choose to quantify the “reasonable period of transition.”

- b. Article 23-c refers to ministry associates who serve alongside of ministers of the Word, allowing them to serve as solo pastor when the minister of the Word leaves “in exceptional circumstances.”

The Candidacy Committee can imagine a case in which a region has deep experience with a ministry associate being considered for service as a solo pastor with a congregation that has a very particular profile for which this ministry associate is uniquely qualified. Only through healthy discussion would these “exceptional circumstances” be articulated and, once this is done in a persuasive way, a happy match between congregation and pastor could be anticipated. Yet, in precisely the same manner, a different region’s knowledge of a different ministry associate or congregation in a different context may lead to a different conclusion. In each case, the flexibility of the current wording can be a blessing to all parties concerned.

- c. Article 23-d refers to ministry associates who are called to serve as solo pastors in established churches. The use of this article is carefully limited by Supplement, Article 23 to ministry contexts in which cultural differences present obstacles to leadership development. The article does not give any timeline or time limit.

This is the most recent addition to the wording of Church Order Article 23, adopted by Synod 2008. It is thus the latest example encouraged by the Candidacy Committee for allowing flexibility in the use of a ministry associate. The supplemental comment for Article 23-d clearly shows that the church has taken great care in allowing for flexibility and in recognizing the unusual character of such an arrangement. The Candidacy Committee can imagine that a Vietnamese congregation of 300 members in Seattle, Washington, may need to call a ministry associate as a solo pastor simply because the supply of ordained Vietnamese-speaking ministers of the Word in North America is insufficient

and may be insufficient for another generation. The absence of a definitive time restriction at this point gives flexibility to our process. The Candidacy Committee can also imagine a situation in which a timeline may be advisable. Imagine another congregation, with a relationship to a particular person who many assess to be a good match for their ministry, who is currently serving as ministry associate in a nearby position that is about to be eliminated; this ministry associate is currently attending seminary part time while doing ministry and is just two years away from completing an M.Div. degree. The congregation may be able to make a case for calling this ministry associate as a solo pastor in order to obtain his or her services, with the clear and explicit understanding that the arrangement is temporary (with a timeline) and unusual.

In each sub-point to Article 23, and in each of the imaginary cases cited, the belief is that a healthy discussion between classis leaders, with the presence and participation of synodical deputies (currently required in each decision), will result in a principled and contextually appropriate decision. Although the wording and concern of the sub-points within Article 23 must be clearly recognized and honored, there is in each case both a clear principle *and* a helpful flexibility for ministries that can make a case for using ministry associates, sometimes in ways that were once assigned only to ministers of the Word.

Thus the Candidacy Committee recommends that synod make no changes to the wording of Church Order Article 23 at this time. In addition, the committee recommends that synod affirm the principles of contextualization implied in Church Order Article 23, and that synod encourage classes and synodical deputies to exhibit appropriate discernment in their application of this article.

2. Recognizing retirements of ministry associates

An additional issue regarding ministry associates was raised on the floor of Synod 2010, but because of time constraints it was not formally addressed. As the annual list of those retiring from service as ministers of the Word was presented, a concern was raised regarding the recognition of those who conclude a career serving the church as ministry associates. The Candidacy Committee has considered this matter and here offers synod two recommendations:

- a. That synod encourage classes to offer recognition and celebration of the ministry associates within their classis who are completing careers of service.
- b. That synod ask the stated clerks of classis to report (via the minutes of classis) the names of such persons, as they are recognized and celebrated, to the synodical office so that the names and persons can also be recognized at synod (similar to the list of retiring ministers of the Word).

3. Coordination and endorsement of ministry associate training

The Candidacy Committee recognizes that our use of the office of ministry associate is evolving. An increasing number of ministry associate positions are being approved, and the ways in which these positions are

used is increasingly varied. This reflects both a purposeful strategy in our denomination and a cultural trend in North America.

The purposeful strategy was articulated by Synod 2007 in its approval of the Candidacy Committee report. The Candidacy Committee observed,

The SMCC believes that the CRC is blessed to have the highly versatile office of ministry associate and can more effectively meet its congregational leadership needs if the office of ministry associate is more valued, used, and supported.

(Agenda for Synod 2007, p. 299)

The cultural trend in North America is to use pastors who have not been trained in the traditional manner. The trend is observed by most, as a number of high profile congregations in North America make use of pastors who have little or no traditional seminary training. More and more congregations in the CRC are becoming examples of this trend, as the number of ordained ministry associate positions in the CRC has grown to match the number of newly ordained ministers of the Word (see the Appendix to this report, columns 3 and 8, showing that 40 new candidates were approved in 2010 and 40 new ministry positions were approved in 2010).

The Candidacy Committee feels the responsibility to tend to these trends and to help the CRC respond to them appropriately. Our mandate was expanded in 2006 to include the consideration of standards for ministry associates (see *Acts of Synod 2006*, p. 662). Because of the nature of this office as a regional (classical) rather than a denominational ordination, administration and regulation of the training becomes a regional responsibility. The Candidacy Committee observed in its report to Synod 2007,

The office of ministry associate is also a highly accessible office. Church Order Article 23 sets forth clear character, knowledge, and skill standards to be met by ministry associates (see Church Order Supplement, Article 23-a), but the way in which those standards are achieved is not prescribed.

(Agenda for Synod 2007, p. 299)

The report went on to say that “the kind and amount of education required for ministry associates will vary in proportion to the level of ministry responsibility in a particular ministry setting” (*Agenda for Synod 2007*, p. 303).

The committee then envisioned conversations with a variety of groups and institutions that might have an interest in training ministry associates, so that efforts could be combined and best practices could be shared (*Agenda of Synod 2007*, pp. 303ff).

Various organizations and institutions within our denomination and beyond are currently designing training programs to prepare persons to serve the church as ministry associates. The Candidacy Committee has been approached by a number of them. Representatives of Trinity Christian College, Redeemer University College, Calvin Theological Seminary, Christian Leaders Institute, and the Reformed Church in America have described training opportunities to us and have asked for our advice. We also recognize that many classes have established Leadership Development Networks or similar programs to meet this need.

While it is true that each classis faces the primary responsibility of discerning what appropriate training is necessary for those it chooses to

ordain, the committee believes the denomination, through the Candidacy Committee, can provide the classes with a valuable resource. The committee can stimulate this discussion, coordinate efforts, and direct attention to and recommend resources that are available. Thus, in the coming year we hope to gather various parties invested in training ministry associates so that a discussion of standards, training expectations, and even “training endorsement mechanisms” can take place. This discussion may result in proposals being presented by the Candidacy Committee to Synod 2012.

4. Further issues to discuss relative to ministry associates

In keeping with the evolving character of our use of the office of ministry associate, a number of suggestions and questions continue to be actively considered by the committee. Although we need not articulate each one, the committee feels it is helpful for the broader denomination to be aware of some of the matters being considered.

- a. Should the very name of the office be reviewed? The term *ministry associate* is a practical, not a biblical, designation and may be changed if the church judges this to be wise.
- b. Should there be special regulations for ministry associates who are given the privilege of proclaiming God’s Word? There is a feeling among some that a separation of our rules regarding ministry associates into “preaching” and “non-preaching” categories might serve the church well, if the “preaching” category had a more specific set of regulations.
- c. Might we be well served to articulate in the Church Order the broad menu of possible ministry associate assignments?

These and other matters are under discussion within the Candidacy Committee and will be addressed more explicitly as the church and synod express the desire to do so.

C. *Discussion regarding mandatory continuing education for pastors*

The Candidacy Committee report to Synod 2010, as well as the Supplemental report, made mention of a discussion regarding mandatory continuing education for pastors. A subcommittee, composed of members of our committee and representatives of various denominational ministries that have an interest in this issue, was appointed to consider the matter of enhancing the continuing education (CE) practices for pastors in the CRC.

The subcommittee met five times over a period of ten months, reporting to the Candidacy Committee. They considered ways to make CE for CRC pastors mandatory, recognizing that plumbers, doctors, lawyers, and many other professions have mandatory CE policies.

Synod last dealt substantively with the matter of mandatory CE for pastors by way of a study committee report in 2000. (See the Report of the Committee to Study Continuing Professional Education for Pastors and Ministry Staff in the Christian Reformed Church in North America, *Agenda for Synod 2000*, pp. 417-24.) The following recommendations adopted by Synod 2000 should be noted (see *Acts of Synod 2000*, p. 681):

2. That synod urge all councils (a) to establish a policy for continuing education, (b) to establish the expectation that their pastor(s) and ministry staff annually engage in an appropriate program of continuing education for

ministry, and (c) to hold ministers and other ministry staff accountable for obtaining continuing education and for the content of the programs. This accountability is to be based on clear criteria adopted by the council in consultation with the minister(s) and ministry staff.

3. That synod urge church councils to grant pastors and ministry staff adequate time (approximately ten days per year) for annual continuing education and budget sufficient funds (approximately \$1,200) to cover this education.
4. That synod urge all classes to create a scholarship fund to which pastors and staff may apply with the endorsement of the church council.

As our current committee discussed the history of this discussion, as the committee considered the context of our day, and as the committee consulted with various persons and reflected with members of the advisory committee at Synod 2010, our predisposition to establishing a mandatory CE policy for pastors changed. The Candidacy decided that it is not wise at this time to advance some sort of “mandatory policy.” Rather, we decided that it would be more helpful to offer concrete ways to raise the discussion between pastors and church councils, and to raise the profile of the discussion within our denomination.

Toward that end, the subcommittee and the Candidacy Committee developed a number of suggestions. The following recommendation was submitted to the BOT for immediate consideration and was adopted:

To request the office of Pastor-Church Relations to convene a focus group composed of the representatives of relevant CRC denominational ministries who have a stake in the issue of continuing education (CE) of pastors (i.e., Sustaining Pastoral Excellence, Sustaining Congregational Excellence, Calvin Theological Seminary, Home Missions, World Missions, Chaplaincy and Care Ministry, and the Candidacy Committee). The focus group discussion may also include others, but would accomplish the goal of drawing attention to the issue of CE for pastors and provide a forum for fresh ideas. *Note:* The office of Pastor-Church Relations has too large a burden with its present workload to carry this concern on its own; each of these other entities has a vested interest and the skill set to bring new ideas to the table.

(September 2010, BOT Minute 3747)

Other suggestions developed include reminding the churches of actions of previous synods that seem too often to be forgotten. Church visitors also can be charged more explicitly with the task of tending to this discussion at the local congregational level. Finally, it is possible to raise the profile of pastoral continuing education through more explicit reference in the letter of call. The current letter of call includes a line item for specifying an amount of funds for continuing education, yet no mention is made of specifying an amount of time to be allotted. The Candidacy Committee feels that adding such a line item would signal the importance of pastoral continuing education.

The Candidacy Committee believes these suggestions will help advance the attention that is needed relative to the issue of CE for pastors, and wishes to place the matter before synod by offering the following four recommendations:

1. That synod remind the churches of existing policy statements regarding CE for pastors (note *Acts of Synod 2000*, p. 681, as quoted above) in the context of the recognition that healthy, thriving pastors are pastors who participate in regular CE, and healthy churches are churches who have healthy pastors.

2. That synod encourage the continuing development of healthy policy and practice for CE for pastors at the local church level, making use of resources available through Pastor-Church Relations.
3. That synod instruct the churches and church visitors to make the issue of CE for pastors a standard part of the discussion with church councils during classical church visiting.
4. That synod approve the addition of a line item in the CRC Letter of Call, giving opportunity to specify an indicated amount of time per year for continuing education

The subcommittee has been dismissed with thanks, and the Candidacy Committee will continue to attend to the many other matters before us. The committee welcomes your questions, reflections, and suggestions regarding this issue and our report to Synod 2011.

D. Looking ahead: the need for attention to the orientation of pastors

In the past year we have done a careful study of the records of synod and of the *Yearbook* relative to the routes into ministry within the CRC (see the Appendix to this report). We have noted a significant change taking place in the methods of training and in the expectations of the church regarding the training of pastoral leadership. A generation ago we were a denomination in which the vast majority of our pastors were trained at our own pastoral education institution, Calvin Theological Seminary (see Column 1 of the Appendix chart). Now we are a denomination in which less than half receive their primary theological and pastoral training through the denominational institution (see Columns 2, 4, 5, and 6 of the Appendix chart, summarized in Column 7 of the Appendix chart). When ministry associates are figured in to this discussion, the percentage of those trained outside of our denominational institution is even larger.

The Candidacy Committee does not wish to advocate a return to the time when all pastors were required to have their seminary training at our denominational seminary. Rather, the committee is advocating careful attention to the issues implied by this trend. As a denomination, we will be best served by pastors who are trained well, who know who the CRC is, and who demonstrate a love and commitment for her. It becomes much more difficult as a denomination to encourage and ensure a love and commitment for the CRC among new pastors when a significant number of these pastors have had minimal exposure to our denominational ministries, culture, history, and polity. Thus we need to carefully attend to programs that will allow such exposure, orientation, and ownership to take place.

There is also a growing trend in North America toward using non-theologically trained persons in ministry, or persons who are minimally trained theologically. Two articles in *Christian Century* (July 13, 2010; pp. 22-33) reflect on the benefits and dangers of this trend. One of the articles asserts that more than one-third of United Methodist churches are now served by “local pastors,” which is the United Methodist term for “ministry associates” as used in the CRC, or “commissioned pastors,” as used in the Reformed Church in America.

The committee continues to believe that the education experienced through earning a Master of Divinity degree needs to be the standard for

pastoral preparation. The synod of the CRC continues to affirm Calvin Theological Seminary as the preferred seminary of the CRC because it believes that the Reformed faith formation achieved through our seminary provides a great advantage for the future of the CRC.

However, the committee also believes we need to acknowledge the broad trends just referred to. A growing number of churches are making use of ministry associates in ministry, persons who generally have less theological education and who also have less exposure to the CRC than did pastors of a generation ago.

The work of the Candidacy Committee since its inception in 2005 has been to help the CRC find ways to ensure that adequate orientation to the CRC and training in the Reformed perspective takes place. This work is being carried out in a number of ways:

1. We continue to have a close relationship with and a high regard for the ministry of Calvin Theological Seminary (CTS). They are an invaluable partner in the preparation of pastors for the CRC.
2. We continue to review and refine the Ecclesiastical Program for Ministerial Candidates (EPMC), the designated program for those who attend seminaries other than CTS. We are currently implementing a pilot program for online course delivery of the EPMC course work, in which students partner with individual mentor pastors and classes for a 24-month period. Currently this pilot program is available for select EPMC students who have been granted a residency exemption.
3. We have also worked hard in the past two years to refine the orientation process of pastors who enter the CRC as an already ordained pastor (Article 8). We are seeking to provide a consistent, effective means of ensuring that these pastors are familiar with the Christian Reformed Church, its theological perspective, its culture, and its ministries so that they can own these as part of their own story.
4. The Korean Institute in Ministry (KIM) program is now in its fifth year as an intensive Korean-language orientation program for Korean-speaking pastors. It is being so well received that Korean pastors who have been ordained in the CRC for years are expressing a desire to attend the program as a refresher course.
5. The “Welcome to the CRC” one-week orientation, done in coordination with the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship’s (CICW) Worship Symposium, was held for a second time this past January. This program can be used as part of a “learning plan” for Articles 8 and 23 pastors as well as RCA pastors serving in the CRC.

Through these initiatives the Candidacy Committee is seeking to be sensitive to the current realities of our world and the needs of the church. We welcome any suggestions that may help us in this endeavor.

IV. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Rev. David Koll (director of candidacy) and to Rev. Peter Choi (member of the Candidacy Committee) when the Candidacy Committee report is discussed.

B. That synod by way of the ballot appoint one member to the Candidacy Committee from the nominees presented and reappoint the member eligible for a second term.

C. That synod affirm the principles of contextualization implied in Church Order Article 23, and encourage classes and synodical deputies to exhibit appropriate discernment in their application of this article.

D. That synod approve the following two recommendations relative to the retirement of those serving the church as ministry associates:

1. That synod encourage classes to offer recognition and celebration of the ministry associates in their classis who are completing careers of service.
2. That synod ask the stated clerks of classis to report (via the minutes of classis) the names of such persons, as they are recognized and celebrated, to the synodical services office so that the names and persons can also be recognized at synod (via a list similar to the list of retiring ministers of the Word).

E. That synod approve the following four recommendations relative to the continuing education of pastors:

1. That synod remind the churches of existing policy statements regarding continuing education (CE) for pastors (note *Acts of Synod 2000*, p. 681) in the context of the recognition that healthy, thriving pastors are pastors who participate in regular CE, and healthy churches are churches who have healthy pastors.
2. That synod encourage the continuing development of healthy policy and practice for CE for pastors at the local church level, making use of resources available through Pastor-Church Relations.
3. That synod instruct the churches and church visitors to make the issue of CE for pastors a standard part of the discussion with church councils during classical church visiting.
4. That synod approve the addition of a line item in the CRC Letter of Call, giving opportunity to specify an indicated amount of time per year for continuing education.

F. That synod take note of the various initiatives of the Candidacy Committee as noted in this report and thank them for their continuing work.

Candidacy Committee
David R. Koll, director

Appendix Statistical Summary of Those Entering Ordained CRC Ministry

	Column 1 CTS Candidates	Column 2 Non-CTS Candidates	Column 3 Seminary Graduate Candidates (Art. 6)	Column 4 "Exceptional Gifts" Admitted (Art. 7)	Column 5 "Ordained in Another Denom." (Art. 8)	Column 6 New CRC Ministers of the Word	Column 7 New Pastors with CTS M.Div. (Column 1 ÷ Column 6)	Column 8 Ministry Associate Positions Approved (Art. 23)
1970-1979	354	12	366	1	20	387	91%	
1980-1989	330	32	362	17	63	442	75%	
1990-1999	252	51	303	21	139	463	54%	
2000-2009	271	85	356	49	161	566	48%	202
2010	30	10	40	0	21	61	49%	40

CTS = Calvin Theological Seminary

Notes:

1. Column 2 demonstrates a growing number of seminary students entering CRC ministry through seminaries other than Calvin Theological Seminary.
2. Column 4 demonstrates the trend over the past decade of ordaining ministers of the Word without prescribed theological education. This trend was addressed by Synod 2007 in a decision to return to the historical use of Article 7, and numbers since that time reflect that decision.
3. Column 7 demonstrates a significant trend—the percentage of ministers of the Word in the CRC who receive a significant training at Calvin Theological Seminary, the preferred seminary of the CRC (see *Acts of Synod 2004*, p. 617), is declining significantly. When the number of those serving as ministry associate is added (most of whom have not spent time at CTS), the trend is even more evident.
4. Column 8 demonstrates the growing use of the office of ministry associate. Statistics of positions approved by synod are available only beginning in 2002. The growing use of this position can be explained in part as a response to the decision of Synod 2007 regarding return to the historical use of Article 7—Synod 2007 approved a strategy of more use, more status, and more support for the office of ministry associate (*Acts of Synod 2007*, p. 652). It is clear that churches are taking advantage of the option of calling a ministry associate.

I. Introduction

Over the past year, members of the Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee (EIRC) have participated in worship with churches of many traditions and in locations across the globe. Often the music had unique rhythms and the sermons were preached in unfamiliar languages. Yet it was clear that the fellow worshippers were praising the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and there was no doubt that the assembly was a gathering of a beautiful part of the family of God. The church of Jesus Christ is diverse, vibrant, and filled with potential to proclaim the good news and testify to God's grace.

The EIRC is honored to represent the CRC in its ecumenical relationships. Sometimes these relationships are institutional and formal, and at other times they are established and fostered through more casual encounters. But whatever the venues—major ecclesiastical assemblies, multilateral associations, worship halls, denominational offices, or coffee shops—"the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3) is experienced and celebrated.

But being involved in ecumenical relationships is much more than an honor—it is a joy. When Christ's people, from a wide variety of traditions, languages, and politics can grasp hands together in respect and solidarity, our hearts soar. When we hear the respect and appreciation that is given to the CRC and we show respect and appreciation for our brothers and sisters in other denominational families, we give thanks and praise to God for the way his Spirit breaks down the walls that our great enemy has constructed.

The two-part name of this committee shows that there are two dimensions to the assignment given by synod. Both are significant and are clearly distinct. Ecumenical relations exist between the CRC and other Christian traditions. Interfaith dialogue takes place between the CRC and faith traditions that do not follow Christ. The EIRC is careful to differentiate between the two activities, and it seeks to assist the members and congregations of our denomination to continue to do likewise.

This has been an eventful time for the EIRC, with a lot of ecumenical activity taking place at many levels of denominational life. Several important matters are being brought to the attention of Synod 2011 by the EIRC, and the committee seeks to provide synod with information needed to make decisions on the recommendations it brings.

II. Membership and meetings

The members of the EIRC for the current year ending June 30, 2011, are Rev. Pedro Aviles (2013/2); Dr. Emily Brink (2013/2); Rev. Carel Geleynse (2011/2); Rev. Marvin J. Hofman, vice chair (2011/2); Dr. William T. Koopmans, chair (2012/2); Ms. Debra Ortiz-Vásquez (2013/1); Dr. Shirley Roels (2012/1); Rev. Peter Slofstra (2013/2); Ms. Rebecca Warren (2011/1); and Ms. Anne Zaki (2012/1).

Rev. Bruce G. Adema and Rev. Gerard L. Dykstra serve as *ex officio* members of the EIRC.

The EIRC met in November 2010 and January 2011, and plans to also meet in April 2011. Typically the on-site meeting locations alternate between Grand Rapids, Michigan, and Burlington, Ontario.

III. Nominations for membership

The first term of Ms. Rebecca Warren ends June 30, 2011, and she is eligible for a second term. The EIRC heartily recommends her to synod for reappointment to a second term.

Rev. Carel Geleynse and Rev. Marvin Hofman are completing their second terms of service. They have faithfully served the cause of ecumenicity for the CRC. The EIRC recommends that synod express its gratitude for their service.

In keeping with the synodical guidelines and requirements for diversity in terms of gender, ethnicity, geographical location, and ordination, the EIRC presents the following slates of nominees to synod to fill these positions, asking that synod appoint one nominee from the Western United States (west of the Mississippi River) and one from Eastern and Central Canada.

Western United States

Rev. Jin Namkoong is pastor of Zion Christian Reformed Church in Portland, Oregon. He has ministry experience in Korea and the United States in both the Christian Reformed and Presbyterian traditions. Rev. Namkoong has shown his commitment to ecumenicity through his chairmanship of the Korean Ministers' Association of Oregon and Vancouver and as chair of the Oregon Council of Korean Churches.

Dr. Jay Shim is associate professor of theology at Dordt College in Sioux Center, Iowa. A graduate of Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary, he has served the Christian Reformed Church on the synodical Candidacy Committee and has participated in two synodical study committees. In addition, Dr. Shim has translated key documents produced by the CRC into the Korean language, and he serves as a multicultural liaison for the Christian Reformed Church.

Eastern and Central Canada

Dr. John Suk currently serves as pastor of Grace CRC in Cobourg, Ontario, and has also been the pastor of Christian Reformed churches in Sarnia, Ontario, and Ann Arbor, Michigan. From 1993 to 2003 he served as editor in chief of *The Banner*, during which time he also earned a Ph.D. in communication theory. Since then Dr. Suk has taught at the Asian Theological Seminary in Manila with Christian Reformed World Missions and has served as president of the Institute for Christian Studies in Toronto.

Rev. John Tenyenhuis, pastor of Rehoboth Fellowship CRC in Toronto, Ontario, was ordained as a pastor in the CRC in 1977 and has served CRC congregations in Blenheim, Ontario, and Montreal, Quebec. He has served in a variety of positions in several classes and has served on the board of Christian Reformed World Missions for eleven years. Presently Rev. Tenyenhuis is the CRC representative on the Christian Interfaith Reference Group of the Canadian Council of Churches. He states that his interest in the Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee is about encouraging the CRC to be missional and peacemaking in relating the gospel to the world.

IV. Information regarding ecumenical relations

A. Fraternal delegates

The EIRC appointed the following fraternal delegates to the assemblies of churches with which the CRC has a relationship or is in ecclesiastical fellowship:

1. To the Reformed Church in Japan (RCJ) General Assembly, Rev. Kenneth Young.
2. To the Synod of the Presbyterian Church in India – Miszoram Synod, Rev. Bruce G. Adema.
3. To the Synod of the Reformed Churches in Argentina, Rev. Bruce G. Adema.
4. To the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America, Dr. Peter Borgdorff.
5. To the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church in the Philippines, Rev. Bruce G. Adema and Rev. Marvin J. Hofman.

B. Representatives and observers to ecumenical organizations

In accordance with the provisions of the Ecumenical Charter of the CRCNA, the EIRC appointed representatives and observers to various ecumenical organizations. These gatherings often provide occasions to connect with representatives of churches with which the CRC is in ecclesiastical fellowship or dialogue, and members of the EIRC take every opportunity to make those connections.

1. Rev. Gerard L. Dykstra serves as the CRCNA's representative on the board of directors of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE).
2. Rev. Peter Slofstra and Rev. Bruce G. Adema serve as the CRCNA's representatives on the governing board of the Canadian Council of Churches (CCC). Rev. Adema now serves as president of the CCC.
3. Rev. Gerard L. Dykstra serves as the CRCNA's representative to Christian Churches Together in the U.S.A. (CCT-USA).
4. Rev. Bruce G. Adema represents the CRCNA to the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC).
5. Rev. William T. Koopmans serves as an adviser to the executive committee of the World Communion of Reformed Churches. Dr. Peter Borgdorff, former president of the Reformed Ecumenical Council, serves as a member of the executive committee.

V. Multilateral relationships – ecumenical organizations

A. World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC)

The Uniting General Council of the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) took place immediately after Synod 2010. Since the meeting location was on the campus of Calvin College, the CRCNA had the honor of being the official host denomination. Many CRC members worked tirelessly to make this a positive experience for the delegates who came from

all corners of the world, and we are grateful to those who served so well on our behalf.

The first order of business was the dissolution of the Reformed Ecumenical Council (REC) and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC). Since the CRCNA was a member of both ecumenical organizations, CRCNA delegates joined with many others in this solemn act. These were poignant moments, as both REC and WARC had accomplished much in the years of their existence, to the glory of God.

This was followed by the creation of the new Reformed ecumenical organization: the World Communion of Reformed Churches. It was decided that the WCRC will build on two priorities, with equal attention to each.

First, it was agreed that *communion* would be a priority. What does it mean to be a communion of Reformed churches? How is communion expressed? What is the basis of communion? How do denominations in the North and South, East and West, and from rich and poor communities perceive communion, and how does it become real among them?

Second, the assembly stated clearly that justice in its many dimensions will be a priority for the WCRC—including economic justice, gender justice, racial justice, political justice, and justice for minority groups in society.

Rev. Jerry Pillay of the Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa was elected to be the first president of the WCRC. He is a godly leader who we are confident will bless the WCRC and its constituent churches. The EIRC was honored to have Rev. Pillay meet with them at their January 2011 meeting, and the committee appreciated his concern for and commitment to the church at all levels—from major assembly to the pew, and every place in between.

B. Evangelical Fellowship of Canada

The CRC is a member of the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC). The EFC focuses on bringing evangelical Christians together for greater impact in mission, ministry, and witness. It does so by working closely together for ministry empowerment and by working cooperatively to address the government and the courts on current issues of interest and concern.

C. Canadian Council of Churches

The CRC is a member of the Canadian Council of Churches (CCC). The CCC works primarily through its Commissions on Faith and Witness and on Justice and Peace. The CRC has representation on both commissions, and the CRC representatives make the CRC's voice heard in matters relating to ecumenical relations and to broad concerns within our culture and world. Rev. Bruce G. Adema, the CRC's ecumenical officer, serves as president of the CCC.

D. National Association of Evangelicals

The National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) meets twice each year, where representatives of evangelical denominations, ministries, and congregations discuss matters of common interest and concern. In addition to these membership meetings, the CRC cooperates with the NAE commissions in the area of chaplaincy ministries (especially as that relates to endorsement of chaplains' issues). From time to time, the CRC is asked to participate in other NAE initiatives.

E. Christian Churches Together in the U.S.A.

Since the fall of 2001, church leaders from a wide spectrum of ecclesiastical traditions have been meeting to discuss and create a new kind of ecumenical organization that includes participants from all Christian traditions at the same table: Christian Churches Together in the U.S.A. (CCT-USA). The present participants in CCT-USA represent five families of churches as follows: Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Historic Protestant, Evangelicals/Pentecostals, and Historic Ethnic.

VI. Bilateral relationships

Relationships with other denominations can be extremely rewarding and a source of great blessings. The CRC has asked for and received advice from other denominations, and it has been asked for and given advice to other denominations. Partnerships and ministry alliances not only allow us all to have a greater impact on others; they also help us to grow in discernment, and together we demonstrate the unity of the worldwide fellowship of God's people.

A. International

1. Christian Reformed Church of Myanmar

For several years the CRCNA has been in ministry partnership with the Christian Reformed Church of Myanmar (CRCM). One indicator of the maturation of this relationship is the desire of the CRCM to be a church in ecclesiastical fellowship with the CRCNA. After reviewing the history of our relationship as well as the doctrine and confessional standards of the CRCM, and having been in communication with the leadership of the CRCM, the EIRC brings the following recommendation to Synod 2011:

That synod recognize the Christian Reformed Church of Myanmar as a church in ecclesiastical fellowship with the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

Grounds:

- a. The Christian Reformed Church of Myanmar is a Reformed church that adheres to the three forms of unity.
 - b. There has been a long relationship between our denomination and the Christian Reformed Church of Myanmar, particularly through Christian Reformed World Missions, as well as through other connections.
 - c. The Christian Reformed Church of Myanmar requests this relationship, and this association will be encouraging to both the Christian Reformed Church of Myanmar and the CRCNA.
- #### 2. Christian Reformed Church of Haiti (Église Chrétienne Réformée d'Haïti)
- The CRCNA has been engaged in ministry in Haiti for many years with a significant partner—the Christian Reformed Church of Haiti (CRCH). Until now, the CRCH's primary relationship with the CRCNA has been through Sous Espwa (Source of Hope—the operational name CRCNA agencies use for their coordinated projects and initiatives within Haiti), but there has not been a formal ecumenical relationship. After meeting with the leadership of the CRCH, it was affirmed that a closer church-to-

church relationship should be sought. The EIRC presents the following recommendation for consideration by synod:

- a. That synod recognize the Christian Reformed Church of Haiti (Église Chrétienne Réformée d'Haïti) as a church in dialogue with the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

Grounds:

- 1) The Christian Reformed Church of Haiti has a current relationship with the CRCNA through the work of CRC agencies, known in Haiti as Sous Espwa (Source of Hope).
 - 2) The Christian Reformed Church of Haiti identifies itself as a Reformed denomination in solidarity with the CRCNA.
 - 3) The Christian Reformed Church of Haiti desires a deeper and more formal ecclesiastical relationship with the CRCNA while continuing to be connected to Sous Espwa.
 - 4) This more formal ecclesiastical relationship will bless and encourage both denominations.
- b. A Memorandum of Understanding between the Christian Reformed Church in Haiti and the Christian Reformed Church in North America will be presented to synod for endorsement by way of the supplemental report (with the understanding that it needs also to be endorsed by the CRC in Haiti to become operative).

3. Other denominations

The EIRC is in communication with a number of denominations regarding the status of their relationship with the CRCNA.

a. Protestant Church in the Netherlands

A Memorandum of Understanding between the Protestant Church in the Netherlands and the CRCNA is in development, and the EIRC anticipates bringing that document to Synod 2012 for approval.

b. Reformed Churches in Argentina

The Reformed Churches in Argentina, with whom the CRCNA enjoys a relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship, has merged with another denomination called The Evangelical Church of the River Plate. The new unified denomination chose this name. What this new reality means for the relationship with the CRCNA is still a point of discussion.

c. Presbyterian Church in India

Some CRC agencies have been engaged in ministry with one of the synods of the Presbyterian Church in India, and exciting opportunities for ministry and fellowship between this church and the CRCNA are being actively explored. We anticipate presenting a full report with recommendations to Synod 2012.

d. Church of Jesus Christ in Madagascar

As was reported to Synod 2010, the Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee is in communication with this denomination, and we anticipate being able to present a Memorandum of Understanding between our churches to Synod 2012.

B. North America

The CRC maintains ecclesiastical fellowship with three churches in North America. They are the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church (ARPC), the Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC), and the Reformed Church in America (RCA). Fraternal delegates are exchanged with these churches on a regular basis.

1. Reformed Church in America

a. Joint worship

The Christian Reformed Church in North America and the Reformed Church in America (RCA) enjoy a warm relationship and engage in cooperative ministries. An indicator of this relationship is a bi-denominational worship event planned for the delegates of Synod 2011 and the delegates of the General Synod of the RCA. The event will take place at the end of the CRCNA synod and at the beginning of the RCA's deliberative assembly.

b. Resolution of appreciation for Dr. Wesley Granberg-Michaelson

The CRC has been blessed by the ministry and leadership of Dr. Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, who will retire this year as RCA General Secretary, and the EIRC recommends that the following resolution of appreciation be adopted by Synod 2011:

Resolution of Appreciation for Dr. Wesley Granberg-Michaelson

Dr. Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, the General Secretary of the Reformed Church in America (RCA) since 1994, will conclude his service in that position in Fall 2011.

Dr. Granberg-Michaelson has shown himself to be a visionary leader of Christ's church and a champion of the ecumenical movement. In his work as RCA General Secretary, as Interim Moderator of Christian Churches Together in the U.S.A., and earlier as Director of Church and Society for the World Council of Churches, he promoted the glorious cause of Christian unity, and so enhanced the church's mission of declaring the gospel of reconciliation.

Dr. Granberg-Michaelson has also shown himself to be a special friend and encourager of the Christian Reformed Church in North America, fostering a warm relationship between our denominations and bringing us to new levels of collaboration and affection.

Therefore be it resolved that the Christian Reformed Church in North America declares its appreciation to Dr. Wesley Granberg-Michaelson for his faithful service to Christ's church and for his friendship with and encouragement to the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

VII. Dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church (RCC)

During its eight-year study of Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 80 and the Roman Catholic Mass (1998-2006), the Christian Reformed Church was invited in 2002 to participate in a round of the U.S. Roman Catholic-Reformed

dialogue. This is a national ecumenical conversation that began in the 1960s in the wake of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) and has addressed a different topic in each successive round. Upon the recommendation of the Interchurch Relations Committee (now renamed EIRC), Synod 2003 officially accepted this invitation. The Reformed denominations already at the table were the Reformed Church in America, the Presbyterian Church (USA), and the United Church of Christ, which has roots in the German Reformed and Congregational traditions. What was proposed for this latest round was a multiyear dialogue on baptism and the Lord's Supper that would seek not only a clearer understanding of each other's doctrines and practices of the sacraments but also, in the case of baptism, a common agreement and perhaps even a common certificate by which the traditions would formally recognize the validity of each other's baptisms.

The CRC delegation, like those of the other Reformed denominations around the table, consisted of three persons: an ecumenical staff officer (Dr. Lyle Bierma functioned in that role after Dr. David Engelhard's death in 2005), a theologian (Dr. Ronald Feenstra), and a specialist in liturgy (Dr. Sue Rozeboom). CRC theologian Dr. George Vandervelde also joined the dialogue in 2004 as a Canadian observer from the Reformed side until his death in early 2007. The Roman Catholics were represented by seven people.

From autumn 2003 until the final meeting in October 2010, the dialogue teams met in eleven plenary sessions, for two or three days at a time, in various parts of the United States. Over the course of those seven years, the participants developed solid friendships with one another as they talked together, ate together, worshiped together, and discussed each tradition's authoritative documents and the papers composed by different team members. Along the way, many misconceptions were dispelled, and Catholics and Protestants alike were pleasantly surprised to learn how much convergence there actually is when the sacramental liturgies and theologies of the two traditions are compared.

All this reading, writing, and discussion resulted in the preparation of four documents, two of which are intended for *approval* by each denomination's highest ecclesiastical assembly, and two of which are intended only for formal *reception* as ecumenical study documents. Therefore the EIRC submits the fruits of the work of the CRC delegation to the U.S. Roman Catholic-Reformed dialogue.

A "Frequently Asked Questions" document has been prepared by the CRC representatives to this dialogue and is found as Appendix A to the EIRC report. It provides helpful perspectives on the matters raised in the report. The EIRC is recommending two other documents, "Common Agreement on the Mutual Recognition of Baptism" (Appendix B) and a template for a common "Certificate of Baptism" (Appendix C), to Synod 2011 for approval. (The General Assembly of the PCUSA and the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops have already approved the "Common Agreement.") In addition, the EIRC submits two longer study reports on baptism ("These Living Waters," Appendix D) and the Lord's Supper ("This Bread of Life," Appendix E), with the request that synod receive these reports and recommend them to the churches for further study and reflection.

Hence the EIRC presents the following recommendations regarding the documents as noted:

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Dr. Lyle Bierma, Dr. Ronald Feenstra, and Ms. Sue Rozeboom when the report regarding the U.S. Roman Catholic-Reformed dialogue is addressed.

B. That synod approve the “Common Agreement on the Mutual Recognition of Baptism” (Appendix B).

Grounds:

1. The “Common Agreement” officially affirms a longstanding CRC practice of recognizing the validity of Roman Catholic baptisms (see Church Order Article 58; *Acts of Synod 1944*, p. 351).
2. The CRC, by entering into this “Common Agreement,” would help testify to and remind us that we are baptized members not first of all of the CRC but of the “one holy catholic church.”

C. That synod encourage CRC congregations to use the language of the common “Certificate of Baptism” (Appendix C) in the issue of all future baptismal certificates.

Grounds:

1. “Compatibility in the form and content of these [certificates] would be a sign of ecumenical cooperation and a safeguard of the validity of what we celebrate together as Christians” (“These Living Waters”).
2. Use of this common certificate would remove unnecessary obstacles when Roman Catholics join the Christian Reformed Church or vice-versa.

D. That synod receive “These Living Waters” (Appendix D) and “This Bread of Life” (Appendix E) as ecumenical documents on baptism and the Lord’s Supper, respectively, and recommend them to the churches for further study and reflection.

Grounds:

1. These documents have been prepared through extensive dialogue between representatives of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and representatives of the CRC and other Reformed churches.
2. These documents offer detailed study of convergences and divergences between Roman Catholic and Reformed views of baptism and the Lord’s Supper.

E. That synod request the BOT to ask Faith Alive Christian Resources to explore with the educational and publishing agencies of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, the Presbyterian Church (USA), and the United Church of Christ the possibility of jointly preparing educational materials on the documents produced by the U.S. Roman Catholic-Reformed dialogue on the sacraments.

Grounds:

1. Such an effort would help broaden the impact of this round of ecumenical dialogue by making the results more accessible to leaders and congregations in our denominations.
2. Working collaboratively on such a project would save time and money for all the denominations involved.

VIII. Calls to ministry to Reformed Church in America and Christian Reformed Church in North America candidates by the other denomination

Due to some recent challenges with the exchange of RCA and CRC pastors, the Candidacy office assisted by suggesting a change, reflected in the following recommendation:

The EIRC recommends that synod approve the following amendment to the "Orderly Exchange of Ministers" between the Christian Reformed Church in North America and the Reformed Church in America (*Acts of Synod 2005*, pp. 741-42), pending approval of the RCA, and that the change also be reflected in Church Order Supplement, Article 8, D, upon synod's adoption:

It is important to the faithful and orderly exchange of ordained ministers that one who would serve in a congregation of another church first be formed and educated for ministry in one's own tradition and have experience in serving in that church's ordained ministry. Such experience and grounding in one's own tradition are seen to be essential prior to serving in a setting of another tradition; therefore, such service is not intended for a first call.

Grounds:

1. Such a statement is included in the "Principles of Agreement" that the RCA has with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the Presbyterian Church (USA), and the United Church of Christ.
2. Such a statement would eliminate potential confusion for those coming from RCA seminary training to serve in CRC settings.
3. Such a statement will encourage CRC students attending RCA seminaries to complete the CRC orientation process required for CRC ordination. (Such a statement will likewise discourage CRC seminary students from following the RCA process to become ordained in the RCA when their intent is to serve in the CRC.)

IX. Interfaith dialogue

Interfaith dialogue is a new area of responsibility for this committee, and care continues to be taken to differentiate interfaith dialogue from ecumenical engagement.

A task force has been appointed to discern what kinds of resources would be helpful for the congregations and members of the CRC in participating appropriately and confidently in dialogue with people from non-Christian faith traditions. The task force will also draft suitable documents and guidelines for consideration by the EIRC, and the results will be brought to Synod 2012.

X. The Belhar Confession

Synod 2009 approved the recommendation to propose to Synod 2012 that the Belhar Confession be adopted as part of the standards of unity of the CRC (as a fourth confession). It also authorized the EIRC to promote study of the Belhar Confession in the churches during this consideration period.

The EIRC asked Dr. Peter Borgdorff to facilitate, on its behalf, the study of the Belhar Confession. With his assistance, a number of classes have discussed the issues raised by this confession; church councils and

congregations have studied it; pastors have preached biblical messages on its themes; and many agencies and offices of the CRC have used the Belhar in their work. We have found enthusiastic engagement at many levels with the content of the Belhar Confession. To assist in the study of the Belhar, the EIRC has produced study materials and a devotional booklet available for free or at minimal cost through Faith Alive Christian Resources (see www.crcna.org/belhar).

The task of promoting study of the Belhar Confession is ongoing. The EIRC is pleased with the interest that congregations and leaders have shown in this confession, and how thoughtfully this important document is being examined and prayed about. Having brought the original recommendation forward to adopt the Belhar Confession as the fourth confessional standard of the CRCNA, the EIRC has been putting considerable effort into facilitating events at which all voices can be heard and all perspectives can be shared—both those currently in favor of adopting the Belhar Confession as a form of unity and those not in favor—during this period of discernment.

XI. Churches in ecclesiastical fellowship and ecumenical visitors at synod

The CRC maintains a relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship with a wide range of Reformed denominations. A complete list of such churches is attached in Appendix F. Some churches are in a less formal relationship with the CRC; however, those relationships are no less important than others. Additionally the CRC participates in a number of multilateral associations.

The EIRC facilitates the invitation and hosting of ecumenical visitors to the synod of the CRC. A rotation schedule of invitation has been developed, allowing synod to welcome people from across the world and from many churches and organizations. Ecumenical guests to this synod will come from churches in ecclesiastical fellowship, a church in corresponding fellowship, and a multilateral ecumenical organization.

We look forward to welcoming them, hearing from them, and growing in fellowship with them.

XII. Recommendations

A. That Dr. William T. Koopmans, chair, and Rev. Bruce G. Adema be given the privilege of the floor when matters relating to the Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee are being discussed.

B. That synod express its gratitude to Rev. Carel Geleynse and Rev. Marvin J. Hofman for serving the cause of ecumenicity for the CRC.

C. That synod by way of the ballot elect two members, one from the Western United States and one from Eastern and Central Canada, to serve on the EIRC for a three-year term.

D. That synod by way of the ballot ratify the reelection of Ms. Rebecca Warren to the EIRC for a second three-year term.

E. That synod recognize the Christian Reformed Church of Myanmar as a church in ecclesiastical fellowship with the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

Grounds:

1. The Christian Reformed Church of Myanmar is a Reformed church that adheres to the three forms of unity.
2. There has been a long relationship between our denomination and the Christian Reformed Church of Myanmar, particularly through Christian Reformed World Missions, but through other connections as well.
3. The Christian Reformed Church of Myanmar requests this relationship, and this association will be encouraging to both the Christian Reformed Church of Myanmar and the CRCNA.

F. That synod recognize the Christian Reformed Church of Haiti (Église Chrétienne Réformée d'Haïti) as a church in dialogue with the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

Grounds:

1. The Christian Reformed Church of Haiti has a current relationship with the CRCNA through the work of CRCNA agencies, known in Haiti as Sous Espwa (Source of Hope).
2. The Christian Reformed Church of Haiti identifies itself as a Reformed denomination in solidarity with the CRCNA.
3. The Christian Reformed Church of Haiti desires a deeper and more formal ecclesiastical relationship with the CRCNA while continuing to be connected to Sous Espwa.
4. This more formal ecclesiastical relationship will bless and encourage both denominations.

G. That synod adopt the following resolution of appreciation regarding the ministry and service of Dr. Wesley Granberg-Michaelson.

Resolution of Appreciation for Dr. Wesley Granberg-Michaelson

Dr. Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, the General Secretary of the Reformed Church in America (RCA) since 1994, will conclude his service in that position in Fall 2011.

Dr. Granberg-Michaelson has shown himself to be a visionary leader of Christ's church and a champion of the ecumenical movement. In his work as RCA General Secretary, as Interim Moderator of Christian Churches Together in the U.S.A., and earlier as Director of Church and Society for the World Council of Churches, he promoted the glorious cause of Christian unity, and so enhanced the church's mission of declaring the gospel of reconciliation.

Dr. Granberg-Michaelson has also shown himself to be a special friend and encourager of the Christian Reformed Church in North America, fostering a warm relationship between our denominations and bringing us to new levels of collaboration and affection.

Therefore be it resolved that the Christian Reformed Church in North America declares its appreciation to Dr. Wesley Granberg-Michaelson for his faithful service to Christ's church, and for his friendship with and encouragement to the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

H. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Dr. Lyle Bierma, Dr. Ronald Feenstra, and Ms. Sue Rozeboom when the report regarding the U.S. Roman Catholic-Reformed dialogue is addressed.

I. That synod approve the “Common Agreement on the Mutual Recognition of Baptism” (Appendix B).

Grounds:

1. The “Common Agreement” officially affirms a longstanding CRC practice of recognizing the validity of Roman Catholic baptisms (see Church Order Article 58; Acts of Synod 1944, p. 351).
2. The CRC, by entering into this “Common Agreement,” would help testify to and remind us that we are baptized members not first of all of the CRC but of the “one holy catholic church.”

J. That synod encourage CRC congregations to use the language of the common “Certificate of Baptism” (Appendix C) in the issue of all future baptismal certificates.

Grounds:

1. “Compatibility in the form and content of these [certificates] would be a sign of ecumenical cooperation and a safeguard of the validity of what we celebrate together as Christians” (“These Living Waters”).
2. Use of this common certificate would remove unnecessary obstacles when Roman Catholics join the Christian Reformed Church or vice-versa.

K. That synod receive “These Living Waters” (Appendix D) and “This Bread of Life” (Appendix E) as ecumenical documents on baptism and the Lord’s Supper, respectively, and recommend them to the churches for further study and reflection.

Grounds:

1. These documents have been prepared through extensive dialogue between representatives of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and representatives of the CRC and other Reformed churches.
2. These documents offer detailed study of convergences and divergences between Roman Catholic and Reformed views of baptism and the Lord’s Supper.

L. That synod request the BOT to ask Faith Alive Christian Resources to explore with the educational and publishing agencies of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, the Presbyterian Church (USA), and the United Church of Christ the possibility of jointly preparing educational materials on the documents produced by the U.S. Roman Catholic-Reformed dialogue on the sacraments.

Grounds:

1. Such an effort would help broaden the impact of this round of ecumenical dialogue by making the results more accessible to leaders and congregations in our denominations.
2. Working collaboratively on such a project would save time and money for all the denominations involved.

M. That synod approve the following amendment to the “Orderly Exchange of Ministers” between the Christian Reformed Church in North America and the Reformed Church in America (*Acts of Synod 2005*, pp. 741-42), pending approval of the RCA, and that the change also be reflected in Church Order Supplement, Article 8, D, upon synod’s adoption:

It is important to the faithful and orderly exchange of ordained ministers that one who would serve in a congregation of another church first be formed and educated for ministry in one’s own tradition and have experience in serving in that church’s ordained ministry. Such experience and grounding in one’s own tradition are seen to be essential prior to serving in a setting of another tradition; therefore, such service is not intended for a first call.

Grounds:

1. Such a statement is included in the “Principles of Agreement” that the RCA has with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the Presbyterian Church (USA), and the United Church of Christ.
2. Such a statement would eliminate potential confusion for those coming from RCA seminary training to serve in CRC settings.
3. Such a statement will encourage CRC students attending RCA seminaries to complete the CRC orientation process required for CRC ordination. (Such a statement will likewise discourage CRC seminary students from following the RCA process to become ordained in the RCA when their intent is to serve in the CRC.)

Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee
Bruce G. Adema, ecumenical officer

Appendix A

Frequently Asked Questions about the “Common Agreement on Mutual Recognition of Baptism” with the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

Note: The following FAQs, intended for use by the Christian Reformed Church, have been prepared by the CRC’s delegates to the U.S. Roman Catholic-Reformed Dialogue in consultation with the CRC’s Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee.

1. What, specifically, does this “Common Agreement” agree to?

This is an agreement to recognize and accept each other’s administration of baptism. In fact, it affirms a longstanding reality—namely, that the Christian Reformed Church recognizes and accepts the baptism of someone baptized in the Roman Catholic Church and does not require that person’s rebaptism should he or she feel called to membership in the Christian Reformed Church. Likewise, the Roman Catholic Church recognizes and accepts the baptism of someone baptized in the Christian Reformed Church and does not require that person’s rebaptism should he or she feel called to membership in the Roman Catholic Church. This is not an agreement on everything there is to say about baptism, but it is an agreement to continue to recognize and accept each other’s baptism.

Differences over the meaning and doctrine of the sacrament remain, but there are many things we can say together. Those basic things that we can—and do—say together are the basis of our mutual recognition and acceptance of each other’s baptism.

2. Why is this “Common Agreement” important?

When the Roman Catholic Church and churches of Reformed confession are compared, often differences are highlighted. Yet many things unite us, none being greater than our baptism into Christ Jesus. For centuries, the Roman Catholic Church and churches of Reformed confession, including the Christian Reformed Church, have informally recognized the validity of one another’s baptisms administered with water in the one triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Yet in recent years, having heard reports that some Protestant churches do not use the biblical, trinitarian formula, the Roman Catholic Church has been reluctant to recognize the validity of baptisms in some Protestant churches. In light of this, to formally affirm that we recognize the validity of one another’s baptisms is a testimony and a reminder to us all that we are baptized members not first of a local congregation or a confessional tradition but of “the one holy catholic church”; it is an opportunity to delight in this element of unity and to provide practical guidance to churches when they receive persons who were baptized in the Roman Catholic Church.

3. Does this agreement require a change in how CRC pastors celebrate and administer the sacrament of baptism?

No. The CRC Church Order (Art. 55) and forms for celebrating the sacrament indicate that baptism is to be administered with water in the name of the triune God by an ordained minister. This is precisely what the “Common Agreement” affirms.

This short agreement is accompanied by a lengthier, jointly prepared study titled “These Living Waters.” This document explores the common biblical-theological grounds on which the statements of the agreement are based. It also concludes with “Pastoral Recommendations: Tangible Expressions of Mutual Recognition of Baptism.” Pastors and congregations may wish to implement these recommendations as a means of delighting in and giving expression to our unity in this sacrament.

4. Since we mutually recognize one another’s baptism, does this mean we may partake of Holy Communion in one another’s churches?

No. While the CRC welcomes anyone who is baptized and publicly confesses Christ as Lord and Savior to partake of the Lord’s Supper, the Roman Catholic Church does not allow its members to receive the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper in Protestant churches, nor does it invite those who are not members of the Roman Catholic Church to receive the Eucharist in a Roman Catholic Church. We pray and work toward the day when we will be united in full communion, sharing in one another’s celebrations of the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper. Holding fast to our mutual recognition of baptism is a fitting expression of this continued hope.

5. The agreement speaks of “baptismal registers” and “written attestations of Baptism, including the liturgical formula used.” What are these? And why are they important?

In referring to “baptismal registers” and “written attestations of Baptism,” the agreement echoes current CRC practice. Our Church Order (Art. 66-68) indicates that churches shall keep records of administrations of baptism, being able to provide a certificate of baptism to any member upon his or her request. On the occasion of baptism, many congregations present to the baptized person a certificate commemorating the occasion. Maintaining baptismal records and presenting baptismal certificates on the occasion of the sacrament’s administration honors the celebration of the sacrament and the baptized person’s membership in “the one holy catholic church.” Such a certificate is itself a written attestation of the administration of the sacrament to that person, and may readily indicate that the trinitarian formula, “Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,” was spoken, just as indicated in the synodically approved forms for the celebration of the sacrament. In order to encourage the distribution of meaningful baptismal certificates (whether upon request or in commemoration of the sacrament’s administration), those who prepared the agreement have prepared text for such certificates. (If synod approves such text, it will be commended to CRC congregations for their use in the future.) Ecclesial baptismal records and personal baptismal certificates are pastorally important when, for example, transferring a membership or celebrating a marriage.

6. The recommended text of the accompanying baptismal register refers to “flowing water.” What is meant by “flowing water”?

In Roman Catholic practice, a priest must use enough water in baptism that the water “flows” on the head of the one baptized as it is administered, that it at minimum “flows” to the brow or to the hairline. This comports with our practice, exercised at its best: baptism is a sign of purifying sprinkling, of washing, even of drowning and rising to new life. As John Calvin and our Reformed tradition after him affirm, applying lavish amounts of water when celebrating the “visible word” of baptism speaks these themes best.

7. When would this “Common Agreement” become effective?

In November 2010, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops approved this “Common Agreement,” thereby making it effective with any of the Reformed bodies that participated in its preparation and that would sign it. Four Reformed denominations participated in the dialogue that prepared it. Of these, the Presbyterian Church (USA) has already approved and signed the agreement, while the CRC, the Reformed Church in America, and the United Church of Christ are currently weighing the document. It would become effective for the CRC upon synod’s approval.

8. What can I do to help make this agreement meaningful?

Aside from simply delighting in our mutually acknowledged baptismal fellowship as brothers and sisters in Christ, whether Reformed or Roman Catholic, thoughtfully engage the document “These Living Waters” (Appendix D), which accompanies the agreement. This resource is the outcome of the dialogue that Roman Catholic and Reformed theologians took up for several years and, again, explores the common biblical-theological grounds on which the statements of the agreement are based.

Consider engaging this document with members of a neighboring Roman Catholic parish. Review the “Pastoral Recommendations” in “These Living Waters,” and thoughtfully consider whether and how such recommendations might be implemented in your worshipping community.

Appendix B

COMMON AGREEMENT ON MUTUAL RECOGNITION OF BAPTISM Roman Catholic-Reformed Church Dialogue, Round VII

Together we affirm that, by the sacrament of Baptism, a person is truly incorporated into the body of Christ (I Corinthians 12:13 and 27; Ephesians 1:22-23), the church. Baptism establishes the bond of unity existing among all who are part of Christ’s body and is therefore the sacramental basis for our efforts to move towards visible unity.

Together we affirm that Baptism is the sacramental gateway into the Christian life, directed toward the fullness of faith and discipleship in Christ.

Together we affirm that incorporation into the universal church by baptism is brought about by celebrating the sacrament within a particular Christian community.

Together we affirm that Baptism is to be conferred only once, because those who are baptized are decisively incorporated into the Body of Christ.

Together we affirm that baptism is a sacrament of the church, enacted in obedience to the mission confided to it by Christ’s own word. For our baptisms to be mutually recognized, water and the scriptural Trinitarian formula “Father, Son, and Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28: 19-20) must be used in the baptismal rite.

Together we affirm that the validity of Baptism depends on its celebration according to the apostolic witness by the church and its authorized ministers.

Together we affirm, as a sign of our unity and as a witness to ecumenical commitment, the practice of inviting the presence and, where appropriate, the participation of members of our respective communions in the celebration of Baptism. At the same time, we affirm our responsibility to respect the integrity of the distinct baptismal practices of the communions in which the rite of Baptism is administered.

Given our mutual recognition of Baptism, we encourage using baptismal registers in the local church community and, when requested by another church for a pastoral need in the life of an individual, providing written attestations of Baptism, including the liturgical formula used. Such cooperation and mutual accountability honors the dignity of the sacrament of Baptism.

We rejoice at the common faith we share and affirm in this document. We understand that the journey toward full, visible unity depends on openness to the grace of God and humility before the initiatives of God's Spirit among us. Because of these convictions, we encourage Roman Catholic and Reformed pastoral leaders to continue their commitment to regular dialogue about theology and pastoral practice from local to international settings. Pastoral leaders engaged in such dialogue embody our hopes for unity, collaborative effort, and common witness. We believe that respectful dialogue can provide a strong witness to the wider church about our commitment to a relationship in Christ and can stand as a safeguard against the unreflective judgments that have, at certain times in our history, diminished and distorted our relations.

The Common Agreement goes into effect for any two of the undersigned bodies as soon as the second body in any pair adopts it according to its respective polity.

Christian Reformed Church in North America:

Signed: _____ on _____
The Rev. Gerard Dykstra, Executive Director

Presbyterian Church (USA):

Signed: _____ on _____
The Rev. Gradye Parsons, Stated Clerk

Reformed Church in America:

Signed: _____ on _____
The Rev. Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, General Secretary

Roman Catholic Church (USCCB):

Signed: _____ on _____
Francis Cardinal George, OMI, President

United Church of Christ:

Signed: _____ on _____
The Rev. Geoffrey A. Black, General Minister and President

Appendix C

Example of a Common Wording for Baptismal Certificates

Front:

Certificate of Baptism

(Name) _____

was baptized with flowing water

in the name of the Father
and of the Son
and of the Holy Spirit

at _____

(Church Name and Address)

on _____

(Date)

by _____

(Name)

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Back:

The wording of this certificate has been approved by the following:

Christian Reformed Church in North America
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
Reformed Church in America
Roman Catholic Church (USCCB)
United Church of Christ

Rev. 23 June 2010

Appendix D

These Living Waters

BAPTISM DOCUMENT

7TH ROUND REFORMED-CATHOLIC DIALOGUE

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1. Introduction

A season of engagement

The 20th century was one of intense dialogue among churches throughout the world. In the mission field and in local communities, in regional ecumenical bodies and in bilateral discussions between churches, Christians made commitments to engage each other not only in cooperative activity but theological deliberation. The Roman Catholic Church and churches of the Reformed tradition have been no exceptions. This report on baptism is offered in the context of more than forty years of dialogue between the Reformed churches in the United States and the National Conference of Catholic Bishops (now the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops). The relationships in the United States form only a part of our context, however, and our dialogue has been enriched by encounter and relationships around the world.

Our global Roman Catholic and Reformed context

Important ecumenical events of the last forty years have influenced our theological perspectives as well as our maturing ability to understand each other. Liturgical renewals, encouraged by relationships with the Roman Catholic Church, have engendered in many Reformed Christians a deeper appreciation of our common roots. These renewals have heightened awareness of the richness of our common liturgical tradition. Roman Catholic seminaries have developed a renewed focus on the preaching of the word in the context of the sacramental liturgy, a strong emphasis in the Reformed tradition. In addition, in recent decades Roman Catholics have come to read Reformed theologians with new lenses. The discovery of new source material – both patristic and biblical – has greatly enhanced our collective ability to affirm a common heritage. More than ever before, ecumenical prayer services include a ritual for the reaffirmation of our baptismal vows, a reminder of that which binds us to each other as kindred in Christ, acknowledging our one calling through our one baptism, claimed by one God.

Earlier in our history, movements within our traditions sought to provide bridges between us. In the German Reformed community, for example, theologians of the Mercersburg liturgical movement made explicit commitments to rebuild relationship with the Roman Catholic Church as one

element in manifesting the full visible unity of the church. Roman Catholic dioceses, in the aftermath of Vatican II, established diocesan ecumenical offices which nurtured the formation of “living room dialogues” in which many Reformed church members participated, enhancing relationships across the United States and the world.

Churches in relationship through the ecumenical movement have also sought to articulate specific beliefs about baptism. Our practices and our theologies have varied widely, but even without complete consensus there have emerged important experiences of convergence and deeper understanding. As a result of numerous bilateral dialogues, a growing familiarity with baptismal theology and practice among churches has made a profound contribution to the church’s ability to claim its vision of unity. As recently as 2002 the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity in the Vatican urged ongoing study and dialogue of many theological issues for the enhancement of Roman Catholic and Reformed church relationships, most especially urging a focus on baptism as a basic to our Christian identity.

Some landmark studies have offered us encouragement and guidance along the way. The 1982 World Council of Churches document *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* presented the churches with an important opportunity to engage in dialogue on these important matters. Through those studies, Christians came to appreciate more deeply their own and each other’s baptismal expressions and theology.

More recently, in the Eighth Report of the Joint Working Group between the Vatican and the World Council of Churches (2005), Protestants, Catholics and Orthodox Christians explored the meaning and the practice of this sacrament. While this important study was much broader in ecclesial scope than the one we offer here, it reflects many issues found in our own bilateral dialogue, and it urges, as we do, further study in those areas of ongoing difference.

Our regional and local context

The international arena is only one among many vital settings for dialogue and reflection between Reformed and Roman Catholic Christians. Official discussions in national church settings in the United States have been equally important in advancing mutual understanding. Topics in the last forty years have included theological, liturgical and ethical issues. These issues have been explored with a consistent expectation that they are in primary service to the pastoral settings of all of our churches. Sound pastoral practice, however, rests on solid theological foundations. The current report, succeeding one on *Interchurch Families*, grew from a recognition that our pastoral customs reflect our different theological and ecclesiological traditions – differences which must be understood if we are to relate to each other in healthy ways.

In the United States, members of our traditions also encounter each other in local settings through common service and community worship experiences. Learning in those settings has been both intentional (through the formation of discussion groups between congregations and parishes) as well as informal (as neighbors work together on projects for the common good). Common work and intentional dialogue, where it has occurred consistently, has enabled members of both of our traditions to respond to community

concerns effectively and deepen appreciation for the different gifts each brings to common public life.

Finally, the family has been a vital setting for dialogue between Roman Catholic and Reformed Christians in the United States. Increasingly, marriage and the mobility of extended families have contributed to this intimate encounter between the traditions, an experience which can be both a joy and sometimes also confusing. Families are the settings where the gifts that each tradition brings can be most concretely received, but also the place where our differences can be most keenly felt, and where the pain of our divisions may have the most significant impact. It has been important, therefore, in official settings, to approach with utmost care those topics which affect the experience of our members and the pastoral leaders who serve them.

In all of these settings, both the Reformed and the Roman Catholic churches have affirmed the value of ecumenical engagement and increased mutual understanding. Through our ongoing encounter we have come to know each other's ecclesial characteristics, value each other's strengths, and make commitments to deeper relationships.

We hope this study will provide an occasion for ongoing dialogue among Roman Catholic and Reformed lay and ordained leaders, both in those places of longtime engagement, and in those settings where it will be entirely new. Such dialogue can contribute to the common witness of the church on the local level, and make ecumenical ideas a lived reality of Christian faith.

Our hope

It is precisely the gift of our unity in the church of Jesus Christ through our baptisms which enables us to come to dialogue tables not just as acquaintances but as kindred – as members of one family in Christ – to consider in depth these matters of baptismal theology and practice.

The theological reflection in this report is intended to provide a sound basis on which our communions can express, in tangible ways, a mutual recognition of each other's baptisms. We have acknowledged areas of agreement and of difference. Through active engagement we have experienced our own faith tradition more clearly by seeing ourselves through the lenses of our partners. Through dialogue we have become reacquainted with our own tradition, the scriptures, and the sacraments. We have had the opportunity to examine, and, perhaps most important, to correct, past misunderstandings and caricatures. As our relationships have deepened we have celebrated those areas of theological consensus and we give thanks for the patient and careful dialogue which has brought our traditions closer together; we note those places where consensus has yet to be achieved but where ongoing dialogue holds promise for closer convergence; and we acknowledge those aspects of our theology and practice where there is no convergence but where the commitment to the eventual full, visible unity of the church will be well-served by enhanced mutual understanding.

Through an honest desire to understand each other, and therefore to acknowledge both the limits and the possibilities of what we can accomplish together, we believe we can make an enduring statement about what we hold in common.

We offer this report not simply as an academic study to be reviewed by those with a particular interest in the theology of baptism but to the entire

constituency of all of our churches as a discernment of where the Holy Spirit is leading us together. We offer a prayer of hope that each encounter may move us to even deeper recognition and into a more faithful relationship with the Triune God. Ultimately our unity is not something we create but is a gift given us by God. Its visible manifestation is something for which our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ prayed (John 17), and we know that the earliest witnesses to the Christian faith proclaimed both the present reality and the eschatological hope of one Lord, one faith, and one baptism (Ephesians 4). Where we have fallen short of answering the call to that full visible unity, we confess our culpability and the enduring scandal of division within the body of Christ.

And so in celebration of what we hold in common, and in testimony to our desire to make God's gift of unity more visible, we offer our common witness in the following Common Agreement.

2. Common Agreement on Mutual Recognition of Baptism

Roman Catholic-Reformed Church dialogue

1. Together we affirm that, by the sacrament of Baptism, a person is truly incorporated into the body of Christ (I Corinthians 12:13 and 27; Ephesians 1:22-23), the church. Baptism establishes the bond of unity existing among all who are part of Christ's body and is therefore the sacramental basis for our efforts to move towards visible unity.
2. Together we affirm that Baptism is the sacramental gateway into the Christian life, directed toward the fullness of faith and discipleship in Christ.
3. Together we affirm that incorporation into the universal church by baptism is brought about by celebrating the sacrament within a particular Christian community.
4. Together we affirm that Baptism is to be conferred only once, because those who are baptized are decisively incorporated into the Body of Christ.
5. Together we affirm that baptism is a sacrament of the church, enacted in obedience to the mission confided to it by Christ's own word. For our baptisms to be mutually recognized, water and the scriptural Trinitarian formula "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28: 19-20) must be used in the baptismal rite.
6. Together we affirm that the validity of Baptism depends on its celebration according to the apostolic witness by the church and its authorized ministers.
7. Together we affirm, as a sign of our unity and as a witness to ecumenical commitment, the practice of inviting the presence and, where appropriate, the participation of members of our respective communions in the celebration of Baptism. At the same time, we affirm our responsibility to respect the integrity of the distinct baptismal practices of the communions in which the rite of Baptism is administered.

8. Given our mutual recognition of Baptism, we encourage using baptismal registers in the local church community and, when requested by another church for a pastoral need in the life of an individual, providing written attestations of Baptism, including the liturgical formula used. Such cooperation and mutual accountability honors the dignity of the sacrament of Baptism.

We rejoice at the common faith we share and affirm in this document. We understand that the journey toward full, visible unity depends on openness to the grace of God and humility before the initiatives of God's Spirit among us. Because of these convictions, we encourage Roman Catholic and Reformed pastoral leaders to continue their commitment to regular dialogue about theology and pastoral practice from local to international settings. Pastoral leaders engaged in such dialogue embody our hopes for unity, collaborative effort, and common witness. We believe that respectful dialogue can provide a strong witness to the wider church about our commitment to a relationship in Christ and can stand as a safeguard against the unreflective judgments that have, at certain times in our history, diminished and distorted our relations.

3. Historical Overview: Perspectives on Sacramentality

The following sections describe both the history and theology of baptismal rites in the Reformed and Roman Catholic communions. Two different investigatory methods are evident in the work that follows: (1) *an historical approach* (especially Section II), narrating each communion's self understanding relative to sacramental practice, as developed over a given timeline, and (2) *a liturgical approach* (especially Section IIIA) that offers each communion's own account of the Church's interaction with God in the celebration of the rites themselves. The observations which follow are made only of Roman Catholic and not of Eastern Christian baptismal rites."

The following sections describe both the history and theology of baptismal rites in the Reformed and Roman Catholic communions. Two different investigatory methods are evident in the work that follows: (1) *an historical approach* (especially Section II), narrating each communion's self understanding relative to sacramental practice, as developed over a given timeline, and (2) *a liturgical approach* (especially Section III) that offers each communion's own account of the Church's interaction with God in the celebration of the rites themselves. The observations which follow are made only of Roman Catholic and not of Eastern baptismal rites.

Historical Introduction

The Reformed and Catholic communions share a common tradition about sacrament. They rejoice over what they uphold together and they understand where they evaluate the tradition differently. Their common tradition begins with the apostle Paul and the Greek word *mysterion* ("mystery") as found in Paul's letters (e.g., 1 Cor. 2:1; 4:1; Rom 16:25). There the word referred to God's hidden plan for salvation. The developing Pauline tradition (e.g., Eph. 1:9; 3:3, 4, 9; Col. 1:26-27; 2:2) took up this theme and proclaimed that this "mystery" is embodied in Christ, in whose sufferings we share

(e.g., Col. 1:24-2:3).¹ From there, early North African, Latin translations of the Greek New Testament translated *mysterion* with the word *sacramentum*. In this context, *sacramentum* referred to the redeeming work of God that was known through Jesus.

The writings of the North African theologian Tertullian (ca. 160-ca. 230), including what may be the earliest work on sacramental theology (*De Baptismo*), continued the connection between *mysterion* and *sacramentum*.² In *De Spectaculis* Tertullian calls the Eucharist a sacrament (3:10), and in *Adversus Marcionem* he calls Baptism a sacrament several times, as he also does in *De Baptismo*. Furthermore, Tertullian does not limit his understanding of sacrament simply to Baptism and Eucharist; he calls charity “the highest sacrament of the faith” (*De Patientia* 12:133-34), and he uses *sacramentum* in relation to martyrdom (*Scorpiace*, ch. 9).

The word sacrament carried two principal meanings by the early third century. It referred to Jesus because God’s redeeming presence was known through the man Jesus – what the *fides historica* broadly calls the incarnation. Sacrament also referred to certain rituals of the church because likewise through the physical, God’s redeeming presence was known. The much-beloved biblical passage that symbolically connected Jesus as sacrament to the church’s sacraments was the scene of blood (symbolizing the Eucharist) and water (symbolizing Baptism) flowing from the wounded side of Christ (Jn. 19:34). Many of the early church theologians allegorically interpreted this scene as referring to the birth of the Church through the issuance of Christ’s blood and water, that is, through the sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist.³

By the fourth century the words *mysterion* and *sacramentum* gained prominence as the rite of Christian initiation, and the catechetical teachings about baptism and Eucharist, flourished in the post-Constantinian period. The writings of Ambrose (339-397), Cyril of Jerusalem (c. 315-386), Theodore of Mopsuestia (c. 350-428), and other patristic theologians, speak about baptism and Eucharist from a Neoplatonic perspective in which the physical sign of the sacrament could be distinguished from the spiritual reality signified in

¹ See, for example, Günther Bornkamm, *Mysterion*, in Gerhard Kittel, ed. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, Vol. IV (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1967) 803ff.

² To the idea of sacrament Tertullian also added the faithful human response to God’s redeeming work that comes to us through the *sacramentum*. For a general introduction to this material and helpful bibliography, see Thomas M. Finn, “Sacraments,” in *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, ed. Everett Ferguson (New York & London: Garland Publishing, Inc, 1990), 811-815. For *sacramentum*, see the discussion by Josef Finkenzeller, *Die Lehre von den Sakramenten in allgemeinen: Von der Schrift bis zur Scholastik* (Freiburg: Herder, 1980), 4-37, esp. 10-13, 25-30; also see, J. de Ghelinck, S.J., *Pour l’histoire du mot “sacramentum” I. Les Anténicéens* (Louvain: Spicelgium sacrum Lovaniense, 1924), esp. 12-18, 144-152. For a classic, late nineteenth century Protestant view on sacrament, see Ferdinand Kattenbusch, “Sakrament,” in *Real-Encyclopädie für Theologie und Kirche* 3rd ed. (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1896-1913), 17:349-381. Kattenbusch denies a proper theological and etymological connection between and *sacramentum*, but agrees that Tertullian first made the connection, probably based on North African, Latin translations of the New Testament (349-351). Also see Kevin W. Irwin, “Sacrament” in Joseph A. Komonchak, Mary Collins, and Dermot A. Lane (eds.), *The New Dictionary of Theology* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press/A Michael Glazier Book, 1989, 1991) 910-22.

³ See Finkenzeller, *Lehre*, 22-23; cf. Saint John Chrysostom, *Catechesis* 3, 13-19; Clement of Alexandria, *Paedagogus*, PG 8, 299 and Ambrose of Milan, *In Luc.* 2, 85-89: PL 15, 1666-1668.

it, yet truly participative in that same spiritual reality. Leo the Great (d. 461) would summarize this most notably in his homily for Ascension Day: “And so the sight of our Redeemer today passes into mystery (*sacramentum*)”⁴ — which meant that what Jesus had done in history, had passed into “sacrament” or “mystery” celebrated by the Church each day in the liturgy. Perhaps the most influential among these theologians, however, stands the North African bishop, Augustine of Hippo (354-430), for whom physical realities were the windows through which the spiritual realities reach us.⁵ Augustine also has a notable chapter in the tenth book of *The City of God* that essentially exegetes the meaning to Rom. 12:1-3. There he argues that the communion of Christian lives given in love is offered to God as its sacrifice through Christ “the great High Priest (*sacerdotum magnum*, Cf. Hebrews 4:14 *et pass.*) who offered himself to God in His passion for us.” Augustine then closes the chapter by asserting that [t]his is the sacrifice of Christians: the many, the one body in Christ. And this likewise is the sacrifice that the church repeatedly celebrates by the sacrament of the altar, noted by the faithful, in which she shows that she herself is offered in the offering that she makes to God.⁶

The two senses of sacrament, as Jesus himself and as the sacraments of the church, continued into the medieval period and Latin theologians gradually synthesized the two ideas of sacrament into an integrated theology. The basic medieval concept was that the church is the body of the crucified, resurrected, and glorified Lord, and God’s grace continues to come to us through Christ just as it did in the incarnation. Only now the grace that comes through Christ comes through the sacraments, most especially the Eucharist, by which Jesus Christ continues to be present in the church. Thomas Aquinas (1224-1274), for example, gave a thorough exposition of eucharistic theology and sacrifice (cf. *Summa Theologica*, III, 73-83) that was a feature of an entire ecclesial world-view that was, so to speak, eucharistic:⁷ The whole world

⁴ Cf. Leo the Great, *Sermon* 74:2 (CCL) 138A, 457: *Quod itaque Redemptoris nostri conspicuum fuit, in sacramenta transiit*. For a full discussion of the relation between *sacramentum* and *mysterium* in the Latin tradition, see Y. Congar, *Le “mysterion” appliqué aux sacrements, traduit par “sacramentum” dans l’église ancienne* in *Un peuple messianique* (Paris: Cerf, 1974), 47-55. See also Louis Bouyer’s *The Christian Mystery*, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1989), especially 5-18 and 31-171 for a treatment of “mystery” in the liturgy.

⁵ For a summary of Augustine on sacrament as a sacred sign, see Finkenzeller, *Lehre*, 39-43. For a wider treatment, see Edward J. Kilmartin, S.J., *The Eucharist in the West*, ed. Robert J. Daly, S.J. (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1998), 3-61.

⁶ *De civitate dei* 10.6; CSEL 47.278-9. *Hoc est sacrificium christianorum: multi unum corpus in Christo. Quod etiam sacramento altaris fidelibus noto frequentat ecclesia, ubi et demonstratur, quod in ea re, quam offert, ipsa offeratur* (CSEL 47.279.52-55)

⁷ For a summary of Aquinas’s eucharistic teaching, and bibliographic references, see David N. Power, *The Eucharistic Mystery* (New York: Crossroads, 1994), 163-240, esp. 208-240 (also see, 269-290). For a thorough entrance to the vast literature on Thomas Aquinas, see Otto Pesch, “Thomas von Aquino/Thomismus/Neothomismus,” in *Theologische Realenzyklopädie* (New York; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2002). In English, see Thomas O’Meara, *The Theology of Thomas Aquinas* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), particularly the annotated bibliography, 290-296. Also see, Kilmartin, *Eucharist in the West*, 247-266; Erwin Iserloh, “Abendmahl: III/2. Mittelalter,” *Theologisches Realenzyklopädie* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1977), 1:95-97; E. Manganot, “Eucharistie du XII^e à la fin du XV^e siècle,” *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique* (Paris, 1913), 5:1304-1320, *passim*. For excellent shorter studies, more accessible to those not trained in scholastic theology, see Owen Cumings, “Medieval Eucharistic Theology,” *Emmanuel* (March, 1993): 73-79; Gary Macy, *The Banquet’s Wisdom*

was related to and dependent upon the grace of God, known in creation, proclaimed in salvation history, and present once and still in Jesus Christ, Word made flesh, the one mediator, who has united believers into his reign, the Body of Christ. Into this triune God one was baptized, and by the very being of this God one was nourished during life's spiritual journey. Christ instituted the Eucharist, argued Thomas, because he desired to remain present in the church, in a sacramental manner available to faith, unlike a mere corporeal presence available to the senses. The whole economy of salvation, which comes to the individual as spiritual nourishment through faith in Christ's passion, is thus effectively realized now in the sacrament that is Christ's activity in the church itself.⁸

The late medieval period, and particularly the various reforming efforts in the late fifteenth and early sixteen centuries, inherited the traditions that connected sacrament to the church itself and to the rites that constituted the church and existed through the church. The Protestant reformers of the Reformed tradition continued to affirm that the true church was ultimately the body of Christ, just as they continued to affirm the sacraments that Jesus Christ instituted. The theological arguments by which they connected sacrament, church, and Jesus Christ constructed the tradition differently, however, than did the late medieval church as it moved into the Council of Trent.

3.a. Sacramentality

i. A Catholic View

Sacramentality is a key theological principle of Catholic ecclesial life. It applies not only to the seven sacraments and to the liturgy but is used in reference to the Church as a whole. In recent Catholic theology the notion of sacramentality functions as a foundational principle for Catholic thought and experience since it is related to the principles of mediation and communion as well as the theology of grace. Grounded in the doctrines of creation, incarnation, and the resurrection of the body, it has much to do with how creation elevated by grace is able to mediate the divine presence even as that presence is personal, hence grounded in the Trinitarian economy. It is an affirmation of the capacity of finite creation to be a means for God's manifestation and self-communication.

Divine revelation attests to the sacramental principle. In the history of salvation, the "economy of Revelation," is "realized in deeds and words, which are intrinsically bound up with each other" (*Dei Verbum*, 2). Since the works performed by God show forth the reality signified by the words and the words proclaim the works, so too, signs and symbols derived from creation and human culture are utilized by the Church in its liturgical life. The liturgy is at the heart of the Church's life as expressed in *Sacrosanctum Concilium*,

(New York: Paulist Press, 1992), 104-109; Herbert McCabe, "Eucharistic Change," *Priests & People* 8/6 (1994): 217-221; Raymond Moloney, *The Eucharist* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1995), 139-150; David Power, "Eucharist," in *Systematic Theology II: Roman Catholic Perspectives*, ed. Francis Schüssler Fiorenza, John P. Galvin (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 277-280. For an informative Catholic perspective on the sacraments in general, and thus the place of Thomas within this development, see Regis A. Duffy, "Sacraments in General," in *Systematic Theology II*, 183-210.

⁸ See David N. Power, *The Eucharistic Mystery* (New York: Crossroads, 1994), 163-240, esp. 208-238.

The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy of the Second Vatican Council: “the liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; it is also the fount from which all her power flows” (*Sacrosanctum Concilium* 11). It is also a work of the Holy Trinity and through the mystery of Christ the High Priest it embraces both human and divine action. Therefore, liturgy is “an ‘action’ of the *whole Christ (Christus totus)*” (CCC 1136), that is, a work of the risen Christ and his Church.

The trinitarian nature of the liturgy proceeds from the missions of the Son and the Holy Spirit (their “joint mission”⁹) that culminates in the incarnation of the Son and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. By virtue of the incarnation, the assumed human nature of Christ is inseparably united to the eternal Son of God in the hypostatic union and thus serves the divine Word as a “living organ of salvation.” So too, by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit “in a similar way, does the visible social structure of the Church serve the Spirit of Christ, who vivifies it, in building up the body” (*Lumen Gentium* 8).

Sacramentality consists of the coalescence of divine and human elements in the life of the Church whereby God acts through the visible organs of the Church especially the sacraments. Catholics, therefore, speak of the Church analogously as a sacrament, in that the “Church, then, both contains and communicates the invisible grace she signifies” (CCC 774). In Christ the Church is “a sign and instrument both of a closely knit union with God and of the unity of the whole human race” (*Lumen Gentium* 1).

Sacramentality is consistent with the doctrine of creation whereby God speaks through the visible creation making it possible for human intelligence to read traces of the Creator in the material cosmos (CCC 1147). A solid theological anthropology needs underscore the social being of humanity and how signs and symbols are intrinsic to communication through language, gestures, and actions (CCC 1146). They are the means for “expressing the action of God who sanctifies men, and the action of men who offer worship to God” (CCC 1148). Consistent with God’s covenant with Israel, wherein both cosmic and social symbols are taken up in Israel’s liturgical life, Jesus himself often illustrated his preaching with physical signs and symbolic gestures, e.g., the use of spittle to heal the blind man (Jn 9: 6). So too, since Pentecost, “the Holy Spirit carries on the work of sanctification” through the sacramental signs of the Church (CCC 1152), what has been called its “sacramental economy” or “dispensation” (CCC 1076).

ii. A Reformed View

From within the long-standing Western tradition where sacrament referred both to the church, which is the body of Christ, and to the sacraments constituting the church, the Reformed tradition asserts that the true church, invisible to human eyes but visible to God’s eyes, is comprised of God’s faithful people gathered as the body of Christ. So *The Westminster Confession* (IX.4) says, “By the indwelling of the Holy Spirit all believers being vitally united to Christ, who is the Head, are thus united one to another in the Church, which is his body (cf., *Larger Catechism*, Qq. 64-66; *Scots Confession*

⁹ “In their joint mission, the Son and the Holy Spirit are distinct but inseparable. To be sure, it is Christ who is seen, the visible image of the invisible God, but it is the Spirit who reveals him.” CCC 689.

XVI; *Second Helvetic Confession* XVII). Reformed theology calls neither the visible nor the invisible church a sacrament.

Reformed theology applies the word “sacrament” to the two divinely instituted signs, baptism and Lord’s Supper, to which God attaches the promise of grace (e.g., *Scots Confession* XXI; *Heidelberg Catechism* Q. 68; *Second Helvetic Confession* XIX; *Belgic Confession*, art. 34; *Westminster Confession* XXVII). In a loose sense, the true *visible* church might be called “sacramental” because its two marks, the preaching of the gospel and the right administration of the sacraments, both communicate God’s real self-giving in Jesus Christ, but such language would be historically foreign to the Reformed tradition. Likewise, although some church rites, such as ordination, penance, and marriage are God-given and useful (*Second Helvetic Confession* XIX); and although some simple church rites that are not contrary to the Word of God might be useful ceremonies (*Second Helvetic Confession* XXVII); the Reformed tradition has never considered such rituals to be “sacramentals,” in the way that the sign of the cross, palms, ashes, incense, or candles were a means of grace within the medieval church.

By contrast, the Reformed tradition has considered the created order to be “sacramental,” insofar as the word connotes God’s self-communication, even if Reformed theology typically has refrained from such language. For example, Calvin believed that God accommodates God’s self in order that we might know who God is. God desires to span the distance between Creator and creation and meets us where we are, communicating to us as we so need, because we otherwise are incapable of knowing God (e.g., *Com. Ex.* 3:2; *Com. Rom.* 1:19; *Com. 1 Cor.* 2:7). The essence of God itself, of course, we can never know (*Inst.* 1.13.21), but God’s activity and will, however, can be seen in creation itself:

Consequently we know the most perfect way of seeking God, and the most suitable order, is not for us to attempt with bold curiosity to penetrate to the investigation of his essence, which we ought more to adore than to search out meticulously, but for us to contemplate him in his works whereby he renders himself near and familiar to us, and in some manner communicates himself to us (*Inst.* 1.5.9).

Creation can clearly be means by which God communicate to us because God

daily discloses himself in the entire working of the universe, so that we cannot open our eyes without being compelled to see him . . . on each of his works he has engraved sure marks of his glory, so clear and prominent that even uncultured and dim-witted people cannot plead ignorance as an excuse (*Inst.* 1.5.1)

The universe has become, says Calvin, “a kind of mirror (*speculi*) in which we are able to see him, so far as it concerns us to know him” (*Geneva Catechism* Q. 25; *OS* 1.77.25-7).

Furthermore, human culture also reflects God’s beneficent glory so that the human mind, even though “fallen and perverted from its wholeness, is nevertheless clothed and ornamented with God’s excellent gifts” (*Inst.* 2.2.15). And thus Calvin acknowledges that law, philosophy, rhetoric,

medicine, and mathematics were true and glorious achievements of ancient cultures because God's grace was at work in the ancients and through these achievements God's beneficence can be seen (*Inst.* 2.2.15). Likewise, through every age moral people have existed whose upright character can be contrasted with those less moral. The moral qualities exemplified are "special graces of God" (*speciales Dei gratias*) that show forth divine beneficence. (*Inst.* 2.3.3-4). The Canons of Dort put the issue this way:

There is, to be sure, a certain light of nature remaining in man after the fall, by virtue of which he retains some notions about God, natural things, and the difference between what is moral and immoral, and demonstrates a certain eagerness for virtue and for good outward behavior. But this light of nature is far from enabling man to come to a saving knowledge of God and conversion to him – so far, in fact, that man does not use it rightly even in matters of nature and society (III/IV, art. 4).

Human moral achievements, both individually and culturally, count not to our glory but to our condemnation because, as Calvin saw the matter, they are done not from thanksgiving that glorifies God, who was the source of such special graces, but were done from our own self-interest (*Inst.* 2.3.4). Thus the Canons of Dort say straightforwardly we "suppress" this light of God in "unrighteousness" and in so doing we render ourselves "without excuse before God" (III/IV, art. 4; cf. *Belgic Confession*, art. 14).

Finally, the Reformed tradition also understands that within the created order God has given certain signs that enable our confidence in God's promises. Calvin says that such signs can be through natural elements, or even through miracles, and he calls such signs "sacraments" (*sacramenti nomen*; *Inst.* 4.14.18). Among natural signs, God used "the tree of life as a guarantee of immortality" to Adam and Eve. So, too, God gave the rainbow to Noah as a pledge of grace towards the earth. Although both tree and rainbow began as natural objects, when they were "inscribed by the Word of God" (*inscripta fuerunt verbo Dei*) they "began to be what previously they were not" (*inciperent esse quod prius non erant*). Among the miracles that were divinely given signs, Calvin notes the light in the smoking fire pot (Gen. 15:17), the fleece with dew (Judges 6:37-8), and the shadow of the sundial going backwards (2 Kgs. 20:9-11) (*Inst.* 4.14.18). These signs were not humanly invented but were given by God, and Calvin differentiates these from the "ordinary" sacraments that God instituted among God's people, both of the old law and those instituted by Christ in the new law (*Inst.* 4.14.19-26).

3.b. Sacraments.

i. Sacraments from a Roman Catholic perspective

The sacraments then, especially the Eucharistic sacrifice, are the center of the Church's liturgical life.¹⁰ Christ's work in the liturgy enables the pilgrim Church to participate "as by a foretaste, in the heavenly liturgy" such that before the *parousia* the Holy Spirit dispenses the mystery of salvation in and through the Church's prayer and sacraments (CCC 1112). The sacraments are

¹⁰ There are seven sacraments in the Catholic Church: Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Reconciliation or Penance, Anointing of the Sick, Matrimony, and Holy Orders.

sacraments of Christ founded in the saving mysteries of Christ's life so that "what was visible in our Savior has passed over into his mysteries" (St. Leo the Great quoted in CCC 1115). The sacraments are sacraments of the Church "by her" and "for her" effectively instantiating the principle of sacramentality. For the Church "the sacraments make the Church" in that they manifest and communicate to human beings the mystery of communion with the triune God (CCC 1118). The sacraments are sacraments of faith because they presuppose faith (prepared by the Word of God) and through words and objects they nourish, strengthen and express faith (CCC 1122-1123). The sacraments are sacraments of salvation because they "confer the grace that they signify" (CCC 1127), bestowing the grace necessary for salvation (CCC 1129). The sacraments are sacraments of eternal life because in "the sacraments of Christ the Church already receives the guarantee of her inheritance and even now shares in everlasting life (CCC 1130).

Catholics also speak of the validity and efficacy of the sacraments, the latter having been a sore point of contention during the Reformation. For a sacrament to be valid it must be administered according to the intention of the Church to confer the grace of Christ, by a proper minister, and with the form and matter of the particular sacrament. The ministers must be validly ordained except in the case of matrimony where the minister witnesses the sacrament that is conferred by the spouses upon each other or in baptism where in the case of an emergency (not the normative administration of baptism) anyone may baptize if they do so with the Church's intention. The form along with the matter of the sacrament embraces the appropriate objects: for example, water, bread, wine, oil, etc., and their corresponding words or sacramental formulae (based on the New Testament accounts) of the Last Supper words of institution for the sacrament of the Eucharist and the Trinitarian baptismal formula.

Sacramental efficacy concerns the conferral of grace in the sacramental act.

The "sacraments act *ex opere operato* (literally: "by the very fact of the action's being performed"), i.e., by virtue of the saving work of Christ, accomplished once for all. It follows that 'the sacrament is not wrought by the righteousness of either the celebrant or the recipient, but by the power of God.' From the moment that a sacrament is celebrated in accordance with the intention of the Church, the power of Christ and his Spirit acts in and through it, independently of the personal holiness of the minister. Nevertheless, the fruits of the sacraments also depend on the disposition of the one who receives them" (CCC 1128).

Catholics understand in this principle the guarantee of Christ's salvific action in the sacraments not because of any notion that the sacraments are magical in nature, an unfortunate characterization, but because Christ established the sacraments and his Spirit acts through them. It underscores the Church's firm conviction about the priority of grace and her dependence on Christ. Nor does this mean that the faith of the minister and recipients of the sacraments is unimportant. In sacraments the posture of the recipient may be interpreted as the disposition of the one receiving the sacraments so as to not place any obstacle in the way of reception, such as impenitence, and more

positively to receive the sacraments in faith, hope and love, and cooperate with the grace received to bear fruit.

Efficacy also includes the grace proper to each sacrament, i.e., sacramental grace, and in the case of Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Orders, the reception of an indelible spiritual sign, mark, seal, or character of the specific sacrament imprinted on the soul. This sacramental character consecrates the person to Christ according to the particularity of the sacrament and underscores the non-repeatability of the sacrament. In Baptism and Confirmation one is consecrated to the common priesthood of the faithful, and in Holy Orders to the ministerial priesthood.

In summary, the sacraments of the Church are the principle means of grace instituted by Christ and through them Christ acts in the Church. Sacraments are “‘powers that come forth’ from the Body of Christ, which is ever-living and life-giving. They are actions of the Holy Spirit at work in his Body, the Church. They are “the masterworks of God” in the new and everlasting covenant” (CCC 1116) with each as mentioned imparting its own specific grace.

The means of grace also include sacramentals—“sacred signs instituted by the Church...[that] prepare men to receive the fruit of the sacraments and sanctify different circumstances of life” (CCC 1677)—such as blessings, exorcisms, and sacred signs, objects and gestures including, for example, holy water, the sign of the cross, altars, vestments, incense, rosaries, etc., many of which inform the variety of expressions of popular piety. The latter engages the common priesthood of all the faithful and embraces the material universe in its use of signs for worship, devotion, and pious and spiritual exercises. The theological principle that accounts for the efficacy of grace in sacramentals is *ex opere operantis* (“from the work of the worker”). Although God is still the source of grace, its impartation in sacramentals is proportioned to the holiness and faith of the believer engaged in their practice. One may also speak of *ex opere operantis Ecclesiae* since it is the Church that acts or prays not only in the sacraments but also in non-sacramental liturgy, e.g., the Liturgy of the Hours, and in various forms of devotional prayer that the Church encourages. All of these are ways in which grace is offered by Christ in the Holy Spirit and increased through its faithful reception by believers and their fruitful cooperation with it.

3.b.

ii A Reformed View

The Reformed tradition historically argued at the time of the Protestant Reformation, and still theologically maintains, that worship ought to be done according to scripture. For some of the tradition, only those practices could be done that scripture warranted:

But the acceptable way of worshipping the true God is instituted by himself, and so limited by his own revealed will, that he may not be worshipped according to the imaginations and devices of men, or the suggestions of Satan, under any visible representation or any other way not prescribed in the Holy Scripture. (*Westminster Confession XXIII*)

For other parts of the tradition, rites not prescribed by scripture could still be celebrated for our benefit so long as they did not go against scripture. As the *Second Helvetic Confession* pastorally puts the matter, “a few moderate and simple rites, that are not contrary to the Word of God, are sufficient for the godly” (XXVII).

The Reformed tradition thus counts the dominically instituted sacraments as two, baptism and the Lord’s Supper (e.g., *Scots Confession* XXI; *Heidelberg Catechism* Q. 68; *Second Helvetic Confession* XIX; *Belgic Confession*, art. 34; *Westminster Confession* XXVII). To these sacraments the Reformed tradition applies the long-standing hermeneutic of *signum-res* to explain what a sacrament is. To the outer sign God attaches an inner reality; and the Reformed tradition typically understands that the inner reality that inheres to the sign is ultimately Christ himself (e.g., *Tetrapolitan Confession*, XVII-XVIII; *First Basel Confession*, VI; *Second Basel Confession (First Helvetic Confession)*, 20 and 22 (Supper); *Scots Confession* XXI; *Second Helvetic Confession* XIX; *French Confession*, XXXIV-XXXVI; *Belgic Confession*, art. 33). As the *Second Helvetic Confession* says,

the principle thing which God promises in all sacraments and to which all the godly in all ages direct their attention (some call it the substance [*substantiam*] and matter [*materiam*] of the sacraments) is Christ the Savior (XIX).

Some Reformed voices express the object signified with a proximate description, such as “holy signs and seals of the covenant of grace, immediately instituted by God, to represent Christ and his benefits, and to confirm our interest in him” (*Westminster Confession* XXVII). When one reaches the actual discussion of baptism and Supper, however, one typically finds there the description of a person’s baptismal “ingrafting in Christ (*Westminster Confession* XXVIII.1), or that in the Supper “really and indeed . . . receive and feed upon Christ crucified, and all the benefits of his death” (*Westminster Confession*, XXIX.7).

Reformed theology distinguishes between the validity and the efficacy of the sacraments. The sacraments are to be administered by duly ordained ministers of the church (e.g., *Scots Confession* XXII; *Second Helvetic Confession* XVIII, XIX; *Large Catechism*, Q. 169), and when so administered, with the proper sign and divine promise of grace, as the church intentionally follows the mandate of scripture, the sacrament validly offers what the sign signifies:

Two things are necessary for the right administration of the sacraments. The first is that they should be ministered by lawful ministers . . . and the second is that they should be ministered in the elements and manner which God has appointed. Otherwise they cease to be the sacraments of Christ Jesus (*Scots Confession* XXII).

In a long discussion, the *Second Helvetic Confession* contrasts validly offered sacraments with the efficacy that includes “the condition of those who receive them.”

For we know that the value [i.e., fruitfulness] of the sacraments depends on faith and upon the truthfulness and pure goodness of God. For as the Word of God remains the true Word of God, in

which, when it is preached, not only bare words are repeated, but at the same time the things signified or announced in words are offered by God, even if the ungodly and unbelievers hear and understand the words yet do not enjoy the things signified, because they do not receive them by true faith; so the sacraments, which by the Word consist of signs and the things signified, remain true and inviolate sacraments, signifying not only sacred things, but, by God offering, the things signified, even if unbelievers do not receive the things offered (XIX).

Thus while under right administration sacraments validly offer the divine reality that the signs signify, the efficacy applies only to those who receive the sacraments in faith. Calvin's 1545 *Geneva Catechism* (no. 329) simply asserts that when the sacraments are offered "[m]any do close the way by their perverseness and so make it worthless for themselves. Thus its fruit reaches only the faithful. Yet from that nothing of the nature of the sacrament disappears (*nihil sacramenti naturae decedit*)."

Finally, the Reformed tradition holds that baptism and the Lord's Supper are not strictly speaking the first sacraments that God gave to God's people. God granted sacraments in the old dispensation, and the "sacraments of the ancient people were circumcision, and the Paschal Lamb, which was offered up" (*Second Helvetic Confession* XIX). The Reformed tradition generally ascribes to these sacraments the same ultimate reality signified as those signified by the sacraments instituted by Jesus Christ (*Westminster Confession* XXVII.7), for in each case Christ "is the chief thing and very substance of the sacraments in both" (*Second Helvetic Confession* XIX). The Reformed tradition argues that there is an ultimate unity of covenant between old and new. As Calvin put the matter,

The covenant with all the patriarchs is so much not different from ours in substance and reality (*substantia et re*) that it is absolutely one and the same thing (*Inst.* 2.10.2)

This covenant unity exists because the patriarchs "had and knew Christ the mediator, through whom they were joined (*coniungerentur*) to God and were partakers of his promises" (*Inst.* 2.10.2). Thus, Calvin rejected "that scholastic dogma (to mention this in passing) which notes so great a difference between the sacraments of the old and new law, as though the old did nothing but foreshadow the grace of God, but the latter truly conferred it as a present reality" (*Inst.* 4.14.23).

At the same time, some Reformed confessions also try to distinguish the sacraments that were given "under the Law" (*Scots Confession* XXI) from those given under the new dispensation. The *Second Helvetic Confession* asserts that "a great difference" exists between the signs. The new signs are "are more firm and lasting," "more simple and less laborious," and "belong to a more numerous people." Further, "both the substance and promise" (*et rem et promissionem*) have been "fulfilled or perfected" in Christ, and "a greater abundance of the Spirit" follows (XIX).

3. c. Summary

In our respective accounts of sacramentality it is evident that this theological concept weighs more heavily in the Catholic than in the Reformed tradition. Perhaps this is most clear in our respective understandings of ecclesiology. As we have seen in the Catholic section, the notion of the Church as sacrament emerged in theology, in the conciliar documents of the Second Vatican Council, and has been utilized in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Reformed theologians have been less apt to appropriate this ecclesiological model. It is interesting that the following statement appeared in the 1976 Report of the U.S. Presbyterian & Reformed-Roman Catholic Dialogue, entitled *The Unity We Seek*.

...we see the Church as called to be a sign—a sacrament—of that unity which God has willed for his creation and disclosed in Jesus Christ.

However at the international level things are quite different.

In the second phase (1984-1990) of the Dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, the Final Report entitled *Towards a Common Understanding of the Church*, two respective conceptions of the Church were examined: the Church as “*Creatura Verbi*” for the Reformed tradition and the Church as “Sacrament of Grace” for Roman Catholics. In their “Questions and Reflections” on these distinct ecclesiologies the document states what is worth quoting in full.

112. We are agreed in recognizing the radical dependence of the church in receiving the transcendent gift which God makes to it, and we recognize that gift as the basis of its activity of service for the salvation of humanity. But we do not yet understand the nature of this salutary activity in the same way. The Reformed commonly allege that Catholics appropriate to the church the role proper to Christ. Roman Catholics, for their part, commonly accused the Reformed of holding the church apart from the work of salvation and of giving up the assurance that Christ is truly present and acting in his church. Both these views are caricatures, but they can help to focus attention on genuine underlying differences of perspective, of which the themes of *creatura verbi* and *sacramentum gratiae* serve as symbols.

113. The two conceptions, “the creation of the word” and “sacrament of grace,” can in fact be seen as expressing the same instrumental reality under different aspects, as complementary to each other or as two sides of the same coin. They can also be poles of a creative tension between our churches. A particular point at which this tension becomes apparent is reached when it is asked how the questions of the continuity and order of the church through the ages appear in light of these two concepts.

Although we did not discuss these texts the tension stated often surfaced in our discussions. We recognize that the comments of the international dialogue penetrate to the heart of our distinct understandings of sacramentality. It can also be noted that World Council of Churches 2005 Faith and

Order Paper, *The Nature and Mission of the Church: A Stage on the Way to a Common Statement* was able to affirm that Church is a “Gift of God, a Creation of the Word and Holy Spirit,” and can even speak of the “Church as a Sign and Instrument of God’s Intention and Plan for the World.” However, it could not agree on the Church as sacrament, confining that concept to a box in the text that articulates alternative views. With this in mind we hope that our text on baptism may be a further stepping stone to a common understanding of the Church and sacramentality.

Section 4: Baptismal rites

a. Common early history

Just as Roman Catholic and Reformed churches share a common tradition about the theology of sacrament, so also we have in common the history of baptismal practice and reflection up until the sixteenth century. Our respect for common biblical and patristic sources has in recent decades become a central impetus for convergence, if not complete agreement, relative to the celebration of baptism in our communions. For this reason, it is useful to review briefly the early history of the church’s baptismal rites, as well as the medieval developments that preceded our separation.¹

The liturgical form of baptism in the New Testament period is not known with precision. However, it would seem that Matthew 28:19-20 reflect actual baptismal practice, sanctioned by the way it is placed on the lips of the Risen Christ. The expressions “baptism in the name of the Lord Jesus (Acts 2:38; 8:16; 19:5) though at times interpreted as referring to a liturgical formula, may in fact simply refer to the rite of baptism in the same way that the term “the breaking of the bread” is used to refer to the Eucharist. Some suggestions of early Christian baptismal practice are attested in the Didache (9:5) which is possibly as early as 60 C.E., as an indication of how liturgical praxis would emerge from its home in apostolic Judaism.

Though the New Testament records few details about baptismal practice in the earliest days of Christianity, it is clear that new converts to Christianity were initiated into Christ and the church by baptism, a ritual washing that was eventually connected with the command of Jesus himself (Matt. 28:19-20). Baptism seems, at first, to have been modeled on the actions of John the Baptist (cf. Jn.1.31, 33 and Acts 1.22) which symbolized repentance or *teshuvah*, and bore some continuity with either the ritual washing or *mikvah* of second temple Judaism, Jewish proselyte baptism as used from at least the first century B.C.E., or the more isolationist Essene-style baptism which was eschatological in character (cf. *Serekh ha-Yahad* or “Community Rule Scroll”). However, it was John himself who would presage the baptism of Jesus by distinguishing his own as merely a “water” baptism versus the “spirit” or “fire” baptism to be given by the promised one (Mt. 3.11 and Lk.3.16; Jn.1.33). Jesus would then use the term “baptism” to describe either a sharing in his sufferings for those who would follow him (cf. Mt. 20.22-23 and Mk. 10.38) or as a name for his own rite of washing with water, but offered by his disciples (Jn.4.1-2) at first only to Jews. Later, the apostles would adapt John’s practices to the injunctions of Jesus to baptize gentiles as well (cf. Matt. 28. 19-20), with Paul then developing the term typologically by contrasting the Israelites’ “baptism into Moses” (1 Cor. 10.2) over and against baptism into Christ Jesus. In sum, New Testament accounts provide several controlling

images for baptism, with two of these particularly important in the patristic era, only to re-emerge as central themes in recent reforms of baptism: (1) baptism as new birth through water and the Spirit (John 3) and (2) baptism as union with Christ in his death and resurrection (Romans 6).

New Testament texts are ambiguous about whether baptism was extended only to adults, or may have included children, as well. When Paul and others are said to have baptized an entire “household” (*oikos*), there is no doubt that it included men and women, married and widowed, and those who were free (cf. 1 Cor.1.16; Acts 16.15;11.14;16.31). But did it also embrace slaves and children? Early Church figures such as Tertullian (c.160-c.240 C.E.) (cf. *De spect.* 4; *De corona mulites* 3; *De anima* 35) speak warmly of the baptism of children, but there seems to be no clear answer to the question of a universal understanding about the matter in the immediately sub-apostolic period. The probability of other mixed practices in the performance of baptism are also suggested in the New Testament. While it is clear, for example, that the Lord’s injunction at Mt. 28. 19-20 involves a declarative formula for baptism, it is equally clear in Acts. 2.38, 8.16, 10.48 and 19.5 that “baptism in the name of the Lord Jesus” was commonplace in many early Jewish-Christian communities¹¹. The same practice is found in the baptismal sections of the *Didache* 9.5 (c. 60 C.E.), where Christian praxis would emerge slowly from its home in apostolic Judaism.

In the second and third centuries, sources reveal varying patterns of development in baptismal practices. Justin Martyr’s (100-165 C.E.) account of baptism in Rome, found in his *First Apology* (61, 65), describes a water baptism whose language is built around Eastern Christian notions of illumination.

In Syria (*Didascalia apostolorum*,9.12) (c.250 C.E.?), there was strong emphasis on pre-baptismal anointing associated with the assimilation of the baptized into the royal and priestly offices of Christ. The baptism itself was accompanied by the Trinitarian formula and led directly to Eucharist. In North Africa, Tertullian (c.160-c.240 C.E.) described a process that included vigils and fasts, renunciation of Satan, threefold creedal profession of faith at baptism, post-baptismal anointing, prayer with laying on of hands associated with the gift of the Spirit, and participation in the eucharist (see *De spect.* 4; *De corona mulites* 3; *De anima* 35). The contested *Apostolic Tradition*, 21 (attributed to Hippolytus of Rome, ca. 215 C.E.) describes three years of catechesis, including prayer, fasting, and exorcism, and a formal rite of admission to the catechumenate accompanied by careful interrogation about lifestyle, all leading up to baptism at a vigil (perhaps the Easter Vigil). This baptismal rite included renunciation of Satan, full body anointing with the “oil of exorcism (or: oil of the catechumens),” threefold creedal questioning accompanying baptismal immersions, post-baptismal anointing with the “oil of thanksgiving”, entrance into the assembly at which the bishop offered the laying on of hands, with prayer, and yet another anointing, and finally, participation in the eucharist (cf. the 5th century Syrian *Canons of Hippolytus*, 19.133). The timing of baptism also differed, some Eastern sources suggesting

¹¹ Though this term may have been the common expression for a fuller ritual expression of baptism (cf. *fractio panis*).

January 6 as the preferred date, others forty days after January 6 (following a period of fasting), and some Western sources choosing Easter or Pentecost.

Baptismal practices underwent significant change in the fourth century, following Constantine's rise to power and legitimating of Christianity as the legal religion of the empire. Again, there are differences between Eastern and Western baptismal practices. In the East, according to the writings of Cyril of Jerusalem (fl. 350-387 C.E.) (*Mystagogical Catechesis*, 1.2;2.3;1.9;2.2;3.1 and 5.1); John Chrysostom (fl. 349-407 C.E.) (*Hom. De bap.* II, 11, 12, 18, 21, 22, 24, 25-27), and Theodore of Mopsuestia (fl. 350-428 C.E.) (*Hom.de bap.*,II, III) baptismal practice generally included the following elements:

- Easter baptism, and the forty day season of Lent for pre-baptismal catechesis on scripture, Christian life, and the creed for those preparing for baptism
- "Scrutinies" (examination of baptismal candidates for evidence of sin and evil remaining in their lives) and daily exorcisms during this period of final catechesis
- Development of renunciation and profession of faith by the candidates
- Ceremonial presentation (*traditio*) and recitation (*redditio*) of the Creed by the candidates
- Reinterpretation of the pre-baptismal anointing as exorcism, purification, and/or preparation for combat with Satan
- Use of Romans 6 as basis for baptism as entrance into the tomb with Christ, signified by the passive formula "N. is baptized . . ."
- Post-baptismal anointing associated with the gift and seal of the Holy Spirit
- Mystagogical catechesis (preaching that expounds on the mysteries which the newly baptized have experienced at baptism) during Easter week

Of course, pre-baptismal rites were widely used, but varied from one local church to another, as the homilies of the Fathers attest (e.g., compare the rites and catechesis for catechumens as described by Quodvultdeus [c. 450] in his *de Symbolo*, 1,2,3 with those of Leo the Great [d.446] *Homilia* 16.6). At this point, there was no uniform practice in the West regarding a fixed baptismal "formula", but instead, there is frequent use of three creedal questions and their responses at the moment of baptism. The correspondence between the use of the invocation and the styles of baptismal immersions was even more varied (cf. de Puniet, *Baptême* in *Dictionnaire d'Archéologie Chrétienne et de Liturgie* (Paris, 1910) 2: col. 305-306).

This developed pattern did not survive much beyond the fourth century in either East or West. Once the vast majority of adults in the Roman Empire were baptized as Christians (after the early medieval period), there was no longer a need for an extended period of pre-baptismal catechesis. In addition, the teachings of Augustine (354-430 C.E.) strongly shaped baptismal theology and practice in the West in two ways: first, his argument for infant baptism based on the need to be cleansed of original sin led to an emphasis on early infant baptism as the norm (*De peccatorum meritiis et remissione et de baptismo parvulorum* and *De spiritu et littera*) Second, his argument with the Donatists over the practice of rebaptism led to a focus on the sacramental elements (water, wine, bread) and their objective validity apart from the moral character of the one administering them (*Contra epistulam Parmeniani*, PL 43).

As a result, medieval Western baptismal practice included baptizing infants as soon as possible, the permission for anyone to baptize (not only a priest), and a focus on the validity of the sacrament rather than the extended drama of the fourth century rites.

The baptismal rite for infants in the medieval era became in essence a compressed version of the rite for adults. Godparents or ministers responded to the questions on behalf of the children who could not do so themselves. The rituals of handing over the creed and the Lord's Prayer eventually were eliminated, while other elements of the fourth century rites (admission to the catechumenate, exorcisms, administration of salt and the clothing with the white garment) remained, but adapted for use with an infant. Other elements of the baptismal rites were reinterpreted. The timing of baptism also shifted; though Easter and Pentecost had been the preferred occasions for baptism in the fourth century, the emphasis on baptizing infants as soon as possible led to the practice of administering baptism within a few days of an infant's birth, no matter the season of the year. Gregory the Great (540-604 C.E.) even allows for a single immersion of adult or child in water, accompanied by the Trinitarian formula (*Epist.* 1.43). By the eighth century, the *Missale Gothicum*, [260] called for the use of a declarative baptismal formula, taken from Mt. 28.19-20, marking a definitive end to the previous question and answer style of the Latin fathers.

A final significant development in baptismal rites in the West was the separation of three liturgical acts: baptism, the anointing that came to be known as confirmation, and first communion. Once the post-baptismal anointing became a sacrament reserved for the bishop, it was commonly celebrated at a time separated—sometimes by several years—from the water baptism. This rite of confirmation was interpreted differently by writers in the medieval period, but gradually came to be associated with the giving of the Holy Spirit. Though the rite of confirmation was celebrated as a separate sacrament, however, priests continued to anoint the baptized with chrism immediately following water baptism, symbolizing participation in the royal and priestly anointing of Christ. The timing of first communion varied considerably: in the early medieval period it was usually given at the time of baptism, but in the eleventh century first communion was usually postponed until age seven or later, because of increasing reverence for the sacramental species. In 1281, the Archbishop of Canterbury, John Peckham, insisted that no one should come to communion until they had been confirmed, while in Spain and southern Gaul for a time the unity of the three rites of initiation was preserved in their original order (see *Concilia Magnae Britanniae et Hiberniae II: Constitutiones Peckham*, p. 54).

At the dawn of the sixteenth century, though there was not absolutely uniform practice in the Western church, a common baptismal order looked like this:

Sarum Rite of Baptism (1543)

The following rite of baptism can be found in the Sarum Manual printed in Rouen in 1543, the final edition of its kind for use in England before the break with Rome and the issuance of the Book of Common Prayer in 1549. As such, the Sarum rite given here represents the shape of the baptismal rite before a universal rite for baptism would be imposed by Rome following the Council of Trent.

- I Entrance Rites
 - A. Interrogatories at the door of the Church
 - B. Signing of the head and chest of the baptizand; giving of name by godparents
 - C. Exorcism of salt
 - D. Giving of salt to baptizand
 - E. Prayer for assignment of guardian angel
 - F. Exorcism
 - G. Ephphetha ceremony
 - H. Recitation of Our Father, Hail Mary and Creed by godparents
- II Rites at the Baptismal Font
 - A. Recitation of Our Father, Hail Mary and Creed by godparents
 - B. Litany of the Saints
 - C. Blessing of water in the font
 - D. Mixing of oil and chrism with baptismal water
 - E. Renunciation of Satan by godparents
 - F. Anointing with oil of catechumens
 - G. Baptismal promises taken by godparents
 - H. Baptism
 - I. Anointing with chrism
 - J. Clothing with white garment
 - K. Presentation of lighted candle
 - L. Confirmation, if a bishop is present
 - M. Giving of holy communion, if baptizand is at least seven years of age
 - N. Reading of the Gospel of Mark 9.17-29; reading of prologue of the Gospel of John 1.1-14.

Source: A.J. Collins, *Manuale ad usum percelebris ecclesiae Sarisburiensis* (Henry Bradshaw Society, XCIX). 1960

4. b. Historical Developments: The Reformation

In the 16th century, Protestant reformers sought to reform the church according to scripture and with respectful attention to the early church sources they had available at the time. In light of these sources, they retained the central practice of baptism with water in the triune name of God, but amended the medieval baptismal rites in the following major ways:

- They emphasized that the *Word of God* engrafts believers into the body of Christ. Thus baptism was understood as a visible form of that Word, conveying and communicating the grace of God only as it is administered in conjunction with the proclamation of the Word.ⁱⁱ There could be no baptism unless there was also proclamation of the Word. Also, because of their emphasis on the power of the Word of God, reformers emphasized the need to administer the sacrament of baptism, as all of the rites of the church, in the vernacular. That which was not understood could not be properly received and thus could not be efficacious.
- They focused attention on the *water* as the primary and only essential symbolic element. Thus they eliminated elements of the rite that were deemed non-essential and non-scriptural: elements such as oil, salt, spittle, and candles. Related to this was their concern to clarify that baptism itself is a sign and promise of the baptism of the Holy Spirit.ⁱⁱⁱ

- They focused attention on the ecclesial dimension of the sacrament. Thus they emphasized the importance of baptizing in the context of the gathered community, and strongly resisted the practice of private baptism.^{iv} Because Reformed Protestants denied that baptism was necessary for salvation, “emergency baptisms” were eliminated, and only ordained ministers were permitted to administer baptism, within the body of the church.
- They focused attention on the connection between baptism and nurture in Christian faith. As a result of this, many reformers were concerned to choose appropriate godparents for infants to be baptized, and charging them with helping to raise the baptized child in the faith, though at other times the parents themselves were admonished to raise the child in the faith. Some Reformed rites also include admonitions to the congregation to assist in Christian nurture.

The implications of these revisions to baptismal practice were twofold: on the one hand, baptism was no longer understood to be necessary for salvation or engrafting into Christ, but on the other hand, reformers in various ways sought to highlight water baptism as a real means of grace that conveyed what it signified: forgiveness of sins and regeneration. These four emphases (centrality of the Word, focus on water, ecclesial nature of baptism, and connection of baptism and ongoing nurture) have continued to be central principles in Reformed baptismal practices until the present, though they have not always received equal attention or led to the same outcome.

Though Martin Luther is not strictly speaking a part of the Reformed Protestant family, his reforms clearly influenced the liturgical developments in the Reformed tradition. In his baptismal liturgies, we can see increasing focus on the water as the central element in baptism, as well as emphasis on the Word in connection with the rite. His first vernacular reformed rite of baptism retained much of the medieval baptismal rite of Magdeburg, which was widely used in his time, though in his “epilogue” he made it clear that elements such as “breathing under the eyes, signing with the cross, placing salt in the mouth, putting spittle and clay on the ears and nose” were not central to baptism (First *Taufbüchlein*, 1523). In his second *Taufbüchlein* (1526), Luther trimmed many more elements of the medieval rite, focusing even more strongly on the water.^v His interest in the central symbol of water can also be seen in his “Flood Prayer,” in which the flood and exodus are interpreted as types of baptism. This liturgical element became commonplace in many Reformed liturgies that followed. In addition to the focus on water, Luther regarded the Word as central to baptism, since it constituted God’s promise to which the sign of water was attached. Therefore, the most important liturgical elements in his view were the word and the flood prayer. Though Luther retained some patristic elements (e.g., exorcism) that later Reformed leaders rejected, his emphasis on the Word and the symbol of water influenced the development of later Reformed baptismal services.

Ulrich Zwingli in Zurich produced an order for baptism in 1525 that purported to remove “all the additions, which have no foundation in the word of God.”^{vi} Zwingli eliminated cleansing, exorcism, renunciation, and even profession of faith, all of which had been present in Luther’s second baptismal rite. Here too we can see the focus on water as the central symbol of baptism,

as well as the Word as both divine promise and norm for liturgical reform. His was a very simple service that clarifies the centrality of faith to the understanding of baptism and offers a clear scriptural warrant for infant baptism, born out of Zwingli's own struggle with the Anabaptists. In the same year in Strassburg, Martin Bucer published his revised baptismal rite, which likewise focuses the prayer on the gift of faith and new life in Christ.^{vii} In Bucer's rite we also see a feature that became important in many later Reformed baptismal services: the admonition or charge to families and/or godparents to raise the child in the faith. Both of these features point to the common Reformed concern to link baptism with ongoing nurture in Christian faith.

During his years in Strassburg (1538-1541), John Calvin surely learned from Bucer's practice of baptism. When Calvin himself produced an order of baptism for the church in Geneva in 1542, however, his order bore little resemblance to Bucer's. Calvin specified that children were to be brought to the church either on Sunday afternoon at the time for catechism, or on a weekday after the morning preaching. These instructions suggest the importance of connecting baptism with preaching or teaching, and they also reveal a lingering concern to baptize the child as soon as possible after birth, an ironic impulse given his denial that baptism was necessary for salvation.^{viii} By Calvin's time, the baptismal exhortation had become a central feature of Reformed baptismal rites, presenting careful teaching on the nature, use, and significance of baptism, including why it was appropriate to baptize infants (against the Anabaptists).

John Knox patterned his baptismal service after Calvin's, including the opening address and the charge to godparents. In 1556 he produced the "Forme of Prayers" for his Scottish congregation in Geneva.^{ix} The language of the post-baptismal prayer, original with Knox, was echoed in the 1645 Westminster Directory and in later generations of Reformed baptismal services in this stream of the Reformed tradition.

In 1566, the Reformed Church in Holland adopted a baptismal liturgy based on the baptismal rite used in Heidelberg in the early 1560s.^x Like the other Reformed 16th century liturgies, it included a strong emphasis on teaching, together with parental promises to nurture the child in the faith, followed by baptism and prayer of thanksgiving. This liturgy was later included in the *Liturgy* adopted at the Synod of Dort (1618-1619). Versions of this baptismal service were used by both streams of the Dutch-American Reformed church (both RCA and CRC) until the early 20th century, and continues to be used in some Christian Reformed Churches in English translation.

Though these 16th century Reformed orders of baptism show variation in their language and ordering of elements, they share the common concerns stated earlier: attention to the Word (particularly clear in explicit scriptural warrant for liturgical practice); emphasis on the water as central symbol and sign of God's grace; concern to locate baptism in the church in connection with public worship; and emphasis on the connection of baptism and ongoing nurture of the faith (as illustrated by admonitions to parents and/or godparents). We also see through the 16th century a growth in exhortation/instruction as a part of the baptismal service in Reformed congregations. Though baptismal instruction may well have been intended by Zwingli and Bucer, this element is firmly ensconced as a part of the baptismal service by the time we reach Calvin, Knox, and the Heidelberg-Dutch traditions. These

four themes that shaped reform of rites in the 16th century continue to exercise major influence in Reformed rites up to the present.

4. c. Historical developments: Roman Catholic

The Council of Trent (1545-1563) left the actual revision of the rites of the sacraments to the judgment of the Pope and his curia as the agents of reform (see Annibale Bugnini, *The Reform of the Liturgy* [Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1990] 5). It would take the major effort of Pius V (1504-1572) and Paul V (1552-1621) to help realize the required changes. Session 7 of that council addressed fourteen principal concerns about baptism which were intended to answer the claims of some reformers who had posed new understandings about long-held baptismal belief. These same concerns would influence the shape of baptismal rites only gradually, if at all, during the fifty year period following the Council.

Among the concerns which touched on the rite of baptism itself was the necessity for the use of water in baptism, rather than the acceptance of a kind of “baptism of the spirit” in its place (Sess.7:c.2). In addition, the Council re-affirmed that baptism may be validly administered by anyone, including heretics, as long as they held “the intention of doing what the church does” (*cum intentione faciendi, quod facit ecclesia*) in baptism (Sess.7:c.4). The Council denied that the only appropriate age for baptism is adulthood (Sess.7:cc.12; cf. cc.13 and 14). Lastly, Trent clearly taught that children who are baptized need not be re-baptized when they reach the ability to profess their own faith, since the Church professed faith on their behalf at their baptisms (Sess.7:c.13).

Implicit in several of the canons from the Council of Trent (Sess. 7:cc. 12, 13, 14, 14) is an argument about whether baptism is efficacious for those not able to freely profess their own faith, but instead have it professed by others on their behalf. This practice had been rejected vigorously by the Anabaptists, but defended as authentically Christian by John Calvin in 1536 (*Institutes* 4.16); in Martin Luther’s *Sermon on the Third Sunday after the Epiphany* of 1525 and in Martin Bucer’s *Grund und Ursach* of 1521. It is to be noted, however, that the Reformed understanding of paedobaptism and its place within the believing community did not correspond with that of Roman teaching, despite the appearance of common ritual elements used by both churches.

Differences on paedobaptism between the Roman Catholic and Reformed churches of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries appear to lie more centrally in the question of the rite as a sign and seal of God’s promise of grace. In the Reformed tradition, infant baptism is not essential to salvation, since it can not bring about the assent of the individual to the action of God, i.e., it can not produce an act of faith. What is more, within Reformed theology, grace is presumed to be available to every child of a believing Christian, by virtue of being born into the covenant. Roman Catholic belief, in contrast, saw paedobaptism as the only path for the salvation for a child, who by definition is completely dependent upon the Church (as represented through parents and god-parents) but which professes faith on the infant’s behalf. In Catholic teaching, the rite of baptism accomplishes *ex opere operato* what it signifies, because of the intention to do what the churches does in obedience to Christ.

It is noteworthy that while the Council of Trent addressed issues of grace and its effects on a personal profession of faith (Session 6, *Decree on Justification*, chapter 5; canon 3; Session 6, chapter 16), none of the canons relative to the shape of baptism proper reflect this discussion. In effect, it appears that the reform of the rites of baptism as directed by the Council and implemented by successive popes proceeded without reference to this issue in its unresolved state with the Reformed churches. Instead, the entire controversy, with its immense implications, is left outside of the Roman Catholic sacramental reform.

The result was predictable: a slow but steady articulation of baptism in the Reformed churches generated a change of shape in their baptismal rites, while little perceptible change occurred in the Roman Rite, which maintained its distance from the Reformed churches' questions. Even when the Reformation as a whole gained momentum throughout Europe, the Catholic Reform appeared to insulate its sacramental reforms from the influence of the debates on covenant theology, free will and prevenient grace, so crucial to subsequent liturgical development in the Reformed Churches.

As the accompanying "Comparative Chart on the Shape of Roman Catholic Baptismal Rites Between 1543 and 1614" demonstrates, local baptismal rites such as found in England (Sarum Rite) in 1543, changed only slightly between the time of the Reformation and the implementation of the sacramental reforms introduced by the Council of Trent. The effort of both of the reforming popes who followed Trent – Pius V, pope from 1566 to 1572, and Paul V, pope from 1605 to 1621 — was to strengthen Catholic rites against doctrinal error and to bring them gradually into greater uniformity with Roman practice. As a result, the overall effect of the Council's changes on the Sarum rite was minimal. Ironically, the Reformation of the Church of England would use this same Sarum Rite as the basis of many of its own liturgies, as found, for example, in the baptismal ceremony included in the first edition of the Book of Common Prayer (1549).

4. d. Comparative Chart on the Shape of Roman Catholic Baptismal Rites Between 1543 and 1614

Sarum Rite of Baptism on the eve of the Reformation in England (1543)

The following rite of baptism can be found in the Sarum Manual printed in Rouen in 1543, the final edition of its kind for use in England before the break with Rome and the issuance of the Book of Common Prayer in 1549. As such, the Sarum rite given here represents the shape of the baptismal rite before a universal rite for baptism would be imposed by Rome following the Council of Trent.

Roman Rite of Baptism revised by Paul V following the Council of Trent (1614)

The following rite of baptism was placed in the ritual of Pope Paul V (1614) and formed by taking the adult rite of baptism and abbreviating it for use with an infant. This rite became the most widely used one for infant baptism between 1614 and the reforms introduced by Pope Paul VI in 1969. Adult baptism was not reconsidered within the Roman Rite until the promulgation of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (1972).

- I Entrance Rites
 - A. Interrogatories at the door of the Church
 - B. Signing of the head and chest of the baptizand; giving of name by godparents
 - C. Exorcism of salt
 - D. Giving of salt to baptizand
 - E. Prayer for assignment of guardian angel
 - F. Exorcism
 - G. Ephphetha ceremony
 - H. Recitation of Our Father, Hail Mary and Creed by godparents
- II Rites at the Baptismal Font
 - O. Recitation of Our Father, Hail Mary and Creed by godparents
 - P. Litany of the Saints
 - Q. Blessing of water in the font
 - R. Mixing of oil and chrism with baptismal water
 - S. Renunciation of Satan by godparents
 - T. Anointing with oil of catechumens
 - U. Baptismal promises taken by godparents
 - V. Baptism
 - W. Anointing with chrism
 - X. Clothing with white garment
 - Y. Presentation of lighted candle
 - Z. Confirmation, if a bishop is present
 - AA. Giving of holy communion, if baptizand is at least seven years of age
 - BB. Reading of the Gospel of Mark 9.17-29; reading of prologue of the Gospel of John 1.1-14.

Source: A.J. Collins, *Manuale ad usum percelebris ecclesiae Saris-buriensis* (Henry Bradshaw Society, XCIX). 1960

- I Entrance Rites
 - A. Interrogatories at the door of the Church
 - B. Minor exorcism
 - C. Exsufflation and the signing of the baptizand's forehead
 - D. The imposition of hands
 - E. Blessing of baptizand with salt on the tongue
 - F. Exorcism
- II Rites at Entrance to Baptistry
 - A. Recitation of the creed by parents and godparents
 - B. Exorcism
 - C. Ephphetha ceremony
 - D. Renunciation of Satan answered by godparents
 - E. Anointing with oil of catechumens
- III Rites at the Font
 - A. Baptismal promises taken on behalf of the baptizand
 - B. Baptism
 - C. Anointing with chrism
 - D. Clothing with white garment
 - E. Lighting of baptismal candle

Source: Paulus V, *Rituale Romanum* (1614)

4. e. Development of baptismal rites after the Reformation:

i. Reformed

Narrating the development of baptismal rites in the Reformed tradition from the sixteenth century to the present presents a particular challenge. First, the Reformed tradition is not a single church with a single rite, but a family of churches with common theological convictions that developed different practices in various parts of Europe and North America (for purposes of this document, we will not recount the history of Reformed churches in other parts of the world). Second, baptismal rites have held different authority in different Reformed churches; e.g. the Dutch Reformed churches have tended to adopt official liturgies which are required for use, while churches stemming from the Westminster Directory tradition have tended to adopt official guidelines for liturgical practice that permit significant flexibility in the details. For these reasons, what follows is not intended to be comprehensive, but suggestive of the general trajectories of development in baptismal practice in Reformed churches during this period.

As noted earlier, baptismal practice in the Dutch Reformed churches remained relatively stable from 1566 until the liturgical revisions of the 20th century. For the Reformed churches in North America that trace their roots to Great Britain, the most significant liturgical development in the 17th century was in England with the introduction of the Westminster Directory for Worship.

The Westminster Directory for Worship (1645) begins its section on baptism with a statement that it is not to be unnecessarily delayed nor administered in private, but only by a “Minister of Christ” and “in the place of Publique Worship, and in the face of the congregation, where the people may most conveniently see and hear.”^{xi} The pattern is similar to the order of baptism in Genevan liturgy, with lengthy instruction, exhortation of parents, scriptural warrant, and prayer preceding water baptism. New in this rite is the explicit admonition of the congregation “to improve and make the right use of their baptisme,” a theme that was at best only implicit in 16th century rites. According to Stan Hall, “two features of this Directory rite, parental promise and use of scriptural warrant, set the precedent for virtually all of the later Presbyterian baptismal rites.”^{xii} Another feature of this rite that lingered until the mid-20th century is the insistence that the minister was to baptize without any additional ceremony (e.g., no consignation¹²). This Westminster form, revised slightly, prevailed in Presbyterian churches in the U.S. until the early 20th century.

The scriptural warrant, already present in the 16th century rites, exemplifies the Reformed concern for the *centrality of the Word* in connection with the sacrament. The stipulation that baptism is to be done “without additional ceremony” echoes the focus on *water* as the primary symbolic element, signifying both God’s grace of forgiveness and the giving of the Holy Spirit. The admonition of the congregation signals the *ecclesial setting* so important to Reformed baptismal understanding, and the exhortation to parents embodies the *link between baptism and ongoing nurture* in the faith. Thus all of the major themes that drove the 16th century reform continued to shape baptismal practice in the Westminster Directory, even though there was a

¹² Consignation means:

move away from authorized liturgies and toward increased local freedom in liturgical practice.

In 1788, the newly formed Presbyterian Church in the United States adopted a revised version of the Westminster Directory for Worship.^{xiii} This version introduced two changes to the 1645 text. First, the American Directory added a chapter on integrating baptized children and previously unbaptized persons into the communion of the church. This shows new attention to the connection between baptism, catechesis, and the Lord's Supper, as well as growing awareness of the possibility of adults presenting themselves for baptism. Previously unbaptized persons were to be accepted following baptism and public profession of faith. Second, the American version removed the detailed descriptions of prayers which had been in 1645 version, so the description of the rite (though not necessarily the rite itself) was briefer than in the original.

On the American frontier, baptism came to be associated with evangelical conversion, especially during the second Great Awakening. American Reformed churches reacted to this movement in various ways. Some (like New England Congregationalist Horace Bushnell in his treatise *Christian Nurture*) strengthened their defense of infant baptism, arguing that faith is best nurtured in the context of families rather than expecting sudden conversion. Bushnell and others emphasized the connection between *baptism and ongoing nurture*, a theme that had been prominent in Reformed baptismal practice since the 16th century. However, with more adults coming for baptism who had not been baptized as infants, Reformed churches were also compelled to address the practice of adult baptism. This growing interest can be seen in several 19th century Reformed liturgical publications (including Charles Shields' 1864 republication of the 1661 Savoy Liturgy "in agreement with the Directory for Public Worship,"^{xiv} the 1868 Directory of the United Presbyterian Church of North America,^{xv} and the 1894 PCUS Directory for Worship^{xvi}).

In addition, the 19th century saw increased interest in set forms for worship, perhaps in response to freedom of the revival tradition and the minimalism of the 1788 Presbyterian Directory. This movement is evident in the introduction of set baptismal forms in various revisions of the Directory for Worship (the 1894 PCUS Directory^{xvii} and the PCUSA Directory^{xviii}), and also in the Mercersburg movement in the German Reformed church, a predecessor tradition of the United Church of Christ. This movement, centered in the Reformed seminary at Mercersburg, Pennsylvania, was led particularly by theologian John Williamson Nevin. Though it did not have a broad effect on German Reformed church practice at the time, Mercersburg represented a desire to claim a sacramental theology and practice more deeply informed by both early and Reformation church sources. Furthermore, in the last half of the 20th century, the Mercersburg movement re-emerged as a significant influence on many Reformed churches in this dialogue seeking to recover a deeper appreciation of liturgical forms and of the centrality of the sacraments.^{xix}

Another concern that continued in some Reformed churches was the connection of prayer with the water of baptism. While the 1645 Westminster Directory had said that prayer "was to be joined with the word of institution, for sanctifying the water to this spiritual use," no mention of water appeared

in Presbyterian Directories until the mid-20th century, out of concern for too high a regard for the efficacy of the sign itself.^{xx}

Reformed baptismal practices in the 19th century thus showed general continuity with practices of prior centuries, with emerging attention to adult baptism, increased usage of set liturgical forms in a tradition that did not require them, and some renewed attention to the water itself in the prayer at baptism.

In the early twentieth century, both major streams of the Dutch-American Reformed tradition revised their baptismal rites, but these did not significantly change the existing practices of baptism. The Reformed Church in America (RCA) approved a new abridged form for baptism in 1906, though the older unabridged form also continued to be printed.^{xxi} This follows closely the 1566 order, though the prayer in this revised version now precedes the instruction. In 1912, the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) translated the 1566 baptismal order into English, but continued to use that same liturgy until the 1960s.

4. e. Development of baptismal rites after the Reformation:

ii. Roman Catholic

As the centuries following Trent drew the Catholic Church into the modern period, her baptismal liturgy remained fixed in form through the final revisions made by Paul V in the *Rituale Romanum* of 1614. Even as the Second Vatican Council approached its opening days in 1962, there was little public discussion of the need for the reform of baptism in particular, though other sacraments such as Eucharist had been widely considered from this point of view (see Annibale Bugnini, *The Reform of the Liturgy* [Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1990] 5-13). This, despite work done locally in the church in France, highlighting the need to revive a more meaningful catechumenate drawn from the example of adult believership in the early church (see e.g., Alois Stenzel, *Die Taufe: eine genetische Erklärung der Tauf liturgie* [Verlag Felizian Rauch, Innsbruck, 1958] or Burhard Neunheuser, *Baptism and Confirmation*, trans. J.J. Hughes [Herder and Herder, New York 1964]).

Meanwhile in the Reformed Churches, a highly influential discussion on baptism, its form and theology had emerged between theologians such as Karl Barth (*The Teaching of the Church Regarding Baptism*, trans. Ernst A. Payne [London, SCM Press, 1948]) and Oscar Cullmann (*Baptism in the New Testament*, trans. J.K.S. Reid [London: SCM Press, 1950]). The influence of this discussion can be seen especially on baptismal documents in Presbyterian churches in the 1970s. However, the work of these two giants would not influence the Concilium reformers, first assembled in 1965, who were yet several years away from issuing a revised order of infant baptism in 1969. Instead, Roman Catholic reform concentrated on the pastoral need for an adult catechumenate based on a new reading of relevant biblical and patristic sources, while the Reformed Church explored further the larger question of baptism's meaning in connection with the act of adult faith.

On the eve of the Second Vatican Council, then, both communities were ready to inaugurate a process of recovering meaning from ancient sources, hoping thereby to recover a more authentic practice and understanding of baptism. Both communities focused their attention on biblical and patristic texts and rites as a point of departure for ritual reforms. As it turned out,

however, both Churches were poised to look at the same sources but in answer to different questions, with different points of departure, theological hermeneutics and methods. As a result, the emergence of baptismal rites which share many common features in both communities, nonetheless appear to reflect differing theological understandings, thus raising the question of the extent to which theological divergences need further exploration.

4 f. 20th century convergence in scholarship and ritual structures:

i. Reformed

In 1957, two streams of the Reformed church family, the Congregational Christian Churches and the Evangelical and Reformed Church, came together to form the United Church of Christ (UCC). This new church, bringing together both New England Congregationalism with its Puritan heritage and German Reformed Protestantism with its Pietist heritage, has been ecumenically oriented from the beginning. Though congregations are free to shape liturgical forms at the local level, the UCC as a denomination has attended closely to the ecumenical biblical and historical scholarship that led to the liturgical renewal movement of the 1960s and 1970s. This ecumenical commitment significantly shaped the order of baptism found in the 1986 *Book of Worship*. In fact, the Order of Baptism “rests significantly on an ecumenical liturgical consensus found in the 1982 *Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry* (BEM) document more than on any one former tradition.”^{xxii} Though not required for use, this 1986 liturgical resource reflects Reformed baptismal themes that have been central since the 16th century: connection of baptism with proclamation of the Word; focus on water as the central symbol of baptism^{xxiii}; ecclesial setting of baptism; and connection of baptism with ongoing nurture, signified by congregational promises and the option of including baptismal sponsors in the service.

In the 1960s, both the CRCNA and the RCA moved to revise their rites more substantially than they had done ever before. The RCA in 1968 adopted revised rites after several years of drafting and evaluation of provisional orders.^{xxiv} The CRC, a few years later in 1976, adopted a similar revised order.^{xxv} Both revised orders reflect similar concerns: to state more clearly the biblical institution for baptism, to present more clearly the covenantal basis for baptism, and to make more explicit the congregation’s responsibility to nurture baptized children.^{xxvi}

Though the RCA published another alternate order for baptism in *Worship the Lord* in 1987, the next major revision of the baptismal forms came in 1994, for both the RCA and the CRC. It is significant that in both cases, there is a single form or outline provided, which can be used for either infant or adult baptism. There are no longer two separate rites.^{xxvii} This is particularly striking, since the Roman Catholic revisions of this era went in the opposite direction, clarifying two different orders for infant and adult baptism. The CRC form is explicitly intended to be more flexible, permitting local adaptation. Both of these recent baptismal orders reflect awareness of the ecumenical liturgical movement, with greater attention to the symbolic value of water and inclusion of ancient elements such as renunciations, affirmations, and a prayer of thanksgiving over the water. At the same time, these new rites show continuing Reformed sensibilities in their opening words of institution, their emphasis on covenant, and the inclusion of promises by both parents/

baptizands and congregation to nurture the baptized in the faith. This theme of baptismal nurture has been present in Reformed baptismal rites since the 16th century, and has only gotten stronger in recent years.

In the Presbyterian stream of North American Reformed churches, there have been two interwoven liturgical developments in the 20th century: revisions to the Directory for Worship, the constitutional document governing worship in Presbyterian churches, and revisions to the Book of Common Worship, a liturgical resource recommended but not required for use in Presbyterian churches. These two documents have not always developed in tandem, but by the end of the 20th century, they came to express common understanding of the theology and the practice of baptism.

In the early part of the 20th century, the official Directory for Worship in the major Presbyterian denominations described a baptismal theology and practice nearly identical to the Westminster Directory of 1645, as abbreviated in America in 1788. Even as this Directory pattern remained in place, liturgical resources approved by the church began to appear for the first time in the Book of Common Worship (hereafter BCW) of 1906, with revisions in 1932 and 1946. Over the first half of the 20th century, baptismal rites in the BCW showed increased involvement of the congregation, increased attention to congregational nurture of the baptized, increased attention to the Christological basis of baptism, and a decrease in instruction and exhortation, with corresponding expansion of the prayer before baptism. These shifts in baptismal patterns in the BCW were eventually reflected in the Directory for Worship as well.

During the 1960s and 1970s, revisions to both Directory and worship resources continued to show the effects of ecumenical liturgical scholarship, particularly the movement toward a single baptismal service suitable, with modification, for both adults and infants, and the move (in 1971) to link baptism more closely to admission to the table. In 1970, the *Worshipbook* provided a single baptismal service that required modification to adapt it for infants. In 1971, a revision of the UPCUSA Directory introduced a major change, affirming that baptism alone admits one to the Lord's Supper (no longer requiring public profession of faith at "confirmation"). Both of these moves reflect ecumenical liturgical scholarship of the time, the first being an effort to make baptism more clearly a single rite, whether for adults or infants, and the second an effort to reflect the early church connection of baptism with celebration of the Lord's Supper.

A substantial 1973 revision to the UPCUSA Directory claimed that "baptism marks a new beginning of participation in Christ's ministry for all people." The theological foundation for baptism was now Jesus' own baptism (rather than the covenant of God or forgiveness/cleansing). This shift of emphasis has continued into current Directory statements on baptism. The doctrinal portion of the chapter on baptism, however, introduced a more dramatic and controversial change. It suggested "two equally appropriate occasions for baptism—either at infancy, or in later years at the emergence of personal faith." This reflects the influence of Barth's theology in *The Teaching of the Church Regarding Baptism* (1965), in which he argued that baptism of mature Christians reflects more clearly the meaning of baptism than does baptism of infants. Here for the first time in U.S. Reformed churches, "believer baptism" was recognized as a possibility for persons raised within the

church. This language remained for only a few years in the Directory, but reveals much ferment in baptismal reflection and practice among Presbyterian churches at that time.

In 1983, reunion of the two former denominations to form the present PC(USA) prompted the need for a new Directory for Worship. That Directory, adopted in 1989, is the current constitutional document guiding worship life in the PC(USA). The outline of the baptismal rite in this Directory is identical to the pattern in BCW 1993^{xxviii}. The other significant change in the 1989 Directory is the inclusion of blessing and optional anointing. Though the 1989 Directory includes a caution that nothing should overshadow the central act of baptizing with water, other actions “deeply rooted in the history of baptism” are permitted.^{xxix} The 1946 BCW had introduced a Trinitarian blessing following water baptism, but this 1989 development elaborates on that practice, a clear attempt to move toward a shared ecumenical pattern informed by early church baptismal practice. The service of baptism in the 1993 BCW, which is provided in the appendix and discussed in more detail below, parallels the 1989 Directory, though the terminology is slightly different.

Method in reform of Reformed baptismal rites

The revisions of Reformed baptismal rites in the 20th century have proceeded differently for the bodies represented in this dialogue. However, they have shared concerns to promote 1) fuller participation of the people, 2) greater attention to the symbolic use of water, and 3) greater appreciation for baptism as central to Christian identity, a mark that both distinguishes the church from the world and calls the church into mission in and for the world.

While the Roman Catholic church has placed a central focus on the restoration of the ancient catechumenate in its baptismal reforms since Vatican II, Reformed churches have focused on revisions of the central baptismal rites and services of reaffirmation or renewal of baptism. In addition, some Reformed churches have begun exploring the possibilities of the catechumenate model as a process of forming new Christians and reiterating baptism as a central symbol of Christian identity. For many Reformed Christians, the catechumenate holds promise for the following reasons:

- It focuses on baptism, which has been a central Reformation “mark of the church”.
- It brings people by stages into the church, providing liturgical boundary markers to celebrate the gradual inclusion of the new Christian into the body of Christ.
- It provides a clear structure for accompanying people along the life of faith, through sponsors, catechists, and the whole congregation praying for the catechumens.
- It is ritually full, something that many seekers and church members are hungering for. The process of leading someone to baptism—and leading a congregation to repeated reaffirmations of that baptism—involves the whole person, body, mind, and soul.

As Reformed Christians continue the work of adapting the catechumenate model to a Reformed context, several issues are emerging as central to our reflection:

- *God's grace and human response.* The chief issue in Reformed baptismal discussion generally continues to be how to maintain our historic emphasis on baptism as God's gracious action while also attending to the human dimension of the sacrament. Faithful Reformed people disagree on how to manage this balance. This basic issue underlies many of the particular questions that arise in baptismal debates: for instance, when is it permissible to refuse to baptize someone? Is any such refusal a denial of the generosity of God's grace? With regard to the catechumenate, how much should we require of those preparing for baptism? Should catechesis precede or follow the act of baptism? Baptism is God's act of cleansing, redeeming, and renewing, and it is also the welcoming of a new Christian into community. Reformed theology always encourages attention first to God's action, but there is increased concern about how persons receive God's action — how God works not only in the act of baptism narrowly construed, but also through the life of the community of faith to form new Christians in lives of gratitude. Some Reformed object to the language of "Christian initiation," claiming that such a term focuses too much on the human community into which one is initiated at baptism. This discomfort points to the debate in the Reformed tradition over how to maintain a focus on the radical priority of God's action while also attending to the shape of human living in response to that grace.
- A related question is the relationship between baptism and faithful living. How is baptism related to sanctification, the ongoing life of faith? The promises of nurture made by the congregation at an infant's baptism are necessary, but not sufficient to answer this question. Some Reformed Christians are seeking to recover Calvin's emphasis on the link between baptism and "discipline," the structure of the faithful life. This moves the discussion from the question of what constitutes valid baptism (which allows for minimalist celebration) to how baptism shapes a life of faithfulness (which focuses on a more expansive process of preparation for and celebration of baptism). The Reformed understanding of discipline may provide a way to talk about catechumenate in a Reformed context, and it may also constitute a fruitful contribution to the ecumenical conversation about Christian initiation.

Conclusions regarding Reformed practices of baptism

Though Reformed churches over the course of 500 years have exhibited diversity of baptismal practice and theology, an examination of baptismal liturgies suggests continuing consensus on the four themes that shaped Reformed baptismal concerns in the 16th century:

- Focus on the *Word of God* as that which joins us to the body of Christ. The intimate connection of baptism with the proclamation of the Word has been maintained steadily for five centuries, as has the commitment to communicate the significance of baptism in the language of the people.
- Centrality of water. If anything, this emphasis has grown more clear in recent years, with increased attention to the symbolic value of water and

a shared appreciation for the connection of baptismal water with biblical narratives of creation, flood, and exodus, as well as Jesus' own baptism. Though some Reformed churches now permit and even embrace additional symbols such as post-baptismal anointing (a change from 16th century practice), these additional acts are always connected to the central symbol of water.

- Ecclesial dimension of baptism: Since the 16th century there has been gradual movement toward greater congregational involvement, as embodied in the congregational promises included in all the current Reformed rites. This is in keeping with the impulse to understand baptism as an ecclesial act.
- Connection of baptism and nurture: in the 16th and 17th centuries this was often embodied in extended exhortations to the parents (and godparents/sponsors) to raise their baptized children in the faith. Contemporary baptismal rites have moved away from such exhortation, but continue to emphasize the importance of ongoing nurture of the baptized through promises made by congregations, parents, and baptismal sponsors, as well as post-baptismal prayers for continued growth in faith.

At the same time, the 20th century has brought some significant shifts in Reformed baptismal practice, particularly the move from ordinance to symbol as the primary lens for understanding sacramental practice in general, and baptism in particular. One result of this shift is the diminished length of time devoted to instruction on the nature of baptism in the context of the liturgy, and (most recently) the increased focus on prayers over the water, shifting the tone of the event from teaching to proclamation and prayer.

4. f. 20th century convergence in scholarship and ritual structures:

ii. Roman Catholic

Overview of the reform of Roman Catholic baptismal rites following the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965)

The reform of the Roman Rite that began in 1963 with the promulgation of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (SC) at the Second Vatican Council was unique in Catholic liturgical history. Its starting point was a generalized desire to see the participation of the faithful as its goal. In most previous reforms, the liturgy was changed to accommodate a development in the articulation of dogma, such as with the addition of language to the Nicene Creed to clearly state belief in the dual natures of Christ as God and man. However, in her most recent renewal of liturgical life, the Roman Catholic Church sought to examine liturgical celebrations in answer to the question, How can these rites be made more accessible to the participation of the lay faithful?

This intention was made clear in the language of *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 14 which set "full, conscious and active participation" of the faithful as the end and goal of the process of revision which would follow. This reform, then, was undertaken essentially for pastoral reasons, emphasizing, in turn, that all liturgical renewal was ordered to bring about a deepening of the life of the Church itself (SC, 14).

The reform of the Roman Rite on this occasion was guided by nine important principles, each found within the Council documents:

(1) that liturgy sanctifies every event in the life of the faithful “with the divine grace which flows from the paschal mystery of the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Christ” (SC no. 61; see also no. 5).

(2) that liturgy must be understood as the “source and summit” of the life of the Church (SC no. 10, *Lumen Gentium*, 11), rather than as a mere external act unessential to her life and mission in the world;

(3) that every rite should enhance the full, conscious, and active participation of minister and faithful alike (SC 14, 21, 30) and to promote this participation by the faithful, liturgical education is to be assiduously pursued (see SC nos. 14-20);

(4) that all liturgical acts are communal and ecclesial by nature and should be celebrated accordingly (SC, 26);

(5) that liturgical celebrations should aim for unity but not uniformity from one local church to another (SC, 23, 37-38);

(6) that whatever changes were effected, they should in some way be an “organic growth” (SC, 23) in harmony with the history and theology of the liturgy in the Latin West;

(7) that each reformed rite should recover the primary role of the celebration of the Word of God as its foundation (SC, 7, 24, 35, 51, 56);

(8) that rites should be appropriately simplified, reducing, for example, wherever necessary, redundancies and superfluties which could distract from the essential meaning of the liturgy (SC, 34, 50) and

(9) that the entire reform should be guided by the tradition of Christian life and worship as found in biblical and patristic sources (SC, 50).

Specific Issues in the Reform of the Baptismal Rites following Vatican II

Several issues governed the reform of Roman Catholic baptismal rites following the Second Vatican Council. Each of these would help to answer a variety of pastoral and historical questions about the shape and use of the rites for the Church in the modern world. Principal among these was the restoration of an adult catechumenate and baptism through the implementation of the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* (RCIA). At the same time, infant baptism was reformed to distinguish it more clearly from the adult rite. Hence, the re-orientation of both rites relative to each other became a major feature of the reform of baptism since the Second Vatican Council.

The RCIA retrieved much of the understanding of gradual conversion found in the rites of the catechumenate in the early church. The reformed rites of 1972 restore this same emphasis on conversion and initiation into Christian life as a “process” rather a single, discrete act. Accordingly, the reformers of the initiation rites sought to re-establish baptism as the gateway sacrament to the other rites of the Church.

The RCIA now includes four continuous periods in the life of the candidate: (1) period of evangelization and pre-catechumenate, in which the candidate explores the message of the Gospel and its values under the direction of a deacon, priest or catechist, who invites the interested party to join in prayer and the reading of the Scriptures on a regular basis; (2) the catechumenate, in which candidates express a clear intention to seek baptism, as the Church responds by accepting them into a structured process of conversion which assists them towards this goal; (3) period of purification and enlightenment, usually during Lent, in which the elect more immediately and

intensely prepare for initiation; and (4) the celebration of the sacraments of initiation (namely, baptism, confirmation and Eucharist), which is followed by *mystagogia* or a final period of post-baptismal catechesis on the rites and growth in the faith. In the catechumenate proper, frequent celebrations of the word of God, of prayers of exorcism and blessing, and then of the more formal steps of the rite of enrollment and election are mandated.

Immediately before baptism is celebrated – usually during the period of Lent which precedes Holy Saturday and the Easter Vigil – the candidates enter their final stage of preparation known as “scrutinies”. This last step is built around intense prayer, strengthened by exorcism, to assist the candidates to put aside all sinful ways and to grow in their desire for life in Christ. During the scrutinies, customarily celebrated during the Third, Fourth, and Fifth Sundays of Lent, the Creed and the Lord’s Prayer are presented to the candidates for their close study and memorization, to be publicly professed before the day of baptism. On Holy Saturday, catechumens complete a less formal set of rites known as “Rites of Preparation” which help them to be ready for the sacraments they will receive that same night at the Easter Vigil. A brief outline of the reformed rites for adult catechumenate and baptism (RCIA) is given here:

Chart of the RCIA Rites of 1972

Rites and Stages of RCIA (*Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*) 1972

- 1 Pre-Catechumenate
 - A. Period of evangelization and exploration of Christian life
 - B. Informal welcoming into a Catholic community
 - C. Instruction and prayer, together with exorcism offered on a regular basis
 - D. Episcopal conferences may devise an informal way in which to recognize and accept the personal intention of the interested party to pursue baptism; no formal rites to be used at this stage
- 2 Catechumenate
 - A. Rite of acceptance into the Order of Catechumens
 - A. Reception of candidates at the door of the church at the start of Sunday Mass
 - B. Greeting of candidates
 - C. Opening dialogue of candidates called by name
 - D. Affirmation by sponsors
 - E. Signing of the foreheads of the candidates
 - F. Concluding prayer
 - G. Liturgy of the Word at Sunday Mass
 - H. Presentation of a bible and cross to candidates with optional exsufflation and exorcism
 - I. Prayers for new catechumens
 - J. Dismissal of catechumens before Liturgy of the Eucharist
 - B. Rites belonging to the period of the Catechumenate celebrated during Sunday Mass
 - A. Celebration of the Word of God
 - B. Minor exorcisms

- C. Prayer of blessings over the catechumens
 - D. Anointing of catechumens
 - E. Rites of Election or Enrollment of Names
 - a. Liturgy of the Word at Sunday Mass
 - b. Homily
 - c. Presentation of the catechumens by sponsors
 - d. Affirmation of the godparents
 - e. Invitation and enrollment of names of catechumens
 - f. Act of admission or election
 - g. Intercessions for the elect
 - h. Prayer over the elect
 - i. Dismissal of the elect from the assembly before the celebration of the Liturgy of the Eucharist
 - F. Period of Purification and Enlightenment
 - a. Third Sunday of Lent: First Scrutiny
 - i. Liturgy of the Word
 - ii. Homily
 - iii. Presentation of the Creed
 - iv. Exorcism
 - v. Dismissal of the elect
 - b. Fourth Sunday of Lent: Second Scrutiny
 - i. (as above for first scrutiny)
 - c. Fifth Sunday of Lent: Third Scrutiny
 - i. (as above for first and second scrutinies)
 - ii. Presentation of the Lord's Prayer to the catechumen
 - G. Preparation Rites on Holy Saturday during the day
 - a. Recitation of the Creed
 - b. Reading from Scripture
 - c. Homily
 - d. Prayer before recitation
 - e. Recitation of the Lord's Prayer
 - f. Ephphetha rite
 - g. Choosing of baptismal name by the catechumen
 - h. Blessing prayer
 - i. Dismissal
- 3 Rites of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist at the Easter Vigil
- A. Following the Liturgy of the Word proper, the rites of baptism and confirmation
 - 1. Presentation of the catechumens
 - 2. Invitation to prayer
 - 3. Litany of the saints
 - 4. Prayer over the water
 - 5. Profession of faith
 - 6. Renunciation of sin
 - 7. Baptism
 - 8. Anointing
 - 9. Clothing with a white garment
 - 10. Presentation of lighted candle
 - 11. Confirmation

- a. invitation and prayer
 - b. laying on of hands
 - c. anointing with chrism
4. Period of Mystagogia or Post-baptismal Catechesis
- A. This period is to be marked by intense prayer and the practice of Christian living in the lives of the catechumens
 - B. No formal rites are prescribed for this period
 - C. Sunday Masses in the Easter Season have been customarily devoted to gatherings of the newly baptized in which the entire community that has received them affirms and supports their new life in Christ
 - D. Bishops are encouraged to meet with the baptized for anniversary celebrations of their baptism
 - E. Godparents are reminded of their on-going duty to support the Christian life of their godchildren

On the eve of the Second Vatican Council, the baptismal rites in place in 1962 had concentrated the attention of the faithful more on the personal rather than the communal or ecclesial nature of worship. Hence, both infant and adult baptisms were regularly held outside of the celebration of Eucharist, most often for the immediate family only. These same tendencies characterized much of the sacramental celebration of the Roman Rite at the time. With the advent of *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, however, the fundamentally ecclesial nature of the liturgy – and hence, the demand for its public and communal celebration – was recovered as a part of the liturgical reform. Accordingly, in the revised rites, the celebration of baptism of infants within Sunday Mass (Baptism of Children, no. 9) and the celebration of adult baptisms at the Easter Vigil (RCIA no. 17, 23) are now considered normative.

The uniting of the sacraments of baptism and confirmation, now taken as normative, is among the feature of the RCIA which re-introduce profoundly traditional and pneumatological elements into the reformed rites. The reform thus attempts to strengthen the paschal nature of the sacrament of baptism (see RCIA nos. 4, 8; Baptism for Children no. 9). Finally, the new rites make clear that pre-baptismal and post-baptismal life in the Church differs radically according to the experience of the baptized and their community; hence, catechesis appropriate to each must be continually developed.

Along with the restoration of the adult catechumenate (RCIA) and adult baptism, the liturgical reform of the Second Vatican Council also revised the rites of infant baptism to reflect more clearly how the rite was intended for those who could not speak for themselves and, as such, was an act of the family and the community that supported them. The text of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* itself called for a three-fold reform of the rites along these pastoral lines: “The rite for the baptism of infants is to be revised, and should be adapted to the circumstance that those to be baptized are, in fact, infants. The roles of parents and godparents, and also their duties, should be brought out more sharply in the rite itself. The baptismal rite should contain adaptations, to be used at the discretion of the local ordinary, for occasions when a very large number are to be baptized together. Moreover, a shorter rite is to be drawn up, especially for mission lands, for use by catechists, but also by

the faithful in general when there is danger of death, and neither priest nor deacon is available” (SC, 68, 69).

In contrast to the reform of infant baptism drawn up by the popes who implemented the directives of the Council of Trent, the revised rites of infant baptism of 1969 show marked differences over those of 1614. A brief comparative chart is given here of the two rites.

Comparative Chart of the Rites of Infant Baptism, 1614 and 1969

Rite of Infant Baptism, 1614

The following rite of baptism was placed in the ritual of Pope Paul V (1614) and formed by taking the adult rite of baptism and abbreviating it for use with an infant. This rite became the most widely used one for infant baptism between 1614 and the reforms introduced by Pope Paul VI in 1969. Adult baptism as a frequent practice did not re-emerge in the Roman Rite until the promulgation of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (1972).

- I Entrance Rites
 - A. Interrogatories at the door of the Church of parents and godparents
 - B. Minor exorcism
 - C. Exsufflation and the signing of the baptizand’s forehead
 - D. The imposition of hands
 - E. Blessing of baptizand with salt
 - F. Exorcism
- II Rites at Entrance to Baptistry
 - A. Recitation of the creed by parents and godparents
 - B. Exorcism
 - C. Ephphetha ceremony
 - D. Renunciation of Satan answered by godparents
 - E. Anointing with oil of catechumens

Rite of Infant Baptism, 1969

The following rite was promulgated in 1969 and was meant to highlight those elements of reform directed by the Second Vatican Council in SC 68 and 69. Its use is separate from that of the rite for baptism of adults; the two may never be interchanged.

The usual place for the celebration of infant baptism is the Sunday Mass of the community into which the child is baptized and which parents live.

- I Entrance Rites
 - A. Greeting at the door of the Church
 - B. Interrogatories of parents and godparents
 - C. Signing of the forehead of the infant by parents and godparents

III Rites at the Font

- A. Baptismal promises taken on behalf of the infant
- B. Baptism
- C. Anointing with chrism
- D. Clothing with white garment
- E. Lighting of baptismal candle

Source: *Paulus V, Rituale Romanum* (1614)

II Rites at the font during Sunday Mass

- A. Liturgy of the Word
- B. Intercessions
- C. Litany of the saints
- D. Exorcism
- E. Anointing with oil
- F. Blessing of the water
- G. Renunciation of sin
- H. Baptismal promises taken on behalf of the infant
- I. Profession of faith by parents and godparents
- J. Baptism
- K. Anointing with chrism
- L. Clothing with white garment
- M. Presentation of lighted candle
- N. Ephephata ceremony

Source: *Paulus VI, Ordo Baptismi Parvulorum* (1969)

The essential differences between the rites reformed by the Council of Trent and those of the Second Vatican Council are three: (1) infant baptism is set within a celebration of the Liturgy of the Word, ideally found within the celebration of the Sunday Eucharist of the family's home community; (2) exorcism is de-emphasized and (3) the shortened rites of 1969 focus the attention of the parents and godparents on their acts of faith and renunciation of the devil as essential pre-requisites to the baptismal act itself. In effect, without the faith of the parents and godparents who support the infant, baptism loses its essential meaning as a sacrament of faith professed (by the adult candidate) or spoken for (in the case of a child). It is also evident that the main lines of this rite remain unchanged from its predecessor of nearly 500 years.

In addition, the reformed rites for infant baptism also helped to clarify the roles of the godparents as secondary to those of the parents who must function as first teachers of the faith to their children (see *Baptism for Children*, nos. 5, 6). Godparents supply this need when parents can no longer provide it. Lastly, the rites now emphasize what can be called the "paschal character" of baptism, i.e., the celebration of baptism as an entrance into the mystery of Christ's own death and resurrection to the Father, cleansing the child of original sin and orienting it to a new life in Christ, strengthened for the profession of faith and the practice of virtue (see SC no. 6; LG no. 1). This same conscious emphasis on the paschal character of every sacrament has been made explicit in all the reformed rites and texts of the liturgy since the Second Vatican Council.

In sum, the reform of the rites of baptism within the Roman Catholic Church have been conducted with careful attention to restoring them to a communal setting within which the Liturgy of the Word is an essential component, and the profession of faith by the Church suffuses the celebration for

all involved. Finally, cultural adaptation of the rites is permitted according to guidelines given both by the Holy See and the local Episcopal conference (SC 63, 64, 65), including the formation of a rite for the reception of already baptized persons into full communion with the Catholic Church.

Pre and post baptismal rites

Roman Catholic baptismal rites include both pre-baptismal and post-baptismal elements which help to prepare for and delineate the mystery experienced in baptism. In effect, the pre-baptismal rites within the RCIA are intended, as described above, to invite and stimulate a desire for God, membership in Christ's body, the Church, and in the ability to profess faith (see LG no. 11 on the effects of baptism; see also Can. 849 in the 1983 Code of Canon Law). The "lead-up" of the extended catechumenate now in place in the reformed rites of adult baptism is the fertile ground for enabling the grace of baptism to take root deeply in the hearts of those well prepared to receive it. Conversion is work: none who desires to be baptized can be expected to prepare themselves apart from a community which will give them membership and belonging. The pre-baptismal rites also serve the valuable purpose of acquainting the catechumen with the community he or she will call "home" for at least some time through the period of *mystagogia*. Likewise, the community must prepare itself to admit new members and thereby deepen its own commitment by expanding yet again the boundaries of its love and mission.

The post baptismal elements, whether of the adult or infant rites, have a single overall purpose: they serve to unfold, explain and detail major aspects of what has just happened in water baptism. Though not essential to the sacramental action of God just experienced, they nevertheless make clear to all – minister, witnesses, family and community members – that the new Christian now enjoys the rights and obligations of membership in Christ's body.

When anointed with chrism, the newly baptized and confirmed are sealed in their priestly role to participate in the Eucharist and in their ability to share in marriage and Orders. Clothing with a white garment signals the beauty and sin-free quality of their new lives now lived in Christ, washed clean of original and actual sin. Like the linen garments worn by the baptized of long ago, white-colored clothing also serves as a reminder and pledge against the temptation to sin which will never leave their lives. The presentation of the lighted candle is a joining of their commitment to live according to the light of Christ as symbolized by the great Easter candle of the Vigil at which the adults were baptized. This candle also solemnizes their vow-taking, as marked in many other rites within the Roman Catholic Church either for weddings, monastic vows, the consecration of virgins or the annual renewal of baptismal promises at the Easter Vigil. Finally, the Ephphetha ceremony brings with it the special grace to hear the Word of God and speak it as a part of the mission and life of the baptized. With this rite, which orients the new believer to the preaching of the Word in life, word and deed, the rite for baptism closes on an evangelical in imitation of Christ who came to serve and not to be served (cf. Mt. 20.28).

Method in the Reform of the Roman Catholic Baptismal Rites

As mentioned above, the reform of the liturgy following the Second Vatican Council was done according to goals never before adopted in the Roman Catholic Church. Specifically, the revision of rites and texts was made with the overarching purpose of deepening the “full, conscious and active participation” of the faithful in the action of God present in the liturgy (SC, 14). Inherently, this goal carried new methodological considerations as well, demanding a theological and liturgical understanding of the rite and texts unlike what was previously needed.

The Council itself would give some direction for the development of this method in its statements that there was no further need for “uniformity” but only for “unity” in the reformed rites (SC, 23); that all of the existing rites from Trent should be, in effect, simplified and made easier and clearer for the faithful to understand (SC, 21, 50, 62), eliminating “elements which, with the passage of time, came to be duplicated, or were added with but little advantage” (SC, 50). Now the method of reform would demand a re-appreciation of the rites which concentrated on the needs of the believer through the lens of a relatively new category of analysis, i.e., of “participant” (cf. SC, 14) in the sacred mysteries.

Implicit within this discussion of enhanced participation within *Sacrosanctum Concilium* is a turn to the subjectivity of the believer interacting with the Church and Christ in the celebration of God’s action in rite and sacrament. The tools needed to complete this kind of reform would differ, however, from previous liturgical reforms introduced over the centuries. For in the past, the liturgy achieved its organic growth primarily from the development of doctrine in the face of schism, heresy or political strife. But the Second Vatican Council would thereby open a door to the organic growth in the liturgy centered upon the experience of the believer in the act of worship itself (cf. SC, 14: “This full and active sharing on the part of the whole people is of paramount concern in the process of renewing the liturgy and helping it to grow” / *Quae totius populi plena et actuosa participatio, in instauranda et fovenda sacra liturgia, summopere est attendenda*; SC, 23: “In order that healthy tradition can be preserved while yet allowing room for legitimate development, thorough investigation — theological, historical and pastoral – of the individual parts of the liturgy up for revision is always to be the first step” / *Ut sana traditio retineatur et tamen via legitimaie progressionis aperiatur et adhibita cauta ut novae formae ex formis iam exstantibus organicè quodammodo crescant*).

In SC, 23 the Roman Catholic Church introduced a series of methodological changes in establishing standards for organic growth within the liturgy which would startle many. There, she names five principles which directly affected the way in which the reform of the baptismal rites – either for adults or children – were accomplished. They include: (1) the preservation of tradition which yet allows for development through an historical, theological and pastoral understanding of the liturgy; (2) determining the general structure and intent of any part of the liturgy before revising it; (3) evaluating and using the experience of liturgical renewal and special concessions in the practice of the liturgy granted up until the Council, and even beyond, to guide the reform of the rites; (4) the grounding of all changes in “real and proven need” of the Church and (5) the promotion of continuity in liturgical growth from old to new forms.

These five points of method were only intensified with the final steps laid down by the Council in its listing of processes to be followed in the reform of the liturgy. For in sections 38 and 39 of *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, the Council states that adaptations of the liturgy according to local cultures are permitted, and can be devised and then submitted by Episcopal conferences to the Holy See for approbation.

The effect of implementing these principles within the reform of the liturgy can be seen in the way in which the modern rites have been simplified and their new expression devised to reflect the proven tradition of the early church in which the deepening conversion of the believer was of great importance. However, the reform of the baptismal rites in the present case is based on work in the modern historical, theological, behavioral and pastoral sciences encouraged by the Council itself. No previous reform sought the same goals as did this one, nor achieved it with the tools unique to the modern age.

Chart with full texts of rites (see Appendix A)

4. g. Critical Comparison of Roman Catholic and Reformed Rites

A comparison of the current printed liturgies of Reformed and Roman Catholic churches in this dialogue reveal strong similarities, arising from the common ecumenical liturgical movement of the 20th century, which itself emerged from shared biblical and historical scholarship in the early part of the century. Even so, some differences remain. This report offers both structural and thematic reflections arising from comparison of the printed baptismal orders. A chart with the full texts of all the current rites can be found in the appendix. It is important to note that the comparison of rites in the appendix focuses on the Roman Catholic rite of paedobaptism, not the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. As noted earlier, the current Reformed rites may be used for either infants or persons of mature faith. This represents a reversal of practice from an earlier era, when Reformed churches had separate rites for adults and children, while Roman Catholic churches had a single rite to be used for both.

Similarities

All of the baptismal rites, both Reformed and Roman Catholic, according to written form if not always in practice, *follow* the reading and proclamation of the Word. Baptism is thus always understood as a response to the proclaimed Word. This is significant, because it represents a change from earlier practice, when baptisms were often conducted privately, apart from the liturgy of the Word (Roman Catholic) or before the reading and proclamation of the Word (some Reformed).

All the baptismal rites include the following elements, though not always in the same order:

- renunciations by candidates or parents of those to be baptized,
- profession of faith (usually the Apostles' Creed),
- promises by parents, sponsors/godparents (if present), and congregation,
- baptismal prayer at the font (variously titled "Blessing and Invocation of God over Baptismal Water" (RC), "Prayer of Thanksgiving" (CRCNA),

“Prayer of Baptism” (UCC), “Baptismal Prayer of Thanksgiving” (RCA), and “Thanksgiving over the Water” (PCUSA)),

- baptism with water “in(to) the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”³⁰ The UCC provides the option of alternate words “*You are baptized* in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” This appears to be the central text of the baptismal rite in every case.
- post-baptismal anointing, laying on of hands and/or declaration and blessing without laying on of hands,
- prayers for the baptized.

From this it appears that all the rites have a basic common structure, though it has been appropriated in different ways.

Furthermore, there is remarkable agreement in the thematic content of the Reformed and Roman Catholic rites. In our analysis of the rites, texts were read for five kinds of statements: (1) *images*, such as those which variously describe baptismal water; (2) *commitments*, such as an expression for the desire for baptism; (3) *effects*, such as the gifts from the Holy Spirit received through baptism; (4) *formulae*, such as the interrogatories prior to baptism, or the adaptation of a berekah-style prayer form and (5) *biblical doctrine*, such as the notion of original sin. Some categories overlap in their functions within the rites, such as formulae used to elicit a commitment, or images which carry doctrinal meaning.

Such thematic analysis reveals substantial similarity among the rites.

- * The majority of the images employed, and the authority for their use, appear to be derived from the gospels and the Old Testament, while the effects are almost all Pauline in their theological roots.
- * Much of the language which accompanies ritual acts – such as the epiclesis, the blessings, the formulae and the commitments – seem to derive from Patristic sources, both in vocabulary and rhetorical structure.
- * Certain texts, such as the use of a berekah-style prayer of blessing over the water, represent a retrieval of Jewish influence in the reform of Christian liturgies, ongoing since the early 1960s.
- * The language of Pauline participationism describes the soteriological aspects of the sacramental action in the rites; Pauline ecclesiology of the body in large measure shapes the notion of church within the rites; Pauline virtue-vice language, as taken from the Wisdom literature and first century Judaism, seems to inform much of the effects and commitments, while reflecting the style of modern day personalism.
- * There is a remarkable similarity in the kind of syntax, vocabulary and general expression used in the rites, characterized by biblical redolence, simplicity, directness, spareness of style and succinctness. This is all the more noteworthy when one considers that the RC rites are themselves a translation of a Latin original. This would suggest some degree of interaction and even dependency between the reformers of the rites.

Differences

The Roman Catholic rite includes baptismal elements early in the liturgy (reception of children, intercessions, pre-baptismal anointing), while the Reformed baptismal rites are contained in a particular portion of the overall

liturgy. While references to baptism may be included at other points in the Reformed services, such as the prayers of intercession, this is not explicit in the written rites.

The Roman Catholic rite also contains several “explanatory rites” not present in any of the Reformed rites: white garment, lighted candle, and ephphetha.

The Reformed rites all begin with scripture or scriptural statements on the meaning of baptism. This is significant, because it points to the Reformed concern to provide biblical “warrant” for the sacrament.

Within the Reformed family, the CRC exhibits a different structure leading up to baptism: statement on baptism is followed by the prayer of thanksgiving, then the renunciations and profession of faith. All other Reformed rites include the renunciations and profession of faith before the prayer of thanksgiving.

The Reformed rites in various ways exhibit tension around the practice of post-baptismal anointing or laying on of hands. The CRCNA and UCC suggest that laying on of hands is optional; CRCNA, RCA, and PCUSA include signing with the cross as optional; the PCUSA suggests anointing as optional. All of this underscores a Reformed concern that the sign of water and the Word not be overshadowed by additional ritual gestures.

Finally, although almost all the rites have alternate expressions for all of the images, effects, commitments, formulae and doctrine of the other churches, there are a few exceptions, such as “original sin” and “covenant.” These exceptions may prove to be distinctive points of identity for individual communities and their liturgical expressions.

4. h. Conclusion: Similar rites with different hermeneutics

The numerous common elements in the baptismal rites of the Reformed and Roman Catholic churches surveyed in this study might initially suggest that there has been a significant sharing of doctrine, method and practice between both communities. In some instances, identical wordings and rites are evident in their baptismal liturgies, as found, for example, in the *berakah*-style blessing over the baptismal water, or in the use of the traditional biblical formula that accompanies the baptismal washing. No fewer than five such components can be found shaping the baptismal rites and texts now in use for each of these churches [see Appendix 1 and 2].

Indeed, many of the methods used in the reform of these rites appear to be products of a common liturgical renewal movement. Authors such as James F. White, who has published seminal studies on the reform of protestant liturgies over the last 40 years, has established this very point (see James White, “Roman Catholic and Protestant Worship in Relationship” in *Christian Worship in North America* [Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1997] 3-15). In addition, both Roman Catholic and Protestant churches undertook joint studies of the biblical and patristic elements of their liturgies in the decades immediately following the Second Vatican Council in repeated efforts to achieve visible communion where possible in their sacramental practices, especially in the celebration of baptism. [See, for example, *Made, Not Born: New Perspectives on Christian Initiation and the Catechumenate*, The Murphy Center for Liturgical Research (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1976).]

Ecumenical journals such as *Studia Liturgica* have effectively served as common platforms from which liturgical dialogue between churches is promoted. Organizations such as the International Consultation on English Texts (ICET) and the English Language Liturgical Consultation (ELLC), worked hand-in-hand with the Roman Catholic ICEL (International Commission on English in the Liturgy) to produce texts of great value in drawing the liturgies of Protestant and Catholic communities together.

Among the most prestigious of these groups is “Societas Liturgica”, founded by Wiebe Vos, a pastor of the Dutch Reformed Church, who saw the need for both Roman Catholic and Reformed churches to draw closer together through a deepened appreciation of common biblical and patristic roots in the liturgy.

These few reflections would suggest that even though a shared liturgical theology may characterize the renewals of both the Reformed and Roman Catholic liturgies of the latter half of the 20th century, it is not clear that systematic or dogmatic theologians understand the sacramental reforms of their respective churches in the same way. Perhaps the most significant critique of the difference in the understanding of baptism between systematic theologians and liturgical theologians in the Reformed churches can be found in John W. Riggs’ *Baptism in the Reformed Tradition* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002). There, Riggs maintains that the reform of baptismal rites completed in the Reformed churches since the 1972 appearance of the Roman Catholic *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* (RCIA), is notably out of harmony with established Reformed theologies of baptism.

Five of the most common theological and structural elements which seem to characterize the reformed baptismal rites of both churches as given above—(1) baptism as a response to the Word of God; (2) the use of the gospels as a source for baptismal images and (3) the use of Pauline literature as a source for the language of baptismal action and effects; (4) the recovery of patristic ritual elements and (5) the adoption of common biblical texts in the rites themselves—must then be read in at least two ways by Reformed theologians through the lens of either liturgical or systematic theology. While these differing interpretations of the Reformed baptismal rites may pose challenges internally to Reformed communities, the use of water through immersion, infusion or sprinkling, while pronouncing the biblical formula of baptism as reflected in Mt. 28.19, remain in place as essentials in the recently revised rites of both the Reformed and Roman Catholic communities.

It is a mark of unity that both churches have agreed that, in order to deepen their relationship as believers in Christ, any examination of their baptismal doctrines and practices must begin with an acknowledgement of commonly used biblical and patristic sources. In addition, both sides seem to have developed a common method for the retrieval of texts and rites essential to their discussions through the best of form and redaction criticisms, yielding accurate texts and ritual histories.

However, both communities appear to interpret these same sources with hermeneutics conditioned by confessional and dogmatic assumptions held *a priori*. This is most especially true in the reading of central texts from the corpus of Augustine’s works on baptism, faith, justification, sacrament and original sin (see *De baptismo*; *De doctrina christiana*; *De libero arbitrio*; *De peccatorum meritis et remissione peccatorum et de baptismo parvulorum*; *de predestinatione*

sanctorum; De correctione donatistarum; Ad Simplicianum (1.2) and Confessiones (7); Enchiridion; Contra Donatistas; Expositio quarundam propositionum ex epistula apostoli ad Romanos; De spiritu et littera; Sermones 151-156 and De gratia Christi et de peccato originale). Indeed, the reconciliation of approaches to the reading of Augustine may open a path for exchange and understanding between both churches in a way never before achieved.

The result of these distinctive approaches is predictable: widely varying readings of common sources lead to differing uses of these same rites and texts brought forward into recently revised baptismal liturgies. Essentially, the Roman Catholic and Reformed churches agree on which texts and rites are central to baptismal belief and practice, but reserve much of their interpretive use of these sources within the bounds of their separate communal confessions.

5. Theology of Baptism

Alongside the developments in baptismal rites during and since the sixteenth century, it is also important to consider both Roman Catholic and Reformed theologies of baptism. As with the baptismal rites, so too in baptismal theology, both traditions share much in common even as they also differ on key issues. The study of the theology of baptism in this chapter is designed to highlight both the common elements and the differences.

This chapter is organized into several sections: after some introductory questions on baptism, it turns to an examination of the nature of baptism and then looks at connections between baptism and the church, baptism and those who receive it, and baptism and other significant Christian doctrines. Within each section, some basic questions about baptism serve to focus the discussion on specific issues. We hope that this organizational structure will allow readers to focus on the main questions first and then to examine subsidiary questions that interest them.

Each topic in this chapter is introduced by a question. In response to each question, there is a common statement that expresses what this dialogue has agreed that we can say together as well as statements articulating both the Roman Catholic and Reformed positions.

The statements from each side were developed first and became the basis for the common statements. In the common statements, we try to state as much as we hold in common even when the language that we typically use on both sides is not held in common.

In the dialogue, deciding what to use as source material for the Roman Catholic and Reformed positions proved to be challenging. Should we use only documents that have been officially approved or also statements by leading theologians from each side? If the latter, which theologians should we take to be authoritative? Not only because it would be difficult to decide which theologians to use, but also because theologians' statements have no official standing in any church in this dialogue, it seemed best to limit our sources to officially approved documents. For the Roman Catholic side, this meant using statements from church councils (primarily from the Council of Trent through the Second Vatican Council), papal teaching, and the recent Catechism of the Catholic Church. For the Reformed side, it meant using the confessions that the Reformed churches in this dialogue include in their official books of confessions or their denominational list of confessions. The

matter of using confessions is complicated on the Reformed side not only because the Reformed churches in this dialogue stem from two branches of the Reformed tradition (Scottish and continental) and have different lists of confessions, but also because the Reformed churches adhere to their confessions in different ways. For some in this dialogue, the confessions carry the weight of tradition, although one might disagree with them today. For other members of the Reformed delegation, the confessions continue to state the faith of the church. Despite these complications, the representatives to the dialogue thought it best to use the official conciliar, catechetical, and confessional statements of our churches as the basis for stating the views of each side.

INTRODUCTION

5. a. What Is Baptism?

Common Statement

Baptism is a sacrament of the church in which a person is effused with or immersed in water, accompanied by the Trinitarian formula that the person is baptized “in(to) the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 28:19-20). Baptism is the first of the sacraments that a person receives. It is a means of grace through which God works in a person and that marks the reception of a person into the life and mission of Christ’s Church.

Roman Catholic Statement

Baptism is the door to life and to the kingdom of God (*The Rite of Christian Initiation*, 1). Therefore, it is the first sacrament. It constitutes the beginning of Christian life and by being baptized one is incorporated into the Church. It is administered with water and in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Through it those born in sin are forgiven all sins, original and actual, and are regenerated into the new life of Christ. Baptism, the cleansing with water by the power of the living Word, makes us sharers in God’s own life and his adopted children (*The Rite of Christian Initiation*, 8).

Reformed Statement

Baptism is a sacrament ordained by Jesus Christ. Christ commanded his followers “to preach the Gospel and to baptize ‘in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit’ (Matt. 28:19)” (Second Helvetic Conf., 5.185). This sign of initiation, in which God’s elect people are consecrated to God, involves washing or sprinkling with “visible water” (Second Helvetic Conf., 5.185, 5.188). In baptism, a person is admitted into the visible church and given “a sign and seal of the covenant of grace, of his ingrafting into Christ, of regeneration, of remission of sins, and of this giving up unto God, through Jesus Christ, to walk in newness of life” (Westminster Confession of Faith, 6.154). Those who are baptized have been received into God’s church, set apart from other people and religions in order to be dedicated to God, and promised that God will be their God forever (Belgic Confession, art. 34).

5.b. Why Does the Church Baptize?

Common Statement

The Church baptizes in obedience to the command of Christ (Matt. 28:19, Mk. 16:16) in order to initiate persons into the life of the Church.

Roman Catholic Statement

“Holy Baptism is the basis of the whole Christian life, the gateway to life in the Spirit (*vitae spiritualis ianua*), and the door which gives access to the other sacraments” (CCC, 1213). With these words the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC) introduces the sacrament of baptism. The Church baptizes in obedience to the command of Christ (Matt 28:19, Mk 16:16) in order to initiate persons into the life of the Church, the new life that God offers in Jesus Christ for the salvation of the world. In the fourth Gospel Jesus declares: “I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly” (Jn 10:10). Likewise the early Church, when it proclaimed the gospel of Christ, understood its mission in similar terms:

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and touched with our hands concerning the word of life—the life was made manifest, and we saw it, and testify to it, and proclaim to you the eternal life which was with the Father and was made manifest to us . . . (1 Jn 1:1-2).

Baptism imparts the new life in Christ. As the sacrament of regeneration baptism not only signifies new birth in Christ but “actually brings about the birth of water and the Spirit without which no one ‘can enter the kingdom of God’” (CCC, 1215). Therefore, the necessity of baptism is seen in its effects, namely, freedom from sin and rebirth as a son or daughter of God (that is, our adoption by grace). This new filial relation with God brought about by the adoption of grace also constitutes the baptized as members of Christ who are incorporated into the Church and are made sharers in her mission. Baptism, therefore, is the privileged means of grace through which a person becomes a Christian. (cf. Mark 10:15; John 3:5)

Reformed Statement

Reformed churches baptize because Jesus Christ ordained or instituted baptism (Westminster Conf., ch. 30.1; Westminster Larger Catechism, Q.&A. 165; Evangelical Catechism, Q.&A. 115-17). According to the Gospel of Matthew, after his resurrection Jesus sent his disciples into the world to “make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you” (Matt. 28:19-20, NRSV). Christians have, in response to this commission, seen baptism as a mark of commitment to the Lord and membership in the church: “The universal practice of baptism by the apostolic Church from its earliest days is attested in letters of the New Testament, the Acts of the Apostles, and the writings of the Fathers” (BEM, Baptism I.1). Since Christian baptism is grounded in Christ’s instruction in his Word, Reformed Christians attempt to follow both biblical practices and teachings surrounding baptism.

THE NATURE OF BAPTISM

5. c. What Does Baptism Effect or Signify?

Common Statement

Baptism is the divinely-appointed means of grace by which Christ acts through a visible sacramental act of the Church to signify the forgiveness of sins, regeneration, and being united to and engrafted into the Church, the Body of Christ.

Roman Catholic Statement

Baptism, the first of the sacraments, is the font or source of both Christian and ecclesial life. The meaning of baptism communicates what is distinctive in Catholic theology but also serves as the basis for a common ecumenical witness with other churches and ecclesial communities. Along with the World Council of Churches 1982 Faith and Order document *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (BEM) the Catholic Church can affirm that the meaning of water baptism has to do with participation in Christ's death and resurrection (what Catholics call the paschal mystery), with conversion, pardoning and cleansing, with the reception of the gift of the Spirit, with incorporation into the Body of Christ, and with the Kingdom of God (BEM 3-7). In a more recent document of the Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches (JWG), "*Ecclesiological and Ecumenical Implications of a Common Baptism*," baptism is identified with initiation into the life of faith, incorporation into the Church, and with continual growth in Christ including the call to holiness (§'s 34, 59, 71, 77). It is in light of these ecumenical insights that the particularities of a Catholic theology of baptism must be understood.

In many ways the different aspects of Christian Initiation continue to guide the ongoing pilgrimage of Christian maturation. As with the other sacraments, baptism is a means of grace. As each sacrament imparts its own specific sacramental grace, so too with baptism. Its two principal effects are "[p]urification from sins and new birth in the Holy Spirit" (CCC, 1262). Yet the sacrament embraces all the elements of becoming a Christian.

"The fruit of Baptism, or baptismal grace, is a rich reality that includes forgiveness of original sin and all personal sins, birth into the new life by which man becomes an adoptive son of the Father, a member of Christ and a temple of the Holy Spirit. By this very fact the person baptized is incorporated into the Church, the Body of Christ, and made a sharer in the priesthood of Christ" (CCC, 1279).

The Catholic Church has traditionally affirmed the necessity of baptism for salvation, specifically "for those to whom the Gospel has been proclaimed and who have the possibility of asking for this sacrament" (CCC, 1257). One may receive salvation through a "baptism of blood" by suffering death for the faith before one is baptized. In a broader sense God is not bound by the sacraments. Since "the Holy Spirit offers to all the possibility of being made partakers, in a way known to God, of the paschal mystery" (*Gaudium et Spes* 62), non-Christians can be saved. This may also be understood as a "baptism of desire," something that catechumens intentionally

express before their actual baptism. In the case of non-Christians the assumption is that baptism would be desired had the person known of its necessity. Of course, the question of how salvation is offered to non-Christians is beyond the scope of this paper, although it is something that the Catholic Church considers a possibility without committing itself to an affirmation that other religions give access through their own rites to Christian salvation. Salvation is always mediated through Christ. How a non-Christian responds to divine grace is a matter of conscience and the light one has received. How that might entail the practice of another religious tradition is left to theological inquiry as long as the centrality of Christ and the paschal mystery is not displaced.

“Baptism is [also] the sacrament of faith” (CCC, 1253). This encompasses both the faith of the Church and that of each believer. The Catholic emphasis on cooperation with grace and the importance of good works does not negate the continual necessity of faith. Faith itself is “a gift of God, a supernatural virtue infused by him” (CCC, 153), something that clearly bespeaks the priority of grace.

“Before this faith can be exercised, man must have the grace of God to move and assist him; he must have the interior helps of the Holy Spirit, who moves the heart and converts it to God, who opens the eyes of the mind and ‘makes it easy for all to accept and believe the truth’” (*Dei Verbum*, 5).

At the same time assistance by divine grace does not exclude that faith is “an authentically human act...[and that t]rusting in God and cleaving to the truths he has revealed are contrary neither to human freedom nor to human reason” (CCC, 154). As a theological virtue, it relates Christians directly to God who have the Trinity as “their origin, motive, and object” (CCC, 1812). One must persevere in faith. Apart from works faith is dead (*Jas* 2:26) and when deprived of hope and love (the other two theological virtues) it “does not unite the believer to Christ and does not make him a living member of his Body” (CCC, 1815).

The theology of baptism is a window into the entire Christian life. Its elaboration can unfold the manifold riches of Christ for those who through baptism are united with him in his death and resurrection. This journey into the Christian life is also the way of discipleship. The paschal mystery is manifested in the lives of those who knowing the power of Christ’s resurrection are made conformable to his death by sharing in his sufferings (*Phil* 3: 10).

Reformed Statement

As a sacrament, baptism offers a visible word that speaks to God’s people. It speaks by means of actions, accompanied by words, that describe spiritual realities and assure God’s people. Baptism signifies certain spiritual realities. It is a “sign and seal” of the covenant of grace, of being ingrafted into Christ, “of regeneration, of remission of sins,” and of beginning “to walk in newness of life” (Westminster Confession of Faith, 6.154). Baptism is “the sign of new life through Jesus Christ,” uniting “the one baptized with Christ and with his people” (BEM, Baptism II.2). As “the sign and seal of God’s grace and covenant in Christ,” baptism “points us back to the grace of God expressed in Jesus Christ;” and the water of baptism “links us to the goodness of God’s

creation and to the grace of God's covenants with Noah and Israel" (PCUSA *Directory for Worship*, W-2.3002-03). Baptism is a sacrament that claims people as "children of God, disciples of Christ, and members of Christ's church" (UCC *Toward the 21st Century: A Statement of Commitment*).

Baptism gives a person a new identity. "In Baptism a person is sealed by the Holy Spirit, given identity as a member of the church, welcomed to the Lord's Table, and set apart for a life of Christian service" (PCUSA *Directory for Worship*, W-4.2001). Baptism is therefore not only a sign of spiritual realities and a means by which God dispenses grace; it is also the sign of admission into the visible church: "In Holy Baptism God imparts the gift of the new life unto man, receives him into his fellowship as his child, and admits him as a member of the Christian Church" (Evangelical Catechism (UCC), Q. & A. 118).

In baptism God "signifies to us that just as water washes away the dirt of the body when it is poured on us ... so too the blood of Christ does the same thing internally, in the soul, by the Holy Spirit. It washes and cleanses it from its sins and transforms us from being the children of wrath into the children of God" (Belgic Conf., art. 34). Baptism's use of an external washing to signify an internal one serves to reinforce the promise of God to forgive sins. In baptism Christ "gave the promise that, as surely as water washes away the dirt from the body, so certainly his blood and his Spirit wash away my soul's impurity, in other words, all my sins" (Heidelberg Catechism, Q. & A. 69). Baptism assures us that God "freely cleanses us from our sins by the blood of his Son, and in him adopts us to be his sons, and by a holy covenant joins us to himself, and enriches us with various gifts, that we might live a new life" (Second Helvetic Confession, 5. 187).

Baptism signifies our being "engrafted into Christ Jesus, to be made partakers of his righteousness, by which our sins are covered and remitted" (Scots Confession, 3.21). Although many Reformed Christians have hesitated to say that baptism effects forgiveness of sins or regeneration, others come close to such a view. Thus, the Westminster Confession of Faith says that, although the "efficacy of baptism is not tied to that moment of time wherein it is administered; yet, notwithstanding, by the right use of this ordinance the grace promised is not only offered, but really exhibited and conferred by the Holy Ghost;" but it adds that this grace is conferred "to such (whether of age or infants) as that grace belongeth to, according to the counsel of God's own will, in his appointed time" (Westminster Confession, 6.159).

Baptism also signifies a dying and rising with Christ: "Baptism with water represents not only cleansing from sin, but a dying with Christ and a joyful rising with him to new life" (Confession of 1967, 9.511). "By baptism, Christians are immersed in the liberating death of Christ where their sins are buried, where the 'old Adam' is crucified with Christ, and where the power of sin is broken," and they are "raised here and now to a new life in the power of the resurrection of Christ, confident that they will also ultimately be one with him in a resurrection like his" (BEM, Baptism II.3).

In sum, baptism uses water to signify cleansing from sin and regeneration. Reformed confessions speak of baptism as "the washing of rebirth and the washing away of sins," noting that, in baptism, God "wants to assure us, by this divine pledge and sign, that the washing away of our sins spiritually is as real as physical washing with water" (Heidelberg Catechism Q.&A. 71,

73). “For in baptism the sign is the element of water, and that visible washing which is done by the minister; but the thing signified is regeneration and the cleansing from sins” (Second Helvetic Confession, 5. 178-79).

Although baptism is a means of grace that signifies justification and cleansing from sin, it is not required in order for a person to be justified before God. Justification is an act by which God remits someone’s sins, absolves the person from guilt and punishment, receives the person into favor, and pronounces the person just (Rom. 8:33; Second Helvetic Confession, 5.106). In justification, God “forgives us our sins for Jesus’ sake, counts the merit of Christ as belonging to us, and accepts us as his children” (UCC Evangelical Catechism, Q. & A. 81). Justification occurs “‘freely’ or ‘by grace,’” apart from works and on the basis of Jesus Christ’s work of redemption (Belgic Confession, art. 23). In justification, God pardons sins and accepts people as righteous, “not for anything wrought in them, or done by them, but for Christ’s sake alone; not by imputing faith itself, the act of believing, or any other evangelical obedience to them, as their righteousness; but by imputing the obedience and satisfaction of Christ unto them, they receiving and resting on him and his righteousness by faith; which faith they have not of themselves, it is the gift of God” (Westminster Confession of Faith, 6.068-69). Since justification is not based on our merits, but only on the “obedience of Christ crucified, which is ours when we believe in him,” it “is enough to cover our sins and to make us confident, freeing the conscience from the fear, dread, and terror of God’s approach” (Belgic Confession, art. 23).

Similarly, although baptism both signifies regeneration and serves as a means of grace moving God’s people to rebirth, baptism is not required in order for a person to be regenerated in Jesus Christ. Regeneration is the rebirth of water and the Spirit, a rebirth that enables entrance into the kingdom of God (John 3:3-6). This rebirth is a “new creation” and a “making alive” that, like the work of creation or the raising of the dead, “God works in us without our help” (Canons of Dort, III/IV, art. 12). In regeneration, God’s grace “does not act in people as if they were blocks and stones; nor does it abolish the will and its properties or coerce a reluctant will by force, but spiritually revives, heals, reforms, and — in a manner at once pleasing and powerful — bends it back” (Canons of Dort, III/IV, art. 16). Although regeneration is God’s supernatural work, God has chosen to bring about that work by such means as “the holy admonitions of the gospel, under the administration of the Word, the sacraments, and discipline” (Canons of Dort, III/IV, art. 17).

5. d. How Is Christian Baptism Related to the Biblical Economy of Salvation?

Common Statement

Christian baptism is rooted in the biblical economy of salvation. The water of baptism echoes the water of creation, of the Flood, of the Red Sea during the Exodus, and of Jesus’ own baptism. Baptism is the sign of God’s covenant with the church, a covenant that not only stretches back to God’s covenant with Abraham and his descendants but also binds those who are members of this covenant to God as God’s children.

Roman Catholic Statement

Both the theology and liturgical praxis of baptism situate it within the biblical economy of salvation. The consecratory prayer over the water refers to the waters of creation, the Red Sea at the time of the Exodus, and those of the Jordan wherein Jesus was baptized. It culminates with the water and blood that flows from Christ's side as he hung upon the cross. This rich imagery associates the paschal sacrifice of Christ with God's creative and redemptive action throughout history. So too, by the power of the Spirit the waters of baptism are unsealed as a fountain of new life. It is also consistent with the covenantal language utilized in sacred scripture to express God's fidelity to creation and his people. Although the word covenant is not used explicitly in the Rite of Baptism it is implied and can be understood in light of Catholic teaching.

Covenant is a part of the "divine plan of Revelation...realized simultaneously 'by deeds and words which are intrinsically bound up with each other' and shed light on each other" (CCC, 53). "Again and again you offered a covenant to man, and through the prophets taught him to hope for salvation" the Church prays in Eucharistic Prayer IV of the *Roman Missal*. "God made an everlasting covenant with Noah and with all living beings (cf. *Gen 9:16*). It will remain in force as long as the world lasts" (CCC, 71)...

"God chose Abraham and made a covenant with him and his descendants. By the covenant God formed his people and revealed his law to them through Moses. Through the prophets, he prepared them to accept the salvation destined for all humanity" (CCC, 72)... "God has revealed himself fully by sending his own Son, in whom he has established his covenant forever. The Son is his Father's definitive Word; so there will be no further Revelation after him" (CCC, 73). This new and definitive covenant in Jesus Christ is at the heart of the Gospel, the Church and its sacramental life, especially the Eucharist, and is the basis for Christian prayer—"Christian prayer is a covenant relationship between God and man in Christ. It is the action of God and of man, springing forth from both the Holy Spirit and ourselves, wholly directed to the Father, in union with the human will of the Son of God made man" (CCC, 2564).

Reformed Statement

Christian baptism is deeply rooted in God's dealings with ancient Israel. The washing and transformation that occur in baptism happen not "by the physical water but by the sprinkling of the precious blood of the Son of God, who is our Red Sea, through which we must pass to escape the tyranny of Pharaoh, who is the devil, and to enter the spiritual land of Canaan (Belgic Confession, art. 34).

Baptism is a sign of God's covenant. The covenant is the means by which God's people are bound to God; and baptism is a sign and seal of the covenant of grace (Westminster Conf., 6.154). "In baptism, the church celebrates the renewal of the covenant with which God has bound his people to himself" (Confession of 1967, 9.511). Thus those who are baptized in the name of Christ have been "enrolled, entered, and received into the covenant and family, and so into the inheritance of the sons of God" (Second Helvetic Confession, 5.187).

Some Reformed Christians speak of both a covenant of works and a covenant of grace; others speak only of a covenant of grace. The covenant of

works is understood by those who affirm it to be a covenant made by God with the first humans, “wherein life was promised to Adam, and in him to his posterity, upon condition of perfect and personal obedience” (Westminster Conf., 6.038). The fall into sin left humans incapable of perfect obedience and therefore unable to attain life with God. The covenant of works, if one existed, was ineffective.

Given humanity’s plight, God made a covenant of grace, “wherein he freely offered unto sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ, requiring of them faith in him, that they may be saved, and promising to give unto all those that are ordained unto life, his Holy Spirit, to make them willing and able to believe” (Westminster Conf., 6.039). The covenant of grace can also be called a testament, with Jesus Christ as the testator bequeathing “the everlasting inheritance, with all things belonging to it” (Westminster Conf., 6.040).

Although this covenant or testament was administered differently before and after the appearance of the promised Messiah, there is one covenant of grace, not two. Thus, since the appearance of Christ, “the ordinances in which this covenant is dispensed are the preaching of the Word, and the administration of the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper” (Westminster Conf., 6.041-42). Thus baptism was ordained by Jesus Christ “not only for the solemn admission of the party baptized into the visible Church, but also to be unto him a sign and seal of the covenant of grace” (Westminster Conf. 6.154). Baptism signifies and seals “our ingrafting into Christ, and partaking of the covenant of grace, and our engagement to be the Lord’s” (Westminster Shorter Catechism, 7.094).

By the use of water, baptism symbolizes God’s ancient covenant of grace: “The water of Baptism symbolizes the waters of Creation, of the Flood, and of the Exodus from Egypt. Thus, the water of Baptism links us to the goodness of God’s creation and to the grace of God’s covenants with Noah and Israel” (PCUSA Directory for Worship, W-2.3003).

Baptism echoes circumcision, the sign of the covenant for ancient Israel: “As circumcision was the sign and symbol of inclusion in God’s grace and covenant with Israel, so Baptism is the sign and symbol of inclusion in God’s grace and covenant with the Church” (PCUSA Directory for Worship, W-2.3004).

5. e. What is the relationship between baptism, faith, and discipleship?

Common Statement

Baptism is an important source for a life of Christian faith and discipleship. For those baptized as infants, faith and discipleship are the expected fruit of baptism. For those baptized as adolescents or adults, typically faith and discipleship precede baptism. Nevertheless, both infant and adult baptism are intended to nurture Christian faith and discipleship. Working with the Word of God, the sacraments – including baptism – nourish the faith of God’s people and motivate them to follow God’s will as Christ’s disciples.

Roman Catholic Statement

The “whole organism of the Christian’s supernatural life has its roots in baptism” (CCC, 1266). This embraces a life of discipleship through growth in the theological and moral virtues, and the prompting and power of the Holy

Spirit in graces and gifts. All of this is based upon the efficacy and fruitfulness of sacramental grace. Sacramental efficacy insures the conferral of grace in the sacramental act.

The “sacraments act *ex opere operato* (literally: ‘by the very fact of the action’s being performed’), i.e., by virtue of the saving work of Christ, accomplished once for all. It follows that ‘the sacrament is not wrought by the righteousness of either the celebrant or the recipient, but by the power of God.’ From the moment that a sacrament is celebrated in accordance with the intention of the Church, the power of Christ and his Spirit acts in and through it, independently of the personal holiness of the minister. Nevertheless, the fruits of the sacraments also depend on the disposition of the one who receives them” (CCC, 1128).

In sacraments the posture of the recipient may be interpreted as informing the disposition of the one receiving the sacraments so as to not place any obstacle in the way of reception, e.g., impenitence. More positively one is exhorted to receive the sacraments in faith, hope and love, and cooperate with the grace received in order to bear fruit in Christ.

Discipleship follows upon baptism. For adults who are baptized using the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults (RCIA) culminating at the Easter Vigil, baptism is followed by a period of mystagogy wherein the mysteries of the faith continue to be assimilated through the grace of baptism and one’s relationship with Christ. For all the faithful this is represented and celebrated in the fifty days of the Easter Season ending with the Solemn Feast of Pentecost and the coming of the Holy Spirit. As a life long process of discipleship baptism continues to highlight the Christian’s deepening union with Christ in his death and resurrection.

The faithful Christian who has “kept the seal” until the end, remaining faithful to the demands of his baptism, will be able to depart this life “marked with the sign of faith,” with his baptismal faith, in expectation of the blessed vision of God—the consummation of faith—in the hope of resurrection (CCC, 1274).

Reformed Statement

Baptism nourishes Christian faith and discipleship. A life of faith and discipleship involves trusting God and accepting grace: “Faith is complete trust in God and willing acceptance of his grace in Jesus Christ” (Evangelical Catechism (UCC), Q. & A. 80). The main components of genuine Christian faith are knowledge and assurance. Faith involves a form of knowledge: “Christian faith is not an opinion or human conviction, but a most firm trust and a clear and steadfast assent of the mind, and then a most certain apprehension of the truth of God presented in the Scriptures and in the Apostles’ Creed, and thus also of God himself, the greatest good, and especially of God’s promise and of Christ who is the fulfillment of all promises” (Second Helvetic Confession, 5.112). In addition to this firm knowledge, faith also involves a deep assurance of the heart: “True faith is not only a knowledge and conviction that everything God reveals in his Word is true; it is also a deep-rooted assurance, created in me by the Holy Spirit through the gospel, that, out of sheer grace earned for us by Christ, not only others, but I too,

have had my sins forgiven, have been made forever right with God, and have been granted salvation” (Heidelberg Catechism, Q. & A. 21).

Faith does not arise from our own “natural powers,” but is kindled in our hearts by the Holy Spirit (Scots Confession, 3.12; Belgic Confession, art. 22). The Spirit ordinarily creates faith in people’s hearts through the preaching of the gospel (or ministry of the word), then confirms and strengthens that faith through preaching as well as through the sacraments and prayer (Heidelberg Catechism, Q. & A. 65; Westminster Conf. of Faith, 6.078). Since faith is bestowed on people by God, not in the sense that God gives the potential to believe and awaits our choice, but in the sense that God produces in people “both the will to believe and the belief itself,” faith is a gift of God (Canons of Dort, II, art. 14)

How does baptism nourish faith? Word and sacraments work together, like a letter with an imprinted seal, to ground faith: “Now faith rests only upon the Word of God; and the Word of God is like papers or letters, and the sacraments are like seals which only God appends to the letters” (Second Helvetic Confession, 5.172). Since God has ordained sacraments “to nourish and sustain our faith,” and since the Lord’s Supper testifies to us that, “just as truly as” we hold, eat, and drink the visible bread and wine of the sacrament, so truly do we receive Jesus Christ’s body and blood, faith can be seen as “the hand and mouth of our souls” (Belgic Confession, arts. 33, 35).

Baptism is a call to Christian discipleship: “The Baptism which makes Christians partakers of the mystery of Christ’s death and resurrection implies confession of sin and conversion of heart” (BEM, Baptism II.4). Luther says that baptism with water “signifies that the old Adam in us, together with all sins and evil lusts, should be drowned by daily sorrow and repentance and be put to death, and that the new man should come forth daily and rise up, cleansed and righteous, to live forever in God’s presence” (Luther’s Small Catechism). The Heidelberg Catechism speaks of baptism as being washed with Christ’s blood and Spirit, noting that being washed with Christ’s blood signifies God’s forgiveness of sins and that being washed with Christ’s Spirit “means that the Holy Spirit has renewed me and set me apart to be a member of Christ so that more and more I become dead to sin and increasingly live a holy and blameless life” (Heidelberg Catechism, Q. & A. 70). In baptism, Jesus Christ, through the Spirit, washes away sins and frees people from their control. Baptism therefore signifies that one day we will rise with Christ in glory and may walk even now in newness of life (Study Catechism 1998 of the PCUSA, Q. & A. 72).

Baptism nourishes the life of faith and discipleship not only of the person being baptized but also of those who witness this demonstrated word of grace. Throughout their lives, and especially when tempted or when witnessing the baptism of others, those who have been baptized must “improve their baptism” by considering baptism’s meaning and benefits, being humbled by their having fallen short of and gone contrary to the grace of baptism, receiving assurance of pardon, drawing strength from Christ’s death and resurrection for their own mortifying of sin, and endeavoring to live as those who have been given to Christ and baptized by the Spirit (Westminster Larger Catechism, Q.&A. 167).

BAPTISM AND THE CHURCH

5. f. What implications does baptism have for the church?

Common Statement

Baptism is the sacramental bond that effects membership in the visible Church. As an ecclesial sacrament it is also the basis for the real communion that Christians enjoy in their churches and among the various ecclesial communities as they strive to overcome separation and division in a more full and perfect communion.

Roman Catholic Statement

Baptism is ecclesially mediated and is the basis for incorporation into the Church. The People of God of the New Covenant are brought into being from the font of baptism. It creates a communion that “transcends all the natural or human limits of nations, cultures, races, and sexes” (CCC, 1267). All the baptized share in common priesthood of all believers, itself a participation in the priesthood of Christ including his prophetic and royal missions. From this proceeds “the apostolic and missionary activity of the People of God” (CCC, 1270). As the sacramental bond of communion baptism “constitutes the foundation of communion among all Christians, including those who are not yet in full communion with the Catholic Church” (CCC, 1271). Thus baptism serves as the basis for ecumenism as *Unitatis Redintegratio* (UR), Vatican II’s *Decree on Ecumenism* states:

For men who believe in Christ and have been properly baptized are put in some, though imperfect communion with the Catholic Church (UR, 3).

And in terms of full ecclesial intentionality of baptism,

Baptism, therefore, constitutes the sacramental bond of unity existing among all those who through it are reborn. But baptism, of itself, is only a beginning, a point of departure, for it is wholly directed toward the acquiring of fullness of life in Christ. Baptism is thus ordained toward a complete profession of faith, a complete incorporation into the system of salvation such as Christ himself willed it to be, and finally, toward a complete integration into Eucharistic communion (UR, 22).

Reformed Statement

Christian baptism is a “basic bond of unity” that brings Christians “into union with Christ, with each other and with the Church of every time and place” (BEM, Baptism II.6). This “one baptism into Christ constitutes a call to the churches to overcome their divisions and visibly manifest their fellowship” (BEM, Baptism II.6).

Baptism is the means by which “individuals are publicly received into the church to share in its life and ministry;” conversely, when it baptizes people, “the church becomes responsible for their training and support in Christian discipleship” (The Confession of 1967 of the PCUSA, 9.51).

5. g. Who May Baptize, and with What Means and Formula?

Common Statement

In order for a baptism to be valid, it must be administered by someone authorized to do so, using water and the Trinitarian formula. Typically, baptism is administered by an ordained minister or priest, within a worship service, using water (either dipping the baptizand into the water or pouring or sprinkling the water on the baptizand), and following the command of Jesus to baptize people of all nations “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 28:19). The Roman Catholic Church allows non-ordained people to administer baptism and permits baptism to occur outside a worship service; Reformed churches do not allow such exceptions. Some Reformed churches allow – at least in practice – the use of alternate formulations of the Trinitarian formula (e.g., “in the name of God the Creator, God the Redeemer, and God the Sanctifier”); other Reformed churches as well as the Roman Catholic Church do not. With one exception, the Roman Catholic Church and the Reformed churches in this dialogue accept any baptism of a member of one of the other ecclesiastical bodies in this dialogue as long as the baptism was recognized as valid by the ecclesiastical communion in which the person was a member. The exception is that the Roman Catholic Church does not recognize as valid a baptism in which any of the following is lacking: intent to do what the Church does when she baptizes, use of water, and use of the Triune name as given in Matt. 28:19.

Roman Catholic Statement

Baptism must be administered with water and in the name of the Triune God since “entry into the life of the Most Holy Trinity through configuration to the Paschal mystery of Christ” is signified and enacted in the sacrament (CCC, 1239). Therefore, the validity of baptism has to do with the very mystery of the faith, the mystagogy of communion with the Trinity. Consequently, the most expressive form of baptism is triple immersion in baptismal water, the latter consecrated by a prayer of epiclesis (an invocation for the Father to send the Holy Spirit upon the water to give the grace of the Son). However, pouring is also accepted. The formula differs between the Latin Church and the Eastern Catholic Churches. The minister in the Latin Church says: “N., I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” An Eastern Rite priest utilizes a variation of this: “The servant of God, N., is baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” As for the ministers of baptism a distinction is made between ordinary and extraordinary situations with the ecclesial intentionality of the sacrament preserved in both cases, either directly through the sacramental representation of Christ in the ordained minister who administers the sacrament, or indirectly through action that conforms to the Church’s understanding of it.

The ordinary ministers of Baptism are the bishop and priest and, in the Latin Church, also the deacon. In case of necessity, anyone, even a non-baptized person, with the required intention, can baptize, by using the Trinitarian baptismal formula. The intention required is to will to do what the Church does when she baptizes. The Church finds the reason for this possibility in the universal

saving will of God and the necessity of Baptism for salvation. (CCC, 1256).

Reformed Statement

Sacraments must be administered by “lawful ministers” who have been “appointed to preach the Word, unto whom God has given the power to preach the gospel, and who are lawfully called by some Kirk” (Scots Conf., ch. 22; also Westminster Conf., ch 30.2). Since baptism is rooted in and declares Christ’s faithfulness, points to the faithfulness of God, and involves a congregational reaffirmation of faith and pledge “to provide an environment of witness and service,” baptism should “always be celebrated and developed in the setting of the Christian community” (BEM, Baptism IV.12). Therefore, within Reformed churches, only an ordained minister of the Word, functioning within the context of the church, may baptize.

Since the church has received the sacrament of baptism from God as a means of grace, the church baptizes by using Christ’s words of institution, baptizing people of all nations “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 28:19; quoted by Heidelberg Catechism, Q.&A. 71 and by the Study Catechism 1998 of the PCUSA, Q.&A. 75).

Following Christ’s example and instruction, Christians baptize with water, which may be poured or sprinkled on the person, or into which the person may be dipped (2nd Helvetic Conf., ch. 20; Westminster Conf., ch. 30.3). Because the sacraments should be celebrated in their “original simplicity,” the sacrament of baptism should not be “adulterated” by adding human devices such as “exorcism, the use of burning lights, oil, salt, spittle, and such other things” as baptizing twice per year “with a multitude of ceremonies” (2nd Helvetic Conf., ch. 20; Scots Conf., ch. 22).

Reformed Christians consider a sacrament to be valid if it includes the biblical words of institution and the biblical sign (i.e., water or bread and the fruit of the vine), if it is performed by someone who would be authorized by a Christian church to perform the sacrament, if the church’s authorities sanction the sacrament, if the recipient (or the parent[s], in cases of infant baptism) requests or intends to receive the sacrament, and if it is performed in a worship service (or, if that is not practicable, connected in some way to the worshipping community).

RECIPIENTS OF BAPTISM

5. h. Why Do People Need to Be Baptized?

Common Statement

Although God created the human race righteous and holy, bearing God’s image, the fall of humanity into sin has so infected the race that all human beings are born sinful, alienated from God, and subject to death and misery. Sin has ruined our connection with God, other human beings, and other creatures, leaving us slaves to sin as well as guilty of it, and helpless to save ourselves from our plight. We therefore need the forgiveness and new life from God that are effected (according to the Roman Catholic Church) or signified (according to Reformed churches) by baptism.

Roman Catholic Statement

The necessity of baptism in bringing about regeneration and adoption figures greatly in the divine economy of salvation due to the consequences of original sin that subjected humanity to sin and death. Original sin is “an essential truth of the faith” (CCC, 388). It is, “so to speak, the ‘reverse side’ of the Good News that Jesus is the Savior of all men” (CCC, 389) and cannot be ignored without undermining the faith itself. The Catholic Church, therefore, understands the Fall of humanity as an historical event preceded by the fall of the angels. “The account of the fall in *Genesis* 3 uses figurative language, but affirms a primeval event, a deed that took place *at the beginning of the history of man*. Revelation gives us the certainty of faith that the whole of human history is marked by the original fault freely committed by our first parents” (CCC, 390).

Through their own personal sin Adam and Eve “lost the original holiness and justice...received from God, not only for ...[themselves]...but for all human beings” (CCC, 416). They universally transmitted to their descendents the wound of their own sin such that Pope Paul VI could confess in his 1968 *Solemn Profession Faith: Credo of the People of God* (CPG, quoted in CCC, 419), “We therefore hold, with the Council of Trent, that original sin is transmitted with human nature, ‘by propagation, not by imitation’ and that it is... ‘proper to each’ (CPG, 16). More precisely “original sin is called ‘sin’ only in an analogical sense: it is a sin ‘contracted’ and not ‘committed’ - a state and not an act” (CCC, 404). The loss of original justice and holiness leads to another consequence of original sin. “[H]uman nature is weakened in its powers, subject to ignorance, suffering and the domination of death, and inclined to sin (this inclination is called ‘concupiscence’)” (CCC, 418).

It is important to register that for Catholics concupiscence is not sin itself. Sin always requires a free act of the will. Concupiscence is the tendency toward sin present in human nature after the Fall. This inclination to sin – metaphorically speaking, ‘the tinder for sin’ (*fomes peccati*) – also remains after baptism. Despite the deprivation caused by original sin the Catholic Church rejoices that the “victory that Christ won over sin has given us greater blessings than those which sin had taken from us” (CCC, 420). It also provides a spiritual lesson for the newly baptized so that with the help of Christ’s grace they “may prove themselves in the struggle of Christian life. This is the struggle of *conversion* directed toward holiness and eternal life to which the Lord never ceases to call us” (CCC, 1426).

In addition to washing away original sin baptism also remits the temporal punishment due to any personal sin. The consequences of sin or its deleterious effects upon a person are remitted. However, “certain temporal consequences of sin remain in the baptized, such as suffering, illness, death, and such frailties inherent in life as weaknesses of character” (CCC, 1264) along with concupiscence.

An important aspect of the Catholic understanding of the human condition (or theological anthropology) is the prelapsarian state of humanity. Although created in grace – the state of original holiness and justice that enabled friendship and intimacy with God as well as harmony in the human condition, interiorly, socially, and with all of creation – it must be understood that the loss of this grace was one of the effects of the Fall. Therefore, “original holiness and justice” was indeed a grace and not something intrinsic to

human nature. It was a gift from God. Nevertheless, humanity was constituted in this state. Without pursuing the many nuances and lively theological debates that inform the Catholic understanding of the relationship between nature and grace, it is worth stating that from a Catholic perspective the grace of original holiness and justice would be compromised – especially with regard to the gratuity, freedom and supernatural character of divine grace – if it was understood to be an essential dimension of human nature and not as a gift given with creation. Since baptism effects the new creation in Christ through regeneration and justification, grace restores the holiness and justice lost in the Fall. This is a marvelous work of divine mercy and grace. With St. Augustine the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* agrees that “the justification of the wicked is a greater work than the creation of heaven and earth” and even “surpasses the creation of the angels in justice, in that it bears witness to a greater mercy” (CCC, 1994). Or, as St. Paul expresses the superabundance of grace, “where sin increased, grace overflowed all the more” (Rom 5: 20b).

Reformed Statement

People need to be baptized because all are sinners, born subject to sin and willing participants in the human race’s sinful rejection of God. All are therefore alienated from God and subject to death and misery.

Although God created the human race “in true righteousness and holiness,” and bearing God’s image, the fall into sin “has so poisoned our nature that we are born sinners — corrupt from conception on” (Heidelberg Catechism, Q.&A. 7). Original sin is an inherited corruption whereby, through the fall into sin, human beings have come “under the power of satan, sin, and death,” and therefore are “inclined to do evil” (Evangelical Catechism of the UCC, Q.&A. 24, 25). Original sin is an innate, transmitted corruption “which has been derived or propagated in us all from our first parents, by which we, immersed in perverse desires and averse to all good, are inclined to all evil” (Second Helvetic Conf., 5.037). Original Sin is “so vile and enormous in God’s sight that it is enough to condemn the human race, and it is not abolished or wholly uprooted even by baptism” (Belgic Conf., art. 15).

Original sin contains several facets, including “the guilt of Adam’s first sin, the want of that righteousness wherein he was created, and the corruption of his nature, whereby he is utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite unto all that is spiritually good, and wholly inclined to all evil, and that continually” (Westminster Larger Catechism, 7.135). In short, unless we are born again “we are so corrupt that we are totally unable to do any good and inclined toward all evil” (Heidelberg Catechism, Q.&A. 8). Having been born with original sin, and apart from the regenerating work of the Spirit, we both unable and unwilling to return to God or to begin to reform ourselves: “Therefore, all people are conceived in sin and are born children of wrath, unfit for any saving good, inclined to evil, dead in their sins, and slaves to sin; without the grace of the regenerating Holy Spirit they are neither willing nor able to return to God, to reform their distorted nature, or even to dispose themselves to such reform” (Canons of Dort, III/IV, art. 3).

Although original sin has turned us from God and leaves us incapable of reforming ourselves, it has not extinguished all sense of God or morality: “There is, to be sure, a certain light of nature remaining in man after the

fall, by virtue of which he retains some notions about God, natural things, and the difference between what is moral and immoral, and demonstrates a certain eagerness for virtue and for good outward behavior. But this light of nature is far from enabling man to come to a saving knowledge of God and conversion to him" (Canons of Dort, III/IV, art. 4).

A recent study catechism nicely captures the ways in which sin has distorted both ourselves and all our relations with others: "Although we did not cease to be with God, our fellow human beings, and other creatures, we did cease to be for them; and although we did not lose our distinctive human capacities completely, we did lose the ability to use them rightly, especially in relation to God. Having ruined our connection with God by disobeying God's will, we are persons with hearts curved in upon ourselves. We have become slaves to the sin of which we are guilty, helpless to save ourselves, and are free, so far as freedom remains, only within the bounds of sin" (Study Catechism 1998 of the PCUSA, Q.&A. 20).

5. i. Who Can Receive Baptism?

Common Statement

Anyone who, having been outside the household of faith, accepts the Christian faith and participates in catechetical instruction not only may, but should, be baptized. In addition, infants of believing parents should be baptized.

Roman Catholic Statement

Quoting from the Code of Canon Law of the Latin Church (*Codex Iuris Canonici*—CIC, can. 864) the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states: "Every person not yet baptized and only such a person is able to be baptized" (CCC, 1246). The same applies for the Eastern Catholic Churches (*Corpus Canonum Ecclesiarum Orientalium*—CCEO, can. 679). There are two implications that one can draw from these canons. First, it highlights the missional dimension of the Church, called to proclaim the gospel to all nations. All peoples are called to faith and baptism. Second, any person validly baptized in another Church or ecclesial community is already a Christian and cannot be baptized again. It underscores the common faith that Catholics share with other Christians.

Reformed Statement

Churches baptize those who, having come from other religions or from unbelief, "accept the Christian faith and participate in catechetical instruction" (BEM, Baptism IV.11). So those who "profess faith in and obedience unto Christ" should be baptized (Westminster Conf., 6.157). But those who are not part of the visible church and therefore are "strangers from the covenant of promise," should not be baptized "till they profess their faith in Christ, and obedience to him," although infants with one or both parents who profess faith in, and obedience to, Christ "are, in that respect, within the covenant, and are to be baptized" (Westminster Larger Catechism, Q.&A. 166).

5. j. Why do we baptize children?

Common Statement

Since God's promises and covenant extend to the children of those who believe in Jesus Christ, we administer baptism, the sign of the covenant, not only to those who come to faith as adults, but also to the infant children of those who believe in Jesus Christ and have established membership in a local parish or congregation. Such baptism recognizes the need of new birth on the part of all people, even infants. It also connects Christian baptism to circumcision, the sign of the covenant in ancient Israel. And it shows that infants, along with their believing parents, are included in the hope of the gospel and belong to the people of God.

Roman Catholic Statement

The Catholic Church baptizes infants in recognition that children are in need of new birth and that infant baptism particularly manifests the "sheer gratuitousness of the grace of salvation" (CCC, 1250). Since baptism is the sacrament of faith there is a clear recognition that faith is present for infant baptism as well as for adult baptism. Within the faith of the Church including the faith of the assembly, the faith of the parents and godparents (a true ecclesial function—*officium*) is active on behalf of the child. Christian nurture provided by family and community is important for the faith that must grow after baptism as the child goes on to receive the sacraments of Reconciliation, Eucharist, and Confirmation at the appropriate ages. First Communion in particular is an important event for the child to develop a personal relationship with Christ. In this respect baptism is a beginning but one which the Church cannot refuse.

The Church and the parents would deny a child the priceless grace of becoming a child of God were they not to confer Baptism shortly after birth (CCC, 1250).

Reformed Statement

Just as infants in ancient Israel received circumcision, the sign of the covenant, so too infants in the church should be baptized: "We believe our children ought to be baptized and sealed with the sign of the covenant, as little children were circumcised in Israel on the basis of the same promises made to our children" (Belgic Confession, art. 34). Since infants as well as adults are in God's covenant, they should be "received into the Christian church" by this "mark of the covenant" and "distinguished from the children of unbelievers. This was done in the Old Testament by circumcision, which was replaced in the New Testament by baptism" (Heidelberg Catechism, Q. & A. 74). In short, "baptism does for our children what circumcision did for the Jewish people. This is why Paul calls baptism the 'circumcision of Christ'" (Belgic Conf., art. 34, quoting Col. 2:11).

In sum, infants, "[a]long with their believing parents, are included in the great hope of the gospel and belong to the people of God. Forgiveness and faith are both promised to them as gifts through Christ's covenant with his people. These children are therefore to be received into the community by baptism, nurtured in the Word of God, and confirmed at an appropriate time by their own profession of faith" (Study Catechism of 1998 of the PCUSA, Q. & A. 73).

When parents have their children baptized, the parents must “help their children grow in godly life by Christian teaching and training, by prayer and example” (Evangelical Catechism, Q.&A. 121). The church and its minister need evidence of such a commitment before baptizing an infant: “It would be irresponsible to baptize an infant without at least one Christian parent or guardian who promises to nurture the infant in the life of the community and to instruct it in the Christian faith” (Study Catechism 1998 of the PCUSA, Q.&A. 74).

5. k. Why should someone be baptized only once?

Common Statement

As Jesus Christ died once for all and was raised from the dead (Rom 6:10, Heb 9:28, 1 Pet 3:18), so too, the Christian is baptized only once, signifying union with Christ in his death and resurrection through the washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit (Tit 3:5-7).

Roman Catholic Statement

Baptism, along with Confirmation and Holy Orders, is a sacrament that cannot be repeated. This has been associated with the reception of a spiritual mark or sacramental character. In the case of the first sacrament to be administered, “[b]aptism imprints on the soul an indelible spiritual sign, the character, which consecrates the baptized person for Christian worship” (CCC, 1280). Therefore the baptized person by virtue of this “*seal of the Lord*” is enabled to exercise the baptismal priesthood or the common priesthood of the faithful (CCC, 1274). It is also a sign of the fullness of redemption to be accomplished in the consummation of faith at the parousia, the resurrection of the dead, and in the beatific vision. A sign of hope that marks the person as belonging to Christ, it also cannot be erased even “if sin prevents Baptism from bearing the fruits of salvation” (CCC, 1272).

Reformed Statement

As the sign of rebirth in Christ, baptism should be administered only once to a person: “anyone who aspires to reach eternal life ought to be baptized only once without ever repeating it — for we cannot be born twice” (Belgic Confession, art. 34). “Any practice which might be interpreted as ‘re-baptism’ must be avoided” (BEM, Baptism IV.13).

5. l. What is the relationship between baptism and confirmation and/or profession of faith?

Common Statement

Those who are baptized as adults are confirmed or profess their faith at the time of their baptism. Those baptized as children should, at an appropriate age, be confirmed or make an ecclesial profession of their faith. While we agree that baptism signifies new birth in water and the Holy Spirit and that no Christian is without the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:9), we do not agree that there is a distinct sacramental act to signify and impart the gift of the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless, all the baptized are heirs of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit given at Pentecost.

Roman Catholic Statement

The overarching framework for baptism is the context of Christian Initiation. Along with the sacraments of Confirmation and Eucharist baptism is necessary for the full initiation of the new Christian into Christ and his Church. The new life in Christ is received in baptism, strengthened in confirmation and nurtured by the Eucharist. Although all three sacraments are administered together in the case of adult conversion and for infants in the Eastern Catholic Churches, they are separated for the initiation of those baptized as infants in the Latin Church. The sacraments of Eucharist and Confirmation are administered at an appropriate age along with the proper catechesis and sacramental preparation. Nevertheless, this distinction between baptism and confirmation does not eliminate their essential complementarity for Christian initiation.

As baptism is clearly associated with the paschal mystery of the Easter Vigil and the reception of the fruits of Christ's saving death and resurrection, so "the effect of the sacrament of Confirmation is the special outpouring of the Holy Spirit as once granted to the apostles on the day of Pentecost" (CCC, 1302). During the Easter Vigil adult catechumens are baptized, confirmed and receive the Eucharist for the first time, thus completing their Christian Initiation. The Christian faithful also renew their baptismal promises by renouncing sin and Satan, and professing the Apostles' Creed. The joint mission of the Son and Holy Spirit is present in both sacraments with the latter sacrament understood as the "an increase and deepening of baptismal grace" (CCC, 1303). A deeper sense of divine filiation, union with Christ, and increase of the gifts of the Spirit in Confirmation render a more perfect bond with the Church and a special strength to confess Christ in the world. Therefore, the grace of Confirmation is a further giving of the Spirit already received in baptism with an eye towards maturity, perfection and mission.

Reformed Statement

Those who come to the Christian faith, not having been baptized as infants, make a profession of their faith and are confirmed at the same time that they are baptized. Those who have been baptized as infants, having been received into the community of the church and "nurtured in the Word of God," are to be "confirmed at an appropriate time by their own profession of faith" (Study Catechism 1998 of the PCUSA, Q.&A. 73).

Although one should be baptized only once, that "baptism is profitable not only when the water is on us and when we receive it but throughout our entire lives" (Belgic Confession, art. 34). Thus, in the case of those baptized as infants, God's promises to be a God to that child lead to the church's expectation that God will work in that child through the Holy Spirit and that the child will respond to the Spirit's work in faith. The church then expects that, once they reach an age of maturity, baptized children who have responded to the Spirit's work in faith will profess that faith publicly in the context of the church.

Since confirmation was not instituted by Jesus, the Protestant reformers did not accept confirmation as a sacrament. Still, many reformers desired some ritual by which children who had been baptized would publicly appropriate the baptismal promises that were spoken on their behalf. Thus the Reformed tradition adapted the earlier rite of confirmation into a catechetical practice for children that included the laying on of hands. Upon completion

of this rite, children were typically admitted to the Lord's Supper, thus connecting two fragmented pieces of patristic initiation, "confirmation" and first communion. Within the Reformed tradition, infant baptism, young adult confirmation, and then first communion became a standard pattern for many churches. In recent years, several Reformed churches have begun allowing or advocating the pattern of infant baptism, communion at a young age, and then confirmation during adolescence.

BAPTISM AND OTHER DOCTRINES

5. m. What is the relationship between baptism and election?

Common Statement

Those who are baptized are part of God's elect people, the Christian church. A person's being baptized is not a guarantee that the person is predestined or elected to salvation.

Roman Catholic Statement

The Catechumenate for those preparing for Baptism ends with the Rite of Election at the beginning of Lent. The candidates are thus called the elect.

For a person to be enrolled among the elect, he must have enlightened faith and the deliberate intention of receiving the sacraments of the Church. After the election, he is encouraged to advance toward Christ with even greater generosity (RCIA, 134).

However, this differs from the theological discussion over the doctrine of election understood as predestination. The Catholic Church has not precisely defined the doctrines of election and predestination although the doctrine exists and has led to considerable theological debate. There are certain negative parameters to be observed. The Council of Trent states:

"No one, moreover, so long as he is in this mortal life, ought so far to presume as regards the secret mystery of divine predestination, as to determine for certain that he is assuredly in the number of the predestinate; as if it were true, that he that is justified, either cannot sin any more, or, if he do sin, that he ought to promise himself an assured repentance; for except by special revelation, it cannot be known whom God hath chosen unto Himself" (*Decree on Justification*, Chapter XII).

This is confirmed by the canons of the same *Decree*:

"If any one saith, that he will for certain, of an absolute and infallible certainty, have that great gift of perseverance unto the end, unless he have learned this by special revelation; let him be anathema" (Canon 16).

"If any one saith, that the grace of Justification is only attained to by those who are predestined unto life; but that all others who are called, are called indeed, but receive not grace, as being, by the divine power, predestined unto evil; let him be anathema" (Canon 17).

The *Decree on Justification* along with other Decrees, e.g., the Condemnation of Cornelius Jansen, thus excludes positive reprobation based upon the

unconditional predestination of the unjust, and any denial of the universality of the divine will for salvation, the scope of the atonement, and extent of the offer of grace. Consistent with these the Catholic doctrine of grace denies its irresistibility and affirms the freedom of the will both prior to grace (although wounded by sin) and under the influence of grace. *Positive assessments of predestination include the following propositions articulated by Fr. Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P.: “(1) Predestination to the first grace is not because God foresaw our naturally good works, nor is the beginning of salutary acts due to natural causes; (2) predestination to glory is not because God foresaw we would continue in the performance of supernaturally meritorious acts apart from the special gift of final perseverance; (3) complete predestination, in so far as it comprises the whole series of graces from the first up to glorification, is gratuitous or previous to foreseen merits.”*¹³

The knotty issue of how grace and freedom are related and the nature of efficacious grace—a heated dispute between Dominicans and Jesuits, the *Congregatio de Auxiliis* controversy—was put to rest by Pope Paul V in 1607 when he forbade both sides from censuring the other. It therefore remains an open theological question. The Council of Quierzy in 853 best sums up what the Church can say in the most general terms:

“that certain ones are saved, is the gift of the one who saves; that certain ones perish, however, is the deserved punishment of those who perish” (Chapter 3).

Practically, many Catholics have taken the advice of St. Ignatius Loyola in his *Spiritual Exercises* (SE):

“Granted that it be very true that no one can be saved without being predestined and without having faith and grace, still we must be very cautious about the way in which we speak of all these things and discuss them with others” (“Rules for Thinking with the Church,” SE, 14).

Reformed Statement

Some in the Reformed tradition, including Calvin, speak of two types of election: God’s election of a people, such as ancient Israel or the Christian church, and God’s election of individuals to salvation. Membership in the former leads to the hope or expectation, but not the guarantee, that one is elect in the latter sense. Baptism is the sign of membership in God’s elect people, the church, but not a guarantee that one is elect to salvation. So baptism is a sign of election, but not a guarantee of election to salvation.

Election to salvation is an eternal divine decision to choose some people to be the recipients of special saving grace. In some contexts the term predestination is synonymous with election, and in others it encompasses both election and reprobation (an eternal divine decision that results in everlasting death and punishment for some persons). The doctrine of election is closely tied to the teaching that salvation is a free gift of God (Eph. 2:8; Phil. 1:29).

Although some have held that divine election to salvation is based on God’s foreknowledge of a person’s faith or life, traditional Reformed

¹³ Fr. Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P., *Predestination*, translated by Dom Bede Rose, O.S.B. (St. Louis: B. Herder, 1939; reprint, Rockford, IL: Tan, 1998), p. 10.

confessions hold that, in election, God has chosen people for salvation “freely, and of his mere grace,” “without any consideration of their works” (Second Helvetic Conf., 5.052; Belgic Conf., art. 16; Canons of Dort, I,9).

From before the foundation of the world, God has elected people to salvation in Christ and on the basis of Christ’s work: “Therefore, although not on account of any merit of ours, God has elected us, not directly, but in Christ, and on account of Christ, in order that those who are now ingrafted into Christ by faith might also be elected” (Second Helvetic Conf., 5.053; see also Scots Conf., 3.08; Belgic Conf., art. 16, Canons of Dort, I,7). God not only elected us in Christ, but “appointed him to be our head, our brother, our pastor, and the great bishop of our souls” (Scots Confession, 3.08).

This divine election to salvation in Christ was for the purpose that we should be “holy and blameless before him in love. He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ ... to the praise of his glorious grace” (Eph. 1:4-6; quoted by Second Helvetic Conf., 5.054). Furthermore, election shows both God’s mercy and God’s justice. God’s having graciously saved people from perdition shows that God is merciful, while God’s “leaving others in their ruin and fall into which they plunged themselves” shows God’s justice (Belgic Conf., art. 16).

Since Christ did not say how few or many would be saved (Luke 13:23-24), and since we do not know who is elect, we should have a good hope for all: “Although God knows who are his, and here and there mention is made of the small number of elect, yet we must hope well of all, and not rashly judge any man to be a reprobate” (Second Helvetic Conf., 5.055-56). Regarding election, then, we should speak with care and with awareness of our limited knowledge. These affirmations have a solid foundation: “No one will be lost who can be saved. The limits to salvation, whatever they may be, are known only to God. Three truths above all are certain. God is a holy God who is not to be trifled with. No one will be saved except by grace alone. And no judge could possibly be more gracious than our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ” (Study Catechism 1998 of the PCUSA, Q. & A. 49).

5. n. What is the relationship between baptism and grace?

Common Statement

Baptism is a sacrament of grace. Baptism signifies both the unmerited favor of God and the impartation of divine life that is God’s self-communication to us.

Roman Catholic Statement

With other Christians, Catholics believe that baptism is a sign of new life in Christ. It is also an instrument of the divine grace it signifies. The grace of baptism includes the grace of justification enabling the new believer to believe, hope in and love God – acts of the three theological virtues of faith, hope and charity – and to respond to the promptings and power of the Holy Spirit through imparting the traditional sevenfold gifts of the Holy Spirit (wisdom, knowledge, understanding, counsel, fortitude, piety, and fear of the Lord – Is 11: 2-3a). Through cooperation with the grace of baptism the Christian also grows more Christ-like through the increase and maturation of the moral virtues, e.g., prudence, justice, temperance, and fortitude (cf CCC, 1266).

Grace is essential to the Catholic understanding of justification and sanctification and in a profound sense one may confess that all is of grace. A summary of the traditional Catholic distinctions in the understanding of different types of grace – habitual and actual grace – is given in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

“Grace is a *participation in the life of God*... The grace of Christ is the gratuitous gift that God makes to us of his own life, infused by the Holy Spirit into our soul to heal it of sin and to sanctify it... Sanctifying grace [or deifying grace] is an habitual gift, a stable and supernatural disposition that perfects the soul itself to enable it to live with God, to act by his love. *Habitual grace*, the permanent disposition to live and act in keeping with God’s call, is distinguished from actual graces which refer to God’s interventions, whether at the beginning of conversion or in the course of the work of sanctification” (CCC, 1997, 1999-2000).

Catholic theology, especially in its scholastic genre, had a penchant to elaborate even further on the differences among various graces. These include the distinction between uncreated grace and created grace, that is, between God himself and the grace that God bestows. For example, there is a distinction between God’s self-bestowal in the Incarnation in the person of the divine Son and the humanity of Christ that has received the fullness of grace. There is also a distinction between the indwelling of the Trinity in the just person and sanctifying grace that transforms the believer, and between the divine essence that is beheld in the beatific vision and the light of glory that enables that seeing. Sanctifying grace, therefore, is a supernatural created gift—distinct from God—that is infused by God and inhering in the person as an accidental mode of being perfecting the soul (which is a substance). Sanctifying grace, also known as habitual grace, is an infused supernatural habit given by God distinct from an innate or an acquired habit.

There are also elaborations of actual graces as in graces that illuminate the intellect or strengthen the will (grace of illumination and grace of inspiration), prevenient grace (or operating grace) preceding the act of the will (including grace which prepares and disposes one for justification) and subsequent grace (or cooperating grace) that accompanies and supports the volitional act, sufficient grace enabling a person to accomplish a salutary act and efficacious grace that secures such an accomplishment. There are also sacramental graces (proper to each sacrament), graces of state accompanying “the responsibilities of the Christian life and of the ministries within the Church” (CCC, 2004), and special or charismatic graces, that is, charisms or gifts which build up the Church in the service of charity and are therefore “oriented toward sanctifying grace and are intended for the common good” (CCC, 2003).

The Catholic doctrine of grace builds on the notion of God’s action and our participation with God in our own sanctification based on *Phil 2: 12b-13*; “...work out your salvation with fear and trembling. For God is the one who, for his good purpose, works in you both to desire and to work.” It should also be stated that without grace one is capable by the light of reason and free will (although wounded by sin) to know religious and moral truths and

perform morally good actions. One cannot, however, attain salvation in the absence of grace.

The fruit of grace in baptism entails regeneration, the “birth into the new life of Christ...by which man becomes an adoptive son of the Father, a member of Christ and a temple of the Holy Spirit.” It is also the beginning of the “whole organism of the Christian’s supernatural life”...namely, “the renewal of the inner man” (CCC, 1266, 1279, 2019) and is therefore accompanied by justification and sanctification.

The Catholic doctrine of justification has been the subject of much ecumenical work as reflected in the 1999 *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* promulgated by the Catholic Church and the Lutheran World Federation. In its specifically Catholic articulation justification may be defined as including “not only the remission of sins, but also the sanctification and renewal of the interior man.” Following upon God’s merciful initiative of offering forgiveness, justification is also “the acceptance of God’s righteousness through faith in Jesus Christ. Righteousness (or ‘justice’) here means the rectitude of divine love” (CCC, 1991).

Justification may be parsed according to its causes and was dogmatically established at the Council of Trent (1545-1563):

“The causes of this justification are: the final cause is the glory of God and of Christ and life everlasting; the efficient cause is the merciful God who *washes and sanctifies* gratuitously, signing and anointing *with the holy Spirit of promise, who is the pledge of our inheritance*, the meritorious cause is His most beloved only begotten, our Lord Jesus Christ, who, *when we were enemies, for the exceeding charity wherewith he loved us*, merited for us justification by His most holy Passion on the wood of the cross and made satisfaction for us to God the Father, the instrumental cause is the sacrament of baptism, which is the sacrament of faith, without which no man was ever justified, finally, the single formal cause is the justice of God, not that by which He Himself is just, but that by which He makes us just, that, namely, with which we being endowed by Him, are *renewed in the spirit of our mind*, and not only are we reputed but we are truly called and are just, receiving justice within us, each one according to his own measure, which the Holy Ghost distributes to every one as He wills, and according to each one’s disposition and cooperation” (Chapter VII of the *Decree on Justification* of the Council of Trent).

Although justification by faith alone is rejected—Canon IX of the *Decree on Justification* of the Council of Trent (since all the theological virtues of faith, hope and love are infused with sanctifying grace)—one may broadly speak of “justification through faith” and sanctification through charity,” (CCC, 2001). These virtues have to do with our collaboration with the grace of God and in that respect “faith is the beginning of human salvation, the foundation and root of all justification” (Chapter VIII of the *Decree on Justification* of the Council of Trent).

Reformed Statement

Baptism signifies God's gracious love. Grace is an unmerited gift of God by which fallen humans are adopted as God's children and granted the righteousness of Christ (Rom. 3:24; Second Helvetic Confession 5.107; Heidelberg Catechism, Q. & A. 33, 56). God grants forgiveness of sins to fallen people and grants to them "the perfect satisfaction, righteousness, and holiness of Christ" as an act of grace (Heidelberg Catechism Q. & A. 60, 70).

Although the grace of forgiveness and regeneration are signified by baptism, forgiveness and regeneration do not necessarily occur at the time of baptism. God's grace and salvation are not so tied to baptism that one cannot be "regenerated or saved without it, or that all that are baptized are undoubtedly regenerated." Nevertheless, "by the right use of this ordinance the grace promised is not only offered, but really exhibited and conferred by the Holy Ghost, to such (whether of age or infants) as that grace belongeth unto, according to the counsel of God's own will, in his appointed time" (Westminster Confession, 6.158-59).

Reformed Christians consider the efficacy of baptism, like the Lord's Supper, to depend on God's grace, working through the Spirit and the words of institution. Sacraments, even when rightly used, do not themselves have the power to confer grace. Moreover, the efficacy of a sacrament does not "depend on the piety or intention of him that doth administer it, but upon the work of the Spirit, and the word of institution, which contains, together with a precept authorizing the use thereof, a promise of benefit to worthy receivers" (Westminster Confession, 6.151; see also Westminster Shorter Catechism, 7.091). Since baptism "signifies the beginning of life in Christ, not its completion, "[t]he efficacy of Baptism is not tied to that moment of time wherein it is administered; yet, notwithstanding, by the right use of this ordinance the grace promised is not only offered, but really exhibited and conferred by the Holy Ghost, to such (whether of age or infants) as that grace belongeth unto, according to the counsel of God's own will, in his appointed time" (Westminster Confession, 6.159).

5. o. What is the relationship between baptism and sanctification?

Common Statement

Baptism signifies the beginning of sanctification, the universal call to holiness for all those joined to Christ. The communication and reception of grace is always a transformative event for one's relation to God and consequently in one's own person.

Roman Catholic Statement

Sanctification is the increase of sanctifying grace (or an increase of justification received—Chapter X of the *Decree on Justification* of the Council of Trent). Infused by the Holy Spirit, sanctifying grace heals the soul of sin and makes it holy (the sanative [or medicinal] and elevating dimensions of grace), uniting the soul to God in Christ. In this respect a person is made pleasing to God and can grow in grace through the increase of the theological and moral virtues in one's life, also known as the increase of justification through cooperation in good works enabled by grace. Moved by the Holy Spirit who is the master of the interior life one can genuinely merit eternal life by responding to the call to Christian perfection, the fullness of divine

charity. One also prays for the grace of final perseverance even as one makes spiritual progress that bears fruit in a more intimate union with Christ.

Merit is an important dimension of the Catholic understanding of sanctification. It is a consequence of the divine initiative to associate human beings in process of their own salvation.

“The fatherly action of God is first on his own initiative, and then follows man’s free acting through his collaboration, so that the merit of good works is to be attributed in the first place to the grace of God, then to the faithful. Man’s merit, moreover, itself is due to God, for his good actions proceed in Christ, from the predispositions and assistance given by the Holy Spirit” (CCC, 2008).

Although “no one can merit the initial grace of forgiveness and justification, at the beginning of conversion... [m]oved by the Holy Spirit and by charity, we can then merit for ourselves and for others the graces needed for our sanctification, for the increase of grace and charity, and for the attainment of eternal life” (CCC, 2010). In this respect all the baptized are called to holiness and to that spiritual progress that “tends toward ever more intimate union with Christ” (CCC, 2014). Catholics therefore even speak of Christian perfection but one that eschews false notions of triumphalism. “The way of perfection passes by way of the Cross... [and t]here is no holiness without renunciation and spiritual battle” (CCC, 2015).

Reformed Statement

Baptism calls God’s people to live in ways that reflect the new life they have received in Christ. Sanctification is the newness of life and progress in doing good that appears in those who have been buried with Christ and renewed by the Holy Spirit (Heidelberg Catechism, Q. & A. 70). Those who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been “buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so [they] too might walk in newness of life” (Rom. 6:3-4). Thus faith, produced in God’s people by hearing God’s Word and by the work of the Holy Spirit, regenerates them and makes them new creatures in Christ, freeing them from slavery to sin (2 Cor. 5:17; Belgic Confession, art. 24). It is, moreover, “impossible for this holy faith to be unfruitful in a human being, seeing that we do not speak of an empty faith but of what Scripture calls ‘faith working through love,’ which leads a man to do by himself the works that God has commanded in his Word” (Belgic Confession, art. 24, quoting Gal. 5:6).

So when faith bears fruit, leading believers to do what God has commanded in his Word, “These works, proceeding from the good root of faith, are good and acceptable to God, since they are all sanctified by his grace. Yet they do not count toward our justification — for by faith in Christ we are justified, even before we do good works” (Belgic Confession, art. 24). “Moreover, although we do good works, we do not base our salvation on them; for we cannot do any work that is not defiled by our flesh and also worthy of punishment. And even if we could point to one, memory of a single sin is enough for God to reject that work” (Belgic Confession, art. 24). Basing our salvation on “the merit of the suffering and death of our Savior” has the benefit of

avoiding the doubt, uncertainty, and torment of conscience that would come from basing our salvation on our good works (Belgic Confession, art. 24).

The growth of baptized believers in the Christian life of faith both bears witness to the liberating Gospel of Christ and “has ethical implications which not only call for personal sanctification, but also motivate Christians to strive for the realization of the will of God in all realms of life” (BEM, Baptism, III.10).

5. p. What is the relationship between baptism and the assurance of salvation?

Common Statement

Baptism is a sacrament intended to provide assurance to God’s people. For Roman Catholics, baptism is always the assurance of grace imparted and therefore of one’s entry into God’s salvific purposes. Therefore, all the baptized may take comfort and hope in the salvation yet to be consummated that God through his Word and Spirit initiates in baptism. For Reformed Christians, baptism is a means God uses to assure believers of God’s forgiveness and of God’s gracious presence.

Roman Catholic Statement

Finally, while Catholics believe that grace is always offered and even infused in baptism they may differ with Reformed Christians on the assurance of grace. The assurance of grace cannot be considered in the Catholic perspective as the assurance or certainty of salvation. The Council of Trent anathematized such assurance as articulated in the language it understood to be used by Protestant Reformers. Hence, the following canons from its *Decree on Justification*:

If anyone says that in order to obtain the remission of sins it is necessary for every man to believe with certainty and without any hesitation arising from his own weakness and indisposition that his sins are forgiven him, let him be anathema (Canon 13).

If anyone says that man is absolved from his sins and justified because he firmly believes that he is absolved and justified, or that no one is truly justified except him who believes himself justified, and that by this faith alone absolution and justification are effected, let him be anathema (Canon 14).

Eternal salvation is a matter of perseverance in grace and the object of the virtue of hope. Therefore, experiences of grace, for example, spiritual consolations, would not be interpreted as the witness of the Spirit assuring one of salvation. If the assurance of grace is intended to pose the question as to whether one is certain that he or she is in a state of grace, again the answer would be in the negative. That is, it could not be matter of absolute certitude. The same Tridentine decree states:

“For as no pious person ought to doubt the mercy of God, the merit of Christ and the virtue and efficacy of the sacraments, so each one, when he considers himself and his own weakness and indisposition, may have fear and apprehension concerning his own grace, since no one can know with the certainty of faith,

which cannot be subject to error, that he has obtained the grace of God" (Chapter IX).

The only exception would be by a special privilege of revelation. However, one may on the basis of conjecture (not certainty) be assured of receiving divine grace and abiding in it. Thomas Aquinas states: "things are known conjecturally by signs; and thus any one may know he has grace, when he is conscious of delighting in God, and of despising worldly things, and inasmuch as a man is not conscious of any mortal sin." This can even entail "certain sweetness" in spiritual experience although "this knowledge is imperfect" (*Summa Theologiae* IIae. 112.5).

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* in answering this question implicates the difference (although not a necessary separation) between the ontological state of grace and psychological awareness of grace:

"Since it belongs to the supernatural order, grace *escapes our experience* and cannot be known except by faith. We cannot therefore rely on our feelings or our works to conclude that we are justified and saved. However, according to the Lord's words—"Thus you will know them by their fruits"—reflection on God's blessings in our life and in the lives of the saints offers us a guarantee that grace is at work in us and spurs us on to an ever greater faith and an attitude of trustful poverty" (CCC, 2005).

A pleasing illustration of this attitude is found in the reply of St. Joan of Arc to a question posed as a trap by her ecclesiastical judges:

"Asked if she knew that she was in God's grace, she replied: 'If I am not, may it please God to put me in it; if I am, may it please God to keep me there'" (CCC, 2005).

Faith it must be emphasized is a theological virtue supernaturally infused and abiding in the soul amid the consolations and desolations of the spiritual life.

Reformed Statement

Baptism is one of the means by which God assures us of forgiveness and of God's gracious presence in and with us. Reformed Christians hold that, despite our sin, those whose sins are forgiven and who have been made new creatures in Christ may approach God with confidence and assurance. Since no one "loves us more than Jesus Christ," who, being in the form of God, emptied himself and made himself like us (Phil. 2:6-8; Heb. 2:17), was tempted in all things as we are, made a "single offering" that "perfected for all time those who are sanctified," and intercedes on our behalf, we may now have confidence to approach God "with a true heart in full assurance of faith," holding fast "to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who has promised is faithful" (Heb. 4:14-16; 10:14, 19-22). According to Hebrews, "faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1).

The assurance that believers have, like faith itself, is the work of the Holy Spirit: "Our faith and its assurance do not proceed from flesh and blood, that is to say, from natural powers within us, but are the inspiration of the Holy Ghost" (Scots Confession, 3.12). The work of the spirit in people's hearts

functions as a sort of testimony of God's love and forgiveness, thereby providing assurance to God's people: "We are assured of our justification by the testimony of the Holy Spirit" (Evangelical Catechism (UCC), Q. & A. 85).

The assurance believers have is an important part of true faith: "True faith is not only a knowledge and conviction that everything God reveals in his Word is true; it is also a deep-rooted assurance, created in me by the Holy Spirit through the gospel, that, out of sheer grace earned for us by Christ, not only others, but I too, have had my sins forgiven, have been made forever right with God, and have been granted salvation" (Heidelberg Catechism, Q. & A. 21).

God has instituted sacraments as means for assuring us of forgiveness and of God's gracious presence in and with us: "The sacraments are visible words which uniquely assure and confirm that no matter how greatly I may have sinned, Christ died also for me, and comes to live in me and with me" (PCUSA Study Catechism of 1998, Q. & A. 69). In the end, however, neither the minister nor the sacrament of baptism confers grace; rather, "our Lord gives what the sacrament signifies — namely the invisible gifts and graces," cleansing us of sin, renewing and filling our hearts with comfort, "giving us true assurance of his fatherly goodness," and replacing our sinful self with a new self (Belgic Confession, art. 34).

The assurance of salvation that believers have, then, "comes not by inquisitive searching into the hidden and deep things of God, but by noticing within themselves, with spiritual joy and holy delight, the unmistakable fruits of election pointed out in God's Word — such as a true faith in Christ, a childlike fear of God, a godly sorrow for their sins, a hunger and thirst for righteousness, and so on" (Canons of Dort, I, art. 12). As God's people receive this assurance, they have "greater cause to humble themselves before God, to adore the fathomless depth of his mercies, to cleanse themselves, and to give fervent love in return to him who first so greatly loved them" (Canons of Dort, I, art. 13).

God provides assurance to believers to the end that they will not only know forgiveness, but also have courage, comfort, and hope in serving God: "God promises to all who trust in the gospel forgiveness of sins and fullness of grace, courage in the struggle for justice and peace, the presence of the Holy Spirit in trial and rejoicing, and eternal life in that kingdom which has no end" (Statement of Faith of the United Church of Christ, adapted by Robert Moss).

6. Pastoral Recommendations: Tangible Expressions of Mutual Recognition of Baptism

Reformed-Roman Catholic Dialogue

1. In our Agreement, we have given the grounds for formal mutual recognition of the validity of our baptisms. The following are recommended to the consideration of our communions on the basis of the ecumenical commitments that bring us to the dialogue table. *It is understood that these recommendations should be implemented in accordance with existing regulations.*

2. We recommend that our local communities maintain the custom of keeping baptismal records and providing baptismal certificates when requested at various times in the Christian life of our members. Compatibility in the form and content of these documents would be sign of ecumenical cooperation and a safeguard of the validity of what we celebrate together as Christians.
3. We recommend that prominence be given to the placement of the baptismal font and water near the worshipping assembly as a sign of continuity in faith.
4. We recommend the practice of inviting members of our respective communions to reaffirm their Baptism together at times of prayer for Christian unity.
5. We recommend, where the custom of baptismal sponsors, witnesses, or godparents has been maintained, that these be selected from our respective communities of faith as a sign that Christians belonging to our communions are truly members of the Body of Christ. This is particularly important when welcoming interchurch families and their congregations to a celebration of Baptism.
6. We recommend the active participation of the families of those to be baptized in the selection of readings, intercessory prayers, and music as a way of giving tangible evidence of the unity that we share in Christ.
7. Mindful that the active participation of clergy and laity of the respective communions of the spouses is at present allowed in interchurch weddings, we also recommend the practice of inviting clergy or lay guests to offer prayers, proclaim a Scripture reading, preach, and/or confer a blessing in the rite of Baptism, maintaining respect for the rites of each communion.
8. We recommend the participation of clergy in local ministerial associations in order to facilitate the pastoral dialogues that need to take place to foster ecumenical cooperation at Baptism and at other important times in the faith journeys of Christians. Ministerial associations can be a means for fostering life-long spiritual accompaniment in faith both for clergy and for the laity whom they serve. In addition, such associations may find other creative symbolic ways to foster ecumenical sharing in a town, neighborhood, or village.
9. At the funeral rites of members of our communions, including other Christians with whom we are in ecumenical dialogue, we recommend the use of a prayer or rite (e.g. sprinkling of the casket, the white pall, etc.) as a final commendation that calls to mind the enduring gift of grace received in Baptism.
10. We recommend the use of those liturgical options already available in our official ritual books for the celebration of Baptism that enhance ecumenical awareness on the local level.
11. Mindful that in many instances local congregations may not be able to implement all these recommendations at the present time, we

recommend a patient and prudent process of discernment among laity and clergy. We recognize that the journey towards full, visible unity depends on openness to the grace of God and humility before the initiatives of God's Spirit among us, which are themselves based on Baptism. Let us above all work to promote the works of charity and service not only to those who are of the household of the faith, but also to all people and to all of creation.

7. Endnotes:

ⁱ For more detailed description of the history that follows, see Maxwell Johnson, *The Rites of Christian Initiation: Their Evolution and Interpretation* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1999) and Edward Yarnold, S.J., *The Awe-Inspiring Rites of Initiation: The Origins of the R.C.I.A.* 2d ed. (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1994).

ⁱⁱ See John Riggs, unpublished paper, July 2006, p. 4.

ⁱⁱⁱ See H.O. Old, *The Shaping of the Reformed Baptismal Rite in the Sixteenth Century* (Eerdmans, 1992), 178.

^{iv} J.D.C. Fisher, "Initiation: Lutheran, Anglican and Reformed Rites," in *The Study of Liturgy*, revised edition (1992), 155-157. The following historical summary is informed in part by Fisher's essay.

^v The resulting simple three part structure was:
cleansing—signation—flood prayer
exorcism—reading of Mark 10:13-16—Lord's Prayer
renunciation—profession—baptism—Lord's Prayer.

Afterward, the child is vested in a white robe. For Luther's rites, see *Luther's Works* 53 (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1965), 106-109 or J.D.C. Fisher, *Christian Initiation: The Reformation Period* (London: SPCK, 1970), 6-16 and 23-25. See also John Riggs, *Baptism in the Reformed Tradition: An Historical and Practical Theology* (Westminster John Knox, 2002), 11-13.

^{vi} His order was as follows:

"Our help is in the name of the Lord . . ."
Presentation and naming of the child
Prayer for faith and regeneration (partly based on Luther's flood prayer)
Reading of Mark 10:13-16
Naming (again) and baptism in the triune name
Clothing in white robe
Benediction [Fisher, 129-131.]

^{vii} It followed this order:

Presentation
Invitation to prayer
Lord's Prayer
Apostles' Creed
Prayer for the gift of faith and for regeneration
Reading of Mark 10:13-16
Exhortation on the gospel
Charge to the godparents to "teach this child Christian order, discipline and fear of God"
Naming of the child and baptism in the triune name (pouring)
Benediction ["A Rite of Baptism, Used at Strassburg, 1525-1530," in Fisher, 34-37.]

^{viii} His order was as follows:

Invocation "Our help is in the name of the Lord . . ."
Presentation
Baptismal exhortation, including reference to John 3 (Jesus' words to Nicodemus), an outline of the plan of redemption, and discussion of the meaning of baptism (with emphasis on washing rather than death and resurrection). Calvin discusses baptism as a sure witness of both justification and sanctification, suggesting that baptism applies to us the benefits of Christ's death and resurrection. The exhortation concludes with a discussion of infant baptism, including Matthew's version of the blessing of the children (Matt. 19:13-15)

Invocation followed by Lord's Prayer (no reference to water)
Admonition to the godparents, including paraphrase of the creed
Baptism in the triune name.
Benediction

[See Fisher essay in *The Study of Liturgy*, 156-157; Fisher, *Christian Initiation*, 113-117; H.O. Old, *The Shaping of the Reformed Baptismal Rite in the Sixteenth Century* (Eerdmans, 1992), 172.]

^{ix} Knox's order was as follows:

Presentation

Exhortation, beginning with defense of infant baptism (including references to circumcision, as well as scriptural allusions to 1 Cor. 7:14 and Mark 10), and then proceeding to clarify that baptism is not necessary for salvation, yet performed out of obedience to Christ's command to teach us that Christ's blood washes away sins and signifies regeneration.

Admonition to parents (and godparents) to raise the baptized child in the faith

Profession of faith by father (or godfather), using Apostles' Creed

Prayer that God will sanctify and receive the infant into "the number of thy children," come to full mature confession of faith, and after death be received into heaven. This prayer concludes with the Lord's Prayer.

Baptism in the triune name

Post-baptismal prayer giving thanks for God's goodness and praying for continued favor toward us, and "tuition and defence" of the infant baptized that by the "holy sprite, working in his harte" s/he may "so prevayle against Satan, that in the end, obeynting the victorie, he may be exalted into the libertie of thy kingdome."

[See William D. Maxwell, *The Liturgical Portions of the Genevan Service Book* (Faith Press, 1965), 105-120.]

^x It has the following structure:

Instruction on the meaning of baptism, including the themes of cleansing from sin, adoption into the covenant, and call to live in obedience to God

Invocation (Luther's flood prayer from 1523)

Address to the parents, including promise to teach the faith to the children

Baptism in the triune name

Prayer of thanksgiving

["Baptism of Children" from CRCNA Baptism forms.]

^{xi} The outline of the service is as follows:

Presentation of the child by the father (or other Christian friend)

Instruction on the meaning of baptism "touching on the Institution, Nature, Use, and ends of this

Sacrament" including the several things signified and sealed by it: "that it is a Seale of the Covenant of Grace, of our Ingrafting into Christ, and of our Union with him, of Remission of Sins, Regeneration, Adoption, and Life eternall." The instruction goes on to explain the reasons for infant baptism (as did the 16th C rites), the responsibilities of the baptized to "fight against the Devill, the World and the Flesh," cautions against tying the grace of baptism to the moment of its administration, and denies that baptism is necessary for salvation.

Admonition of the congregation to "looke back to their Baptisme; to repent of their seins against their covenant with God; to stir up their faith; to improve and make the right use of their baptisme; and of the Covenant, sealed thereby betwixt God and their soules."

Exhortation of the parent to bring up the child in the Christian religion, requiring a "solemn promise for the performance of his duty."

Scriptural institution

Prayer "for sanctifying the Water to this spirituall use." The prayer includes petition that God would join the baptism of the Spirit with the baptism of water, making the sacrament a seal of all the promises mentioned in the instruction. Specific mention of water in the prayer does not appear in the American adaptation of the Directory (1788), nor in Presbyterian baptismal liturgies, until the late 20th C. An exception is Charles Shields' 1864 publication of the 1661 BCP, which apparently did enjoy usage in some American Presbyterian churches in the 19th C.

Baptism in the name of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost by pouring or sprinkling.

Prayer of thanksgiving. Includes thanksgiving for God's faithfulness and graciousness as well as prayer that the one baptized will be received by God into "his fatherly tuition and defence," so that if the child dies in infancy, God will receive him into glory, and if the child should live, that God will "make his Baptisme effectual to him . . . that by faith he may prevail against the devil, the world, and the flesh." This prayer echoes the language of Knox's post-baptismal prayer. [*The Westminster Directory being A Directory for the Publique Worship of God in the Three Kingdomes* (1644), with an introduction by Ian Breward (Grove Books, 1980), 19-21.]

xii Hall, 74.

xiii See Hall, 125.

xiv Charles Shields, ed., *The Book of Common Prayer and Administration of the Sacraments and other rites and ceremonies of the church as amended by the Presbyterian Divines in the Royal Commission of 1661 and in Agreement with the Directory for Public Worship of the Presbyterian Church in the United States* (New York: Randolph & Co., 1864)

xv The UPNA was a smaller Presbyterian denomination that united with the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. to form the UPCUSA in 1957. The UPCUSA united with the Presbyterian Church in the United States in 1983 to form the current PC(USA). See Hall, 280.

xvi Hall, 218 n. 109, and 220.

xvii Hall, 217-218.

xviii On this other hand, this was not a universal movement; the 1868 UPNA Directory, e.g., significantly abbreviated the texts of their earlier Directory, removing all prayer instructions and condensing the exhortations.

xix For more on Nevin and Mercersburg, see John Williamson Nevin, *The Anxious Bench* (1843) in *Catholic and Reformed: Selected Theological Writings of John Williamson Nevin*, Eds. Charles Yrigoyen, Jr. & George Briker (Pittsburgh: The Pickwick Press, 1978) 17-126 and "Editorial Introduction to Vindication of the Revised Liturgy" and "Vindication of the Revised Liturgy (1867)" in *Catholic and Reformed*, 311-403. Secondary sources include D.G. Hart, *John Williamson Nevin: High Church Calvinist* (Phillipsburg NJ: P & R Publishing, 2005); Richard E. Wentz, *John Williamson Nevin: American Theologian* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1997); Sam Hamstra, Jr. "Nevin on Regeneration" in *Reformed Confessionalism in Nineteenth-Century America*. Eds. Sam Hamstra, Jr. & Arie J. Griffioen (Lanham MA: The American Theological Association, 1995) 153-167; and John B. Payne, "Nevin on Baptism" in *Reformed Confessionalism in Nineteenth-Century America*, 125-151.

xx See Hall, 281f. Shields, however, shows another Reformed response, including a prayer to sanctify the water in both the infant and adult rites of baptism.

xxi The 1906 form for baptism of infants has the following structure:

Prayer of thanksgiving for the covenant and for appointing the sacrament of baptism to be its sign and seal and petition to receive it with true faith
Instruction on the doctrine of baptism
Vows by parents
Baptism in the triune name
Prayer of thanksgiving and intercessions for child, parents, and all children of the]
Church, concluding with Lord's Prayer

xxii Sid Fowler, "A Tipping Point: Forming a United Church of Christ Order of Baptism," unpublished paper prepared for the U.S. Reformed-Roman Catholic Dialogue, April 11, 2005.

xxiii The introduction to the order for baptism in the UCC Book of Worship says, "Water is an essential element of baptism. Its presence and use should be boldly dramatized in the service." [*Book of Worship* (1986): 130.]

xxiv The 1968 order for baptism of infants is as follows:

Words of institution (Matt. 28:18-20)
Instruction on the meaning of the sacrament (revision of 1906)
Prayer of thanksgiving for the covenant and petition to sanctify the sacrament to be the sign and seal of that covenant. Includes also self-offering of congregation
Apostles' Creed
Vows by Parents
Vows by Congregation
Baptism in triune name
[Optional declaration that the child is received into the church]
Prayer of thanksgiving and intercession for child and parents

- ^{xv} Words of institution (Matt. 28:18-20)
 Statement of scriptural promises (Gen 17:7, Jer. 31:33-34, Matt. 26:28, Acts 2:38-39, 2 Tim. 2:11-12)
 Instruction on the meaning of the sacrament
 Prayer of preparation, including references to flood, exodus, and Jesus' baptism, and prayer for faith and hope in the promises
 Vows by Parents
 Vows by Congregation
 [Mark 10:14]
 Baptism in triune name
 Hymn
 Prayer of thanksgiving and intercession for parents, congregation, and child
- ^{xvi} See "Changes in CRC Baptismal Rites", unpublished paper by Lyle D. Bierma and Ronald J. Feenstra, April 1, 2005.
- ^{xvii} The RCA form is as follows:
 Words of institution
 Statement on the meaning of baptism
 Presentation
 Vows (renunciations and affirmations)
 Vows by the congregation
 Apostles' Creed
 Prayer of Thanksgiving, including references to creation, flood, exodus, and baptism of Jesus and prayer for the Holy Spirit to be poured out
 [optional statement at the baptism of children]
 Baptism in the triune name
 Declaration and blessing (statement of receiving the baptized into the church)
 Prayer of thanksgiving and intercession for the baptized
 Welcome and blessing by the congregation
- The CRC structure follows:
 Words of institution
 The Covenant of Baptism
 God's covenant promises (including several options, all attending to a broad range of baptismal meanings)
 Prayer of thanksgiving, including references to creation, flood, exodus, and Jesus' baptism, and prayer for faith
 Our covenant promises
 Promises by parents OR renunciations and affirmations by adults
 Creed
 Baptism in the triune name
 Blessing, including prayer of thanksgiving and intercession for God's nurture of the baptized
 Welcome, including congregational promise
- ^{xviii} The outline is as follows: "commitments and vows"; prayer; the act of baptizing with water and the triune name; "other actions," including blessing and optional anointing; and welcoming. The expansion of the prayer may be the most significant development in this rite, including thanksgiving for God's covenant faithfulness; praise for God's reconciling acts; and petition "that the Holy Spirit attend and empower the Baptism, make the water a water of redemption and rebirth, equip the church for faithfulness." [W-3.3604c]
- ^{xix} Directory for Worship, W-3.3603.

8. Resources:

Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry. Faith and Order Paper #111. Geneva: WCC, 1982.

The Book of Confessions. Part 1 of The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Louisville: Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), 2002.

Brownson, James V. *The Promise of Baptism: An Introduction to Baptism in Scripture and the Reformed Tradition*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, forthcoming.

Ecumenical Creeds and Reformed Confessions. Grand Rapids: CRC Publications, 1988.

Nevin, John W. *The Mystical Presence: a Vindication of the Reformed or Calvinistic Doctrine of the Holy Eucharist*. Edited by Augustine Thompson. New York: Lippincott, 1846. Reprint, Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2000.

Riggs, John W. *Baptism in the Reformed Tradition*. Louisville: WJK, 2002.

Vanderzee, Leonard J. *Christ, Baptism and the Lord's Supper: Recovering the Sacraments for Evangelical Worship*. Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004.

^{xxx} The CRCNA alone has "into" rather than "in": "I baptize you *into* the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."

MAJOR CONFSSIONAL STATEMENTS IN ENGLISH TRANSLATION

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Appendix E

This Bread Of Life: Report Of The United States Roman Catholic-Reformed Dialogue On The Eucharist/Lord's Supper (November 2010)

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Section 1: General Introduction

In the groundbreaking ecumenical document, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (1982), the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches declared as its aim “to proclaim the oneness of the Church of Jesus Christ and to call the churches to the goal of visible unity in one faith and one eucharistic fellowship, expressed in worship and common life in Christ, in order that the world might believe.”¹ Similarly, the Roman Catholic Church, in the Vatican Council document *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, December 4, 1963) listed as two of its aims “to encourage whatever can promote the union of all who believe in Christ; [and] to strengthen whatever serves to call all of humanity into the church’s fold.”² In pursuit of these noble goals, we offer this report from the seventh round of dialogue between the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and four denominations in the Reformed tradition: the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRC), the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A. (PC(USA)), the Reformed Church in America (RCA), and the United Church of Christ (UCC).

This round of dialogue began with a discussion of the sacrament of baptism (2003-2007), which resulted in the report, “These Living Waters: Common Agreement on Mutual Recognition of Baptism.”³ The present document concludes this round of ecumenical discussion with its report on the second part of the dialogue (2007-2010), which focused on what is commonly called the Eucharist in the Roman Catholic tradition and the Lord’s Supper or Holy Communion in the Reformed tradition. We hope that this report is read by and benefits church leaders, pastors, ministers, seminarians, and parishioners. We offer the report with the prayer that it will serve to draw our communions closer to lived unity within the Body of Christ.

1a: Scope of the Dialogue on Eucharist/Lord’s Supper

As we affirmed in our earlier report on baptism, “Baptism is the sacramental gateway into the Christian life, directed toward the fullness of faith and discipleship in

Christ.”⁴ Together we understand that the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper/Eucharist nourishes believers to live their baptismal identity and commitment throughout their lives.

At the outset of our dialogue on the Eucharist/Lord’s Supper, we agreed that we would broaden our discussion to include key themes beyond those commonly considered. Many previous ecumenical discussions of the Eucharist/Lord’s Supper have focused on the issues of the “*real presence*” of Christ in the sacrament and on *sacrifice* and *offering*, since these have tended to be areas of greatest divergence.

While we realize that the presence of Christ and sacrifice/offering are critical themes needing our attention (and, indeed, they will be thoroughly

¹ *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, Faith and Order Paper, no. 111 (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1982), viii.

² No. 1 in *Vatican Council II: Constitutions, Decrees, Declarations* (Northport, NY: Costello, 1996), 117.

³ “These Living Waters: Common Agreement on Mutual Recognition of Baptism” (report prepared during the seventh round of the United States Catholic-Reformed dialogue, 2008).

⁴ “These Living Waters,” 5.

discussed), we came to understand that there is a richness to be uncovered by broadening our dialogue to include *epiclesis* (invoking the action of the Holy Spirit), *anamnesis* (the act of remembering), and *discipleship* (the response-action of believers).⁵ Furthermore, as we developed all five themes, we discovered that they are not isolated but closely interconnected. Taken together, these themes offer a rich approach to the sacrament that points to a felicitous degree of ecumenical convergence.

It is our hope that this report fairly represents each dialogue partner's understanding of the Eucharist/Lord's Supper, and clearly states both points of agreement and those needing further dialogue. We recognize that there are other critical issues (e.g., ecclesiology, orders, actual divergence in practice) related to the sacrament. However, time and the mandate given to us by our respective churches have led us to limit our focus to these five themes. It is our prayerful expectation that future dialogue will be able to address these other significant issues.

1b: Brief History and Development of the Sacrament

There is much documentation concerning the development of the ritual shape of the Eucharist/Lord's Supper across the centuries. This development shows increased understanding through ritual experience of and theological reflection on the meaning of the sacrament. It is not our intent to present this development in detail here. However, we believe it will be helpful to outline in broad strokes the development of the sacrament, for this not only points to a common early tradition we all share, but it also provides the basis on which we have structured the body of this report.

Earliest Practice

Both scriptural and extra-scriptural evidence suggests that the earliest celebrations of the Lord's Supper/Eucharist were simple "family" gatherings of about thirty to fifty people held in the larger homes of wealthier community members who were able to accommodate these numbers. In response to Jesus' command to "do this in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19), this shared meal ended with the blessing, breaking, and giving of bread and the blessing and passing of the cup (1 Corinthians 11:20-22). On the one hand, this meal was a continuation of the table fellowship so central to Jesus' whole ministry, and, on the other hand, in some of the Gospels it was unmistakably linked to the Jewish Passover celebration.

In addition to the significance of the meal as a response to Christ's command to celebrate in a remembrance of him, these gatherings were also significant because all present were to be regarded as equals, regardless of their economic or social rank. Social distinctions were abolished through baptism into Christ, and thus could have no place at the communion meal. Hence

⁵ Significant scholarly work in recent decades by both Protestants and Roman Catholics has led to a new appreciation of the work of the Spirit in the Eucharist (especially with respect to the *epiclesis*) and to a richer understanding of the role of remembering (*anamnesis*) in Jewish and early Christian praying. These developments have led to liturgical changes in all of our communions and prompted the decision to incorporate these two themes so prominently in this report.

Paul was dismayed at the behavior of the Corinthian community, where some had their fill while others were shamed and went hungry.⁶

The late first-century *Didache*⁷ indicates that the Christian community gathered on the Lord's Day (14:1), and this gathering included confession of sins (4:14; 14:1), reconciliation with neighbors (14:2), and making memorial of the Lord's sacrifice.⁸ From this early, simple description of the Supper as a memorial of the Lord's sacrifice celebrated in the context of a household meal, sacramental theology and practice developed. Already in apostolic times, we find leadership roles emerging—apostles, overseers (*episkopoi*), presbyters, and deacons—all of which helped order the social and liturgical life of the early Christian communities. It is probable that by the turn of the first century (or shortly thereafter) this simple household meal had already begun to find structure as a eucharistic ritual, the main components of which are still recognizable today.

Second to Fourth Centuries

A number of changes took place during the period from the second to the fourth centuries. These changes continued to move the sacrament away from a simple, though structured, shared meal toward a more formal ritual. The meeting place changed from family homes to house churches as Christian communities began to buy property and own buildings dedicated to worship and other activities of the community. The meeting time changed from the evening meal on the Sabbath to sunrise on the Lord's Day, reflecting a strong resurrection motif. During this period, the following liturgical structure began to emerge: Scripture is read "as long as time allows," after which the "president in a discourse admonishes and exhorts [us] to imitate these good things"; prayers are offered and gifts are presented; the president offers prayers and thanksgiving, followed by distribution of the communion elements; the elements are taken by deacons to those who are absent; and a collection from the wealthy is taken up and given to the president who helps those in need.⁹ In this collection for the poor as an element of the rite, we note an ongoing concern that participation in the Lord's Supper include the community's caring for those in need. By mid-second century, therefore, four main components of the liturgy were already in place: introductory rites, word, sacrament, and dismissal, which included a collection for the poorer members of the community.

Fourth Century and the Classical Structure of the Eucharist Liturgy

Emperor Constantine's Edict of Milan (313 AD), which ended the era of persecution, made possible a flurry of developments in Christian worship. As Christian communities grew, they needed larger buildings and churches

⁶ 1 Corinthians 11:20-22.

⁷ While scholars disagree as to the exact date, most would agree that the *Didache* was redacted in the middle of the second century from previously existing manuscripts dating from the late first and early second centuries.

⁸ *Didache* XIV, in J. Stevenson, ed., *A New Eusebius*, 6th ed. (London: SPCK, 1975), 129. Sections IX and X of the *Didache* show us something of the kind of text that was used for the liturgy.

⁹ Justin Martyr, *First Apology*, 67:3-7, in *Prayers of the Eucharist: Early and Reformed*, trans. and ed. R. C. D. Jasper and G. J. Cuming, 3rd ed. (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1987).

began to be constructed—at first along the lines of a typical basilica, the standard architecture for public buildings at that time. With the growth of the Church came also growth in the number of distinct Christian communities (for example, Greek, Latin, Syriac). While there were unique features in the celebration of the sacrament in each of these diverse communities, certain key elements were practiced in common:

- introductory rites
- proclamation of the word and preaching
- prayers of the faithful
- presentation and preparation of gifts (done in silence)
- prayer over the offerings
- *lavabo* (hand washing)
- kiss of peace
- reading of names of the living and dead (diptychs)
- the eucharistic prayer or great thanksgiving consisting of
 - introductory dialogue
 - preface
 - *epiclesis* (over the gifts as well as the assembly)
 - institution narrative
 - *anamnesis* (remembering)
 - offering
 - intercessions
 - doxology
 - the recitation of the Lord’s Prayer by all
 - the breaking of the bread and mingling of the elements
 - preparation for and invitation to Communion
 - distribution of the elements
 - concluding blessing and dismissal

There are three key points to note about the development of sacramental practice and theology through the first several centuries of the Church’s life. First, while prayers and actions were added, the basic shape of the sacramental rite remained the same. Second, the sacrament was understood theologically predominantly as a memorial of the sacrifice of Christ. Third, the Eucharist/Lord’s Supper was seen as transforming the assembly into being more perfect members of the Body of Christ. St. Augustine says it eloquently (Sermon 272):

If you are to understand what it means to be the Body of Christ, hear what Paul has to say: “Now you are the Body of Christ and individually members of it” (1 Corinthians 12:27). If you are the Body of Christ and members of it, then it is that mystery which is placed on the Lord’s table: you receive the mystery, which is to say the Body of Christ, your very self. You answer Amen to who you are and in the answer you embrace yourself. You hear Body of Christ and answer Amen. Be a member of Christ’s body, that your Amen will be true.¹⁰

¹⁰ Joyce Ann Zimmerman, C.P.P.S., *Liturgy as Living Faith: A Liturgical Spirituality* (Scranton: University of Scranton Press; London and Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1993), 101; translation author’s.

Participation in the Lord's Supper carried an ethical mandate to live as Jesus did, with particular concern for those who are poor and oppressed.

This review of the first four centuries of practice and theological perspective on the Lord's Supper provides a common foundation for the shape of this dialogue and the convergences that have emerged. Between the fourth and sixteenth centuries there were, of course, many further developments in practice and theology related to the Lord's Supper. For our purposes, we have chosen not to review these intervening centuries, but rather to move directly to the sixteenth century in which emerged critical historical and ongoing divergences concerning the sacrament between Roman Catholics and the Reformed churches. These divergences have necessarily given shape to our dialogue.

The Reformation and Beyond

In the 16th century both Reformed and Roman Catholic reformers attempted to address liturgical, theological, and practical concerns, but they did so in different manners. The Reformed reformers¹¹ believed that theological errors had crept into the celebration of the sacrament over the course of the centuries, such as a false understanding of the ordained ministry, of the Mass as a re-sacrifice, and of the real presence of Christ in the elements of bread and wine as expressed in the doctrine of transubstantiation. They also perceived certain abuses in the practice of the sacrament, such as private Masses and communion in which believers received only the bread. In response to these concerns, the Reformers simplified the structure of the liturgy, emphasizing the importance of worthy reception of the sacrament by the baptized and stressing the Lord's Supper as a remembrance of Christ's sacrifice and not an actual re-offering of it to God the Father. Meanwhile, at the Council of Trent (1545-1563), the Roman Catholic Church attempted to clarify and thus define what it believed. Theological and ecclesial differences, therefore, created intense conflict between the Roman Catholic Church and the churches of the Reformation, with each side defining its practice and theology of the sacrament explicitly in opposition to the other.

Since the period of the Reformation, both Roman Catholics and Protestants have gone through periods of renewed understanding and practice of the sacrament. Liturgical renewal, began already in the mid-eighteenth century in the Roman Catholic liturgical movement, was manifest in the mid-nineteenth century, for example, in the Protestant Mercersburg movement,¹² and culminated in the twentieth century at the Catholic Second Vatican Council. These developments breathed new life into the celebration of the liturgy for Reformed and Roman Catholic Christians and created convergences in practice. Additionally, twentieth century ecumenical dialogue has prompted us to re-examine our histories, traditions, and rites in search of common roots, and made us mindful of how sixteenth century conflicts have disproportionately focused on our differences. Both Protestants and Roman Catholics have ardently sought to develop a new perspective on the old conflicts so that mutual understanding can be achieved and our unity in

¹¹ Hereafter, the "Reformed reformers" will be referred to as the "Reformers."

¹² A "high church" confessional and liturgical renewal movement led by Philip Schaff and John W. Nevin at the German Reformed seminary in Mercersburg, Pennsylvania.

Christ advanced. Through this particular dialogue, we have come to a new appreciation of what the Lord has given us in the sacrament—the very gift of Christ, ever present to us and for us through the Holy Spirit, the source of our unity and common life as disciples of Christ.

1c: Design of This Report

In the body of this report we present the Reformed and the Roman Catholic theologies and practices of the Lord's Supper/Eucharist with attention to five major themes: 1) *Epiclesis*—Action of the Spirit; 2) *Anamnesis*—Remembering; 3) Presence of Christ; 4) Offering and Sacrifice; and, 5) Discipleship. As will be seen below, these themes are marvelously interconnected. Beginning with the invocation of the Holy Spirit (*epiclesis*), we remember God's mighty deeds (*anamnesis*), are attentive to the presence of Christ, offer ourselves with Christ as holy and living sacrifices, and are impelled to live the Eucharist/Lord's Supper in our daily journey to follow Christ faithfully as his disciples. Underlying and connecting all of these themes is the Reformed and Roman Catholic common emphasis on believers' mystical union with Christ.

Following the individual sections on the Lord's Supper/Eucharist from our respective traditions, we present the convergences, divergences, and mutual appreciations that have emerged from our focus on the five themes above. In the conclusion, we articulate the implications of our dialogue for pastoral practice, and highlight those areas of theology and practice that are in need of further dialogue among our communions. We have also appended a chart in which our liturgies/rites for the Eucharist/Lord's Supper are presented side by side. This chart demonstrates the significant parallels in our celebrations of the sacrament that have emerged as we have sought to recover our common roots in the historic practices of the Church catholic.

We acknowledge, of course, with sadness, longing, and hope, that as Reformed and Roman Catholic Christians we do not presently celebrate fully the Eucharist/Lord's Supper at a common Table. The reasons for this are complex and deeply embedded in our distinctive histories and theologies. The goal of this report is not to explore or provide explanations for the present situation. It is rather to present as clearly as we can an account of Roman Catholic and Reformed understandings and practices of the Eucharist/Lord's Supper, so that we might grow in mutual understanding, affirm what we hold in common, and invite our communions to remain committed to the process of dialogue on this and other matters of critical significance as we seek to make visible the gift of our unity in Christ.

Section 2: Perspectives on Five Themes for Eucharist/Lord's Supper

2a: A Reformed Perspective on the Five Themes

Sources

To discuss the doctrine of the Lord's Supper in the Reformed confessions and liturgies is a complex undertaking, since the Reformed and Presbyterian tradition has never had a single confession or body of confessions, or liturgies to which all its denominations subscribe. Further, each of our denominations has other constitutional sources (e.g. books of church order) that ground our practices of the Lord's Supper. Therefore, we will limit ourselves

here to those confessions recognized in some way by the four Reformed denominations participating in this round of dialogue; we will draw on our several liturgies for the Supper, and use other constitutional sources from our particular Reformed traditions. Current liturgies for the Lord's Supper for each of our communions are appended to the document in parallel form with one of the Eucharistic Rites from the *Roman Missal*.

The primary or baseline confession will be the Heidelberg Catechism of 1563—for three reasons. First, the Catechism is a kind of “ecumenical” Reformed confession, designed to represent and promote theological consensus among the Bullingerian, Calvinist, and Melancthonian parties in the German Palatinate of the 1560s.¹³ Second, the Catechism is still perhaps the most widely loved and used Reformed catechism in the world today. Finally, it is the only common confessional statement among the four Reformed denominations in this dialogue. The other confessions we have consulted, and the denominations in the dialogue that recognize them as authoritative sources,¹⁴ are as follows:

- Scots Confession, 1560 (PC(USA))
- Belgic Confession, 1561 (RCA, CRCNA)
- Second Helvetic Confession, 1566 (PC(USA))
- Westminster Confession and Catechisms, 1648 (PC(USA))
- Evangelical Catechism, 1929 (UCC)
- Confession of 1967 (PC(USA))
- Our Song of Hope, 1978 (RCA)
- Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony, 1986 (CRCNA)
- Study Catechism 1998 (PC(USA))¹⁵

In addition to these confessional documents, we sometimes also cite the works of theologians like John Calvin who have served as significant interpreters of the Reformed confessional tradition.

Introduction

The Lord's Supper in the Reformed tradition is a repeatable sacrament by means of which the triune God signs and seals to the faithful God's gospel promise.¹⁶ As expressed in our historic confessions, the promise is that “our sins have been completely forgiven” through Jesus Christ,¹⁷ and that “the Holy Spirit grafts us into Christ”¹⁸ so that in this mystical union we might share in “his true body and blood.”¹⁹

¹³ See Lyle D. Bierma, *The Doctrine of the Sacraments in the Heidelberg Catechism: Melancthonian, Calvinist, or Zwinglian?* Studies in Reformed Theology and History, New Series, no. 4. (Princeton: Princeton Theological Seminary, 1999).

¹⁴ The first six of these confessions and catechisms have official or constitutional standing; the last three have been approved for study and use in teaching and worship.

¹⁵ Lyle D. Bierma, “The Lord's Supper in the Reformed Confessions” (paper prepared for the U. S. Catholic-Reformed Dialogue, May 2008), 1.

¹⁶ Heidelberg Catechism, Q & A 66, in *Ecumenical Creeds and Reformed Confessions* (Grand Rapids: Faith Alive, 1988).

¹⁷ Heidelberg Catechism, Q & A 66.

¹⁸ Belgic Confession, Art. 35, in *Ecumenical Creeds and Reformed Confessions* (Grand Rapids: Faith Alive, 1988).

¹⁹ Heidelberg Catechism, Q & A 79.

Historically, our theology and practice of the Lord's Supper have focused on Christ's atoning death. Presently, our Reformed communions celebrate the Supper in remembrance of and in gratitude for Christ's whole life, person, ministry, and work, and in recognition that this Supper is a pledge and foretaste of the eschatological feast that God prepares. Those who partake of the Lord's Supper in faith are granted and assured union with Christ, nourished in their communion with one another as members of the Body of Christ, and called to live in hope and service as Christ's thankful disciples every day.

At the Lord's Supper, the Church gathers to offer its thanksgiving, or Eucharist, and to receive what Christ through the Spirit offers there. At this Table, we acknowledge that Christ is the true host, present as both the giver and the gift. At this Table, we remember the Last Supper, at which Jesus pointed the disciples to his impending death through the signs of bread and wine, but we also remember and give thanks for his incarnation, earthly life and ministry, resurrection, ascension, and present and future reign. At this Table we are mindful of all the tables at which Christ served as host during his lifetime, inviting sinners and all who hunger for righteousness to break bread with him in celebration of the gracious, restorative hospitality of God. We are also mindful that at this Table we share in the joyful, eschatological feast of the people of God who are being drawn by God from east and west, from north and south, to be transformed through true union with the risen Christ and communion with one another in all our rich diversity.²⁰ This mindfulness presses our Reformed communions to consider carefully what it means for the Church to receive all whom God gathers, and to extend Christ's welcome to this Table where he presides as host, offering his own body and blood—his own self—as holy, life-giving, communion-creating sustenance for the world's peoples.

When we gather to celebrate the Lord's Supper in a worship service, we are already responding to the grace of God who has created and called us to this place.²¹ The liturgy begins with our praising God for this abundant goodness. Our acknowledgement of God's goodness and mercy moves us to confess together how far we fall short, and how much we ever stand in need of God's forgiveness in order to approach God at all. God answers our confession with words of pardon and assurance of forgiveness. As those who are forgiven and reconciled in Christ we are made worthy and ready to receive the living Word, first as it is proclaimed and then as it is offered in the sacramental meal.

As the liturgy moves to the proclamation of the Word, by the power of the Spirit we hear what the Lord has to say to us today. Through the accounts of God's dealings with the people of Israel and the early Church, and particularly through the testimonies regarding Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, we encounter again the living Christ. The promises we hear in proclamation

²⁰ Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), *Book of Common Worship* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1993); United Church of Christ, *Book of Worship* (New York: United Church of Christ Office for Church Life and Leadership, 1986), 44.

²¹ Some of our Reformed congregations celebrate the Lord's Supper weekly; others do not. Regardless of whether the Supper is celebrated, we respond to the proclamation of the Word with prayers of thanksgiving (Eucharist), intercession for the Spirit's work in us and the world, and the offering of our gifts and ourselves for God's use in the world.

are then sealed as we come to the Table and receive the signs of bread and wine. In the meal we see and touch the goodness of God in Christ—the same goodness we praise at the opening of worship and hear in the Word proclaimed. From the Table, we intercede for ourselves and the world, and are sent out to proclaim God’s gracious benevolence to the whole world, and with our eyes newly opened to see the goodness of God already at work in all the places into which we are sent.

In what follows, we summarize the Reformed theology of the Lord’s Supper with attention to the five major themes identified earlier: 1) *Epiclesis*—action of the Holy Spirit; 2) *Anamnesis*—remembering; 3) Presence of Christ; 4) Offering and sacrifice; and 5) Discipleship.

***Epiclesis*—Action of the Holy Spirit**

With respect to the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper, the work of the Holy Spirit figures prominently in Reformed confessions and liturgies. It is only because of the mysterious and incomprehensible work of the Holy Spirit that those who come to the Table in faith truly receive the gift that Christ by his Spirit there offers: his true body and blood as spiritual food for the spiritual journey; an ever deeper engrafting, or union, with his mystical body; and a strengthening of faith for service in the Church and the world.

Apart from the work of the Holy Spirit the sacraments have no effect. Concerning the Lord’s Supper and what transpires there, the Scots Confession states:

This union and conjunction which we have with the body and blood of Christ Jesus in the right use of the sacraments *is wrought by means of the Holy Ghost*, who by true faith carries us above all things that are visible, carnal, and earthly, and makes us feed upon the body and blood of Christ Jesus, once broken and shed for us but now in heaven, and appearing for us in the presence of his Father. . . . The Holy Spirit, who can never be separated from the right institution of the Lord Jesus, will not deprive the faithful of the fruit of that mystical action.²²

Likewise, the Belgic Confession asserts that the sacraments are “visible signs and seals . . . by means of which God works in us through the power of the Holy Spirit. So they are not empty and hollow signs to fool and deceive us.”²³ The Reformed tradition confesses that the Spirit labors ceaselessly in the Church through Word and Sacrament and in human hearts to grant faith to those whom God calls. The Spirit is God’s free gift to the Church and is active in the Body of Christ, unbidden. Yet, in their celebrations of the Supper, churches in the Reformed tradition explicitly pray for the Spirit to come and act in the sacrament. Current liturgies in the Reformed communions commonly include an *epiclesis* such as this one from the PC(USA):

²² Scots Confession, Chap. 21, in *The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)*, part 1, *Book of Confessions* (Louisville: Office of the General Assembly, 2002), (emphasis added). See also the Second Helvetic Confession, Chap. 21, in *Book of Confessions*, 5.196; Heidelberg Catechism, Q & A 76, 79; Belgic Confession, Art. 33, 35; Study Catechism 1998, Q & A 67, 78. <http://www.creeds.net/reformed/belonging/catechismconfirmation.pdf>. (August 6, 2010)

²³ Belgic Confession, Art. 33. See also Second Helvetic Confession, Chap. 19, *Book of Confessions*, 5.180-181.

Gracious God, pour out your Holy Spirit upon us and upon these gifts of bread and wine, that the bread we break and the cup we bless may be the communion of the body and blood of Christ. By your Spirit make us one with the living Christ, and with all who are baptized in his name that we may be one in ministry in every place.²⁴

In light of such a prayer, we can ask just what the congregation is bidding the Holy Spirit to do here? What is the action of the Holy Spirit? The short answer is simply, to effect the promise of the sacrament. Calvin writes:

Now, that sacred partaking of his flesh and blood, by which Christ pours his life into us, as if it penetrated into our bones and marrow, Christ testifies and seals to us in the Supper—not by presenting a vain and empty sign, but by *manifesting there the effectiveness of his Spirit* to fulfill what he promises. And truly he offers and shows the reality there signified to all who sit at that spiritual banquet, although it is received with benefit by believers alone, who accept such great generosity with true faith and gratefulness of heart.²⁵

In the sacrament, the “effectiveness of Christ’s Spirit is manifested” with respect to both the signs and those who receive them. Christ has promised, says the Heidelberg Catechism, that “as surely as I receive from the hand of the one who serves and taste with my mouth the bread and cup of the Lord given me as sure signs of Christ’s body and blood, so surely he nourishes and refreshes my soul for eternal life with his crucified body and poured-out blood.”²⁶ According to Calvin, in the sacrament the Spirit *effects* that very promise of Christ, communicating Christ’s body and blood by means of the signs of bread and wine.²⁷ The effectiveness of the Spirit is also manifested among believers who come to the Table insofar as faith is the gift of the Holy Spirit, the gift by which Christ and his benefits are received.²⁸ So by the Spirit, by faith, by the nourishment of our souls in the Supper with Christ’s body and blood, we are ever more deeply engrafted into the mystical Body of Christ so that we may “be the Body of Christ in the world.”²⁹

In the PC(USA)’s Great Thanksgiving prayer cited above, and in similar prayers from the UCC, the Spirit is summoned explicitly upon the people

²⁴ “Great Thanksgiving,” in *Book of Common Worship*, 129.

²⁵ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1559), ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Lewis Ford Battles, 2 vols., The Library of Christian Classics, 20–21 (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), 4.17.10 (emphasis added). Significant phrases in this quotation are as follows in the original Latin text: *et quidem non obiecto inani aut vacuo signo, sed efficaciam spiritus sui illic proferens . . . Et sane rem illic signatam offert et exhibit . . .*

²⁶ See also Belgic Confession, Art. 33, 35.

²⁷ Calvin writes, “For what is the nature of a sacramental union between a thing and its sign? Is it not because the Lord, by the secret power of this Spirit, fulfills what he promises?” *Commentary on the Harmony of the Evangelists, Matthew, Mark, and Luke*, trans. William Pringle (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1846), 3:209.

²⁸ See, e.g., The Second Helvetic Confession, Chap. 21, *Book of Confessions*, 5.200.

²⁹ See n. 28 above.

and upon the gifts of bread and wine. In some of our Reformed churches, the summons for the Spirit is explicit with respect to the people and ambiguous with respect to the elements.³⁰ This reserve likely reflects a liturgical and theological anxiety about the prospect of suggesting that the Holy Spirit somehow “changes” the bread and wine so that they themselves “become” the body and blood of Christ.³¹ Yet even in this form of the *epiclesis*, it cannot be doubted that the bread and wine are taken to be *true* signs—instruments by which Christ through his Spirit works effectually. The action of the Holy Spirit with regard to the sacramental celebration as a whole, which includes both the faithful and the elements, is duly understood.³²

Again, in offering the *epiclesis*, we are praying for the Spirit to effect the promise of the sacrament. Nevertheless, we do not believe that, ultimately, it is *because* the people of God have offered this prayer for the Holy Spirit to act, that the Holy Spirit acts, as if God acted at our behest or fancy. God bestows grace freely and sends the Spirit freely—as God wills, when God wills. This brings us to the more general question, “Why do Christians need to pray at all?” The Heidelberg Catechism answers:

Because prayer is the most important part of the thankfulness God requires of us.

And also because God gives his grace and Holy Spirit only to those who pray continually and groan inwardly asking God for these gifts and thanking him for them.³³

The *epiclesis*, or prayer for the work of the Holy Spirit, is the last rhapsodic movement of the Great Prayer of Thanksgiving. It is, in a strong sense, part of our liturgical thanksgiving. In offering the *epiclesis*, we are indeed “groaning inwardly” to God (Romans 8:23), longing for God to act by the Spirit to effect the sacrament and the sacrament’s benefits for those who partake in faith. We are “groaning inwardly” for God to act as God has promised to act. But we are also expressing our thankfulness to God for having promised certain gifts, namely, *to send* the Spirit, and by the Spirit, *to gift* us with the communion of Christ. We are expressing our thankfulness to God for acting as God promises to act. In all this groaning and thanksgiving, we ultimately

³⁰ The *epiclesis* in the RCA’s liturgy is: “Send your Holy Spirit upon us, we pray, that the bread which we break and the cup which we bless may be to us the communion of the body and blood of Christ.” The *epiclesis* in the CRC’s liturgy is: “Show forth among us the presence of your life-giving Word and Holy Spirit, to sanctify us and your whole church through this sacrament.”

³¹ See e.g., Heidelberg Catechism, Q & A 78.

³² That is, most generally, in the Holy Spirit’s being the bond of our union with Christ by or through whom all the benefits of Christ accrue to us; in the Spirit’s prompting us to “lift up our hearts” and to pray; in the Spirit’s being the one who “brings these things to remembrance and interprets to us the meaning of these events,” thus prompting our *anamnesis* (James B. Torrance, *Worship, Community and the Triune God of Grace* [Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 1996], 86); and in the Spirit’s effecting our communion with Christ and prompting our response of self-offering in return (see e.g., Belgic Confession, Art. 33 and 35, where this may be inferred).

³³ Heidelberg Catechism, Q & A 116.

express our trust in the promise of Christ: “If you ask anything of my Father in my name, he will give it to you” (John 16:23).³⁴

Noteworthy here, especially because it is so central to the Reformed liturgical and theological tradition, is the parallel between the *epiclesis* offered in the Lord’s Supper and the *epiclesis*, or Prayer for Illumination, offered prior to the reading and proclamation of the Word.³⁵ In his liturgy for the Lord’s Day, Calvin instructs that before the sermon a prayer shall be offered by the minister in which “he begs God to grant the gift of the Holy Spirit, in order that his Word may be faithfully expounded to the glory of his name and the edification of the Church, and be received with becoming submission and obedience.”³⁶ One liturgy of the CRC opens such a prayer with: “Almighty God, grant us your Spirit, that we may rightly understand and truly obey your Word of truth.” So the people pray to God with respect to the proclamation of the Word and the communion of the Lord’s Supper, petitioning God to send the Spirit in order that Word³⁷ and Sacrament might be efficacious in the lives of God’s people.³⁸

Anamnesis—Remembering

Since the mid-twentieth century, ecumenical scholarship has recovered the Hebraic and New Testament understanding of *anamnesis* (remembrance), particularly as it relates to the Church’s celebration of the Lord’s Supper. These studies address both the nature and the scope of remembering, and have prompted our Reformed communions to explore our own liturgies and confessional traditions in order to deepen our understanding and practice of remembrance in the Lord’s Supper. The central shift is away from viewing the Supper as a human act of bringing to mind the past event of Christ’s sacrificial death—an act of human memory—toward a recognition that the remembrance that takes place is a making present of and a participation in the person of Christ and his work through the Spirit. Succinctly stated, “The word *anamnesis* . . . does not simply denote recollecting some remote date of

³⁴ Referenced by Heidelberg Catechism, Q & A 117. This theme is also explicated in the treatment of prayer in other Reformed confessions and catechisms, which cite not only John 16:23 but also Mark 11:24 and Matthew 7:7-8. See, e.g., the Westminster Larger Catechism, Q & A 196 (*Book of Confessions*, 7.306), and the Westminster Confession, Chap. 9: “The Holy Spirit, whom the Father is ever willing to give to all who ask him, is the only efficient agent in the application of redemption” (*Book of Confessions*, 6.053; emphasis added).

³⁵ The Reformed tradition has always embraced Calvin’s maxim that “the sacraments have the same office as the Word of God: to offer and set forth Christ to us, and in him the treasures of heavenly grace” (*Institutes*, 4.14.17).

³⁶ Calvin, “Forms of Prayer for the Church,” in *Tracts and Treatises on the Reformation of the Church*, trans. Henry Beveridge, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1958).

³⁷ In terms of preaching, the Reformed tradition understands that the Word is proclaimed by Christ himself through the minister, who is his mouthpiece or instrument. See, e.g. Calvin, *Institutes*, 4.3.1 (in which Calvin speaks of ministers as those who “represent his [Christ’s] person”), 4.8.2., and even 4.14.11. The catechisms and confessions reflect this in their expositions of “The Word of God” or “Holy Scripture.” See, e.g., Second Helvetic Confession, Chap.1, *Book of Confessions*, 5.001ff.

³⁸ Westminster Larger Catechism, Q & A 157, *Book of Confessions*, 7.267. See also the first paragraph under “The Word of God in Proclamation and Sacrament” in the RCA Directory for Worship. <https://www.rca.org/sslpage.aspx?pid=1864> (August 6, 2010).

bygone history. . . . Rather, it means remembering in such a way that we see our participation in the past event and see our destiny and future as bound up with it."³⁹ The Church's act of remembering past, present and future becomes the means by which we realize "our participation and fellowship in . . . Christ [through] the work of the Holy Spirit."⁴⁰

The Reformed tradition has always had a strong sense of remembrance as an essential aspect of the Lord's Supper, which derives from Christ's own words of institution in the gospel accounts of the Last Supper. This emphasis on remembrance, however, has often been understood in a minimalist way as "mere memorial," particularly associated with the theology of Zwingli.⁴¹ "Mere memorial" has been construed as the act of the congregation simply recalling the sacrificial death of Jesus.

Whatever the Reformers meant by remembrance, they certainly did not mean that the benefits of the Supper depended primarily on the congregation's willful acts of memory and devotion. The Reformers and the Reformed confessions make clear that the remembrance that occurs in the Supper is grounded in the action of God, it is the work of the Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit who enables us to realize "our participation and fellowship in the sufferings of Christ. . . . He brings these things to our remembrance and interprets to us the meaning of the events. We remember Christ—yet it is not so much we who remind ourselves of these events, but Jesus Christ, who brings his passion to our remembrance through the Holy Spirit."⁴² In this sense, the Holy Spirit makes the redeeming work of Christ present to the congregation, and communicates here and now the benefits of what has already been accomplished and completed in Christ's once and for all sacrifice on the cross. The *anamnesis* is a re-presentation of Christ and his benefits through Word and sacramental signs in the power of the Spirit. As Calvin describes it, "the bread and wine are visible signs which represent to us the body and the blood. . . . It is therefore for good reason that the bread is called 'body' since not only does it represent it to us, but also presents it."⁴³

Having shown that the fruits of remembrance depend on the Spirit's action in the Supper, we also note that in the Reformed tradition the congregation is not only acted upon but also shares in these acts in the remembrance. Through its participation in the sacramental remembrance and re-presentation of the work of Christ, the congregation submits and opens itself to the

³⁹ Torrance, *Worship*, 84-85.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 86.

⁴¹ Some recent scholars, however, have challenged this characterization of Zwingli's eucharistic theology, suggesting that he was no "mere" memorialist. For instance, Swiss historical theologian Gottfried Locher points out that "for the humanist, Platonizing, student of Augustine, *memoria* ['remembrance'] does not mean a retrospective looking back but a re-presenting, an effective presence of the suffering of the Lord." *Streit unter Gästen* (Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 1972), 10-11. Rereadings of Zwingli by Jaques Courvoisier (*Zwingli: A Reformed Theologian* [Richmond: John Knox, 1963]) and Julius Schweizer (*Reformierte Abendmahlsgestaltung in der Schau Zwinglis* [Basel: Reinhardt, 1954?]) also move beyond the old caricature, enriching contemporary Reformed understandings of *anamnesis*.

⁴² Torrance, *Worship*, 86.

⁴³ John Calvin, "Short Treatise on the Lord's Supper," in *Calvin: Theological Treatises*, trans. and ed. J. K. S. Reid, Library of Christian Classics, vol. 22 (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1965), 147.

work of the Spirit, who makes Christ's one perpetual sacrifice⁴⁴ efficacious for their communal and individual lives. The congregation receives this remembrance as gift and shares in this sacred rehearsal and representation of salvation history. At a deeper level, as we take Christ's body and blood, once offered on the cross for our salvation, "we see ourselves made partakers in it [and] may assuredly conclude that the power of his life-giving death will be efficacious in us."⁴⁵ As the congregation remembers the redeeming work of Christ and communes at the Table, the Spirit nourishes them with Christ's own body and blood, deepens their union with Christ, assures them of their participation in the person and work of Christ, and manifests this participation through their witness and service in the world. As the PC(USA)'s *Directory for Worship* puts it, "In remembering, believers receive and trust the love of Christ present to them and to the world; they manifest the reality of the covenant of grace in reconciling and being reconciled; and they proclaim the power of Christ's reign for the renewal of the world in justice and in peace."⁴⁶

As we consider *what* is being remembered in the Lord's Supper, we will see that our current liturgies and theology expand on the Reformers' overwhelming emphasis on remembering the once for all sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross. The Westminster Confession reflects the core Reformed sense of the Supper, which was "instituted for the perpetual remembrance of the sacrifice of [Christ] himself in his death" for the forgiveness of sin.⁴⁷ In the Reformed understanding of the Supper, the re-presentation of Christ's death is not a re-sacrifice. Rather, Christ gives himself in the present "as the one who has already given himself to us, unsurpassably, in his life, death and resurrection."⁴⁸ This sacramental self-giving "does not repeat the unrepeatable, but it does attest what it mediates, and mediate what it attests—the one whole Jesus Christ, who in his . . . humanity, his body and blood, is at once both the Giver and the Gift."⁴⁹

This focus on remembering in the Supper Christ's perfect, once for all sacrifice for the sin of the whole world testifies to the Reformed tradition's recognition of the pervasive, devastating reality of human sin, the inability of human beings to free themselves from their sin and guilt, and the immensity of God's grace in overcoming sin and restoring relationship in Christ, through the Spirit. Without losing this central focus, recent scholarship has broadened our sense of *anamnesis* in the Lord's Supper and is reflected in the most recent communion liturgies of our Reformed churches. This is exemplified in one of the prayers of the PC(USA) as it moves from opening thanks to God for creation, through the *Sanctus*, to a full recounting of Jesus' ministry:

⁴⁴ John Calvin, "Catechism of the Church in Geneva," in *Calvin: Theological Treatises*, trans. by J.K.S. Reid, Library of Christian Classics, XXII (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1965), 137. This language of "the one perpetual sacrifice" allows us to talk about remembrance in a way that recognizes our participation in Christ's sacrifice here and now. Christ is not re-sacrificed. Rather, the effects of his sacrifice are perpetually realized in the Supper, through the Holy Spirit.

⁴⁵ Calvin, *Institutes*, 4.17.1.

⁴⁶ *Directory for Worship*, W-2.4004.

⁴⁷ Westminster Confession, Chap. 31/29, *Book of Confessions*, 6.161.

⁴⁸ George Hunsinger, "The Dimension of Depth: Thomas F. Torrance on the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 54, no. 2 (2001): 170.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

He lived as one of us, knowing joy and sorrow. He healed the sick, fed the hungry, opened blind eyes, broke bread with outcasts and sinners, and proclaimed the good news of your kingdom to the poor and needy....⁵⁰

Following the words of institution, the prayer continues, “Remembering your gracious acts in Jesus Christ, we take from your creation this bread and this wine.”⁵¹ The “gracious acts” clearly refer not only to the sacrificial death of Jesus, but also to the entire shape of his life and ministry. Similarly, the “Meaning of the Sacrament” in the RCA’s communion liturgy recalls the full scope of Christ’s incarnate presence and work:

We come in remembrance that our Lord Jesus Christ was sent of the Father into the world to assume our flesh and blood and to fulfill for us all obedience to the divine law, even to the bitter and shameful death of the cross. By his death, resurrection, and ascension he established a new and universal covenant of grace and reconciliation that we might be accepted of God and never be forsaken by him.⁵²

The effect of this expanded *anamnesis* is to deepen our understanding and assure us of our union with and participation in the whole Christ—his person, his salvific work in history, and the benefits he has won and now grants through the Spirit. For the sixteenth-century Reformers, remembering focused primarily on the once for all nature of Christ’s sacrifice, so it has been salutary to see the fuller remembrance of Christ’s work in our recent liturgies. In addition, contemporary reflections on *anamnesis*, both Catholic and Protestant, have introduced an eschatological dimension to the Church’s acts of remembering. At the Table, we not only recall the past and receive Christ here and now, but also remember the promises that God has made for the Church’s and the world’s future. At the Table we remember and pray for that day when heaven and earth will be made new, God’s glorious reign will be complete and uncontested, human suffering and tears shall be no more, and the unity of Christ’s Church will be manifested as all gather at the one, joyful banquet feast of the Lamb. As we gather at the Lord’s Table in the present we receive this eschatological reality as both gift and obligation.

Presence of Christ

Churches of the Reformed tradition affirm the true presence of Christ in every service of worship and in the celebration of the Lord’s Supper.⁵³ We confess that Christ is the one who welcomes those who gather, and it is Christ, through the minister, who proclaims the Word and hosts those who have gathered in faith at his Table.⁵⁴ In the same way that Christ, in his per-

⁵⁰ “Great Thanksgiving A,” in *Book of Common Worship*, 70.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 71.

⁵² *Worship the Lord*, ed. Eric Routley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), 567.

⁵³ Belgic Confession, Art. 35; Second Helvetic Confession, Chap. 21, *Book of Confessions*, 5.205.

⁵⁴ As also noted below (p. 70, note 171), among the Reformed churches represented in this dialogue, the celebration of the sacrament is provided for and overseen not only by the minister, but also by elders, deacons and/or other authorized lay persons.

son and by his power (*virtus*), is present to all creation, Christ, in his person and by his power, is present in, among, and to the gathered fellowship.⁵⁵ Such presence is effected by the incomprehensible agency (*virtus*) of the Holy Spirit.⁵⁶

With respect to the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, Christ himself invites us to the Table, and, by the incomprehensible power of his Spirit, nourishes us with his body and blood, which is food for the soul just as bread and wine are "aliments" for the body.⁵⁷ The bread and wine are true signs by which Christ himself, at the hand of the minister,⁵⁸ effectively proffers⁵⁹ his body and blood as spiritual food.⁶⁰

In this sense, these signs, or elements, are efficacious, though not efficacious of themselves. Rather, God in Christ has designated them for the purpose of communicating spiritual food,⁶¹ and the Spirit uses them as instruments to this end. The minister speaks the Words of Institution as God's word, and it is this word which sets apart, or "consecrates," common, ordinary bread and wine for an uncommon, extraordinary purpose⁶²: namely, the true communication of Christ's body and blood as food for our souls.⁶³ The people ask God to send the Spirit (*epiclesis*) so that "the bread which we break and the cup which we bless may be to us the communion of the body

⁵⁵ Calvin, "The Catechism of the Church of Geneva," in *Calvin: Theological Treatises*, trans. and ed. J. K. S. Reid, The Library of Christian Classics, vol. 22 (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1954), 137 (Q & A 354-55); Heidelberg Catechism, Q & A 47.

⁵⁶ Second Helvetic Confession, Chap. 21, *Book of Confessions*, 5.198. Scots Confession, Chap. 21, *Book of Confessions*, 3.21.

⁵⁷ Heidelberg Confession, Q & A 75; Belgic Confession, Art. 35; Calvin, "Catechism," 135-36 (Q & A 341).

⁵⁸ Second Helvetic Confession, Chap. 19., states that we receive the sacraments "as from the hand of God" and that "the substance of the sacraments is given [us] by the Lord" (*Book of Confessions*, 5.173, 174; see also Chap. 21). Calvin (*Institutes*, 4.3.1) also speaks of ministers as those who "represent his [Christ's] person." With regard to the Lord's Supper itself, Calvin writes in his commentary on Isaiah 6:7: "By the hand of the minister he presents to us his body, that it may be actually enjoyed by the godly." *Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Isaiah*, trans. William Pringle (Édinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1850), 1:211.

⁵⁹ In his treatments of the Lord's Supper, Calvin frequently employs cognates of the Latin word *exhibere*, which means "to offer, to proffer, to hand over" and not merely "to exhibit," as in "to represent."

⁶⁰ Belgic Confession, Art. 33.

⁶¹ Calvin, "Catechism," 135-36 (Q & A 341); Westminster Confession, Chap. 29/27 (*Book of Confessions*, 6.151): "The grace which is exhibited in or by the sacraments, rightly used, is not conferred by any power in them," but the "efficacy of a sacrament" depends upon "the work of the Spirit, and the word of institution." See also Westminster Larger Catechism, Q & A 161, *Book of Confessions*, 7.271.

⁶² So the Second Helvetic Confession, Chap. 19, "The Consecration of the Sacraments" (*Book of Confessions*, 5.178): "For they are consecrated by the Word, and shown to be sanctified by him who instituted them. To sanctify or consecrate anything to God is to dedicate it to holy uses; that is, to take it from the common and ordinary use, and to appoint it to a holy use. For the signs in the sacraments are drawn from common use, things external and visible. . . . In the Lord's Supper, the outward sign is bread and wine, taken from things commonly used for meat and drink; but the thing signified is the body of Christ which was given, and his blood which was shed for us, or the communion of the body and blood of the Lord." See also Westminster Confession, Chap. 29/27, *Book of Confessions*, 6.151, and Westminster Larger Catechism, Q & A 169, *Book of Confessions*, 7.279.

⁶³ Second Helvetic Confession, Chap. 21, *Book of Confessions*, 5.194.

and blood of Christ.”⁶⁴ Calvin writes regarding this mystical communion, or nourishing:

Christ does not simply present to us the benefit of his death and resurrection, but the very body in which he suffered and rose again. I conclude, that Christ’s body is *really*, (as the common expression is)—that is, *truly* given to us in the Supper, to be wholesome food for our souls. I use the common form of expression, but my meaning is, that our souls are nourished by the substance of the body, that we may truly be made one with him, or, what amounts to the same thing, that a life-giving virtue from Christ’s flesh is poured into us by the Spirit, though it is at a great distance from us, and is not mixed with us.⁶⁵

The foregoing discussion, of the consecration of the elements as effective signs and the “true communication” of Christ’s body and blood by their means, raises the question of the relation between the sign and the thing signified. For Calvin, whose view is embraced by the Reformed churches gathered in this dialogue, sacramental signs can be distinguished from that which they signify, but they cannot be separated from it. The sign and the thing signified are conjoined such that the thing signified is offered to and received by the believer simultaneously with the sign. So sacraments are, in the strong sense, a “means of grace.” They are instruments through which the Holy Spirit effectively conveys the spiritual reality they promise.⁶⁶ Following Calvin, many Reformed confessions emphatically declare that the signs are “not empty.”⁶⁷

Even as we affirm that Christ, in his humanity, has ascended to heaven, we also confess that Christ is truly present at the Table to nourish us with his body and blood, the gift that Christ truly offers and truly communicates by the secret, miraculous, and incomprehensible power of the Holy Spirit. As the Belgic Confession states, “Jesus Christ remains always seated at the right hand of God his Father in heaven—but he never refrains on that account to communicate himself to us through faith.”⁶⁸ On the one hand, the Reformed tradition seeks to maintain the truth of Christ’s incarnation and full

⁶⁴ Liturgy of the RCA. See also the liturgies of the other Reformed churches in this dialogue in the addendum.

⁶⁵ John Calvin, *The First Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians*, trans. John W. Fraser, ed. D. W. and T. F. Torrance (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 246.

⁶⁶ This paragraph is based on Bierma, “Lord’s Supper in the Reformed Confessions.” In this paper, Bierma examines various views held in the Reformed tradition. See also Brian A. Gerrish, “Sign and Reality: The Lord’s Supper in the Reformed Confessions,” in *The Old Protestantism and the New: Essays on the Reformation Heritage* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1982); Ronald S. Wallace, *Calvin’s Doctrine of the Word and Sacraments* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1953; Tyler, TX: Geneva Divinity School Press, 1982); Jan Rohls, *Reformed Confessions: Theology from Zurich to Barmen*, trans. John Hoffmeyer, Columbia Series in Reformed Theology (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997); and Paul Rorem, “*The Consensus Tigurinus* (1549): Did Calvin Compromise?” in *Calvinus Sacrae Scripturae Professor: Calvin as Confessor of Holy Scripture*, ed. Wilhelm H. Neuser (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994).

⁶⁷ For example, Belgic Confession, Art. 33, states: “So they are not empty and hollow signs to fool and deceive us, for their truth is Jesus Christ, without whom they would be nothing.”

⁶⁸ Belgic Confession, Art. 35. See also Heidelberg Catechism, Q & A 49, 76.

humanity following his ascension as the guarantee that “we have our flesh in heaven as a sure pledge that he [Christ] will also take us up to himself. . .”⁶⁹ If Christ has a flesh like ours and is “seated at the right hand of God the Father,” then Christ cannot be literally, physically present in the elements of bread and wine. On the other hand, the Reformed faith is insistent that in the Spirit’s power Christ is truly present and truly nourishes the faithful with his own flesh and blood in the Supper.

In a manner of speaking, Christ, by the indwelling of his Spirit, is also present in those who come to the Table in faith.⁷⁰ Through the grace of the Holy Spirit, believers have already been gifted with faith and engrafted into the mystical Body of Christ. With the mouth of this faith, then, they truly feed on what is truly offered by Christ at his Table, his true body and blood, as spiritual food for the spiritual journey.⁷¹

However, those who come to the Table come not alone but in the fellowship of their local congregation and in the company of all the faithful in heaven and on earth. That is to say, the true Church of all times and places encompasses all those engrafted into Christ’s mystical body. We come mindful of this “communion of the saints” gathered at the Table to be nourished by Christ. Indeed, the Supper effects our deeper engrafting into this mystical Body of Christ, binding us to each other and summoning us to our mutual calling. The Westminster Confession says that Christ instituted the Supper to “seal” to believers “their spiritual nourishment and growth in him, their further engagement in and to all duties which they owe unto him; and to be a bond and pledge of their communion with him, and with each other, as members of his mystical body.”⁷² Among the “duties” owed to Christ because of our engrafting in his mystical body is our participation in and embodiment of Christ’s ministry in the world, just as expressed in the *epicleses* of our liturgies:

By your Spirit make us one with Christ, that we may be one with all who share this feast, united in ministry in every place. As this bread is Christ’s body for us, send us out to be the Body of Christ in the world.⁷³

Having encountered Christ’s presence at the Table, believers are sent forth, in union with Christ, to manifest Christ’s presence in the world.

We realize that this engrafting into Christ, which the Supper effects, and Christ’s ministry in the world, which we embody, will not come to complete fruition until the eschaton. So in expressions such as “Come, Christ Jesus!” and “Christ will come again!” and “until Christ comes,” the liturgies confess eschatological longing for the coming of Christ, for the renewal of all

⁶⁹ Heidelberg Catechism, Q & A 49.

⁷⁰ Calvin, “Catechism,” 136 (Q & A 344); Heidelberg Catechism Q & A 76. We recognize (e.g., with Calvin) that the gathered body is a *corpus permixtum*, an issue that became important regarding the *manducatio indignorum/impiorum*. See e.g., Belgic Confession, Art. 35; Westminster Confession, Chapter 31/29.7, *Book of Confessions*, 6.167; Second Helvetic Confession, Chap. 19, 21, *Book of Confessions*, 5.183, 204.

⁷¹ Scots Confession, Chap. 21 (*Book of Confessions*, 3.21): “True faith apprehends Christ Jesus.”

⁷² Westminster Confession, Chap. 31/29, *Book of Confessions*, 6.161.

⁷³ PC(USA) Liturgy. See also those of the other traditions in the addendum.

creation according to God's final vision, and for our union with Christ in all its fullness.⁷⁴ Further, the disparity between the true presence of Christ by his power and Spirit in the Supper, and the fact that Christ has physically ascended and "remains seated at the right hand of God his Father in heaven...",⁷⁵ is the reality that underlies—and indeed compels—the eschatological longing inherent to this sacramental celebration.

Offering and Sacrifice

Offering and sacrifice are prevalent in both Reformed confessions and liturgies for the Lord's Supper. As noted in our discussion of *anamnesis*, there has been a gradual shift in the Reformed tradition from an emphasis on simply the atoning sacrifice of Christ for the forgiveness of sins to a recognition of the breadth of the redeeming work of Christ: his incarnation, ministry, passion, resurrection, and ascension. So also with offering. There has been a broadening of our understanding that now embraces the fullness of God's gift given in Christ—not only forgiveness of sin, but also reconciliation, unity, and life eternal.

Reformed sacramental theology stresses God's initiative in the offering of grace, a divine initiative to which we respond in faith, gratitude, and discipleship. Drawing from Reformed confessions and liturgies, we highlight several senses in which offering takes place in the Supper. These various senses follow a progression from grace to gratitude, from gift to response. This progression also reflects the Great Prayer of Thanksgiving in our Lord's Supper liturgies:

God offers the gift of creation and of life itself;

God offers the gift of hope and renewal throughout salvation history;

Christ offers a sacrifice in taking our nature, living, dying, and being raised on behalf of God's people;

In the Lord's Supper, Christ offers and we receive both Christ and Christ's benefits of forgiveness, renewal, reconciliation, unity, communion, victory over death, eternal life, and love;

In the Lord's Supper, the Spirit is offered or poured out so that the bread and wine are for us the communion of the body and blood of Christ;

⁷⁴ "A Formula of Agreement between the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the Reformed Church in America and the United Church of Christ on entering into full communion on the basis of *A Common Calling* [1997],"¹⁰ (citing the Leuenberg Agreement [1973], II.2.15, 16). <http://oga.PCUSAPCUSA.org/ecumenical-relations/resources/formula.pdf> (August 13, 2010).

⁷⁵ Belgic Confession, Art. 35: "Jesus Christ remains always seated at the right hand of God his Father in heaven—but he never refrains on that account to communicate himself to us through faith." See also Heidelberg Catechism, Q & A 49, 76. The Reformers were insistent that if indeed Christ is human in exactly the ways we are human, if his flesh is our flesh and he has ascended to "heaven" and remains there, then he cannot be literally, physically present in the aliments of bread and wine.

In response, we offer ourselves as living sacrifices of thanksgiving—in the Lord’s Supper and in all of life—in acts of love and justice. We become the Body of Christ in the world.

God Offers the Gift of Creation and of Life Itself

Reformed confessions present God as the creator and giver of life. When God, who is “completely . . . good, and the overflowing source of all good,”⁷⁶ created all things, “everything God had made was very good, and was made for the profit and use” of human creatures.⁷⁷ The Presbyterian Study Catechism presents God’s work of creation as an act of grace and blessing:

God’s decision to create the world was an act of grace. In this decision God chose to grant existence to the world simply in order to bless it. God created the world to reveal God’s glory, to share the love and freedom at the heart of God’s triune being, and to give us eternal life in fellowship with God.⁷⁸

These gifts of creation and life extend to God’s providential care. Thus we confess that God “still preserves my body and soul,” as well as “provides me with all the necessities of life, and preserves me from all danger,” and that God does this out of “divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness on my part.”⁷⁹

Although these confessional affirmations of God’s goodness and life-giving power do not explicitly mention the Supper, current Reformed liturgies for the Lord’s Supper highlight this theme. In our liturgies, the broader context of offering typically appears in the Preface of the Great Prayer of Thanksgiving. The gift of life and creation are identified at the very beginning: “You have given us life and being...” (RCA); “We thank you for all the gifts of creation and the gift of life itself” (UCC); and, “We bless you for your continual love and care for every creature. We praise you for forming us in your image and calling us to be your people” (CRC).

Seeing creation and life itself as a gift offered by God provides the context, then, for seeing God’s work of salvation, including the saving work of Christ, all of which is symbolized and offered in the Lord’s Supper. This, in turn, becomes the basis for offering ourselves in thankful service to God.

God Offers the Gift of Hope and Renewal throughout Salvation History

Reformed confessions present God not only as life-giver but also as redeemer who proclaims the good news of salvation “already in Paradise” as well as through the prophets, believers, and acts of redemption accomplished in ancient Israel.⁸⁰ Thus ancient Israel “had not only external and earthly but also spiritual and heavenly promises in Christ.”⁸¹ The PC(USA) Study Catechism elaborates God’s redemptive work in and through Israel:

⁷⁶ Belgic Confession, Art. 1.

⁷⁷ Second Helvetic Confession, Chap. 7, *Book of Confessions*, 5.032.

⁷⁸ Study Catechism 1998, Q & A 26.

⁷⁹ Evangelical Catechism, Q & A 16-18. <http://www.ucc.org/beliefs/evangelical-catechism.html> (August 6, 2010). See also Heidelberg Catechism, Q & A 26.

⁸⁰ Heidelberg Catechism, Q & A 19.

⁸¹ Second Helvetic Confession, Chap. 13, *Book of Confessions*, 5.088.

God made a covenant with Israel, promising that God would be their light and their salvation, that they would be God's people, and that through them all the peoples of the earth would be blessed. Therefore, no matter how often Israel turned away from God, God still cared for them and acted on their behalf. In particular, God sent them prophets, priests and kings. Each of these was "anointed" by God's Spirit—prophets, to declare God's word; priests, to make sacrifice for the people's sins; and kings, to rule justly in the fear of God, upholding the poor and needy, and defending the people from their enemies.⁸²

God's promises were "repeated and made clearer from time to time" as well as "embraced with joy" and "received by all the faithful" prior to the appearance of Jesus Christ.⁸³

Current Reformed Lord's Supper liturgies lift up this ongoing work of God's salvation in words of thanksgiving: "We thank you that you did not abandon us in our rebellion against your love, but sent prophets and teachers to lead us into the way of salvation" (CRC); "We offer you praise for women and men of faith in every age who stand as witnesses to your love and justice" (UCC); and "When we rebelled against you refusing to trust and obey you, you sent us prophets to call us back to your way" (PC(USA)). In the Lord's Supper, we recognize that as we receive God's gifts of grace in Christ today, we stand among that great cloud of witnesses with whom God has continually renewed covenant and hope.

Christ Offers a Sacrifice in Taking our Nature, Living, Dying, and Being Raised on behalf of God's People

As we saw in our discussion of *anamnesis* above, contemporary Reformed liturgies evidence a broad understanding of the nature of Christ's sacrifice and self-offering. Historically, our Supper liturgies and sacramental theology focused on Christ's sacrificial death. We have begun to recover a fuller sense of the breadth of Christ's work expressed in our confessions so that both our sacramental theology and practice now apprehend the offering of Christ within the broad picture of God's redemptive work. Thus the Presbyterian Study Catechism affirms:

Despite our turning from God, God did not turn from us, but instead sent Jesus Christ in the fullness of time to restore our broken humanity. Jesus lived completely for God, by giving himself completely for us, even to the point of dying for us. By living so completely for others, he manifested what he was—the perfect image of God. When by grace we are conformed to him through faith, our humanity is renewed according to the divine image that we lost.⁸⁴

⁸² Study Catechism 1998, Q & A 36.

⁸³ Scots Confession, Chap. 4, *Book of Confessions*, 3.04.

⁸⁴ Study Catechism 1998, Q & A 21.

This broader view is also seen in our widespread confessional emphasis on Christ's threefold office as prophet, priest, and king.⁸⁵ Even when the confessions highlight Jesus' sacrificial death—his priestly work—they do not ignore the significance of Christ's incarnation, life, resurrection, and ascension.

Reformed confessions do emphasize Christ as God's offering or sacrifice for the purpose of reconciling the world to God. The Belgic Confession says that God "poured out his goodness and mercy on us, who are guilty and worthy of damnation, giving to us his Son to die, by a most perfect love, and raising him to life for our justification, in order that by him we might have immortality and eternal life."⁸⁶ Similarly, the Westminster Shorter Catechism says that "Christ executeth the office of a priest in his once offering up of himself a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice, and reconcile us to God."⁸⁷ The Presbyterian Study Catechism ties Christ's priestly, sacrificial work to his larger self-offering and to the benefits he offers us: "He was the Lamb of God that took away the sin of the world; he became our priest and sacrifice in one. Confronted by our hopelessness in sin and death, Christ interceded by offering himself—his entire person and work—in order to reconcile us to God."⁸⁸

Our current Reformed liturgies for the Supper also present Christ's sacrificial death within God's broader work of forgiveness and reconciliation. Christ's sacrificial death is not lifted up as the only or even the most significant moment in God's redemptive act through Christ. One specific example, the liturgy for the Lord's Supper developed for shared use among the "Formula of Agreement" churches, illustrates this broader reality: "We gratefully recall and remember the wonder of Jesus' incarnation...his bearing of the cross with its death, and his rising from the tomb by the power of God...."⁸⁹

All communions name the gift of Christ's death on the cross as central to our celebration of the Lord's Supper, but not as the sole dimension of Christ's offering. The CRC's liturgy for the Supper places a greater emphasis on the atoning/forgiving aspect of Christ's sacrifice than do the liturgies of the other Reformed communions. The words of the memorial declare "that [the Lord Jesus] took upon himself our flesh and blood, and bore the wrath of God against our sin. We confess that he was condemned to die that we might be pardoned, and suffered death that we might live." During the distribution, the CRC liturgy explicitly points to forgiveness as a primary effect of partaking, reminding the congregation that Christ's precious body and blood were given "for the complete forgiveness of all our sins." We also note across our Reformed communions an increased emphasis on the sacrifice of

⁸⁵ See Heidelberg Catechism, Q & A 31; Westminster Shorter Catechism, Q & A 24-26, *Book of Confessions*, 7.024-026; Westminster Larger Catechism, Q & A 43-45, *Book of Confessions*, 7.153-155; Study Catechism 1998, Q & A 39-41.

⁸⁶ Belgic Confession, Article 20.

⁸⁷ Westminster Shorter Catechism, Q & A 25, *Book of Confessions*, 7.025.

⁸⁸ Study Catechism 1998, Q & A 40.

⁸⁹ The Formula of Agreement Liturgy [for Eucharist] in *Guidelines and Worship Resources for the Celebration of Full Communion* (1998). <http://images.rca.org/docs/worship/LiturgyFormulaOfAgreement.pdf> (August 13, 2010).

Christ and its atoning work in the Church's penitential seasons.⁹⁰ But more generally, at the Lord's Table the assembly remembers the fullness of God's saving activity, including God's action in the incarnation, life, sacrificial death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ.

In the Meal of the Lord's Supper, Christ Offers and We Receive Both Christ and Christ's Benefits of Forgiveness, Renewal, Reconciliation, Unity, Communion, Victory over Death, Eternal Life, and Love

Reformed confessions see the Lord's Supper as offering Christ and his benefits. Eating the bread and drinking the wine "in accordance with Christ's appointment" means partaking in Christ and receiving "from the risen Lord the benefits of his death and resurrection."⁹¹ As the Evangelical Catechism states, in this sacramental meal "we receive the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ as the nourishment of our new life, strengthen the fellowship with Christ and all believers, and confess that he has died for us."⁹² The chief gift given in the Supper is deeper union and communion with Christ, who with himself gives us all the benefits of his life, death, resurrection, and ascension: new life, forgiveness and reconciliation, communion with neighbor, unity as the Body of Christ, and the love of God in Christ Jesus from which nothing can separate us. Our Reformed liturgies evidence differing emphases in naming what is received in the Supper, but each focuses on our participation in Christ and his benefits. These are received as both gift and call.

The Supper not only communicates these gifts to recipients but also offers a multi-sensory confirmation of these very gifts. Thus, "as surely as" we see the bread of the Lord broken for us and the cup given to us, "so surely his body was offered and broken for me and his blood poured out for me on the cross." Moreover, "as surely as" we receive the elements and taste them, "so surely he nourishes my soul for eternal life with his crucified body and poured-out blood."⁹³ We receive not just physical nourishment, but Christ our Savior: "Just as truly as we take and hold the sacraments in our hands and eat and drink it in our mouths, by which our life is then sustained, so truly we receive into our souls, for our spiritual life, the true body and true blood of Christ, our only Savior. We receive these by faith, which is the hand and mouth of our souls."⁹⁴

In the Meal of the Lord's Supper, the Holy Spirit Is Offered, or Poured Out, So That the Bread and Wine Are for Us the Communion of the Body and Blood of Christ

As has been amply demonstrated above, both our Reformed confessions and liturgies emphasize the Spirit's role in the meal, making us sharers in Christ. After saying that Christ wants to teach us that the meal nourishes our souls for eternal life, the Heidelberg Catechism says, "But more important,

⁹⁰ For example, options for the "Great Thanksgiving," such as in the CRC Holy Week preface before the *Sanctus*: "We give you thanks for Jesus Christ, our Lord, who became the paschal Lamb that was sacrificed for our salvation." This also appears in the PC(USA)'s post-*Sanctus* thanksgiving for Christ at Maundy Thursday: "The cup of suffering which he drank has become for us the cup of salvation," and the UCC preface for Lent, "Because you have come in Jesus Christ, enduring the cross so that we might know eternal life."

⁹¹ Confession of 1967, II.B.4, *Book of Confessions*, 9.52.

⁹² Evangelical Catechism, Q & A 125.

⁹³ Heidelberg Catechism, Q & A 75, 79.

⁹⁴ Belgic Confession, Art. 35.

he [Christ] wants to assure us, by this visible sign and pledge, that we, through the Holy Spirit's work, share in his true body."⁹⁵ Christ and the Spirit are deeply connected in the meal: "When we celebrate the Lord's Supper, the Lord Jesus Christ is truly present, pouring out his Spirit upon us. By his Spirit, the bread that we break and the cup that we bless share in our Lord's own body and blood."⁹⁶ As a repeatable sacrament, "...the Lord's Supper indicates that as we turn unfilled to him again and again, our Lord continually meets us in the power of the Holy Spirit to renew and deepen our faith."⁹⁷

In our discussion of the *epiclesis* we described the Church's prayer for the work of the Holy Spirit as "the last rhapsodic movement of the prayer of thanksgiving." In offering this prayer, the Church expresses its thanksgiving and its longing "for God to act by the Spirit to effect the promise of the sacrament and the sacrament's benefits for those who partake in faith."⁹⁸ We acknowledge God's freedom in response to our bidding, but trust that God will grant the outpouring of the Spirit so that the simple gifts of bread and wine may be to us the communion of the body and blood of Christ.

We Offer Ourselves as Living Sacrifices of Thanksgiving—in the Lord's Supper and in All of Life—in Acts of Love and Justice. We Become the Body of Christ in the World

Reformed confessions echo Romans 12 in saying that we offer ourselves as living sacrifices in response to God's grace in Christ. Thus, the Heidelberg Catechism says that through Christ's death our old selves are put to death "so that the evil desires of the flesh may no longer rule us, but that instead we may dedicate ourselves as an offering of gratitude to him."⁹⁹ The Catechism adds that, as members of Christ by faith, believers share in his anointing and are themselves anointed "to present [themselves] to him as a living sacrifice of thanks."¹⁰⁰ The Evangelical Catechism concludes its section on the Lord's Supper by noting that our communion with Christ requires us to "have no pleasure in sin, but earnestly flee and avoid it," so that we may "cheerfully and confidently say, 'Lord Jesus, for thee I live, for thee I suffer, for thee I die! Lord Jesus, thine will I be in life and death!'"¹⁰¹

While some Reformed Communion liturgies explicitly mention the "sacrifice" of Christ and some do not,¹⁰² all mention the sacrifice or offering of God's people. Such words are found in the *epiclesis*, oblation, or dedication in the various liturgies: "We offer ourselves to you as holy and living sacrifices" (RCA); "With thanksgiving, we offer our very selves to you to be a living and holy sacrifice, dedicated to your service" (PC(USA)); "We present to you our very lives, committed to your service in behalf of all people" (UCC); and, "We present ourselves a living sacrifice and come to the table" (CRC).

⁹⁵ Heidelberg Catechism, Q & A 79.

⁹⁶ Study Catechism 1998, Q & A 78.

⁹⁷ Study Catechism 1998, Q & A 70.

⁹⁸ See p. 19 above.

⁹⁹ Heidelberg Catechism, Q & A 43.

¹⁰⁰ Heidelberg Catechism, Q & A 32.

¹⁰¹ Evangelical Catechism, Q & A 128.

¹⁰² The RCA and CRC liturgies do; the UCC, PC(USA), and "Formula of Agreement" liturgies do not.

The offering of the people of God, so explicit in the oblation, is intimated in the beginning of many of our liturgies for the Supper through the presentation of our tithes and offerings along with bread and wine, as well as in the people's response to the invitation to "Lift up your hearts," with the words, "We lift them to God."¹⁰³ Several of our Reformed Supper liturgies make explicit provision for God's people to carry forward the bread and the wine during the Lord's Supper ceremony. Some Reformed Christians see this as theologically confusing, suggesting perhaps that we first give or offer something to God before God offers us the sacrament of the Lord's Supper and thus undermine the priority of God's action in the Supper. Other Reformed Christians, however, consider it to be appropriate that God's people carry forward the bread and the wine, enacting the theology of the twentieth-century RCA confession, "Our Song of Hope" which says, "Jesus takes up our bread and wine to represent his sacrifice, to bind his ministry to our daily work, to unite us in his righteousness."¹⁰⁴ However, in the case of either practice,¹⁰⁵ all of our communions give absolute priority to God's initiative in the multi-dimensioned offerings remembered and made in the Lord's Supper, and share the conviction that we are called to offer ourselves to God in a response of thanksgiving and daily service to the glory of God.

Discipleship

The Reformed understanding of discipleship is grounded in our theology of grace: our active service is a response to the unmerited divine favor that has been extended to us in Jesus Christ. This pattern of action-as-response to the gracious action of God is set forth clearly in the opening words of the Heidelberg Catechism. The believer's "only comfort in life and in death" is "that I am not my own, but belong . . . to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ"; and this has been made possible by Christ, who "by the Holy Spirit" not only "has set me free from the tyranny of the devil," but also "assures me of eternal life and makes me wholeheartedly willing and ready from now on to live for him."¹⁰⁶ The insistence on active response to God's grace is repeated elsewhere in the Catechism, where belonging to the One who is prophet,

¹⁰³ The liturgies of the UCC, RCA, and PC(USA) include specific rubrics for the congregation's offering of moneys along with the elements of bread and wine.

¹⁰⁴ Our Song of Hope, VI.19. <https://www.rca.org/sslpage.aspx?pid=313> (December 3, 2008).

¹⁰⁵ Both sides ground their views in Scripture, noting that the Lord's Supper echoes several biblical accounts of Jesus providing food and drink to many (e.g., the feeding of the multitudes, the wedding at Cana, the resurrected Christ feeding his disciples on the shore). In support of the first view, one can observe that Jesus often shared his meal with tax collectors and sinners, who came to the table with nothing. And when the meal included fish that the disciples had caught, Jesus had provided the fish by telling them where to cast their nets (John 21:1-14). In support of the second view, one can observe that on several occasions people provided ordinary food or drink (loaves and fish, water) that Jesus used to nourish large numbers of people (John 2:1-11, John 6:5-14). Even in this second view, it is worth observing that what people provided was not adequate for the need at hand. The loaves and fish were not sufficient to feed the crowd, and the water was not what was needed at a wedding banquet when the wine had been consumed. Still, Jesus used these inadequate "gifts" and in return gave something far greater than what was offered to him. So too, we receive gifts from Christ that are far greater than any humble, ordinary gifts we offer in worship.

¹⁰⁶ Heidelberg Catechism, Q & A 1.

priest, and king¹⁰⁷ means that the believer is obligated “to confess his name, to present myself to him as a living sacrifice of thanks, [and] to strive with a good conscience against sin and the devil.”¹⁰⁸

The sacrament of the Lord’s Supper is a crucial context for reinforcing and nurturing this action-as-response. Furthermore, in Reformed sacramental theology, the faithful response that flows from participation at the Lord’s Table has to do not only with our belonging to Christ, but also with our belonging to all others who are members of his body. We recall here that the historic Reformed confessions are clear that the Supper is, among other things, for the strengthening of the participants’ ongoing engagement in “all duties which they owe unto him,” including those duties that they owe to “each other, as members of his mystical body.”¹⁰⁹

The Reformed conception of the formation that takes place in the Supper, then, has always made much of the way of life that must flow from our communion with

Christ: a pattern of living that takes with utmost seriousness the ways in which union with Christ cannot be divorced from union with all who belong to his Body. Expressing these themes, the PC(USA)’s *Directory of Worship* offers this instruction for the prayer of invocation at the Table: on behalf of the congregation, the presider asks the triune God “to unite them in communion with all the faithful in heaven and on earth” and “to keep them faithful as Christ’s body, representing Christ and doing God’s work in the world.”¹¹⁰ Thus, the Lord’s Supper is a joining together with the Church universal—fellow Christians “in heaven and on earth”—in a way that creates a sense of solidarity with those who have suffered for the faith in the past, and with those in the Church on earth who are victims of a various forms of oppression. Our fully conscious participation in this universal, unifying Supper, given by Christ, ought to provide sufficient motivation for “representing Christ and doing God’s work in the world.”

These same themes recur in the various Great Prayers of Thanksgiving in our Reformed liturgies. Through our sharing in the Lord’s Table, the Spirit “enables us to remain faithful in hope and love” (CRC); the Spirit “unites us in ministry and sends us out to be the Body of Christ in the world” (PC(USA)); and, through the sacrament we are empowered to be “salt and light and leaven for the furtherance of God’s will” (UCC).

Properly understood, formation for discipleship is integral to all stages in the drama that occurs at the Table. Not only is Christ offered to us in the sacrament, but, as was illustrated in our discussion of “offering,” the gathered participants in turn offer themselves to Christ. The strong emphasis in John Calvin’s own theology on union with Christ is reaffirmed as a basis for discipleship in the *epiclesis*: We pray for the Spirit to descend upon us so “that we may grow up in all things into Christ our Lord” (RCA).

In all of this, the basic pattern is the same. The believer, by God’s sovereign grace, comes to belong to Christ. This in turn incorporates the believer into communion, not only with Christ but also with all who belong to Christ.

¹⁰⁷ Heidelberg Catechism, Q & A 31.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ Westminster Confession, Chap. 31/29.1, *Book of Confessions*, 6.161.

¹¹⁰ PC(USA), *Directory for Worship*, W-2.4005.

The Lord's Supper nurtures and empowers this rich sense of communion with Christ and his whole Church, thus obligating us to move into the world as instruments of what we have heard and seen and tasted at the Table. That this goes beyond a mere "private" struggle against sin is made clear by John Calvin's insistence regarding the proper effects of participation in the Supper:

We shall very much benefit from this sacrament if this thought is impressed and engraved on our minds: that none of the brethren [or sisters] can be injured, despised, rejected, abused, or in any way offended by us, without at the same time injuring despising, and abusing Christ by the wrongs we do.... we cannot love Christ without loving him in the brethren.¹¹¹

While the call to discipleship is present, then, in the early Reformed confessions, liturgies, and theological writings, in the twentieth century a series of new Reformed confessional statements were produced, expanding the call to discipleship in relation to new social and cultural realities. This updating has expanded our understanding of the task of the believing community, and while the emphasis remains on our need to be nurtured sacramentally for service to Christ and all who belong to his Body, there is also recognition of the need to serve neighbors of other faiths, as well as those who claim to have no faith.

In struggling with new manifestations of injustice and oppression in our world, Reformed Christians have in recent years given new emphasis to the eschatological character of the Lord's Supper as an anticipation of the ancient promise that the day is surely coming when "the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food. . . . And he will destroy on this mountain the shroud that is cast over all peoples, the sheet that is spread over all nations" (Isaiah 25:6-7). In the light of this promise, even now we can "rejoice in the foretaste of the kingdom which he will bring to consummation at his promised coming, and go out from the Lord's Table with courage and hope for the service to which he has called them,"¹¹² and with assurance that "Christ is present in His world proclaiming salvation until He comes, a symbol of hope for a troubled age."¹¹³

Those who have been to the Table can confidently depart with this prayer on their lips: "You promise to all who trust your forgiveness of sins and fullness of grace, courage in the struggle for justice and peace, your presence in trial and rejoicing, and eternal life in your realm which has no end."¹¹⁴ This commitment to the way of discipleship is grounded in a sacramental deepening of our union with the Christ who "is our life-giving food and drink," the One who "will come again to call us to the wedding feast of the Lamb."¹¹⁵

¹¹¹ Calvin, *Institutes*, 4.17.38.

¹¹² Confession of 1967, II.B.4, *Book of Confessions*, 9.52.

¹¹³ Our Song of Hope, VI.19.

¹¹⁴ "United Church of Christ Statement of Faith in the Form of a Doxology," in *Book of Worship*, 514.

¹¹⁵ Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Confession, Art. 38. http://www.crcna.org/pages/our_world_gods_people.cfm (August 6, 2010).

Sources

When asked to articulate Catholic doctrine on the Eucharist, Roman Catholics name as primary sources the sacred Scriptures, liturgical texts,¹¹⁶ and the conciliar and magisterial teaching of the Church throughout the ages. These include the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed and the writings of the Fathers, and the Doctors of the Church. Specifically in this document, we have paid close attention to the decrees of the Council of Trent and Second Vatican Council, the *Roman Missal*, and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

Introduction

This section summarizes the Roman Catholic understanding of the Eucharist with respect to the same five themes we just examined in the Reformed tradition: 1) *Epiclesis*—action of the Holy Spirit; 2) *Anamnesis*—remembering; 3) Presence of Christ; 4) Offering and sacrifice; and 5) Discipleship. Before discussing these five points, however, it would be helpful to summarize the four major sections of the Catholic eucharistic liturgy and their interconnection.

The Introductory Rites gather the members of the Body around the priest as the visible presence of Christ the Head of the Body. In this gathering the Church is made visible, Christ's true presence within the community is proclaimed, and those gathering are called to surrender themselves to God's transformative action as they prepare to enter into the mystery of Christ's death and resurrection that is being celebrated.

The Liturgy of the Word proclaims God's mighty deeds on behalf of believers, but especially in the reading and preaching of the gospel, Christ becomes present to the community of believers—teaching them, challenging them, and urging them to fidelity as disciples of Christ.

In the Liturgy of the Eucharist we so completely unite ourselves with the saving work of Christ that we place ourselves on the altar, are transformed and renewed, and are invited to approach the messianic banquet table to be nourished by a gracious, lavishly generous God.

The Concluding Rites send us forth with a divine blessing to live what we have remembered and celebrated. Thus the Mass ends, but the Eucharist is a reality also to be lived every day by the community of believers.¹¹⁷

Epiclesis—Action of the Holy Spirit

While the Roman Canon (revised as the Roman Catholic Eucharistic Prayer I) has no explicit *epiclesis* over the gifts (one can argue that it is implied), most other eucharistic prayers¹¹⁸ in use in the United States have both an *epiclesis* over the gifts (before the institution narrative) and an

¹¹⁶ The Roman Catholic liturgical texts quoted in this document are from the English translation of the third edition of the *Roman Missal* (Latin *editio typica*, 2008; English approved translation, 2010).

¹¹⁷ See the section "The movement of the celebration" in *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2d ed. (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1997), 1348-1355 (hereafter CCC).

¹¹⁸ The one exception is the Eucharistic Prayer for Children III which has no explicit *epiclesis* over the gifts (the prayer asks the Father to "bless these gifts of bread and wine and make them holy"). Nor is there an explicit *epiclesis* over the people; without mentioning the Holy Spirit, the prayer for the people asks that we "be filled with the joy of the Holy Spirit" rather than ask for our unity, as do the *epicleses* in the other eucharistic prayers (1975/85 text).

epiclesis over the people (after the institution narrative).¹¹⁹ In Eucharistic Prayer II, for example, this is expressed as follows:

Before the institution narrative:

Make holy, therefore, these gifts, we pray,
by sending down your Spirit upon them like the dewfall,
so that they may become for us the Body and Blood of our Lord,
Jesus Christ.

After the institution narrative:

Humbly we pray that, partaking of the Body and Blood of Christ,
*we may be gathered into one by the Holy Spirit.*¹²⁰

To give another example, before the institution narrative Eucharistic Prayer III states, "Therefore, O Lord, we humbly implore you: *by the same Spirit* gracious make holy these gifts we have brought to you for consecration, *that they may become the Body and Blood* of your Son our Lord Jesus Christ."¹²¹ After the institution narrative it adds, "grant that we, who are nourished by the Body and Blood of your Son *and filled with his Holy Spirit, may become one body, one spirit* in Christ."¹²² This restoration of the *epiclesis* in the revised eucharistic liturgy points to its significance as an action of the Holy Spirit in changing the elements and transforming the community. It also makes clearer the trinitarian action of the whole eucharistic rite. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* speaks of a fourfold action of the Holy Spirit in the sacraments: first, the Holy Spirit "prepares the Church to encounter her Lord."¹²³ The Spirit "gathers the children of God into the one Body of Christ," and the grace of the Spirit "seeks to awaken faith, conversion of heart, and adherence to the Father's will."¹²⁴

Second, "The Holy Spirit... recalls and makes Christ manifest to the faith of the assembly."¹²⁵ The *Catechism* goes on to say that "primarily in the Eucharist, and by analogy in the other sacraments, the liturgy is the *memorial* of the mystery of salvation. The Holy Spirit is the Church's living memory."¹²⁶ Thus the *Catechism* makes a connection between the Holy Spirit and *anamnesis*. Specifically,

in the Liturgy of the Word the Holy Spirit "recalls" to the assembly all that Christ has done for us. In keeping with the nature of liturgical actions and the ritual traditions of the churches, the celebration "makes a remembrance" of the marvelous works of God in an *anamnesis* which may be more or less developed. The Holy

¹¹⁹ Because the two *epicleses* are divided by the institution narrative, they are called a "split" *epiclesis*.

¹²⁰ Emphasis added.

¹²¹ Emphasis added.

¹²² Emphasis added.

¹²³ CCC, 1092.

¹²⁴ CCC, 1097-98.

¹²⁵ CCC, 1092.

¹²⁶ CCC, 1099.

Spirit who thus awakens the memory of the Church then inspires thanksgiving and praise (*doxology*).¹²⁷

What is critical here is that the act of “remembering” (*anamnesis*) is not the same as “recalling.” It is in the remembering that the past act is made present in the here and now by the Holy Spirit.

Third, the Holy Spirit makes present the mystery of Christ. In the Eucharist, this happens (is effected) not only in the act of remembering (*anamnesis*) but also in the *epiclesis*: “The *Epiclesis* (‘invocation upon’) is the intercession in which the priest begs the Father to send the Holy Spirit, the Sanctifier, so that the offerings may become the body and blood of Christ and that the faithful, by receiving them, may themselves become a living offering to God.”¹²⁸

Fourth, the Holy Spirit brings us into communion with Christ. “In every liturgical action the Holy Spirit is sent in order to bring us into communion with Christ and so to form his Body.”¹²⁹ The fruit of the Holy Spirit’s work in the liturgy is our communion with the Trinity and with each other. In the Eucharist, the *epiclesis* is “a prayer for the full effect of the assembly’s communion with the mystery of Christ.” Indeed, in almost all cases the *epiclesis* over the people is to bring the community into unity with each other and God. Even when unity is not explicitly mentioned, joy is the dominant effect of the coming of the Holy Spirit.¹³⁰ The Holy Spirit makes us a living sacrifice to God by our “spiritual transformation into the image of Christ, by concern for the Church’s unity, and by taking part in her mission through the witness and service of charity.”¹³¹ So the Holy Spirit is also the ground for connecting Eucharist and discipleship.

One point that the *Catechism* highlights throughout its treatment of the Eucharist is that the Spirit works *with* us, in a sense that takes seriously human cooperation with grace: “When the Spirit encounters in us the response of faith which he has aroused in us, he brings about genuine

¹²⁷ CCC, 1103.

¹²⁸ CCC, 1105. And in no. 1353: “In the *epiclesis*, the Church asks the Father to send his Holy Spirit (or the power of his blessing) on the bread and wine, so that by his power they may become the body and blood of Jesus Christ and so that those who take part in the Eucharist may be one body and one spirit (some liturgical traditions put the *epiclesis* after the *anamnesis*). In the *institution narrative*, the power of the words and the action of Christ, and the power of the Holy Spirit, make sacramentally present under the species of bread and wine Christ’s body and blood, his sacrifice offered on the cross once for all.”

Historically, there has been a difference in emphasis between the Western and Eastern churches with respect to consecration. The Eastern Church has emphasized the role of the Holy Spirit and, consequently, has a stronger emphasis on the *epiclesis*, locating the change in the elements at the *epiclesis*. The Western Church, in contrast, has had only an implied *epiclesis* up until the newly composed eucharistic prayers approved after Vatican II. For it, the emphasis has been more strongly on the *verba* (“This is my body. . . This is my blood.”), locating transubstantiation of the elements here. Presently, in the Latin Church, both the *epiclesis* and *verba* are appreciated to be one prayer.

¹²⁹ CCC, 1108.

¹³⁰ See note 118.

¹³¹ CCC, 1109.

cooperation. Through it, the liturgy becomes the common work of the Holy Spirit and the Church."¹³²

Anamnesis—Remembering

The ritual *anamnesis* (to remember, to make memorial) is an element that follows the institution narrative in all ten of the U.S. eucharistic prayers. In the *anamnesis* "the Church calls to mind the Passion, resurrection, and glorious return of Christ Jesus; she presents to the Father the offering of his Son which reconciles us with him."¹³³ An example would be the *anamnesis* in Eucharistic Prayer III:

Therefore, O Lord, as we celebrate *the memorial* of the saving Passion of your Son, his wondrous Resurrection and Ascension into heaven, and as we look forward to his second coming, we offer you . . .¹³⁴

The *anamnesis*, therefore, makes explicit that what the Christian community is doing in the eucharistic liturgy is placing itself within the dynamic rhythm of the whole paschal mystery of Christ: his life, suffering, death, resurrection, ascension, sending of the Spirit, and the promise of his return. It is important to keep in mind here the connection between *anamnesis* and the Holy Spirit that we noted earlier, for it is through the power of the Spirit, who is "the church's living memory," that the mystery of Christ is made present in the Eucharist.¹³⁵

The *Catechism* begins its section on the sacramental sacrifice by recalling Jesus' words "Do this in remembrance of me."

We carry out this command of the Lord by celebrating the *memorial of his sacrifice*. In so doing, *we offer to the Father* what he has himself given us: the gifts of his creation, bread and wine which, by the power of the Holy Spirit and by the words of Christ, have become the body and blood of Christ. Christ is thus really and mysteriously made *present*.¹³⁶

Thus Catholic doctrine sees the teachings on *anamnesis*, sacrifice, and the real presence of Christ as intimately connected.

The notion of "remembering," which has its origin in the Hebrew word *zkr*, is not the mere recalling of a past event, but a celebration of God's action in the present. As the *Catechism* notes,

In the sense of Sacred Scripture the *memorial* is not merely the recollection of past events but the proclamation of the mighty works wrought by God for men. In the liturgical celebration of these events, they become in a certain way present and real. This is how Israel understands its liberation from Egypt: every time Passover is

¹³² CCC, 1091. See also 1099: "The Spirit and the Church *cooperate* to manifest Christ and his work of salvation in the liturgy" (emphasis added).

¹³³ CCC, 1354.

¹³⁴ *Roman Missal* (2010), Eucharistic Prayer III, (emphasis added).

¹³⁵ CCC, 1099.

¹³⁶ CCC, 1357.

celebrated, the Exodus events are made present to the memory of believers so that they may conform their lives to them.

In the New Testament, the memorial takes on new meaning. When the Church celebrates the Eucharist, she commemorates Christ's Passover, and . . . the sacrifice Christ offered once for all on the cross remains ever present.¹³⁷

Presence of Christ

Sacrosanctum Concilium speaks of multiple presences of Christ in the Eucharist:

He is present in the sacrifice of the Mass, not only in the person of his minister, "the same now offering, through the ministry of priests, who formerly offered himself on the cross," and most of all in the eucharistic species. By his power he is present in the sacraments, so that when anybody baptizes it is really Christ Himself who baptizes. He is present in his word, since it is he himself who speaks when the holy scriptures are read in the church. Lastly, he is present when the church prays and sings, for he has promised: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. 18:20).¹³⁸

The liturgical texts support the Constitution's assertion of Christ's personal presence in the eucharistic celebration. For example, with respect to the liturgy constitution's assertion that Christ is present in the very proclamation of the word, the assembly's acclamatory response before and after the gospel uses second person, direct address pronouns: "Glory to you, O Lord" and "Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ."¹³⁹

The *Catechism* repeats the constitution's language of Jesus being especially present under the eucharistic species. It describes the manner of Christ's presence as follows:

The mode of Christ's presence under the Eucharistic species is unique. It raises the Eucharist above all the sacraments as "the perfection of the spiritual life and the end to which all the sacraments tend." In the most blessed sacrament of the Eucharist "the body and blood, together with the soul and divinity, of our Lord Jesus Christ and, therefore, the whole Christ is truly, really, and substantially contained." "This presence is called 'real'—by which is not intended to exclude the other types of presence as if they could not be 'real'

¹³⁷ CCC, 1363-64. *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* (ed. David N. Freedman [New York: Doubleday, 1992], 5:669) describes the act of remembrance in the Lord's Supper as follows: "When believers gathered around this table, they remembered the past, to be sure; they remembered the stories of the suffering and death of the risen Lord—but not merely as a historical recollection. In remembering that past, they owned the stories as their stories (including the story of Peter's "remembering," Mark 14:72). This remembering involved a "pleading guilty" to the death of Jesus but also a sharing in that death and in the new covenant (with its forgiveness) which Christ established. *This remembering was constitutive of identity and community and determined conduct in the present*" (emphasis added).

¹³⁸ No. 7 in *Vatican Council II*, 121.

¹³⁹ Emphasis added.

too, but because it is presence in the fullest sense: that is to say, it is a *substantial* presence by which Christ, God and man, makes himself wholly and entirely present."¹⁴⁰

The *Catechism* then goes on to repeat the teaching of the Council of Trent, which affirms the doctrine of transubstantiation.¹⁴¹ The eucharistic presence of Christ "begins at the moment of the consecration and endures as long as the Eucharistic species subsist."¹⁴²

The real and substantial presence of Christ in the Eucharist confirms the efficacy of the *epiclesis* (the invocation of the Holy Spirit), for it is through the power of the Holy Spirit that the bread and wine are truly transformed into his risen body and blood. Moreover, it is the real and substantial presence of the risen Christ that makes the *anamnesis* (the remembering) a true re-presentation (the making present) of the living salvific mysteries and not merely the recollection of a past event. Because Christ, the great High Priest, is substantially present, the faithful, in joining themselves to him, are also united to his once-and-for-all sacrifice and so acquire its everlasting saving benefits, the forgiveness of sins and the risen life of the Holy Spirit. Finally, because the risen Christ is substantially present in the Eucharist, the faithful, in receiving him, are truly conformed into his own risen likeness, and so are able to live more fully their call to discipleship.

It is important to note that the understanding of transubstantiation embraces notions of symbol and eschatological anticipation but cannot be reduced to them. Pope Paul VI was concerned to correct such misunderstandings in his 1965 encyclical *Mysterium fidei* where he also addressed the sacramental nature of Christ's physical or bodily presence in the sacrament.

To avoid any misunderstanding of this type of presence, which goes beyond the laws of nature and constitutes the greatest miracle of its kind, we have to listen with docility to the voice of the teaching and praying Church. Her voice, which constantly echoes the voice of Christ, assures us that the way in which Christ becomes present in this Sacrament is through the conversion of the whole substance of the bread into His body and of the whole substance of the wine into His blood, a unique and truly wonderful conversion that the Catholic Church fittingly and properly calls transubstantiation. As a result of transubstantiation, the species of bread and wine undoubtedly take on a new signification and a new finality, for they are no longer ordinary bread and wine but instead a sign of something sacred and a sign of spiritual food; but they take on this new signification, this new finality, precisely because they contain a new "reality" which we can rightly call ontological. For what

¹⁴⁰ CCC, 1374.

¹⁴¹ CCC, 1376 states: "The Council of Trent summarizes the Catholic faith by declaring: 'Because Christ our Redeemer said that it was truly his body that he was offering under the species of bread, it has always been the conviction of the Church of God, and this holy Council now declares again, that by the consecration of the bread and wine there takes place a change of the whole substance of the bread into the substance of the body of Christ our Lord and of the whole substance of the wine into the substance of his blood. This change the holy Catholic Church has fittingly and properly called transubstantiation.'"

¹⁴² CCC, 1377.

now lies beneath the aforementioned species is not what was there before, but something completely different; and not just in the estimation of Church belief but in reality, since once the substance or nature of the bread and wine has been changed into the body and blood of Christ, nothing remains of the bread and the wine except for the species—beneath which Christ is present whole and entire in His physical “reality,” corporeally present, although not in the manner in which bodies are in a place.¹⁴³

This belief in the real and substantial presence of Christ in the eucharistic species has several consequences for Catholic worship and devotion. First, “in the liturgy of the Mass we express our faith in the real presence of Christ under the species of bread and wine by, among other ways, genuflecting or bowing deeply as a sign of adoration of the Lord.”¹⁴⁴ In addition, the faithful adore and worship Jesus present in the Eucharist, “not only during Mass, but also outside of it, reserving the consecrated hosts with the utmost care, exposing them to the solemn veneration of the faithful, and carrying them in procession.”¹⁴⁵

The *Catechism* goes on to speak more specifically about adoration. It acknowledges that the tabernacle (a decorated wood or metal receptacle that holds the reserved Sacrament) was originally intended as a worthy repository for the Eucharist that would be given to the sick and others who had to be absent from Mass. However, “as faith in the real presence of Christ in his Eucharist deepened, the Church became conscious of the meaning of silent adoration of the Lord present under the eucharistic species.”¹⁴⁶

Indeed, eucharistic adoration has been a long tradition in the Catholic Church, resting in the belief that Christ’s presence in the bread and wine after they have become his body and blood is substantial and enduring. Moreover, gestures of adoration take place within the shape of the liturgy itself: at the genuflection of the priest (and the bow of the assembly if they are standing) after the elevations of the Host and Chalice; at the genuflection of the priest before he receives Communion; at the communicants’ bow before they receive (in the U.S.); in the prolonged period of silence or communal song of praise at the conclusion of the Communion procession; and in the period of adoration at the Repository on Holy Thursday after the procession with the Eucharist. The adoration of the Blessed Sacrament is an extension of the adoration that begins in the Mass itself.

Although it does not develop the point at length, the *Catechism* recognizes that there is a sense in which “real presence” has to do not only with the eucharistic elements but also with those who receive it. The point is made most explicitly in the section on how the Eucharist “makes the Church”: “Communion renews, strengthens, and deepens this incorporation into the Church, already achieved by Baptism. In Baptism we have been called to form but one body.” In this connection, the *Catechism* cites the sermon by St. Augustine that we quoted in the general “Introduction”

¹⁴³ Pope Paul VI, *Mysterium fidei*, no. 46. http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_vi/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_03091965_mysterium_en.html (October 6, 2010).

¹⁴⁴ CCC, 1378.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁶ CCC, 1379.

If you are the body and members of Christ, then it is your sacrament that is placed on the table of the Lord; it is your sacrament that you receive. To that which you are you respond "Amen" ("yes, it is true!") and by responding to it you assent to it. For you hear the words, "the Body of Christ" and respond "Amen." Be then a member of the Body of Christ that your *Amen* may be true.¹⁴⁷

In addition to its expression in the *Catechism*, this emphasis has also been operative in recent Catholic theological reflection on the Eucharist and social justice.¹⁴⁸

Offering and Sacrifice

Sacrifice language has been one of the historically divisive matters between our churches. At issue is whether the sacrifice on the cross is repeated. Eucharistic Prayer I (a revision and translation of the Roman Canon) helps us address this question. The prayer, after the institution narrative, continues with these words after the *anamnesis*: ". . . we, your servants and your holy people, offer to your glorious majesty from the gifts that you have given us, this pure victim, this holy victim, this spotless victim, the holy Bread of eternal life and the Chalice of everlasting salvation." What is remembered and offered is the risen Christ substantially present in the Bread and Wine, "a holy sacrifice, a spotless victim."

Just as the celebration of Passover makes present the Exodus event to Jewish believers, the Eucharist is Christ's Passover in which "the sacrifice Christ offered once for all on the cross remains ever present" to the Christian community.¹⁴⁹ In this connection the *Catechism* quotes the Second Vatican Council's "Dogmatic Constitution on the Church" (*Lumen gentium*), no. 3: "As often as the sacrifice of the Cross by which 'Christ our Pasch has been sacrificed' is celebrated on the altar, the work of our redemption is carried out." The *Catechism* goes on to say:

Because it is the memorial of Christ's Passover, the Eucharist is also a sacrifice. The sacrificial character of the Eucharist is manifested in the very words of institution: "This is my body which is given for you" and "This cup which is poured out for you is the New Covenant in my blood." In the Eucharist Christ gives us the very body which he gave up for us on the cross, the very blood which he "poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins."¹⁵⁰

It then makes two further points about the Eucharist as sacrifice. First, the sacrifice of Christ and the sacrifice of the Eucharist are one single sacrifice:

¹⁴⁷ CCC, 1396; see page 8 above.

¹⁴⁸ It has been argued that this emphasis is found in the New Testament, e.g., in 1 Cor 11:17-32, where Paul speaks of eating the bread and drinking the cup in an unworthy manner. Thus the Corinthians may have *thought* that they were coming together to celebrate the Lord's Supper (v. 20), but their behavior towards the poor precluded an authentic celebration of the Eucharist. See Jerome Murphy-O'Connor's excellent analysis in "Eucharist and Community in First Corinthians (Part II)," *Worship* 51 (1977) 65-68.

¹⁴⁹ CCC, 1364.

¹⁵⁰ CCC, 1365.

Jesus, who offered himself on the cross, now offers himself through the ministry of the priest in an “unbloody” manner.¹⁵¹ At the same time, the community is invited to unite itself to Christ’s sacrifice; thus the Eucharist is also a time for each individual to renew his or her own self-giving surrender to fidelity to God. Second, the Eucharist is also the sacrifice of the Church. “The Church which is the Body of Christ participates in the offering of her Head. With him, she herself is offered whole and entire.” This includes all of the members of Christ’s body, whose “praise, sufferings, prayer, and work, are united with those of Christ and with his total offering, and so acquire a new value.”¹⁵²

Catholic doctrine has often spoken of the “propitiatory” nature of Jesus’ sacrifice, that is, that it expiates sin. The *Catechism* quotes the Council of Trent on this point: “Since in this divine sacrifice which is celebrated in the Mass, the same Christ who offered himself once in a bloody manner on the altar of the cross is contained and is offered in an unbloody manner . . . this sacrifice is truly propitiatory.”¹⁵³ This notion, however, requires some expansion. Christ lovingly offered his holy and innocent life to the Father out of love for the whole of humankind. It is this loving offering that makes Jesus’ sacrifice an act of *propitiation* or expiation for sin. The whole sinful history of humankind is an affront to the goodness and love of the infinite God. Justice itself, and not the arbitrary demands of an angry God, demands that reparation be made to God for such an offense, so that human beings might be reconciled to God and be made holy once again. Jesus’ loving sacrificial offering of his own holy and innocent life to the Father on behalf of humankind made reparation for all the sinful (unloving) acts that were and are an affront to the goodness and love of God, and thus human beings were reconciled to the Father and made holy. Jesus’ propitiatory sacrifice, then, does not quell the wrath of an angry God, but rather, having met the demands of justice, makes it possible once more for those who come to faith in Christ to become authentic sons and daughters of the Father. The Council of Trent expresses this as follows:

And insasmuch as in this divine sacrifice which is celebrated in the mass is contained and immolated in an unbloody manner the same Christ who once offered Himself in a bloody manner on the altar of the cross, the holy council teaches that this is truly propitiatory and has this effect, that we, contrite and penitent, with sincere heart and upright faith, with fear and reverence, draw nigh to God, *we obtain mercy and find grace in seasonable aid.* For, appeased by this sacrifice, the Lord grants the grace and gift of penitence and pardons even the gravest crimes and sins.¹⁵⁴

It is this one propitiatory sacrifice that is made present within the eucharistic celebration.

¹⁵¹ CCC, 1367.

¹⁵² CCC, 1368.

¹⁵³ CCC, 1367.

¹⁵⁴ *Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*, trans. H. J. Schroeder (Rockford, IL: Tan, 1978), 145-46 (“Doctrine Concerning the Sacrifice of the Mass,” Chap. 2 [Council of Trent, Session 22]).

The *Catechism* summarizes that the Eucharist is a sacrifice for three reasons: “because it *re-presents* (makes present, enacts) the sacrifice of the cross, because it is its *memorial* and because it *applies* its fruit.”¹⁵⁵ The Eucharist makes present the one sacrifice of Christ so that all believers, from every age, might be united to it, and so reap its salvific benefits, that is, forgiveness of sins and reconciliation with the Father. As the Council of Trent states,

[Christ], our Lord and God, was once and for all to offer himself to God the Father by his death on the altar of the cross, to accomplish there an everlasting redemption. But because his priesthood was not to end with his death, at the Last Supper “on the night when he was betrayed,” [he wanted] to leave to his beloved spouse the Church a visible sacrifice (as the nature of man demands) by which the bloody sacrifice which he was to accomplish once for all on the cross would be re-presented, its memory perpetuated until the end of the world, and its salutary power be applied to the forgiveness of the sins we commit.¹⁵⁶

It is worth noting that the *Catechism* begins its teaching on sacrifice with what *Christ* offered, and relates all other meanings of sacrifice back to it. But this sacrifice of Christ also involves God the Father’s offering of Jesus to the Church. This understanding is reflected in the Catholic liturgical tradition, such as, for example, in the wording of Eucharistic Prayer IV:

Look O Lord, upon the Sacrifice which *you yourself have provided for your Church*, and grant in your loving kindness to all who partake of this one Bread and one Chalice that, gathered into one body by the Holy Spirit, they may truly become a living sacrifice in Christ to the praise of your glory.¹⁵⁷

Discipleship

Every eucharistic celebration dynamically moves toward the concluding rites during which we are explicitly sent forth to live what we have celebrated. Indeed, two new formulae for dismissal written by Pope Benedict XVI and included in the 2010 third edition of the *Roman Missal* make our discipleship even stronger: “Go and announce the Gospel of the Lord.” and “Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life.” But even earlier in the Mass there are indications that we are challenged to live what we have celebrated as faithful disciples of the Lord. For example, the purpose of the homily is so that “the mysteries of the faith and the *guiding principles of the Christian life* are expounded from the sacred text during the course of the liturgical year.”¹⁵⁸ The two eucharistic prayers for reconciliation remind us of our responsibility to reach out to those whom we have hurt or those from whom we are alienated. In the Eucharistic Prayer for Masses for Various Needs and Occasion: I. The Church on the Way to Unity we pray that the Church manifests the covenant of the Father’s love and until Christ comes again and

¹⁵⁵ CCC, 1366.

¹⁵⁶ *Canons and Decrees*, 144 (“Doctrine Concerning the Sacrifice of the Mass,” Chap. 1., quoted in CCC, 1366.

¹⁵⁷ Emphasis added.

¹⁵⁸ No. 52, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* in *Vatican Council II*.

we pray that we proclaim the work of God's love. In the same eucharistic prayer, IV. Jesus, the Compassion of God we pray that the Lord open our eyes to the needs of all, inspire us to comfort through our words and deeds those who labor and are burdened, and keep our service of others faithful to the example and command of Christ.

Sacrosanctum Concilium clearly places the liturgy in the wider context of the Christian life when it says:

11. But in order that the liturgy may be able to produce its full effects, it is necessary that the faithful come to it with proper dispositions, that their minds should be attuned to their voices, and that they should cooperate with divine grace lest they receive it in vain (see 2 Cor 6:1). Pastors of souls must, therefore, realize that, when the liturgy is celebrated, their obligation goes further than simply ensuring that the laws governing valid and lawful celebration are observed. They must also ensure that the faithful take part fully aware of what they are doing, actively engaged in the rite, and enriched by it.

12. The spiritual life, however, is not limited solely to participation in the liturgy. Christians are indeed called to pray with others, but they must also enter into their rooms to pray to their Father, in secret (see Mt 6:6); furthermore, according to the teaching of the apostle, he must pray without ceasing (see 1 Th 5:17). We also learn from the same apostle that we must always carry around in our bodies the dying of Jesus, so that the life too of Jesus may be made manifest in our mortal flesh (see 2 Cor 4:10-11). That is why we beg the Lord in the sacrifice of the Mass that, "receiving the offering of the spiritual victim," he may fashion us for himself "as an eternal gift."¹⁵⁹

The *Catechism*, too, lists several "fruits of Holy Communion." These connect the Eucharist to Catholics' overall life of faith and their relationship with the Church—Church understood in a fairly broad sense. The first fruit of the Eucharist is that it "augments our union with Christ."¹⁶⁰ Holy Communion "preserves, increases, and renews the life of grace received at Baptism." It provides spiritual nourishment just as material food provides bodily nourishment.¹⁶¹ Second, the Eucharist "separates us from sin."¹⁶² This includes wiping away venial sins and preserving us from future mortal sins.¹⁶³ The *Catechism* explains the latter as follows: "The more we share the life of Christ and progress in his friendship, the more difficult it is to break away from

¹⁵⁹ *Vatican Council II*, 123.

¹⁶⁰ CCC, 1391.

¹⁶¹ CCC, 1392.

¹⁶² CCC, 1393.

¹⁶³ CCC defines venial sin as follows: "One commits *venial sin* when, in a less serious matter, he does not observe the standard prescribed by the moral law, or when he disobeys the moral law in a grave matter, but without full knowledge or without complete consent" (1862). "Mortal sin is sin whose object is grave matter and which is also committed with full knowledge and deliberate consent" (1857).

him by mortal sin.”¹⁶⁴ The third fruit is that the Eucharist “makes the Church. . . Communion renews, strengthens, and deepens [our] incorporation into the Church, already achieved by Baptism.”¹⁶⁵ Fourth, the Eucharist commits us to the poor: “To receive in truth the Body and Blood of Christ given up for us, we must recognize Christ in the poorest, his brethren.”¹⁶⁶ Thus, the Eucharist should commit us to social justice. The fifth and final fruit of the Eucharist is that it signifies the unity of Christians. “The more painful the experience of the divisions in the Church which break the common participation in the table of the Lord, the more urgent are our prayers to the Lord that the time of complete unity among all who believe in him may return.”¹⁶⁷ The Catechism’s language clearly suggests that this fruit is only partially realized as long as our churches remain divided.

The *Catechism* ends this section with several paragraphs on the Eucharist as a pledge of eternal glory.¹⁶⁸ This point could just as well have been made under the rubric of fruits of the Eucharist in that, like the fruit of unity, it signifies the “not yet” of the kingdom. Our discipleship is always lived in the context of waiting in joyful hope for the coming of the Savior.

Section 3: Convergences and Divergences

In studying our theologies and liturgies of the Eucharist/Lord’s Supper, our Roman Catholic and Reformed dialogue teams tried not only to understand each other better but also to identify areas of convergence and divergence on each of the five themes that together we explored. In what follows, we specify these points of agreement as well as ways in which our understandings continue to differ. These points of convergence and divergence summarize what has been elaborated above in each of our discreet discussions of the five themes. For the benefit of the reader, we provide page references to the specific sections from which these summaries derive. At the close of each section below we express, as Roman Catholic and Reformed Christians, what we appreciate about the theology and practice of the Eucharist/Lord’s Supper of our partners in dialogue, especially in relation to our differences in understanding. This discussion is not an official statement endorsed by our respective communions. Rather, it reflects the perspectives of our dialogue teams—the fruit of our mutual and prayerful study, writing, and conversations together. We offer it in the hope that it will provide a basis for further reflection and dialogue.

3a: *Epiclesis*—Action of the Holy Spirit¹⁶⁹

Reformed and Roman Catholic dialogue participants recognize significant convergence in our understanding of the action of the Holy Spirit in the Lord’s Supper/Eucharist. Centrally, we agree that it is through the work of the Spirit that the sacrament becomes effective. While we agree that the Spirit’s presence and work in the sacrament is manifest, we also

¹⁶⁴ CCC, 1395. The forgiveness of mortal sin is proper to the Sacrament of Penance.

¹⁶⁵ CCC, 1396.

¹⁶⁶ CCC, 1397.

¹⁶⁷ CCC, 1398.

¹⁶⁸ CCC, 1402-1405.

¹⁶⁹ See above, Reformed discussion of *epiclesis*, pp. 15-19, and Roman Catholic discussion, pp. 43-46.

acknowledge that the Spirit's presence is inscrutable and the Spirit's work mysterious.

We agree that it is the Spirit who gathers and prepares the Church, as well as individual persons, for encounter in the sacrament with Christ, who has lived, died, risen, ascended, and now reigns as Lord of the Church.

We agree that in, with, and through Word and Sacrament, the Spirit makes Christ present here and now. Through Word and Eucharist/Lord's Supper, all that Christ has done for us, and all of Christ's benefits are offered and given. In faith, the Church receives the person and work of Christ. For both the Reformed and Roman Catholics, the Spirit makes present the whole paschal mystery—the incarnation, life, death, resurrection, and ascension. For Roman Catholics, however, a key emphasis of the Eucharist is on the one sacrifice of Christ that is offered to the Father, through the Spirit, by the Church in union with Christ.

We agree that through the sacrament, the Spirit grants, renews, strengthens, and deepens faith; more fully conforms us to the person of Christ; and inspires the Church's thanksgiving, praise, and faithful living in response to the presence and offering of Christ.

We agree that the Holy Spirit effects and deepens our union and communion with Christ, the Son, and thus also, our union and communion with the Father and Holy Spirit. Through the sacrament, the Spirit also effects and deepens our union and communion with each other, and with all the saints who have died in faith. The Spirit forms us, the living and the dead, as the Body of Christ—many members joined together under the one rule of Christ, the Lord and Head of the Church.

For Roman Catholics, the union that the Spirit effects in the Eucharist is one in which the Church is so joined to Christ that it is united with the one sacrifice of Christ and shares in Christ's own self-offering to the Father. The Reformed affirm that in the Supper the Spirit effects deeper union with Christ, but not as a joining in Christ's one sacrifice to the Father. Thus, the self-offering of the congregation that the Spirit effects at the Lord's Table is a response, in thanksgiving, to the unique self-offering of Christ.

We acknowledge that in the sacramental rites of all our communions, the Church prays, explicitly or implicitly, for God to send the Spirit with respect to both the gifts of bread and wine and the gathered congregation, so that the faithful might receive and be nourished by the body and blood of Jesus Christ. As concerns the faithful, we agree that God answers the *epiclesis* by sending the Spirit who creates a disposition of readiness, obedience, receptivity, thanksgiving, and longing in the congregation. As concerns the bread and wine, Roman Catholics believe that the Spirit changes the bread and wine into "the body and blood, soul and divinity" of the risen Jesus Christ. That is to say, that under the appearance of bread and wine itself, the whole risen Christ is given and received. The Reformed believe that the Spirit uses the bread and wine as instruments, or true signs, by means of which the faithful are nourished by the true body and blood of Christ.

As a result of our dialogue, the Roman Catholic participants have come to a greater understanding and appreciation of the Reformed churches' conviction that the *epiclesis*, or calling down of the Holy Spirit, engenders within the worshipers a deeper readiness, obedience, and receptivity to the work of Christ, a renewed spirit of thankfulness for the gift of Christ, and a longing

to be more deeply united to him and to see the day when Christ's kingdom is fulfilled on earth as in heaven. The Reformed participants have come to a greater understanding and appreciation for the Roman Catholic sense of the Church's action, in and with the Spirit, as efficacious in the celebration and fulfillment of the Eucharist.

*3b: Anamnesis—Remembering*¹⁷⁰

Together we agree that when we celebrate the Eucharist/Lord's Supper, we are remembering Christ's person and work in a way that goes beyond mere human recollection of a past event. In our liturgical practice and theological reflection, Roman Catholic and Reformed Christians share a common sense of *anamnesis* as a making present of and participation in the person, work, and benefits of Christ, through the Spirit. This shared conviction has three interrelated elements.

First, we recognize that remembering is intimately related to the presence of Christ. As we remember Christ, we realize Christ's presence with us. Our conversations about Christ's presence in the Eucharist/Lord's Supper, therefore, should be held together with our common reflections on *anamnesis*.

Second, we agree that remembering brings about a participation in Christ that encompasses past, present, and future. Through our remembering, we realize not only Christ's presence to us here and now, but our very fellowship in Christ. This common conviction should be kept together with the shared emphasis on the uniqueness of Christ's sacrifice in which we participate. As we remember, we enter into the "once and perpetual" sacrifice that Christ has offered on our behalf. Through this participation, we also "remember" and believe that our future is entirely bound up with what Christ has done and is doing now.

Third, as was said in the discussion of *epiclesis* above, the Church's act of remembering is effective by the power of the Holy Spirit. It is an act of God working through the Church. Thus we acknowledge together that the Church's *anamnesis*, through which is realized our participation in Christ's person, work, and benefits, is ever a gift. God's action is always primary in this event.

Though we share the conviction that God's action is primary in the act of remembering, our communions also agree that the Church gathered at the Eucharist/Lord's Supper is engaged as an active partner in remembering. As the congregation comes to receive the sacrament, it opens itself to the work of the Spirit, enters into the presence of Christ, realizes its participation in Christ (past, present and future), and offers up its praise and thanksgiving as it remembers God's acts of salvation.

Having identified significant convergence in our understanding of *anamnesis*, we also note differing emphases on this theme. Reformed Christians make a clear distinction between Christ's activity and the activity of the faithful who engage in *anamnesis*. The people's activity is always secondary and dependent on Christ's activity. For this reason, when Reformed Christians affirm real participation in Christ through the sacrament, we do not understand that we offer Christ's sacrifice to the Father. Instead, we believe

¹⁷⁰ See above, Reformed discussion of *anamnesis*, pp. 19-24, and Roman Catholic discussion, pp. 46-48.

that we participate in Christ, who offered himself as a sacrifice to the Father. Roman Catholic Christians, on the other hand, confess that the Church is so joined to Christ that it is united with the one sacrifice of Christ and, in the Eucharist, participates in Christ's own self-offering to the Father.

A second difference in emphasis concerns the breadth of what is remembered in the sacrament. As previously discussed, Reformed Christians in recent years have expanded the scope of the *anamnesis* of Christ's work, both in confessional formulations and in liturgical expression. While earlier documents focused almost exclusively on Christ's sacrificial death as that which was remembered, confessions and liturgies since the mid-twentieth century have emphasized that the life and ministry of Christ and the hope of Christ's return are also central to the sacramental remembrance. While Roman Catholic doctrine has also taken into account the saving nature of Christ's life, the *anamnesis* itself focuses on the death, resurrection, and second coming of Christ. This apparent difference in emphasis merits further dialogue about the role of Christ's life in the Church's *anamnesis*.

As a result of our dialogue, Reformed participants have gained appreciation for the depth of Roman Catholic conviction regarding the church's participation in Christ's offering itself, and see this as a profound invitation to ponder more fully the mystery of our unity with the risen Christ. Roman Catholic participants have come to appreciate the Reformed communions' emphasis on God's action in their understanding of sacramental remembering. This emphasis is evident in the Reformed tradition's conviction that the church does not share in Christ's own self-offering at the Table but rather receives what Christ has offered, which highlights the depth and breadth of human dependence on God's grace.

3c: Presence of Christ¹⁷¹

Our dialogue has confirmed that both the Reformed and Roman Catholic traditions have always held that Christ is truly present in the Supper, and present in multiple ways. For the Reformed, Christ gives his presence through the Word, calls us to the Table, is present by the Spirit in those who come to the Table in faith, bids us through the minister to participate in the effective signs of bread and cup, and by the Spirit nourishes us with his body and blood and more deeply engrafts us into his mystical body. For Roman Catholics, too, Christ is present by his power in the sacraments, in the Word, in the ministry of the priest, and in the praying and singing of the Church.

However, our traditions differ in their understanding of how Christ is distinctively present in the Supper. We can trace this difference to the historical development of our respective theologies of the Eucharist/Lord's Supper and believe it helpful to briefly summarize these developments here. Latin and Greek patristic sources display rich eucharistic imagery and theology, including two principal ways to describe how Christ nourishes believers with his very body and blood. Some patristic theologians maintained that Christ is present through a conversion of the elements themselves, while others described Christ as mystically engrafting believers yet more deeply into his

¹⁷¹ See above, Reformed discussion of "presence," pp. 24-29, and Roman Catholic discussion, pp. 48-52.

real presence.¹⁷² The Roman Catholic tradition developed and maintains a synthesis of these two positions. The Reformed theologians of the Protestant Reformation, however, principally followed an interpretation of Augustine on Christ's eucharistic presence, which stresses the mystery of the Spirit's engrafting believers more deeply into Christ's real presence. As it is clear in our separate presentations above, therefore, both traditions, in their historical catholicity and present constructive positions, are interested in the mode of Christ's presence in the Eucharist/Lord's Supper.

If both traditions insist that what believers receive at the Table is not mere blessed bread but Christ himself, what exactly does that mean? For Roman Catholics, it means a substantial presence by which the whole Christ makes himself wholly present on the altar. Christ is truly, really, and substantially present under the form of the eucharistic elements. This takes place by what the Catholic Church calls a "transubstantiation," or change in the substance, of the eucharistic bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ, a change that is effected at the moment of consecration and lasts as long as the eucharistic species subsist.

By taking up this interpretation of the Augustinian mode of presence, whereby believers are fed by Christ who engrafts them more deeply into his mystical body, the Reformed tradition, too, specifically holds to the true presence of Christ. However, it wishes to distance itself from any idea of a "real" conversion of the elements themselves, and thus from the doctrine of transubstantiation. Christ himself is indeed effectively offered by, with, and through the signs of bread and wine, which assures believers that as they partake, they are engrafted more deeply into Christ's mystical body and are thereby nourished by his flesh and blood. But the flesh and blood of Christ themselves remain in heaven, at the right hand of God, since his human body cannot be located in several places at once. It is through the mysterious agency of the Holy Spirit that our mystical union with Christ's flesh and blood communicated by the signs is brought about, a point which we take up in more depth at the end of this section.

The Catholic Church also recognizes this Augustinian feature of Christ's presence and mystical union in the Eucharist, but as we saw earlier, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* places the discussion of mystical engrafting into Christ in the section on "The Fruits of Communion," which follows the treatment of the presence of Christ as such. For Roman Catholics, the Eucharist is a fundamental cause of the Church itself, whereas for the Reformed tradition the mystical communion of believers with Christ is presupposed by the Supper and forms the basis of the sacrament in which believers are engrafted yet more deeply into Christ and nourished by his body and blood.

One of the most important things that participants in this dialogue have learned to appreciate, therefore, is the deep historical roots of the

¹⁷² On the real presence of Christ, see, for example, Pierre Batiffol, *L'Eucharistie, la présence réelle et la transubstantiation* (Paris: Librairie Victor Lecoffre, 1905); Josef Rupert Geiselman, *Die Eucharistielehre der Vorscholastik*, Forschungen zur Christlichen Literatur- und Dogmengeschichte, vol. 15 (Paderborn: F. Schönigh, 1926); Edward J. Kilmartin, S.J., *The Eucharist in the West: History and Theology*, ed. Robert J. Daly (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1998). See also Johannes Betz, *Die Eucharistie in der Zeit der griechischen Väter*, 2 vols. (Freiburg: Herder, 1961-64); idem, *Eucharistie: In der Schrift und Patristik* (Freiburg: Herder, 1979).

convergences and divergences cited here. Despite our differences, the Roman Catholic and Reformed traditions are able to say together that in the Eucharist/Lord's Supper Christ is truly present, offering at the Table for our nourishment what he once offered on the cross, so that we receive not just the blessed elements but Christ himself.

A Further Clarification on Presence

As noted above, the Reformed position is that the risen body of Christ at the right hand of the Father cannot be located in several places at once. While this might seem to accentuate the differences between the Catholic and Reformed positions because of the Catholic teaching on the real presence, there also exists between our two traditions a possible convergence on the eucharistic presence of the body of Christ. We agree that Christ in his risen body is in heaven at the right hand of God. We also agree that in the Eucharist he communicates in a life-giving manner the substance of his body and blood. Even though we have not arrived at a common understanding concerning how this presence is communicated through the eucharistic signs of bread and wine, we share similar perspectives on how Christ's glorified flesh relates to his presence in the Eucharist. Both of our theological traditions have taken up this question of the "how" (or modality) of Christ's eucharistic presence. Here we repeat the quote from Calvin already cited and compare it to one from Pope Paul VI in his encyclical *Mysterium fidei*, also previously cited.

Calvin writes:

Christ does not simply present to us the benefit of his death and resurrection, but the very body in which he suffered and rose again. I conclude, that Christ's body is *really*, (as the common expression is)—that is, *truly* given to us in the Supper, to be wholesome food for our souls. I use the common form of expression, but my meaning is, that our souls are nourished by the substance of the body, that we may truly be made one with him, or, what amounts to the same thing, that a life-giving virtue from Christ's flesh is poured into us by the Spirit, though it is at a great distance from us, and is not mixed with us.¹⁷³

On this same point, in his encyclical *Mysterium fidei* Pope Paul VI says:

To avoid any misunderstanding of this type of presence, which goes beyond the laws of nature and constitutes the greatest miracle of its kind, we have to listen with docility to the voice of the teaching and praying Church. Her voice, which constantly echoes the voice of Christ, assures us that the way in which Christ becomes present in this Sacrament is through the conversion of the whole substance of the bread into His body and of the whole substance of the wine into His blood, a unique and truly wonderful conversion that the Catholic Church fittingly and properly calls transubstantiation. As a result of transubstantiation, the species of bread and wine undoubtedly take on a new signification and a new finality,

¹⁷³ John Calvin, *The First Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians*, trans. John W. Fraser, ed. D. W. and T. F. Torrance (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 246 (see note 65, p. 26 above).

for they are no longer ordinary bread and wine but instead a sign of something sacred and a sign of spiritual food; but they take on this new signification, this new finality, precisely because they contain a new “reality” which we can rightly call ontological. For what now lies beneath the aforementioned species is not what was there before, but something completely different; and not just in the estimation of Church belief but in reality, since once the substance or nature of the bread and wine has been changed into the body and blood of Christ, nothing remains of the bread and the wine except for the species—beneath which Christ is present whole and entire in His physical “reality,” corporeally present, *although not in the manner in which bodies are in a place*.¹⁷⁴

It is the last clause of Paul VI’s quote that Reformed Christians find particularly pertinent. Christ’s corporeal presence in the Eucharist is “not in the same manner in which bodies are in a place.” We know from Scripture that the risen Jesus was recognized and even touched during his Easter appearances. Catholics and Reformed Christians agree that after his ascension Christ is physically present at the right hand of the Father in his risen body. We agree that in regard to the Eucharist we distinguish between Christ’s bodily presence in a place, e.g., at the right hand of God, and his bodily presence sacramentally. From the Catholic perspective he is bodily present in the Eucharist but not in the same manner (or modality) that he was present in the Easter appearances. Thomas Aquinas explained Christ’s bodily presence in the Eucharist as being without dimension or extension according to its proper quantity (as in the Easter appearances where he was seen and touched), but indeed according to its substance (as in his incarnate and glorified humanity). This means he is really present, even physically as Paul VI affirms, while his risen body remains in heaven. This is why Catholics reverence the consecrated species and even adore Christ in the Eucharist.

The Reformed perspective also emphasizes that the risen body of Christ remains in heaven during the Lord’s Supper. The Reformed tradition asserts that Christ communicates his life-giving glorified flesh to believers through the incomprehensible activity of the Holy Spirit. Christ’s presence in the Lord’s Supper is distinctly sacramental, a point that Reformed theology has traditionally affirmed. However, the bread and wine do not become the body and blood of Christ. Therefore, Reformed Christians consider it inappropriate to reverence the eucharistic elements. While we recognize this remaining divergence, nevertheless, we hope that the convergence on the spatial nature of the risen body of Christ may open up new possibilities for further discussion on this matter in the future.

*3d: Offering and Sacrifice*¹⁷⁵

With respect to what is offered or sacrificed in the Eucharist/Lord’s Supper, the Roman Catholic and Reformed traditions converge on several points and diverge on several others. Using the language of offering and sacrifice,

¹⁷⁴ Pope Paul VI, *Mysterium Fidei*, no. 46 (see note 139, p. 50 above).

¹⁷⁵ See above, Reformed discussion of offering and sacrifice, pp. 29-38, and Roman Catholic discussion, pp. 52-55.

both traditions tend to agree on what God in Christ offers and sacrifices on our behalf, but differ on the questions of what *we* offer or sacrifice to God.

Roman Catholics and Reformed converge in seeing the Eucharist/Lord's Supper as grounded in God's gracious work in creation and salvation history, as a sacramental means of encountering Christ's redemptive self-offering, and as moving worshipers to offer themselves as living sacrifices of thanksgiving in imitation of Christ.

Both communions agree that God's gracious work in creation and in the history of salvation form the background for the Eucharist/Lord's Supper. God is the creator and giver of life, the source of all good, and the one whose providential care sustains all. The Eucharist/Lord's Supper recalls the great events in which God acts to offer or give salvation, and in particular such events as the Exodus of the people of Israel from Egypt and the return of God's people from the Exile. Through these events, God is restoring and renewing God's creatures and all creation, rescuing them from sin and evil. These events give shape to our understanding of God's character as one who offers life and hope despite our fallenness.

In addition, we agree that, against this background, the Eucharist/Lord's Supper highlights Christ's redemptive self-offering which culminates in his death and resurrection. Christ's sacrificial self-offering is the culmination of God's redeeming and renewing work. Through this self-offering, the world is reconciled to God and creatures are reconciled to one another. The Eucharist/Lord's Supper not only highlights Christ's self-offering, but also serves as a means of grace by which Christ offers and we receive the benefits of his redemptive and reconciling work.

Finally, both traditions agree that in this sacrament, worshipers offer themselves as living sacrifices of thanksgiving in response to God's grace in Jesus Christ. The act of participating in the sacrament is not only a receiving of the grace offered by God, but also a presentation of ourselves as an offering of praise and thanksgiving to God. This self-offering is part of the larger offering of ourselves as living sacrifices to God (Romans 12:1). In all of these ways, then, the Roman Catholic and Reformed traditions share a common understanding of what God offers to us and what we offer to God through the Eucharist/Lord's Supper.

Despite the many significant ways in which our communions converge, we also diverge on some important claims about the Eucharist/Lord's Supper. First, the Reformed communions speak of Christ being offered to us, but do not say that we offer Christ in the Eucharist or Lord's Supper. Roman Catholics say that Christ invites us into his act of self-offering, so that the priest and people offer the eucharistic Christ to the Father as an act of worship. Roman Catholics also say that, if we are in Christ, then our act of self-offering is also a means by which we offer Christ. In contrast, the Reformed tradition is not willing to speak of our offering of Christ to the Father, or of our self-offering as, in part, an offering of Christ. Rather, Reformed confessions emphasize that the Lord's Supper is God's gift to us, which we receive from God's grace and to which we respond.

Second, the two traditions differ on the Eucharist/Lord's Supper as a "re-presentation" of Christ's sacrifice. Roman Catholics see the Eucharist as a re-presentation and real participation in Christ's unique sacrifice on the cross. It is an unbloody re-presentation and memorial of Christ's once-for-

all sacrifice. In contrast, Reformed Christians see the sacrament as a visible presentation of the message of the Gospel and as a means of grace, but not as actually continuing Christ's sacrifice on the cross. In short, the difference here is over each tradition's understanding of the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ.

Finally, the two traditions differ over the role of the minister or priest in the sacramental offering. In the Reformed tradition, Christ hosts the meal and offers himself to the congregation through the office of the minister.¹⁷⁶ Roman Catholics see the priest, acting in the person of Christ, as offering Christ's one sacrifice to the Father on behalf of the people, as well as representing the Church in the faithful's self-offering, in union with Christ, to the Father.

As a result of our dialogue, Reformed participants have grown in appreciation for the Roman Catholic understanding of how the Church's profound union with Christ is expressed as an actual participation Christ's own self-offering, to the Father. Roman Catholic participants appreciate the Reformed impulse to preserve the priority of God's action as distinct from the Church's action in response to what God has done and is doing.

3e: *Discipleship*¹⁷⁷

The Reformed and Roman Catholic traditions both strongly affirm the connection between Eucharist/Lord's Supper and Christian discipleship. Historically, this theme has appeared in numerous key documents of our respective communities, and in recent years it has reappeared in works of both Reformed and Roman Catholic theology.¹⁷⁸ This is an area where the convergences are many and clear and the divergences are fewer and sometimes manifested as different tendencies in our two traditions.

Both traditions emphasize that the Eucharist/Lord's Supper deepens our union with Christ. Additionally, both affirm that the sacrament strengthens our communion with the Body of Christ, the Church. In our liturgies, this deepened communion with and participation in the Body of Christ is understood also to permeate the Christian's daily witness in the world. In the RCA's Supper liturgy, for example, the *epiclesis* includes the prayer, "Send your Spirit that we may grow up in all things into Christ our Lord." In the Roman Catholic Mass, the "Prayer after Communion" is an explicit or implicit petition that the eucharistic celebration will have an effect in our daily lives. And one of the imperatives in the Roman Catholic dismissal rite is, "Go and announce the Gospel of the Lord."

Related to this area of convergence is the theme of daily dying to sin and living for God that grows out of our participation in the Eucharist/Lord's Supper. In both Roman Catholic and Reformed theology, this dying and living have found specific expression in a commitment to social justice. Indeed, the very first reference to the sacrament in 1 Corinthians 11 is in the

¹⁷⁶ As previously noted (p. 24, note 54), among the Reformed churches represented in this dialogue, the celebration of the sacrament is provided for and overseen not only by the minister, but also by elders, deacons and/or other authorized lay persons.

¹⁷⁷ See above, Reformed discussion of discipleship, pp. 38-42, and Roman Catholic discussion, pp. 55-57.

¹⁷⁸ To mention but a few: Monika Hellwig, *The Eucharist and the Hunger of the World* (New York: Paulist, 1976); Rodica Stoicoiu, "Eucharist and Social Justice," in David M. McCarthy, *The Heart of Catholic Social Teaching: Its Origins and Contemporary Significance* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2009), Joseph A. Grassi, *Broken Bread and Broken Bodies: The Lord's Supper and World Hunger* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1985).

context of discipleship and ethics: “All who eat and drink without *discerning the body* [i.e., paying attention to the needs of the Body of Christ that is the Church], eat and drink judgment upon themselves” (1 Corinthians 11:29). As our opening discussion of the history of the Eucharist/Lord’s Supper also showed, care for the poor has been a key implication of the sacrament since the early days of Christianity. The Church has emphasized this connection throughout the ages, but the last one hundred years or so have seen an expansion of both Reformed and Roman Catholic reflection on the relationship between discipleship and economic justice. This interconnection between the Eucharist/Lord’s Supper, the life of Christian discipleship, and justice for the poor is repeatedly expressed in more recent confessions, theological writings, and practices in both of our traditions.

Finally, both Roman Catholic and Reformed Christians view the connection between our participation in the sacrament and our growth in discipleship within an eschatological framework. In the Eucharist/Lord’s Supper the Church receives a pledge and foretaste of the fulfillment of God’s kingdom of justice and shalom that is both already present and yet to come. In light of this eschatological perspective, both traditions express confidence in the fact that the Eucharist/Lord’s Supper is a celebration of and participation in God’s promised kingdom. As the Church receives the body and blood of Christ, the Spirit enables the Church to die to sin and rise to new life in Christ. We are nourished toward greater faithfulness in our daily witness to the present and coming kingdom of God, while also recognizing that our discipleship will only reach perfection when God’s glorious kingdom is fully come.

This dialogue, therefore, has disclosed significant convergences between Reformed and Roman Catholic understandings of the relationship between the sacrament and discipleship. However, we do have a somewhat different understanding of the relationship between the Eucharist/Lord’s Supper and the forgiveness of sin. Roman Catholics believe that the Eucharist effects the forgiveness of venial sins and can help to preserve us from future mortal sin. The Reformed Christians believe that through our participation in the Supper the Spirit assures us that in Christ our sins are already forgiven and that our union with Christ both requires and enables us to avoid sin. In either understanding, however, the intended result is a greater joy, thanksgiving, and faithfulness in our lives as disciples of Christ.

In conclusion, in the area of Eucharist/Lord’s Supper and discipleship, we express mutual appreciation for the significant convergences we have identified between our communions. More generally, we give thanks to God for the ways in which our engagement with the five themes of *epiclesis*, *anamnesis*, presence of Christ, sacrifice/offering, and discipleship have increased understanding, respect, and appreciation among us all, and have provided a basis for further dialogue between the Roman Catholic and Reformed communions.

Section 4: Pastoral Implications

The Eucharist/Lord's Supper Is Fundamental to Our Union with Christ, the Community, and Our Ethical Call

The eventual goal of all ecumenical dialogue is the reestablishment of full visible unity among all Christian traditions. The final expression of this unity will be to celebrate the Eucharist/Lord's Supper together in full unity of faith and communion. Our appreciation and knowledge of each other's understanding of the Eucharist/Lord's Supper has grown deeper as a result of our dialogue. Because visible unity does not exist we are not yet at the point where we can participate fully in this sacrament together.¹⁷⁹ Nevertheless, we can be joined in those things which this sacrament calls us to do and be for one another. The Eucharist/Lord's Supper is fundamental to our union with Christ and so we take hope in the realization that as we grow closer to Christ, we grow closer to one another until that unity among his followers for which he prayed will be realized in fullness. The Eucharist/Lord's Supper is also fundamental to our union with the local community in which we find ourselves. Namely, that we will not stand aloof from the issues and struggles of our neighbors in the communities in which we live, but rather strengthened by this sacrament, we go forth as agents of positive change, bringing the gospel message of hope and wholeness especially to the most vulnerable in our society. Thus, the Eucharist/Lord's Supper is essential to our ethical call to help the world, or at least that small part of it in which we find ourselves, to become what God has created it to be.

Practical Ways to Use This Document in Local Settings

The best ecumenism always happens on the local level. While it is good and necessary for religious leaders and theologians to meet in dialogue to discuss matters essential to the recovery of Christian unity, no amount of discussion or dialogue will have lasting impact if the insights, knowledge, and understanding gained therein do not find their way in to the everyday lives of Reformed and Roman Catholic Christians. Roman Catholic and Reformed ecumenical officers, pastors, and laity are encouraged to find creative ways for continuing this dialogue on the local level. This might include:

In General

- A jointly sponsored five to eight week course which explores the five topical areas outlined in the document
- Individual study between the local Roman Catholic and Reformed pastors
- Joint presentations at clergy days of enrichment

¹⁷⁹ Reformed and Roman Catholic Christians acknowledge that there exists a real but imperfect ecclesial communion between our ecclesial bodies. The pain of this imperfect communion is most poignantly manifested in the rite of communion. Roman Catholics view the reception of Holy Communion as the visible sign of full ecclesial communion. Where this full ecclesial communion does not yet exist, the invitation to receive Holy Communion cannot in conscience be extended to other Christians in attendance at a celebration of Roman Catholic Eucharist. Likewise, Roman Catholics who attend Reformed celebrations of the Lord's Supper must refrain from receiving communion there, even though the Reformed liturgies of the Lord's Supper invite all the baptized, including Roman Catholics, to receive at the table. The pain of this reality is deeply felt by Reformed Catholic and Reformed Christians alike.

On Epiclesis

- Invite partner churches on or around Pentecost to do a study on the role of the Holy Spirit in the lives of our churches and how we understand this in our sacramental life
- “Dialogue nights” jointly sponsored by a Reformed and Roman Catholic congregation, on the importance of the Holy Spirit in our respective traditions.

On Anamnesis

- Joint study of the notion of sacred remembering in our traditions
- A six week Lenten study of the same culminating on Good Friday
- Invite partner churches to attend each other’s Good Friday services, reflecting on how we carry the power of that all through the year as a way of sacred remembering

Presence of Christ

- A joint Easter study series on the abiding presence of Christ in Word and Sacrament in the lives of our churches

Offering/Sacrifice

- Invite each other to celebrations of confirmation or acceptance of new members with an emphasis on offering ourselves in service to Christ and the Church
- As our traditions permit, invite each other to attend celebrations of those who have given their lives in service to Christ and his Church, such as ordinations, installations of new pastors, sending of missionaries, celebrations of significant wedding anniversaries, etc., while lifting up insights from this document

Discipleship

- Create partnerships between local Roman Catholic and Reformed congregations to respond to the issues and concerns of all the people who are present in our communities
- In communities that already do partner for charity and justice, to use insights of this document to study how their sacramental life informs these actions

Areas for Future Dialogue

As this round of the dialogue comes to a close, we are excited by the possibilities that lie before us, even as we acknowledge the challenges ahead. This has been by far the most ambitious round of the dialogue, and some would say the most challenging. Yet through it all we have remained committed to join our prayer to that of Christ, “that they all may be one...that the world might believe...” (John 17:21ff), and so we have indeed drawn closer to one another. Still there remains much work to be done on our journey together. Having spent the last six years discussing the sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist/Lord’s Supper, we noted how each of our traditions turns to particular sources and authoritative references when they seek to articulate the authentic interpretation of their faith tradition. We must also acknowledge that our deliberations were hampered by several ecclesiological issues that arose which were sometimes the cause of considerable tension. Thus we believe that it would be good for us in the future to explore together

these ecclesiological issues which still stand before us, including how our sacramental theology relates to the theology of ministry and ordination, the relationship between an individual congregation and the universal Church, understanding each other's polity, and the nature of the Church and how authority is exercised within that understanding in service to the Body of Christ. Particular emphasis may be paid to how the charism of *episkopé* is understood and exercised in Roman Catholic and Reformed traditions. In the course of such a discussion we might even be so bold as to take up the invitation of the late John Paul II given in his encyclical *Ut unum sint* (1995) to discuss the how the ministry of the Bishop of Rome might be a help and not a hindrance in the cause of Christian unity.

A great amount of discussion in the current round was also centered on the role of the Holy Spirit in the celebration of the sacrament, especially on the *epiclesis* in the Great Prayer of Thanksgiving. This emphasis caused us to wonder more generally about the Spirit's labor in the shared practice of praying the "Lord's Prayer." Perhaps we might wish to expand this discussion of the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church.

Another area upon which there was considerable agreement, but about which there is much more to discuss, is the call to discipleship and mission which flows out of the celebration of the sacraments. A thorough discussion of how each of our traditions understand and approach the concept of "mission" and "evangelization," with special emphasis on its soteriological, Christological, ecclesiological, and anthropological dimensions, might be particularly fruitful.

The possibilities are rich, the challenges are real, but if our experience in this last round has taught us anything, it is that through his Spirit, the Lord Jesus continues to work in powerful and sometimes surprising ways to the glory of the Father. We are confident that God will continue to pour the Holy Spirit upon us as we continue the work of unity. "If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" (Luke 11:13).

Our Prayer at the End of This Round of Dialogue

Eternal God, Creator of all that is and yet will be,
in the fullness of time you sent your Son to redeem the world,
and daily you send the Holy Spirit to bring new life and peace.
Faithful to the exhortation of Jesus,
we ask you to send your Holy Spirit in abundance
upon the members of the Reformed—Roman Catholic Dialogue
and upon the people in our respective traditions
that through Word and Sacrament
we may continue to grow in deeper communion with your Son
and therefore in deeper communion with each other
until that day when we can share in full communion around your table.
We thank you for the grace of inspiration, patience, and
perseverance which you
have given to the members of the dialogue these past forty-five years.

We ask that you continue to guide us as we prepare for the next round of dialogue
that all we do might begin with your inspiration,
 be sustained by you
 and by you be joyfully ended.
We ask this through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit
one God for ever and ever. Amen.

Addendum

Roman Catholic and Reformed Liturgies for Eucharist/Lord's Supper

A classic principle of liturgical theology is *lex orandi, lex credendi*: the law of prayer is the law of belief. In other words, rituals reflect what a community actually believes, sometimes more so than formal theological statements. This addendum offers a comparison of all of our communities' liturgies of the Eucharist/Lord's Supper. The chart illustrates on a practical level many of the convergences and divergences that are outlined in our Report.

Eucharist Liturgy Comparison

RC	CRCNA	UCC	RCA	PC(USA)
Began in 1964, ended revision in 1969. Third edition, Latin text: 2002; English text, 2010.	Form finalized in 1981 and found in current hymnal, 1987). http://www.crcna.org/pages/1981_sacrament.cfm	Final product published 1986; draft booklets in 1982 after receiving 1977 directive. <i>The New Century Hymnal</i> . Cleveland, Ohio: The Pilgrim Press, 1995.	Received order in 1991, adopted by synod in 1994, by classes in 1995.	Began revision in 1980, completed in 1993. <i>Book of Common Worship</i> . The Theology and Worship Ministry Unit. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1993.

Outline of Service of Word and Sacrament:

Gathering Entrance Chant or hymn Sign of the Cross Greeting Penitential Act <i>Kyrie</i> <i>Gloria</i> Collect	Gathering Opening Hymn Call to Confession Confession Declaration of Pardon Response Dedication Hymn	(Word and Sacrament II) Gathering Concerns of the Church Prelude Hymn of Adoration Greeting Invocation Act of Praise	Gathering <i>Votum</i> Sentences Salutation Hymn Confession Pardon Law Psalter and <i>Gloria Patri</i>	Gathering Call to Worship Prayer of the Day Hymn of Praise Confession and Pardon The Peace Canticle, Psalm, Hymn
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<p>Word First Reading Responsorial Psalm Second Reading Gospel w acclamation Homily Prayer of Faith Prayers of the Faithful</p>	<p>Word (liturgy begins "Communion" section here) Prayer Scripture Readings Sermon Prayer Hymn Creed Intercessory Prayer Offertory</p>	<p>(Word Reading of Scripture Sermon <i>Baptism</i> Affirmation of Faith Hymn, Anthem, or Other Music</p>	<p>Word Prayer for Illumination Lessons Sermon Prayer for Blessing Confession of Faith</p>	<p>Word Prayer for Illumination First Reading Psalm Second Reading Anthem, Hymn, Psalm Gospel Reading Sermon</p>
<p>Eucharist Preparation Gifts / Altar Prayer over the Gifts Eucharistic Prayer Lord's Prayer Sign of Peace Breaking of the Bread Communion Communion Song Period of Silence/Song Prayer after Communion</p>	<p>Eucharist Minister's Words Thanksgiving Memorial Prayer of Consecration Preparation of Elements Invitation Dedication Communion Thanksgiving (Ps. 103) Hymn</p>	<p>Eucharist Prayers of the People Confession of Sin Silence Assurance of Pardon Passing the Peace Offertory Lord's Prayer Invitation Communion Prayer Breaking Bread and Pouring Wine Resurrection Acclamation Sharing of the Elements Prayer of Thanksgiving</p>	<p>Eucharist Peace Offering Doxology Meaning of Sacrament Invitation Communion Prayer Communion Thanksgiving Intercession</p>	<p>Eucharist Hymn, Canticle, Psalm <i>Baptism</i> Invitation Prayers of the People Offering Invitation to the Lord's Table Great Thanksgiving Lord's Prayer Breaking of the Bread Communion of the People</p>
<p>Sending Greeting Blessing Dismissal Dismissal (Hymn)</p>	<p>Sending Dismissal (Hymn)</p>	<p>Sending Benediction Hymn of Parting Postlude</p>	<p>Sending Hymn Benediction</p>	<p>Sending Hymn Charge and Blessing</p>

Summary of Entire Rites:

Headings below use each denomination's published language, when available.)

RC	CRNCA	UCC	RCA	PC(USA)
<p><i>Pres. of Gifts/Prep. of Altar</i> <i>Eucharistic Prayer</i> <i>Lord's Prayer</i> <i>Breaking of Bread</i> <i>Communion</i> <i>Prayer</i> <i>Greeting / Blessing /</i> <i>Dismissal</i></p>	<p><i>Invitation</i> <i>The Thanksgivng</i> <i>Lord's Prayer</i> <i>Preparation of Elements</i> <i>Invitation/Dedication</i> <i>The Communion</i> <i>The Thanksgivng</i></p>	<p><i>Offering</i> <i>Lord's Prayer</i> <i>Invitation</i> <i>Communion Prayer</i> <i>Breaking Bread/Pouring</i> <i>Wine</i> <i>Sharing the Elements</i> <i>Prayer of Thanksgvng</i></p>	<p><i>Offering</i> <i>Doxology</i> <i>Meaning of Sacrament</i> <i>Invitation</i> <i>Communion Prayer</i> <i>Lord's Prayer</i> <i>Communion</i> <i>Thanksgivng</i></p>	<p><i>Offering</i> <i>Invitation to Lord's Table</i> <i>Great Thanksgivng</i> <i>Lord's Prayer</i> <i>Breaking of the Bread</i> <i>Communion of the People</i></p>

Offertory

<p>Offering Let us return to God the offerings of our life and the gifts of the earth.</p> <p>The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it (Ps 24:1)</p> <p>(Music) <i>The offering is collected.</i></p> <p>Ascription of Praise L: Yours, O Lord, are grandeur and power, majesty, splendor, and glory. P: All in heavens and on the earth is yours, all of your own we give you.</p>	<p>Offering (As the offerings are gathered there may be an anthem or other musical offering. The elements for the Lord's Supper may be brought forward with the offering.)</p> <p>Doxology (This hymn, or another ascription of praise, may be used as the offerings are brought forward.)</p>	<p>Offering L: We shall bring to Christ's table with our offering the bread and wine for the supper. Christ invites to this table all who profess the Christian faith, who endeavor to be at peace with their neighbors, and who seek the mercy of God.</p> <p>(Music)</p> <p>Lord's Prayer L: Let us pray as Christ our Savior has taught us.</p>		
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Invitation:

Presentation of the Gifts / Preparation of the Altar:

Priest: Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation, for through your goodness we have received the bread we offer you: fruit of the earth and work of human hands, it will become for us the bread of life.
All: Blessed be God for ever.

Priest: Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation, for through your goodness we have received the wine we offer you: fruit of the vine and work of human hands, it will become our spiritual drink.
All: Blessed be God for ever.

[stand]

Minister:
Brothers and sisters in Christ, the gospels tell us that on the first day of the week, the day on which our Lord rose from the dead, he appeared to some of his disciples and was made known to them in the breaking of bread. Come, then, to the joyful feast of our Lord.

[If the communion elements are not already on the table, they may be brought forward at this point.]

“Invitation”

L: Jesus said: I am the bread of life. You who come to me shall not hunger; you who believe in me shall never thirst.

P: In company with all who hunger for spiritual food, we come to this table to know the risen Christ in the sharing of this life-giving bread.

“Meaning of the Sacrament”

Beloved in the Lord Jesus Christ, the holy Supper which we are about to celebrate is a feast of remembrance, of communion, and of hope.

We come in remembrance that our Lord Jesus Christ was sent of the Father into the world to assume our flesh and blood and to fulfill for us all obedience to the divine law, even to the bitter and shameful death of the cross.

By his death, resurrection, and ascension he established a new and eternal covenant of grace and reconciliation that we might be accepted of God and never be forsaken by him.

We come to have communion with this same Christ who has promised to be with us always, even to the end of the world. In the breaking of the bread he makes himself known to us as the true heavenly Bread that strengthens us unto life eternal. In the

Invitation

Friends, this is the joyful feast of the people of God! They will come from east and west, and from north and south to sit at table in the kingdom of God.

According to Luke, when our risen Lord was at table with his disciples, he took the bread, and blessed it and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him.

This is the Lord’s table. Our Savior invites those who trust him to share the feast which he has prepared.

Priest: Pray, brethren (brothers and sisters), that my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.

All: May the Lord accept the sacrifice at your hands, for the praise and glory of his name, for our good and the good of all his holy Church.

Prayer over the Gifts

[Then the Priest, with hands extended, says the Prayer over the Offerings, at the end of which the people acclaim:]

All: Amen.

cup of blessing he comes to us as the Vine in whom we must abide if we are to bear fruit.

We come in hope, believing that this bread and this cup are a pledge and foretaste of the feast of love of which we shall partake when his kingdom has fully come, when with unveiled face we shall behold him, made like unto him in his glory.

Since by his death, resurrection, and ascension Christ has obtained for us the life-giving Spirit who unites us all in one body, so are we to receive this Supper in true love, mindful of the communion of saints.

Invitation

(The minister, in the name of Christ, shall extend an invitation to all present concerning participation in the Sacrament.

All baptized Christians present who are admitted to the Lord's Supper are to be invited to participate.)

Great Thanksgiving

<p>All text below is as printed in the liturgy.</p> <p>Preface Dialogue Preface Sanctus</p> <p>Memorial Acclamation Doxology and Great Amen</p> <p>Eucharistic Prayer: <i>Preface Dialogue:</i> <i>Priest:</i> The Lord be with you. All: And with your spirit. <i>Priest:</i> Lift up your hearts. All: We lift them up to the Lord. <i>Priest:</i> Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. All: It is right and just.</p> <p>Preface [generally variable; here is the invariable one for Eucharistic Prayer IV:]</p> <p>It is truly right to give you thanks, truly just to give you glory. Father most holy, for you are the one God living and true, existing before all ages and</p>	<p>Words as section-headers below describe the liturgy, but are not printed in the liturgy unless in quotations.</p> <p>Opening Dialogue Preface Sanctus</p> <p>“The Institution” “The Memorial” “Prayer of Consecration” “The Thanksgiving”</p> <p>Opening Dialogue M: Lift up your hearts. P: We lift them up to the Lord. M: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. P: It is right for us to give thanks. It is our joy and our peace, at all times and in all places</p> <p>to give thanks to you, holy Father, almighty, everlasting God, through Christ our Lord.</p>	<p>Words as section-headers below describe the liturgy, but are not printed in the liturgy unless in quotations.</p> <p>Opening Dialogue Preface Sanctus</p> <p>Words of Institution Epiclesis</p> <p>“Communion Prayer”</p> <p>Opening Dialogue Pa: God be with you. P: And also with you. Pa: Lift up your hearts. P: We lift them to God. Pa: Let us give thanks to God Most High. P: It is right to give God thanks and praise.</p> <p>Preface Pa: Eternal God, who has created the heavens and the earth, giving breath to every living thing, we thank you for all the gifts of creation and for the gift of life itself. We thank</p>	<p>Words as section-headers below describe the liturgy, but are not printed in the liturgy unless in quotations.</p> <p>Opening Dialogue Preface Sanctus</p> <p>Post-Sanctus Anamnesis – Oblation Memorial Acclamation Epiclesis</p> <p>“Communion Prayer”</p> <p>Opening Dialogue The Lord be with you. And also with you. Lift up your hearts! We lift them up to the Lord. Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. It is right to give our thanks and praise.</p> <p>Preface Holy and right it is, and our joyful duty to give thanks to you at all times</p>	<p>Words as section-headers below describe the liturgy, but are not printed.</p> <p>Opening Dialogue Preface Sanctus</p> <p>Post-Sanctus Words of Institution Anamnesis – Oblation Memorial Acclamation Epiclesis Doxology</p> <p>Opening Dialogue L: The Lord be with you. P: And also with you. L: Life up your hearts. P: We lift them to the Lord. L: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. P: It is right to give our thanks and praise.</p> <p>Preface It is truly right and our greatest joy to give you thanks and praise, O Lord our God, creator and ruler of the universe. In your wisdom, you made all</p>
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abiding for all eternity, dwelling in unapproachable light; yet you, who alone are good, the source of life, have made all that is, so that you might fill your creatures with blessings and bring joy to many of them by the glory of your light.
And so, in your presence are countless hosts of Angels, who serve you day and night and, gazing upon the glory of your face, glorify you without ceasing.
With them we, too, confess your name in exultation, giving voice to every creature under heaven as we acclaim:

Holy, Holy (Sanctus):
All: Holy, holy, holy Lord God of hosts.
Heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Preface
M: We bless you for your continual love and care for every creature.

We praise you for forming us in your image and calling us to be your people.

We thank you that you did not abandon us in our rebellion against your love, but sent prophets and teachers to lead us into the way of salvation.

Above all we thank you for sending Jesus, your Son, to deliver us from the way of sin and death by the obedience of his life, by his suffering upon the cross, and by his resurrection from the dead. We praise you that he now reigns with you in glory and ever lives to pray for us.

We thank you for the Holy Spirit, who leads us into truth, defends us in adversity, and out of every people unites us into one holy church. Therefore with the whole company of saints in heaven and on

you for making us in your own image, for forgiving us when we act as though you have no claim on us, and for keeping us in your steadfast care.

We rejoice in Jesus Christ, the only one eternally begotten by you, who was born of your servant Mary and shared the joys and sorrows of life as we know it. We remember Christ's death, we celebrate

Christ's resurrection, and, in the beloved community of your church, we await Christ's return at the end of history. We take courage from abiding presence of your Holy Spirit in our midst. We offer you our praise for women and men of faith in every age who stand as witnesses to your love and justice. With all the prophets, martyrs, and saints, and all the company of heaven, we glorify you:

and in all places, O Lord our Creator,

almighty and everlasting God! You created heaven with all its hosts and the earth with all its plenty.

You have given us life and being, and preserve us by your providence. But you have shown us the fullness of your love in sending into the world your Son, Jesus Christ, the eternal Word, made flesh for us and for our salvation.

For the precious gift of this mighty Savior who has reconciled us to you, we praise and bless you, O God.

With your whole Church on earth and with all the company of heaven we worship and adore your glorious name.

Sanctus
All: Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest!

things and sustain them by your power. You formed us in your image, setting us in this world to love and to serve you, and to live in peace with your whole creation. When we rebelled against you refusing to trust and obey you, you did not reject us as your own. You sent prophets to call us back to your way. Then in the fullness of time, out of your great love for the world, you sent your only Son to be one of us, to redeem us and heal our brokenness.

Therefore we praise you, joining our voices with choirs of angels, with prophets, apostles, and martyrs, and with all the faithful of every time and place, who forever sing to the glory of your name:

Sanctus:
Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.

<p>Hosanna in the highest. [kneel] [There are ten choices in the United States for the Eucharistic Prayer. Here is Eucharistic Prayer II:] You are indeed Holy, O Lord, the fount of all holiness. [<i>Epic/lests</i>] Make holy, therefore, these gifts, we pray, be sending down your Spirit upon them like the dewfall, so that they may become for us the Body and Blood of our Lord, Jesus Christ.</p>	<p>earth we worship and glorify you, God most holy, and we sing with joy. Sanctus: All sing: Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty! All thy works shall praise thy name, in earth and sky and sea. Holy, holy, holy! Merciful and mighty! God in three persons, blessed Trinity!</p>	<p>Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest! (Silence) Anamnesis – Oblation Most righteous God, we remember in this Supper</p>	<p>Sanctus: All: Holy, holy, holy God of love and majesty, the whole universe speaks of your glory, O God Most High. Blessed is the one who comes in the name of our God! Hosanna in the highest! Words of Institution Pa: We remember that on the night of betrayal and desertion, Jesus took bread, gave you thanks, broke the bread, and gave it to the disciples, saying: “This is my body which is broken for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”</p>	<p>Post-Sanctus (Minister continues) You are holy, O God of majesty, and blessed is Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord. In Jesus, born of Mary, your Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth. He lived as one of us, knowing joy and sorrow. He healed the sick, fed the hungry, opened blind eyes, broke bread with outcasts and sinners, and proclaimed the good news of your kingdom to the poor and needy. Dying on the cross, he gave himself for the life of the world. Rising from the grave, he won for us victory over death. Seated at your right hand, he leads us to eternal life. We praise you that Christ now reigns with you in glory, and will come again to make all things new.</p>
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<p>Hosanna in the highest. [There are ten choices in the United States for the Eucharistic Prayer. Here is Eucharistic Prayer II:] You are indeed Holy, O Lord, the fount of all holiness. [<i>Epic/lests</i>] Make holy, therefore, these gifts, we pray, be sending down your Spirit upon them like the dewfall, so that they may become for us the Body and Blood of our Lord, Jesus Christ.</p>	<p>earth we worship and glorify you, God most holy, and we sing with joy. Sanctus: All sing: Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty! All thy works shall praise thy name, in earth and sky and sea. Holy, holy, holy! Merciful and mighty! God in three persons, blessed Trinity!</p>	<p>Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest! (Silence) Anamnesis – Oblation Most righteous God, we remember in this Supper</p>	<p>Sanctus: All: Holy, holy, holy God of love and majesty, the whole universe speaks of your glory, O God Most High. Blessed is the one who comes in the name of our God! Hosanna in the highest! Words of Institution Pa: We remember that on the night of betrayal and desertion, Jesus took bread, gave you thanks, broke the bread, and gave it to the disciples, saying: “This is my body which is broken for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”</p>	<p>Post-Sanctus (Minister continues) You are holy, O God of majesty, and blessed is Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord. In Jesus, born of Mary, your Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth. He lived as one of us, knowing joy and sorrow. He healed the sick, fed the hungry, opened blind eyes, broke bread with outcasts and sinners, and proclaimed the good news of your kingdom to the poor and needy. Dying on the cross, he gave himself for the life of the world. Rising from the grave, he won for us victory over death. Seated at your right hand, he leads us to eternal life. We praise you that Christ now reigns with you in glory, and will come again to make all things new.</p>
<p>Hosanna in the highest. [There are ten choices in the United States for the Eucharistic Prayer. Here is Eucharistic Prayer II:] You are indeed Holy, O Lord, the fount of all holiness. [<i>Epic/lests</i>] Make holy, therefore, these gifts, we pray, be sending down your Spirit upon them like the dewfall, so that they may become for us the Body and Blood of our Lord, Jesus Christ.</p>	<p>earth we worship and glorify you, God most holy, and we sing with joy. Sanctus: All sing: Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty! All thy works shall praise thy name, in earth and sky and sea. Holy, holy, holy! Merciful and mighty! God in three persons, blessed Trinity!</p>	<p>Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest! (Silence) Anamnesis – Oblation Most righteous God, we remember in this Supper</p>	<p>Sanctus: All: Holy, holy, holy God of love and majesty, the whole universe speaks of your glory, O God Most High. Blessed is the one who comes in the name of our God! Hosanna in the highest! Words of Institution Pa: We remember that on the night of betrayal and desertion, Jesus took bread, gave you thanks, broke the bread, and gave it to the disciples, saying: “This is my body which is broken for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”</p>	<p>Post-Sanctus (Minister continues) You are holy, O God of majesty, and blessed is Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord. In Jesus, born of Mary, your Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth. He lived as one of us, knowing joy and sorrow. He healed the sick, fed the hungry, opened blind eyes, broke bread with outcasts and sinners, and proclaimed the good news of your kingdom to the poor and needy. Dying on the cross, he gave himself for the life of the world. Rising from the grave, he won for us victory over death. Seated at your right hand, he leads us to eternal life. We praise you that Christ now reigns with you in glory, and will come again to make all things new.</p>

<p>all of you, and drink from it; for this is the chalice of my Blood, the Blood of the new and eternal covenant, which will be poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this in memory of me. <i>Priest:</i> The mystery of faith.</p> <p>All: We proclaim your Death, O Lord, and profess your Resurrection until you come again. <i>or When we eat this Bread and drink this Cup, we proclaim your Death, O Lord, until you come again.</i> <i>or Save us, Savior of the world, for by your Cross and Resurrection you have set us free.</i> [Annuniation and Offering] Therefore, as we celebrate the memorial of his Death and Resurrection, we offer you, Lord, the Bread of life and the Chalice of salvation, giving thanks that you have held us worthy to be in your presence and minister to you. [Epicletis over the people]</p>	<p>is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.' For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes." (1 Cor. 11:23\~26)</p> <p>"The Memorial" All: We shall do as our Lord commands. We proclaim that our Lord Jesus was sent by the Father into the world, that he took upon himself our flesh and blood, and bore the wrath of God against our sin. We confess that he was condemned to die that we might be pardoned, and suffered death that we might live. We proclaim that he is risen to make us right with God, and that he shall come again in the glory of his new creation. This we do now, and until he comes again.</p>	<p>P: Amen. Come, Christ Jesus!</p> <p>Epicletis Pa: Gracious God, we ask you to bless this bread and cup and all of us with the outpouring of your Holy Spirit. Through this meal, make us the body of Christ, the church, your servant people, that we may be salt, and light, and leaven for the furtherance of your will in all the world.</p> <p>P: Amen. Come, Holy Spirit!</p>	<p>may be to us the communion of the body and blood of Christ. Grant that, being joined together in him, we may attain to the unity of the faith and grow up in all things into Christ our Lord.</p> <p>And as this grain has been gathered from many fields into one loaf, and these grapes from many hills into one cup, grant, O Lord, that your whole Church may soon be gathered from the ends of the earth into your kingdom. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!</p>	<p>Words of Institution (may accompany breaking of bread; may be said later) We give you thanks that the Lord Jesus, on the night before he died, took bread, and after giving thanks to you, he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying: Take, eat. This is my body, given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.</p> <p>In the same way after supper he took the cup, saying: This cup is the new covenant sealed in my blood, shed for you and for the forgiveness of sins. Whenever you drink it, do this in remembrance of me.</p>	<p>Annuniation – Oblation (Minister continues) Remembering your gracious acts in Jesus Christ, we take from your creation this bread and this wine and joyfully celebrate his dying and rising, as we await the day of his com-</p>
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Humbly we pray that, partaking of the Body and Blood of Christ, we may be gathered into one by the Holy Spirit.

[Intercessions]

Remember, Lord, your Church, spread throughout the world, and bring her to the fullness of charity, together with N. our Pope and N. our Bishop and all the clergy. Remember also our brothers and sisters who have fallen asleep in the hope of the resurrection, and all who have died in your mercy: welcome them into the light of your face. Have mercy on us all, we pray, that with the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, with the blessed Apostles, and all the Saints who have pleased you throughout the ages, we may merit to be co-heirs to eternal life, and may praise and glorify you through your Son, Jesus Christ.
Doxology and Great Amen:

“Prayer of Consecration”
M: Heavenly Father, show forth among us the presence of your life-giving Word and Holy Spirit, to sanctify us and your whole church through this sacrament. Grant that all who share the body and blood of our Savior Jesus Christ may be one in him and may remain faithful in love and hope. And as this grain has been gathered from many fields into one loaf and these grapes from many hills into one cup, grant, O Lord, that your whole church may soon be gathered from the ends of the earth into your kingdom. Now, as our Savior Christ has taught us, we pray:

ing. With thanksgiving, we offer our very selves to you to be a living and holy sacrifice, dedicated to your service.

Memorial Acclamation

Great is the mystery of faith:
Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again.

Epiclesis

Gracious God, pour out your Holy Spirit upon us and upon these your gifts of bread and wine, that the bread we break and the cup we bless may be the communion of the body and blood of Christ. By your Spirit make us one with Christ, that we may be one with all who share this feast, united in ministry in every place. As this bread is Christ's body for us, send us out to be the body of Christ in the world.

(Intercessions may be included here)

Priest: Through him, and
with him, and in him, O
God, almighty Father,
in the unity of the Holy
Spirit, all glory and honor
is yours, for ever and ever.
All: Ament!
[stand]

In union with your church
in heaven and on earth, we
pray, O God, that you will
fulfill your eternal purpose
in us and in all the world.

Keep us faithful to your
service until Christ comes
in final victory, and we
shall feast with all your
saints in the joy of your
eternal realm.

Doxology

Through Christ, with
Christ, in Christ, in the
unity of the Holy Spirit, all
glory and honor are yours,
almighty Father, now and
forever. Amen.

Lord's Prayer

<p>COMMUNION RITE Lord's Prayer: <i>Priest:</i> At the Savior's command and formed by divine teaching, we dare to say: All: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.</p> <p><i>Priest:</i> Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil, graciously grant peace in our days, that, by the help of your mercy, we may be always free from sin and safe from all distress, as we await the blessed hope and the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ.</p>	<p>All: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be . . .</p>	<p>(Prayed earlier, following the taking of the offering.)</p>	<p>(Prayed later, following intercessions.)</p>	<p>Let us pray for God's rule on earth as Jesus taught us: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.</p>
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All: For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours now and forever.

Sign of Peace:

Priest: Lord Jesus Christ, who said to your Apostles, Peace I leave you, my peace I give you, look not on our sins, but on the faith of your Church, and graciously grant her peace and unity in accordance with your will. Who live and reign for ever and ever.

All: Amen.

Priest: The Peace of the Lord be with you always.

All: And with your spirit.

Deacon or Priest: Let us offer each other the sign of peace.

[And all offer one another a sign, in keep with local customs, that expresses peace, communion, and charity. The Priest gives the sign of peace to a Deacon or minister.]

Breaking of the Bread

<p>Breaking of the Bread: <i>All:</i> Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us. <i>Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.</i> <i>Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, grant us peace.</i> [kneel]</p> <p>[The invocation may even be repeated several times if the fraction is prolonged. Only the final time, however, is grant us peace said.]</p>	<p>“Preparation of the Elements”</p> <p>[as the minister breaks the bread and pours the cup]</p> <p>M: The bread which we break is a sharing in the body of Christ. P: We who are many are one body, for we all share the same loaf. M: The cup for which we give thanks is a sharing in the blood of Christ. P: The cup which we drink is our participation in the blood of Christ.</p> <p>“The Invitation” M: Congregation in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord has prepared his table for all who love him and trust in him alone for their salvation. All who are truly sorry for their sins, who sincerely believe in the Lord Jesus as their Savior, and who desire to live in obedience to him, are now invited to come</p>	<p>“Breaking Bread and Pouring Wine”</p> <p>(while taking the elements) Pa: Through the broken bread we participate in the body of Christ. Pa: Through the cup of blessing we participate in the new life Christ gives.</p> <p>“Resurrection Acclamation” Pa: [Alleluia!] Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the living one. P: I died, and behold I am alive for evermore. [Alleluia!]</p>	<p>“Communion”</p> <p>(The minister shall declare the Words of Institution. In full view of the people the minister shall take the bread and say:) The Lord Jesus, the same night he was betrayed, took bread; and when he had given thanks, he broke it (The minister shall break the bread.) and gave it to them, saying, “Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you: do this in remembrance of me.” (Lifting the cup, the minister shall say:)</p>	<p>(Words of Institution here, if not earlier)</p> <p>Because there is one loaf, we, many as we are, are one body; for it is one loaf of which we all partake. (Minister breaks loaf)</p> <p>When we break the bread, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ? (Minister fills cup)</p> <p>When we give thanks over the cup, is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ?</p>
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with gladness to the table of the Lord.

"The Dedication"

All: Holy Father, in thanks for the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, in the joy of his resurrection, in the hope of his coming again, we present ourselves a living sacrifice and come to the table of our Lord.

[as the minister indicates the elements]

M: The gifts of God for the people of God.

After the same manner also, he took the cup when they had supped, saying, "This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."

Communion of the People

<p>Communion: <i>Priest:</i> Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.</p> <p><i>Communion Minister:</i> The Body of Christ. Communicant: Amen.</p> <p><i>Communion Minister:</i> The Blood of Christ. Communicant: Amen.</p> <p>Communion Song: [While the Priest is receiving the Body of Christ, the Communion Chant (or song) begins.] [sit]</p> <p>Period of Silence or Song of Praise: [If appropriate, a sacred silence may be observed for a while, or a psalm or other canticle of praise or a hymn may be sung.] [stand]</p> <p>Prayer after Communion: <i>Priest:</i> Let us pray. [<i>All pray in silence with the</i></p>	<p>"The Communion" [when the people are ready to eat the bread]</p> <p>M: Take, eat, remember and believe that the body of our Lord Jesus Christ was given for the complete forgiveness of all our sins.</p> <p>[when the people are ready to drink the cup]</p> <p>M: Take, drink, remember and believe that the precious blood of our Lord Jesus Christ was shed for the complete forgiveness of all our sins.</p> <p>"The Thanksgiving" M: Congregation in Christ, since the Lord has fed us at his table, let us praise his holy name with thanksgiving.</p> <p>[Sing together Psalm 103 or say in unison]: All: Praise the Lord, O my soul;</p>	<p>"Sharing the Elements"</p> <p>Pa: The gifts of God for the people of God. Come, for all things are ready.</p> <p>(while giving the elements)</p> <p>Pa: The body of Christ, the living bread. P: Amen!</p> <p>Pa: The blood of Christ, the saving cup. P: Amen!</p> <p>"Prayer of Thanksgiving" L: Let us pray. Eternal God, you have called your people from east and west and north and south to feast at the table of Jesus Christ. We thank you for Christ's presence and for the spiritual food of Christ's body and blood. By the power of your Holy Spirit, keep us faithful to your will. Go with us to the streets, to our homes, and to our places of labor and leisure that whether we are gathered or scattered, we</p>	<p>(In partaking of the bread it shall be said:)</p> <p>The bread which we break is the communion of the body of Christ.</p> <p>(In partaking of the cup it shall be said:)</p> <p>The cup of blessing which we bless is the communion of the blood of Christ.</p> <p>"Thanksgiving after Communion"</p> <p>Brothers and sisters, since the Lord has now fed us at his table, let us praise God's holy name with heartfelt thanksgiving! Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and do not forget all his benefits who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the Pit, who crowns you with</p>	<p>Invitation The gifts of God for the people of God.</p> <p>Communion <i>The body of Christ, given for you. The blood of Christ, shed for you.</i></p> <p>Prayer After Communion L: Bless the Lord, O my soul; P: And all that is within me bless God's holy name! L: Bless the Lord, O my soul, P: And forget not all God's benefits.</p>
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Priest for a while, unless silence has just been observed. Then the Priest says the Prayer after Communion, at the end of which the people acclaim:]
All: Amen.

CONCLUDING RITE

[Brief announcements:]
[stand]

Greeting:
Priest: The Lord be with you.

All: And with your spirit.

Blessing:

Option A: Simple Form

Priest: May almighty God bless you: the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

All: Amen.

Dismissal:

Deacon or Priest: Go forth, the Mass is ended.
or God and announce the Gospel of the Lord.
or Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life.
or Go in peace.

All: Thanks be to God.
[Recessional and Closing Song]

may be the servant church of the servant Christ, in whose name we rejoice to pray. Amen.

steadfast love and mercy.
The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities.

For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us. As a father has compassion for his children,

so the Lord has compassion for those who fear him, who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all, and will also give us all things with him.

Therefore shall my mouth and heart show forth the praise of the Lord, from this time forth forevermore. Amen.

From Psalm 103, with additions

(Service continues with Intercessions closing in the Lord's Prayer.)

Appendix F

Churches in Ecclesiastical Fellowship and Formal Dialogue

I. Churches in Ecclesiastical Fellowship

Following is a list of churches in ecclesiastical fellowship, referencing the year in which such fellowship was established.

A. Africa

1. Christian Reformed Church of Nigeria (CRCN) (1974)
2. Church of Christ in the Sudan Among the Tiv (NKST) (1974)
(Nongo U Kristu U Ken Sudan Hen Tiv)
3. Dutch Reformed Church in Africa (DRCA) (1983)
(Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Afrika)
4. Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa (DRC) (2001)
(Die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid Afrika)
5. Reformed Church in Africa (RCA) (1982)
6. Reformed Churches in South Africa (1974)
(Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika)
7. Reformed Churches in South Africa (Synod Soutpansberg) (1989)
8. Reformed Church of Christ in Nigeria (2003)
9. Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa (URCSA) (1982)
(Verenigende Gereformeerde Kerk in Suider Afrika)

B. Asia, Australia, and Indonesia

1. Christian Church of Sumba (Indonesia) (1974)
(Gereja Kristen Sumba)
2. Christian Reformed Church in the Philippines (1997)
3. Christian Reformed Churches of Australia (CRCA) (1974)
4. Christian Reformed Church of Sri Lanka (1974)
5. Reformed Church in Japan (RCJ) (1974)

C. Europe

Netherlands Reformed Churches (NRC) (1982)
(Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerken-Buiten Verband)

D. North America

1. Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church (ARPC) (1977)
2. Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC) (1986)
3. Reformed Church in America (RCA) (1976)

E. Latin America

Christian Reformed Church in Cuba (2001)
(La Iglesia Cristiana Reformada en Cuba)

F. South America

1. Evangelical Reformed Church in Brazil (1974)
(Ireja Evangelica Reformada no Brasil)
2. Reformed Church in Argentina (1974)
(Iglesias Reformadas en le Argentina)

II. Churches in Formal Dialogue

It is synod's prerogative to decide with which denominations the CRC will maintain ecclesiastical fellowship, and with which denominations the CRC will be in *formal dialogue*. Following is a list of churches currently in *formal dialogue* with the CRC:

- A. *Christian Reformed Church in Eastern Africa (Uganda)*
- B. *Christian Reformed Church of Myanmar*
- C. *Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (Nkhoma Synod) - Malawi*
- D. *Church of Jesus Christ in Madagascar*
- E. *Evangelical Reformed Church of Burundi*
- F. *Presbyterian Church in Canada (PCC)*
- G. *Protestant Church in the Netherlands (PCN)*
- H. *Reformed Church in Zambia*
- I. *Reformed Church of East Africa (Kenya)*

I. Introduction

The Historical Committee is a standing committee of the Christian Reformed Church established by Synod 1934 to oversee the work of the denominational archives and promote publication of denominationally related historical studies. The committee's members are Rev. Lugene Schemper, chair (2011/2); Dr. James De Jong (2012/2); Ms. Angie Ploegstra (2013/2); Mr. William Sytsma (2013/2); and Dr. Richard Harms (ex officio), secretary.

II. Archives staff

Dr. Richard Harms is the curator of the Archives, which are housed in Heritage Hall at Calvin College. As archivist he serves the Christian Reformed Church, Calvin Theological Seminary, and Calvin College. Other staff include Ms. Hendrina Van Spronsen, office manager; Ms. Wendy Blankespoor, library assistant; Ms. Melanie Vander Wal, departmental assistant; Dr. Robert Bolt, field agent and assistant archivist; student assistant Ms. Jessica Nieboer; and volunteers Rev. Dr. Paul Bremer, Mrs. Willene De Groot, Mr. Ed Gerritsen, Mr. Fred Greidanus, Mr. Ralph Haan, Dr. Henry Ippel, Mrs. Helen Meulink, Rev. Gerrit Sheeres, Mrs. Janet Sheeres, and Mr. Ralph Veenstra.

III. Archival work during 2010

An additional sixty-five cubic feet of material was processed and added to our Christian school records collection. These additional materials came primarily from the former Millbrook, Creston, and Oakdale Christian schools as part of the reorganization of Grand Rapids Christian Schools. Although these additional materials date back to 1934, the bulk of the records detail the schools since the beginning of the 1950s.

We organized and made accessible the WWII collections of prisoner-of-war Mr. Jacob Fridsma from New Jersey. Mr. Fridsma was taken prisoner during operation Market Garden and then worked as a POW on a German farm near the Baltic Sea. During the last five months of the war in Europe, he and others were marched through northern Germany to avoid approaching Allied troops. He kept a daily diary of his experience, and his family kept every item received from Mr. Fridsma and from the U.S. government during his internment.

The H. Evan Runner papers have been processed and are now available for research. Organizing the collection proved particularly challenging, given Dr. Runner's extensive interests and confusing organizational system, made even more so because the material was reboxed several times before being placed in the Archives. With the Runner papers as well as those from Dr. Pete Steen, Jr.; Dr. Paul Schrottenboer; and others, we have valuable resources on the North American component of reformational philosophy developed by Dr. Herman Dooyeweerd and Dr. Dirk H. Th. Vollenhoven.

We also opened the collection of 100 black-and-white photographs from Dr. Lee Pool detailing Calvin College during the late 1940s and early 1950s. The images are a welcome addition because we did not have a particularly rich collection of quality photographic images from that period.

The Historical Committee received and processed the records of three discontinued denominational ministries: First Christian Reformed Church, Minneapolis, Minnesota; Mountain Lake (Minn.) CRC; and Epicenter Christian Reformed Church, a discontinued church plant in Parrish, Florida. The committee also made available the papers of Dr. Ralph Blocksma, noted plastic and reconstructive surgeon and medical missionary during the two decades following World War II. In addition, the committee organized seventeen cubic feet of denominational records from Faith Alive Christian Resources, Christian Reformed World Missions, the Chaplaincy and Care Ministry office (including the denomination's work on Just War Theory), and Classis Lake Superior.

Recently received but not yet processed collections include Calvin College Enrollment Management files, 1992-1997; Calvin College president office files, 2007-2008; various seminary and college committees records, 2010; CRC Board of Trustees records, 1992-2002; and the congressional papers of U.S. Congressman Vernon Ehlers.

IV. Publications

Mrs. Janet Sheeres compiled data of nearly 10,000 Dutch emigrants to North America, 1946-1963, assisted by the Immigration Committee of the Christian Reformed Church in North America. She keyed this information into a database, and the results of her work are now available in digital format at www.calvin.edu/hh/family_history_resources/Dutch_Emigrants.htm. By far the largest percentage of these immigrants settled in Canada, and the committee has notified Canada's National Museum of Immigration in Halifax, Nova Scotia (Pier 21), of this new resource.

V. Recognition

A. The committee acknowledges the following individuals who have served a combined 3,749 years in ordained ministry and who will celebrate significant anniversaries in 2011:

71 years	Repko W. Popma
70 years	Harold Petroelje Gysbert J. Rozenboom
67 years	Paul Han
66 years	Edward G. Boer George D. Vanderhill James W. Van Weelden
65 years	David B. Muir Seymour Van Dyken
64 years	John A. De Kruyter Jacob Hasper Herman Minnema Bernard E. Pekelder Clarence Van Ens

63 years	Carl G. Kromminga, Sr. Peter M. Macaskill Howard B. Spaan
62 years	John A. Petersen Albert J. Vanden Pol
61 years	Lugene A. Bazuin Martin D. Geleyense Dick C. Los Lammert Slofstra Leonard F. Stockmeier
60 years	Isaac J. Apol Gerard Bouma Willis P. De Boer Jacob Hekman Leonard J. Hofman Jacob Kuntz MyungJae Lee John T. Malestein John C. Medendorp Leonard Sweetman Clarence J. Vos Wilmer R. Witte
55 years	Harold Bode Theodore L. Brouwer James A. Bultman John Cooper Sidney Cooper Henry M. De Rooy Milton R. Doornbos John T. Ebbers Norman E. Jones James R. Kok Edson T. Lewis, Jr. Calvin W. Niewenhuis Jacob A. Quartel George R. Spee Clarence Van Essen John G. Van Ryn
50 years	Barry B. Blankers John F. De Vries John D. Hellinga Alvin L. Hoksbergen David E. Holwerda Simon Kistemaker Gerrit Koedoot Ronald L. Peterson Edwin Walhout

Sierd J. Woudstra
John Zantingh

B. The committee reports the following anniversaries of ministries that will occur in 2011:

- | | |
|----------------------|---|
| 125 years, 1886-2011 | Fulton, IL – First
Prinsburg, MN – First |
| 100 years, 1911-2011 | Burdett, AB
Everett, WA – First
Sanborn, IA |
| 75 years, 1936-2011 | Denver, CO – Jewel
Terra Ceia, NC |
| 50 years, 1961-2011 | Agassiz, BC
Cedar Springs, MI – Pioneer
Crown Point, IN – First
Edina, MN – Calvary
Fredericton, NB
Fulton, IL – Bethel
Grand Rapids, MI – Shawnee Park
Grandville, MI – Hanley
Hull, IA – Hope
Indianapolis, IN – Hope Community
Inver Grove Heights, MN – Grace
Kalamazoo, MI – Southern Heights
Riverside, CA – Hope Community
Surrey, BC – Fleetwood
Walnut Creek, CA – Faith Christian Fellowship
Waupun, WI – Bethel
Wyoming, MI – Ideal Park |
| 25 years, 1986-2011 | Abbotsford, BC – New Life
Frankford, ON – Community
Langley, BC – Immanuel
Milford, NS – Faith Community
Orange, CA – Korean American of Orange County
Plainfield, IL – Christ Community
Prospect Park, NJ – Unity
Silverdale, WA – Anchor of Hope
Traverse City, MI – Fellowship |

VI. Reminders

The Historical Committee again asks congregations that have or will observe anniversaries in 2011 to send copies of commemorative materials (booklets, historical sketches, video recordings, photographs, and so forth) to the Archives.

Official minutes of 106 Christian Reformed churches and two Christian school organizations were received and microfilmed, and the copies were stored in our vault. The originals are always returned. Official minutes were

received from 46 of the 47 classes. Anniversary materials were received from 13 Christian Reformed churches.

Of the 836 organized congregations that have existed for at least ten years, 657 (79 percent) have sent their minutes to the Archives for microfilming. Having heard regular reports of lost or misplaced minutes, the committee again strongly urges congregations to utilize this very inexpensive means to produce backup copies of their important records—all of which will be stored in a secure location. As was the case last year, we gratefully report that every church at least ten years old in the following classes has sent their minutes to be duplicated and placed in the Archives: Arizona, B.C. North-West, Eastern Canada, Grand Rapids East, Hamilton, Heartland, Minnkota, Niagara, Thornapple Valley, and Zeeland.

VII. Digital version of *Acts of Synod* and *Agendas for Synod*

The Historical Committee and denominational staff receive frequent requests for digital versions of the *Agendas for Synod* and the *Acts of Synod* accessible via the Internet. Since 1999 the denomination has made such publications available online, and several years ago the Archives made available such versions for the years 1857-1880. The committee has investigated the cost of making the remaining *Agendas* and *Acts*, 1881-1998, available in digital format and asks that synod allocate \$4,000 for this project. The committee anticipates that upon approval of the necessary funding, these documents would be available by Synod 2012.

VIII. Regional representatives

The Historical Committee encourages each classis to appoint a regional representative who acts as a liaison between the committee and the churches in their respective regions. The committee has a designated representative in most, but not all, of the classes. When a classis has no designated regional representative, the classical stated clerk serves in this role. Each of the Historical Committee's representatives has been thanked for their services during this past year.

IX. Committee membership

The Historical Committee thanks Rev. Lugene Schemper for his six years of diligent service, most of those years as its chair. Since Rev. Schemper has completed two terms of service, the committee presents the following slate of candidates for election:

Dr. Lyle Bierma is an ordained minister in the Christian Reformed Church with a doctorate from Duke University. Since 1999 he has been the Jean and Kenneth Baker Professor of Systematic Theology at Calvin Theological Seminary. Previously he taught doctrine and church history for nineteen years at Kuyper College (formerly Reformed Bible College). An author and translator of numerous books and journal articles, he is currently working on a book on the theology of the Heidelberg Catechism.

Dr. John Bolt has a doctorate from the University of St. Michael's College and served as pastor of the churches in Penticton and Kelowna, British Columbia. He later joined the faculty of Religion and Theology Department at Calvin College, then served on the faculty of Redeemer College, and

now serves on the faculty of Calvin Theological Seminary, where he teaches systematic theology. The author of several books, he is also the editor of the four-volume English edition of Herman Bavinck's *Reformed Dogmatics*.

X. Recommendations

- A. That synod grant Dr. Richard H. Harms the privilege of the floor when matters pertaining to its mandate come before synod.
- B. That synod by way of the ballot appoint, from the slate of nominees presented, a new member to a first term of service to the Historical Committee.
- C. That synod allocate \$4,000 to the Historical Committee for the project of making available digital copies of the *Acts of Synod* and *Agendas for Synod* from the years 1881-1998.
- D. That synod encourage those 37 classes that have member churches more than ten years old to submit copies of council minutes to the Archives if they have not yet done so.

Historical Committee

James De Jong

Richard Harms (ex officio), secretary

Angie Ploegstra

Lugene Schemper, chair

William Sytsma

I. Brief overview

In 2011 the Sermons for Reading Services Committee solicited and processed twenty-seven sermons that are available on the denominational website. Email and other information received by the committee indicates that this service continues to be used and is widely appreciated, but churches are beginning to look for video sermons as well—something the committee does not currently offer.

The denominational Proservices staff have completed work to make the sermons on the committee's website easier to search by author, text, Bible book, date, keyword, or sermon title. Take time to visit the site at www.crcna.org/pages/reading_sermons.cfm. Requests for video sermons are received by the committee periodically. Adding video sermons may be explored in the future; however, for now the committee intends to provide links to websites hosting the video sermons of CRC pastors rather than posting them on the Sermons for Reading Services site, since posting would involve additional work and expense.

The committee is currently composed of Rev. Richard J. deLange (2012) as chairman and secretary, Rev. Paul D. Stadt (2011), Rev. Kenneth F. Benjamins (2012), and Rev. Stephen D. Tamming (2013). We thank Rev. John Kerssies for his work as he is completing his second term.

The committee requests that synod appoint Rev. Mark Verbruggen to the committee for a three-year term.

Rev. Mark Verbruggen is pastor of First CRC, Sioux Center, Iowa. He was ordained in 1995 after graduating from Calvin Theological Seminary. With a passion for preaching, he has ably served Georgetown CRC in Ontario and is now an adjunct faculty member in the theology department at Dordt College.

With the inclusion of ministers on this committee from a wide cross-section of the denomination, the committee plans to hold its annual meeting via the Internet. Our hope is to expand the base of ministers submitting sermons and those using the sermons from the website. The Sermons for Reading Services Committee originated in Canada and has received sermons mostly from Canadian ministers, but increasingly we are receiving sermons from U.S. pastors, so this expansion is a next step in becoming a more denomination-wide ministry by and for all regions of the denomination. With gratitude to God, the committee hears through various means that the website is being used throughout the denomination, and we hope that its use will continue and grow.

II. Recommendations

A. That synod approve the work of the committee and encourage the churches to avail themselves of the sermons for reading services on the CRCNA website.

B. That synod by way of the ballot approve the appointment of Rev. Mark Verbruggen for a three-year term on the Sermons for Reading Services Committee.

Sermons for Reading Services Committee
Kenneth F. Benjamins
Richard J. deLange, chairman/secretary
Paul D. Stadt
Stephen D. Tamming

DENOMINATIONALLY RELATED AGENCIES

For more than 55 years, Dordt College has been blessed by the support of churches in the Christian Reformed denomination. We are as thankful today for that support as we were as a fledgling institution.

We take our task as seriously in 2011 as we did in 1955. Our mission is to

- lead students in becoming faithful disciples, equipped to serve around the world.
- help students develop a holistic biblical understanding of creation and culture.
- celebrate and proclaim the lordship of Christ over all areas of life.

In short, we are training serious Christian leaders who can make decisions and plan and direct God-glorifying development of our culture. In today's interconnected world, that means training people in biotechnology, genomics, biofuels, ecological stresses, efficient design and lean manufacturing, software development, renewable energy systems, biomedical engineering, and earthquake-safe structures—as well as in language, teaching, counseling, and much more.

Of the 1,368 students who enrolled at Dordt College for the 2010-2011 school year, 49 percent are members of a Christian Reformed church. Students from the family of Reformed churches make up 71 percent of our student body. This marks a change from five years ago, when Dordt College enrolled 790 students who were members of a Christian Reformed church (62 percent) and the total Reformed affiliated students equaled 81 percent of total enrollment. Thus, though we have seen an overall enrollment gain, the number of CRC students has declined. We believe passionately that we have something valuable to offer Christian young people, and we hope you continue to encourage your students to attend CRC-affiliated colleges.

Students returned to Dordt College this fall to a new building on campus. The Kuyper Apartments have geo-thermal heating, use many environmentally sustainable materials, and have expansive views of our thriving restored prairie. They help us offer a seamless holistic education by providing spaces for educational programming outside of classrooms.

Dordt College has been honored this year by a Number 3 ranking by *U.S. News & World Report*—and being named to their “Strong Commitment to Teaching” and “Great Schools, Great Prices” lists, a top ranking in the nation among 8,000 colleges, universities, and trade schools for our students' loan repayment rate, and exceptional pass rates for our nursing and engineering students—exceeding those of the top engineering schools in the nation. New programs, international connections, steady enrollment, ongoing success in our Beyond Jubilee Vision 2020 fundraising campaign, and faithful support in economic hard times have made our work both meaningful and enjoyable.

While we continually reach out to and embrace students from other denominational fellowships, our Reformed heritage and view of life shapes our teaching and learning and continues to be a blessing both to our students and to our broader supporting community.

In February we hosted the seventh annual Day of Encouragement, with Rev. Julius T. Medenblik, recently appointed president of Calvin Theological Seminary, as keynote speaker. More than 300 people attended the address

and participated in more than 20 breakout sessions geared toward ministry in the local congregations.

In all of these ways and so many more, Dordt College is honored to serve both the CRC denomination and the kingdom of Jesus Christ, wherever it is found.

Dordt College
Carl E. Zylstra, president

The Institute for Christian Studies (ICS) is a graduate school forming a new generation of Christian scholars using the interdisciplinary orientation of Reformational theology and philosophy.

The principal features of ICS are teaching and mentoring. This year, 83 students were enrolled at ICS—40 of them were taking full-time courses, and the rest were studying part-time. Many of these part-time students were from the various colleges at the Toronto School of Theology at the University of Toronto, of which ICS is an affiliated member.

ICS course offerings included 11 on-campus courses and two offered by distance education.

In November 2010, six students graduated from ICS—one Ph.D., four master of arts degrees, and one master of worldview studies.

ICS faculty published 15 scholarly articles, worked on two new book manuscripts, and had two book proposals accepted by publishers. The faculty also gave 17 papers at scholarly conferences and 16 papers and lectures at church and community conferences. Faculty members also edited and adjudicated four book manuscripts, served as referees in two tenure processes, and wrote the foreword to one new philosophy text, which will be published imminently.

Faculty also organized the following symposia:

- Religious Discourse in Public Deliberative Debate in March
- Truth Matters—an international conference of Christian scholars sponsored by ICS, Calvin College, Dordt College, and the Free University (Amsterdam)

ICS remains committed to sending faculty and students to churches and community centers across Canada to present lectures and workshops about matters concerning the Christian community and the general public. In 2010 these presentations included

- Hope in Troubled Times—an evening with Bob Goudzwaard; February 25, Toronto
- Arts Talk – Ethics and the Arts—a conference about the relation of music, ethics, and society; April, Toronto
- What’s So Critical About Faith?—Dr. Ron Kuipers; April, Edmonton and Calgary
- God Is Dead and I Don’t Feel Good Myself—Jon Stanley and Dr. Ron Kuipers; May, Toronto; September, Ottawa
- A History of ICS—Dr. Bob VanderVennen; September, Toronto

ICS has established a new project, The Research Centre for Philosophy, Religion, and Social Ethics, which will be formally opened in September 2011. Dr. Lambert Zuidervaart of ICS has been appointed as the founding director of the center.

Research has always been an important part of the work done by ICS faculty. The Research Centre will take research to a more prominent level, giving it greater support and visibility. The center will welcome other academics and public figures into our scholarship, enriching our work by having new voices join our conversations and show the relevance of our

research for the most urgent questions of our time—ethics, social justice, cultural and religious pluralism, environmental issues, and democratic solidarity.

Institute for Christian Studies
Chris Gort, president

In fall of 2010, The King's University College welcomed 668 students to study and be a part of our community for the 2010-11 academic year. We are encouraged by modest increases in enrollment over the past few years, and we pray that prospective students and their parents will continue to see the extraordinary value of the Christian university education that King's provides.

In spring of 2011 we look forward to sending out the first graduates of our bachelor of education—secondary education program, launched in September 2009. At the time of this writing we expect to congratulate fourteen graduates of this program at our spring graduation convocation.

The Canadian government's 2009 budget included a large economic stimulus allocation for university and college infrastructure. King's proposal under this program was approved at the level of \$1.89 million, with 50 percent of the project costs funded by the federal government. In November 2010 we celebrated the completion of the main components of the project: a new student services mall in the center of our main building, upgrades to the science wing, and improvements to the library. At the official ribbon cutting ceremony we were pleased to welcome the city of Edmonton mayor, Mr. Stephen Mandel, federal members of Parliament Ms. Linda Duncan and Ms. Laurie Hawn, and King's board chair Mr. Bill Diepeveen. It was great to be able to show our distinguished guests around our campus and to note how impressed they were with the facility and the research work being carried out by our faculty and students.

The daily schedule of the House of Commons in Ottawa includes a time allotment for members of Parliament to make a statement about a significant event or development in their constituency. On November 30, Ms. Duncan used this opportunity to tell the House about the work of a small university in her constituency—The King's University College! Her statement mentioned that she has a King's student as an intern and described King's as "a small Christian university college [that] embraces a philosophy that addresses the whole person." She continued to say that "this small university punches well above its weight, making a tremendous difference not just for students but the broader community."

In fall of 2010, King's again achieved outstanding results in *The Globe and Mail* Canadian University Report. King's is ranked at or near the top of the "Very Small" university category in all the important academic categories. The full report card can be found on the web at globecampus.ca/uni-101/. At the end of November, *Maclean's*, Canada's leading news magazine, also published an annual report on the results of two student satisfaction surveys. Some of the results, including students' satisfaction with the quality of teaching and their level of satisfaction with their choice of university, were published in the November 29 issue of *Maclean's*. King's received the top ratings nationally!

The King's University College continues to be blessed with generous support from Christian Reformed churches. Through area college ministry shares and other offerings, churches contributed \$520,000 to King's in 2010, enabling us to maintain and build programs, offer student financial support, and control tuition. We thank God for the ongoing support of Christian

higher education at King's. May God bless your work on behalf of his church during Synod 2011.

The King's University College
J. Harry Fernhout, president

Kuyper College is very grateful to have the history and relationship we have enjoyed for seventy-one years with the Christian Reformed Church. We were born out of a strong sense of vision shared by CRC pastors and laypeople, and the college has continued to serve the denomination with generations of pastors, evangelists, missionaries and, in its more contemporary manifestation of our mission, with graduates specializing in many service-oriented professions. We recognize the impact and importance of the CRC in helping us grow into a professional studies institution with an emphasis on Christian leadership. We are thrilled with our sense of calling and purpose as we look at the current and near-future role and opportunities that are before us.

The Bible and theology curriculum remains the hallmark of Kuyper. Students are drawn to the college because of our unique emphasis on and requirement for this major—either noting its desirability as they prepare for seminary and ministry or as the essential undergirding for a professional career that will be used to serve the church worldwide. The depth of this major and the quality of preparation it provides are affirmed by institutions and organizations to which our graduates go for work or further study. We are delighted, for example, with the new program established between Calvin Theological Seminary and Kuyper that allows students to complete their undergraduate and seminary education a year sooner than previously possible.

The professional studies curriculum also continues to attract more students as we expand the number of majors possible for students to complete this requirement. An energizing example in this area can be seen with the development of our new business major. Our students have increasingly desired business education, particularly with micro-business and service agency roles in mind. A consortium program we had with Cornerstone University demonstrated that Kuyper had enough students to warrant our own program, so we have initiated that curriculum this year. An emphasis on international and inner-city needs and opportunities characterizes the focus of the program.

A new strategic plan was formulated this year that will provide guidance to our growth and development over the next five years. In that plan we are committed to furthering our existing mission “to equip students with a biblical, Reformed worldview to serve effectively Christ’s church and his world.” We also continue with a vision of a campus serving 500 to 600 students as we seek to provide more graduates to fill existing and projected vacancies in ministry as well as to provide Christian leaders for new opportunities we see developing around the world. An example of this lies in our growing involvement with areas of Muslim outreach and equipping people to assist in the development of Muslim Background Believers.

Your continued prayers, encouragement, and support are deeply appreciated as we serve together in Christ’s kingdom. The affirmation you give us adds joy to our labor in the Lord. Thank you, and may God bless you and your work in the church.

Kuyper College
Nicholas V. Kroeze, president

Greetings from Redeemer University College to the delegates of the synod of the Christian Reformed Church. We praise God for the many blessings he has given Redeemer during this past year, and for the wonderful opportunities he continues to provide for our future.

Redeemer remains strongly committed to its mission of providing Christian university education across the liberal arts and sciences from a biblical, Christ-centered worldview. Led by our board of governors, we have recommitted ourselves to this mission and to our Reformed Christian identity. In addition, we have adopted a strategic plan that envisions extending this mission with programs to deepen spiritual formation, extend our Christian discipleship to co-curricular as well as curricular matters for whole life education, and to widen our engagement globally through international programs, experience, and recruitment. In these and all our programs, we aim to equip students to be servant-leaders of God's kingdom in our contemporary culture.

Redeemer continues to experience steady enrollment growth. This year we welcomed 915 full-time equivalent (FTE) and 955 students in total, compared to last year's 865 FTE and 918 students in total. Our students come from 9 Canadian provinces, 5 U.S. states, and 7 other countries. Approximately 51 percent of our students are from Reformed denominations and, in total, our students represent more than 50 different denominations. Our Continuous Learning & Education at Redeemer (CLEAR) program served an additional 1,850 adult participants from the surrounding community this past year.

With the help of stimulus funding from federal, provincial, and city governments—for the first time ever—we have been able to improve our facilities with a renovated administration wing, upgrades to our science labs and keyboard lab/recording studio, and a major solar energy project. We anticipate completion of our soccer dome and field-house complex and a First Nations memorial garden in Spring 2011.

Our campus has experienced many highlight events this past year, including the Refresh and Renew Worship conference, symposia on Charlotte Mason hosted by our Education Department, "Scouting the Future" offered by the Paideia Center, and conferences on "Liberty or Liability: The Future of Institutional Religious Freedom" with Cardus and on "Spiritual Formation in the Trenches" presented by ARIHE (Association of Reformed Institutions of Higher Education). We also hosted "The World and Our Calling Lectures" with Dr. Steven Garber as speaker.

In all of these efforts can be seen the commitment of our faculty, students, and staff to engage our community, both locally and globally, through scholarship and performance, service-learning, internships, and volunteer work. Such efforts are helping Redeemer to be a strong and respected witness for God's kingdom in our world. Meanwhile, our students respond very positively to these opportunities, as indicated in published student satisfaction surveys. In the *Globe & Mail* Canadian University Report, students gave Redeemer excellent grades in faculty-student interaction, quality of teaching, residence life, and so forth, and ranked Redeemer second among all universities across the country for providing an academically nurturing

and supportive environment. In the *Maclean's* report of Canadian University Survey Consortium, we scored second in the nation on student satisfaction with "quality of teaching" and "decision to attend this university."

We are deeply grateful for our faithful supporting community, including the prayers and area ministry shares of churches of the CRC. These resources are essential for our mission of providing Christian university education and promoting Christian scholarship from a biblical, Reformed Christian perspective. We believe that a strong partnership between family, churches, and Christian education is vital for helping our young adults develop in Christian discipleship and effective kingdom service. We pray that God will bless not only your meeting but also your continued efforts to faithfully nurture the body of Christ.

We look forward to seeing you at Redeemer for Synod 2012!

Redeemer University College
Hubert R. Krygsman, president

As challenging economic times persist for all of us, Trinity Christian College continues to plan with intense fiscal responsibility, striving to keep a Reformed, Christian education affordable for families desiring such for their sons and daughters. Families are finding ways to finance a Trinity education with help from the campus work study program, Trinity financial aid, and government aid.

God's blessings are evident, as the 2010-2011 academic year saw record-breaking enrollment numbers. Included in the record-high total of 1,491 students were record highs of 371 new students, 131 transfer students, and 398 Adult Studies students.

The global city of Chicago continues to be central to our mission. Students from Trinity and from sister colleges continue to benefit from Trinity's Chicago Semester program—a semester-long experience interning and living in the city. In addition, Trinity continues to offer and expand its ChicagoQuest program for high school students. More students each year take advantage of this four-week program in the summer designed for academically motivated high school students who have completed their junior year and for incoming Trinity freshmen. During this structured, residential experience to be held June 14 through July 8, 2011, students establish friendships, take a general education course, and immerse themselves in cultural and service opportunities in the city. Earlier this year Trinity also opened its own set of downtown classrooms and offices in the Daystar Center, home to many non-profit ministries as well as Daystar School, a Christian Schools International elementary school serving students in the heart of Chicago.

On our main campus in Palos Heights, Illinois, the first phase of our gym expansion project is on schedule to finish during the summer. This phase will provide students and faculty with a new competition gymnasium, training facilities, classrooms, and offices. Phase Two will primarily consist of the remodeling of the current Mitchell Memorial Gymnasium and the construction of a 6,000-square-foot fitness facility and additional classroom space. The ongoing development of a site less than a mile from campus will provide new fields for softball, baseball, and soccer.

Church leaders and members enjoy a variety of workshops and seminars offered through the Church Connection Initiative at Trinity (CCIT). CCIT is a catalyst for collaborative learning that strengthens local church ministries and equips leaders and lay members with instruction, knowledge, and opportunities by offering resources focused in four areas: preaching, worship, leadership development, and service. Highlights of Spring 2011 offerings included the Care and Kindness conference, Preaching and Teaching the Vices seminar, and a worship conference featuring Rev. John Bell of the Iona Community in Scotland, who presented "Worship in the New Testament Age."

We are grateful for God's blessings, evidenced in continuing growth in enrollment and in the offerings we receive from Christian Reformed churches directly or through ministry-share reduction offered to various classes. During 2010, we gratefully accepted \$165,000 in funds from these churches and classes.

Trinity Christian College
Steven Timmermans, president

Calvinist Cadet Corps

Encouraged by the Cadet Corps visioning team, a major focus of the Cadet ministry is leaders. We want to be excellent at recruiting, training, building, and keeping the men that God wants in this ministry. With that in mind, our counselors in southern California brought us to an excellent training event last summer and introduced us to the theme for the past year: Knotted Together in Christ. The annual counselors' convention was in San Diego, California, and counselors and their families took advantage of the opportunity for education, inspiration, and fellowship.

Regional training events continue to successfully draw good numbers of men too. These typically take place on a Saturday and offer the opportunity for a man to attend four or five workshops from a choice of more than a dozen. In addition to the international and the regional training, localized training takes place throughout North America on a nearly monthly basis. A counselor who is interested in training can get it.

A second major focus of Cadets for the past year has been prayer. We have emphasized the need for prayer through each of our publications, including a new monthly prayer e-letter, mailed to each counselor who has an e-mail address. During council meetings (a Cadet council is similar to a CRC classis) there has been a renewed emphasis on prayer.

After a three-year absence from Africa, four North Americans returned to Kenya last October to participate in a conference hosted by the Kenyan Cadet ministry. The purpose was to develop a Cadet guidebook specifically for their ministry. In a few short days, the entire North American guidebook was reviewed, decisions were made, and the work was done. Our men did have time to visit one Kenyan Cadet club on the way. That club had used funds from its partner in Canada to build a Cadet building by the church, open a well for irrigation of a field by the church, and install a water tank. They are an ambitious group—one of about three dozen Cadet clubs in Kenya.

Calvinist Cadet Corps

G. Richard Broene, executive director

GEMS Girls' Clubs

The ministry of GEMS Girls' Clubs continues with passion and boldness our equipping ministry: equipping women and girls to passionately live out their faith—doing justice, loving mercy, and walking humbly with God. Highlights from 2010 and goals for 2011 include the following:

- Training, equipping, and inspiring women to be mentors of girls continues as a cornerstone of our ministry. This past year over 3,600 of the 5,400 women serving as counselors were trained at one of the 26 area-wide/training workshops in North America; and/or attended our Annual Counselors' Leadership Conference in Minneapolis, Minnesota, at Bethel University; attended one of three training workshops in

Zambia; or completed online training. Most of the 555 Christian Reformed churches that offer GEMS Clubs have counselors that have received helpful, inspiring training at one or more of the GEMS training events.

- Providing girls with culturally relevant, biblically based, curriculum and web materials continues as a foundational belief of how GEMS is called to engage girls in faith development. Eight new or newly revised curricula were introduced to GEMS Clubs in North America in 2010-2011. All have been received with much praise and enthusiasm.
- Hosting large-group events for girls in which head, heart, and hands can be engaged remains a critical part of how we intentionally work at developing the whole girl. Get Connected! Camp, our international summer camp for early teen girls held in the United States and in Zambia this past summer, and the Beauty of Believing Tour (with Zondervan Publishing) for preteen girls are just two of the events that have attracted and made an impact on hundreds of girls.
- Providing women and girls with opportunities to “do justice” as Micah 6:8 instructs—to be difference-makers in our world—has become another high core value for GEMS. Since 2006, GEMS has been working in Zambia, Africa, by starting GEMS Clubs, training women to be counselors, helping build a home for orphans, continuing to support that home, providing micro-financing opportunities for women, and now building a school, The Esther School, for orphan and under-resourced children. Through these programs and activities, girls and women have taken their eyes off of themselves and placed them on a lost and hurting world to see how they can help. While training teams have been going to Zambia each spring for the past five years, in Summer 2011 GEMS will take our first sixteen-member work team to help build the library at the Esther School. It is our plan and hope to open the school sometime in 2012.
- Based on the success of clubs operating in Zambia and the curriculum developed for that country, GEMS is opening the door to a greater international presence. In 2011 we will be launching a web-based effort to provide churches in countries around the world with a basic curriculum that will enable them to start and run GEMS Clubs in underprivileged communities and rural villages alike. Through this effort we will be able to live out our name more fully—*Girls Everywhere Meeting the Savior*.

For all the opportunities for kingdom work, service, and growth, GEMS gives thanks to our great God. We give thanks also to the Christian Reformed Church for entrusting to our care and nurture your beautiful girls!

GEMS Girls' Clubs

Jan Boone, executive director

Youth Unlimited

Youth Unlimited (YU) is blessed to serve the Christian Reformed Church at the denominational, classical, and local church levels.

In 2010 at the denominational and classical levels, Youth Unlimited was a member of the Youth Ministry Task Force, served as the youth ministry guide for the new CRC Network, and led workshops and trainings for Day of Encouragement events and classis meetings.

At the local church level, YU empowered 28 local congregations to serve their community by hosting a SERVE experience, sent over 2,000 youth and adults on either a SERVE mission experience or to the Where U At? Urban Youth Conference, led three regional youth worker Soul Care Retreats, sent the *Equip* youth ministry magazine and *Out of the Trenches* e-resource free of charge to every CRC church, and visited many youth worker networks across Canada and the United States.

As YU lives out its mission of “helping churches challenge youth to commit their lives to Jesus Christ and transform their world for him” in 2011, we do it with a peace and passion that can only come from Jesus Christ. In addition to our ministry staples like SERVE, Where U At?, and the *Equip* magazine, we are offering even more this year.

Feeling led by God to increase our effort to serve more youth and youth workers, here is what’s new for 2011:

- Live it! – a new and relevant large event for youth (July 20-24)
- Israel 2011 – a leadership development trip through the Holy Land where youth workers connect personal faith discoveries with their youth ministry efforts (June 11-27)
- Three new youth worker Soul Care Retreats, totaling 6 regional retreats (winter and fall)

Youth Unlimited appreciates its 90-year partnership with the Christian Reformed Church and eagerly anticipates how God will bless the lives of young people, youth workers, and congregations in 2011 and beyond.

Youth Unlimited
Jeff Kruithof, executive director

Friendship Ministries

Friendship Ministries is an international and interdenominational ministry committed to both sharing God's love with people who have intellectual disabilities and enabling them to be active members of God's family.

Friendship Ministries provides opportunities for people with intellectual disabilities to make profession of faith using our resource, *Expressing Faith in Jesus*. For example, in June 2010 at Plymouth Heights CRC in Grand Rapids, Michigan, five new members were baptized and one made profession of faith as a result of a Friendship Ministries program. Other Friendship club members have found ways to serve and share with their congregations by ushering, helping to lead worship, and participating in service projects.

There are more than 300 Friendship programs in Christian Reformed churches in Canada and the United States, and many of these programs involve multiple CRC congregations. Many programs also collaborate with churches of other denominations, helping to extend their outreach into many communities.

We are a worldwide organization in that

- currently, there are more than 1,100 Friendship programs in 28 countries.
- Friendship serves approximately 17,000 people with intellectual disabilities.
- this past year we began a new program in Kenya, and the Friendship program in Listowel, Ontario, has begun to sponsor a new program in Uganda.
- through *Ministerio Amistad*, the Spanish arm of Friendship Ministries, there are four programs in the Cuba CRC. There are almost 300 programs in Latin America.
- this past year 92 new programs were started. Our goal is to keep up this pace for the coming year.

We offer high-quality curriculum materials to help groups grow in faith.

- The Friendship Bible Studies used in our programs have three themes with 95 sessions: *God, Our Father; Jesus, Our Savior; and The Spirit, Our Helper*.
- *Living God's Way* has 13 sessions on the Ten Commandments.
- *Psalms: God Cares How I Feel* has 10 sessions and was just published in August 2010.
- *Compartiendo la Palabra de Dios con Personas con Discapacidad Intelectual* was published in Fall 2010—a Spanish-translation combination of our Program Guide and *What Friendship Mentors Need to Know*.
- We also offer *God, Our Father* and *Jesus, Our Savior* in Spanish.
- Our book *Autism and Your Church* is a resource for congregations that need help including people with autism spectrum disorders. Our next goal is to revise this book and translate it into Spanish.

Friendship Ministries partners with Faith Alive Christian Resources in developing the materials used in Friendship programs. Together with Faith Alive, we are also developing webinars that offer training on various aspects of disability ministry. Our first webinar deals with how to include people

who have autism spectrum disorders, and it has had over 567 viewers; in early February 2011 we released a webinar on ministering with people who have severe disabilities.

Additional services we provide include

- consultation on including children in church education programs.
- consultation with parents on how to approach the congregation for inclusion of their sons and daughters with intellectual disabilities.
- ideas for recruiting volunteers for programs.
- consultation on making worship a more multisensory experience, which is often helpful for people who have disabilities.
- consultation on how to include people with intellectual disabilities in worship and the life of the church.
- recommending resources as needed on various topics for ministering with people who have disabilities.

Mentors who volunteer in the programs often tell us how their spiritual lives are enhanced through their ministry with people who have intellectual disabilities. Families express that Friendship programs are the one place their son or daughter is fully accepted and spiritually nurtured. This witness has encouraged many families to either remain in their congregations or to join a church that has a Friendship program. Friendship has also been a source of outreach to many care providers who are included in these programs when they bring Friends to a church.

Friendship Ministries

Nella Uitvlugt, executive director

As a part of a growing global movement of Christian businesspeople, Partners Worldwide is empowering thousands of business owners and entrepreneurs to fulfill their calling to use business in Christ's transformation of lives and his restoration of all things. More than ever before, Christians are being affirmed, encouraged, and commissioned—regardless of their profession—as Christ's agents in their sphere of influence, including business.

In 2010, pastors and church leaders have acknowledged the untapped potential that exists in businesspeople for kingdom transformation, leading to a higher demand for business as ministry (BAM) training in North America. To respond to the growing demand, this year Partners Worldwide launched a church engagement strategy, including mailings of our BAM curriculum and study guides to all CRC churches, one-day conferences, and speaking engagements in churches across North America and the globe.

Another highlight took place this October 2010, when nearly 400 businesspeople from 25 countries attended "Marketplace Revolution: Fighting Global Poverty Through Business," the biannual international conference of Partners Worldwide held in Grand Rapids, Michigan. For two days, attendees were challenged to reconsider ministry and business development in their unique calling as business professionals. "We as Christians can't just do things because it sounds cool, but need to be strategic in what we do," said one Zambian businessman. "What really excites me is seeing the change in people when they're in a productive environment. God is a God who's productive, has plans, and accomplishes them."

"Bottom line is that many people aren't yet aware of the essential role business has in sustainable development," says Mr. Daniel Jean-Louis, partnership manager of Haiti who facilitates mentoring relationships of North American and Haitian business professionals. "We need to confirm the callings of businesspeople and utilize the unique abilities God has given them to transform society."

New business networks in India and China were also created in 2010 by local business leaders who are passionate about utilizing job creation in the fight against global poverty. In these new partnerships, as well as in 39 existent partnerships in 20 developing countries, businesspeople from the United States, Canada, and Hong Kong are committed to mentoring, praying for, and walking alongside their partners across cultures and time zones.

The impact of these partnerships around the world has been amazing! The 2010 results include 681 dedicated business mentors and coaches who walked alongside others within a network of 16,852 business owners and entrepreneurs. These businesses also retained 20,472 jobs and created 1,922 new jobs, directly affecting the lives of over 120,000 people with sustainable incomes—incomes that support families with dignity.

Through the ministry of Partners Worldwide, businesspeople are participating in God's holistic transformation, especially as the body of Christ affirms and commissions them. Thank you for partnering in this vital ministry of Partners Worldwide. We look forward to partnering with more CRC churches and businesspeople of the CRC to continue creating jobs and transforming lives around the globe!

Partners Worldwide
Douglas Seebeck, president

STUDY COMMITTEES

I. Background and mandate

This is now the fourth report that the Faith Formation Committee is presenting to synod as it seeks to fulfill the five-year mandate given by Synod 2007. Synod appointed the committee in the context of discussions and decisions concerning the matter of admitting children to the Lord's Supper. Synod 2006 adopted a motion to propose a change to the Church Order which would have welcomed all baptized members to come to the Lord's Supper. However, Synod 2007 did not approve that proposal but instead appointed the Faith Formation Committee with the following mandate:

To deepen the integration of biblical teaching; confessional norms; church polity; and liturgical, educational, and pastoral practices in the CRC with respect to (1) participation in the Lord's Supper and (2) public profession of faith, by means of:

- a. Formulating a clear statement about the participation of baptized children at the Lord's Supper and the practice of public profession of faith for use in the churches. The statement should include, first, an explanation of 1 Corinthians 11 and other relevant Scripture texts in light of the principles of Reformed hermeneutics and, second, a discussion of the Reformed confessions with emphasis on the implications of the relationship between covenant and sacraments.
- b. Describing how Christian Reformed congregations in various contexts are experiencing intergenerational faith formation and sacramental practice and discerning which liturgical, educational, and organizational practices should be commended by synod to the entire denomination on the basis of their pastoral and theological integrity.
- c. Discussing with various agencies and organizations that work in the areas of faith formation, pastoral care, and worship (e.g., Calvin Theological Seminary, Home Missions, Youth Unlimited, Christian Schools International, the Center for Excellence in Preaching at Calvin Theological Seminary, and the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship) what kinds of collaborative educational efforts best promise to support pastorally sensitive, theologically grounded work in these topics.
- d. Providing guidelines, liturgical materials, and pastoral advice on these topics in collaboration with Faith Alive Christian Resources.
- e. Serving as a resource for discussions of these topics at a congregational and classical level.
- f. Reporting to synod annually for the next five years.

Grounds:

- a. Our approach to the question of participation at the Lord's Supper and public profession of faith must proceed on the basis of a clear statement of biblical and theological rationale.
- b. A study committee on biblical and theological issues alone is insufficient. An ongoing discussion needs to take place at all levels of the church to link our theology with our practice within a whole cluster of issues that relate to the sacraments, the preached Word, faith formation, church discipline, and practices that sustain lifelong discipleship.
- c. Our approach to children at the Lord's Supper and profession of faith needs to be part of a larger discussion of faithful and vital intergenerational faith formation in various contexts. Mutual accountability and learning among very different types of congregations is only likely to happen when there are intentional structures in place to promote it.
- d. Several congregations are already asking for shared wisdom on this topic.
- e. Given strongly held opinions on this issue and growing diversity of practices, this topic is likely to be discussed throughout the denomination for at least the next five years. A pastorally and theologically oriented committee,

attuned to the diversity of ministry settings within the denomination, would be well positioned to shepherd a healthy theological dialogue within the denomination over time.

- f. This approach would be a cost-effective means of shepherding this discussion, especially given the availability of the Internet to promote communication among committee members and to disseminate information to the denomination.
- g. The work of such a committee would be a fitting way to carry forward the themes, insights, and energy developed during the denominational Year of Faith Formation (2007-2008).

(Acts of Synod 2007, pp. 655-57)

In addition, Synod 2007 gave the committee some additional related work on the subjects of infant dedication and infant baptism:

That synod mandate the Faith Formation Committee to provide biblical and pastoral guidance for councils who are conversing with those members who are requesting infant dedication in place of infant baptism.

Ground: Covenantal theology is foundational for faith formation (Gen. 17:1-14; 1 Cor. 7:14; Acts 2:38-39).

That synod mandate the Faith Formation Committee to provide guidance concerning liturgical practices surrounding infant baptism.

Ground: Because liturgical practices teach doctrine, it is important that liturgical practices reflect the doctrinal standards of the denomination.

(Acts of Synod 2007, p. 621)

Committee members eagerly began their work in the fall of 2007 with the awareness that the task was a large one and the timeline was longer than usual. The committee was given a five-year mandate with the responsibility to report to synod each year. Each year the committee has informed synod of its efforts and findings and, for the past three years, has engaged synod in conversations about the issues involved in the life of the church relative to this matter.

II. Continued efforts

A. Collaborative efforts

Throughout our work together over the past four years, we have been particularly eager to respond to synod's call for collaborative work on this topic. Many of our meetings have included conversations with between ten and twelve congregational leaders from a variety of ethnic and cultural contexts and a wide range of congregations. We have been helped by insights from fifty pastoral correspondents to drafts of our documents. We have created a website for materials generated within our work—www.crcna.org/faithformation—and we have also set up an email address for correspondence with our committee. We have met with representatives of ten different agencies whose ministries relate in some way to our mandate. By the time synod meets, the members of our committee will have met for an extended session with thirty-one of the forty-seven CRC classes, have held events within the setting of nine others, and offered presentations at over a dozen conferences or Days of Encouragement. A particular highlight of our committee's work this past year was a meeting in southern California that included discussions with twenty pastors from a wide variety of ethnic and cultural settings, Sunday visits to several congregations, and evening events to congregations in both Redlands and San Marcos. In each of these

exchanges, we have been eager to listen to the concerns and insights arising from local congregations and to share what we have learned from other parts of the denomination. We are grateful for the ways in which this extensive consultation has strengthened the documents we are presenting and, more important, strengthened the relationships and sense of partnership in the gospel that we share throughout the Christian Reformed Church.

B. Agency contributions

The committee expresses gratitude on behalf of the denomination for the work of several agencies that contribute to the general area of faith formation. Back to God Ministries International offers an impressive array of formative resources through ReFrame media. Calvin Theological Seminary has provided several timely contributions to the topic of faith formation through the *Calvin Seminary Forum*. Calvin College, Dordt College, Trinity Christian College, The King's University College, and Redeemer University College have each sponsored conferences, developed faith formation programs, and contributed faculty expertise to work in this area. The Calvin Institute of Christian Worship has sponsored reading groups involving over 150 denominational members, including several youth, in discussions about faith formation. And Youth Unlimited offers a significant set of events and resources for youth and children's ministries.

In addition, Faith Alive Christian Resources has developed several new products that directly respond to major themes in the committee's work.

- *Home Grown—Handbook for Christian Parenting: 111 Real Life Questions and Answers* (by Karen DeBoer, Faith Alive Christian Resources, 2010) and accompanying seven-session course (*Home Grown: Essentials for Christian Parenting*) offer help to parents who want Christ-centered homes where faith grows and deepens.
- “Nurture” blog—Check out www.NurtureKidsFaith.org and recommend it to families in your congregations with whom you partner to form faith in children and youth.
- *Celebrating the Milestones of Faith: A Guide for Churches*—A helpful resource for churches seeking to build a faith milestones ministry that will bless members of all ages.
- *Shaped by God: 13 Essentials for Nurturing Faith in Children, Youth, and Adults*—A collection of essays written for congregations by experts in the field of church education and faith formation.

We are so pleased that many of the major themes in the committee's work—the importance of “milestones,” of intergenerational learning opportunities, of forming parents for their role as faith mentors—are not waiting for some future project to further develop but are already explored in user-friendly resources.

III. Progress on specific documents and projects

A. Overall vision: Affirming baptism and forming faith (Appendix A)

Over the past four years, the Faith Formation Committee has been developing a document that articulates an overall vision for faith formation, especially as it relates to baptism, the Lord's Supper, and profession of faith. We have received excellent feedback from pastoral correspondents and

through discussions at various classis meetings and synod. The document is now in its 15th draft, thanks to the many helpful suggestions forwarded to the committee.

In 2010, synod adopted the following recommendation:

That synod . . . receive the draft document “Affirming Baptism and Forming Faith” for information and refer it to the churches for study and feedback, with the understanding that the Faith Formation Committee will return to a subsequent synod so that the document can be given to the churches as a shepherding document to guide and encourage the churches.

(Acts of Synod 2010, p. 812)

On the basis of the encouragement we continue to receive from the churches, the committee is now ready to submit this document (Appendix A) to Synod 2011 for approval.

B. Church Order changes (Appendix B)

The largest task for our committee over the past four years has been to engage in continued study and listening conversations about the topic of children at the Lord’s Supper. We have been very grateful for the reception of our work by the churches and for the strong endorsement of the committee’s work offered at Synod 2010. Synod 2010 adopted the following recommendation:

That synod endorse the following guiding principle as the basis for the committee’s continuing work:

All baptized members who come with age- and ability-appropriate faith in Jesus Christ are welcome to the Lord’s Table and called to obey the scriptural commands about participation (e.g., to “examine themselves,” to “discern the body,” to “proclaim the Lord’s death,” to “wait for others”) in an age- and ability-appropriate way, under the supervision of the elders. The elders have responsibility to nurture in the congregation grateful and obedient participation through encouragement, instruction, and accountability.

The following statements clarify the guiding principle above:

- a. A formal public Profession of Faith prior to participation in the Lord’s Supper is not required by Scripture or the confessions.
- b. A formal public Profession of Faith is a vital practice for faith formation and is one pastoral approach to consider prior to participation in the Lord’s Supper.
- c. Professing faith regularly in and outside of corporate worship is a natural practice for lifelong faith formation which the church should encourage, enhance, and express.

(Acts of Synod 2010, pp. 810-11)

After nearly 25 years of sometime contentious debate on this issue, the committee is grateful for the nearly unanimous support Synod 2010 offered for this recommendation.

Synod 2010 went on to adopt the following motion:

That synod instruct the Faith Formation Committee to submit any Church Order changes it will propose according to the study committee schedule so that those changes may be adopted at Synod 2011 instead of being proposed at Synod 2011 for adoption at Synod 2012.

(Acts of Synod 2010, p. 812)

The Faith Formation Committee submitted these proposed changes as requested in the fall of 2010, and it recommends that Synod 2011 adopt them (Appendix B).

C. *Revised document*—“*Children at the Table: Toward a Guiding Principle for Biblically Faithful Celebrations of the Lord’s Supper*” (Appendix C)

The action of Synod 2010 on children at the Lord’s Supper, including its approval of a guiding principle and request for Church Order changes, was guided by the document “*Children at the Table: Toward a Guiding Principle for Biblically Faithful Celebrations of the Lord’s Supper*.” Our committee developed this document as a response to our first mandate—that we formulate “a clear statement about the participation of baptized children at the Lord’s Supper and the practice of public profession of faith for use in the churches. The statement should include, first, an explanation of 1 Corinthians 11 and other relevant Scripture texts in light of the principles of Reformed hermeneutics and, second, a discussion of the Reformed confessions with emphasis on the implications of the relationship between covenant and sacraments.” Once complete, this document will be available in the synodical resources section of the CRC website to serve as an important interpretive document to explain the rationale and intent of synod’s actions.

Synod 2010 expressed appreciation for our work on this document but also asked for some additional changes. Synod adopted the following recommendation:

That synod

- a. Receive the document “*Children at the Table: Toward a Guiding Principle for Biblically Faithful Celebrations of the Lord’s Supper*” as a sufficient foundational basis for the adoption of the guiding principle and refer it to the churches for study and feedback, with the understanding that the Faith Formation Committee will continue to incorporate changes and suggestions to the document.
- b. Specifically encourage the Faith Formation Committee to include (1) a more detailed study of the command to “examine oneself” as stated in 1 Corinthians 11:28 and (2) a comparison and contrast with the “confirmation” process of other Christian traditions.

(Acts of Synod 2010, p. 812)

The committee has revised the document as instructed, and it presents the revised document (Appendix C) for approval. We take note that one advantage of our committee’s mandate, and the process of making annual reports to synod, is the opportunity it creates for us to respond to insights and concerns from a particular synod, and from overtures to synod, even when those overtures are not acceded to.

D. *Preliminary report on responding to requests for infant dedication (Appendix D)*

As noted above, Synod 2007 also assigned the Faith Formation Committee with the task “to provide biblical and pastoral guidance for councils who are conversing with those members who are requesting infant dedication in place of infant baptism.” Synod was clear in its affirmation of infant baptism, as expressed in both the Reformed Confessions and Church Order, but also wanted to generate constructive conversation about the most helpful approaches to requests for infant dedication. To help us understand the concerns of the denomination, our committee conducted a survey of pastors early in 2010 about this question and is now ready to present a preliminary set of reflections on this theme for synod’s consideration (Appendix D). We anticipate completing our work on this task by 2012, within our five-year mandate.

IV. Denominational planning

In all of these efforts, the committee has been struck by the deep sense of urgency felt throughout the denomination over issues related to faith formation. Part of this, we sense, is fueled by concern for young adults who are leaving the church. Another part, we sense, is fueled by a renewed commitment in several Christian traditions not merely to grow churches but also to form disciples of Jesus.

We have also heard repeated questions about what kind of denominational conversation may best be suited to encourage learning and accountability in this important area. While some of these questions are critical in nature (for example, “Why doesn’t the CRC do more to . . . ?”), more are generated out of a positive sense of calling (for example, “At this time, what kind of denominational engagement best promises to strengthen congregations for their work in intergenerational faith formation?”). Several more specific questions also arise naturally out of the committee’s work:

- If intergenerational learning opportunities are so important for faith formation, how can the very structure of ministries, both locally and denominationally, reflect this concern?
- If the sacraments and milestones in public worship are so important for faith formation, is it sufficient to have denominational structures for faith formation that primarily focus on individual and group learning apart from worship?
- If lifelong formation of adults is important for creating a culture of growth and discipleship in congregational life, could it be that too few denominational resources are devoted to ongoing adult learning and creating congregational cultures of learning and growth?

The committee senses there is a general consensus that

- while synodical discussions are crucial, they are not sufficient to ensure that work in this area affects the life of local congregations.
- several agencies are producing excellent resources for work in this area but may not have the resources or mandate to provide ongoing training, support, or accountability in this area.
- our committee has played a small role in moving the conversation forward, but our work is scheduled to conclude in 2012.

The committee has heard several suggestions for innovative future work in this area, ranging from suggestions that (1) a future shepherding committee be assigned the task of continuing work in this area, (2) a group of regional catalysts be developed to encourage work in local congregations, (3) that an existing denominational agency be assigned the mandate and resources to take the lead in work in this area, and (4) that a recombination or restructuring of denominational staff positions might strengthen work in this area.

We sense that it is beyond the mandate of our committee to present specific proposals along these lines, but it does fall within our mandate to raise the subject and ask synod to address it. Further, we sense that it is wise to raise the issue this year—one year before our committee’s work is complete—to allow for appropriate reflection on a way forward. For this reason

the committee offers a recommendation requesting synod to ask the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA to reflect on this future prior to Synod 2012.

V. Concluding our committee's work

During the coming year the Faith Formation Committee anticipates concluding its work by

- responding to the decisions of Synod 2011.
- working with Faith Alive Christian Resources toward publication of practical resources to help churches.
- continuing to participate in discussions at the classical and congregational levels.
- discerning what kind of liturgical and pastoral resources should be presented to Synod 2012 for approval, including those that arise from our mandate given by Synod 2007 “to provide guidance concerning liturgical practices surrounding infant baptism.”
- concluding our work on infant dedication, in light of Synod 2011’s response to our preliminary work.

Already in 2007 the committee formulated the following statement of our “dream” outcome to our work:

When we look back on our work after five years, we . . . want to be able to say that we have worked well together as a denomination, we have wrestled with Scripture, we have honored and learned from the Reformed confessions, we have shared with each other the fruits of our local ministries, we have supported each other in prayer, and we have strengthened our ministry among children, youth, seekers, and lifelong Christians of all ages.

(Agenda for Synod 2008, p. 233)

In the meantime, our work as a committee proceeds prayerfully toward a clearer understanding of how faith develops and how it may be nurtured by the family and the congregation, particularly by means of the sacraments of baptism and the Lord’s Supper. It is our deepest hope that greater understanding will lead to joyful affirmation of our baptism, to celebration of the Lord’s Supper in all of the richness that 1 Corinthians 11 suggests, and to a revitalization of our practice of profession of faith.

We sense that some of this has already happened, particularly as it relates to the denominational structures of classis and synod. But so much of this dream is ultimately focused on what happens in local congregations on a weekly basis. The committee’s overarching goal in this coming year, then, is to build upon the strength of our denomination-wide collaborative reflections, learning, and decisions in this area, and to prayerfully seek ways of strengthening congregational life.

VI. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Dr. John D. Witvliet, chair; Dr. Howard Vanderwell, secretary; and other members of the committee who may be present when the committee’s work is being discussed.

B. That synod endorse “Affirming Baptism and Forming Faith” as a guiding document for the work of both denominational agencies and congregations in the area of faith formation (Appendix A).

Grounds:

1. The document is consistent with Scripture and the Reformed confessions.
2. The document has received substantial input from the denomination over the past four years, including a plenary discussion of the document by Synod 2009 and a request from Synod 2010 that congregations review the report and offer feedback to the committee.
3. The document offers timely perspectives on important challenges facing congregations.

C. That synod adopt the changes to the Church Order and its Supplement as presented in Appendix B.

Grounds:

1. These changes provide for the implementation of the decision of Synod 2010 about age- and ability-appropriate participation in the Lord's Supper.
2. These changes acknowledge that while profession of faith is a vital practice for faith formation, neither Scripture nor the confessions require that it take place prior to participation in the Lord's Supper.
3. These changes promote a consistency of terminology within the Church Order and of practice within the churches.

D. That synod accept the revised version of "Children at the Table" (Appendix C) as fulfillment of the mandate of the Faith Formation Committee to formulate "a clear statement about the participation of baptized children at the Lord's Supper and the practice of public profession of faith for use in the churches."

Grounds:

1. The document is consistent with Scripture and the Reformed confessions.
2. Synod 2010 endorsed an earlier draft of the document as sufficient basis for approving a principle to guide further work on the topic.
3. The revised document includes the changes requested by Synod 2010.
4. This action will allow the document to be received by our congregations and by our ecumenical conversation partners as a document accepted by synod.

E. That synod affirm the following principle regarding infant dedication to guide the continuing work of the committee (see also Appendix D):

When parents request infant or child dedication in public worship, the pastor and elders of local congregations should (1) engage in pastorally appropriate ways to celebrate the birth or adoption of the child, to pray for the child and parents, and to call for the commitment of the parents to nurture their children in the Lord, (2) engage in convicted and winsome teaching on the subject of infant baptism, and (3) refrain from leading rituals of infant or child dedication in public worship services.

Grounds:

1. Congregations should minister to those who will not present their children for infant baptism with a spirit of gratitude to God for the gift of these children, offering encouragement and accountability to parents as part of faithful, pastoral ministry.
2. A faithful, encouraging, pastoral response to parents promises to reduce unhelpful ambivalence toward members who do not affirm infant baptism.
3. Many people do not embrace infant baptism because they do not understand how it is consistent with Scripture. Teaching on the subject offers a rich opportunity to promote greater biblical understanding and may lead the parents to present their children for baptism.
4. A ritual of an infant or child dedication in public worship is not required by the Bible and is not consistent with the Reformed confessions.
5. A ritual of infant or child dedication in public worship could easily create confusion about the meaning and purpose of the sacrament of baptism.
6. This principle is consistent with the Reformed confessions and with the past decisions of Synods 1888, 1964, 1973, and 2007.

F. That synod request the executive director of the CRCNA and the Board of Trustees to review the ongoing needs of the CRC regarding intergenerational faith formation and sacramental participation and to propose an appropriate denomination-wide mechanism for promoting continued learning, reflection, and training on this important topic, taking into account the strategic goals of the denomination and the importance of our wise stewardship of resources.

Grounds:

1. Faithful discipleship and faith formation is an urgent and ongoing concern for our churches.
2. While the Faith Formation Committee will complete its formal mandate at the meeting of Synod 2012, the largest tasks of training, learning from congregations, and mutual accountability are ongoing.
3. Any plan for continuing work on this topic should be completed by the time the committee completes its work in 2012.
4. It is beyond the mandate of the Faith Formation Committee to propose continuing institutional mechanisms for this work.

Faith Formation Committee

Irene Bakker
Peter Choi
Gerard L. Dykstra, *ex officio*
Jill Friend
Syd Hielema
Pat Nederveld
H. David Schuringa
Howard Vanderwell, secretary
John D. Witvliet, chair

Appendix A

Affirming Baptism and Forming Faith

Since beginning our work late in 2007, the Faith Formation Committee has had the privilege of listening to voices from throughout the CRC to engage in scriptural and theological study and to reflect on the significant challenges and opportunities of contemporary ministry and denominational life. Our mandate from synod challenges us to express and hone a biblical vision for faith formation and to provide specific guidance on the question of children at the Lord's Supper. We strongly sense that our approach to the more focused question of children at the table must be seen in the context of an overarching biblical vision for the sacraments and faith formation.

This document, "Affirming Baptism and Forming Faith," is one attempt to express such a vision. The document is designed to express widespread feelings of both concern and opportunity in contemporary ministry, reflect our continuity with the confessions, create an outline for teaching and for gathering additional resources, and serve the cause of spiritual renewal in the church. More specifically, this document expresses several key themes embedded in the formation of our faith and found in our work to date:

1. **Baptismal Identity**—Our identity is found in our union with Christ through the Holy Spirit. Practices of faith formation are designed not merely to teach biblical literacy or to promote certain behavioral choices, as important as these are. Rather, the ultimate purpose of faith formation practices is to deepen our sense of identity as God's children, united to Christ. The importance of this task is underscored by the identity crisis that many of God's children are facing today.
2. **Milestones**—Public, liturgical, prayerful celebrations of milestone moments (such as profession of faith and other events; see Part 2, 2.3) promise to reinforce baptismal identity, convey the church's love for each individual, and express a warm invitation to deeper participation in the life of faith (see, for example, Josh. 4:21-24).
3. **Expectant Urgency**—Growth in the faith is a gift of the Holy Spirit. We do not produce it, but we should pray for it, long for it, participate in it, and be prepared to suffer in it—themes poignantly conveyed in Paul's description of his attitude toward the Galatians as being "in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you" (Gal. 4:19).
4. **Lifelong Learning**—We never graduate from the school of faith formation. Each chapter or season of life includes its own challenges and opportunities that can aid or impede growth. We must resist any practice or language that unwittingly conveys the impression that we graduate from learning when we make our public profession of faith. We must also resist any practice or language that implies that those who are farther along in the journey of faith no longer face questions and struggles.
5. **Holistic Formation**—Our practices of formation are aimed at helping us love God with all our heart, soul, and mind, and our neighbors as ourselves (Matt. 22:37-39). We are eager to resist approaches to formation that are merely cognitive or merely affective or that separate our love of God

from our love of neighbor. We aim that the whole person be formed after the pattern of Jesus Christ. Only through such holistic formation will true biblical maturity be evidenced.

The form of this document is something of an experiment. Unlike a standard synodical report, the audience for this document is not primarily synod, but rather any individual or group engaged in a study of faith formation and the sacraments (for example, teachers, parents, a church council, a small group, a college or seminary class). Once this provisional text is approved, additional study materials can be compiled for each section, and a shorter summary version can be prepared for other audiences.

Toward the end of genuinely expressing the church's common convictions, this document has been developed through a process that has been very collaborative. Over fifty pastoral correspondents and several seminery students offered feedback on earlier drafts of this material. The committee has engaged twenty CRC classes in workshop discussions and has welcomed helpful feedback about both the content and form of this statement from delegates to Synod 2009, from church councils, and from individuals throughout the denomination and beyond. Following Synod 2010, we have responded to received advice by making further edits to this document.

PROLOGUE

Discerning Faithful Sacramental Practice in Contemporary Culture

The sacraments are indispensable gifts of God and are of vital significance for the church's task to make and form disciples of Jesus. Baptism and the Lord's Supper are clearly mandated by Scripture, in rich and evocative texts that point back to God's dealings with Israel and to the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ and also point ahead to the fullness of the coming kingdom. The confessions of the church affirm that God "confirms [our faith] through our use of the holy sacraments" (Heidelberg Catechism, Q&A 65) and that God "added these to the Word of the gospel . . . confirming in us the salvation he imparts to us" (Belgic Confession, Art. 33). The *Contemporary Testimony* echoes these confessions: "God meets us in the sacraments, communicating grace to us by means of water, bread, and wine" (*Our World Belongs to God*, 2008 edition, par. 37). The sacraments are indispensable gifts of God which not only express but also form and nurture faith.

Nevertheless, the contemporary practice of the sacraments involves several complex challenges. In many contexts, the liturgical practices around the sacraments have changed more in the past generation than in the past four centuries, generating new and sometimes competing perceptions about their meaning and purpose, as well as very different ways of celebrating the sacraments. New emphasis on visual communication offers both opportunities and challenges for contemporary sacramental practice, forming in people both inside and outside the church a new capacity for perceiving meaning in visual and dramatic actions, but also so surrounding us with significant visual and dramatic forms of communication that the unique role of the sacraments can be obscured. Further, members of our congregations have more sustained contact with the entire spectrum of Christian traditions than in previous times, exposure that generates many competing perceptions

about the meaning of sacraments. In a time of significant change, it is wise for all of us—working together as a denomination and in partnership with our ecumenical partners worldwide—to discern and then promote biblically faithful sacramental practices.

PART 1: BAPTISMAL IDENTITY

1.1 **Baptism and the Grace of God**

The marvelous grace of God given through Jesus Christ and conveyed to us through the work of the Holy Spirit is the foundation of baptism. Through this sacrament God takes the initiative and declares that we belong to him. It is God who acts through baptism, working to nourish, sustain, comfort, challenge, teach, and assure us. A richly symbolic action, the celebration of baptism stirs our imaginations to perceive the work of God and the contours of the gospel more clearly. “By [baptism] we are received into God’s church and set apart from all other people . . . that we may be dedicated entirely to him, bearing his mark and sign. It also witnesses to us that he will be our God forever, since he is our gracious Father” (Belgic Confession, Art. 34).

We call on each other to celebrate the wondrous grace of God signified in baptism in all the liturgical and pedagogical avenues available to us.

1.2 **Multiple Scriptural Images for Baptism**

As the New Testament unfolds the meaning of baptism, it teaches us that baptism is a single celebration that conveys several layers of meaning. It is at once a sign of the washing away of sin (Acts 2:38; 22:16), a sign of our union with Jesus’ death and resurrection (Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:12), a sign of the promise of new birth in Christ (1 Pet. 3:21-22), a sign of incorporation into the one, universal church (Eph. 4:5; 1 Cor. 1:13; 12:13), and a sign of the covenant and kingdom of God (Eph. 1:13; Col. 2:11). While the image of washing away sin has long been primary in Reformed theology and liturgy, the celebration of baptism should highlight each of these aspects of New Testament teaching.

While we gratefully recognize the rich blessings of the washing imagery in baptism, we also call on each other to affirm and teach the full range of scriptural imagery for baptism.

1.3 **Baptism and the Drama of Redemption**

When God called Abram to leave his country, his people, and his father’s household, God gave him a new identity and promised to make his name great and to cause him to be a blessing to all the peoples on earth (Gen. 12:1-3). Later God identified his arrangement with Abram as a covenant to which God would be faithful forever, which would involve both Abraham and his descendants for the generations to come, and which should be signified by circumcision (Gen. 17:1-14).

In the New Testament baptism functions similarly, as a sign of God’s covenant to which he will always be faithful, involving us and our descendants as his covenant children, signified by the water of baptism. Paul says that in our baptism we have a “circumcision not performed by human hands” and that we are “circumcised by Christ” (Col. 2:11).

In baptism God identifies us as his covenant children, pledges his faithfulness to us, and calls us to faithful obedience as his body in the world.

We call on each other to see the entire story of God’s redemptive work expressed in our baptism, and to proclaim that his gift of a new identity is at the heart of his drama of redemption.

1.4 Baptism as a sign of both forgiveness and lifelong dying and rising with Christ

One way to summarize this rich scriptural teaching is to note how baptism is a sign of the believer’s justification and sanctification. It is a sign of both the washing and cleansing of our sin and also of our being “set apart . . . that we may be dedicated entirely to [God]” (Belgic Confession, Art. 34). John Calvin referred to this as a “double grace and benefit from God in baptism,” which includes both that “God wills to be a merciful Father to us, not imputing to us all our faults” and that “God will assist us by his Holy Spirit so that we will have the power to battle against the devil, sin, and the desires of the flesh, until we have victory in this, and to live in the liberty of his kingdom” (Calvin’s 1542 baptismal liturgy). The apostle Paul uses the metaphor of clothing to describe these two dimensions of the sacrament. Paul declares, “You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ” (Gal. 3:26-27). But this status of being clothed with Christ includes the call to continue putting on the character of Christ: “as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience” (Col. 3:12). The unfathomable gift of a new status implicitly comes with a call sustained by a promise, for “he who began a good work in [us] will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus” (Phil. 1:6). In this context, we take note of the tendency in some preaching and teaching about baptism to focus only on justification—a narrowing which can undermine our perception of God’s grace throughout life and our lifelong practice of affirming baptismal identity (see Part 2).

We call on each other to proclaim both the gift and the calling that come to us in our baptism.

1.5 Baptismal Identity

In all these ways, baptism points us to our ultimate identity in Christ. This identity should shape our habits, our piety, and our daily life. The Christian life is a daily dying to sin and rising with Christ. As the Belgic Confession concludes, “This baptism is profitable not only when the water is on us and when we receive it but throughout our entire lives” (Art. 34). This statement echoes John Calvin’s concern that “the benefit which we derive from the sacraments ought by no means to be restricted to the time when they are administered to us, as though the visible sign conveyed with itself the grace of God only at that moment when it is actually being proffered . . . the benefit of baptism lies open to the whole course of life, because the promise which is contained in it is perpetually in force” (Calvin’s 1549 Articles concerning the sacraments). This benefit blesses both infants and adults, and

infants gradually grow to appropriate this benefit as they mature. Our baptismal identity in Christ reminds us of the astonishing work of the Holy Spirit to transform and renew our entire being—our dispositions, desires, knowledge, imagination, emotions, and more—in the image of Christ (Col. 3:10; 2 Cor. 3:18; 4:15).

Baptism thus offers us our ultimate vocation, that of being disciples of Jesus, a vocation that includes but is always more important than our careers, our hobbies, even our families. This comprehensive character is described by Paul at the conclusion of one of his key descriptions of living out this baptismal identity: “And whatever you do, whether in word or in deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him” (Col. 3:17).

We call on each other to speak explicitly with people of all ages, reminding them that their identity is found in God’s claim on them—a claim made visible in baptism.

1.6 The Inclusion of Infants

The inclusion of the children of believers in the covenant of grace is ingrained in God’s plan of redemption. Covenant infants have a relationship with God (see Ps. 22:9-10; 71:6; 139:13; Jer. 1:5), and therefore covenant blessings are promised to them (Gen. 17:7; Acts 2:39). If crossing the Red Sea pictures baptism, it would be impossible to imagine Israel leaving the children on shore until they were old enough to cross on their own (1 Cor. 10:2). Jesus embraced infants as citizens of his kingdom (Luke 18:16), further suggesting how children need not be excluded from baptism. Paul refers to baptism as receiving the circumcision done by Christ (Col. 2:11-12). For these reasons, Reformed Christians, joining with many major Christian traditions, have concluded that Scripture gives us warrant for including covenant children in the sacrament of baptism. As the Belgic Confession concludes, “Truly, Christ has shed his blood no less for washing the little children of believers than he did for adults” (Art. 34).

We also take note that some other Christian traditions refrain from baptizing infants, at times in conjunction with constructive criticisms of those who do. We are particularly grateful for their warnings to us about allowing the practice of infant baptism to erode our commitment to teach our children the faith and to challenge them to express their faith in Christ. Indeed, infant baptism should heighten, not erode, our commitment to invite our children and youth to claim their baptismal identity.

We call on each other to celebrate that infants of believers are covenant children who are warmly invited to taste God’s grace through the sacrament of baptism and to regularly invite children and youth to consider the claim of God on their life and to express their faith.

1.7 Baptism as Ritual Action

There are many reasons to be cautious about ritual action. The Bible gives priority to hearing the Word as the means of grace (see Deut. 6:4; Luke 10:16; Rom. 10:14-17), forbids the use of images bearing the wrong message (Ex. 20:4; Heidelberg Catechism, Q&A 98), declares

the Old Testament ceremonies as fulfilled in Christ (Col. 2:17), and defines faith as the conviction of things not seen (John 20:29; 2 Cor. 5:7; Heb. 11:1).

There are also many reasons to value healthy ritual actions, including the redemptive intentions of the Creator for both ear and eye (Prov. 20:12), Jesus' explicit command to baptize (Matt. 28:19), and Jesus' participation in ritual practices (Luke 22:14-23; John 13:1-11), including his own baptism (Matt. 3:13-17). Such concrete, physical, symbolic action is designed, says the Belgic Confession, to "represent better to our external senses both what [God] enables us to understand by his Word and what he does inwardly in our hearts" (Art. 33). This embodied nature of baptism is significant for congregations in many ways. It is a source of encouragement not only when we receive baptism but also when we witness it. It demonstrates that grace comes to us as fully embodied creatures, created in God's image.

We call on each other to recognize the ritual and sensory character of baptism in ways that deepen the congregation's participation, while resisting any semblance of ritualism or formalism.

1.8 The Covenant Community in Baptism

Baptism is not intended to be a private action, but one that takes place within the worshiping community. God speaks publicly about the covenant position of the one being baptized. The recipients of baptism are publicly welcomed as members of the covenant community. And the community responds with its vows to receive baptized persons in love, to pray for them, and to encourage and sustain them in the fellowship of believers (see forms for baptism of children and baptism of adults). The covenant community lives out its vows by loving, praying for, encouraging, teaching, mentoring, and offering models of grace-filled, faithful living to every member of the congregation.

We call on each other to take such vows seriously and to faithfully provide the support, encouragement, and ministries needed to foster healthy growth of faith in all who are baptized.

1.9 The Significance of Baptismal Identity in Contemporary Culture

Claiming baptismal identity is especially important in the context of contemporary culture, which is hungering for healing, hope, and significant relationships. Baptism clearly anchors our spirituality in the church, and it resists any church-less form of spirituality. Baptism frankly acknowledges that the Christian life may involve suffering for Christ, resisting any form of spirituality that is sentimental or therapeutic. Baptism grounds us in the grace of God, resisting any spirituality that is moralistic. Baptism calls attention to the beauty, glory, holiness, and gracious sovereignty of a triune God who is intimately involved in creation and in the life of the church. In doing so it resists any notion of God as removed or isolated. Baptism draws us into the worldwide redemptive work of God who is making all things new through the work of his Son, Jesus Christ.

We call on each other to discern and resist the spirits of the age that seek to undermine the meaning or significance of baptism, and to take steps to affirm its deepest meaning and significance.

PART 2: AFFIRMING BAPTISMAL IDENTITY AS A LIFELONG PRACTICE

2.1 Remembering and Affirming Baptism Throughout Life

While baptism is rightly celebrated only once, affirming our baptismal identity is a lifelong practice. The Belgic Confession reminds us that “this baptism is profitable not only when the water is on us and when we receive it but throughout our entire lives” (Art. 34). John Calvin likewise affirmed, “We must realize that at whatever time we are baptized, we are once for all washed and purged for our whole life. Therefore, as often as we fall away (i.e., newly committed sins into which we fall after baptism), we ought to recall the memory of our baptism and fortify our mind with it, that we may always be sure and confident of the forgiveness of sins” (Institutes 4.15.3).

We call on each other to remember and affirm our baptismal identity throughout our lives. We call on parents to regularly remind children of their baptism and its significance.

2.2 Nurturing Baptismal Identity in Congregations

Our baptismal identity in Christ is nurtured through a variety of scripturally mandated practices and disciplines of prayer, learning, obedience, witness, fellowship, and service. For this reason, congregations teach people of all ages, including very young children, to pray, to understand the Bible, and to engage in service in both the church and society. Our church education, fellowship, and service programs are part of how we live out our baptismal vows. Speaking explicitly about the connection between these aspects of church life and baptism is constructive—and it may be a bit too rare in some contexts. When the connection is clear, we more easily understand that our learning, fellowship, and service in congregational life are not merely activities of self-enrichment. They are expressions of our identity in Christ. They are ways for each of us to embrace and live out of this identity.

We call on each other to speak more intentionally about the connection between baptismal identity and congregational programs for education, service, and mission.

2.3 Milestones: Multiple Occasions for Publicly Affirming Baptism

Public celebrations of milestone moments promise to reinforce baptismal identity, convey the church’s love for each individual, and express a warm invitation to deeper participation in the life of faith (the milestone imagery is suggested, for example, in Joshua 4:21-24). There are particular occasions when our focus on baptismal identity is especially important.

- a. Public profession of faith is an especially important occasion for looking back at God’s hand on us, affirming his grace for us, and looking ahead to continued obedience (see also Part 3 below).
- b. In corporate worship we regularly affirm our faith in receiving the assurance of pardon, in regular professions of the creeds, in the baptism of others, at the Lord’s Supper, and at other key milestones in

congregational life. Nearly every worship service offers us opportunities to affirm our baptismal identity.

- c. Further, we affirm baptismal identity in significant public moments in the lives of individual Christians, including marriage, ordination, commissioning services for particular ministries, being welcomed into a new congregation, reaffirmation of faith after a time of estrangement from the church—and even at the time of death. At times, the language of baptism may be too obscure in our celebrations of these events. Renewing awareness of how each of these moments is a part of living our baptismal vocation offers rich possibilities for renewed faithfulness.
- d. This perspective also provides a framework for marking significant life moments of many kinds—for example, pregnancy, miscarriage, significant birthdays and anniversaries, graduations, new employment or unemployment, retirement, hospitalization, recognition of an addiction or recovery from an addiction, significant moves, and more. In each of these significant times of transition, individuals, families, fellowship groups, and congregations can joyfully affirm that “we claim our identity as children of God” and pray, “Spirit of God, help us live out our identity in this new circumstance.”
- e. Other times of affirmation can occur at special moments in the life of a congregation, including celebrations of significant anniversaries or dedications of new ministries or facilities, marking times of crisis or difficult decision, opportunities to welcome or say farewell to a pastor.

All such occasions, and many others, are fitting times for individuals or congregations to intentionally and explicitly remember baptism, claim again the promises of God in Christ, and renew commitment to baptismal living. Speaking explicitly about baptism in all these events is an important antidote to any sense that baptism is an isolated ritual, disconnected from the Christian life.

We call on each other to regularly celebrate our public affirmations of baptism at multiple occasions to sense the journey of our lives, the faithfulness of God’s grace, and our oneness with each other.

We call on churches to do further work in providing practical resources for worship and congregational life and to eagerly share these with other congregations.

2.4 Affirming Baptism in Many Cultural Contexts

We celebrate the many ways in which the formation of children and youth comes to expression in the varied cultures represented in God’s growing family, in and beyond the CRC. Through the varied cultural expressions within the CRC, we see the fabric of God’s redeeming work in breaking down dividing walls and creating one new people (see Eph. 2:14-22). We acknowledge that “the church, in its unity and diversity, is God’s strategic vehicle for bringing into being his new creation” (*Acts of Synod 1996*, p. 230). While we recognize that race, ethnicity, and culture are significant for self-identification, we uphold

that “Christians . . . find their deepest identity in union with and in the service of Christ” (*Acts of Synod 1996*, p. 232). We are grateful for the variety of approaches to nurturing faith and teaching scriptural truths that arise out of diverse cultural contexts. We are grateful for the ways that various cultures express, for instance, passion for prayer, cultivate faith through family and other intergenerational relationships, tell stories that affirm God’s grace, and mark significant occasions in the growth and development of each child and young person.

We encourage each other to learn from and about faith formation practices in many times and places.

We challenge each other to develop and refine faith formation practices that embody the fullness of the gospel in ways that are at once deeply contextual and countercultural.

2.5 Remembering and Affirming Baptism in Family Life

Since parents and guardians have such a significant role in nurturing their children’s faith, they should make every effort to regularly teach their children about the meaning of baptism. Parents and guardians can use the occasion of a baptism in the family or in the church family to teach their children about the promises and mystery of the sacrament of baptism. Remembering and celebrating a child’s “baptism birthday” can be a particularly significant time for learning and growth in family life. Parents and guardians need to frequently speak to their children about baptism and to model the importance of baptismal identity in their own lives. They can find support and encouragement in that they do not carry such tasks alone but are supported by the entire congregation.

We call on parents and guardians to teach their children about their baptism, to make possible their participation in the life of the church, and to nurture their sense of baptismal identity.

2.6 Affirmation of Baptism Instead of Rebaptism

The experience of spiritual renewal and repentance are remarkable gifts of God to individuals and to the church. Requests for rebaptism that come from individuals are thus occasions for gratitude and joy for the work of God in their life. The church’s response to these requests should reflect this gratitude.

The response should also be aware of the complex messages that rebaptism can convey, including the strong resistance to rebaptism articulated in the Reformed Confessions. The Belgic Confession concludes, “We believe that anyone who aspires to reach eternal life ought to be baptized only once without ever repeating it—for we cannot be born twice” (Art. 34). More specifically, rebaptizing can easily convey three false impressions:

- a. that God’s promises were not really given in one’s original baptism
- b. that the congregation or denomination in which a given member was originally baptized is not a legitimate part of Christ’s body
- c. that personal experience is the sole barometer of the presence of God

For these reasons, Reformed churches in many cultural contexts have responded to requests for rebaptism by planning for public celebrations of *affirmation* of baptism. These celebrations offer praise and thanks for the sovereign grace of God, providing a memorable, visible, and public milestone for both the congregation and the individual.

We call on each other to strengthen joyful practices of affirming baptism and reaffirming baptismal vows, rather than rebaptism, as the appropriate pastoral response to requests for rebaptism.

2.7 Affirming Baptism in Contemporary Cultures

Affirming baptism is a particularly significant act in many contemporary cultural contexts. In an age in which people long for a sense of belonging, affirming baptism rehearses that we belong to Christ and to the body of Christ, the church. In a culture of consumerism, baptism affirms that we know to whom we belong and the radical transformation of our values. In an age of individualism, baptism affirms our inclusion as members of Christ's body. In an age that tends to evaluate people on their achievements, baptism affirms that our identity as children of God is a gift that does not depend on our own efforts. In a world that belongs to God, baptism affirms our calling to identify movements of providence within history and culture that can serve to extend Christ's rule and reign. In a world of self-promotion, affirming our baptism calls us to a life of self-giving mission that seeks first the kingdom of God (Matt. 6:33), finding greatness through unselfish service (Mark 10:43-45) that includes seeking out "the least of these" (Matt. 25:40).

We call on Christians and churches everywhere to refuse to allow the world to force us into its mold and to regularly affirm that our baptism calls us to remain true to our mission for God in this world (Rom. 12:1-2).

PART 3: AFFIRMING BAPTISMAL IDENTITY THROUGH A REVITALIZED PUBLIC PROFESSION OF FAITH

3.1 Public Profession of Faith as an Affirmation of Baptism

For those who come to faith as an adult, their time of baptism also includes a profession of their faith. This event is always a milestone for them and carries great personal significance. Those who are baptized as an infant, however, are expected to make their personal profession of faith later, when they are able to give their personal response to their baptism. Public profession of faith, though not a specific biblically mandated practice, is nevertheless an especially important milestone by which persons affirm their baptism, express personal trust in Jesus Christ, and indicate their pledge to follow Christ. Reformed Christians have practiced public profession of faith with good benefit for theological, pastoral, and historic reasons. It marks a time in which a believer is ready for new responsibilities and roles in the life of the church. It offers the Christian community rich opportunities to express gratitude for the work of God in the lives of his children. The opportunity for public profession of faith is a gift, then, both for individuals and for the church.

We call on each other to highlight the way that public profession of faith is an affirmation of baptism and to celebrate public professions of faith with joyful gratitude.

3.2 Profession of Faith of Children and Youth as a Milestone

Profession of faith by a baptized person represents both an affirmation of their baptism and a response of commitment to the promises of God given at baptism. It affirms what was given and looks forward to obedience in living out that gift.

There are significant developmental or psychological reasons for affirming profession of faith. For many generations, a public profession of faith has served as a rite of passage out of childhood and into adolescent or adult faith. It serves as a natural occasion for challenging youth to consider the claims of Christ, to give voice to the faith within them, to celebrate and affirm their God-given gifts, and to join in God's worldwide work.

However, the church is not able to state that there is a particular age at which a person may make profession of faith. In God's sovereign grace, congregations have witnessed profound professions of faith by believers age 8 through 88 (and beyond). Professions of faith arise out of individual initiative as the Holy Spirit leads. For this reason, congregations need not passively wait for individuals to step forward but should rather eagerly and sensitively invite children and youth to take the significant step of publicly professing their faith.

We acknowledge readily that several contemporary factors have recently eroded this practice, including the extension of adolescence as a distinct stage in one's life cycle, the reluctance of some churches to impose any expectation of a formal profession of faith, the practice of welcoming young children to the Lord's Supper, and—for some—prolonged periods of formal education (such as college and graduate school) at a distance from a person's congregational home. These factors, nonetheless, do not offer grounds for setting aside this practice; instead they make for becoming more intentional about it. Congregations that offer warm, personal invitations to each child and young person to explore making profession of faith by probing their doubts and questions, developing Christian practices of Bible study and prayer, and discerning their gifts for service will have served them well.

We call on each other to intentionally create a culture in our congregations in which we eagerly tell our stories of faith formation as a means of mentoring and encouraging others.

We call on each other to explore ways in which the ritual of a public profession of faith can be revitalized and become a memorable and encouraging event in the spiritual journey of each believer.

We call on all baptized persons to resist the temptation to unnecessarily delay or postpone their personal response to baptism, and to sense the urgency of such a response.

We call on each other to resist practice and instruction that gives the impression that profession of faith is a one-time stand-alone event.

We call on each other to develop and recognize multiple occasions in the life of a person and within a congregation when we profess our faith, and to discover ways in which this can be celebrated liturgically.

3.3 Young Children and Profession of Faith

Young children are people of faith. Little ones have much to teach us when we listen to their simple, spontaneous expressions of love for Jesus—as Christ himself suggested (Mark 10:13-16). The Christian Reformed Church took Christ’s reminder seriously when it urged congregations to invite covenant children to affirm their baptisms and profess their faith at younger ages, rather than waiting until late adolescence. In 1988, synod encouraged covenant children “to make public profession of faith as soon as they exhibit faith and are able to discern the body and remember and proclaim the death of Jesus in celebrating the Lord’s Supper” (*Acts of Synod 1988*, p. 559). In 1995 synod outlined a four-step procedure for hearing such age-appropriate professions of faith (*Acts of Synod 1995*, pp. 719-20). Synod 2010 also took note of this when it called for “age- and ability-appropriate faith” as necessary for admittance to the Lord’s table (*Acts of Synod 2010*, pp. 810-11).

We call on each other to be sensitive to the faith often found in younger children, and to encourage younger children to consider professing their faith as Synods 1988 and 1995 have encouraged.

We call on each other to embrace young children who have professed their faith and to heartily affirm their baptisms, celebrate with great joy, welcome them to the Lord’s table, and give thanks to God for his faithfulness throughout the generations.

3.4 Persons with Disabilities and Profession of Faith

Healthy congregations include all who seek to belong to the body of Christ by professing faith in him, including persons with disabilities. Healthy congregations welcome all people with the message “Come to Jesus. Belong to the people of God. Give and receive love and acceptance. And participate by sharing your gifts with brothers and sisters in this faith community.” The invitation to profess one’s love for Christ and to live in community with fellow believers is offered to all in the measure in which they are able to respond—with no age requirement, no physical, emotional, or cognitive prerequisite! The invitation has no higher goal than to extend Christ’s love to all, to deepen the fellowship of believers, to integrate the gifts of all, and to strengthen the witness and work of the church in this world.

We call on each other to practice the full welcome of God to all whose disabilities make it necessary for them to express their faith in their own appropriate way.

3.5 Profession of Faith and Confirmation

While confirmation was considered a sacrament prior to the Reformation, the Reformers resisted identifying it as a sacrament, preferring instead to call it profession of faith and acknowledging that there is no explicit mandate in Scripture for a specific ritual action (as there is for baptism). The Reformers identified profession of faith as a pastoral

practice that worked together with catechesis and worship to encourage vital faith formation and to provide a public opportunity to affirm the grace of God signed and sealed in baptism (see *Calvin's Institutes*, 4.19.4-13). They mandated that the journey prior to profession of faith should include instruction in the Christian faith, a personal response to the grace of God, an expression of love for and commitment to Jesus Christ as Savior, a confession of the church's common faith, and a pledge of obedience to the triune God.

We affirm the Reformers' resistance to making public profession of faith a sacrament of the church—like baptism and the Lord's Supper—and we affirm their approach of practicing public profession of faith as a fruitful pastoral practice that builds up the body and encourages vital faith formation.

3.6 Profession of Faith and the Mission of God

Public profession of faith is both an expression of and a catalyst for the missional work of the church in the world. The great commission calls the church to a public testimony of faith as it disciples nations, “baptizing them . . . and teaching them to obey” all that Christ has commanded (Matt. 28:19-20). Indeed, the church's profession of faith, and each individual profession of faith, is an act of proclamation that reaches out to the lost and disciples the found. This reaching out toward the world that God loves happens both through explicit witness to the love of Christ and through faith-filled actions in society (Heidelberg Catechism, Q&A 86), including caring for “the least of these” with grace-filled words and deeds (Matt. 25:3-40) and serving as an advocate for victims of injustice (Prov. 31:8-9; Mic. 6:8).

Yet in some contexts, the missional character of public profession of faith may be too unclear or obscure, with little attention given to challenging all believers to joyfully use their gifts for the sake of God's mission in the world. Indeed, when we affirm our baptism and profess our faith, we express our intentional commitment and vow to “join with the people of God in doing the work of the Lord everywhere” (Form for Public Profession of Faith, *Psalter Hymnal*, 1987; p. 964). The private and personal expression of faith must always be seen as a genuine public pledge to join the mission of God in the world.

We call on each other to see public profession of faith as an expression of the missional work of the church in the world, and to look for ways to celebrate public profession of faith with more explicit commitment to the mission of God in the world.

3.7 Profession of Faith and the Worship of the Church

Public professions of faith are a lifelong practice, rather than a once-in-a-lifetime event. Some of these professions happen at significant life moments. For example, parents who present children for baptism profess their faith, and officebearers who are ordained and installed to their offices profess their faith, each in the public assembly for worship. Additional expressions of faith happen as a recurring part of worship, as the congregation recites creeds, sings songs that testify to God's goodness, or exclaims “Amen” or “Thanks be to God” after a Scripture reading or in the middle of a sermon. Every time we participate in the

Lord's Supper, we profess our faith, proclaiming "the Lord's death until he comes" (1 Cor. 11:26). Professing faith should thus be seen as an indispensable element in regular worship practices. And the formal, rite of passage we call *profession of faith* can be understood as a way for each individual to join in expressing assent to the faith regularly professed by the whole congregation.

We call on each other to strengthen and revitalize profession of faith by underscoring, celebrating, enhancing, and multiplying these liturgical moments, and by resisting the idea that a profession of faith is a once in a lifetime event.

We call on each other to understand the high value of such times of corporate professions of faith in worship as a time in which we give encouragement in the faith to one another (Rom. 1:12).

3.8 The Significant Role of Parents and Guardians

At baptism, parents make important vows about their role in the faith development of their children, specifically to instruct their children in the Christian faith and to lead them by example to be Christ's disciples (Deut. 6:4-9). We call on parents to nurture their children's faith by faithfully teaching the truths found in Scripture and by using every possible means in everyday life to interact with their children on the questions and issues of faith. The key to a revived Christian nurture of children is a parental faith that is vital, involved, and communicated. Adult spiritual growth and discipleship help to provide the foundation for children's faith and its nurture. Alongside traditional church-based Christian education programs for children and youth, congregations must emphasize training parents for this enormous responsibility, as well as to encourage a culture of lifelong learning and growth for adults. Whether through classes, workshops, or mentoring, congregations need to walk alongside parents to assist them in their task of Christian nurture in the home from birth until the child leaves the home. A strong denomination-wide effort is needed to invite and exhort parents to accept this responsibility with renewed commitment and joyful hope. Many Christians have historically provided Christian day schools to assist parents in this task.

We call on parents to understand that the faith development of their children is primary among all the tasks of parenthood. We call on each other to take an active supportive role with parents, not only reminding them but also providing support, encouragement, counsel, and training in their tasks of faith formation.

3.9 Profession of Faith and Lifelong Discipleship

Profession of faith is a significant milestone in the lifelong journey of discipleship. Congregations should not view profession of faith as a graduation from church-based education programs. Instead, profession of faith should further encourage and stimulate the individual toward greater levels of maturity in faith formation (see Heidelberg Catechism, Q&A 114-115). Profession of faith should further awaken the entire congregation to challenge and stretch Christian believers of all ages in ways that make faith formation a priority in every stage of life.

We call on each other to see profession of faith not as an end but as the beginning of a new step forward in the journey of faith formation. We call on each other to emphasize the lifelong nature of Christian discipleship and develop ministries to aid this awakening.

3.10 Profession of Faith and Contemporary Culture

Public profession of faith goes hand in hand with the church's calling to be a prophetic voice in contemporary culture. Obligated to speak out against injustice and wickedness in the world, the church errs seriously when it suppresses the faith by remaining silent. It must sound a loud and clear voice for the voiceless that embraces all, without exception, with the love of Christ (Prov. 31:8-9; 1 Cor. 14:8). In the faith formation of its members young and old, the body is equipped to profess its faith, staking the claims of Christ in every sector of society. The profession of its members ought not to be an expression of world-flight Christianity that trumpets platitudes over a fortified wall of isolationism, nor a profession submerged by or indistinguishable from the deafening noise of this world. The church's public profession of faith and the faith formation of its members must be in line with the Bible and the Reformed tradition, but, as truly Reformed and reforming, the church must be determined to be a clear voice for today with an ear for the times.

We call on all who have professed their faith to be committed to the task of the body of Christ to be his transforming presence in the world.

PART 4: THE LORD'S SUPPER AS SIGN AND SEAL OF GOD'S GRACE

4.1 The Lord's Supper, Baptismal Identity, and the Grace of God

In baptism God speaks to us, sealing his covenant and pledging his covenant faithfulness. In the case of adult baptism, he seals his covenant to one who has responded in faith. In the case of infant baptism, he seals his covenant to a child of believing parents who does not yet understand. In both cases, God acts in grace. The sealing of the covenant to such persons gives each an identity as one who belongs to God.

Similarly, the Lord's Supper is a sign and seal of God's gracious forgiveness through Christ Jesus. Through the sacrament we act in remembering Jesus' death on the cross as atonement that makes satisfaction for our sins. Through his death and resurrection, our sins are forgiven and we are declared righteous before God. The Lord's Supper is, therefore, the visible means by which we see God's invisible work in us "through the power of the Holy Spirit" (Belgic Confession, Art. 33). In this sacrament we remember his gracious sacrifice, and Christ confirms to us that we are forgiven, nourishes our new life in Christ, and confirms that we are members of God's covenant family. As in baptism, it is God who acts through the Lord's Supper, working to nourish, sustain, comfort, challenge, teach, and assure us. "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast" (Eph. 2:8-9).

We call on each other to celebrate the wondrous grace of God signified in the Lord's Supper in all the liturgical and pedagogical avenues available to us.

4.2 Multiple Scriptural Images for the Lord's Supper

The New Testament teaches us that the Lord's Supper is a celebration that conveys several layers of meaning. It involves both memory and hope. It serves as a thankful remembrance of the entire life and ministry of Christ; as a celebration and proclamation of Jesus' real, spiritual presence with us, of the forgiveness he offers, and of the spiritual nourishment he provides; as a celebration of the unity of Christ's body, the church; and as a meal of hope in which we anticipate the heavenly feast of Christ's coming kingdom (*The Worship Sourcebook*, pp. 305-06).

As the story of the New Testament unfolds the meaning of the Lord's Supper as instituted by Christ, we are struck by the beauty of the multiple images given to us in Scripture. Not only is this a time for remembrance and proclamation, it is also a time of eager anticipation of the heavenly feast (1 Cor. 11:24, 26). Jesus reminded the disciples that this sacrament was a sign of the atonement represented in the Passover feast (Mark 14:12-16) and therefore a time of assurance of God's forgiveness (Matt. 26:28). It is also a time of spiritual nourishment (John 6:35) and a participation in the oneness of the body of Christ (1 Cor. 10:17). We are to find, therefore, when we come to the Lord's table, that we can expect Christ to manifest himself to us (Luke 24:28-31).

We call on each other to emphasize and proclaim the richness of this sacrament as represented in these multiple images. We also call on pastors and worship leaders to plan celebrations of the Lord's Supper that take these multiple images into careful consideration.

4.3 The Lord's Supper and the Drama of Redemption

The mission of God unfolds within the drama of redemption and is demonstrated in the Lord's Supper. Beginning in the Garden of Eden and progressing through history to the consummation of all things, Christ carries out the redemptive plan of God.

Our first parents were given the cultural mandate and were nourished with the garden's abundance in order to accomplish the mission. In disobedience, they ate of the forbidden fruit, failing the test and were banned from the garden. God, in his mercy, however, had already been busy orchestrating his grand drama of redemption in Christ, with the plan that the seed of the woman would ultimately crush the head of the serpent.

In keeping his promise through Abraham to bless all the nations, God rescued his people from Egypt and represented this deliverance through the Passover. Israel was unfaithful to God's covenant and was exiled. However, God graciously preserved a remnant he would return to the land and through which he would bring forth the Messiah promised already in Eden.

Jesus, perfectly faithful to the mission of God, became the bread of life to which Scripture had pointed from the beginning. Before his atoning death, Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper, symbolizing his body and blood. As he continues to prepare the table today, this meal becomes

for the New Testament church a vital means of grace, not only to rehearse the drama of redemption but also to empower God's people with the Spirit of Christ in their efforts to participate in carrying out the mission of God.

We call on each other to celebrate this sacrament with the expectation that God will nourish us in preparation for our efforts to carry out his mission in the world.

4.4 Nurturing and Feeding Our Spirits at the Table

When we come to the table, we come in faith, bringing our hunger for life. We trust Jesus' words: "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty" (John 6:35). At the table we follow the exhortation of the psalmist who declared, "Taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the one who takes refuge in him" (Ps. 34:8). Through participation we respond to the Lord's gracious invitation given through Isaiah: "Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost" (Isa. 55:1). The Lord delights in nourishing his people, and we respond by coming with grateful, but empty, hearts to his bountiful table, so that we sing together, "You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows" (Ps. 23:5).

For this reason, we trust that "just as truly as we take and hold the sacraments in our hands and eat and drink it in our mouths, by which our life is then sustained, so truly we receive into our souls, for our spiritual life, the true body and true blood of Christ, our only Savior. We receive these by faith, which is the hand and mouth of our souls" (Belgic Confession, Art. 35). "The celebration of the Lord's Supper nourishes our faith and stirs our imaginations to perceive the work of God and the contours of the gospel more clearly" (*The Worship Sourcebook*, p. 305).

We call on churches to celebrate the riches of God that nourish our spiritual lives, and to invite his people to bring their hungers and longings to him, believing that the community that hungers and thirsts for righteousness will be blessed with filling (Matt. 5:6).

4.5 The Life-Giving Imperatives for the Table

We participate in the supper as part of the "dance of grace" in which the Lord leads and we respond—the Lord provides, and we receive. Our response involves our entire life. Paul summarizes significant dimensions of this response in 1 Corinthians 11:17-34, reminding believers of the action words, given mostly in the imperative form, associated with the table: *take, eat, drink, remember, examine yourself, and wait for each other* (see also Matt. 26:26-27; Luke 22:19). These imperatives are not prerequisites for earning the right to come to the table, but they exemplify our grateful steps of response as a community that has entered into the wondrous dance of grace. Such steps are life-giving; they expand our capacity to receive and to become contagious with the new life that Jesus pours into us.

We call on churches to celebrate the privilege we have in engaging this covenantal dance, carefully avoiding all language that would imply we earn the right to come by our actions.

4.6 The Lord's Supper as Healthy Ritual Action

It is significant that Jesus commanded us to "do this," calling for specific actions that we perform together (Luke 22:19). While we may well be cautious about ritual actions that can become mere ritual, it is nevertheless important that Jesus himself commanded the church to observe the Lord's Supper, which symbolizes his body and blood, broken and shed for God's people. The Holy Spirit uses the Lord's Supper to bring blessing to the church. It is not an ordinary meal with other humans, but fellowship with Christ himself. Through it we are reminded that we are saved through Jesus' death and resurrection.

"Jesus said to them, 'I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him'" (John 6:53-56).

The Lord's Supper is also a seal, confirming that we belong to God. The participation in the eating and drinking and the sharing in the benefits of Christ's body and blood given for us nourish and refresh the spiritual union among believers and with the Lord.

The Christian community is glued together in such a repeated ritual action. A sense of belonging is created and identity as God's beloved people is fostered. Our hearts and minds are linked when we partake of this meal so that faith is strengthened. We are connected once again with the core of the Christian belief and what life is all about. We are reminded of who we are and whose we are. We are empowered to move forward in faith.

Therefore, we believe there are several foundational claims that shape this ritual action to be a healthy one for the Christian church. It is a celebration of grace, not human achievement. It is not an end in itself, but also points beyond itself to God's grace and covenant faithfulness. It is a sign of a covenant relationship with God that is based on promises. And it is deeply personal but never private (*The Worship Sourcebook*, pp. 306-307).

We call on each other to celebrate the ritual and sensory character of the Lord's Supper in ways that deepen the congregation's participation, while resisting any semblance of ritualism or formalism.

4.7 Coming to the Table in a Hospitable and Healing Community

When we are united to Christ, we also live in union with all who belong to him, and the Lord's Supper celebrates and affirms both of these realities.

Jesus pointedly prayed "that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you" (John 17:21). Many New Testament references, in addition to Jesus' high priestly prayer, speak of the unity of the body (see 1 Cor. 12:4-26; Eph. 4:3-6). This same theme is expressed in the earliest communion liturgies available to us ("As many

grains are gathered from many hills into one loaf . . .”). Through this corporate act we are called to practice hospitality, discern the body, and wait for each other (1 Cor. 11:17-34). This communal character of the sacrament requires that we honor church discipline, call all believers to come to the table without lingering resentments, forgive as the Lord’s forgiveness has been received (Col. 3:13), and call to repentance all who undermine the unity of the body (1 Cor. 1:10). Our confessions therefore speak of this holy supper as a privilege for those who are “born again and ingrafted into his family: his church” (Belgic Confession, Art. 35).

We call on churches to celebrate our unity in Christ and repent of all actions, words, and attitudes that undermine this unity.

4.8 Children and Others at the Lord’s Supper

Scripture and our confessions have taught us that the church’s celebrations of the sacraments should be marked by a spirit of welcome for all those who come with hunger and trust. They have also taught us that a spirit of exclusion regarding any other than those who are unrepentant, hypocritical, unbelieving, and ungodly (see Heidelberg Catechism, Q&A 81-82) would violate the soul and spirit of the sacrament. For this reason, Paul points to the divisions within the life of the Corinthian church and claims, “Your meetings do more harm than good” (1 Cor. 11:17).

Since Christ desires to nourish and sustain the spiritual life of all his children, the church must be careful to pay attention to those who might easily be overlooked or neglected. Persons with cognitive disabilities or dementia are to be welcomed to the table in a way that is appropriate to their abilities, that they may be nourished by the Lord. Similarly the church must be concerned about young children and youth who are growing in faith and able to fulfill the imperatives for the Lord’s Supper in an age-appropriate way. To exclude them would be to deny them the very nurture that their faith formation requires.

We call on each other, therefore, to be sensitive and welcoming toward those who might easily be overlooked or neglected, such as children and others of limited ability.

4.9 The Key Importance of the Lord’s Supper in Contemporary Culture

When one considers our contemporary culture, the Lord’s Supper is ever relevant to the faith and life of God’s people. In a climate of individualism, the Lord’s Supper provides a communal context of shared faith and identity; in a culture of consumerism, the Lord’s Supper points to that which can truly satisfy; in a visual age, the Lord’s Supper proclaims the truth of the gospel in visible signs and seals; as differentiation diffuses society into ever-increasing numbers of components, the Lord’s Supper turns our attention to the King whose sovereign claims embrace every sphere of life; in a culture where people feel broken and “homeless,” the Lord’s Supper warmly invites them to the hearth of God’s family; and in a world with a relentlessly growing divide between the haves and the have-nots, the Lord’s Supper provides a level playing field for all believers under the cross and energizes each to reach out to those in need.

Since the Lord's Supper is a visual means, in a visual age, its message can be powerful. We must, therefore, pay attention to the messages we are transmitting in its celebration, for it is capable of either effectively communicating the message of the gospel or of seriously altering it. It is able to communicate a joyful invitation and a beautiful welcome to be experienced by all who come trustingly. Or it may signal an unwarranted exclusivism regarding those who might not be considered in the inner circle. Even the manner of its celebration can carry important messages that must be carefully examined.

We call on each other to carefully and thoughtfully examine the messages of our observance of the sacraments in our current culture to discern their faithfulness of the intent of Scripture, and to identify any mistaken messages being conveyed.

We call on each other to make sure our observance of the sacraments is a clear proclamation of a worldview that brings all things under the rule of the living Lord, until he comes again and his glorious kingdom will be on display for all to see.

PART 5: CONCLUSION

5.1 Expectant Urgency

Faith, both its presence and its growth, is a gift of God given to us through the ministry of the Holy Spirit (see Acts 16:14; 1 Cor. 12:3; Gal. 5:16-26). We do not produce it, but we should pray for it, long for it, participate in it, and be prepared to suffer in it—themes poignantly conveyed in Paul's description of his attitude toward the Galatians as being "in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you" (Gal. 4:19). This dramatic imagery challenges us to live, teach, pray, and worship with expectant urgency for the faith formation of all members of the body.

5.2 Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of Our Faith

In all our efforts from baptism through the life of full obedience, we celebrate the grace of God, which unites us with Jesus Christ. We affirm and proclaim that Jesus is the "author and perfecter of our faith" (Heb. 12:2) and we take comfort in the promise that "he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus" (Phil. 1:6).

To him be all glory now and forever!

Appendix B Recommended Church Order Changes

I. Work of the committee and synod's responses

Since 2007 the Faith Formation Committee has engaged in a wide range of conversations with agencies, key leaders, pastors and other church staff, congregations, and more than half of all CRC classes. The committee has researched and formulated a variety of biblical, theological, and pastoral

materials that it believes are helpful to the churches. These resources are now posted on the Faith Alive website at www.crcna.org/faithformation.

The committee has been particularly grateful for the encouragement and instructive responses to our work by Synods 2008, 2009, and 2010. In each case, members have learned a great deal from informal discussions with delegates and from the advisory committee and plenary deliberations. These discussions point to a widespread desire for prayerful and intentional ways of deepening faith formation in our congregations and for faith-filled and expectant participation in the Lord's Supper.

At Synod 2010 the committee presented a key recommendation that would function as a basis for its continuing work. Following very constructive contributions by the synodical advisory committee, synod approved the following recommendation:

All baptized members who come with age- and ability-appropriate faith in Jesus Christ are welcome to the Lord's Table and called to obey the scriptural commands about participation (e.g., to "examine themselves," to "discern the body," to "proclaim the Lord's death," to "wait for others") in an age- and ability-appropriate way, under the supervision of the elders. The elders have responsibility to nurture in the congregation grateful and obedient participation through encouragement, instruction, and accountability.

The following statements clarify the guiding principle above:

- a. A formal public Profession of Faith prior to participation in the Lord's Supper is not required by Scripture or the confessions.
- b. A formal public Profession of Faith is a vital practice for faith formation and is one pastoral approach to consider prior to participation in the Lord's Supper.
- c. Professing faith regularly in and outside of corporate worship is a natural practice for lifelong faith formation which the church should encourage, enhance, and express.

(Acts of Synod 2010, pp. 810-11)

Seven grounds were included with the recommendation upon adoption:

Grounds:

- a. This position honors the covenant status of all who are baptized and affirms their membership in the body of Christ.
- b. This position is faithful to the instruction of 1 Corinthians 11, which calls for a response of obedience on the part of those that come to the table.
- c. This position acknowledges that, though members of the body of Christ respond to the promises of God in ways that are shaped by their age and abilities, their responses are nevertheless valid responses.
- d. This position implements the instructions of Heidelberg Catechism, Q. and A. 81, that those who come to the table must be repentant, trusting, and desirous of growth in obedience.
- e. This position honors the polity of the CRC, in which the sacraments of the church are to be celebrated under the supervision of the elders.
- f. This position allows for diversity of local practice within a standard principle.
- g. Adopting this principle will give the Faith Formation Committee sufficient guidance to continue to carry out its mandate by proposing Church Order changes and working with church agencies to develop pastoral resources for congregations.

(Acts of Synod 2010, p. 811)

The Faith Formation Committee was grateful for the unanimous recommendation of the advisory committee for this proposal, and for the overwhelming

positive voice vote by which this recommendation was approved. It was also grateful for the positive testimony of delegates to synod who previously were on opposite sides of the children at the Lord's Supper discussion, but who communicated to the committee their appreciation for the way this principle honors the Bible's invitation to, and instructions about, table participation.

As delegates noted, changes in the Church Order will be necessary for the implementation of this principle. However, it should be noted that Synod 2010 also agreed that changes in local practice should be delayed until the Church Order changes are adopted by the following action:

That synod remind the churches that changes in local practice arising out of this principle should be delayed until changes to the Church Order are adopted at a future synod.

Grounds:

- a. This approach reflects the covenant we share about changes to Church Order Article 47.
- b. This reminder is necessary because congregations have recently been confused about the status of synodical decisions on this topic.
- c. Working together as a denomination in discerning faithful practices for Lord's Supper celebrations is particularly important in an age of congregationalism.

(Acts of Synod 2010, pp. 811-12)

Synod 2010 adopted the following with regard to the necessary Church Order changes:

That synod instruct the Faith Formation Committee to submit any Church Order changes it will propose according to the study committee schedule so that those changes may be adopted at Synod 2011 instead of being proposed at Synod 2011 for adoption at Synod 2012.

(Acts of Synod 2010, p. 812)

II. Recommended Church Order changes

By way of this report, the Faith Formation Committee recommends the necessary changes to the Church Order. The changes were presented according to the time-line suggested so that they could be adequately considered by the churches before being presented to Synod 2011.

The recommended changes are designed to make clear both the principle by which baptized members are welcomed to the table and the pastoral significance of a public profession of faith. Other proposed changes are designed to ensure that our terminology for baptized and confessing members is consistent throughout the Church Order.

III. Recommendation

That synod approve the following changes to the Church Order and its Supplement as indicated.

Grounds:

1. These changes provide for the implementation of the decision of Synod 2010 about age- and ability-appropriate participation in the Lord's Supper.
2. These changes acknowledge that while profession of faith is a vital practice for faith formation, neither Scripture nor the confessions require that it take place prior to participation in the Lord's Supper.

3. These changes promote a consistency of terminology within the Church Order and of practice within the churches.

Note: **Boldface text** indicates changes from the current Church Order.

Current Article 25

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

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

c. The deacons shall represent and administer the mercy of Christ to all people, especially to those who belong to the community of believers, and shall stimulate the members of Christ's church to faithful, obedient stewardship of their resources on behalf of the needy—all with words of biblical encouragement and testimony which assure the unity of word and deed.

Proposed Article 25

a. [Remains the same]

b. The elders, with the minister(s), shall oversee the doctrine and life of the members of the congregation and fellow officebearers, shall exercise admonition and discipline along with pastoral care in the congregation, shall participate in and promote evangelism, and shall defend the faith. **The elders also shall nurture in the congregation grateful and obedient participation in the Lord's Supper through encouragement, instruction, and accountability.**

c. [Remains the same]

Current Article 56

The covenant of God shall be sealed to children of believers by holy baptism. The consistory shall see to it that baptism is requested and administered as soon as feasible.

Proposed Article 56

The covenant of God shall be sealed to children of **confessing members** by holy baptism. The consistory shall see to it that baptism is requested and administered as soon as feasible. **Upon their baptism, children shall be designated as "baptized member."**

Current Article 59

a. Members by baptism shall be admitted to the Lord's Supper upon a public profession of their faith in Christ with the use of a prescribed form. Before the profession of faith the consistory shall ensure that there be an appropriate examination concerning their motives, faith, and life. Their membership shall be designated as "confessing member." The names of those who are to be admitted to the Lord's Supper shall be announced to the congregation for approval at least one Sunday before the public profession of faith.

b. Confessing members who have reached the age of eighteen and who have made a commitment to the creeds of the Christian Reformed Church and the responsibilities of adult membership in the church shall be accorded the full rights and privileges of such membership.

c. Confessing members coming from other Christian Reformed congregations shall be admitted to communicant membership upon the presentation of certificates of membership attesting to their soundness in doctrine and life.

Proposed Article 59

a. **All baptized members who come with age- and ability-appropriate faith in Jesus Christ are welcome to the Lord's Supper and called to obey the scriptural commands about participation in an age- and ability-appropriate way under the supervision of the elders.**

b. **Baptized members shall be encouraged to make a public profession of faith with the use of a prescribed form in a public worship service. This public profession of faith includes a commitment to the creeds and confessions of the Christian Reformed Church. Before their profession of faith, they shall give an appropriate testimony of their faith, life, and doctrine to the elders. The names of those who will make a public profession of faith shall be announced to the congregation for approval at least one Sunday before their profession takes place. Upon their public profession of faith, they shall be designated as "confessing member."**

c. **Confessing members receive all the privileges and responsibilities of such membership. Privileges include but are not limited to presentation of children for infant baptism, the right to vote at congregational meetings, and eligibility to hold office. Responsibilities include full participation in the work, life, and mutual discipline of the local congregation and the universal body of Christ.**

d. **Confessing members coming from other Christian Reformed congregations shall be admitted to **confessing membership in the congregation** upon the presentation of certificates of membership attesting to their soundness in doctrine and life.**

<p>b. Confessing members who have reached d. Confessing members coming from churches in ecclesiastical fellowship shall be admitted to communicant membership upon presentation of certificates or statements of membership after the consistory has satisfied itself concerning the doctrine and conduct of the members. Persons coming from other denominations shall be admitted to communicant membership only after the consistory has examined them concerning doctrine and conduct. The consistory shall determine in each case whether to admit them directly or by public reaffirmation or profession of faith. Their names shall be announced to the congregation for approval.</p>	<p>e. Confessing members coming from churches in ecclesiastical fellowship shall be admitted as confessing members of the congregation upon the presentation of certificates or statements of membership after the consistory has satisfied itself concerning the doctrine and conduct of the members.</p> <p>f. Persons coming from other denominations shall be admitted as confessing members of the congregation only after the consistory has examined them concerning doctrine and conduct. The consistory shall determine in each case whether to admit them directly or by public reaffirmation or profession of faith. Their names shall be announced to the congregation for approval.</p>
	<p>Proposed <i>Supplement, Article 59-c</i></p> <p>Each congregation shall determine the appropriate age at which a confessing member shall receive such privileges and responsibilities.</p>
<p><i>Current Article 63</i></p> <p>a. Each church shall minister to its youth—and to the youth in the community who participate—by nurturing their personal faith and trust in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, by preparing them to profess their faith publicly, and by equipping them to assume their Christian responsibilities in the church and in the world. This nurturing ministry shall include receiving them in love, praying for them, instructing them in the faith, and encouraging and sustaining them in the fellowship of believers.</p> <p>b. Each church shall instruct the youth in the Scriptures and in the creeds and the confessions of the church, especially the Heidelberg Catechism. This instruction shall be supervised by the consistory.</p>	<p><i>Proposed Article 63</i></p> <p>a. Each church shall minister to its children and youth—and to the children and youth in the community who participate—by nurturing their personal faith and trust in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, by nurturing their faithful participation in the Lord’s Supper, by preparing them to profess their faith publicly, and by equipping them to assume their Christian responsibilities in the church and in the world. This nurturing ministry shall include receiving them in love, praying for them, instructing them in the faith, and encouraging and sustaining them in the fellowship of believers.</p> <p>b. [Remains the same]</p>

<p><i>Current Article 66</i></p> <p>a. Confessing members who move to another Christian Reformed church or to a church in ecclesiastical fellowship are entitled to a certificate, issued by the council, concerning their doctrine and life. When such certificates of membership are requested, they shall ordinarily be mailed to the church of their new residence.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">—Cf. Supplement, Article 66-a</p> <p>b. Members by baptism who move to another Christian Reformed church or to a church in ecclesiastical fellowship shall upon proper request be granted a certificate of baptism, to which such notations as are necessary shall be attached. Such certificates shall ordinarily be mailed to the church of their new residence.</p> <p>c. Ecclesiastical certificates shall be signed by the president and clerk of the council.</p>	<p><i>Proposed Article 66</i></p> <p>a. [Remains the same]</p> <p>b. Baptized members who move to another Christian Reformed church or to a church in ecclesiastical fellowship shall upon proper request be granted a certificate of baptism, to which such annotations as are necessary shall be attached. Such certificates shall ordinarily be mailed to the church of their new residence.</p> <p>c. [Remains the same]</p>
<p><i>Current Supplement, Article 66-a</i></p> <p>When a church council transfers memberships, it should note for the receiving church whether the confessing members have assented to the creeds of the Christian Reformed Church and accepted the responsibilities of adult membership.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>(Acts of Synod 1995, p. 721)</i></p>	<p><i>Supplement, Article 66-a</i></p> <p>[Is unnecessary]</p>
<p><i>Current Article 79</i></p> <p>a. The members of the church are accountable to one another in their doctrine and life and have the responsibility to encourage and admonish one another in love.</p> <p>b. The consistory shall instruct and remind the members of the church of their responsibility and foster a spirit of love and openness within the fellowship so that erring members may be led to repentance and reconciliation.</p>	<p><i>Proposed Article 79</i></p> <p>a. [Remains the same]</p> <p>b. The consistory shall encourage a spirit of mutual accountability, calling the congregation away from favoritism, division, and selfishness toward hospitality, forgiveness, and unity within the body, especially in conjunction with participation in the Lord’s Supper as mandated in 1 Corinthians 11:27-29.</p> <p>c. The consistory shall instruct and remind the members of the church of their responsibility and foster a spirit of love and openness within the fellowship so that erring members may be led to repentance and reconciliation.</p>

Current Supplement, Articles 78-81

a. Discipline shall be applied by the consistory only after an adequate investigation has been made and the member has had ample opportunity to present his/her case.

b. A person who persistently rejects the admonition of the consistory shall be suspended from the privileges of communicant membership [with explanatory footnote].

c. A person may be excluded from membership only after the consistory has secured the approval of the classis.

d. The role of the classis in giving approval is

- 1) To judge whether proper procedure has been followed.
- 2) To assure that adequate pastoral care has been extended to the person.
- 3) To determine that the consistory has advanced adequate reasons for proceeding with discipline.

e. The approval of classis does not obligate a consistory to exclude a person from membership since repentance and restoration to the full fellowship of the church are always possible.

f. The liturgical forms and announcements for admonition and discipline may be used if the consistory judges that these will further the purposes of discipline and will serve the welfare of the congregation.

(Acts of Synod 1991, p. 718)

Note: See Acts of Synod 1991, pp. 720-23, for revised announcements and forms for exclusion from membership and for readmission.

Proposed Supplement, Articles 78-81

a. [Remains the same]

b. A person who persistently rejects the admonition of the consistory shall be suspended from the privileges of **membership. The privileges of confessing membership include but are not limited to the right to present children for holy baptism, the right to vote at congregational meetings, and eligibility to hold office.**

c. [Remains the same]

d. [Remains the same]

e. [Remains the same]

f. [Remains the same]

Note: The Faith Formation Committee will also submit an annual report to synod with additional recommendations and resources, which will be distributed by way of the *Agenda for Synod 2011*.

Faith Formation Committee
Irene Bakker
Peter Choi
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Jill Friend
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H. David Schuringa
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Appendix C

Children at the Table: Toward a Guiding Principle for Biblically Faithful Celebrations of the Lord's Supper, Revised Edition

Note: Synod 2010 received this document "as a sufficient foundational basis for the adoption of the guiding principle" about children's participation at the Lord's Supper and "refer[red] it to the churches for study and feedback, with the understanding that the Faith Formation Committee [would] continue to incorporate changes and suggestions to the document." Synod also "specifically encourage[d] the Faith Formation Committee to include (1) a more detailed study of the command to 'examine oneself' as stated in 1 Corinthians 11:28 and (2) a comparison and contrast with the 'confirmation' process of other Christian traditions" (*Acts of Synod 2010*, p. 812). This revised edition incorporates these recommended changes.

Report outline

I. Report overview: Key ideas

II. Background

- A. *Pastoral concern*
- B. *Mandate*

III. 1 Corinthians 11:17-34

- A. *Central theme: Confronting inhospitality, promoting unity*
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I. Report overview: Key ideas

The Lord's Supper is a gracious gift of God that sustains and nourishes our faith. In response to our mandate to study the role of children at the Lord's Supper, this document proposes the following principle:

All baptized members are welcome to the Lord's Supper for age- and ability-appropriate obedience to biblical commands about participation, under the supervision of the elders. The elders have responsibility to nurture grateful and obedient participation by providing encouragement, instruction, and accountability in the congregation. Requiring a formal public profession of faith prior to participation in the Lord's Supper is one pastoral approach to consider, but is not required by Scripture or the confessions.

This approach, which is different from both the standard case for and the standard case against welcoming young children to the table, is developed out of the following convictions:

1. All baptized persons, regardless of age, are members of the church. Church membership comes not upon profession of faith but upon baptism.
2. We are invited to the table out of sheer grace as members of God's covenant people and not because of our profession of faith or our level of comprehension.
3. When we are invited, each participant is called to age- and ability-appropriate obedience to biblical commands about participation at the Lord's Supper.
4. We must learn to see the commands about participation in the Lord's Supper as life-giving gifts, not onerous burdens.

5. First Corinthians 11:17-34 is an especially significant text for understanding faithful participation in the Lord's Supper, inhospitality, and calls for greater unity in the body of Christ. The text is not primarily concerned about children's participation but rather focuses on unrepentant or inhospitable adults. At the same time, the text has implications for all participants at the table.
6. The elders of a congregation have responsibility for cultivating both the gracious invitation to the table and obedient participation at the table.
7. At times, discussions about the Lord's Supper have slipped into one of two opposing errors: (a) focusing too much on achieving a level of cognitive understanding prior to participation, and (b) minimizing the importance of theological reflection and learning about deeper anticipation. Calling for "age- and ability-appropriate participation" addresses both problems at once, resisting the idea that children need to arrive at a certain level of comprehension before partaking and resisting the kind of unthinking participation that can set in over time for any worshiper.
8. Requiring a public profession of faith before participation in the Lord's Supper is a wise pastoral practice in some circumstances, but it is not a biblically mandated or confessionally required practice. Each church council should promote age- and ability-appropriate obedience at the table, as described in the Bible and in the Reformed confessions, and may choose to require public profession of faith if appropriate.
9. This approach commends common criteria and a complementary set of practices for welcoming children to the table. The common principle and common criteria proposed below promise to help us to resist congregationalism, even though our practices may vary according to culture and ministry context.

II. Background

A. *Pastoral concern*

This report arises out of the heartfelt questions of many CRC members about Lord's Supper practices:

- The parent who wonders, "If our young children can be baptized, why can't they participate in the Lord's Supper?"
- The *Banner* reader who can't imagine how people can even think about young children at the table, in light of 1 Corinthians 11.
- The youth leader who is frustrated about restrictions that keep some young people from participating in the Lord's Supper at an ecumenical youth rally.
- College students who love Jesus but haven't made a public profession of faith, are now quite removed from the life of their home church, and now feel drawn to participate in the Lord's Supper at a campus ministry event, but also feel guilty about doing so.
- The elders who are deeply saddened that their 10-year-old Sunday school students who deeply love Jesus are asked to pass plates of communion bread and cups on to their parents without partaking.

- The church council who must respond to a family who transfers from another congregation in which their children have participated at the table without making a public profession of faith and now asks for the same privileges.

Though the following pages are focused on biblical study and assessing theological arguments, these pastoral questions are never far from our minds. In fact, we hope that the following pages help us realize how valuable corporate biblical and theological reflections are when addressing questions of pastoral practice. This document develops a principle that we believe can be helpful in addressing each of these situations. We look forward to developing pastoral resources to these and other situations in light of synod's action on the proposed principle (see *Acts of Synod 2010*, pp. 810-11).

B. *Mandate*

The specific question of children at the Lord's Supper has been addressed in several prior studies and overtures to synod, which have reached varying conclusions. In light of this past work, Synod 2007 mandated our committee to formulate

a clear statement about the participation of baptized children at the Lord's Supper and the practice of public profession of faith for use in the churches. The statement should include, first, an explanation of 1 Corinthians 11 and other relevant Scripture texts in light of the principles of Reformed hermeneutics and, second, a discussion of the Reformed confessions with emphasis on the implications of the relationship between covenant and sacraments.

(Acts of Synod 2007, pp. 655-56)

This document is a first step in responding to this part of our mandate.

This assignment is no small matter. Arguments about this topic have already filled multiple dissertations, books, denominational reports, and websites (see attached bibliography). Taken together, these materials offer us some passages that are insightful, others that are tedious; some that are logical, others that stretch logic. Sorting out the relevant arguments has been a complex task, more complex than a brief report can possibly acknowledge. Our goal in preparing this report is not to catalog every single argument and counterargument, but rather to accurately summarize ongoing debates, and to discern what is essential for grounding a biblically faithful, confessionally Reformed, and pastorally responsive approach to the topic. It is our prayer that the following reflections will be faithful and generative.

We also note that while it is easy to be disparaging about the procession of committees and study reports that have emerged on this topic over the past 25 years, this entire discussion represents on both sides a sincere attempt to wrestle with one of the central challenges in pastoral ministry in every era of church history: the relationship of grace and obedience, faith and works. For two thousand years the church has constantly needed to test its practice so that it clearly communicates the unmerited grace of God that comes to us in Jesus and the obedient discipleship that flows from receiving this grace. With respect to the Lord's Supper, the church needs to convey that the Lord's Supper is God's gracious provision for the covenant community as well as the nature of obedient participation in which this gift should be received. Calibrating these dynamics is vitally important for faithful ministry, and each generation needs to see again the importance of both grace and obedience.

To this end, we pray that this report will be an occasion for learning and renewal.

It is important to note that this is not the final report of the Faith Formation Committee. We have been given a five-year mandate to describe and learn from local ministry challenges throughout the Christian Reformed Church related to Faith Formation, to engage in biblical and theological study of key issues, and to provide recommendations and resources to strengthen congregational practices. As we observed in our report to Synod 2008,

Our mandate includes some work that is similar to past synodical study committees, such as that of producing a written document which will help synod respond to particular issues in the life of the church [such as this report]. . . . Our mandate includes some new kinds of work for a denominational committee, particularly that of working to strengthen communication, trust, and mutual learning within the denomination. Our mandate acknowledges that synodical decisions by themselves are not sufficient to generate a shared vision, commitment, or set of practices. But synodical decisions that emerge from and shape ongoing local conversations, learning, and ministry planning do promise to deepen our work together.

When we look back on our work after five years, we not only want to be able to say that we have addressed particular issues in scripturally-sound ways. We also want to be able to say that we have worked well together as a denomination, we have wrestled with Scripture, we have honored and learned from the Reformed confessions, we have shared with each other the fruits of our local ministries, we have supported each other in prayer, and we have strengthened our ministry among children, youth, seekers and life-long Christians of all ages.

(Agenda for Synod 2008, p. 233)

This document is offered to the churches in the spirit of these observations. This document has been developed out of prayerful study of biblical and theological texts and past synodical study reports, with close attention to what we heard in discussion sessions at 31 of the 47 CRC classes, events within the settings of nine others, and in presentations at over a dozen conferences or Days of Encouragement, the past two synods, and in several hundred other written communications. We are offering a principle that promises to help us move forward together as a denomination.

In this spirit, we invite CRC congregations and classes to continue to engage this report and its recommendations by not only studying the material here but also

- praying for the growth in faith of everyone with whom our congregations minister, and for our common work on these topics.
- studying “Affirming Baptism and Forming Faith” (see Appendix A), which presents an overarching vision for the role of the sacraments in faith formation (see also the related sermon/worship suggestions).
- using the Bible study materials on 1 Corinthians 11: “A Practice of Christian Unity” provided on the Faith Formation Committee’s website for group study (see www.crcna.org/faithformation).
- communicating with us regarding your questions or observations. We have posted responses to commonly asked questions on the website.

We welcome your suggestions about how we can do our work better, and we look forward to discerning conversations throughout the next months about the themes of this document.

III. 1 Corinthians 11:17-34

Before assessing specific arguments for or against children at the Lord's Supper, we pause for an extended study of one text, 1 Corinthians 11:17-34. This text is one of the few that provide specific guidance about the practice of the Lord's Supper, and it is the single most important text in discussions of children at the Lord's Supper. For this reason, Synod 2007 included a specific reference to it in the mandate of our committee.

We must note at the outset, however, that biblical teaching concerning communion is not limited to this one passage. The Old Testament anticipates the table in two ways: through the institution of the Passover (Ex. 12) and through many different metaphors that expand the richness of our partaking. For example, at the table we follow the exhortation of the psalmist who declared, "Taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the one who takes refuge in him" (Ps. 34:8). Through participation we respond to the Lord's gracious invitation given through Isaiah: "'Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost" (Isa. 55:1). We come to the table as our lives are characterized by profound struggle and spiritual warfare, singing with David, "You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows" (Ps. 23:5).

As the story of the New Testament unfolds the meaning of the Lord's Supper as instituted by Christ, we are struck by the beauty of the multiple images that are given to us in Scripture. Christ reminded the disciples that his sacrament was a sign of the atonement represented in the Passover feast (Mark 14:12-16) and therefore a time of assurance of God's forgiveness (Matt. 26:28). It is also a time of spiritual nourishment (John 6:35) and of participation in the oneness of the body of Christ (1 Cor. 10:17). We are to find, therefore, when we come to the Lord's Supper that we can expect Christ to manifest himself to us (Luke 24:28-31). We joyfully continue the practices of the early church, which included devoting "themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer" (Acts 2:42). Within this larger biblical context, we now turn to 1 Corinthians 11:17-34.

A. *Central theme: Confronting inhospitality, promoting unity*

Though there are certainly many areas of disagreement about this text, we are grateful that there is a strong consensus among biblical scholars about its main theme: confronting inhospitality and favoritism in the Lord's Supper. We also note that this consensus view is hardly benign. It offers much to challenge, correct, and inspire us all.

One central theme of 1 Corinthians as a whole is the breakdown of community, unity, and fellowship in the Christian church, and 1 Corinthians 11:17-34 deals with one facet of this theme. Paul is writing to protest favoritism and inhospitality at the Lord's table, a breakdown of the Christian community along sociological lines. He is specifically concerned with those who "show contempt for the church" and "humiliate those who have nothing" (v. 22, NRSV). When Paul says, "I hear that . . . there are divisions among you" (11:18), he is tying this part of the book into the broader theme of unity that he stresses in 1:10 ("I appeal to you . . . that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought"), and in the preceding and subsequent context of chapter 11 (10:16-17 and 12:12-13).

The specific issue in 1 Corinthians 11:17-34 involves Lord's Supper practices that were inhospitable and divisive. As Professor Jeffery Wiema explains:

The church in Corinth, like other congregations well into the second century, celebrated the Lord's Supper as part of a dinner or full meal. The whole church would first break bread at the beginning of the meal to remember Christ's death, then they would eat their main course, and finally at the end of the meal they would drink wine also to remember Christ's death (note 1 Cor. 11:25, "In the same way, *after supper*, he took the cup, saying . . ."). The problem was the main course that took place between these two acts of remembrance: the Corinthians were celebrating the Supper in a way that created divisions (v. 18). The guilty were the wealthy ("those who have homes"), whose conduct at these meals involved "despising the church of God and humiliating those who have nothing" (v. 22). In fact, things got so out of hand that poor church members left the worship services hungry while the rich members staggered home drunk (v. 21)! . . . Although we cannot know with certainty what led to divisions over the Lord's Supper at Corinth, it is clear that the problem involved social discrimination: the wealthy Christians celebrated the Lord's Supper in a way that despised and humiliated their poorer fellow believers.¹

In dealing with this situation, Paul outlines some principles for participation at the table that transcend the specific situation: each participant must carefully assess their relationship to others who are coming to the table, set aside all arrogance, inhospitality, and self-centeredness, and wait for, welcome, and receive one another in the celebration itself (see vs. 33).

When we generate modern-day applications of this text, one good place to begin is by asking, When do we "show contempt for the church" and "humiliate those who have nothing" (v. 22)? It is a provocative exercise to think about who may be experiencing such humiliation in various CRC congregations. In our day, as in first century Corinth, the poor come to mind immediately. They are often more welcome in soup kitchens than in worship. But others may also be treated as second class citizens in the church: adult singles, the divorced and separated, persons with disabilities, ex-offenders, shut-ins, those with dementia, those without a certain level of education, and many others. This text challenges us to make sure that none of God's children is humiliated, even subtly, in our celebrations of the Lord's Supper. We might also state the matter positively: When we assemble at the table, and elsewhere, how can we more adequately express that we are God's new people, eager to show hospitality and break down the barriers which divide us?

As the main theme of this text, the breakdown of the church as the body of Christ should be a central concern for any sermon, Bible study, or other discussion of this text. We regret that in some discussions of the Lord's Supper, including those about whether or not children should participate, this central theme recedes from view. More attention is given to the narrow question of at what age children should participate than to this prophetic call for hospitality. We urge each of us, regardless of our specific views on the matter of children at the table, to avoid this error.

B. Obedient participation at the table

As this text addresses the problem of inhospitality, it offers us additional guidance about participation at the table. This wisdom is articulated in each

¹ Jeffrey A. D. Wiema, "Children at the Lord's Supper and the Key Text of 1 Corinthians 11:17-34." *Calvin Theological Seminary Forum* (Spring 2007): 7-8.

of the action words, mostly in the imperative form, associated with the table: *take, eat, drink, remember, examine yourself, and wait for each other.*

Before looking at these imperatives, it is important to remember that the Bible's commands are not onerous obligations but rather gracious gifts. Obeying them is life-giving. They help us flourish as apprentices of Jesus. This is important to state because of the persistent tendency in many Christian churches, including Reformed ones, to unwittingly treat the Bible's commands as onerous burdens. In fact, when our committee asked Synod 2008 delegates about how their local congregations practice these life-giving commands, we received several comments like the following: "I have never thought about these as life-giving commands." Indeed, Reformed Christians have not always seen this as a text that points to joyful obedience (in direct opposition to Reformed theology's high view of the law as a guide for grateful living!). Rather, these commands have at times been a source of anxiety and legalism. In this context, we need to recover the sense that these commands are life-giving. Obeying them brings joy, integrity, and justice.

The specific actions associated with participation at the table include the following: doing this in remembrance of Jesus (vv. 24-25), eating, drinking, proclaiming the Lord's death (vv. 26-27), examining ourselves (v. 28), discerning the body (v. 29), and waiting for one another (v. 33).

Of all of these actions, discerning the body has generated the most controversy and discussion. The verb *discern* is an active verb which calls us to reflection, judgment, and correct perception. "The body" refers, most likely, to both the physical body of the Christ (as in the reference to the "body and blood" of the Lord in v. 27)² and to the church as the body of Christ (as in 1 Cor. 10 and 12). Indeed, the power and delight of the metaphor of the body is that it refers simultaneously to Jesus' literal body (on earth and now in heaven), the church, and to the bread we break.

In the context of this passage, Paul is emphasizing the significance of the church as the body of Christ. Paul is calling the Corinthians to examine their relationship to their fellow believers and to celebrate the sacrament in a manner that does not humiliate other congregational members. This communal or horizontal aspect is an essential part of this text. Thus, a significant part of "discerning the body" involves determining, perceiving, and practicing what it means to be the church—a community who embodies Jesus' presence and mission. The central application or result of this discernment action is then beautifully summed up in vs. 33: "wait for one another."³

² There is a textual critical issue in v. 29. While some translations have "the body of the Lord" (as in NIV), the NRSV has simply "the body." There is very strong scholarly consensus for not including the phrase "of the Lord" in v. 29. Still, either alternative fits well with the interpretation we are describing.

³ We caution against speaking about "a new interpretation of 1 Cor. 11." The themes we are presenting above are attested throughout the history of the Christian church. While it is true that it is new for some CRC people to think of "discerning the body" as having to do with the church as the body of Christ, this is not a new discovery! See, for example, Thomas Davis, *This is My Body: The Presence of Christ in Reformation Thought* (Baker Academic, 2008), pp. 149-68.

At the same time, this primary emphasis need not displace the fact that “body” can also refer to Jesus’ literal body on the cross.⁴ The bread we eat points us to and symbolizes our union with Jesus, whose ascended body is now in heaven. While some scholars insist that “the body” here refers exclusively to the “church as the body of the Christ,” and while others insist that it refers to the presence of Christ’s own body, we see no conclusive evidence that forces us to choose between these views.

The command to “examine” or “scrutinize” yourself (v. 28) is also an essential part of this text. This command is an invitation to introspection and self-assessment. Often such examination or testing is performed by someone else (1 Thess. 2:4; 1 Tim. 3:10), but here it clearly refers to actions performed by each participant (cf. 1 Cor. 3:13; 2 Cor. 13:5; Gal. 6:4). This call resists participation that is casual or routine—participation that fails to live into the new vision for the body of Christ as a community of hospitality and mutual accountability. Over the centuries, commentators have varied in interpreting exactly what a person should look for when testing himself or herself. Are we primarily to test whether we are sorry for sin and love Jesus? Or—following the theme of this text—are we primarily to test whether we are living as hospitable members of the Christian community? Once again we see no conclusive evidence that forces us to choose between these views.

Commentators also vary significantly in the tone they bring to this command. Is this a command that should generate in us fear and sobriety? Or should this be an exercise that primarily leads us to the joyful discovery of God’s grace? Some of the discussions are unnecessarily clouded by conflating joy with informality and casual attitudes, and conflating seriousness and somberness. The text is clearly calling us to serious and meaningful accountability—the kind sufficient to help us root out our own sense of self-sufficiency and our own acts of inhospitality. But the exercise and result of this activity are joyful and upbuilding, as we discover again the astonishing joy of being a part of Christ’s body.

C. *A word of judgment*

While protesting inhospitality and describing participation at the Lord’s Supper, the text also clearly offers a word of judgment. Whoever partakes unworthily will “eat and drink judgment against themselves” (v. 29) and be “answerable for the body and blood of the Lord” (vs. 27). In Corinth, this meant that some became weak or ill, and some died (v. 30), the result of God’s disciplinary action (v. 32).

It is important for us to attend to these warnings. Many treatments of the text and of Lord’s Supper theology in general avoid these warnings like a plague. Others, including some historic Reformed treatments, dwell on them in ways that generate unnecessary fear and anxiety at the table.

One particular error to address is the notion that God’s judgment here refers exclusively to eternal judgment. Echoes of this idea lurk in many informal conversations and even in some published sermons, and this may be partly why many resist any mention of these warnings. Yet there are several

⁴ Several recent commentators have pointed out that in many Reformed and evangelical congregations the understanding of “discerning the body” has been limited to this second meaning only. This is a reductionist account that takes vv. 23-25 out of their context and ignores the main theme of the text.

problems with this view: (1) the text speaks of consequences on earth, not eternal judgment; (2) it is hard to conceive of a logic which says that one mode of partaking can somehow override divine election with respect to our eternal destiny; and (3) Paul was writing to “those sanctified in Christ Jesus” (1 Cor. 1:2) to call them to obedience. The idea that the judgment in question here is eternal judgment displaces any active awareness of the judgment the text does describe: the consequences of our actions that become part of God’s disciplinary program to make us holy. God’s discipline, while painful, is also redemptive and sanctifying.

Thus Paul invites us to think of the consequences of improper participation as a matter of divine discipline. Whether this discipline comes to us through natural consequences of our actions or through divine intervention in natural processes, it is clear that inhospitality and indifference to others will have consequences. Indeed, if we don’t root out arrogance and self-centeredness, we will let a cancer grow inside our churches. If we simply rehearse hypocrisy rather than resisting it, we will grow increasingly insensitive to others and cause untold harm. The more we think of judgment in these terms, the more our approach to discipline at the table is likely to become organic and ongoing. This is why a once in a lifetime public profession of faith is, by itself, an inadequate door to admission to the table, and why Reformed polity has always insisted on other practices of mutual accountability. We need regular practices of confession, repentance, forgiveness, and accountability to complement our participation at the table.

D. Three errors to avoid

In light of this analysis, we judge that there are three persistent errors with respect to this text that have harmed the church.

First, some interpretations and practices ignore the communal dimension of the text. This error includes allowing the community to recede from view in our understanding of what it means to “discern the body” and “examine ourselves.” These commands suggest for many a picture of an individual believer before the cross, reflecting on their own sin and their salvation in Christ, with little awareness or attention on the community. Gordon Fee, for example, wonders “whether our making the text deal with self-examination has not served to deflect the greater concern of the text, that we give more attention at the Lord’s Supper to our relationships with one another in the body of Christ” (*The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, p. 569). The Lord’s Supper is never a private affair. And “discerning the body” and “examining ourselves” each entail not only looking within but also looking around us to cherish and deepen the communion of all of God’s people.

Second, some interpretations and practices promote unhealthy legalism and scrupulosity. In some contexts, we have allowed the imperative verbs of this text to overshadow the welcome to the table. This approach has left some unhealthy impressions in some communities, including the notion that the value of the Lord’s Supper depends on our faith and on our righteousness. In contrast, what we need is the kind of balance and logic reflected in Paul’s letters and in the Reformed confessions: we are graciously welcomed to the table, we gratefully accept Jesus’ invitation, and in gratitude we engage in the kind of self-examination and discernment that deepens our faith and promotes integrity. Our obedience is not a condition for the invitation,

but rather is the way to respond to the invitation. This distortion could well be less prominent in Reformed churches today than in past years. And it could be that in contemporary culture we will more likely face an opposite problem—the lack of any clear and sustained call for believers to practice self-examination and discernment. Nevertheless, this concern remains significant in many contexts, as attested by several communications to our committee.

Third, some interpretations and practices tend to explain away or set aside the strong imperatives in the text, and to ignore its strong words of judgment. The result is a kind of “cheap grace,” where the church is constantly rehearsing messages of inclusiveness and welcome without realizing that these warnings are also a part of God’s gracious provision for us.

What makes our work as a committee and denomination especially challenging is that these three tendencies can be simultaneously present in a given congregation, and even in the practices of any single church leader. As we listen to voices in the CRC, we hear voices that are motivated by concern for each. All of this is further complicated by the fact that resisting one of these errors can sometimes generate one of the others. We resist individualism so much that we fail to call for individual accountability. We resist legalism and end up downplaying divine commands. The matter is further complicated by our ever-changing cultural context. Indeed, each of these problems is potentially fueled by cultural considerations that can vary widely throughout a diverse denomination.

In sum, the challenge before every congregation and for all of us together as a denomination is to discern how to celebrate the Lord’s Supper faithfully in our specific cultural contexts. We are called to resist making any member of Christ’s body a second-class citizen. We are called to resist individualism while still calling for individual accountability. We are called to enhance the joyful, life-giving practices of remembering, proclaiming, examining, discerning, and waiting. There is much here to challenge and inspires us all.

E. Church practices: Pastoral care and church discipline

Throughout the history of the church, a variety of practices have been developed to resist the kind of inhospitality, division, and favoritism that this text warns against. These include the following: church visits by office-bearers from classis to each church council; the practice of mutual censure (Church Order Article 36); devotional, liturgical, and instructional practices to help congregations prepare for celebrations of the Lord’s Supper; sermons and public prayers that deal with difficult topics around inhospitality and division; intentional training, such as anti-racism training, about communal life; and prayers for healing and reconciliation, including liturgical prayers of confession. Every denomination, every congregation, and every believer is strengthened by healthy practices of accountability.

IV. Debate about children at the Lord's Supper

A. *The two basic positions*

The case for and against the presence of children at the table has been made in several recent books, articles, and synodical studies.⁵ These discussions are frequently complicated by lack of clarity about the age of children under consideration and the inconsistent use of terms (e.g., "paedo-communion"). Further, these discussions have been complicated by the fact that each argument for or against requiring public profession of faith prior to table participation draws upon a different set of arguments. We have done our best to clarify the best thinking of each point of view

Nevertheless, there are two basic positions in the CRC that can be readily identified. The following descriptions summarize these two positions:

1. Position 1: Typical arguments for welcoming children at the table before public profession of faith

Those who argue for children at the table typically develop several of the following arguments:

- a. The Bible nowhere explicitly bars children from participation at the table.
- b. Children are clearly part of the covenant community.
- c. Children participated in the Passover (Ex. 12:26), the covenant feast that was transformed by Jesus into the Lord's Supper.
- d. Evidence suggests that children participated in the Lord's Supper in the early church.

They conclude that on the basis of covenant theology, we would naturally assume that children should participate at the table, as in Passover, unless told otherwise. They suggest that the burden of proof should rest on those who want to hold children back from the table.

Some advocates of children at the table go on to argue that Reformed interpretations of the command "repent and be baptized" (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16) are instructive. Unlike some Baptist interpretations that uphold this command as a universal command requiring repentance before baptism in every instance, Reformed interpreters stress that the command is directed only to those who have the capacity to do so: adults and older children, but not infants. In a similar way, advocates of children's participation in the Lord's Supper argue that the imperatives in 1 Corinthians 11 fittingly apply to all who have the capacity to obey them.

Here are some CRC voices that make this case:

- "It strikes me very odd how the arguments we use to support infant baptism (it's God's work . . . not dependent on us or the infant) seem to be turned upside-down in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper (first show that you are competent, then partake)."

⁵ See the extensive bibliography at the end of this appendix and materials on the Faith Formation Committee website (www.crcna.org/faithformation). Recent contributions include overtures from Classis Holland (*Agenda for Synod 2006*) and Classis Pella (*Agenda for Synod 2007*), Cornelis P. Venema, *Children at the Lord's Table?* (Reformation Heritage Books, 2009), and *Calvin Seminary Forum* (Spring 2007).

- "It does bother me that that one text is used to deny all covenant children a place at the table, and it's not even talking about the kids!!"
- Here is a statement of this argument in the 2006 Overture from Classis Holland: "How can Paul's concerns for unity of the body at Communion be applied to exclude baptized children? The apostle's concerns actually suggest the opposite, namely, that all members of the covenant community should be included at the Table rather than having some who remain spiritually hungry" (2007 CRC Survey on Children at the Table).

Most of those who argue for inviting children to the table have in mind young children roughly ages 5-10. In many congregations the children in question are those who no longer participate in a children's worship time during the main worship service.

2. Position 2: Typical arguments against children at the table before public profession of faith

Those who respond by arguing that baptized children should not partake respond as follows:

- a. There is no biblical text that explicitly warrants the inclusion of children at the table.
- b. There is no proof that children participated in the Passover.
- c. 1 Corinthians 11 clearly requires each participant to engage in certain actions.
- d. Baptism and the Lord's Supper are two quite different sacraments, with baptism being more passive, and the Lord's Supper being more active.

Some insist that the burden of proof should require all who want to depart from traditional practice to make a conclusive case for change.

Here are some CRC voices that advance this position:

- "The Lord's Supper ought to remain a sacrament partaken of by those who have professed faith in Jesus Christ."
- "We are concerned about how baptized children of a younger age can meet the requirements for the Lord's Supper set forth in 1 Corinthians 11:27-29, and we have significant reservations about how younger children (under the middle school age category) can meet the standards set forth in Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 81."
- "We ought to be concerned that people can eat and drink judgment on themselves if they don't rightly examine themselves before coming to the table as 1 Corinthians 11 instructs his church."
- "Clearly the big issue is interpreting what it means to discern the body. Clearly a child cannot do this, so it will be interesting to watch once again how a clear passage of Scripture is handled by our CRC" (2007 CRC Survey on Children at the Table).

B. *Reformed confessions*

The confessions bear upon this discussion in several ways. First, the confessions clearly convey that membership in the church is tied to baptism, not profession of faith. The Belgic Confession clearly asserts that "by baptism

we are received into God's church" (Art. 34). Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 74 clearly asserts that "infants as well as adults are in God's covenant and are his people. . . . Therefore, by baptism, the mark of the covenant, infants should be received into the Christian church." By the standard of the confessions, it is not appropriate to say to someone when they make profession of faith, "Congratulations on joining the church." Full membership in the church comes with baptism, even if a denomination distinguishes baptized and confessing members (see also 1 Cor. 12:13).

Second, the confessions clearly convey that proper participation arises out of faith. Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 81 explains who may come to the table: "those who are displeased with themselves because of their sins, but who nevertheless trust that their sins are pardoned and that their continuing weakness is covered by the suffering and death of Christ, and who also desire more and more to strengthen their faith and to lead a better life." The catechism goes on to name those who may not participate: "Hypocrites and those who are unrepentant, however, eat and drink judgment on themselves." Q&A 82 goes on explain how the church must prevent the unbelieving and godly from participating.

The Belgic Confession explains this in a slightly different way: "We believe and confess that our Savior Jesus Christ has ordained and instituted the sacrament of the Holy Supper to nourish and sustain those who are already born again and ingrafted into his family: his church" (Art. 35). How might this passage apply to children at the Lord's Supper? The confessions clearly assert that baptized children are ingrafted into the church, a point noted by advocates of children at the table. Yet the confessions also make clear that while baptism is a sign of regeneration,⁶ it is not the cause or mechanism of regeneration, a point noted by advocates of requiring a public profession of faith prior to table participation.

In response, we take note that the confessions do not speak about public profession of faith. Requiring public profession of faith before entrance to the table certainly fits well with the confessions' claim that proper participation arises out of faith. At the same time, the confessions do not require this particular form of profession. That is, there may be any number of ways by which the church conveys that table participation is for believers and through which the church allows participants to express their faith as they come to the table.

Yet we know that many would argue along these lines: "The Belgic Confession asserts that the table is for those who are born again; and a public profession of faith is a testimony to God's regenerating work, and offers us sufficient assurance that a given person is born again. That is why we should require it." We urge particular care in both advancing and responding to this line of thought, for it brings us very close to a host of theologically and pastorally challenging topics. Our basic response to this is that we should gratefully receive all expressions of faith, including public profession of faith, as likely signs of God's regenerating work. Public profession of faith may differ from other expressions of faith in degree, but not kind. We also join a long

⁶ See Belgic Confession, Article 34: "In this way God signifies to us that just as water washes away the dirt of the body when it is poured on us and also is seen on the body of the baptized when it is sprinkled on him, so too the blood of Christ does the same thing internally, in the soul, by the Holy Spirit."

chorus of voices urging caution about making conclusive judgments about who is born again, even as we warmly invite everyone, both inside and outside the church, to accept Jesus and testify to their faith.⁷

Third, the confessions speak about the nature of participation: “No one should come to this table without examining himself carefully” (Belgic Confession, Art. 35); to “eat the crucified body of Christ and to drink his poured-out blood . . . means to accept with a believing heart the entire suffering and death of Christ” (Heidelberg Catechism, Q&A 76). Obedient participation involves self-examination and belief.

Finally, we note that when stating explicitly those who may not partake of the Lord’s Supper, the confessions only mention “hypocrites and those who are unrepentant,” “the unbelieving and ungodly” (Heidelberg Catechism, Q&A 81-82), and “the wicked person” (Belgic Confession, Art. 35). The confessions nowhere explicitly bar covenant children from the Lord’s Supper. It can only be ascertained implicitly if one concludes that up to a certain age, children cannot be “displeased with themselves because of their sins” and “nevertheless trust that their sins are pardoned and that their continuing weakness is covered by the suffering and death of Christ, and who also desire more and more to strengthen their faith and to lead a better life” (Heidelberg Catechism, Q&A 81). That it would not have been the authors’ intent to place covenant children in the same company as hypocrites, the unrepentant, and the ungodly, is evident when, earlier, covenant infants are said to be “in God’s covenant and are his people” and that “they, no less than adults, are promised the forgiveness of sin through Christ’s blood and the Holy Spirit who produces faith” (Heidelberg Catechism, Q&A 74).

On this question, Ursinus’s comments concerning the children of believers are instructive. He clearly argues that “infants are not capable of coming to the Lord’s Supper, because they do not possess faith actually, but only potentially and by inclination.” He also suggests that “all the children of those that believe are included in the covenant, and church of God, *unless they exclude themselves*” (emphasis added). Further, as those “born in the church, or school of Christ,” it follows that “the Holy Spirit teaches them *in a manner adapted to their capacity and age*” (emphasis added). He states that the “benefit of the remission of sins, and of regeneration” indeed “belongs to the infants of the church.” He concludes, “Those unto whom the things signified belong, unto them the sign also belongs.” But then he defaults to excluding infants from the Lord’s Supper “because of their incapacity of shewing the Lord’s death, and proving themselves.”⁸

The original authors of the confessions, despite their high view of the spiritual state of covenant children, were not disposed to infant participation at the Lord’s Supper. But they were ambiguous regarding the age at which children could legitimately participate in faith. It must be noted that the confessions themselves only implicitly exclude covenant children if it can be

⁷ And if we do make judgments, we are advised by the Canons of Dort, as follows: “Since we must make judgments about God’s will from his Word, which testifies that the children of believers are holy, not by nature but by virtue of the gracious covenant in which they together with their parents are included, godly parents ought not to doubt the election and salvation of their children whom God calls out of this life in infancy” (1:17).

⁸ Zacharias Ursinus, *Commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism*, trans. G. W. Williard (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1954), pp. 366-67, 425; see also p. 429.

proven that they are unable to examine themselves or to what extent such a condition is applicable to them. Could it be argued that fencing the table with age requirements may be inconsistent with the confessions' own covenant theology? And if we take seriously Ursinus's belief that the Holy Spirit teaches children "in a manner adapted to their capacity and age," could it be that the faith of covenant children may not only be "potential" and "inclinal," but also more "actual" than usually assumed? At the very least, then, one could conclude that the confessions, according to original intent and explicit statement, suggest that covenant children should be welcomed to participate in the Lord's Supper as soon as they are able to partake in an age- and ability-appropriate manner.

C. *Inconclusive arguments*

The debate about children at the table is complicated by the use of several arguments that are, in our judgment, not conclusive. These topics can be instructive and can inform our learning together, but they do not offer conclusive evidence that would help us arrive at a settled position. We encourage all participants in this discussion to be especially cautious in pursuing these arguments.

1. Texts that do not speak with sufficient detail

Some texts speak to the general topic of children, but do not really help us make a final decision about this topic. Jesus said, "Let the children come to me." This text rules out indifference to children. But by itself, it doesn't help us decide between welcoming them to partake and welcoming them to observe expectantly. Invoking texts in this way usually serves to inflame the debate without clarifying it.

2. The analogy with Passover

Did children eat at the Passover meal? We don't really know at what age they participated and under what conditions. We know that children participated by asking about the meaning of the meal (Ex. 12:24-26). We know that Passover was celebrated within households (e.g., Ex. 12:3-4; 2 Chron. 35:4). We know that the "whole community of Israel" was called to celebrate it (Ex. 12:47), and we have descriptions of the Passover being celebrated by all the returned exiles for a period of seven days (Ezra 6:19-22), a description that implies that the entire covenant community was involved. These texts figure prominently in many discussions of children at the Lord's Supper, often leading writers to opposite conclusions that can each seem rhetorically convincing, especially to people who agree with their position (e.g., "If children asked about the meaning of Passover, then it seems as if they were participating," or, "If they had to ask about the meaning, it appears that they were not yet eating.") The committee therefore urges caution about such arguments on both sides. The Passover certainly does inform our understanding of the Lord's Supper and the nature of a covenant relationship with God. But while biblical discussions of the Passover offer suggestive evidence about the participation of children, they do not offer conclusive evidence about when children first participated or under what conditions they did so.

3. The “communal agent” approach

Some argue that children should be welcome because it is the church as a community (not only each individual) that must discern the body. This argument is hinted at, though not defended, in the report of the task force to Synod 2007:

The decision to allow baptized children to the Lord’s Supper is also based on a strong awareness of the significance of the faith of the entire community. In defending the practice of infant baptism, many Reformed theologians stress that the phrase *repent and be baptized* (Acts 2:38) is practiced by the entire faith community rather than by the infant—a communal action that is also possible for *discerning the body*. Some may even suggest that this is the *only* interpretative move needed to defend the practice of welcoming children to the Lord’s Supper in the context of a tradition that practices infant baptism, regardless of how one understands the phrase *discerning the body*.
(*Agenda for Synod 2007*, p. 51)

This communal subject approach is compelling as a response to an individualistic culture. The problem with this approach is the grammar of the text, which clearly calls for the faithful participation not only of the community but also of each individual Christian at the table (the English translation *whoever* in 1 Corinthians 11:27 is designed to emphasize this point).

4. The historical argument

Some argue for young children at the table because some ancient Christian sources suggest it was common practice. Some argue for requiring a public profession of faith prior to participation at the table because the Reformers practiced this. Significant historical work on these topics offers significant insight about the complex interplay of theological, pastoral, and historical factors in these time periods. Each period is well worth studying, and it contributes to several sections of this report. But ultimately, the history of this topic does not conclusively argue for one side or the other. The early church offers some evidence of young children and infants at communion, but it is unclear how widespread the practice was, and whether there was theological and pastoral consensus about the reasons for the practice. The Reformation period offers us testimony to the pastoral function of public profession of faith but does not provide an argument why public profession of faith is scripturally required for admission to the table. In the end, history is a source of wisdom, but not a source for a definitive position.

In addition to these inconclusive arguments, we note that the discussion of this topic is further complicated because of the conceptual links or implicit connections between various arguments and other positions which do not cohere with the confessions. Some defenses of young children at the table seem to imply baptismal regeneration (the idea that the act of baptism is the means by which God accomplishes regeneration) or other form of sacramentalism. Some defenses of requiring public profession of faith for table admission slip into language about the Lord’s Supper that sounds more like Zwingli (who stressed that the bread and cup merely represent Jesus’ body and blood, and the Lord’s Supper is primarily about our memorial of Jesus) than the Belgic Confession (which insists in Article 35 that “this banquet is a spiritual table at which Christ

communicates himself to us with all his benefits” and that the Lord’s Supper is both for our memorial and for God’s feeding and nourishment of faith). In all our discussions about the Lord’s Supper, it is important to be alert for any principle or practice that might unwittingly suggest either baptismal regeneration or Zwinglian memorialism.

D. *Substantive arguments*

That leaves two primary considerations: 1 Corinthians 11:17-34 and covenant theology, the very two issues named in our mandate from synod.

1. 1 Corinthians 11:17-34

As we have suggested in Section III above, 1 Corinthians 11:17-34 is primarily addressing the breakdown of Christian community along sociological lines. The question of children at the table is *not* the central concern of this text. In other words, while the text specifically addresses the participation of unrepentant and inhospitable adults, the question is whether it also addresses the participation of children. This involves a central issue in biblical interpretation—namely, how we can most faithfully apply commands that were intended for one situation to a somewhat different situation. On this point, two basic positions emerge:

- a. First, those who support children at the table emphasize how the historical context here helps us understand the imperatives in the text. They typically argue, “A text that bars unrepentant adults should not be used to bar covenant children.” They are eager to apply the text but to focus its application to very similar situations today. This is similar to saying that the command “repent and be baptized” (Acts 2:38) naturally applies to adults but not to infants, a fairly standard argument by Reformed theologians.
- b. Second, those opposed to young children at the table insist that grammatical construction of general principles in verses 27-29 establishes a timeless principle that is not limited to similar contexts. They typically argue, “When Paul says ‘examine yourselves’ and ‘discern the body,’ that is clearly intended for all participants in all circumstances.” Some who hold this view go on to say, in effect, “And this is an activity that young children are incapable of doing.”

Our committee’s judgment is that each position advances a very compelling argument. If we truly approach the commands here as life-giving gifts, then we should be eager to obey them in all possible circumstances, and we should be eager to teach them to the youngest of believers. From this point of view—which again we recognize is not the implicit approach to these commands in many contexts—there would seem to be little motivation to pursue the first view: why would we want to withhold these commands from our youngest children? At the same time, as we will explain below, we do not think that we should simply assume that young children are incapable of obeying these imperatives.

2. Covenant theology

Alongside of discussions of 1 Corinthians 11, the most significant arguments about the participation of children at the Lord’s Supper focus on the nature of the covenant that God establishes with us. God’s covenant

promises echo throughout Scripture and have been central to Reformed discussions of the sacraments. This attention is given particular urgency in Peter’s sermon on Pentecost: “The promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him” (Acts 2:39). We worship a God who has chosen to ingraft us into a promise-based relation and a promise-shaped community. In light of this rich vein of biblical teaching,

- those who favor the participation of young children at the table simply ask: If covenant children should be baptized, what prevents them from participating at the table?
- those who favor requiring a public profession of faith respond: What about the obligations and responsibilities of covenant membership, one of which is to come to the table of the Lord after self-examination?

As we have studied these positions, we observe that while each rightly points to essential elements of biblical teaching, each position also entails some potential dangers to avoid:

- To require public profession of faith prior to table participation can unwittingly suggest that the efficacy of the Lord’s Supper depends upon our faith or on the level of our understanding (and though no official document, confessional statement, or other widely accepted theological work defends this, it does surface as a common pastoral concern).
- To fail to require public profession of faith prior to table participation can unwittingly undermine the significance of the obligations we have as believers in covenant participation, and in some circumstances can create a culture of practice in which the participation in the Lord’s Supper is taken quite lightly.

Communications to our committee confirm that both concerns are expressed in CRC congregations. We urge each of us to be deeply aware of these dangers. As we will continue to explain, our view is that we should seek a practice that reflects both elements of covenantal engagement: God’s gracious invitation to all members of the body, and the importance of obedience to God’s commands. Further, we are convinced that the potential pastoral dangers described here must be of primary concern for church councils as they shape local practice.

V. Profession of faith

For many Reformed Christians over the past 450 years, public profession of faith has been a rich and vital practice, a time of gratitude for God’s work, an occasion for deepened commitment to the faith, and an occasion for recognizing the joyful and serious obligations of participation in the church. As a committee, we are eager to renew and deepen public profession of faith as a significant milestone event in the lives of believers.

A. Profession of faith as an affirmation of baptism

Profession of faith is a time to celebrate and affirm baptismal identity. For those baptized as infants, profession of faith is a time to affirm covenant

promises. For those baptized as adults, profession of faith accompanies baptism and affirms that our identity is found in Jesus Christ.

Public profession of faith is both an expression of and a catalyst for the missional work of the church in the world. The great commission calls the church to a public testimony of faith as it disciples nations, “baptizing them . . . teaching them to obey everything” Jesus has commanded (Matt. 28:19-20). Indeed, the church’s profession of faith, and each individual profession of faith, is an act of proclamation that reaches out to the lost and disciples the found. This reaching out toward the world that God loves happens both through explicit witness to the love of Christ and through faith-filled actions in society (Heidelberg Catechism, Q&A 86), including caring for “the least of these” with grace-filled words and deeds (Matt. 25:40) and serving as an advocate for victims of injustice (Prov. 31:8-9; Mic. 6:8).

There are also significant developmental or psychological reasons for affirming profession of faith. For many generations, a public profession of faith has served as a rite of passage out of childhood and into adolescent or adult faith. It serves as a natural occasion for challenging youth to consider the claims of Christ, to give voice to the faith within them, and to celebrate and affirm their God-given gifts, and to join in God’s world-wide work.

At the same time, there is no single age which the church is able to mandate for public profession of faith. Indeed, in God’s sovereign grace, congregations have witnessed profound professions of faith by believers of 8 and 88 years and beyond. Professions of faith arise out of individual initiative as the Holy Spirit leads. We also note gratefully that in recent years many congregations have been more intentional about welcoming persons with intellectual disabilities to profess their faith.

Public professions of faith are a lifelong practice, rather than a once-in-a-lifetime event. Some of these professions happen at significant life moments, for example, parents who present children for baptism profess their faith, and officebearers who are ordained and installed to their offices profess their faith, each in the public assembly for worship. Additional expressions of faith happen as a recurring part of worship, as the congregation recites creeds, sings songs that testify to God’s goodness, or exclaims “Amen” or “Thanks be to God” after a scripture reading or in the middle of a sermon. Every time we participate in the Lord’s Supper, we profess our faith, “proclaiming the Lord’s death until he comes.” Professing faith should thus be seen as an indispensable element in regular worship practices. And the formal rite of passage we call “profession of faith” can be understood as a way for each individual to join in expressing assent to the faith regularly professed by the whole congregation. Regrettably, public profession of faith has tended to be seen as a once-in-a-lifetime event, overshadowing the fact that the act of professing faith happens throughout life and in many and varied ways in the life of a congregation.

B. Profession of faith and the practice of confirmation in other Christian traditions

Profession of faith is both similar and different from the practice of confirmation in various Christian traditions. Like confirmation, it is a rite of passage that affirms the covenant of baptism and usually is associated with full participation in the life of the church (though most traditions take care to insist that all baptized persons are “full members” of the church). However,

while profession of faith emphasizes the affirming response of the believer to God, confirmation in many traditions places an emphasis on bestowing or conferring the gift of the Holy Spirit. Confirmation (which is sometimes called “chrismation”) is understood by Roman Catholic and Orthodox believers to be a sacrament, while the Reformed tradition affirms only baptism and the Lord’s Supper as sacraments. While the center of profession of faith is testimony, the center of confirmation is the laying on of hands *and* prayers for the gift of the Holy Spirit. In some other Protestant traditions, the term *confirmation* is used for something quite similar to some traditional aspects of profession of faith in the CRC, with an emphasis placed on learning and embracing the creeds and confessions of the church. Confirmation has its origins as a part of baptism. In the early church, bishops would affirm the legitimacy of baptisms done by local priests/pastors, using the language of 2 Corinthians 1:21-22 (“God confirms us with you in Christ and has anointed us, putting a seal on us and giving us the Spirit”—as in the Catholic Douay-Rheims Bible; see also the Amplified Version and Young’s Literal Translation). Soon, this practice became associated with the laying on of hands and prayers for the Holy Spirit (see Acts 8:14-17; 19:1-7; Heb. 6:1-2). Reformed interpreters and theologians have long taken issue with the use of these texts in this way, arguing that they do not mandate a formal ritual of confirmation. At the same time, Reformed theology deeply embraces the promise that we “share in Christ’s anointing” (see Heidelberg Catechism, Q&A 32) and are graced by the gift of the Holy Spirit.

There is quite a diversity of practices across traditions with respect to the relationship of confirmation to coming to the Lord’s table. In many traditions, these are separate milestones in the journey of faith. Often a “first communion” milestone is celebrated first, with confirmation occurring later. In some cases, confirmation has been associated with a first celebration of the Lord’s Supper.

C. *Pastoral challenges*

We acknowledge that several contemporary factors have also eroded the practice of profession of faith, including the extension of adolescence as a distinct stage in one’s life cycle, the reluctance of some churches to impose any expectation of a formal profession of faith, lack of clarity about the missional character of profession of faith, and—for some—prolonged periods of formal education at a distance from a young person’s congregational home.

These factors, however, do not offer grounds for setting aside this practice, but only for becoming more intentional about it. Congregations that offer warm, personal invitations to each child and young person to explore making profession of faith by probing their doubts and questions, developing Christian practices of Bible study and prayer, and discerning their gifts for service will have served them well.

D. *The status of requiring profession of faith prior to table participation*

Since the Reformation, profession of faith has also been a requirement for participation at the table in many Reformed and Presbyterian churches. The sixteenth century Reformers in the Reformed tradition replaced medieval confirmation with profession of faith. Profession of faith was closely linked with both baptism and catechesis. Children ages 10-14 were invited and expected to testify to their faith and to recite answers to catechism questions

that explored their faith prior to participation at the Lord's table. It entailed, then, both a testimony of faith in response to God's grace and assent to the particular doctrines of the local church. In the Reformation period, this practice was an effective means of encouraging discipleship and resisting superstitious views of the Lord's Supper.⁹ Likewise, in subsequent centuries it has been a valuable pastoral approach.

However, we also observe that public profession of faith is neither biblically nor confessionally mandated. It is one pastoral strategy to promote discipleship and to provide accountability regarding table participation. And the requirement does have some disadvantages. For one, requiring profession of faith before table participation can unwittingly reinforce the perception that infants and young children are not members of the church. In these circumstances, profession of faith replaces baptism in the perception of many as the entrance requirement into the church, in opposition to the confessions (see Belgic Confession, Art. 34) For another, it can suggest that participation at the table requires not only age-appropriate obedience to the biblical commands about participation but also assent to the particular doctrinal formulations.

With these disadvantages in mind, some have called for eliminating the requirement for profession of faith prior to participation in the Lord's Supper in all circumstances, judging in effect that the Reformers were wrong in instituting it. Our committee, in contrast, judges that requiring profession of faith prior to participation at the table should be a matter of local discernment. We have heard compelling accounts from some pastors and elders who minister in areas of significant biblical illiteracy, where some would be likely to treat the Lord's Supper in a superstitious way (in other words, a situation not unlike that of John Calvin's day), in which requiring profession of faith would be a wise decision on the part of the elders. We have also heard compelling accounts from pastors and elders who sense that requiring profession of faith prior to participation in the Lord's Supper has reinforced the idea that children are not members of the church.

In sum, promoting discipleship and nurturing obedient participation at the table is the task of every congregation under the supervision of the elders. Requiring public profession of faith may be one strategy for accomplishing this.

VI. Assessment and guiding principle

A. Two positions restated

In light of Section IV, it is helpful to state again the two basic positions, purged of the inconclusive arguments, and restated in light of our study of 1 Corinthians 11 and covenant theology.

1. Those against children partaking before making a profession of faith—
The Bible nowhere explicitly mandates that children should participate. 1 Corinthians 11 mandates that *each* participant at the table should examine themselves and discern the body, actions which young children are

⁹ See, for example, Robert M. Kingdon, "Catechesis in Calvin's Geneva," in John Van Engen, ed., *Educating People of Faith* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), pp. 150-78.

incapable of engaging in. While Paul articulates these imperatives with respect to a specific situation, they do apply in all situations.

2. Those for children at the table—The Bible nowhere explicitly bars children from participating. When we “discern the body,” part of what we discern is that children should be present because they belong to the covenant. We should handle the command for each to examine themselves just like we do the command “repent and be baptized,” noting that it is appropriate for everyone who has the capacity to do so.

Each of these arguments can be stated in rhetorically powerful ways. Each is convincing to some. For this reason, the CRC has had a series of study reports, majority and minority positions; the RCA allows both practices; and several other Reformed and Presbyterian denominations have had vigorous debates about the topic. As a committee, we have listened to both positions. We have learned much from each. We are convinced that no matter what position someone holds, there is much to learn from the best arguments for the other position, provided they can be heard above the din of the weaker arguments.

Further, we also sense an underlying unity in both positions: everyone involved wants as many baptized members as possible to be sorry for their sin, to trust in Jesus as their Savior, to desire to live for Jesus, and to participate actively in the Lord’s Supper.

We also note that both positions on this topic are fraught with some problematic tendencies.

The case for welcoming children tends to downplay the significance of the imperatives in the text. The Lord’s Supper does involve tangible, faith-filled action: taking, eating, drinking, discerning, and waiting. Yet some are so eager to defend the presence of young children at the table that this active obedience tends to be downplayed.

The case for not welcoming children until profession of faith tends to treat profession of faith as the only appropriate strategy for welcoming people to the table, a lofty designation for a practice that is not mandated directly in Scripture.

B. Points of agreement and consensus

That brings us to our current assessment of this material. We offer the following two claims on the basis of this study. Further, on the basis of conversations across the CRC, we sense that these two claims could be widely embraced.

1. Baptized children are members of the church—the body of Christ who are welcomed to the table on the basis not of their comprehension or profession but on the basis of God’s gracious invitation to the covenant community.
2. Each participant in the Lord’s Supper should participate actively, in obedience to each biblical imperative.

That is, with those who support children at the table, we agree that the main application of 1 Corinthians 11 should be to call inhospitable adults to renewed practices of hospitality. Yet we see no reason why it should not also call inhospitable persons of all ages to renewed practices of hospitality.

Likewise, with those who oppose children at the table, we agree that each imperative comes as life-giving instruction to each participant, regardless of age. We agree that Scripture clearly teaches that all participants at the Lord's table are called to examine themselves and discern the body.

As we shall explain below, where we disagree with those who oppose children at the table is with the sense that very young children are incapable of self-examination and discernment in age-appropriate ways.

C. An additional consideration: Age- and ability-appropriate obedience

In addition to this brief summary, the committee wishes to add one additional but significant consideration: a simple comparison of how we approach the obedience of children to various biblical commands. Namely, should we not view the imperatives regarding participation in the Lord's Supper as we do with all the life-giving imperatives throughout Scripture, as something that all God's children should obey in an age- and ability-appropriate way? Just as we encourage very young children to begin obeying commands to pray to God and to not steal or lie, so too we invite young children to engage in age- and ability-appropriate ways of participating at the Lord's table.

This "age-appropriate and ability-appropriate" argument is already practiced by the church. We gratefully observe that congregations regularly welcome baptized persons with intellectual disabilities to the table as members of the covenant who participate according to their ability. Further, the church regularly welcomes persons with dementia to the table, long after they have experienced loss of capacities by which they once did examine themselves and discern the body. The church welcomes these members to obey in an "ability-appropriate" way. As a committee, we want to strongly affirm the practice of welcoming persons with intellectual disabilities and dementia to partake of the Lord's Supper in precisely this way—namely, by obeying all the imperatives in an "ability-appropriate" way.

This position challenges the notion that children are not capable of self-examination and discernment. Even very young children engage in the practices commended in 1 Corinthians 11, as they express with heartfelt sincerity, "I'm sorry"; "I love Jesus"; "This is God's family"; "This is God's feast." Like all professing adults who express these same sentiments, they will not understand them fully, and they may not hold to them consistently throughout their life. But, as with professing adults, we see no reason why the church should not welcome and nurture their age- and ability-appropriate participation, as well as to commit to ongoing nurture, education, and accountability.

This view resists a common analogy that we hear in discussions of this topic, the view that requiring profession of faith prior to table participation is like requiring a driver's license before driving. Aspects of this analogy are compelling: participation at the table, like driving, is a matter of great significance. But other aspects of this analogy are troubling: the implication that young children are incapable of faith or genuine obedience, and the implication that the commands of 1 Corinthians 11 are qualitatively different from other biblical commands. While we enthusiastically embrace the significance of the commands presented in 1 Corinthians 11, we see no biblical grounds for supporting this analogy.

We realize that some will still resist this approach, asking how can children even know what they are doing? We want to respond to this point with great care.

First, the committee wants to gently challenge the emphasis on cognitive understanding that may undergird this question. Our ability to reason is a great gift from God. But participation in the Lord's Supper should never be limited to thinking about what we are doing, even as we generously invite each participant to greater learning over time.

Second, we would respectfully note that none of us can comprehend the depths of the mystery of the Lord's Supper. As adult believers, it is appropriate for us to realize that the difference between a young child and a mature adult pales in significance with the depth of this mystery.

Third, an approach that advocates participation in an "ability-appropriate" way necessary entails that we challenge children to grow in their understanding. Rather than setting aside the value of learning and pursuing cognitive understanding, it actually reinforces it: calling on Christians to grow in knowledge and depth of participation throughout their lives. Indeed, this "age-appropriate" and "ability-appropriate" consideration also mitigates another pastoral challenge—the fact that some lifelong members either passively or actively resist growth in their walk with God and their participation in the table over the course of their life.

This brings us to what we judge one of the underlying but often unarticulated dynamics with the CRC discussion of this topic over the past 25 years—the fact that we have unwittingly focused our response to the warnings of 1 Corinthians 11 almost entirely on the process of welcome to the table. As we reflect on the gift of God's covenant love, many of us do find the idea of children's participation compelling. But we can't set aside the haunting sense that we would not be taking seriously enough the warnings of 1 Corinthians 11. That makes sense if our answer to the question "What does the church do to prevent unworthy participation?" is limited to "Requiring a public profession of faith prior to participation." If this is the case (and we sense that it may often be in practice, if not in theory), this is unhealthy in two ways: it does not include organic, ongoing practices of discipline around the table, and it unnecessarily sets the bar too high for initial participation. For this reason, both the Church Order changes and resources we continue to develop address both the nature of welcome to the table and ongoing discipline.

In sum, "age- and ability-appropriate participation" should be not considered merely a way of "lowering the bar" for young children, persons with dementia, or persons with intellectual disabilities. Rather, it "sets the bar" for every believer in ways that fit with their own age and capacity.

D. A guiding principle

These considerations are summarized in the following guiding principle, adopted by Synod 2010 (see *Acts of Synod 2010*, pp. 810-11):

All baptized members who come with age- and ability-appropriate faith in Jesus Christ are welcome to the Lord's table and called to obey the scriptural commands about participation (e.g., to "examine themselves," to "discern the body," to "proclaim the Lord's death," to "wait for others") in an age- and ability-appropriate way, under the supervision of the elders. The elders have

responsibility to nurture in the congregation grateful and obedient participation through encouragement, instruction, and accountability.

The following statements clarify the guiding principle above:

1. A formal public profession of faith prior to participation in the Lord's Supper is not required by Scripture or the confessions.
2. A formal public profession of faith is a vital practice for faith formation and is one pastoral approach to consider prior to participation in the Lord's Supper.
3. Professing faith regularly in and outside of corporate worship is a natural practice for lifelong faith formation which the church should encourage, enhance, and express.

Grounds:

- a. This position honors the covenant status of all who are baptized and affirms their membership in the church.
- b. This position is faithful to the instruction of 1 Corinthians 11, which calls for a response of obedience on the part of those that come to the table.
- c. This position acknowledges that, though members of the body of Christ respond to the promises of God in ways that are shaped by their age and abilities, their responses are nevertheless valid responses.
- d. This position implements the instructions of Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 81, that those who come to the table must be repentant, trusting, and desirous of growth in obedience.
- e. This position honors the polity of the CRC, in which the sacraments of the church are to be celebrated under the supervision of the elders.
- f. This position allows for diversity of local practice within a standard principle.
- g. Adopting this principle will give the Faith Formation Committee sufficient guidance to continue to carry out its mandate by proposing Church Order changes and working with church agencies to develop pastoral resources for congregations.

VII. Ministry practices that uphold this principle

A. Common criteria for evaluating practices

This principle is an important first step in our process of discerning together the nature of faithful participation at the Lord's Supper. The next step is to discern what practices best enact this principle. We suggest shaping this discussion as follows: first, to identify a set of common criteria for discerning practices; second, to describe common practices that we all can share; third, to describe complementary practices of welcome to the table that congregations may develop in response to local ministry contexts.

First, this guiding principle, in light of the preceding discussion, leads naturally to several criteria that each church council should use to evaluate their own local practices.

1. Congregations should actively resist any language that suggests baptized children or any other typically marginalized group are not part of the church.
2. Congregations should question any practices that routinely “humiliate those who have nothing” or others in the body of Christ.
3. Congregations should question their practices if they fail to challenge the unrepentant, the inhospitable, or others who “show contempt for the church of God” and routinely participate in the Lord’s Supper.
4. Congregations should prayerfully examine practices that may routinely fail to invite certain groups of baptized members to partake in an age- and ability-appropriate way, including persons with cognitive disabilities or dementia, as well as children.
5. Congregations should develop practices of training, formation, and accountability that invite baptized members into joyful obedience of each biblical command about table participation, including instruction in self-examination and discerning the body. These practices should be cultivated for each age group in age- and ability-specific ways.
6. Congregations should promote a culture of lifelong learning, in which no milestone moment is seen as a graduation from growth in the faith.
7. Congregations should resist overly casual approaches to the Lord’s Supper that minimize the important and life-giving biblical commands for participation.

It may be helpful to formulate these criteria as constructive questions:

- What can we do to actively resist language that suggests children are not part of the church?
- What can we do to ensure that no one is treated as a second-class citizen at the table?
- What can we do to challenge inhospitable or unrepentant attitudes?
- What can we do to actively encourage all members to participate in an age-appropriate way?
- What can we do to offer specific instruction on faithful participation in the Lord’s Supper, including what it means to “discern the body” and examine ourselves?
- What can we do to cultivate a culture of lifelong learning and discipleship?
- What can we do to resist overly casual attitudes toward participation in the Lord’s Supper?

B. *Common practices*

The committee also judges that the preceding discussion commends a wide range of practices that should be common in every CRC congregation.

1. When the Lord’s Supper is celebrated, it should be clear that all participants are, in fact, professing faith as they do so. They are “proclaiming the Lord’s death until he comes.”

2. Each congregation should provide clear explanations for new and inquiring Christians and for parents and guardians about who is welcome and why.
3. Each congregation should provide ongoing nurture and instruction about the Lord's Supper to people of all ages and abilities.
4. Each congregation should provide regular, constructive disciplines of accountability, such as mutual censure.

C. *Models of welcome to the table*

In the context of these common criteria and practices, each church council has important decisions to make about the specific ways that it will welcome baptized members to participate in age- and ability-appropriate ways. In what circumstances might it be wise to require public profession of faith prior to participation at the Lord's table? In what ways can the church communicate both God's gracious invitation and the joy of covenant obedience? What should happen in worship services, and what should happen outside of worship?

At this point, the context of each congregation will become particularly important. The history of local practice, the nature of common assumptions, and the particular pastoral challenges of each congregation must all be taken into account in making wise choices about practice. This is clearly a matter for church councils to decide through processes of spiritual and pastoral discernment.

However a council proceeds, it is important that the process involve the children, the parents or guardians of the children, and the church (typically, the pastor, elders, and/or church education teachers).

The committee is aware of three basic models that churches have considered in light of the preceding principle and common criteria.

One approach would be for a congregation to simply convey in the context of the Lord's Supper celebration the principle we have described. A pastor might say, "The Lord's Supper is a gracious gift that God has provided to Christ's body, the church. All members of Christ's body are invited to participate as an act of faith, and to come to the table of the Lord discerning that this bread and cup are signs and seals of God's love for us and discerning that we who participate are members of Christ and each other." This approach is simple and clear. But we have significant reservations about an approach that relies only on this invitation. First, few churches do or would take the time during a worship service to explain each of the life-giving commands about participation at the table. Without that explanation, it is far too easy to be unaware of those commands. And without understanding them, it is very easy, especially in a North American context, for participants to slip into a rather privatistic way of participating. Second, by itself this approach does not provide a milestone event for welcoming children to the table. Our conversations with congregational leaders throughout the Christian Reformed Church have repeatedly confirmed our reservations about this approach.

In another approach, some congregations may judge that requiring a formal, public profession of faith before participation in the Lord's Supper remains the best pastoral way to encourage faith-filled, age-appropriate

participation. This may be especially apt in pastoral settings where biblical literacy is low or where the Lord's Supper would otherwise be treated in a rather casual or flippant way. In this regard, we are grateful for the testimony of a pastor in a largely unchurched area who spoke eloquently to us about how requiring profession of faith before entrance to the table is crucial for helping the youth of the church take it seriously. We also note that the resources provided by Synod 1995 can assist churches who would continue to require a public profession of faith prior to table participation in welcoming younger children to profess their faith.

A third model involves a process whereby the church invites young, baptized members of the church to learn about the Lord's Supper, to express their desire to participate in faith in an age-appropriate way, and then to celebrate the milestone of their first participation. As with profession of faith, this may be done with a group of children or by individual children. The process may involve a Sunday school teacher, an elder, parents, and pastors in appropriate ways. It could be as simple as a conversation between the child and the pastor, or it may be more complex, including several Sunday school lessons.

This model is ideal in many ways: it offers an intentional time for nurturing full, active, and conscious participation; it celebrates the work of God in the lives of members of the body; and it clearly conveys that the Lord's Supper is a church matter, not merely an act of personal devotion.

This model may be appropriate in many settings. It is especially appropriate in contexts in which there are several baptized members who love Jesus but don't participate in the Lord's Supper because profession of faith seems intimidating—a fairly common concern we have heard from congregations in our work. It is also especially appropriate in settings where many have come to think of profession of faith rather than baptism as the entrance into church membership.

We encourage churches who adopt this model to retain the term "profession of faith" for the public act of professing faith and indicating agreement with the Reformed creeds and confessions, and to refer to this process as a "welcome to the table" process.

D. Sustaining and deepening table participation

With each model, however, our discussion makes clear that the welcome to the table is just the beginning. Every church needs to deepen and sustain faithful participation over time. If a child begins to participate in the Lord's Supper at age 8, we should be able to ask that individual five or ten years later, "What has your church done to deepen your understanding and participation at the Lord's Supper?" and receive a satisfying answer. Likewise, if a church requires public profession of faith for table participation and a person makes profession of faith at 18 or 28 or 58, we should be able to ask that person the same question five or ten years later and receive a satisfying answer. We have some concern that the significant attention we've given to the welcome to the table over the past generation has unwittingly detracted from healthy practices that sustain and deepen table participation over time.

E. Renewing profession of faith

Our committee continues to be very enthusiastic about the practice of public profession of faith. Note the following affirmation in “Affirming Baptism and Forming Faith” (Part 3.1):

Public profession of faith, though not a specific biblically mandated practice, is nevertheless an especially important milestone by which persons affirm their baptism, express personal trust in Jesus Christ, and indicate their pledge to follow Christ. Reformed Christians have practiced public profession of faith with good benefit for theological, pastoral, and historic reasons. It marks a time in which a believer is ready for new responsibilities and roles in the life of the church. It offers the Christian community rich opportunities to express gratitude for the work of God in the lives of his children. The opportunity for public profession of faith is a gift, then, both for individuals and for the church.

We call on each other to highlight the way that public profession of faith is an affirmation of baptism and to celebrate public professions of faith with joyful gratitude.

Shepherding people through the process of making a public profession of faith is an important pastoral opportunity that requires both patient attentiveness to the spiritual journey of each individual and gentle, proactive encouragement. We are eager to highlight the many voices we have heard throughout the denomination that urge each church to actively and warmly encourage each young person and each spiritual seeker to take the step of making a public profession of faith, and to celebrate this affirmation of baptism meaningfully in contextually appropriate ways.

F. Every congregation on a trajectory of growth

We have some concern that our work and this discussion will result to two equally problematic situations: (1) it may lead some congregations to make radical changes hastily, without a healthy approach to change, and (2) it may lead some congregations to conclude that their present approach is good enough and that they don’t need to take up the topic. In contrast, our vision—confirmed by dozens of conversations across the CRC—is that each congregation will study this topic and look for ways to hone practices that deepen discipleship. Our vision is that every congregation would be on a healthy trajectory of growth.

G. Responses to common questions

As we continue to think through this matter, we have received several helpful questions. The following paragraphs attempt to address these questions based on the themes of this report.

1. Won’t this approach simply further congregationalism?

We are certainly aware of the risks of congregationalism. Should we really promote a culture in which some churches require profession of faith and some do not? It is our prayer that this proposed approach will not in fact fan congregationalism, but rather will strengthen the unity we share by articulating a common principle, a set of common criteria to evaluate practices, and a network of communication to share resources that

fit well with this principle and common criteria. These common starting points are, indeed, significant common ground—far greater than many denominations share, including many Reformed denominations. In an age of astonishing diversity in congregational life, we dare to dream that this will deepen, not erode, our sense of unity across the denomination.

2. What about cases in which young children participate, but then go through a period of time in which they rebel against the church? Isn't it risky to involve them at such a young age?

This is a difficult challenge that requires great spiritual discernment and pastoral wisdom. But it is also important to see that this is not really different from welcoming a sullen, stubborn 39-year-old who cheats on his or her taxes despite the fact that this person has been participating since having made public profession of faith at the age of 20. In both cases, the church should pray for such members and call them to a life of faithful discipleship. And the church has the authority to also either (a) suggest or (b) require that they not participate in communion for a time. Wise church leaders might themselves choose to abstain from communion at a given time until they can reconcile with a neighbor.

3. If we adopt this, will we finally be doing something to prevent so many young people from leaving the church?

The reasons for the phenomenon of young people leaving the church are complex, and no one change in church practice is, by itself, likely to address this problem. Still, if we deeply internalize the vision represented here—in which children are seen as full members of the body, and they are invited to and are held accountable to full, active, conscious participation in body life, including at the table—that could, by the Spirit's power, make an enormous difference in the faith formation of children and youth. That is why we are eagerly working on this topic together.

4. What about the issue of transferring from church to church and having various practices—must churches who make different decisions on the three models accept transfers from churches that have done it differently and allow them to follow their ways—for example, if a church requires profession of faith for participation, does that apply to the children in a family transferring from a church that does not require it?

This is a challenging issue, and one that many congregations already face. This issue is significant no matter what direction the CRC takes on it, given the number of transfers that occur from many other denominations into the CRC. Church councils here have two options: one is to explain current practice and ask everyone to abide by it, the other is to grant exceptions to children who have already participated. Each approach has strengths and weaknesses. Yet we sense that the principle we are recommending offers the best possible position from which to decide. The question to ask for any given child or family is "How can we invite baptized members of the church to participate most deeply in an age-appropriate way?" In many instances, this would entail a pastoral conversation with the family about the Lord's Supper and the nature of obedient participation at the table and granting permission for children to participate. In some instances, perhaps in instances in which a family's

prior congregation approached the Lord's Supper in a rather superstitious or casual way, a church may ask the children not to participate for a time until further instruction or conversations are possible.

5. Is there an age that is too young for "age-appropriate participation"?

We do not think there are scriptural grounds for making a specific determination about this. We judge that naming a specific age in the Church Order would be too arbitrary. The cultural context of a congregation also makes a difference in shaping perceptions around young children and their capacity for participation. We sense that many congregations will approach this by welcoming children beginning somewhere around ages 5-8, though some may choose to invite 3- or 4-year-olds. It would seem natural to wait for children to answer in the affirmative questions like these: *Do you love Jesus? Are you sorry for your sin? Is this God's family? Is this God's meal? Do you want to participate?* We realize that local church councils will need to offer specific advice about this question for parents. As our committee develops resources for church councils, we will do so in response to synod's action on our recommendation.

6. Is it possible for baptized infants to practice "age-appropriate participation"?

At present the committee is not aware of a strong desire in the CRC to practice infant communion. But we do hear people asking this theological question. Some raise the question in light of the intriguing words of the psalmist: "You brought me out of the womb; you made me trust in you even at my mother's breast" (Ps. 22:9) and "From birth I have relied on you; you brought me forth from my mother's womb. I will ever praise you" (Ps. 71:6). Others point to recent discoveries in developmental psychology that demonstrate the significant ways in which infants respond to their environment.

As this report explores, celebrations should highlight the life-giving significance of active participation, avoid implying that either baptism or the Lord's Supper imparts grace magically, and avoid reinforcing a kind of "cheap grace" view that is prevalent in contemporary culture. For this reason, we judge that infant communion would not be a wise pastoral practice.

At the same time, we do not believe we can determine a particular age when infants or children can appropriately participate, especially given many diverse ways in which various cultures understand the capacities of young children. That is why our recommendation notes that communion take place "under the supervision of the elders," and we entrust this particular decision to them.

7. How do the recommendations of this report differ from those adopted by Synod 1995?

The primary change that occurred in 1995 involved finding pastorally helpful ways to lower the age for making profession of faith. This report commends the importance of public profession of faith as a significant faith milestone, but it also proposes that a public profession of faith not be required for table participation in all congregations. Instead, this report

recommends that participation at the table be understood in terms of age- and ability-appropriate obedience.

8. How do the recommendations of this report differ from those adopted by Synod 2006?

Synod 2006 simply declared that all baptized members of the CRCNA were welcome to come to the table. It did not provide analysis of 1 Corinthians 11, and it did not lay out specific principles or guidelines for participation or accountability.

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Appendix D

Infant Dedication and the Christian Reformed Church – Preliminary Report

As a result of an overture from Classis Alberta North to Synod 2007, the question of whether and how to handle the practice of infant dedication in the Christian Reformed Church was assigned to the Faith Formation Committee. Synod affirmed "the church's commitment to the practice of covenant baptism," noting that "the practice of infant dedication can never replace the beauty of the expression of God's covenant of grace communicated in the sacrament of baptizing infants," and that "the practice of baptizing infants is the normative practice prescribed by the Reformed confessions (Heidelberg Catechism, Q&A 74; Belgic Confession, Art. 34; and Church Order, Art. 56)." Synod discouraged "the practice of infant dedication" but also mandated "the Faith Formation Committee to provide biblical and pastoral guidance for councils who are conversing with those members who are requesting infant dedication in place of infant baptism," noting that "more than forty years have passed since synod last addressed infant baptism. We live in a different day than when synod last addressed these matters, and the churches would be well served by carefully considering together questions not previously raised surrounding infant dedication, as well as be provided with a fresh articulation of the practice of infant baptism" (*Acts of Synod 2007*, p. 659).

The following is a preliminary report on our work on this part of our mandate. We look forward to discussions of this material at Synod 2011 and anticipate presenting a more detailed and refined report for consideration at Synod 2012.

I. Historical and pastoral reflections

As we have studied both academic and pastoral resources on the subject of infant baptism and have received communications from pastors, elders, and members across the Christian Reformed Church, we take note of several recurring themes that inform our work on this subject.

A. *Multiple sources of requests for infant dedication*

- In one situation, a given town has only one Protestant church. Welcoming those with disparate views on infant baptism is agreed upon by all to be matter of Christian hospitality. It won't work to say, "If you want believer's baptism, then there is a church down the street," when, in fact, there isn't such a church down the street.
- In another situation, a new congregation or small congregation is eager to embrace every potential member—in part because it is struggling. Why bother fussing about infant baptism when survival is at stake?
- In yet another situation, one parent wants infant baptism, while the other parent wants believer's baptism. The parents might even compromise by baptizing some but not all of their children. Whatever else happens, the church wants to encourage these parents and ensure that the issue does not harm their marriage.
- In another case, a congregation has always practiced infant baptism, but a few years ago it reluctantly welcomed some members who do not agree. Despite this effort, the newer members still feel ambivalence. They feel like second-class citizens in the congregation. This leads the pastor and elders to identify inhospitable attitudes as the primary spiritual problem that needs to be addressed.
- In yet another case, the congregation and council of a congregation may be enthusiastic about infant baptism, but the pastor may have enough reservations to be more open to infant dedication than the congregation or council.

One reason that the CRC's past responses to the topic of requests for infant baptism do not seem sufficient is that they do not address these underlying contexts effectively. The committee agrees with synod's clear mandate that we affirm infant baptism and discourage infant dedication. The committee also believes that we need to reflect together on the underlying contextual challenges of ministry today.

B. *Notes on credobaptists and the Dutch Reformed tradition*

The committee has benefited by reviewing the history of credobaptism (believer's baptism; insisting on a profession of faith at baptism) and the Dutch Reformed tradition.

While it appears that believer's baptism emerged quite late in church history, not long after the Reformation there were baptistic influences in England and on the European continent, and the Dutch Reformed churches worked hard to fend off their impact. Church Order required the reading of the form for baptism each time children were baptized, and that included a clear explanation of the biblical rationale for baptism. The baptism questions to the parents and the prayers in the form also contained a strong defense of the practice. It appears that the Reformed churches have always felt the pressure of credobaptists.

However, while officially "detesting" Anabaptists in the Belgic Confession, a soft spot for baptists by those in the Dutch Reformed churches can be traced at least back to the seventeenth century, especially as that baptist movement progressed through England and Holland. Our spiritual forefathers shared an understandable attraction to baptist emphases such as

the necessity of personal repentance and faith, discipleship, and zeal for evangelism and missions. The popularity of the writings of John Bunyan, a Reformed Baptist, is a case in point.

Without actually converting to the baptist position, there were experiential pastors of the *Nadere Reformatie* (a period from about 1600-1750 that is often called the Dutch Second Reformation or the Further Reformation) like the prominent Rev. Joducus VanLodenstein, who wrestled with the meaning of infant baptism. Toward the end of his ministry, he changed the wording of a question (to parents) in the baptism form from “our children *are* sanctified in Christ” to “our children *will become* sanctified in Christ.” Messing with the approved forms could be a risky venture in those days.

The *Nadere Reformatie* emphasis on personal experience was rediscovered in the *Afscheiding of 1834* as believers read from the *Oude Schrijvers* (*Old Writers*) in their small group Bible studies. Some baptist tendencies tagged along on this spiritual renaissance, which also followed the church to the formation of the Christian Reformed Church in North America in 1857.

So it comes as no surprise that already in 1888, only 31 years after the denomination was founded here in the United States, there were questions in the church regarding the necessity of baptizing infants. When asked, synod responded unequivocally that year that parents who failed to present their children for baptism were to be “instructed and admonished patiently” and, that failing, were to be *disciplined*.

Synod’s act indicates how seriously as a Reformed church we took the doctrine. Denying baptism to a covenant child was paramount to violating his or her covenant rights. Efforts to restrain baptist tendencies in the denomination were bolstered over the years by an influx of Kuyperian immigrants who leaned toward the teaching of presumptive regeneration (based on the presumption that the covenant child is already regenerated or sanctified in Christ, and should thus be baptized).

While there has never been an explicit prohibition in the confessions or Church Order against infant dedication, it was always understood as a practical denial of infant baptism.

Due to our experiential DNA and the North American evangelical environment, however, the issue refused to disappear. Seventy-six years later, in 1964, the question again came to synod. This time synod significantly softened its stance by deciding that parent couples who did not want to baptize their children could be members in good standing as long as they were willing to be instructed and they promised not to propagate views in the church contrary to its official position. Synod 1973 went a step further when it determined that even adults who had themselves *rebaptized* could, at the discretion of their consistory, remain members of the church but would not be permitted to hold ecclesiastical office.

These decisions of the past generation opened the door to where we find ourselves today. Now we have many baptists who are members in good standing in the Christian Reformed Church. While many baptist members of the CRC have become convinced by the infant baptism position, others would still prefer to have their covenant children dedicated. While synod hoped it could maintain authority on the issue by having the parents promise not to propagate their views, the presence of unbaptized covenant children in our churches speaks volumes and is now demanding attention. It is

important to acknowledge that our official position can lead these members to feel a degree of ambivalence. On the one hand, they have been accepted as members in good standing for more than a generation, but, on the other hand, their decision to not baptize children is frowned upon. It is no small wonder there are some who are pleading their cause, others who are simply ignoring the official position of the church, and still others, like Classis Alberta North, asking for guidance.

Somehow the church needs to account for a situation it has itself fostered over the years, and at the same time the church must maintain the priority of the confessional position that promotes the blessedness of covenant theology.

C. *Multiple approaches to infant dedication, complex historical developments*

There are many different practices of infant dedication across the spectrum of Protestant churches. In churches that do not practice infant baptism, there is broad diversity in the practice of infant dedication, ranging from a ceremony that sounds and looks much like a “dry baptism” to a ceremony that distances itself from having anything directly to do with the children and, instead, dedicates the *parents* to instructing their children in the Lord. Some ceremonies implicitly refer back to Old Testament accounts of the dedication of Samuel; others make a point of resisting this comparison, noting that few parents feel comfortable making commitments on behalf of their children. Some ceremonies center on a celebration of birth; others focus on the commitment of the parents; others focus on prayers for the blessing of the children. Some include the laying on of hands over the parents, and some over the infants, and some not at all. There is no one theology of infant dedication.

D. *Changes in the landscape of Christian practice*

One mistake we must avoid is to think that this topic is basically unchanged, and that all we are doing is rehearsing arguments about this topic that have been going back and forth for nearly 1,700 years. While it is true that many of the core scriptural arguments do recur throughout church history, it is also important to note the following recent developments.

1. Greater mutual recognition—British Baptists are more likely than North American Baptists to recognize infant baptism. Reformed and Catholic Christians have been working toward greater mutual understanding and recognition of each other’s baptisms.
2. Resistance to mutual recognition—At the same time, there is in some places greater resistance to mutual recognition. Many people who grew up CRC but now are members in various believer’s baptism churches have had to be rebaptized in order to join those churches.
3. The rise of Baptist sacramentalism—Quite often the split between infant baptism and believer’s baptism congregations corresponded with a difference in symbolic understanding. Most churches who baptized infants thought of baptism as a sacrament; most believer’s baptism churches thought of baptism as a symbol. Today some churches that practice believer’s baptism are attempting to recover the language of *sacrament*.
4. The growth of Reformed Baptists and *covenantal* dedication—Large numbers of the recently identified “young, restless, and Reformed”

(New Calvinism) movement belong not to Reformed but rather to believer's baptism churches. Some of these congregations have developed rituals of "covenant dedication" that emphasize God's covenantal promises but refrain from using the term *baptism*.

5. The rise of *mixed practice* congregations—It is instructive that a recent volume titled *Baptism: Three Views* (IVP, 2009) includes a case for infant baptism, believer's baptism, and *mixed practice*—something that denominations like the Evangelical Covenant Church have practiced for some time.
6. Post-Christendom—Some of the most prominent critics of infant baptism in Europe were motivated by the demise of a genuinely baptismal spirituality in the contest of state churches and "Christendom" in Europe. Families presented infants for baptism, whether or not they had genuine faith, treating baptism as a superstitious ritual practiced simply because it was tradition.
7. Individualism and post-modern views of symbol—On the one hand, post-modernism has created a kind of "anything goes" approach to symbolism and a greater appreciation of how symbols are not merely received but can be invented (for example, "Can we make up a ritual that is somewhere between baptism and dedication?"). On the other hand, we find some congregations that embrace post-modern sensibilities in almost every way but remain rather firm in their views on baptism (usually "baptism is required").

All of this means that while many of the basic arguments for and against infant baptism are similar to those voiced by sixteenth-century Reformed and Anabaptist theologians, there are also many unique contextual dynamics to this conversation that do not remain static.

II. Renewed teaching about infant baptism

As our committee listens to conversations across the denomination, we have repeatedly heard both significant testimonies and renewed calls regarding effective teaching on covenant infant baptism.

The reasons for our commitment to infant baptism are not simply that "our confessions say so" or that "we do this because we belong to a CRC," but because we are convinced this practice is faithfully obedient to the Word of God. For this reason, we believe it is crucial that we strengthen each other for the ministry of patient teaching on this theme. When a family asks for infant dedication, two of the *least helpful* approaches are simply to accommodate their request without significant conversation and to hastily deny their request without opportunity for conversation. The most helpful approaches nearly always see the request as an opportunity to promote learning and growth, as congregational members gather around God's Word for instruction.

We have repeatedly heard accounts of people who once were reluctant to embrace infant baptism but later become enthusiastically grateful for it, because a pastor or elder or church education class took the time to patiently consider the Scriptures.

We have heard other accounts of how candid and constructive discussions within congregations are beneficial to proponents of each view: those who defend infant baptism can be grateful for the clear intention of credobaptists to challenge their children to state their own faith commitment; those who defend credobaptism can learn about the beauty of covenant promises.

To this end, it has been helpful for us to rehearse again the rationale for infant baptism and to glean from a number of resources that local congregations and pastors have provided regarding this teaching ministry. A number of these offer succinct biblically grounded replies to some of the most common objections to infant baptism. The following is a relatively brief, composite statement of these concerns, which may be helpful for use in a variety of pastoral settings.

III. Answering objections to infant baptism

A. *Objection 1: The Bible says that faith comes first, then baptism*

According to Mark 16:16, “Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved” (see also Acts 2:38-41; Gal. 3:26-29). This text suggests that faith comes first, then baptism. Infants should not be baptized until they grow up and come to faith. Paedobaptists wholeheartedly agree that those passages do indeed teach that adults should not be baptized until they come to faith, because baptism is for *believers* (and their children). Passages like this are speaking to and about adults, not covenant children. Of course, when it comes to adults, it is the one who believes and is baptized who will be saved. Whether or not you see a link between circumcision and baptism, to say that such texts exclude children would be like reading Romans 4:11 and concluding that children were not circumcised, or to assume that Jesus is not God based on his maintaining that “the Father is greater than I” (John 14:28). For adults who are saved, baptism follows faith. For the children of believers, faith follows baptism, though the relationship of trust and faith between a child and his or her covenant God should not be underestimated (see Ps. 22:9-10; 71:5-6).

B. *Objection 2: There is no explicit command in Scripture to baptize babies*

Sometimes there are no explicit proof texts for important doctrines in the Bible. For example, there is no one text that articulates the doctrine of the Trinity. We come to that doctrine by reading Scripture in its entirety and by piecing together the biblical evidence. So too with the doctrine of infant baptism. We study Scripture in its entirety and connect the dots. We recognize who is in the covenant and should receive the sign of the covenant, indicating their relationship with God in Christ. Scripture tells us that the covenant promises belong to believers and their children (Gen. 17:7; Acts 2:39). That covenant children have a relationship with God is indisputable (Ps. 22:9-10; 71:5-6). In fact, the children of a couple that includes just one believer are to be considered as holy (1 Cor. 7:14). Baptism is for those whose sins are washed away in Christ, the only way to have a relationship with God (Acts 22:16). If the Red Sea crossing is a symbol for baptism (1 Cor. 10:2), it would be impossible to imagine that the children would have been left on the beach to cross when they were old enough to make their own decision. It is also noteworthy that Jesus did not tell parents to wait to bring their little children (Mark 10:14-16) and babies (Luke 18:15) to him until they grow up. In fact,

he commands his disciples to permit the parents to bring them to him. If the circumcision/baptism link can be established, however (see below), the command to circumcise (Gen. 17:10) would be tantamount to an explicit command to baptize infants in the New Testament era.

C. Objection 3: There is no explicit example of a baby being baptized in the New Testament

The burden of proof for this argument falls back on those who deny infant baptism. There are three examples in Scripture of entire households being baptized: the households of Lydia (Acts 16:15), the Philippian jailer (16:33), and Stephanas (1 Cor. 1:16). It is possible there were no children in any of those households, but if baptizing babies is wrong, you would think the New Testament writers would go out of their way to point out that there were no infants or young children in those households. Also, there is an interesting covenant principle occurring in household baptisms that supports the “believers and their children” notion of covenant inclusion found elsewhere in Scripture. Nothing is said about the faith of the other members of the household; only the faith of the head of the household is mentioned. In 1 Corinthians 10:2, in anticipation of baptism, it is said that *all* Israel was baptized as it crossed the Red Sea. The fact is, there is no example in Scripture of a child of baptized parents who had to be baptized later as an adult.

D. Objection 4: What if they grow up and are not believers?

It is possible that a baptized child could grow up and reject the faith in which he was raised. But is that a potential problem for infant baptism or for *all* baptisms? Does a profession of faith and baptism *guarantee* that a person will never backslide or even reject the faith? No. The fact that many who were baptized as adults get baptized more than once, if not frequently, indicates the opposite. And the likelihood of lasting faith probably lies within the context of the benefits a being raised in a covenant family. True faith is guaranteed only by the Spirit of God. And the fact remains that all believing parents are obligated to train their children in the way they should go (Deut. 6:4-7; Prov. 22:6).

E. Objection 5: Circumcision is merely an Old Testament Jewish-ethnic badge, not a precursor to baptism

The circumcision/baptism link can be severed only if one fails to read Scripture as a whole, within the context of the grand sweep of redemptive history and the unity of the one covenant of grace. To say that circumcision is merely a Jewish badge and has nothing to do with baptism is to miss the fact that the Jews were called to circumcise their *hearts* (Deut. 10:16) and that they are referred to in Scripture as the “church” in the wilderness (Acts 7:38, where the Greek text has *ecclesia*). In both the Old Testament and New Testament, promises are made to believers and their children (Gen. 17:7; Acts 2:39). The fact is that circumcision, like baptism, was never to be merely an external ethnic symbol but a sign and “a seal of the righteousness” that faith brings (Rom. 4:11). All of this comes together in Colossians 2:11-12, where Paul describes baptism as *the circumcision of Christ*. This is where it was all heading, as all those who belong to Christ are Abraham’s seed and heirs according to the promises (Gal. 3:27-29). When reading the Bible as a whole, one must also ask, Would God be less generous with his grace in the New

Testament than in the Old Testament by now excluding the children from the covenant (that is, from having a relationship with him)?

F. Objection 6: Baptizing babies presumes they are regenerate

There have been those who have appeared to “presume” the salvation of children who are baptized. This seems to be true in Roman Catholic circles and their *ex opera operato* view of the sacraments. Ideas of baptismal regeneration are likely what many Baptists fear when they see infants baptized. Indeed, there have been proponents of so-called “presumptive regeneration” among Reformed folk, though it would be difficult to imagine that this presumption meant not caring for the faith and nurture of their covenant children. Baptism, whether for children or adults, should never be about human *presumption* but about God’s *promises* and living in accord with those promises. The faith of adults who are baptized ought also not to be taken for granted but nurtured continually within the context of the faith community. Actually, many of those who reject infant baptism are among those who presume salvation; this occurs when the believer’s baptism position is accompanied by a doctrine of the universal salvation of those who die in infancy, which is nowhere taught in Scripture.

G. Objection 7: Baptism is a sign of faith, which babies cannot exercise

We have established that the relationship between God and covenant children is much closer than we can imagine (Ps. 22:9-10; 71:5-6; 1 Cor. 7:14). However, whether you see baptism first of all as a sign of something that a *person* is doing or a sign of what *God* is doing will make a difference in how you come out on this issue of whom should be baptized. If you see baptism first of all as a sign of a person’s faith, you cannot help but end up with believer’s baptism. You will have a radically different outcome if you understand baptism first of all as a sign of the washing away of sins in Christ—what God is doing. Even the oft-quoted baptism text of Romans 6, being buried and raised with Christ in baptism, is in the passive voice, meaning it is something that God has done. Salvation is first of all about what *God* is doing, and how we *respond* in faith. In this way infant baptism is a precious symbol of the doctrine of the sovereignty of God in *any* person’s salvation. “It was not I that found, O Savior true; no, I was found, was found of thee” (*Psalter Hymnal*, 498).

H. Objection 8: Believer’s baptism is a more emotional and memorable event for the candidate than infant baptism

If objections 1-7 have been biblically answered, to still choose for believer’s baptism, based on the desire for an emotional experience, would be questionable. No one remembers their birth, but most have successfully claimed that event as their own and its memory has become one of their most treasured days of the year. If receiving the sign of the covenant promise in infancy is right, the candidate will be reminded of this wonderful occasion in his or her life on a regular basis and, with every baptism that is witnessed, learn to claim the event as his or her own. Besides, how emotional and singularly memorable is an event when it is well known that many who hold to believer’s baptism are apt to experience it more than once? It would, however, be entirely legitimate to celebrate in memorable ways the event of one’s public profession of faith as it is grounded in the promise of one’s baptism.

The committee views this summary of responses as provisional, and it welcomes feedback about other common objections and other helpful pastoral responses.

IV. Additional pastoral responses

The Faith Formation Committee recognizes that a sufficient response to this topic will involve more than preaching and teaching. Even after patient and effective teaching on the subject, CRC councils still receive requests for infant dedication or for ministry with people who choose not to present their children for infant baptism. What kinds of pastoral responses are most appropriate?

The committee is grateful for—and stands in agreement with—synod’s prior decisions to discourage infant dedication ceremonies. Having two ritual actions (both baptism and infant dedication) can easily create confusion about the meaning of each, particularly when infant dedication itself can be understood in so many different ways.

We also have been grateful to hear testimonies from several congregations and pastors about thoughtful, pastoral responses to requests for infant dedication. In some congregations, the pastor and elders have scheduled a special home visit to celebrate the birth or adoption of a child, offer prayers of thanksgiving to God for the child, to pray for parents, and to listen to their concerns and commitments in the Lord. In some congregations, a special prayer of thanksgiving and welcome is offered for all newborn or newly adopted children in public worship independent of celebrations of infant baptism. Some congregations have taken special care to invite children who have not yet been baptized to profess their faith at a young age and receive baptism. We sense that these kinds of responses both honor the confessional commitments we hold as Reformed churches and respond in pastorally appropriate ways to members who do not present their children for baptism. We sense that these approaches are marked by conviction and hospitality as well as consistency and graciousness.

The committee is eager to hear from congregations about additional practices or suggestions along these lines, and we anticipate presenting a more complete document on this topic to Synod 2012.

Addendum

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I. Background

A. History

In 2003 Fleetwood CRC in Surrey, British Columbia (Classis B.C. South-East), overtured Synod 2004 to study the efficacy of the Form of Subscription (FOS) on the grounds that many churches in that classis no longer used the FOS because many individuals had difficulty signing it. Classis B.C. South-East wrote, "When a tool such as the Form of Subscription becomes ineffective in our culture and time, a study into the reasons and attempts to once again make it effective are justified" (*Agenda for Synod 2004*, p. 435).

Synod 2004 did not accede to the overture but, in response to it, instructed the Board of Trustees (BOT) to inquire regarding the methods by which the churches comply with the provisions of Church Order Article 5 and refer the results of such inquiry to Synod 2005 for appropriate action.

In late 2004 the general secretary's office sent a survey to the CRC churches concerning the current use of the FOS. The BOT referred the results of the survey to Synod 2005 and, based on its review of the survey data, made several recommendations. In response to the BOT's report and recommendations, Synod 2005 adopted the following recommendations:

That synod adopt the following recommendations with reference to the Form of Subscription (BOT Supplement, section I, H):

1. That a revised edition of the Form of Subscription be presented to Synod 2007 for consideration and possible adoption, with the understanding that the purpose of the revision is to clarify the meaning of the Form of Subscription.
2. That the proposed revision of the Form of Subscription be drafted by a committee appointed by the Board of Trustees.
3. In their work, we encourage the committee to take note of the guidelines as to the meaning of subscription found in the Church Order Supplements (2004 edition, p. 26).
4. That the draft of a proposed revision be sent to the churches no later than January 1, 2007.
5. That the text of the proposed revision be printed in the *Agenda for Synod 2007*.

Grounds:

- a. The survey conducted among the churches indicates that a substantial number of churches believe that an update is desirable.
- b. The present Form of Subscription contains statements that are subject to misinterpretation.
- c. A more contemporary expression of agreement will make the requirements more meaningful.

(*Acts of Synod 2005*, p. 735)

In response to the recommendations adopted by Synod 2005, the BOT appointed a task force with the mandate to clarify the FOS, articulate the meaning and significance of subscription, and propose a possible replacement to the FOS. This study committee reported to Synod 2008 (*Agenda for Synod 2008*, pp. 473-78).

The advisory committee of Synod 2008 commended the work of the study committee in several ways. First, the Form of Subscription Revision Committee understood that the mandated clarification of the FOS required a more thorough restatement rather than a minor update of the language. The proposed Doctrinal Covenant for Officebearers in the CRCNA was the study committee's contribution toward faithfully and thoroughly carrying out its assigned mandate. That proposed Doctrinal Covenant for Officebearers raised critical questions and produced vigorous conversations, not only about the FOS, but also about the role of the confessions in our denomination. The study committee correctly discerned that the foundational issue was not merely the rewriting of a document but the revitalization of confessional conversation within the church.

Second, the Form of Subscription Revision Committee observed that one of the issues at stake in clarifying the FOS was the issue of encouraging rather than discouraging significant theological discussion. In its report, the study committee wrote that "any regulatory instrument that is adopted by the church ought to be regarded as an invitation to the officebearers of the church to participate in this ongoing reflection rather than as a document that precludes or hinders such reflection" (*Agenda for Synod 2008*, p. 247). The advisory committee endorsed this view because it reflects both the will of previous synodical decisions (see *Acts of Synod 1976*, pp. 67-70, 550-91 and *Acts of Synod 2005*, p. 735) and the purpose of the FOS.

Third, the Form of Subscription Revision Committee's work highlighted the need to address how the FOS functions within our increasingly diverse church family. A FOS, no matter how well written, is useful only if it functions to enhance the faithful ministry of the local church. The FOS, in whatever form, must offer a clear and compelling statement of Reformed Christianity, to which officebearers can readily subscribe, as well as bridge barriers of language and ethnicity. This is an especially relevant concern for our emerging and ethnic minority churches and their leaders.

Despite the above-mentioned strengths of the Form of Subscription Revision Committee's work, the advisory committee expressed concerns about the clarity and accuracy of language and the need for broader engagement between the study committee and the churches. Believing these challenges presented a unique opportunity to educate our denomination regarding the importance and usefulness of the confessions in the life of the church, the advisory committee recommended a more comprehensive approach than was originally mandated to the Form of Subscription Revision Committee.

B. Committee mandate

In order to address these concerns and to fulfill the original mandate of Synod 2005, Synod 2008 adopted the following recommendations:

2. That synod recommit the mandate of Synod 2005 as well as the work done thus far by the Form of Subscription Revision Committee, including the proposed Doctrinal Covenant for Officebearers and its study committee report, to an expanded study committee, namely:
 - a. That a revised version of the Form of Subscription be presented to Synod 2011 for consideration and possible adoption, with the understanding that the purpose of the revision is to clarify the meaning of the Form of Subscription.

- b. That the proposed revision of the Form of Subscription be drafted by a committee appointed by Synod 2008.
- c. In their work, we encourage the committee to take note of the guidelines as to the meaning of subscription found in the Church Order Supplement, Article 5, A.
- d. That the draft of a proposed revision be sent to the churches no later than January 1, 2010.
- e. That the newly constituted committee present to Synods 2009 and 2010 a progress report.

Grounds:

- 1) Since the FOS is of confessional significance and has a direct impact on the ministry of the churches, the numerous concerns highlighted above need to be addressed by an expanded study committee. Neither our advisory committee nor synod can adequately address all these concerns.
 - 2) An expanded committee would allow for continued discussion of a crucial doctrinal matter of concern for the entire denomination. Such discussion has not yet occurred on a widespread basis but is absolutely necessary for broader acceptance of whatever document emerges from this process.
- 3. That synod mandate the study committee to develop an educational strategy designed to engage both local churches and denominational agencies and educational institutions in discussion of the issues at the heart of the Form of Subscription revision and the role of the Reformed confessions in the life of the church. . . .
 - 5. That synod request that the study committee, in carrying out its mandate, consider but not be limited by the following:
 - a. Communication 1 from Classis Northcentral Iowa (*Agenda for Synod 2008*, p. 313-15) because of its explicit mention of the ecumenical creeds, the tone of its language, and its clear flow of thought.
 - b. Concerns regarding the clarity of language of the proposed revision of the FOS.
 - c. Creative models of denomination-wide education and discussion such as those employed by the Faith Formation Committee and the Belhar Confession focus groups.

(Acts of Synod 2008, pp. 476-77)

II. The committee's work

The Form of Subscription Revision Committee II began its work with a meeting in October 2008. At that meeting the committee wrestled with some foundational issues with respect to its mandate, such as the purpose of a FOS and how the committee's work might best proceed as it drafts a document to replace the present FOS. The committee was committed to a process of engagement—first, with the confessions themselves and significant questions about what it means to subscribe to them and, second, to guide a conversation about the confessions and their vital place in the life of the church.

Through our correspondence and conversations with many classes, congregations, and individuals who honored synod and the church with their responses, it became clear that revising the FOS would be an extremely delicate undertaking. In that sense the 2008 committee's experience replicated that of the 2005 committee, though with more responses as expected, given

the larger number of study committee members and the expanded scope of denominational engagement.

The committee examined equivalent documents to the CRC's FOS from a number of other confessionally Reformed denominations to immerse ourselves in the nature and significance of confessional subscription in the Reformed tradition. The committee discovered that the position in which we found ourselves was not unique. Many concerns regarding confessional vitality and veracity of subscription were shared by denominations with confessional sensitivities similar to our own. The committee also grappled with what it means to subscribe, both theoretically and practically, to confessions, as well as how and to what degree one is bound to these confessions.

In effect, the committee attempted to write a FOS even for those who do not think we should have such a document, because several of the responses raised points leaning in that direction. Nevertheless, the committee has not tried simply to please all parties. Rather, it honestly engaged and weighed the concerns expressed and tried to discern how the CRC can best live and minister together.

In preparation for Synod 2009, the committee developed a "working document" as a potential revision of the FOS—a background document that briefly explains the reasoning behind the potential revision and a discussion guide designed to encourage reflection in large and small groups that may gather to discuss matters within the study committee's mandate. Committee members led a small group roundtable discussion with delegates to Synod 2009 regarding the proposed revision and background document.

Leading up to and following Synod 2009, committee members met with various groups within the denomination. Members made presentations to the Black and Reformed Conference, the Multiethnic Conference, and numerous classes. From these presentations the committee received many positive responses, as well as suggestions and constructive criticism for improving the proposed revision of the FOS. The committee is grateful for the depth of engagement evident in many of these reflections. In order to facilitate healthy interactions and widespread engagement across a broad spectrum of congregations within the denomination, the committee facilitated a translation of the proposed revision into Korean and Spanish for those whose first language is not English.

In preparation for Synod 2010, study committee members engaged a significant number of the classes in the denomination in discussions of the committee's work and about the nature of confessional subscription, always soliciting responses from classical delegates. From these encounters we received several helpful recommended revisions as well as many comments appreciative of the winsome tone of the proposed revision, its explicit mention of Scripture and ecumenical creeds, and its simplicity of language. Following these discussions and its own ongoing reflection, the committee then prepared another revision of the FOS and submitted it, along with a brief background report, to the churches following Synod 2010 through the Office of Synodical Services and requested feedback from the churches to the committee's work.

Although it is impossible and inadvisable in the body of a report to catalogue exhaustively the responses given to the committee, we can highlight some major issues recurring in the correspondence and conversations held

at various venues. The committee is grateful for each response received, and even more so for the renewed engagement with the confessions that these discussions have prompted in many churches. The committee wishes to assure all those who took the time to engage the committee's work that, although we have not adopted every recommendation, each one was received in a spirit of openness and sincerity, and thoughtfully and critically considered.

As is often the case when a committee must present its work apart from the context of shared discussion among the members, the understanding of certain word choices is not immediately clear to the reader. Nevertheless, through the discussions at classis meetings and in correspondence with councils and individuals, the committee was often able to reach strong consensus regarding the definition and nuance of much of the language in question.

The committee often noticed that many of the concerns, appreciations, and even dissonances raised from throughout the denomination were also those expressed by committee members in our own meetings. Thus, committee members appear to be broadly representative of the denomination as a whole.

We thank God for the confessions that breathe the Scriptures and help shape the church's work in many troubled lives. We pray that our denomination's attentiveness to them and to our attempts to use them faithfully will continue to bear fruit. To that end the committee offers the following Covenant for Officebearers in the Christian Reformed Church as the revised Form of Subscription in fulfillment of the mandate given by Synod 2008:

Covenant for Officebearers in the Christian Reformed Church

We, the undersigned, believe the inspired Word of God as received in the Old and New Testaments of Holy Scripture, which proclaims the gospel of grace in Jesus Christ and the reconciliation of all things in him. Acknowledging the authority of God's Word, we submit to it in all matters of life and faith.

We affirm three creeds—the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Athanasian Creed—as ecumenical expressions of the Christian faith. In doing so, we confess our faith in unity with followers of Jesus Christ throughout all ages and among all nations.

We also affirm three confessions—the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort—as historic Reformed expressions of the Christian faith. These confessions continue to define the way we understand Scripture, direct the way we live in response to the gospel, and locate us within the larger body of Christ.

Grateful for these expressions of faith, we promise to be formed and governed by them, conforming our preaching, teaching, writing, serving, and living to them.

Along with these historic creeds and confessions, we also affirm the witness of *Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony* as a current Reformed expression of the Christian faith that forms and guides us in our present context.

We also promise to present or receive confessional difficulties in a spirit of love and fellowship with our brothers and sisters as together we seek a fuller understanding of the gospel. Should we at any time

come to believe that a teaching in the confessional documents is irreconcilable with God's Word, we will communicate our views to the church, according to the procedures prescribed by the Church Order and its supplements. Further, we promise to submit to the church's judgment and authority.

We honor this covenant for the well-being of the church to the glory of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

III. Clarifications

Through its discussions and engagement with various groups, the committee was able to clarify its mandate in significant ways. The committee realized that the task before it was enormously demanding and complicated. Further, the committee recognized that the FOS or any proposed revision of it was not the real issue. Rather, the deeper issue was the nature of confessional subscription. Thus we begin what we hope will become an ongoing process of discussion and reflection on the confessions and their vitality and what it means to subscribe to them.

As the committee carried out its work, it reached agreement that the purpose of any revision should be unity with a secondary concern for purity. Though the concern for unity was primary, it was not to be achieved at the expense of purity. The FOS revision needed to be clear, compelling, and easily transportable across cultural and linguistic barriers. The committee was committed to write a document in language that "sings" rather than "plods along." Any document that calls people to covenant together should be stated in simple yet profound language so that it might be widely understood and embraced.

Further, the committee desired that the tone of the language should encourage open, honest, respectful dialogue over questions that arise. Related to our commitment that the language easily cross cultural and linguistic barriers, it was important as well that the document be meaningful to those who did not grow up in the Reformed tradition (or in any Christian tradition) and who may not be familiar with our particular theological dialect or accent.

There are a number of significant matters to highlight with regard to the proposed revision to the FOS. First, the committee chose to use the word *covenant* in the title. In addition to the obvious biblical and theological weight carried by the word *covenant*, a "Covenant for Officebearers in the Christian Reformed Church" was a preferred working title for a number of reasons.

The language of *covenant* is communal rather than individualistic. Further, it suggests that the document is not just an affirmation of one's personal beliefs but an agreement on how we are called to live together as sisters and brothers in Jesus Christ. Such language also implies a reciprocal understanding of obligations. There is a commitment on the part of an individual to the broader community, and from the community to the individual, to approach questions in a spirit of mutual love and commitment. The language of *covenant* conveys a promise to work through disagreements and openly and honestly deal with questions that arise, rather than to have the first reaction be to stifle dissent. The committee was concerned to present a document that encourages discussion and an ongoing process of deeper understanding and discernment, as well as more faithful living. *Covenant* suggests promise-

making and a binding together of parties. A covenant is binding and therefore not to be taken lightly. Covenantal language implies a concern with the ethical as well as the doctrinal. It suggests depth as well as periodic renewal. Covenantal language draws us into the work of God in the world. *Covenant* is a liturgical and even missional concept.

As such, this means taking a significant step beyond the mere signing of a fixed document. Rather, it involves promising to engage in committed, candid, and loving conversation as a community about the doctrines we hold dear and their confessional articulations.

Most who responded were pleased with the new suggested name “Covenant for Officebearers” for the document the committee was mandated to present. The deep resonance both in the Bible and in the Reformed tradition of covenantal language, thought, and action appealed to many respondents. Included in *covenant*, of course, is not only first responsibility to God for initiating covenants, but also the communal responsibility incumbent on individuals and institutions to hold each other accountable to commitments and doctrines.

Second, the committee wished to make clear the logical flow of authority in the document from Scripture to creeds to confessions and finally to *Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony*. We agreed that the FOS revision should be precise in identifying the relationship of Scripture, creeds, confessions, and other documents that many affirm as useful contemporary expressions of Reformed Christianity but have not been granted confessional status (i.e., *Our World Belongs to God*).

The committee chose explicitly to include the ecumenical creeds in recognition of the changed cultural context in which the church finds itself in the twenty-first century. We increasingly realize that we are part of a broader body of Christ and are working toward greater unity with our brothers and sisters in various places. Our common creedal heritage connects us to a deep historical reality that gives strength and breadth to our witness of Jesus Christ in the world.

The “Covenant” intentionally places the creeds and confessions in their respective positions in order to acknowledge their primacy and to distinguish them from *Our World Belongs to God*. The committee struggled to define the status of *Our World Belongs to God*, because, while it has a comparatively short history within the denomination, it does enjoy a certain level of official recognition as well as widespread acceptance and much contemporary relevance. Further, the committee wondered about the continuing veracity of reasoning that has thus far prevented *Our World Belongs to God* from becoming a fully recognized confessional statement of the church.

Questions about the status of *Our World Belongs to God* may be particularly pertinent at this time in light of Synod 2009’s commendation of the Belhar Confession to the churches for reflection and study at the same time the FOS is being revised.

The committee received many responses regarding its decision to include reference to *Our World Belongs to God* within a document that addresses subscription to official creedal and confessional documents recognized as such within our communion. For various reasons a number of respondents argued that *Our World Belongs to God* should not be included at all in a revised FOS. Some consider that it is not of the same character, depth, or

weight as the doctrinal standards. Others believe that as a testimony it is by nature malleable and open to regular review and revision (as occurred as recently as 2008). To include it, thus, would be to bind signatories to a document that can change again and again.

The committee engaged in energized, committed discussions regarding these matters. In the end we were unanimous that *Our World Belongs to God* has made a fitting contribution to our denomination's conviction to be a Reformed church that is always reforming. Thus it finds an appropriate place in the "Covenant" because it speaks with confessional language. The committee has concluded that *Our World Belongs to God* has the potential to revitalize confessional identity and engagement within the Christian Reformed Church. Thus the committee strongly urges synod to consider whether *Our World Belongs to God* could serve as a helpful starting point to carry forward the Reformed confessional tradition today in the form of a contemporary confession. This might entail considering to adopt it as a confession or to formulate a new confession using *Our World Belongs to God*.

Third, the committee wishes to highlight some of its deliberations regarding the nature of the language of conformity in the proposed revision. Within the document itself, the strength of the word *irreconcilable* in paragraph six is significant. It implies previous, long-term discussion about a matter in dispute. Its application is also limited to the doctrine under dispute. The Supplement to Church Order Article 5 already grants that one does not subscribe to the particular formulation of a doctrine as that formulation is expressed in the confessions, but only to the doctrine itself. The committee does not envision frequent cases of this nature but wished to provide the means necessary to communicate such difficulties in the event they might arise.

Throughout history the FOS has been perceived as unduly intimidating for individuals who presented *gravamina*. The committee and many respondents considered that *covenant* both encourages discussion and respects the honest confessional questions raised by those who might otherwise have been discouraged by the thought of facing a council, classis, or synod in a long process. Mutually entering into a covenant promises respect as well as subscription to the document, whereas merely signing a "form" of subscription appears to be affixing a signature to a static document and leaving little recourse for discussion.

Further, some of the responses expressed concern about the apparent lack of disciplinary sanction for those who are judged to have contradicted a doctrine contained in the confessions. The language of conforming to the confessions in paragraph four of the "Covenant" by definition includes not contradicting them. The committee appreciated these concerns and seriously considered them but ultimately concluded that procedures for the discipline of an officebearer based on deviation from sound doctrine are provided for by Church Order Article 83, to which all officebearers agree to submit.

The committee also faced the challenge of the procedures for holding officebearers accountable to abide by the doctrines articulated in the confessions. Some respondents held that the draft covenant did not hold officebearers to sufficiently defined boundaries. The committee affirmed the necessity of such boundaries but also wished to balance that necessity with the freedom to engage in candid discussion of matters in question.

As to the matter of whether current officebearers should be obligated to sign the new “Covenant for Officebearers,” we look forward to the day when, in keeping with the biblical character of *covenant*, officebearers eagerly recommit themselves by signing the “Covenant.”

IV. Recommendations

A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Rev. James C. Dekker, chair, and Rev. Michael Borgert, reporter, when the report of the Form of Subscription Revision Committee II is discussed.

B. That synod adopt the “Covenant for Officebearers in the Christian Reformed Church” and commend it to the churches as a means to encourage ongoing, vital engagement of officebearers with the ecumenical creeds and the Reformed confessions.

C. That the pertinent articles of Church Order be amended to reflect the changes entailed by adopting the “Covenant for Officebearers in the Christian Reformed Church.”

D. That synod, in order to address the issue of confessional vitality, appoint a study committee to

1. Examine the reasons why the church has not to date adopted a contemporary confession that addresses the concerns of the gospel in today’s context.
2. Consider whether *Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony* could serve as a helpful starting point for carrying forward the Reformed confessional tradition today.

E. That synod dismiss the Form of Subscription Revision Committee II.

Form of Subscription Revision Committee II

Michael Borgert, reporter
Mark A. Davies
James C. Dekker, chair
Gerard L. Dykstra, *ex officio*
Eduardo A. Gonzalez
Sheila Holmes
Cornelius Plantinga, Jr.
Kristen Van Engen
John Van Schepen
Wilma Vander Leek
Uko Zylstra

OVERTURES AND COMMUNICATIONS

Overture 1: Appoint a Study Committee to Review the Biblical Teachings Regarding Homosexual Orientation and Practice

I. Background

After discussing the responses of churches and individuals to the 1973 Committee to Study Homosexuality report, the synodical Committee to Give Direction about and for Pastoral Care for Homosexual Members stated in their 2002 report that “given the thoughtful challenges posed by individuals and churches within the denomination, there may be wisdom, both pastorally and theologically, for the church to address these concerns at some time in the future” (*Agenda for Synod 2002*, p. 315).

Noting this statement from the report, the advisory committee to synod observed that “there may be wisdom in developing a current response to the many recent treatments of the biblical passages pertaining to this issue” (*Acts of Synod 2002*, p. 483).

In this time of social, legal, and cultural change in regard to homosexuality, our congregations need such a study in order to pastorally and theologically address individuals and the wider culture in a biblically informed manner.

II. Overture

Classis Grand Rapids East overtures Synod 2011 to appoint a study committee to review the biblical teachings regarding homosexual orientation and practice in light of current biblical and theological study of these issues.

Grounds:

1. Our latest official statement regarding biblical teachings on this issue is thirty-eight years old.
2. There has been significant biblical and theological consideration of these issues since then, both in the Reformed tradition and in the wider Christian church.
3. Both the 2002 Committee to Give Direction about and for Pastoral Care for Homosexual Members and the advisory committee assigned the report at Synod 2002 recognized the possible usefulness of such a review.

Classis Grand Rapids East
Alfred E. Mulder, stated clerk

Overture 2: Declare That Section VI, J of Report 28 (1991) Be Part of the CRCNA's Official Position on Creation and Science

I. Background

Synod 2010 declared that Declaration F of Synod 1991 is no longer part of the CRCNA's official position statement on creation and science (*Acts of Synod 2010*, p. 875). The practical effect of that decision was to allow persons within the CRC to adopt evolutionary theories for the origin of humanity.

In 2009 two Calvin College professors were invited by colleagues to address "the biblical and theological issues involved if Adam and Eve are understood as literary figures rather than historical beings." In articles published in fall 2010, both professors addressed those issues. They are significant, including a radical reinterpretation of what one professor calls the Augustinian interpretation of Scripture expressed in the church's confessions. In declaring that Declaration F no longer be part of the CRCNA's official position, synod did not intend to sanction such a radical reinterpretation of our confessions, as evidenced by its reference to Report 28, VI, J (*Acts of Synod 2010*, p. 875).

Some, including persons of such prominence as Dr. Nicholas Wolterstorff, have suggested that synod may have intended to sanction such a radical reinterpretation of our confessions. In a letter addressed to members of the Calvin College administration, dated October 6, 2010, and subsequently distributed to the Calvin College Board of Trustees, Dr. Wolterstorff argued that adopting the positions suggested by the professors would not violate the Form of Subscription. Dr. Wolterstorff wrote:

(6) The Catechism and the Confession clearly propound what Schneider calls the Augustinian interpretation of Scripture on these matters. But Synod does not regard as binding all parts of the Augustinian interpretation as found in the Catechism and the Confession. When I read the Catechism and the Confession to see what they seem to take as the heart of their Augustinian interpretation, two things stand out: human beings are made in the image of God, and all human beings are sinners in need of redemption. Synod highlights the former of these; no doubt it takes the latter for granted. The essays by Schneider and Harlow are fully compatible with both of these doctrines.

(7) In short, I think it is beyond doubt that the articles by Schneider and Harlow do not violate any guidelines of Synod. They are not fully compatible with all parts of the Augustinian interpretation as presented in the Catechism and the Confession. But Synod has explicitly allowed for departures from that interpretation without specifying which departures are forbidden, with the exception of the doctrine that human beings uniquely bear the image of God. Thus one cannot point to incompatibilities between the articles of Schneider and Harlow, on the one hand, and the Catechism and the Confession, on the other hand, and declare that the incompatibilities constitute a violation of the Form of Subscription. If it were that simple, we would have to conclude that all delegates at the Synod of 2010 who voted in favor of declaring Declaration F of 1991 no longer in effect were violating the Form of Subscription. We simply do not know what Synod would say about the incompatibilities between the articles of Schneider and Harlow and the Augustinian interpretation as propounded in the Catechism and the Confession other than that it is acceptable to hold, as Schneider and Harlow do, that the human race had evolutionary forebears.

II. Overture

For the peace of the church, Classis Central Plains overtures synod to declare that section VI, J of Report 28 be part of the CRCNA's official position on creation and science—that is,

There are strict limitations on the extent to which the Genesis text can be reinterpreted within the Reformed tradition. However stylized, literary, or symbolic the stories of Genesis may be, they are clearly meant to refer to real events. Especially in God's acts of creation, Adam and Eve as first parents, the fall of humanity into sin, and the giving of the so-called mother promise (Gen. 3:15), the reality of the events described is of foundational importance for the entire history of redemption. It is the presupposition of the New Testament and historic Christian orthodoxy. Any interpretation which calls into question the event character of the story told in these first and fundamental chapters of the Bible must be firmly rejected, whatever difficulties this may cause with respect to the scientific evidence.

(Report 28, VI, J, *Agenda for Synod 1991*, pp. 403-404)

Grounds:

1. The decision of Synod 2010 has caused confusion and consternation within the CRCNA.
2. By appealing to this section of Report 28 as a sufficient safeguard for the church's confession, Synod 2010 implied that it is part of our church's official position. Explicitly declaring it to be so clarifies what Synod 2010 did and what it did not intend to sanction with its declaration that Declaration F is no longer part of our official position.

Classis Central Plains
John Gorter, stated clerk

Overture 3: Permit Professors, Pastors, and Teachers to Write, Preach, and Teach That in Scripture the Word *Jerusalem* Means *Jerusalem* and the Word *Israel* Means *Israel*

I. Background

Synod 1975 considered Report 36, Article 25, "Eschatological Issues in North America." It reviewed 1949, 1963, and 1974 initiatives. It lamented that it had never attained a good report on eschatology (the doctrine of the last things). The report identified recurring issues in eschatology that need to be addressed, such as, among others, the *millennium*, the *rapture*, and *Israel* and *the church—this new Israel*. The report said, "The church—this new Israel [all emphases in overture—except when noted—are mine] . . . ought to claim all that was promised of old but is now given and received in the last days." Synod concurred with the conclusion of the study committee on Report 36, Article 25, which identified the *church* as the *new Israel*, and the report was signed by *inter alios* committee reporter Rev. Andrew Kuyvenhoven and Calvin Seminary professor Dr. A. A. Hoekema. The report noted "that Dr. A. A. Hoekema is presently preparing [sic] a book on Reformed eschatology." Both Rev. Kuyvenhoven and Dr. Hoekema have written on *Israel* and the church since 1975.

Synod 1918—But long before Synod 1975 came Synod 1918 wherein Classes Holland, Orange City, and Sioux Center petitioned Synod 1918 about

the doctrinal correctness of First Muskegon pastor Rev. H. Bultema on *inter alia* Israel and the Church.

Synod 1966—Finally, from 1956 to 1966, synod pursued a new translation of the Bible. The study committee in Supplement 35 of Synod 1966 warned: “When the famous Synod of Dordt commissioned the translation of the Scriptures into Dutch the opponents thought that they would not find it difficult to point out the Calvinistic bias of the ensuing translation. But historians inform us that the Arminians failed to find any occasion to accuse the translation of *unfairly bending a phrase or a clause for the establishment of a particular doctrine*. The ideal of perfect objectivity combined with a whole-hearted submission to the divinely authoritative canon of Scripture had been achieved to a remarkable degree. *May the same ideal motivate* those who have committed themselves to render the Word of God into the speech of today.”¹ But Synod 1966 rejected the study report that included the recommendation.

II. Observations

The issues with which Reformed eschatology normally must contend are defined popularly by people such as Hal Lindsey (*The Late Great Planet Earth*) and Tim LaHaye (*Left Behind* series), normally defined as dispensationalists. One popular doctrine is the *rapture* when the “church” is taken to heaven to avoid the *tribulation*. The *millennium*, or thousand-year reign on earth of Jesus Christ (outlined in Revelation 20:1-6), is another of many “dispensations” or ways in which God administers his creation.

The *rapture*—Dispensationalists cite 1 Thessalonians 4:14-17 as evidence of the rapture. They claim this text speaks of a resurrection of believers *before* a period of seven years of tribulation—in other words, they say that days and time on earth will continue *after* the resurrection. But Jesus clearly said in John 6:40: “For my Father’s will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the *last day*.” I suggest a tribulation cannot follow the “last” day.

The *tribulation*—Dispensationalists like Tim LaHaye *et al.* believe that Jesus comes with the rapture before the seven-year *tribulation*. But Jesus, in describing end-time events in Matthew 24:29-30, omits any reference to a rapture before a tribulation, stating that “immediately *after* the distress [tribulation] of those days . . . At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory.” Tim LaHaye says Jesus comes in the rapture *before* the tribulation. Jesus does not mention a rapture before the tribulation, but describes a coming *after* the tribulation. Reformed theology agrees with this and comes closest to Scripture.

The *millennium*—Revelation 20:1-6 describes the millennium (thousand years). Dispensationalists say this describes a *physical* reign of Jesus on *earth*. Reformed theology says earth is *without* a millennium—*amillennial*, meaning without a millennium on earth. Revelation 20:4 *literally* describes *living souls* reigning with Jesus—apparently in heaven. I suggest that Reformed theology—which dispensationalists typically accuse of *not* interpreting Scripture *literally*—comes *closest* to Scripture. For dispensationalists, the “resurrection”

¹ *Acts of Synod 1966*, held at Central College, Pella, Iowa, June 8-16, 1966. Supplement 35, Art. 76, 82, p. 376.

of Revelation 20:4-5 *must be physical*. Revelation 20:4-5 *must* describe people on earth in their bodies. Revelation 20:5 also describes this resurrection as the “first” resurrection.

However, in Matthew 22:31 Jesus said, “But about the *resurrection* of the dead—have you not read what God said to you, ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? He is not the God of the dead but of the living.’” Jesus here told the Sadducees that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had entered into the *resurrection* without their bodies. The *same Greek word* for resurrection used in Matthew 22:31 is used in Revelation 20:5. Thus it *can* be a spiritual resurrection, which is the Reformed view here. If Revelation 20:5 describes a *resurrection*—which it does—and if Revelation 20:5 says it is “first”—which it does—then it must describe a resurrection as early as that of Abraham in Jesus’ time—which can only be a *spiritual* resurrection. Reformed theology agrees with and follows Scripture most closely for the *millennium*.

The study committee of Synod 1966 counseled against “unfairly bending a phrase or a clause for the establishment of a particular doctrine” in the coming new translation which would be known as the New International Version. Revelation 20:4—part of Revelation 20:1-6, the one and only millennium text—was *changed* from the King James Version to apparently favor the dispensationalists’ interpretation over Reformed interpretation. The King James Version of Revelation 20:4 reads: “And they *lived and reigned* with Christ a thousand years.” The New International Version changed the text to read “They *came to life and reigned* with Christ a thousand years.” How might this change or “bend” the text toward the dispensational view? The Reformed view is that this text speaks of “souls” living and reigning with Christ in heaven (which is what the King James describes), but the New International Version changed it to say that the souls “came to life,” apparently coming into a physical resurrection. It is absolutely *crucial* to the dispensationalist, premillennial view that this resurrection is a *physical* resurrection. This is the only text in the Bible which specifically identifies the “millennium.” Any other texts are only by inference. If Revelation 20:4 is translated most literally, which the King James does, the dispensationalist, premillennial theory falls, having no biblical support. I suggest that the original language of Revelation 20:4 (prior to the NIV) supports Reformed theology while the change in the NIV strengthens the dispensationalists.

I suggest the King James Version in Revelation 20:4 comes the closest to the original Greek. The American Standard Version of 1901, an update of the King James Version, kept this text of the KJV (except for the comma after “lived”) intact: “And they lived, and reigned with Christ.”² The literal version concurs: “And I saw thrones, and they sat on them. And judgment was given to them, and the souls of the *ones* having been beheaded because of the witness of Jesus, and because of the word of God, and who had not worshipped the beast nor its image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand. And they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.”³ This version describes living *souls*.

² Rev. 20:4b, ASV.

³ Jay P. Green, *A Literal Translation of the Bible* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1987), p. 1009.

I suggest that the Greek word for “lived” in Revelation 20:4 is in the aorist tense, which is, in effect, a form *without* tense. The Greek in the most technical form says “there is life there.” It does not indicate whether it is the only occurrence, whether it is past, future, active, passive, or passing from the spiritual to the physical. Dispensationalists claim this is “ingressive aorist,” but such can only be ascertained from the *context*. John sees the “souls of those.” He is not referring to people in the flesh as souls. He sees the actual souls. The “context” appears to be heaven. The dispensational interpretation—that these souls “came to life”—would appear to *change* the “context” to earth. The language change from the King James Version to the New International Version appears to change the interpretation to favor the dispensational interpretation over the Reformed view. The King James Version and the Reformed view appear to be the most accurate interpretation.

III. Rationale

Dispensationalists interpret the millennium as an event in which the nation of Israel is physically in its own land. To Reformed scholars the millennium seems to be a description of martyrs in *heaven* reigning there with Jesus after a spiritual resurrection. There is confusion in the Reformed community over the definitions of Israel, Jerusalem, and the church.

Disparate interpretations of Revelation 21:22 may be emblematic of the confusion in eschatology. Dispensationalist Merrill Unger says, “Ezekiel’s temple is a literal structure, *whereas in the New Jerusalem there is no temple at all* (Rev. 21:22).”⁴ But does the text say that? It says John did not *see* a temple, it does not say there is no temple. Unger’s statement probably derives from his dispensationalist theology that the Ezekiel Temple foreshadows the millennium, not the new Jerusalem, and since he believes the temple is in the millennium, his theology tells him the temple is not in the new Jerusalem.

Amillennialist and Calvin Theological Seminary professor *emeritus* Dr. David Holwerda writes about Revelation 21:22, “The city itself has become the temple.”⁵ But does the text say *that*? Revelation 21:22: “I did not see a temple in the city, because the *Lord God Almighty and the Lamb* are its temple.” If “the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb” are the temple of the city, how can the temple be the city itself? Holwerda’s interpretation probably comes from the amillennial interpretation of Ezekiel 40-48 that the Ezekiel temple anticipates the new Jerusalem (it *does*, but according to Rev. 21:22 the new Jerusalem is not itself the temple).

Synod 1975 committee member and reporter Rev. Andrew Kuyvenhoven writes that “the new Jerusalem has all the holiness and wholeness and glory of Ezekiel’s temple, but it is a *city* [emphasis Kuyvenhoven’s]. . . . All of the city is temple, because God is all in all.”⁶ But again, if Revelation 21:22 says *God* is the temple, and if the *city* is the temple, does that mean God *is* the city? When the Bible says God is “all in all,” what does it mean in other texts? 1 Corinthians 15:28 (NIV): “When he has done this, then the Son

⁴ Merrill F. Unger, *Great Neglected Bible Prophecies* (Chicago: Scripture Press, 1955), pp. 59-60.

⁵ David Holwerda, *Jesus & Israel: One Covenant or Two?* (Grand Rapids: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1995), p. 111.

⁶ Andrew Kuyvenhoven, *The Day of Christ’s Return* (Grand Rapids: CRC Publications, 1999), p. 144.

himself will be made *subject* to him, so that God may be all in all.” Again, Ephesians 1:22-23 (KJV): “And he hath *put all things under his feet*, and gave him to be the *head* over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fullness of him that *filleth* all in all.” Does not the Bible describe a creation that is *subject* to God, or a creation that God *fills*? Does the Bible *really* describe a creation—a *city*—which assumes the *same identity* as God? Would that not be pantheism?

Kuyvenhoven also asks, “And how is Jerusalem rebuilt by the Messiah? That is the story of Christ’s death and resurrection . . . and the building of the *church*.”⁷ Does this mean the new Jerusalem is the *same as* the church? Thus the temple, the city, and the *church* all have the same identity? So if Revelation 21:22 says God is the city’s temple, and the temple is the city, and the city is the church, then does God become the same as the city and the church?

Hoekema asserts convincingly the new creation will be a *renewal* of the *present* creation: “First, both in 2 Peter 3:13 and in Revelation 21:1 the Greek word used to designate the newness of the new cosmos is not *neos* but *kainos* [emphases Hoekema’s]. The word *neos* means new in time or origin, whereas the word *kainos* means new in nature or in quality . . . therefore [the new heaven and new earth, the new cosmos] though it has been gloriously renewed, stands in continuity with the present one.”⁸ If God is not the same identity as his present creation, can we not expect he will not be the same identity as the new?

I suggest establishing four basic principles as points of our general agreement.

1. The first proposition

The church is comprised of believing Israel and believing Gentiles. This is established in Ephesians 3:6: “This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Jesus Christ.” Ephesians 3:6 seems to identify Gentiles and Israel as each being *within* the church. The church has received the *promises* of Israel—1 Peter 2:9: “But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light” (Ex. 19:6; Deut. 7:6; 14:2). But in scores of New Testament texts Israel *keeps* its identity—the church has *not* received the *identity* of Israel. Synod 1975, however, refers to “the church—this new Israel,” which says that—rather than being in the church according to Ephesians 3:6, Israel actually *is* the church itself. Report 36, Article 25, of Synod 1975 appears to conflict with Ephesians 3:6.

Synod 1918 in Article 62, page 76, cites the Heidelberg Catechism, Lord’s Day 21, Question 54, which establishes the doctrine of the “unity of the Church.” On page 77 of that report it cites Article 27 of the Belgic Confession: “We believe and profess one catholic or universal Church. . . . This Church has been from the beginning of the world, and will be to the end thereof.” Next, Synod 1918 says that in the “confessions there is not the least doubt with respect to [*inter alia*] (1) the unity of the Church of all

⁷ Kuyvenhoven, *Ibid.*, p. 145.

⁸ Anthony Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1979), p. 280.

ages, Israel not excluded.” This statement of synod agrees with Ephesians 3:6 that “Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body.” But then Synod 1918 faulted Bultema for teaching “that there is an essential difference between Israel and the Church.” The conclusion that there is *not* an essential difference is like saying that Michigan has existed since the 19th century, not excluding Grand Rapids, thus there is *no essential difference between Grand Rapids and Michigan*. Does not Ephesians 3:6 seem to teach that *Israel* and the *Gentiles* are both *joint heirs* in the church, not that Israel itself *is* the church?

The Synod 1975 report (with Kuyvenhoven as reporter) said, “The church—this new Israel . . . ought to claim all that was promised of old but is now given and received in the last days.” But in his 1999 book Kuyvenhoven added *Jesus* to the identity of Israel: “Jesus is corporate Israel.”⁹ Then about the church, Kuyvenhoven says: “It’s not as if they [the church] are Israel, but they *are* God’s Israel [emphases Kuyvenhoven’s].”¹⁰ Then: “Israel, Christ, and the church form only a single people of God.”¹¹ Thus Jesus is Israel, Israel is the church, and Jesus is the church, all three grouped together as the “single people of God.”

But does not the apostle Paul relate *Jesus*, the *Gentiles*, *Israel*, and the *church* differently? Ephesians 3:6: “This mystery is that through the gospel the *Gentiles* are heirs *together* with *Israel*, *members together* of *one body* [the church], and *sharers together* in the *promise* in *Jesus Christ*.”

Rev. Kuyvenhoven

“single people of God”		
Israel	Christ	Church
No Gentiles mentioned		

Ephesians 3:6

Jesus Christ	
“one body” (church)	
Gentiles	Israel

Apparently for Paul, Israel is neither the same as the *church* [Kuyvenhoven, 1975] nor the same as *Christ* [Kuyvenhoven, 1999], but Israel abides *with* the Gentiles *in* the church *in* Jesus Christ. In Ephesians 3:6, Israel does not seem to be the same as the church. I suggest “Israel” in the New Testament may be Israel.

The study committee of Synod 1966, as I noted, warned of efforts to “bend” texts when undertaking what became the New International Version (NIV). Galatians 6:16 was *significantly changed* in meaning from the King James to the NIV, and the change is important to Reformed theology. The King James Version (KJV, 1611) had read: “And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be upon them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.” The American Standard Version (ASV, 1901) had kept

⁹ Kuyvenhoven, *Ibid.*, p. 108.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*

the language from the KJV, “and upon the Israel of God.” But the Revised Standard Version (RSV, 1946, NT; 1952, OT) dropped the “and,” thus *not translating* the Greek word *kai*. Then, finally, the NIV (1978) boldly inserted the new word “even” for the Greek word *kai*, a *major theology change* in the text. In deciding to translate the Greek word *kai*, the NIV switched to a *rarely used* translation of the word *kai* (translating it “even,” used for *kai* about 1% of the time in the New Testament) while the King James had used the much more common translation (“and,” used for *kai* about 90% of the time in the New Testament). The NIV (1978) reads: “Peace and mercy to all who follow this rule, even [Greek word *kai*] to the Israel of God.” The Israel of God has become the church, changing the *text* to conform to Reformed *theology*.

Synod 1975 committee member Dr. A. A. Hoekema defends the new translation, saying that “all those who are new creatures in Christ [“new creation” of Galatians 6:15]. . . . all true believers, both Jews and Gentiles . . . have already been included in the words ‘all who follow this rule.’ The word *kai*, therefore, should here be rendered *even*, as the New International Version has done.”¹² But in the greater context of Galatians 6:16 (Gal. 6:12-16), does not Paul address Gentiles? In Galatians 6:12 Paul speaks to *Gentiles*: “Those who want to make a good impression outwardly are trying to compel *you* to be circumcised.” Jews have already been circumcised. Therefore, Paul is speaking to *Gentiles*. Galatians 6:13: “Not even those who are circumcised obey the law, yet they want you to be circumcised that they may boast about your flesh.” Here Paul probably tells *Gentiles* in the Galatian church that the *church* Jews are taking flak from *synagogue* Jews for associating with “uncircumcised” *Gentiles*. Is not Paul writing to *Gentiles*?

Finally, Paul in verse 16 greets “all who follow this rule.” The Greek word is derived from a word meaning “to march” in military rank. The King James uses the word “walk,” that is, “all who walk according to this rule.” What is the rule? That you can “walk” in uncircumcision. Who are those who “walk” according to this rule? *Only Gentiles* can “walk” according to this rule because Jewish people have *already been circumcised*—an irreversible action or “walk.” It is *too late* for Jewish people to “walk” in uncircumcision. In Galatians 6:12—in this same paragraph as Galatians 6:16—the apostle Paul refers to *Israel* as “those” and “they”: “Those who want to make a good impression. . . .” And again Galatians 6:12: “the only reason *they* do this. . . .” And Galatians 6:13: “Not even *those* who are circumcised [Israel]. . . .” And again Galatians 6:13: “*They* [Israel] want *you* [Gentiles] to be circumcised. . . .” So the context dictates that Paul is speaking to [you] *Gentiles*. He thus gives greetings to the *Gentiles* of God. Then, finally, he gives greetings to “those” who are the “Israel” of God. So the context seems to dictate the Greek word *kai* be translated *and*. Is changing Galatians 6:16 to make “Israel” mean “church” correct? Even Dutch Reformed amillennial theologian G. C. Berkouwer is not totally comfortable with the church as the new Israel in Galatians 6:16: “But it is indeed open to question whether Paul, in writing to the Galatians, had in mind the church as the new Israel. The meaning may well be: peace

¹² Hoekema, *Ibid.*, p. 197.

and mercy to those who orient themselves to the rule of the new creation [of Galatians 6:15; he also overlooks the greater context] in Christ, and also peace and mercy be upon the Israel of God, that is, upon those Jews who have turned to Christ."¹³ In Galatians 6:16 in the KJV Israel seems to be *in* the church, but in the NIV Israel *is* the church—which is Reformed theology. Was Synod 1966's study committee counsel not to "bend" texts headed in the NIV translation?

The word "Israel" is used in the New Testament to connote *ethnic* or *national* Israel—seventy-seven times in the NIV and King James. How can Israel mean "the church" when it is not used that way in Scripture? Early Reformed theologian Herman Bavinck of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries noted that some Bible texts did not seem to agree with the Reformed theology of "The church—this new Israel," two of which were Luke 13:34-35 and Luke 21:24. Willem Van Gemen quotes Bavinck: "The New Testament teaches thus about the Jews that the assembly of believers has completely supplanted ethnic Israel in the flesh; the Old Testament is fulfilled with the New."¹⁴ Then Van Gemen comments: "Bavinck admits that a few passages of Scripture seem to contradict his conclusions concerning the future of Israel, such as Matthew 23:37-39; Luke 13:33-35; Luke 21:24; and Acts 3:19-21 (pp. 647ff.). . . ." ¹⁵ If Reformed theology somewhere contradicts Scripture, should we not there reexamine that theology?

2. The second proposition

The church is distinguished by true faith rather than by ethnicity. This is established in Galatians 3:28-29: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." The church has received this *promise* of Israel.

3. The third proposition

Some of us believe that *all* the promises of Israel will be brought to fulfillment in the church. Some of us entertain a caveat perceived from Scripture that the Belgic Confession would preclude the new Jerusalem fulfillment as being the church. William Hendriksen (former Christian Reformed pastor and scholar) says the new Jerusalem is the church: "This new and holy Jerusalem is very clearly the church of the Lord Jesus Christ."¹⁶ But Article 27 of the Belgic Confession states that the "church has existed from the beginning of the world, and will last until the *end*." Revelation 21:1-2 says, "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the *first heaven and the first earth had passed away* . . . [2] I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God." So Revelation 21:1-2 states that when the new Jerusalem arrives, the first earth will be gone, very possibly meaning the church at that time is finished.

¹³ G. C. Berkouwer, *Studies in Dogmatics, vol.13-14, The Return of Christ*, trans. James Van Oosterom, ed. Marlin J. Van Elderen (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), pp. 344-45.

¹⁴ Willem A. Van Gemen, "Israel as the Hermeneutical Crux in the Interpretation of Prophecy (II) in *Westminster Theological Journal* 46 no. 2 (fall, 1984): p. 262.

¹⁵ Van Gemen, *Ibid*: p. 263.

¹⁶ William Hendriksen, *More Than Conquerors* (Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing House, 1965), p. 239.

4. The fourth proposition

The New Testament yet reserves a special future event for Israel; namely the promise of a large harvest, or conversion from among them when all the Gentiles have come in, quite probably in the last days or at the end of time.

This "harvest" is found in Romans 11:25-26: "I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved." Hoekema noted that John Calvin thought "and so all Israel will be saved" referred to the church. Hoekema wrote, "The difficulty with this [John Calvin's] interpretation, however, is this: in Romans 9-11 the term *Israel* occurs eleven times; in each of the ten instances other than 11:26 where the term is used, it points unmistakably to the Jews in distinction from the Gentiles. What reason is there for accepting a different meaning of the term here? Why should Paul suddenly shift from the natural meaning of the term *Israel* to a wider figurative meaning?"¹⁷ I agree with Hoekema's departure from John Calvin here. But the wider issue still is that Hoekema believes that this text says Israel is saved *during* the hardening, not *after* the hardening.¹⁸ If Israel is saved *during* the hardening, *national* Israel does not yet exist; if *after* the hardening, national Israel is in the land and Romans 11:26 disproves the church as the new Israel. Thus Kuyvenhoven contends Romans 11:26 says "'and so all Israel will be saved,' not 'and then all Israel will be saved' . . . [therefore this concerns] not God's *time* but God's *method* [emphases Kuyvenhoven's] of saving 'all Israel.'"¹⁹ He quotes Hendriksen that "'and so all Israel will be saved' [refers] to the 'full number of elect Jews whom it pleases God to bring into the kingdom throughout the ages'" until all Gentiles have come in.

But Holwerda disagrees, writing in *Jesus & Israel: One Covenant or Two?* that if Hoekema, Kuyvenhoven, and Hendriksen are correct, "Then the salvation of Jewish Israel will be limited forever to a remnant. . . . this simple arithmetical approach to fullness, adding up the remnant of all ages, destroys the dynamic of Paul's argument."²⁰ Indeed it does. Then Holwerda continues: "The dynamic of Paul's argument points to the fullness of Israel as an eschatological reality that will exist without the mark of hardening that now characterizes Israel's existence and divides Jewish Israel into the remnant and the rest. . . . There is an eschatological fullness of both the Gentile world and Jewish Israel that awaits consummation. That moment describes the end of God's history of salvation."²¹ Holwerda reads Romans 11:25-26 more naturally. In line with Holwerda's reasoning, I observe that the Greek word *houtō* (so) in Romans 11:26 *can* mean "after that" as well as "so," thus meaning "*after that* all Israel will be saved."

Hosea 3:4-5 further illumines Romans 11:25-26 in its prophecy that Israel comes to salvation *afterward*, in the *New Testament*, and in its own

¹⁷ Hoekema, *Ibid.*, p. 144.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 146.

¹⁹ Kuyvenhoven, *The Day*, p. 117.

²⁰ Holwerda, *Jesus & Israel*, p. 170.

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 174-75.

land: "For the Israelites will live many days without king or prince, without sacrifice. . . . Afterward the Israelites will return and seek the Lord their God and David their king. They will come trembling to the Lord and to his blessings in the last days." Thus Israel returns to its land before their New Covenant is consummated, which tends to support Holwerda's position that Israel's salvation comes after the Romans 11:25-26 hardening. So does Ezekiel 36:24-26: "For I will bring you back into your own land. . . . I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you." Ezekiel 36:24-26 also tends to confirm that Israel comes into the New Testament when it returns at the time of the end.

Many Old Testament texts convey the same message as Romans 11:25-26 about Israel in the New Testament. Isaiah 45:17: "But Israel will be saved by the Lord with an everlasting salvation." Isaiah 45:20: "Gather together and come; assemble, you fugitives from the nations." Isaiah 45:23: "Before me every knee will bow; by me every tongue will swear." Isaiah 45:25: "But in the Lord all the descendants of Israel will be found righteous and will exult." These Isaiah 45 texts seem to unite a return of Israel, the time of the judgment, and Israel's salvation. The Isaiah 45 texts tie Israel's return to its land to its entry into the New Covenant or New Testament. That is very similar to Romans 11:25-26. Jeremiah 31:27, 28, 31, 38, 40: "'The days are coming,' declares the Lord, 'when I will plant the house of Israel and the house of Judah. . . . so I will watch over them to build and to plant [return],' declares the Lord. . . . The time is coming,' declares the Lord, 'when I will make a new covenant [New Testament] with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. . . . this city [Jerusalem] will be rebuilt. . . . The city will never again be uprooted or demolished [new Jerusalem].'" Jeremiah 31:31-34 is clearly defined in Hebrews 8:8-12 as prophetic of the New Covenant, the New Testament. The Old Testament text ties Israel's return to its land with its entry into the New Covenant or New Testament. So do these Old Testament texts: Ezekiel 36:22-27; Deuteronomy 28:36, 49, 64, 68; and 30:1-3, 5-6; Isaiah 61:4, 8; Jeremiah 24:6-7; Jeremiah 31:23, 27-28, 31-34; Jeremiah 32:36, 37, 40; Jeremiah 50:4-5; Ezekiel 37:5, 11, 12, 14 (dry bones text); and Ezekiel 11:17, 19.

Then, Isaiah 61:4, 8: "They will rebuild the ancient ruins and restore the places long devastated. . . . [return] In my faithfulness I will reward them and make an everlasting covenant [New Testament] with them." Here Israel returns to its land first and then enters into the New Covenant or New Testament, or "everlasting covenant," which looks forward to the New Testament. In Isaiah 61:4, 8 God says Israel will enter the New Covenant (or New Testament) after they return to their land as Hosea 3:4-5 says, and Romans 11:25-27 says Israel will be saved after all Gentiles have come in (also apparently near the end of the age). Deuteronomy 30:2-3 had said, "And when you and your children return to the Lord . . . then the Lord your God will restore your fortunes." But Isaiah 65:24 said, "Before they call, I will answer." Will God answer with Israel's return before they call for salvation? Might not Isaiah 61:4, 8; Hosea 3:4-5; and others say so?

Another text important to Israel's New Testament return is Isaiah 11:10-11: "In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples; the nations will rally to him, and his place of rest will be glorious. In that day the LORD will reach out his hand a second time to reclaim the

remnant that is left of his people from Assyria, from Lower Egypt, from Upper Egypt, from Cush, from Elam, from Babylonia, from Hamath and from the islands of the sea." In the book that Synod 1975 said A. A. Hoekema was writing (*The Bible and the Future*, Eerdmans, 1979), Hoekema says Isaiah 11:10-11 is fulfilled in the *Old Testament*: "This prophecy has thus had a literal fulfillment in the return of the Israelites from captivity in the sixth century B.C."²² It is a requirement of Reformed eschatology that this text either have an *Old Testament* fulfillment or none at all. A *New Testament* fulfillment would conflict with "the church—this new Israel," since national Israel would still be present in the *New Testament*.

But I suggest a *New Testament* fulfillment is what Isaiah 11:10-11 projects. (1) The Root of Jesse is Jesus who by his death ushers in the *New Testament*; (2) Jesus stands "as a banner for the peoples" in the *New Testament*. (3) The nations "rally" to Jesus in the *New Testament*, *not* the *Old Testament*—the preaching and growth of the gospel of the kingdom; (4) his place of rest—at the Father's right hand in either his current or coming kingdom—is *New Testament*. Isaiah 11:10-11 says that in that very *New Testament* day of Jesus, the Lord will reach out a second time to the exiles of Israel. Furthermore, Hoekema says Isaiah 11:11 is fulfilled in the return from *Babylon*, but Isaiah 11:11 says Israel would also return from *Egypt*. And God had said through Jeremiah that if Israel *went* to Egypt, they would *not return* from Egypt. Jeremiah 42:18: "This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: 'As my anger and wrath have been poured out on those who live in Jerusalem, so will my wrath be poured out on you when you go to Egypt. . . . you will never see this place [Jerusalem] again.'" And Jeremiah 43:8-11: "In Tahpanhes [Egypt] the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah: 'While the Jews are watching, take some large stones with you and bury them in clay in the brick pavement at the entrance to Pharaoh's palace in Tahpanhes. Then say to them, "This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: I will send for my servant Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon. . . . He will come and attack Egypt, bringing . . . captivity to those destined for captivity . . . [Israelites destined for captivity in Babylon].'"'"

First-century historian Josephus certified that Nebuchadnezzar retrieved Israelites from *Egypt*—fulfilling Jeremiah's prophecy: "For on the fifth year after the destruction of Jerusalem, which was the twenty-third of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, he made an expedition against Cele-Syria. . . . [then next the Ammonites, Moabites, and then] he fell upon Egypt, in order to overthrow it; and he slew the king that then reigned, and set up another; and he took those Jews that were there captives, and led them away to Babylon."²³ So it appears that Hoekema's attempt to assign Israel's return from Egypt in Isaiah 11:10-11 to the *Old Testament* *departs from Scripture*. Isaiah 11:10-11 must have a *New Testament* fulfillment. Deuteronomy 28:36 had indeed predicted the Babylonian captivity: "The LORD will drive you and the king you set over you to a nation unknown to you or your fathers." Babylon fulfilled that. Israel had a king then.

²² Hoekema, *Bible and the Future*, p. 206.

²³ Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 10.9.7.

In Deuteronomy 28:49 God predicted: “The Lord will bring a nation against you from far away, from the ends of the earth, like an eagle swooping down. . . .” Rome was farther distant. Rome’s emblem was the eagle. Deuteronomy 28:64: “Then the Lord will scatter you among the nations, from one end of the earth to the other.” That happened in A.D. 70, which Jesus also predicted; that was Rome. And then the reference to Egypt (the return from which Isa. 11:10-11 had predicted), Deuteronomy 28:68: “The Lord will send you back in ships to Egypt on a journey I said you should never make again. There you will offer yourselves for sale to your enemies as male and female slaves, but no one will buy you.” Josephus reports about the A.D. 70 defeat in Jerusalem and scattering. He said Titus (the Roman General) put “Fronto” in charge of disposition of the prisoners, reported that he killed some, reserved some for the triumphal parade in Rome, but “as for the rest of the multitude that were above seventeen years old, he put them into bonds, and sent them to the Egyptian mines.”²⁴ Must not the return from Egypt predicted in Isaiah 11:10-11 have a New Testament fulfillment? After Deuteronomy 28:68 predicted a scattering to Egypt and elsewhere (occurring in the New Testament), Israel’s return and New Covenant is predicted in Deuteronomy 30:5-6: “He will bring you to the land that belonged to your fathers. . . . The Lord your God will circumcise your hearts [New Covenant] and the hearts of your descendants, so that you may love him with all your heart and with all your soul, and live.”

The King James Version of the Bible relates the end of the scattering (return) of national Israel to the second coming of Jesus in Daniel 12:7: “And when he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished.” The King James Version for Isaiah 40:2 reads, “Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem . . . that her warfare is accomplished.” The word “accomplished” here is used to mean “completed.” In other words, the period of warfare is over. Daniel 12:7 appears to mean the same: the scattering will be over; or Israel will be whole. The literal translation confirms this meaning: “And when they have made an end of scattering the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished.”²⁵ In Daniel 12:7 in the King James, the man dressed in linen says things happen when God has made an end of the scattering of Israel—apparently when Israel is restored. The New Jerusalem Bible confirms the King James: “All these things will come true, once the crushing of the holy people’s power is over.”²⁶ The translation from the ancient eastern text (Aramaic, possibly the oldest of all) is even more direct: “And when holy people are delivered, all these things shall be fulfilled.”²⁷

Of what things is Daniel 12:7 speaking? The question was asked in Daniel 12:6: “How long will it be before these astonishing things are fulfilled?” What “astonishing things”? Daniel 12:1-3—which speaks of the *tribulation*, the *return of Jesus*, the *resurrection*, and the *new heaven and*

²⁴ Josephus, *Wars of the Jews*, 6.9.2.

²⁵ Green, *Literal Translation*, p. 728.

²⁶ Bruce M. Metzger, ed. *The Complete Parallel Bible*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 1968-69.

²⁷ George Lamsa, *Holy Bible from the Ancient Eastern Text* (HarperSanFrancisco, 1984), p. 899.

new earth. Daniel 12:2: “Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt.” Daniel 12:7 answers the question of *when* Jesus will come: “It will be for a time, times and half a time.” That means 3.5 years (NIV Dan. 7:25 text note), the time still left over from the 70th week in Daniel 9:26 after the Messiah was cut off (under the Reformed view; dispensationalists include those 3.5 years in the future tribulation). Three and a half years equal 42 months or 1,260 days (in which days may stand for years)—these are prophetic months of 30 days each. What does Daniel 12:7 say would occur during the 3.5 years? The KJV says these 1,260 days (time, times and half a time, 3.5 years, 42 months) would be the same as the “scattering” of Israel, which must end before Jesus returns.

But the NIV translation of Daniel 12:7, a more *recent* translation, has apparently *changed* this text to say the *exact opposite*! Is this another example of the “bending a phrase or a clause,” about which the Synod 1966 study committee warned? Daniel 12:7: “When the power of the holy people has been *finally broken*, all these things will be completed.” The NIV in Daniel 12:7 *appears* to say that after Israel has been finally defeated, destroyed, or ended, then the return of Jesus is ready to occur. The Reformed scholars who initiated the translation of the NIV—the translation began with an overture to synod from Seattle—actually *did believe* that Israel has been finally broken (as of A.D. 70 when Jerusalem was destroyed), and the NIV translation of Daniel 12:7 reflects that belief.

Do *New Testament* texts lend light to Daniel 12:7? They confirm the King James, Literal, Aramaic, and Jerusalem Bible texts, but not the NIV. Jesus says in Luke 21:24: “They [Israel] will fall by the sword and will be taken as prisoners to all the nations. Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.” Then Jesus says in Luke 21:27: “At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.” Daniel 12:7 had set the timing of the return of Jesus to occur after *Israel returns in the New Testament*. The phrase Jesus used in Luke 21:24 was “Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles.” The same language is in Revelation 11:2: “But exclude the outer court; do not measure it, because it has been given to the Gentiles. They will trample on the holy city for 42 months.” Revelation 11:2 repeats Jesus in Luke 21:24 about the trampling of Jerusalem, but it further connects the trampling to “42 months,” or the “time, times and half a time” of Daniel 12:7. The King James, Literal, Aramaic, and Jerusalem Bible versions all interpret Daniel 12:7 to say that the scattering of Israel *comes to an end*. Prophetic days can be used as years²⁸—in other words, a long time. Israel actually was scattered among the nations and Jerusalem was trampled by the Gentiles for about 1,900 years. It was called the Diaspora. But Jesus had predicted that the Diaspora would last “until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.” *All* these texts *may* have been Jesus speaking *in person*—Revelation 11:2 (Revelation of Jesus Christ); Luke 21:24, 27 (Olivet Discourse); and Daniel 12:1-3, 7 (Dan. 10:5-6 is stunningly similar to Rev. 1:12-16).

²⁸ The NIV *Study* note for Daniel 9:24 says: “*sevens*. Probably seven year periods of time.” The NIV *text* note for Daniel 9:24 says: “Or ‘*weeks*.’” In other words, “sevens” means weeks; “sevens” means seven years, thus days equal years.

Revelation 11:3-4 adds more meaning to the same 3.5 years: "And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days. . . . These are . . . the two lamp-stands." Revelation 1:20 says "the seven lamp-stands are the seven churches." Thus, Revelation 11:3-4 appears to mean the churches spreading the gospel during the same time as the scattering of Israel. This is the *same* message as Romans 11:25-26, which says Israel is hardened, and after all the Gentiles come into the kingdom, all Israel will be saved. Revelation 11:2-4 seems to say that Israel's scattering and the spreading of the gospel to the Gentiles are the same time. Romans 11:25-26 equates the gospel to the Gentiles with the *hardening* of Israel. This Old Testament text equates the hardening to the scattering—Hosea 3:5: "Afterward the Israelites will return and seek the LORD their God and David their king. They will come trembling to the LORD and to his blessings *in the last days*." This text confirms that Israel does not come into the New Covenant until after they return—thus the hardening and the scattering are the same thing and time. Thus Daniel 12:7; Romans 11:25-26; Hosea 3:4-5; Revelation 11:2-4; and Luke 21:24, 27 all neatly and beautifully fill in one message of Israel's scattering and coming into the New Covenant, apparently into the church, at the time of the end.

There are more texts which fit in with the idea of Jesus returning to Israel, which implies the presence of Israel in the land. Zechariah 14:4: "On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, and the Mount of Olives will be split in two from east to west." Apparently this is to where Jesus will return—Acts 1:11-12: "'This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.' Then they returned to Jerusalem from the hill called the Mount of Olives." So when Jesus returns in Luke 21:27, it is apparently to the Mount of Olives. It appears that Jesus returns to Israel.

When Jesus prophesied Israel's return to its land in the *New Testament*, he apparently confirmed that Israel is still *national Israel*, not the church. Jesus further seems to support the concept that *Israel of renewed heart* [as prophesied in Deuteronomy 30:5-6; Isaiah 61:3; Jeremiah 24:6-7; Jeremiah 31:28, 33; Jeremiah 32:39-40; Jeremiah 50:4-5; Ezekiel 11:19; Ezekiel 36:26-27; Ezekiel 37:14; and Hosea 3:5] will *see him and greet him in Jerusalem* when he *returns*—Luke 13:34-35: "'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you. . . . you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'" The rejoicing of Israel to see Jesus when he returns is very compatible with the Romans 11:26 identification of an Israel that has been saved. The caveat in Luke 13:34-35 is that Jesus *identifies* the *site* as *Jerusalem*. That is all consistent with Luke 21:24 that says the scattering of Israel would end with Israel's return, and consistent with the Old Testament texts cited above combining the return of Israel with its entry into the New Covenant—which we identify as the church. Yes, it does appear that Israel sometime after it reenters its own land, may enter into the church. Jesus seems to say Jerusalem will welcome him when he returns. And Jerusalem is very close to the Mount of Olives. But the Daniel 12:7 *NIV* translation—and Reformed theology—say that national Israel has disappeared; if so, a return

to the Mount of Olives in Israel is problematic because Israel is not there anymore. It has become the church.

Synod 1975—the last synod to deal with eschatology—apprised us that Hoekema’s book, eventually titled *The Bible and the Future*, was coming. Hoekema’s book *does not mention* and includes *no discussion* of all these texts discussed above: Daniel 12:7; Luke 21:24; Luke 21:27; Revelation 11:2-4; Zechariah 14:4 (except a brief mention about dispensational interpretations); Hosea 3:4-5; Deuteronomy 28:36, 49, 64, 68; or Deuteronomy 30:1-6; Isaiah 61:4, 8; Luke 13:34-35; Ephesians 3:6; Isaiah 45:17, 20, 23, 25; Jeremiah 24:6-7; Jeremiah 32:36, 37, 40; Jeremiah 50:4-5; and Ezekiel 11:17, 19—all texts essential to a thorough discussion of the return of Jesus. But Hoekema in *The Bible and the Future* omitted them all! Rev. Kuyvenhoven titled an article in *The Banner*, November 4, 1996 (p. 16), “Modern Israel: Not the Land of Prophecy: Why events in modern Israel say nothing about the second coming of Christ.” But does not Jesus relate Jerusalem and Israel to the second coming in Luke 21:27? “At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.”

Rev. Kuyvenhoven: “Events in modern Israel *say nothing* about the second coming of Christ” (*The Banner*, November 4, 1996, p.16).

Jesus: “Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles . . . until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled” (Luke 21:24). [Israel returns in the New Testament.]

Jesus: “At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory” (Luke 21:27). [Jesus returns.]

Israel showing up in its own land at the end of the New Testament conflicts with “the church—this new Israel” theology. As does Psalm 105:8-11: “He remembers his covenant forever, the word he commanded, for a thousand generations, the covenant he made with Abraham, the oath he swore to Isaac. He confirmed it to Jacob as a decree, to Israel as an everlasting covenant: ‘To you I will give the land of Canaan as the portion you will inherit.’”²⁹ Where else in the Bible is God more emphatic: covenant, forever, commanded, oath, swore, confirmed, decree, everlasting covenant? Kuyvenhoven says this was a *conditional* promise: “Israel lost the land through their disobedience.”³⁰

Holwerda states that the land was *both* an “irrevocable promise” and a “conditional possession.”³¹ He continues: “Fear of the Lord must be placed in their [Israel’s] hearts. . . . Only then can the Lord bring them back to the land and make them dwell in safety.”³² The Bible predicts all that. Holwerda further observes, “Surprisingly, this role of Zion’s citizens is not restricted to Israelites but includes peoples from the nations of the world. God will register them on the citizenship rolls of Jerusalem (Psalm 87).”³³ Yes, and Hebrews 12:22: “But you have come to Mount Zion, to the

²⁹ Also 1 Chronicles 16:15-18; David’s psalm of thanks when the ark of the covenant was brought to the City of David.

³⁰ Kuyvenhoven, *The Day*, p. 131.

³¹ Holwerda, *Jesus & Israel*, pp. 88, 90.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 95.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 107.

heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God.” And this heavenly Jerusalem comes down to earth in Revelation.

In Jeremiah 33:24-26 the LORD asks, “Have you not noticed that these people are saying, ‘The LORD has rejected the two kingdoms he chose?’ So they despise my people and no longer regard them as a nation. This is what the LORD says: ‘If I have not established my covenant with day and night and the fixed laws of heaven and earth, then I will reject the descendants of Jacob and David my servant and will not choose one of his sons to rule over the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. For I will *restore* their fortunes and have compassion on them.’” Here God says the fixed laws of heaven and earth, the coming of the Messiah and Savior, and the abiding of the *nation*—that is the word used—*of Israel* are all equally certain.

Not only does the theology of Israel and the church impact eschatology at a time events may be hastening to the end of the age, but it also determines how we accept other commands from God. Jeremiah 31:10: “Hear the word of the LORD, O nations; proclaim it in distant coastlands [North America?]: ‘He who scattered Israel will gather them and will watch over his flock like a shepherd.’” This text has a message of action for us today. Romans 11:25-26 applies the broad change for Israel coming late in—or at the end of—the gospel age. In fact, God told Jeremiah he would *watch* to make *sure* Jeremiah 31:10 is fulfilled. Jeremiah 1:11-12: “The word of the LORD came to me: ‘What do you see, Jeremiah?’ ‘I see the branch of an almond tree [Hebrew word: *shâ-qêd*, (shaw-kâde’)],’ I replied. The LORD said to me, ‘You have seen correctly, for I am watching [Hebrew word: *shâ-qad*’ (shaw-kâhd’)] to see that my word is fulfilled.’” Now, recall when Jesus reproved the disciples on the road to Emmaus: “He said to them, ‘How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe *all* that the prophets have spoken!’”³⁴

In Isaiah 62:6-7, God instructs us to implore him to establish Jerusalem as the praise of the earth: “You who call on the LORD, give yourselves no rest, and give him no rest till he establishes Jerusalem and makes her the praise of the earth.” God directs us to *pray* to usher in the new Jerusalem, Revelation 21:24: “The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it.”

There is ample evidence that Reformed eschatology is not settled. This overture does not request a change in Reformed eschatology. However, professors, pastors, and teachers are free to teach that Israel in the Bible means “church”; should they not feel free to write, preach, and teach that when the Bible says *Israel* it means *Israel* and when it says *Jerusalem* it means *Jerusalem*? There is evidence of apprehension in doing so. Acts 17:11 says, “Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.” I suggest it is time to do that with Reformed eschatology, thus letting Scripture be the constant guide in searching out eschatological texts and guiding in their ecclesiastical development.

³⁴ Luke 24:25.

IV. Overture

I Overture Synod 2011 to permit professors, pastors, and teachers to write, preach, and teach that in Scripture the word *Jerusalem* means *Jerusalem* and the word *Israel* means *Israel*.

Ed Fredricks, Byron Center, Michigan

Note: This overture was submitted by the council of Faith CRC to Classis Holland in January 2011, but the classis did not adopt the overture. The council of Faith CRC decided not to forward it to synod, so it is being submitted by the author.

Overture 4: Reject the Proposed Changes to the Reformed Confessions

Classis Zeeland overtures Synod 2011 to not adopt the new translations of the Belgic Confession, Heidelberg Catechism, and Canons of Dort, as proposed by the Committee to Propose a Combined RCA/CRC Translation of the Three Reformed Standards.

Grounds:

1. The stated aim of avoiding or minimizing masculine pronouns for *God* is contrary to the pattern of God-language given in Scripture, which makes overwhelming use of masculine pronouns for *God*.
 - a. The new translations remove approximately two-thirds of masculine pronouns for *God* compared to the current version; 69 percent from the Belgic Confession, 63 percent from the Canons of Dort, and 60 percent from the Heidelberg Catechism.¹ The majority of these were not highlighted as changes from the current version,² and in one instance a quoted biblical text itself was altered to remove a masculine pronoun (Belgic Confession, Art. 14).
 - b. In contrast, the Bible texts “overwhelmingly and consistently present God as a masculine person who is occasionally spoken of in feminine figurative language . . . indicated not only by the thousands of gender-specific personal designators for God—names, kinship terms, titles, epithets, and generic nouns—but also by the thousands of grammatically gendered verb forms, adjectives, articles, and pronouns. . . .”³ The CRC policy on God-language reads, “Christians ought to speak of God in the way that Scripture speaks of God . . .

¹ This count included all masculine pronouns referring to *God the Father* or the Trinity as a whole outside of direct Scripture quotations. The proposed Belgic Confession removes 75 pronouns for *God* of the current version’s 108. The proposed Canons of Dort removes 79 of the current 125. The proposed Heidelberg Catechism removes 50 of the current 84.

² From the current Belgic Confession the proposed version removes 75 masculine pronouns for *God*, of which 48 are not highlighted as changes. The Canons of Dort removes 79, of which 50 are unhighlighted. The Heidelberg Catechism removes 50, of which 30 are unhighlighted.

³ Report of the Committee to Study Inclusive Language for God, *Agenda for Synod 1997*, p. 331.

and in the overall pattern of language it presents.”⁴ Reducing pronouns for God in this way is outside the parameters of Scripture.

2. Reducing pronouns for *God* is contrary to the character and the standards of the Christian Reformed Church.
 - a. In 1997, synod adopted the following statement: “The endorsement or use of contemporary inclusive language for God—i.e., the broad gender-egalitarian and/or gender-neutral approach . . . is unacceptable to the Christian Reformed Church.”⁵
 - b. The “unacceptable” God-language was defined as “language that seeks to eliminate the impression that God is primarily masculine” by doctoring the language in ways that include “avoidance of (masculine) pronouns for God.”⁶ The proposed translations are a notable departure from the CRC’s adopted approach in that the proposed translations “sought to reduce the number of male pronouns for God when it could be done with felicity. . . .”⁷
3. Reducing personal pronouns for God in effect makes him less personal. Reducing male pronouns for God has the unintended consequence of reducing the impression that God is a personal God who comes into a loving covenant relationship with his people. Reducing pronouns of God (regardless of the gender) undermines the personhood of God and his relatable nature to us as relational creatures. Personal pronouns make the subject personal. If God is less of a “he . . . his . . . him” and more “God . . . God’s . . . God,” then he is less personable and more generic or an abstract concept. This generic, abstract concept God is more akin to the God of Islam, Hinduism, or Buddhism and not the personal God revealed in the person of Jesus Christ. Removing personal terminology removes the impression of a personal God.
4. Expanding Faith Alive Christian Resources’ market to other denominations⁸ does not constitute a good ground for revising our confessions of faith. The denomination’s official statements of faith are too pivotal and valuable to be altered for the sake of a non-profit denominational agency to expand its market share to additional denominations.
5. The desired cooperation and unity does not require compromise and uniformity. The proposed confessions are an effort toward uniformity, not the stated aim of unity. It is argued that “A common translation of the confessions will . . . increase cooperation and partnership between the two denominations.”⁹ However, honest and true unity or cooperation between two parties must not come at the expense of either party’s identity. The proposed Reformed Confessions are stripped of CRC identity in an effort to meet the RCA half way. The RCA’s current translations of the confessions intentionally avoid all masculine pronouns

⁴ *Acts of Synod 1997*, p. 691.

⁵ *Acts of Synod 1997*, p. 690.

⁶ *Agenda for Synod 1997*, p. 268.

⁷ Appendix A: Introduction for the Reformed Confessions Translation.

⁸ Ground C, *Agenda for Synod 2010*, p. 166; Recommendation B, Ground 3, *Agenda for Synod 2010*, p. 167.

⁹ Recommendation B, Ground 3.

for *God*,¹⁰ so reducing masculine pronouns for *God* is a compromise of current CRC standards on God-language for the sake of uniformity in confessional language. In addition, these translations remove the Bible version of choice in the CRC (NIV) and replace it with a version used in few CRC congregations (NRSV). Also, certain modifications made to the confessional text by previous CRC synods are missing or marginalized (e.g., no brackets in Q&A 80). Compromising CRC identity in such a way is not unity but uniformity.

- a. The CRC and RCA have fundamental differences in their understanding and use of the confessions. The CRC uses the confessions as current statements of faith that must be kept up-to-date, evident by synod's occasional modification to the confessional texts to continually reflect our current understanding of Scripture.¹¹ By contrast, the RCA sees the confessions as historical texts frozen in time that may or may not have relevance today. Therefore, the RCA never makes updates because "the confession was written within a historical context which may not accurately describe the situation that pertains today."¹²
 - b. Identical language is not necessary for Christian cooperation and unity. If it is said that a common translation of the confessions will "make it a truly ecumenical document,"¹³ then it is implied that true ecumenism and unity among churches requires statements of faith in exactly the same words, as if English-speaking Reformed churches have a false ecumenism with Spanish- or Swahili-speaking Reformed churches since their translations differ. Diversity is a virtue toward unity and cooperation, not uniformity.
6. Some of the work on these new translations and the manner in which they are presented is questionable.
- a. Biblical texts within quotation marks have been altered. The desire to remove pronouns for *God* has even trumped the integrity of the biblical text itself. The proposed Belgic Confession text has God within a biblical quotation where the NRSV text has a masculine pronoun (Article 14).
 - b. Highlighting of the changes has been selectively applied. The proposed translations are helpfully presented with the changes from the current version highlighted, except that the highlighting is selectively applied. Many notable changes to the texts went unhighlighted.¹⁴

¹⁰ The statement introducing the RCA versions of the confessions says, "Masculine pronouns (he, him, himself, his) have been retained in references to the historical Jesus and the risen Christ, but they have been eliminated in all references to God the Father, the pre-incarnate Word, the necessary (a priori) characteristics of the Mediator, and the Holy Spirit in order to avoid, as much as possible, language that suggests that God is limited by the male gender."

¹¹ E.g., Synods 2004 and 2006 and Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 80. Synods 1910, 1938, and 1958 and Belgic Confession, Article 36.

¹² See the note with Article 36 of the proposed Belgic Confession.

¹³ Recommendation B, Ground 4; cf. Ground B, *Agenda for Synod 2010*, p. 166.

¹⁴ Most notable among many others are found in the proposed Belgic Confession, Articles 31, 35; Heidelberg Catechism, Q&A 10, 18, 32, 48, 98, and 102. None of these were changes in punctuation or inclusive language.

Punctuation changes were sometimes highlighted and not highlighted even in the same section.¹⁵ Inclusive language changes for humanity were sometimes highlighted and not highlighted in the same section.¹⁶ Most distressing is the statement, “Changes from the most recently approved CRC translations are highlighted, *with the exception of* changes in use of pronouns for God. . . .”¹⁷ Why not? While changes from semicolons to periods are highlighted,¹⁸ the majority of God’s pronoun removals are not highlighted.¹⁹ This selectivity might suggest an assumption that changing language for *God* is more insignificant than changing punctuation.

- c. Gender-inclusive terminology for humanity was not completely achieved. The proposed confessions attempted to make gender-inclusive changes whereby “all references to men or other exclusive terms have been changed to human or to a similar gender-inclusive term.”²⁰ However, in at least one instance, an exclusive term (men) was left unchanged for no apparent reason.²¹
- d. Certain errors and irregularities still exist. For example, the “Rejection of Errors” headings throughout the Canons of Dort are irregularly translated and irregularly highlighted for changes.
- e. That “it is not possible to make further changes”²² raises concerns. The wording leaves the impression of a now-or-never situation, placing pressure on synod to adopt the proposed confessions hastily.

Classis Zeeland
Ronald J. Meyer, stated clerk

Overture 5: Reject Proposed New Translation of the Three Reformed Standards

I. Overture

Classis Zeeland overtures Synod 2011 to reject the proposed new translation of the three Reformed Standards.

Ground: The use of the NRSV Bible as the foundation of the Reformed Standards is unwise.

- a. The NRSV was approved by Synod 1992 with “caution” (*Acts of Synod 1992*, Article 80, 2; p. 671): “The translation contains problems significant

¹⁵ E.g., proposed Belgic Confession, Article 26; Heidelberg Catechism, Q&A 119.

¹⁶ E.g., proposed Belgic Confession, Articles 9, 14; Canons of Dort, Points 3/4,1, 15-16, Rej. III, V, VII, IX.

¹⁷ Appendix A, “Note.” (Emphasis not mine.)

¹⁸ E.g., proposed Belgic Confession, Article 26; Heidelberg Catechism, Q&A 119.

¹⁹ From the current Belgic Confession the proposed version removes 75 masculine pronouns for *God*, of which 48 are not highlighted as changes. The Canons of Dort removes 79, of which 50 are unhighlighted. The Heidelberg Catechism removes 50, of which 30 are unhighlighted.

²⁰ Appendix A: Introduction for the Reformed Confessions Translation.

²¹ Proposed Canons of Dort, Point 2, Rej. II.

²² Report of the Committee to Propose a Combined RCA/CRC Translation of the Three Reformed Standards (I, Background).

- enough to warrant caution in its use.” Caution enough that synod approved the recommendation to inform the churches by way of *The Banner*.
- b. The NRSV is not commonly used in the CRC. The NIV is still the most commonly used Bible version in the CRC, and it remains very accurate to the Scripture texts and uses current language.

II. Summary

It is unwise to use a questionable translation as a foundation of the confessions. It is unwise to allow culture to dictate the meaning of the Bible. The message we are teaching the next generation is that we can change our confessions to match our own thinking and agendas. And then to back those up we can change Scripture to match our own thinking and agendas. It does not take much imagination to see where that can end up. We must stand on firm ground and determine to remain faithful to God’s Word as he has graciously given it to us. We must be examples of people who have a firm “conviction that everything God reveals in his Word is true” (Heidelberg Catechism, Lord’s Day 7, Q&A 21). The formation of faith of each generation is grounded in Scripture. We ought to be very cautious what we teach them.

Classis Zeeland
Ronald J. Meyer, stated clerk

Overture 6: Reject Revisions to the Three Reformed Standards

I. Background

As part of a bi-denominational hymnal for the CRC and RCA, a committee was mandated to create a new *Psalter Hymnal*. To this we have no objection. However, we do object to including the proposed revisions to the three forms of unity in this new hymnal. Our strongest objection is to the gender-neutral language used for *God* in the proposed revisions.

II. Overture

Classis Grand Rapids North overtures Synod 2011 to reject the proposed revisions to the three forms of unity and remain uncompromising in all the articles and points of doctrine contained in the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort.

Grounds:

1. Synod 1997 ruled that gender-neutral language for *God* is unacceptable to the Christian Reformed Church (*Acts of Synod 1997*, p. 690). We further remind the CRC of some of the grounds for this decision which apply to the proposed revisions:
 - a. Contemporary inclusive language for God presents a significantly different view of God than the language of Scripture does.
 - b. It confuses, undermines, or conflicts with the church’s confessional-doctrinal understanding of the Trinity and the person of Christ.
(*Acts of Synod 1997*, p. 690)

In the proposed revisions in the Belgic Confession, all three masculine-pronoun references to the Holy Spirit (Articles 9, 11) have been deleted, leaving an impersonal and wrong revelation of the Holy Spirit as neuter.

2. The proposed revisions are spiritually dangerous in refusing to accept God as he has revealed himself in his Word. Two hundred five masculine pronouns for God are removed in the proposed revisions. The third commandment of God warns against misusing God's name. The name of God includes all that God has revealed about himself in his Word. Rather than obscuring or changing God's revelation of himself, the CRC should be faithful at making the triune God as clear as he has revealed himself in his Word.
3. The proposed revisions contradict our confessions. Article 7 of the Belgic Confession declares "The Sufficiency of Scripture," forbidding us to add to or subtract from the Word of God, since the teaching is perfect and complete in all respects. The proposed revisions use a gender-inclusive translation of the Bible (NRSV), which then misquotes 2 John 10, removing the pronoun *him* in order to be gender-inclusive. In doing so, they did exactly what Article 7 forbids us to do—namely, adding to or subtracting from the biblical text.

Classis Grand Rapids North
William G. Vis, stated clerk

Overture 7: Do Not Adopt Translations; Appoint Larger Committee to Update the Confessions

Classis Columbia overtures Synod 2011 not to take action on the recommendations presented by the Committee to Propose a Combined RCA/CRC Translation of the Three Reformed Standards. Instead we propose that synod request the other denominations involved to join the CRC in appointing a larger and more academically diverse committee to update these confessions.

Grounds:

1. The magnitude of updating each confession requires the best scholarship we can provide. The committee appointed was not representative of the scholarship available among our Reformed and Presbyterian seminaries.
2. The magnitude of updating each confession requires a larger committee to do justice to such a task. The committee appointed was too small to do a thorough updating of all three documents as is evidenced by the many corrections provided to the committee prior to this synod and our conviction that additional time and study will lead to many more beneficial changes.
3. We acknowledge the value of continual updating of the translations of our confessions, but we are convinced (as reflected in grounds 1 and 2 above) that this updating can only be accomplished in a thorough and responsible manner by appointing a much larger and diverse translation committee. Therefore, we recommend appointing a larger committee of scholars from a consortium of Reformed and Presbyterian seminaries affiliated with the denomination involved in this process.

Classis Columbia
Howard B. Spaan, stated clerk

Overture 8: Postpone Action on Adoption of the Proposed Changes to Three Forms of Unity

Classis Wisconsin overtures Synod 2011 to postpone action on adoption of the proposed changes to the three forms of unity for one year, in order to give the churches more time to process and absorb the revised changes.

Grounds:

1. Insufficient time has been given for church councils and congregations to engage and reflect on the revisions.
 - a. The turn-around time coming out of Synod 2010 to absorb the revised changes was too short. The recently revised changes were made available only 4-5 months before the deadline for response.
 - b. The Form of Subscription change was given 4-5 years for the churches to process, while the revision of the confessions has been given much less time for reflection. Considering the length and complexity of the documents, and their theological importance for the life of the church, it seems reasonable that the churches are allowed more time.
2. For the unity of the whole body of the CRC, it is important for all the churches to have the opportunity to be participants in the process of these revisions. This would allow the churches throughout the denomination to have assurance of the faithfulness of the proposed changes to the confessions.

Classis Wisconsin
John Bylsma, stated clerk

Overture 9: Do Not Adopt Changes to Forms of Unity

The council of Maranatha CRC in Woodbridge, Ontario, overtures Synod 2011 regarding the proposed changes to the forms of unity. The proposed changes and updates to the language of the forms of unity should not be adopted.

Grounds:

1. By signing the Form of Subscription, the officebearers of the Christian Reformed Church state that they sincerely believe that all the articles and points of doctrine set forth in the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort fully agree with the Word of God. Some of the proposed changes to the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort have the consequence of bringing these documents out of full agreement with the Word of God. For example, the proposed translation of Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 120 changes the word *fathers* in the answer to *parents*. Besides undercutting the clear metaphorical connection between *Our Father* and our *earthly fathers*, this proposed change also brings the Catechism out of alignment with Matthew 7:9-11, which clearly refers to a father's provision for his son.

2. In both the Hebrew and Greek as well as in the majority of English translations of the Bible, the use of the male pronoun for *Deity* is employed. Our council finds no compelling reason to limit the use of the male pronoun in our creeds and confessions.
3. There are other changes that may cause undue confusion among our members.
 - a. The Heidelberg Catechism changes the common practice of praying, “Lead us not into temptation,” to, “lead us not into the time of trial.” This will bring the language of the Lord’s Prayer in the Heidelberg Catechism out of alignment with the language of the Lord’s Prayer commonly used in the churches.
 - b. The language of Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 25 is changed from “since there is only one God” to “since there is only one divine being.”
 - c. The Conclusion of the Canons of Dort changes the term “Mohammedanism” to “Turkism.” The referent for the term *Turkism* is unclear and can be confused with the Turkish ethnic group, some of whom are Christians.

Council of Maranatha CRC, Woodbridge, Ontario
David Banks, clerk

Note: This overture was submitted to Classis Toronto but was not adopted.

Overture 10: Do Not Adopt Proposed Revision of the Three Reformed Standards

I. Background

Faith Alive Christian Resources has been in the process of developing a new *Psalter Hymnal* as a joint venture with the Reformed Church in America (RCA). It is a longstanding denominational policy to include the confessions of the church in its hymnals. Because the CRC and RCA have different translations of the Reformed standards (Belgic Confession [BC], Heidelberg Catechism [HC], and Canons of Dort [CD]), both denominational offices authorized Faith Alive to appoint a committee to work on a common translation. They released their proposed changes in April 2010. Because of the short timeframe given for consideration, Synod 2010 acceded to several overtures to give churches more time to review and reflect on the proposed changes.

Church councils were given until October 1, 2010, to respond to the translation/revision committee, and the new revision was presented to the churches on October 29, 2010. The committee did make some positive changes based on those responses, such as returning some of the language that emphasized the warm, personal nature of the HC. One major doctrinal improvement was to retain Adam as the representative head of the human race in HC, Q&A 20. We are thankful for these changes, but some of the fundamental and more essential problems remain.

II. Review of main concerns

A. Weakening the fatherhood of the triune God

The proposed revision removed the masculine pronouns for *God* 205 times (HC, 51; BC, 75; CD, 79), and they retain the masculine pronouns only 113 times (HC, 34; BC, 33; CD, 46). This accounts for 64 percent of the masculine pronouns being removed when referring to *God*. The manhood of Jesus is omitted seven times, with *he* replaced by the word *Lord*. Three of the four masculine references to the *Holy Spirit* in the HC and *all* three references in the BC are deleted.

One example in proposed BC, Article 9, removes the masculine pronoun for *God* by saying, “when God says: ‘Let us make humankind in our image’—and afterward God indicates the unity in saying, ‘God created.’” The current version states, “‘Let us make man in our image’—and afterwards he indicates the unity when *he* says, ‘God created.’” The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), which the translation committee used as its foundational Bible translation, even retains the masculine pronouns for God in the verses which stand behind this part of Article 9 (Gen. 1:26-27):

Then God said, “Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.” So God created humankind in *his* image, in the image of God *he* created them; male and female *he* created them.

In BC, Article 10, the proposed revision deemphasizes the masculine nature of the Trinity in eternity before the creation of the world. The current version says: “*he* who is called God, the Word, the Son, and Jesus Christ already existed when all things were created.” The revision says: “*the one* who is called God, the Word, the Son, and Jesus Christ already existed before creating all things.”

Deemphasizing the masculine aspect of God goes against the overwhelming way God reveals himself in Scripture, which is also reflected in official CRC policy per Synod 1997, which declared that “The endorsement or use of contemporary inclusive language for God—i.e., the broad gender-egalitarian and/or gender-neutral approach . . . is unacceptable to the Christian Reformed Church” (*Acts of Synod 1997*, p. 690; see also *Agenda for Synod 1997*, pp. 265-372). Therefore, using gender-neutral language for *God* in our confessions or even moving in that direction violates the standing position of the CRCNA.

1. Weakening the divinity of Christ

Christ’s divinity is also weakened in BC, Article 9, which currently reads, “And therefore the holy one to be born of you shall be called the Son of God” (quoting Luke 1:35). The revision proposes: “*therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God.*” This revision, based on the NRSV, causes confusion with regard to when Jesus assumed his divine nature, implying by the future tense it is at some point *after* his birth.

2. Weakening the nature of the Godhead

HC, Q&A 25, weakens the nature of the Godhead. "Since there is but one God" becomes "Since there is only *one divine being*." God is a "divine being," certainly, but the NIV has only one reference to *divine being*, and that is the apostle Paul's interaction with the pagans at the Areopagus in Athens. The NRSV only has one reference in 1 Samuel 28:13, but that is a reference to the witch of Endor's vision of a spirit. Referring to God as merely a "divine Being" takes away from the unique and personal nature of God.

3. Distinctive theological language is lost

Confessions should reflect the distinctive language used commonly in the church. There is a unique theological language that is used because of the depth of meaning behind those terms that other more ordinary words do not fully encompass. For example, HC, Q&A 56, currently says, "because of Christ's *atonement*." That becomes "Christ's *satisfaction*" in the revision. Is Christ satisfied now? What does it mean to be satisfied? Synonyms include "happy" and "content." Is God merely happy and content with us now? Or have our sins been atoned for? Also HC, Q&A 45, currently states, "are already now *resurrected* to a new life." In the revision this becomes "are already *raised* to a new life" "Resurrected" more clearly connects our new life with Christ's. And finally BC, Article 14, now refers to "The *natural man*," which becomes "*those who are unspiritual*," in the proposed revision. This takes away vivid, personal language. These are just a few examples of a broader problem with the proposed translation.

III. Summary

Since the Reformed standards provide the doctrinal foundation for the way the Christian Reformed Church interprets Scripture, all CRC office-bearers sign their name agreeing with these confessions and all professing members state their agreement with them in their profession of faith. This vital role in the life and faith of our denomination compels us to respond, particularly as the proposed changes affect the foundations of our unity as believers in Christ Jesus.

IV. Overture

Classis Holland overtures Synod 2011 not to adopt the proposed revision by Faith Alive Christian Resources of the three Reformed standards.

Grounds:

1. These proposed revisions are in direct conflict with the standing position of the CRCNA. Synod 1997 declared that "the endorsement or use of contemporary inclusive language for God—i.e., the broad gender-egalitarian and/or gender-neutral approach . . . is unacceptable to the Christian Reformed Church" (*Acts of Synod 1997*, p. 690).
2. Avoiding or minimizing masculine pronouns for God is contrary to the language given to us in Scripture, which overwhelmingly uses masculine pronouns for God. This philosophy leads to some serious theological problems as highlighted above. Without these masculine references to God we lose the depth of the original meaning of God's relationship to his people, such as a father to his children.

3. The proposed revisions rely on Scripture quotations from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), which is not used in many CRCs as their primary pew Bible. The New International Version, 1984, is the primary pew Bible and teaching version in the vast majority of CRC churches, and also in a sizeable number of RCA churches. Synod 1992 approved the use of the NRSV in Christian Reformed congregations and institutions, but with the following concern: “the translation contains problems significant enough to warrant caution in its use” (*Acts of Synod 1992*, p. 671). In fact, there was enough concern that Synod 1992 wanted to ensure all were informed by instructing *The Banner* to publish this caution, which it did in the June 29, 1992, issue (p. 17). That article also referred back to Marten H. Woudstra’s article titled “Pitfalls of Modernizing the Bible,” published in the December 17, 1990, issue of *The Banner*, reviewing the NRSV.
4. The Reformed standards hold a significant place in the life and theology of the Christian Reformed Church in North America, requiring all officebearers to “teach these doctrines diligently” and “defend them faithfully.” It is imperative that any process to change our confessions—especially changes that raise such significant theological issues as indicated above—be done in a clear and deliberate manner in which the reasons for such changes are defended from Scripture and shown to be theologically more accurate. The proposed changes do not do that in our judgment.

Classis Holland

Calvin Hoogstra, acting stated clerk

Overture 11: Do Not Adopt the Proposed Revisions to the Three Forms of Unity

I. Introduction

As part of planning for the bi-denominational hymnal, it was noted that the RCA and CRC have differing versions of the Reformed standards. With the approval of the two denominational offices, a small committee was formed by Faith Alive Christian Resources to work toward a common translation of the confessions. The committee decided that it would not undertake a totally new translation but work with the translations presently used by the two denominations.

The purpose of this revision was to have a common text for both denominations. However, some of the changes went beyond minor revisions and changed the theological content of the three forms of unity. These new revisions were intended to clarify; however, often they do not.

II. Overture

Hope CRC of Brantford, Ontario, overtures Synod 2011 to not adopt the proposed changes to the combined RCA/CRC translation of the three forms of unity.

Grounds:

1. It sets bad precedent—If the churches felt a revision of the three standards was warranted, they could and would ask for it. Now, however, a new precedent will be set. An agency meant to serve the denominations (Faith Alive) proposes changes in order to facilitate greater printing efficiency (*Agenda for Synod 2010*, p. 166, sections IV, C, 2, a-c). Should not our theology and practice be our guide rather than printing costs?
2. Implicitly changes our theology—The three forms of unity hold a significant place in the life and theology of the Christian Reformed Church in North America, requiring all officebearers to “teach these doctrines diligently,” “believe that all these articles fully agree with the Word of God,” and “defend them faithfully” (Church Order Supplement, Art. 5). Some of the proposed changes move away from sound theology. For example, in Article 2 of the Belgic Confession (*Agenda for Synod 2010*, p. 171), the proposal suggests, when talking about salvation, that we change and remove the words *his own*. The suggested change would say “our salvation”—the suggestion and implication being that we now play a part in our own salvation. The words *his own* shows who does the work; it is God. We should not open the door to shaky theology.
3. It does not clarify—There are “clarifications” that are unhelpful. For example, in the conclusion of the Canons of Dort, there is a proposed change from Mohammedanism to Turkism* (*Agenda for Synod 2010*, p. 291). If the revision is to mean *Islam*—as the asterisks says—then why not say it? As it is proposed, it now seems that we have issues with Turkish people. If the revisions seek to clarify matters, then they ought to do so.
4. Inappropriate gender changes or neutering of the Godhead—One of the mandates of the committee, approved by synod, was affirming the approach of the task force with respect to gender usage for humanity and God, using gender-inclusive terms in references to humankind and reducing the number of male pronouns for God when it can be done with felicity (*Agenda for Synod 2010*, p. 168).

We notice many changes when it comes to inclusive language for *God*—many which change the meaning of the text. Eliminating masculine pronouns for *God* in any measure is inconsistent with biblical language for *God* and out of character for our denomination, going against previous synodical decisions on language for *God*. Synod 1997 declared, “The endorsement or use of contemporary inclusive language for God—i.e., the broad gender-egalitarian and/or gender-neutral approach . . . is unacceptable to the Christian Reformed Church” (*Acts of Synod 1997*, p. 690), and affirmed that “it is linguistically necessary and appropriate to use masculine pronouns” in reference to *God* (*Acts of Synod 1997*, p. 692). The proposed revisions to the three Reformed confessions remove not just some but over half of the masculine pronouns for *God*. The proposed Heidelberg Catechism removes 49 masculine pronouns for God and retains only 29. The proposed Belgic Confession removes 74 masculine pronouns for God and retains only

28. The proposed Canons of Dort removes 81 masculine pronouns for God and retains only 51.

We also appreciate the concern in trying to use the best texts, as is the case in Article 9 of the Belgic Confession. The suggestion is to move a quote from 1 John 5:7 to a footnote. This is because the proposed change is seeking to follow the superior Greek texts. We agree with this change. Our question then is why are there many other changes to Scripture quotes to include women or change the pronouns for *God*? Have these texts changed as well? Are these based on better Greek or Hebrew texts? If this is not the case, then why make the changes? These changes are unhelpful and not necessary.

III. Summary

Though we appreciate the thought of having a combined hymnal with the RCA and having the same wording of the confessions, the weight of the changes that are being proposed is much larger than just small wording changes. These changes get at much larger issues and should be discussed further. Since the proposal before synod is to adopt the report “*with no further amendments*” (p. 181), we feel we cannot subscribe to these changes.

The council of Hope CRC is convinced that the proposed changes are not necessary and detract rather than add to the confessions. We humbly overture synod to *not* adopt them as presented.

Council of Hope CRC, Brantford, Ontario
Geoff Dreise, clerk

Overture 12: Request a Balanced Discussion of the Belhar Confession

Classis Heartland overtures Synod 2011 of the CRCNA to instruct the Board of Trustees of the CRCNA and the agencies and committees thereof, especially Faith Alive Christian Resources and the Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee, to foster a more balanced denomination-wide discussion of the Belhar Confession.

Grounds:

1. The official denominational efforts, most notably by Faith Alive Christian Resources and the Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee, have predominantly served to persuade the congregations of the denomination to accept the Belhar Confession as a fourth confessional standard rather than to foster a discussion of the merits and liabilities of the Belhar Confession.
2. Such promotional efforts do not adequately foster honest, healthy discussion.
3. Such promotional efforts also violate the deliberative nature of ecclesiastical assemblies.

Classis of the Heartland
David L. Heilman, stated clerk

Overture 13: Give Confession Status to *Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony*

Classis B.C. North-West overtures Synod 2011 to give *Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony* the status of confession within the Christian Reformed Church.

Grounds:

1. It is time for a substantive discussion to be held by synod on this matter. Synod itself has recognized that a substantive discussion will very likely one day be held on whether the *Contemporary Testimony* should be given the status of a confession. Synod 1979 discussed the matter of “status” for the yet to be written testimony, understanding that this new document would require time for the churches to digest and own its content. Synod fully anticipated that in time further discussion would ensue regarding whether the testimony would or should gain confessional standing.

As to the future status of the testimony, we cannot make any predictions. If it turns out to be a better formulation and an up-to-date address which is clearly biblical and recognizably Reformed, the new testimony will tend to supersede the old confessions, wherever they speak on the same matters. But it would be premature to speculate on the relationship between the testimony and the confessions, or to define beforehand what measure of authority it ought to carry. We should simply proceed to do the work which we believe God requires. At a letter [sic] date God’s people will decide on the status of the testimony. . . . The committee should know that the church is aiming for a contemporary testimony that might eventually gain confessional standing.

(*Acts of Synod 1979*, pp. 530-31)

This understanding was again confirmed by Synod 1982: “A testimony is of lesser rank than a creed or confession. It could gain the stature of a creed as the church uses it in its witness and ministry” (*Acts of Synod 1982*, p. 577).

2. The churches have now had almost thirty years during which to own and embrace *Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony*. It has enjoyed widespread acceptance throughout the Christian Reformed Church and in parts of the broader Christian community. In numerous churches the *Contemporary Testimony* functions as a confession; in the tradition of the Heidelberg Catechism it is taught in the evening services, it is regularly included in the liturgy of worship, and it is used to help new members to the CRC embrace the story of Scripture. Giving the *Contemporary Testimony* the status of confession would acknowledge the role it already plays in much of the denomination.
3. *Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony* winsomely unfolds God’s mission in the drama of redemptive history to restore the whole creation and invites the church today to participate in God’s renewing work. No other confession makes so central the redemptive-historical nature of Scripture and our place in it or the comprehensive scope of the gospel of the kingdom—emphases our tradition treasures.
4. Confessions often arise out of a crisis or challenge to the gospel. Our three existing confessional documents were drawn up in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to speak to the challenges of the day.

Much has changed since that time; new spirits shape our culture. The gospel must be confessed in fresh ways today so that we are led into a vivid and relevant apprehension of our faith, and so that the faith is protected from the idols of today.

5. The very nature of the Reformed tradition is that we continually restate our faith: *Reformata semper reformanda est*. We believe Leslie Newbigin said it well over sixty years ago:

The responsibility of the church [is] to declare to each generation what is the faith. . . . This is always a fresh task in every generation, for thought is never still. The words in which the Church states its message in one generation have changed their meaning by the time the next has grown up. No verbal statement can be produced which relieves the Church of the responsibility continually to re-think and re-state its message. No appeal [to creeds and confessions] can alter the fact that the Church has to state in every new generation how it interprets the historic faith, and how it relates it to the new thought and experience of its time. . . . Nothing can remove from the Church the responsibility for stating *now* what is the faith. It belongs to the essence of a living Church that it should be able and willing to do so.

(Leslie Newbigin, *The Reunion of the Church: A Defence of the South India Scheme* [London: SCM Press, 1948], pp. 137-138)

Classis B.C. North-West
Andy de Ruyter, stated clerk

Overture 14: Amend “Covenant for Officebearers”

Classis Grand Rapids North overtures Synod 2011 to amend the “Covenant for Officebearers” in the Christian Reformed Church by adding the following:

1. Change paragraph 3 to the following:

We also affirm three confessions—the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dordt—as historic Reformed expressions of the Christian faith, *which fully agree with the Word of God*. These confessions continue to define the way we understand Scripture, direct the way we live in response to the gospel, and locate us within the larger body of Christ.

Ground: This makes clear that our confessions are rooted in Scripture, which gives them their authority.

2. Change paragraph 4 to the following:

Grateful for these expressions of faith, we promise to be formed and governed by them, conforming our preaching, teaching, writing, serving, and living to them. *We promise to teach these doctrines diligently, to defend them faithfully, and not to contradict them, publicly or privately, directly or indirectly, in our preaching, teaching, or writing.*

Ground: Defending the faith is just as important as teaching the faith according to Scripture—Jude 3: “I felt I had to write and urge

you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints"; 1 Timothy 6:12: "Fight the good fight of the faith."

Classis Grand Rapids North
William G. Vis, stated clerk

Overture 15: Reject the Proposed Form of Subscription

I. Background

The proposed "Doctrinal Covenant for Officebearers" in the Christian Reformed Church" is an inadequate replacement for the current Form of Subscription.

The committee presents our current Form of Subscription (FOS) as being "ineffective" (*Agenda for Synod 2011*, p. 622), "unduly intimidating" (p. 629), a document that "plods along" (p. 627) and "precludes or hinders [theological] reflection" (p. 623). The committee further suggests that the FOS is difficult for emerging and ethnic minority church leaders to understand (p. 623). No specific clauses in the FOS are referenced to support these inferences. In fact, the committee does not clearly identify any particular problems with the FOS.

Far from being a "static document" (p. 629), the FOS commits the signer to many ongoing obligations. They must teach the doctrines contained in the confessions, defend them faithfully, and not contradict them. They are obligated to keep watch over their church, keeping it free from error. The FOS compels the signer to do more than just reject error, but also refute it.

The Covenant substitutes these robust demands with language that treats the confessions as if they were an unreasonably slow speed limit; drivers do not need to like the speed limit, understand the reasons for it, promote it, defend it, or encourage fellow drivers to obey it. All they must do is affirm the speed limit's existence as a *historic expression* of the municipal code and keep from being caught when exceeding it. Our commitment to our core doctrines should be more than a mere affirmation.

Thankfully, the Covenant "acknowledges the authority of God's Word," calling the signer to "submit to it in all matters of life and faith." However, the omission of any clause which attests that all confessional articles and points of doctrine fully agree with the Word of God renders the Covenant impotent in its most important task—keeping the church free from unorthodox *interpretations* of Scripture.

Expressing belief that the Bible *is* the Word of God is insufficient. Officers of the church must agree on what the Bible *says* regarding specific doctrines. Our confessions address these key issues. They reflect our beliefs about who and what God is, who we are, how we are saved, and how we must therefore live. If we cease to demand agreement that these documents *fully agree with* Scripture,¹ then the church will have little recourse to combat error.

¹ Our confessions are *norma normata*; "subordinate, fallible, the work of humans, an inadequate expression of what the church has absorbed from Scripture as divine truth and now confesses upon the authority of God's Word against all error and deception." Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 4, p. 421.

History bears this out. “The doctrinal declension of a church or denomination that has subscribed to confessional standards has usually begun with a loosening of the requirements of those standards. When such denominations have ceased requiring full subscription to their confessional standards, they eventually fell into liberalism.”² This is the direction that replacing the time-tested Form of Subscription with the proposed Covenant would take us.

This exclusion also makes the Covenant’s appellate process circular. Officers who raise doctrinal questions or who are accused of unorthodoxy will face a council, classis, or synod that itself has no objective standard that all agree accurately summarizes Scripture’s teaching about the subject at hand. Without a confessional anchor, the church will begin to drift whichever way the cultural winds blow.³

The committee’s report infers several times that the FOS discourages “significant theological discussion.” They wish to provide officers with the “freedom to engage in candid discussion of matters in question” (p. 629); however, the time to do that is *before* making a commitment to protect and promote the core doctrines of the Reformed faith. Inasmuch as the FOS prevents officers from publicly or privately proposing, defending, preaching, or teaching unorthodox doctrine, it is working exactly as designed.

In addition to not adequately measuring up to the FOS, the Covenant goes beyond the scope of the FOS, giving the Contemporary Testimony (CT) a *de facto* promotion to creedal and confessional status. The committee attempted to maintain a logical flow of authority, starting with the Word of God, then the ecumenical creeds and the Reformed confessions, ending with the CT. However, the Covenant’s use of the phrase “along with” negates this flow and gives all of these documents equal footing. For example, most would bristle at the affirmation that one believes in “God, Jesus, the Spirit, along with the apostle Paul,” as this phrasing gives Paul the same divine status as the Trinity. By using this phrase, the Covenant compels the signer with the same obligations toward the CT that it gives to the creeds and confessions.

The proposed Covenant is at best an inadequate affirmation, and at worst it opens the door to serious theological drifting. The committee presents no substantive evidence that the FOS itself needs any improvement at all. In fact, they are trying to fix something that is not broken.

II. Lack of any meaningful commitment to our confessions will shatter any notion of meaningful unity within the CRCNA

The CRC is justifiably proud of the ethnic, cultural, and age diversity of its members. Quite a few of us can claim a Reformed heritage of several generations, while many of our members are new to Reformed theology, and some are new to Christianity altogether. We have different tastes and expectations

² Pipa, J. Written, in his forward to “The Erosion of Calvinist Orthodoxy” by Ian Hamilton (Ross-Shire: Mentor, 2010).

³ The current FOS demands a *quia*-subscription: We subscribe to the confessions *because* they agree with God’s Word. A *quatenus*-subscription, on the other hand, subscribes only *insofar as* the confessions agree with God’s Word. A *quatenus* confession is no real confession but an evasion that leaves it to a person’s subjective judgment. (Robert P. Swierenga, “The Form of Subscription in Dutch Reformed History.”) www.swierenga.com/FOSDutchRefChurch_1ec.html.

in music, food, recreation, politics, and nearly every other subjective arena. Unity is a key component in maintaining a healthy denomination, but it should be obvious that we will never find it in these ancillary areas.

The committee writes that “it reached agreement that the purpose of any revision should be unity with a secondary concern for purity. Though the concern for unity was primary, it was not to be achieved at the expense of purity” (p. 627). The committee on one hand wants unity to trump purity, but in the very next sentence writes that purity should never be trumped by unity.

Our unity comes from a shared commitment to purity. People who have few common cultural interests can stand together firmly united in that they “sincerely believe that all the articles and points of doctrine set forth in the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort fully agree with the Word of God” (FOS). The beauty of our three forms of *unity* is that they very concisely summarize our core beliefs about what the Bible says without binding the conscience on secondary matters. We certainly cannot attain purity on every matter, so the confessions present a minimum list of topics we must agree on to remain unified. As the previous section illustrated, to replace a statement that the confessions fully agree with Scripture with one that simply affirms their existence renders them useless in providing the unity this denomination needs.

Passage of this committee’s recommendation would jeopardize our denomination’s greatest strength—unity based upon clear, concise confessions that fully agree upon the Word of God.

III. The recommendation of the Form of Subscription Revision Committee II sidesteps the problem of confessional ignorance and apathy within the CRC

The beginning of the third section of the Form of Subscription Revision Committee II report clearly articulates the main problem: “The committee recognized that the FOS or any proposed revision of it was not the real issue. Rather, the deeper issue was the nature of confessional subscription” (p. 627). Yet they recommend replacing the Form even though they recognize it is not the problem. It should be very troubling that there are apparently a significant number of office-holders within the CRC who do not fully subscribe to our primary doctrines. The committee’s recommendation does nothing to address this serious issue.

In their 2008 report to synod, the previous FOS committee writes that the need for a regulatory instrument to keep us orthodox “is increasingly being called into question. Increased cultural and ethnic diversity, the increase in new church plants, and the cultural movement often described as postmodernism are among the factors raising these questions.”⁴ Rather than calling the need for a regulatory instrument into question, these shifts within the CRC landscape demonstrate the overwhelming dependence we have for a solid, uncompromising commitment to the absolute doctrines of Scripture

⁴ *Agenda for Synod 2008*, p. 243.

summarized by the three forms of unity. Truth does not change over time, or with cultural and philosophical fads.

Consider a farmer who, every time he came outside, found his animals out wandering around rather than being in the barn where they belong because the barn door was always left wide open. This would be a very serious problem with a very simple solution: make sure the barn door stays closed. However, if this committee ran the farm, they would solve the problem by removing the door. They would see value in having the animals stay in the barn for sure, but since nobody seems to be closing the door anyway, the door ought to be removed and they would just hope the animals would stay put.

The CRC needs a solid, well-marked barn door to guard against the “free range” theology that would be sure to follow if the door were eliminated. The officeholders of the church are tasked with maintaining this door. It should be constantly evaluated in the light of Scripture, and when adjustments are warranted, they ought to be made carefully and with due process. We should be quick to invite others into the fold but always be on guard for wolves and predators that prey on the itching ears of our flock.

Classis B.C. South-East began this process in 2004, overturing that the FOS has “become ineffective in our culture and time.”⁵ Inasmuch as the FOS is either abused or neglected, their statement has validity. However, the subsequent recommendations that have evolved from this overture are backwards. Rather than changing or eliminating the FOS (in effect, killing the messenger), the CRC ought to evaluate how our culture and times can distort our understanding of the truth.

We should not repeat the mistakes of denominations who have acquiesced to their cultures and times by reducing their commitment to absolute truth. Instead, we ought to address the rampant confessional ignorance and apathy that is plaguing our denomination.

IV. Overture

Classis Columbia overtures Synod 2011 to reject the proposals submitted by the Form of Subscription Revision Committee II.

Grounds:

1. The proposed “Doctrinal “Covenant for Officebearers” in the Christian Reformed Church” is an inadequate replacement for the current Form of Subscription.
2. The lack of any substantive commitment that all the articles and points of doctrine contained in our confessions fully agree with the Word of God will shatter any notion of meaningful unity within the CRCNA.
3. The recommendation of the Form of Subscription Revision Committee II sidesteps the problem of confessional ignorance and apathy within the CRC.

Classis Columbia
Howard B. Spaan, stated clerk

⁵ *Agenda for Synod 2004*, p. 435.

Appendix

Quotations Affirming Strong Confessional Subscription

“A confession of our loyalty to the Bible is not enough. The most radical denials of biblical truth frequently coexist with a professed regard for the authority and testimony of the Bible. When men use the very words of the Bible to promote heresy, when the Word of truth is perverted to serve error, nothing less than a confession of Faith will serve publicly to draw the lines between truth and error.” (Paul Martin, “The Legitimacy and Use of Confessions of Faith”; referenced on CCEL. <http://www.ccel.org/creeds/bcf/what.htm>)

“Directly arising from these considerations is the authority of the church to confess the truth it believes and to maintain it as confession in its midst. The objection advanced against this on the part of Remonstrants in the preface to their Confession and Apology, of Baptists, Congregationalists, Quakers, and many others is that the adoption of binding confessions is inconsistent with the all-sufficiency of Scripture, destroys Christian liberty, introduces intolerable tyranny, and cuts off further investigation and development. Scripture, however, clearly imposes on churches the duty to be a ‘pillar and foundation of the truth’ and to confess it before all people, to avoid those who deviate from the doctrine of the truth, and to maintain the Word of God against all adversaries. Almost from the outset (that is, from the beginning of the second century), the church has been a confessional church that found its unity in the rule of faith common to all, that is, in the baptismal confession, the original, later somewhat expanded, apostolic symbol, and over the centuries was further prompted repeatedly by heresy and slander to produce a more highly elaborated statement of the truth. *Also, in a world immersed in lies and deception, a church cannot exist without a rule of faith; it falls prey—as especially the history of the nineteenth century teaches—to all the tyranny of prevailing schools of thought and opinions.* Moreover, with such a confession the church does not fail to do justice to the sufficiency of Scripture, but only rearticulates what is contained in Scripture, Scripture alone is trustworthy in and of itself (*αυτοπιτος*), unconditionally binding us to faith and obedience, unchanging; a confession, on the other hand, always remains examinable and revisable by the standard of Scripture. It is not a standardizing norm (*norma normans*) but at most a standardized norm (*norma normata*), not a norm of truth (*norma veritatis*), but ‘a standard of doctrine received in a particular church,’ subordinate, fallible, the work of humans, an inadequate expression of what the church has absorbed from Scripture as divine truth and now confesses on the authority of God’s Word against all error and deception. *The church does not coerce anyone with this confession, nor does it fetter research, for it leaves everyone free to confess otherwise and to conceive the truth of God in some other sense. It listens attentively to the objections that may be advanced on the basis of God’s Word against its confession and examines them as the confession itself requires. Only it refuses and has to refuse to degrade itself into a debating club or a philosophical society in which what was a lie yesterday passes for truth today. It is not like a wave of the sea but like a rock, a pillar and foundation of the truth.*” (Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 4; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 2008; pp. 420-421)

Overture 16: Remove Mention of the Contemporary Testimony in the “Covenant for Officebearers”

Classis Heartland overtures Synod 2011 to remove mention of *Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony* from the proposed “Covenant for Officebearers.”

Grounds:

1. Even though *Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony* may “enjoy a certain level of official recognition” by some congregations and officebearers in our denomination (Form of Subscription Revision Committee II Report, p. 622), the fact remains that we have not adopted it as a confessional standard to which officebearers must subscribe. Consequently, to include it in a revision of the Form of Subscription would be to short-circuit a necessary and healthy ecclesiastical process.
2. The inclusion of the Contemporary Testimony in the proposed revision to the Form of Subscription oversteps the mandate that synod gave to the Form of Subscription Revision Committee II. Synod 2008 recommitted the work of revising the Form of Subscription to an expanded committee, mandating “that a revised version of the Form of Subscription be presented to Synod 2011 for consideration and possible adoption, with the understanding that the purpose of the revision is to clarify the meaning of the Form of Subscription” (*Acts of Synod 2008*, p. 476). Including the Contemporary Testimony does not clarify our current Form of Subscription but instead adds to it substantially. We would be well served by omitting mention of the Contemporary Testimony from this proposed “Covenant for Officebearers.”

Classis Heartland

David L. Heilman, stated clerk

Overture 17: Reject the Proposed “Covenant for Officebearers” as It Presently Stands

I. Introduction

Our current Form of Subscription (FOS), based on the one adopted at the Synod of Dort 1618-1619, has been largely unchanged since adoption by the Christian Reformed Church in North America. A new FOS, or at least an updated one, could be a valuable resource for our denomination. We are grateful for the effort of the Form of Subscription Revision Committee II in drafting a new document rather than just updating some of the language. Certainly the language of *covenant* has many strengths rather than just calling it a *form of subscription*. The language of the proposed “Covenant for Officebearers” is more accessible and pastoral than our current form. We appreciate the recognition of the importance of the Contemporary Testimony. While not officially a doctrinal standard, the Contemporary Testimony is an important document applying a Reformed worldview to our present culture. We also appreciate the committee’s work in hearing concerns of other churches. Also, the first paragraph about the inspiration and authority of Scripture is well written and offers something the old form does not.

These things being said, however, we cannot support the proposed “Covenant for Officebearers” in its present form. The reasons why are listed below. We would be better served using our current form or modifying the proposed Covenant.

II. Concerns

A. *There is too much risk in omitting the language “fully agree with God’s Word”*

The proposed Covenant bears striking similarities with the FOS adopted by the Dutch Reformed Church in 1816, an event that led in part to the *Afscheiding* of 1834. Despite the strong Reformation heritage of the Netherlands, the early 19th century experienced a mixture of religious and political views. The status of the country did not please William of Orange. Tired of religious wars and other dissension, he wanted to unify the country. There had been no national synod for 200 years. William called one to unify his country over these competing factors in which a new FOS, which departed from the one instituted in 1619 at the synod of Dort, was introduced. The 1619 FOS confessed adherence to the doctrinal standards *because* they agreed with the Word of God. The 1816 FOS, however, used language that was open to interpretation. Instead of language like “because they agreed with God’s Word” the new FOS said “which, in agreement with God’s Holy Word.” Donald Sinnema explains the significance of this change (see “The Origin of the Form of Subscription in the Dutch Reformed Tradition” in *Calvin Theological Journal*, November 2007; vol. 22, no. 2; p. 280):

There was deliberate ambiguity in the phrase “which, in agreement with God’s Holy Word,” to allow greater freedom on the part of subscribers. The phrase in the 1816 FOS could be understood either as meaning that the subscriber accepted the doctrine contained in the forms of unity *because (quia)*, or *insofar as (quatenus)* it agreed with God’s Word.

Thus, the 1816 FOS allowed for subjectivity to determine whether or not a doctrine needed to be believed in or taught. Any pastor could determine what was true doctrine or not. A situation was created in which the Reformed, Arminian, and any other viewpoint could exist side by side. Peter Y. De Jong traces the consequences of the adoption of the new form in his article “A Darkness Over the Land” in the book *The Reformation of 1834* (pp. 14-15):

Brouwer, minister of the church of Maassluis, attacked the doctrine of the Trinity. In Raamsdonk a certain Magnet repudiated the substitutionary atonement of our Lord. Criticisms of the Canons of Dort proliferated. Vander Linden of Kantens described them as “human patchwork” with no binding authority, while Posthumus of Waaxens told his people that they were “wooden flatirons” unfit to smooth the wrinkles for a good and wholesome life. Besides ordinary pastors, also ecclesiastical leaders who controlled the boards spoke out. Benthem Reddingius of Assen cast doubt on the perfect holiness and righteousness of Jesus.

At no time since the Reformation had the Reformed Church in the Netherlands fallen into such a sad and unspiritual state.

Movements such as the *Reveil* and the Scholte club countered the changes happening in the state church that led to the *Afscheiding*. Many within the *Afscheiding* movement made their way to America and founded the CRC (see James Schaap, *Our Family Album*; CRC Publications, 1998; pp. 68-75; for more details).

Our current FOS, based on that of 1619, reads, “We sincerely believe that all articles and points of doctrine set forth in the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort fully agree with the Word of God.” The proposed Covenant uses language like “we affirm” and “historic expressions of the Christian faith” without a line expressing full agreement with God’s Word. In other words, those who sign the Covenant do not have to believe our doctrinal standards are actual doctrinal standards. The 1816 form and the proposed Covenant are similar in this regard.

Our denomination traces its heritage back to the movements such as the *Afscheiding* and the *Doleantie*, which rejected these compromising trends in the state church. Those who founded our denomination deliberately chose to use the 1619 FOS in part due to the language of “fully agree with God’s Word.” As someone once said, “We are children of the *Afscheiding*.” If we adopt the proposed Covenant we risk opening ourselves to compromising trends similar to that of 1816. Therefore, the proposed Covenant would be stronger if it retained the language “fully agree with God’s word.” There is great risk if we keep this language omitted.

B. The proposed Covenant is self-defeating and confusing

According to the Covenant, the three forms of unity are merely “historic Reformed expressions,” yet the Covenant goes on to say, “We promise to be formed and governed by them, conforming our preaching . . . to them.”

Why would we conform our preaching to these historical expressions when they are merely *historic* expressions and not documents that we believe are in agreement with God’s Word? While it is true we conform our preaching and teaching to documents that are indeed historical expressions of the Reformed faith, the actual reason why we have done this is only because we believe those documents are in agreement with God’s Word. It seems that the Covenant wants to have it two ways—it wants to assert some kind of doctrinal authority and yet take it away at the same time. This fits with the committee’s intent: to draft a document that officers can feel comfortable signing and less “intimidated” (see *Agenda for Synod 2011*, p. 629). However, in the process of making it less intimidating and appealing to more people, the “Covenant for Officebearers” has become self-defeating, because unless the Heidelberg Catechism, Belgic Confession, or Canons of Dort function as doctrinal standards (fully agreeing with God’s Word) in our FOS there is no reason to have a FOS. The proposed Covenant, therefore, is so divided within itself as to what it wants to achieve that it is also highly confusing. Any FOS should be clarifying rather than obscuring.

C. *The proposed Covenant does not adequately hold officers accountable to contend for the truth*

The church of Pergamum was rebuked because it tolerated false teachings (Rev. 2:14). The church of Thyatira tolerated Jezebel's false teachings (Rev. 2:20) and was rebuked for it. Timothy is warned of anyone who teaches a different doctrine that does not agree with what was taught by Jesus (1 Tim. 6:2) and warned not to itch the ears of his members. He was encouraged to preach the truth in season and out of season and to reprove, rebuke, and exhort (2 Tim. 4:2). Based upon Scripture, officebearers need to do what the current FOS says: "reject errors and refute them." The Covenant does not hold officers accountable to what Scripture requires. Our denomination becomes weakened when we no longer hold our officers to this high standard. We understand that the desire is to make the proposed Covenant more appealing and readily accessible to all as well as to make it easier to sign for those who have issues, but those reasons do not align with the Scripture passages just mentioned. Any FOS would be stronger and more useful if it contained language that held officers accountable to contend for the truth as our current one does.

III. Overture

Therefore, based upon the above analysis, we overture Synod 2011 to reject the proposed "Covenant for Officebearers" as it currently stands.

Grounds:

1. There is too much risk by omitting the language "fully agree with God's Word."
2. The proposed Covenant is self-defeating and confusing.
3. The proposed Covenant does not adequately hold officebearers accountable to contend for truth.

Council of Lucas CRC, McBain, Michigan
Rog Hoeksema, clerk

Note: The above overture was presented to Classis Northern Michigan but not adopted.

Overture 18: Do Not Adopt "Covenant for Officebearers"

Classis Hudson overtures Synod 2011 not to adopt the proposed "Covenant for Officebearers" that is being proposed by the Form of Subscription Revision Committee II.

Grounds:

1. The proposed "Covenant for Officebearers" fails to achieve its stated purpose of helping councils and officebearers clarify the meaning of subscription to the Reformed confessions.
 - a. The ambiguous language of the "Covenant for Officebearers", in particular its affirmation of the Reformed confessions as "historic Reformed expressions of the Christian faith," fosters confusion rather than clarity about what it means to serve faithfully as an officebearer in our denomination today.

- b. *Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony* has never been adopted by synod on par with the historic statements of faith. However, its inclusion in the “Covenant for Officebearers” with the description, “a current Reformed expression of the Christian faith that forms and guides us,” adds confusion about the central truths to which CRC officebearers must subscribe.
 - c. The Church Order (Art. 29, 30, and 82) and its Supplements (Art. 5 and 30-c) already contain procedures to address perceived conflicts between the Reformed confessions and the teaching of Scripture.
2. The “Covenant for Officebearers” does not do justice to the calling of an officebearer to refute false teaching in addition to promoting sound doctrine (Titus 1:9; 2 Tim. 2:25).
 3. Though synod directed the committee to revise the current Form of Subscription, the document that has been presented to Synod 2011 is a completely new document and thus beyond the committee’s mandate.

Classis Hudson

Joel Vande Werken, stated clerk

Overture 19: Delete Church Order Supplement, Article 13-c, Regulation b

I. Background

Classis Arizona recently approved the temporary loan of a CRCNA pastor to a non-CRCNA church. The congregation to which the pastor was loaned is an independent church, most of whose members are formerly from the Christian Reformed Church and the Reformed Church in America (RCA). When this church began about fifteen years ago, it sought financial aid from the churches of Classis Arizona and was turned down, with consequential hard feelings. Subsequent efforts by members of Classis Arizona to repair relationships have not been successful until recently. The congregation has vowed to remain independent of any denominational affiliation, even though it supports ministry causes of the CRCNA and the RCA with finances, encouragement, and prayers. Its preaching and teaching are thoroughly Reformed.

When leaders of this congregation read the language of regulation b, from Church Order Supplement, Article 13-c, they took deep offense at the suggestion that the person they hired would have the “duty” to bring their church into the CRCNA. Classis heard of their hurt at its most recent meeting and promised to address the language in regulation b with the synod of the CRC. Through our discussions we discovered that regulation b is generally practiced in our denomination as more of a “hope” than a “duty.”

The regulation in question reads as follows:

The minister contemplating service in an undenominational church acknowledges it as a matter of duty to bring such a church into the Christian Reformed Church, or at least into a Reformed denomination similar to the Christian Reformed Church.

II. Overture

Classis Arizona overtures Synod 2011 to delete regulation b of Church Order Supplement, Article 13-c.

Grounds:

1. This regulation puts the minister-on-loan in an untenable position, requiring him/her to accomplish something over which he/she has no control.
2. This regulation could bring offense (and already has in at least one instance) to the church requesting the loan of a CRCNA pastor, thus damaging or even negating the intended effect of the regulation.
3. A CRCNA pastor on loan to a non-CRCNA church will by their very presence influence that church regarding the Reformed faith.
4. Regulation a is comprehensive enough to allow for the deletion of regulation b.

Classis Arizona
Derek Van Dalen, stated clerk

Overture 20: Amend Church Order Article 47

I. Background

For the past several years there have been ongoing discussions in three sister denominations regarding how to respond to the Belhar Confession. The Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRC), Reformed Church in America (RCA), and Presbyterian Church in the USA (PCUSA) have held focus groups, published materials, and wrestled with the content of the Belhar Confession. The RCA General Synod of 2009 proposed adoption of the Belhar Confession, and their General Synod of 2010 finalized the approval. The 2010 General Assembly of the PCUSA proposed adoption, with potential final adoption by the 2011 General Assembly. The CRC Synod 2009 proposed adoption of the Belhar Confession to Synod 2012, allowing for three years of discussion.

On the surface, the processes appear to be the same. But there is a significant difference. In both the RCA and PCUSA confessional changes or additions require approval by two-thirds of their classes or presbyteries, respectively. The mandate for regional body approval creates a healthy denomination-wide discussion process. It also guarantees that a significant majority of the denomination approves a confessional change or addition before it takes place.

The RCA Book of Order provisions outline their processes in the following:

Rules and Amendments of the Government of the Reformed Church in America and Disciplinary Procedures

Sec. 1. The General Synod shall have power to make all rules and regulations necessary to put into effect any and all articles of the Government, the Disciplinary Procedures, the Formularies, and the Liturgy of the Reformed Church in America.

Sec. 2. Amendments to the Government, the Disciplinary and Judicial Procedures, the Formularies, and the Liturgy and the Directory for Worship shall be

made only upon adoption by the General Synod at a stated meeting, with recommendation to the classes for approval. At least two-thirds of the classes shall approve a proposed amendment in order to secure its adoption. If an amendment is approved by the classes, the General Synod, at its discretion, may pass a final declarative resolution on the amendment. When the declarative action has taken place, the amendment shall become effective.

The following provisions are from the PCUSA Constitution:

G-18.0200 2. Confessional Documents

G-18.0201 Amendments to Confessional Documents

a. Amendments to the confessional documents of this church may be made only in the following manner:

- (1) The approval of the proposed amendment by the General Assembly and its recommendation to the presbyteries;
- (2) The approval in writing of two thirds of the presbyteries;
- (3) The approval and enactment by the next ensuing General Assembly.

The CRC Church Order (as indicated below) only requires approval by two subsequent synods, with no direct classical input or approval required, though there must be enough time for the classes to respond if they wish.

Article 47

The task of synod includes the adoption of the creeds, of the Church Order, and of the principles and elements of worship. Synod shall approve the liturgical forms, the *Psalter Hymnal*, and the Bible versions suitable for use in worship. No substantial alterations shall be effected by synod in these matters unless the churches have had prior opportunity to consider the advisability of the proposed changes.

—Cf. Supplement, Article 47

Supplement, Article 47

Regulations Pertaining to Article 47 of the Church Order

- a. A substantial alteration is any alteration which changes the essential meaning of the creeds or the articles of the Church Order or which changes the church's regulation of its worship through the adopted liturgical forms, *Psalter Hymnal*, principles and elements of worship, or the designated Bible versions to be used in the worship services. A committee recommending any change in these matters shall specify what change is being recommended and shall state whether or not the change is a "substantial alteration."
- b. *Prior opportunity* is understood as sufficient time for churches and classes to be able to respond to a substantial alteration with overtures or other communications to synod before the substantial alteration is adopted. Generally, churches and classes have prior opportunity in the case of study committee reports because such reports are received by November 1 of the year before synod meets. Generally, churches and classes do not have prior opportunity in the case of standing-committee reports and overtures because the printed *Agenda for Synod* is received only two months before synod meets and one month after the majority of the classes have had their last meetings before synod.
- c. If the churches and classes have not had prior opportunity to consider a substantial alteration, it must be submitted to a following synod, which will consider its advisability. The first decision shall be understood as a decision to propose; the action of a following synod shall be understood as a decision to adopt.
- d. A proposed change may not be implemented until it is adopted by a following synod. It has no effect on any other synodical decisions until it is adopted.
- e. A proposed change has the same status as the recommendation of a study committee. The synod proposing the change may designate a person(s) to represent the change at the synod to which it is submitted for adoption.

The proposed change and its representatives have all the rights and privileges of the recommendations and representatives of a synodical study committee.

- f. If a proposed change is rejected by a following synod, that change (or one substantially similar) is not available for adoption by a succeeding synod unless it has been first proposed once again by synod.
- g. Changes to Church Order Supplements are not subject to the above requirements.

(Acts of Synod 1995, pp. 755-56)
(Amended Acts of Synod 1996, p. 500)

Synod 2009 of the CRC provided three years for discussions to take place and, as Regulation b of Church Order Supplement, Article 47 provides, "for churches and classes to be able to respond to a substantial alteration with overtures or other communications to synod before the substantial alteration is adopted." However, when Classis Niagara responded with an overture to Synod 2010, suggesting Synod 2012 adopt the Belhar Confession at the level of the Contemporary Testimony, their work was set aside when synod withheld action on their overture. As a result, it appears that no responses from the classes will be considered until Synod 2012 actually meets and the three-year period is essentially reduced to a single synod meeting.

In addition to the consideration of the Belhar Confession, the *Banner* editor has recommended that the Contemporary Testimony be raised to full confessional status (*A Modest Proposal*, December 2010). And while there has been no official action on the Accra Confession, suggestions have been heard that we add that as one of our confessions as well.

With this range of suggestions at work, it would be wise to adopt the processes of the RCA and PCUSA as our own with regard to confessional changes or additions. While the three-year period for reflection on the Belhar Confession approved by Synod 2009 was intended to allow for maximum local input, not all classes have set aside time to discuss it, and as we have seen in the case of the Classis Niagara overture, efforts by the local classes to directly address the matter have been set aside. Mandating agreement by a minimum of two-thirds of the classes to confessional changes or additions would guarantee there was widespread approval before confessional changes would be finalized.

II. Overture

Classis Grand Rapids North overtures Synod 2011 to amend Church Order Article 47 so that one synod would propose the change or addition and two-thirds of the classes would then have to approve by a majority vote before a subsequent synod could finalize the change or addition.

Grounds:

1. This process would assure that a significant majority of the denomination agreed with a proposed confessional change or addition, helping to maintain the unity of the CRC.
2. This process would guarantee a denomination-wide discussion.
3. This process would mirror that used by our closest sister denominations.

Classis Grand Rapids North
William G. Vis, stated clerk

Overture 21: Amend Church Order Supplement, Article 17

The purpose of this overture is to propose an amendment to Church Order Supplement, Article 17-a (Provisions regulating release from ministerial service in a congregation¹) such that the indefinite amount of time the “process of evaluation and assistance”² takes for either declaring a released minister eligible for call or declaring the minister released from ministerial office, be defined within the time frame of sixteen to eighteen months. This would provide a year plus one classis meeting for a classically appointed oversight committee to complete its work and prepare recommendations—sixteen months for those that meet three times a year and eighteen months for those that meet twice a year.

Classis Grand Rapids North overtures Synod 2011 to approve a change in wording and, therefore, duration of the “process of evaluation and assistance” as laid out in Supplement, Article 17-a. We believe that the “process of evaluation and assistance,” if it is not limited to sixteen to eighteen months, can move away from its intended purpose of healing and restoration of parties involved.

A. *Proposed change to Article 17-a, Regulation a, 1*

Current Supplement, Article 17-a, Regulation a, 1

The classis shall appoint an oversight committee of no fewer than three persons to plan and monitor an evaluation of readiness for the ministry that focuses on professional competence and personal/emotional status. An evaluator or evaluators mutually agreed upon by the classis and the oversight committee shall conduct the evaluation. (Pastor-Church Relations is able to recommend appropriate evaluators.) Classis shall determine who is responsible for any costs of evaluation or stipulated personal counseling.³

Proposed Supplement, Article 17-a, Regulation a, 1

The classis shall appoint an oversight committee of no fewer than three persons to plan and monitor an evaluation of readiness for the ministry that focuses on professional competence and personal/emotional status. An evaluator or evaluators mutually agreed upon by the classis and the oversight committee shall conduct the evaluation. (Pastor-Church Relations is able to recommend appropriate evaluators.) Classis shall determine who is responsible for any costs of evaluation or stipulated personal counseling. *The classis shall reach the final decision within sixteen to eighteen months after the separation of the pastor and the church.*

B. *Proposed change to Church Order Supplement, Article 17-a, Regulation a, 4*

Current Supplement, Article 17-a, Regulation a, 4

If the classis does not declare the minister eligible for call, it shall, with the concurrence of the synodical deputies, release the minister from office.⁴

¹ *Church Order and Its Supplements 2010*, Supplement, Article 17-a, p. 34.

² *Ibid.*, Article 17-d, p. 34.

³ *Ibid.*, Supplement, Article 17-a, p. 34.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

Proposed Supplement, Article 17-a, Regulation a, 4

If the classis does not declare the minister eligible for call *within sixteen to eighteen months after the time of release*, it shall, with the concurrence of the synodical deputies, release the minister from office.

C. *Proposed change to Church Order Supplement, Article 17-a, Regulation b*

Current Supplement, Article 17-a, Regulation b

If a classis decides a congregation that has been separated from its minister needs a time of evaluation and assistance before extending another call, it shall specify at the time of separation what is required before the congregation calls another minister.⁵

Proposed Supplement, Article 17-a, Regulation b

If a classis decides a congregation that has been separated from its minister needs a time of evaluation and assistance before extending another call, it shall specify at the time of separation what is required before the congregation calls another minister. *Ordinarily this process of evaluation and assistance shall take place within sixteen to eighteen months of separation.*

Grounds:

1. Article 17 is designed as a way for “ministers who are neither eligible for retirement nor worthy of discipline” to be “released from active ministerial service in a congregation.”⁶ This article is not intended to bring special discipline to the minister that may result in “deposition” or “suspension”⁷ from ministerial service; rather, its intentions are to bring restoration and healing to the pastor before he or she is eligible for call. A time period beyond sixteen to eighteen months for the “process of evaluation and assistance” does a disservice to the article’s original intention. After sixteen to eighteen months, the minister may find himself or herself in an unjust scenario without work, without an income, and “in limbo” with regard to eligibility for call.
2. If a classis has not accomplished the “process of evaluation and assistance” within sixteen to eighteen months, it has erred in the application of Article 17-a and its Supplement and any further emendation beyond that time limit is unnecessary.
3. If a classis “oversight committee”⁸ cannot finish the “process of evaluation and assistance” in sixteen to eighteen months with an ability to recommend the minister eligible for call, then the “oversight committee” must recommend to classis a decision to release the minister from office. Because there are no grounds for “special discipline” within Article 17, the minister at this point has the option of an appeal to the decision of classis with grounds that he or she is indeed ready to be eligible for call. Also, the minister has the option to appeal the decision of classis before synod.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*, Article 17-a, p. 33.

⁷ *Ibid.*, Article 82, p. 95.

⁸ *Ibid.*, Supplement, Article 17-a, a, 1, p. 34.

4. If Supplement, Article 17-a, Regulation a, 1 had a time limit of sixteen to eighteen months, the parties involved would be held accountable to accomplish their work within that time period. The minister would be motivated to meet the requirements of the process, and the classis oversight committee would be held accountable to work through any road blocks to restore a colleague and fellow minister of the Word into ministerial office.
5. If, during the sixteen- to eighteen-month process the classis oversight committee realizes that classis has erred and that the wrong Church Order article was used with regard to the minister's ministerial status (Article 83 says that "special discipline shall be applied to officebearers if they violate the Form of Subscription, are guilty of neglect or abuse of office, or in any way seriously deviate from sound doctrine and godly conduct"⁹), they have the option of recommending to classis an action appropriate for that Church Order article.
6. Many of the same grounds apply to the council of the church that has been separated from its minister. They, too, need to be held accountable to work through the issues that precipitated the separation, and to take proper action to be eligible to call another minister. For accountability reasons, the council needs to work within the sixteen to eighteen months during which they are required to pursue spiritual health and any restructuring or rebuilding necessary before being declared ready to extend a call.

Classis Grand Rapids North
William G. Vis, stated clerk

Overture 22: Add a Supplement to Church Order Article 40-a

I. Background

Synod 2000 adopted a new rule requiring classes to send delegates from all member churches whenever the concurrence of synodical deputies was required. This decision was in response to an egregious case. It came to the floor of synod by way of a synodical deputy report, which stated that only five officebearers were present with the deputies to conduct an examination of a candidate. Synod found this to be inappropriate representation for a meeting of classis. Synod was concerned for the integrity of classical decisions and, in particular, those concerning admission to and release from the office of minister of the Word. Motivated by this incident, Synod 2000 approved the following declaration:

That any classical decision requiring the concurrence of the synodical deputies be made in the presence of delegates from all the churches which are members of the classis in which the action is being taken. If a classis contracta is necessary because of justifiable circumstances, to be determined in consultation with the deputies, a contracted classis shall never be convened with fewer than half the churches represented. A quorum for a classis contracta shall be half the churches of a classis plus one.

⁹ *Ibid.*, Article 83, p. 95.

Grounds:

1. Any business requiring the presence of the synodical deputies is sufficiently weighty for the life of the church to require the deliberation of the full classis.
2. The expectation that a quorum of half the churches of the classis plus one for a contracted classis meeting is not unreasonable and follows accepted practice for a quorum in many organizations.
3. A regulative statement on this matter will greatly assist the synodical deputies, who encounter a variety of practices when going from one classis to another.

(Acts of Synod 2000, p. 668)

II. Overture

Classis Grand Rapids East overtures synod to define and regulate contracted classis meetings with the following proposed Supplement to Church Order Article 40-a:

- a. A classis may elect to convene specific contracted sessions due to justifiable circumstances as determined by a prior full session of classis.
- b. All member churches shall be invited and authorized to attend a contracted session of classis, including those churches which have been excused from attending.
- c. A quorum of half of the member churches plus one is required for decisions of classis to be settled and binding.

Grounds:

1. The use of a duly constituted classis contracta, under some circumstances, allows for a more thorough and appropriate examination.
2. By defining what constitutes a quorum for decisions of classis, Synod 2000 corrected one of the problems it sought to alleviate. It did not need to go further by requiring all member churches to be present when a decision needed the concurrence of synodical deputies.
3. Under the present rule, what constitutes “justifiable circumstances” is not defined, making interpretation inconsistent and planning difficult, whereas the proposed guideline regulates the practice by referring the determination of such justification to the body for whom the circumstances apply.

Note: The understanding and intent regarding this overture is that the proposed guidelines replace the decision of Synod 2000 regarding this matter.

III. Elaboration of the grounds

A. The use of a duly constituted classis contracta, under some circumstances, allows for a more thorough and appropriate examination.

The frequency of examination of candidates varies greatly among the classes. Classis Grand Rapids East has a particularly high number of exams, examining some 33 candidates in the past 6 years. This is not a complaint! Many officebearers delegated to classis would agree that these examinations are a high-point in the life of a classis. It is a privilege to hear the candidate’s testimony regarding how God led them to this point and is calling them now into fulltime ministry. Moreover, it is an important responsibility to conduct a thorough examination to determine readiness for ministry. While a candidate has

certainly already withstood many examinations, the classical exam is important because it is now the church, gathered in a classis, which does the exam.

Already meeting three times a year, and with a growing agenda due to some important goals regarding classical renewal, Classis Grand Rapids East discovered that the examination of candidates often felt like something “tacked on” to the regular meeting. With a long agenda and (oftentimes) multiple candidates to be examined, the proceedings felt rushed and impersonal. The time that could be given for the exam and to each person being examined was simply not sufficient. The result was that the exams felt like an unwanted interruption—hardly the impression one wants to leave with the candidates.

This situation became even more acute in 2009 when classis adopted a new classical structure to facilitate the goals of classical renewal and to focus on collaborative ministry and fellowship. A host of new committees were formed at the classical level to increase awareness of the work of its member churches as well as to facilitate cooperative work among the churches and agencies. These are goals urged by synod as well. But the expanded new focus of classis also meant more meetings. So Classis Grand Rapids East decided, whenever possible, to have special sessions devoted to the examination of candidates and to ordinarily conduct those examinations using a classis contracta. All the churches of classis were welcome to send delegates, but half plus one were required to be present. Classis reasoned that this would accomplish the twin goals of allowing for devoted time for examinations while not overburdening the churches in a way that would detract from other valuable ministry objectives.

In fact, the practice of devoted meetings for the purpose of examining candidates has led to much more meaningful exams. Candidates have become the focal point of the meeting. Delegates may take the time and give the attention that the occasion merits. In other words, classis has found that, in their circumstances, the use of a classis contracta for the purpose of examining candidates has led to better exams. These have always been duly constituted contracta (i.e., a quorum has been present each time, and all member churches are welcome to send delegates).

B. By defining what constitutes a quorum for decisions of classis, Synod 2000 corrected one of the problems it sought to alleviate. It did not need to go further by requiring all member churches to be present when a decision needed the concurrence of synodical deputies.

As the background section to the decision of Synod 2000 states, the Church Order actually “does not give classes permission to hold an official meeting when only some of the churches of classis are expected to attend” (*Acts of Synod 2000*, p. 668). Neither does the Church Order define a quorum necessary for conducting business. The 2000 decision went on to note that despite this silence by the Church Order, some classes have used contracta to conduct their business. Particularly disturbing were instances in which a classis met “with fewer than half the churches of the region present” (p. 668). In fact, it was the particularly egregious example of this practice that prompted the 2000 decision. So the decision remedied this problem by now defining what constitutes a quorum for a classis contracta: half the churches plus one. As one can deduce from the decision, this was based on common business practice “in many organizations” (p. 668). The Church Order was

silent on the matter, never answering the vital question, How many delegates need to be present for classis to officially act?

By defining what constitutes a quorum for a *contracta*, Synod 2000 provided an answer to this vital question. It is important to note that this by itself would have disallowed the conduct that brought this case to synod in the first place. But the 2000 decision went further, requiring all member churches to be present when the synodical deputies are required, allowing for an exception only when “justifiable circumstances” exist.

Classis Grand Rapids East conducted an informal survey of the classes for the purposes of this overture. Following are some of the findings:

- For several classes, simply getting at least half the churches to attend a regularly scheduled classis meeting is difficult. While all churches are expected to attend, not all actually attend. As one stated clerk said, “Getting a quorum even for our regular meeting can be a real challenge.” Thus, when a “regular” session of classis is called, the expectation is that at least half plus one will attend. Similarly, some classes have scheduled extra meetings for the purpose of examinations.
- Classes send notice to all member churches to attend, but they have an understanding that some of the churches simply will not come. The reasons for this vary. Distance is the most often-cited reason, but there are also scheduling issues and financial issues. Moreover, the turnaround time on exams is sometimes quite short—that is, when a candidate needs to fill a position (such as going to the mission field) and the churches do not receive ample notice to schedule the exam. Situations like this can make it difficult to get all the churches to attend.

What happens in all these cases is that all member churches are called to the classis meeting, but some do not come. Yet the classis goes ahead with its business as long as it has a quorum. The question Classis Grand Rapids East raises is this: Why is that any different from requiring a quorum to come, while inviting all the churches to come? The unspoken rule that seems to be governing the work in all the classes is that half the churches plus one are required for official classical action. Classis Grand Rapids East is urging synod to make that the official rule, while still inviting and welcoming all churches to attend an examination.

C. Under the present rule, what constitutes *justifiable circumstances* is not defined, making interpretation inconsistent and planning difficult, whereas the proposed guideline regulates the practice by referring the determination of such justification to the body for whom the circumstances apply.

While requiring delegates from all the churches to be in attendance for a decision that required the concurrence of the deputies, one exception was allowed. The 2000 decision allows for a classis *contracta* when it is necessary because of justifiable circumstances, which are to be determined in conjunction with the synodical deputies.

Recall that this decision was made in part (as stated in Ground 3) to assist synodical deputies by giving them a “regulative statement.” Understandably, they desired some guidance regarding classis’ obligations for attendance in these kinds of decisions. The problem, however, is that the rule does not say what constitutes “justifiable circumstances.” And now instead of

the classes' having "a variety of practices," synodical deputies may among themselves have a variety of perspectives as to what qualifies as a justifiable circumstance. This has already been encountered by Classis Grand Rapids East. In attempting to follow the synodical decision, classis has contacted synodical deputies prior to arranging a classis contracta devoted to exams. Some have found the above reasons to be justifiable, but others have not. The effect has been that the classis has had to schedule meetings and notify churches on a case-by-case basis, with the decision resting on whether or not the three synodical deputies agree. In such situations one might be tempted to go looking for deputies who agree!

In determining what constitutes "justifiable circumstances," the informal survey found that geographical distance was cited as a sufficient reason for three classes to examine a candidate in a classis contracta. This typically occurs in classes that are geographically spread out, in which the distance between member churches makes it difficult and expensive to bring them all together. The reason why distance seems to be the universally accepted justification for a contracta can likely be traced to a paragraph in *The Revised Church Order Commentary* (1967). While classis contracta is not dealt with in the Church Order, there is a very brief word about it in that commentary, citing its use in cases in which a classis is called upon to consider and act on matters that cannot wait until the next regular scheduled meeting of classis. The commentary states that while all the churches are notified, those "at a distance simply do not come" (*The Revised Church Order Commentary*, p. 162). This single comment probably explains the fact that distance is cited as a justification for a contracta. By contrast, Classis Grand Rapids East churches are all within a few miles of each other and, by this reasoning, not entitled to this exception.

But this fails to take into consideration several key factors. These geographically spread out classes, under Church Order Article 40-b, already receive an exception to the rule of meeting three times a year, so they meet only twice. If Classis Grand Rapids East were to meet in special session and examine three candidates per session, it would mean an average of five to six meetings per year. Even though the churches are close together, this still requires the expense and time associated with calling a meeting of classis, delegating officebearers who must find time in their schedules, oftentimes providing food for delegates and visitors along with other incidental costs. Viewed together, the time and cost of so many meetings of geographically close churches begins to approach the amount that allows geographically distant churches the justifiable circumstance exception. The problem is that what constitutes justifiable is not defined and is not uniformly applied. So, in effect, neither the classes nor the deputies have a clear regulative principle. Classis Grand Rapids East asks synod to make the quorum, as it has already defined it, to be the bright line necessary in these cases. While still inviting and welcoming broad participation by member churches in the matter of examinations, the guidelines allow action by a classis contracta so long as a quorum exists.

Classis Grand Rapids East
Alfred E. Mulder, stated clerk

Overture 23: Amend Church Order Supplement, Article 17-a

I. Background

Church Order Article 17-a enables pastors to be released from the churches they serve for weighty reasons other than discipline or retirement. The recurrent and increasing use of this article—in 2010 there were 20 cases; in 2009, 12; in 2008, 10—is deeply disturbing. What makes matters worse is that too often such separations result in deep wounds that are inadequately addressed. This is not to dismiss the sincere efforts that are put forth by interveners at the local, classical, and denominational levels to address the wounds of the separation. We acknowledge that many agonizing hours are spent trying to resolve the conflicting issues that lead to the separation under Article 17. Yet it appears that after the terms of the separation (i.e., severance, provision for counseling, and other support) are agreed upon, the urge to seek healing of relational wounds often dissipates. Perhaps the parties are too exhausted to deal with these wounds; or perhaps the assumption is made that since the terms of the separation have been agreed upon, the pursuit of redemptive healing is not necessary; or perhaps the need to address these wounds is simply overlooked. Yet the gospel requires that we do our utmost to seek reconciliation. Note that by reconciliation in this context we mean a redemptive healing of the relational wounds, *not* a resumption of the pastor's ministry with the church with which he or she has engaged in an Article 17 release.

Events leading up to the use of Article 17-a are often relationally wounding and anger-inducing. Indeed, such relational wounds bear similarities to physical wounds in the healing process. In order to heal, a physical wound needs not only to be dressed; it requires cleaning before it is dressed if the wound is to heal well and as quickly as possible. Dressing an uncleaned wound can cause permanent scarring. An uncleaned wound can also lead to illnesses; in the worst case it can even cause fatal infections. Likewise, when Article 17 is applied, the pastor and family as well as the congregation and its leaders are often wounded, at times deeply. Dressing the relational wound can be likened to settling the terms of the separation (i.e., severance, provision for counseling, and other support). However, the relational wounds also need to be cleaned lest anger give way to decreased ministry effectiveness and entrenched bitterness. The way to clean these wounds is through redemptive healing.

Such redemptive healing means that the hurts that have been inflicted—intentionally or unintentionally—are aired in a safe environment with the use of competent restorative dialogue facilitators. The hurts are recognized, acknowledged, validated, owned up to, and finally mutually forgiven by the parties. The goal of redemptive healing is that while the wounds still hurt and likely will for some time, the relationships are restored. Once this redemptive healing happens, the pastor will be in a better position to consider whether to pursue a new call, and the church will be in a better position to issue a call for a new pastor.

Our denomination has provided guidelines for addressing these wounds (see *Acts of Synod 1998*, pp. 392-96). Indeed, these guidelines were drawn up “against a background of concern for the possibility of healing for both pastors and congregations” (p. 395). However, these are *guidelines* and, thus,

they can be understood to be optional with the result that too often they are overlooked. In effect, this overture seeks to turn the *guidelines* into *requirements* when Church Order Article 17 is invoked. Pastors and churches must be encouraged to observe Paul's plea: "If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone" (Rom. 12:18, NIV) and be held accountable for it.

II. Overture

Classis Alberta North overtures Synod 2011 to amend Church Order Supplement, Article 17-a by inserting the following as the new section a, 1 (the current sections a, 1-6 would become sections a, 2-7):

- 1) When the separation under Article 17 has resulted in woundedness between pastor and church, classis shall ensure that both pastor and council make a sincere effort at redemptive healing using competent restorative dialogue facilitators who are to report back to classis. This effort is to be made before the pastor accepts a new call and the church extends a new call. The church, pastor, and classis shall share the cost of this effort.
 - a) Redemptive healing requires that hurts that have been inflicted—intentionally or unintentionally—are aired in a safe environment with the use of competent restorative dialogue facilitators. The hurts are recognized, acknowledged, validated, owned, and forgiven by the parties.
 - b) The goal of redemptive healing is that, while the wounds still hurt and likely will for some time, the relationships are restored.

Grounds:

1. Pastor-church separations under Article 17 often result in deep, long-lasting, relational, emotional, and spiritual wounds for the pastor, his or her family, and the church. This amendment mandates that a sincere effort at healing be made.
2. Seeking redemptive healing between pastor and church is required by the gospel (1 Cor. 14:33; 2 Cor. 5:18; Col. 2:2, 3:13-15; 1 Peter 3:8). We owe it to one another to help the parties find a way to overcome a painful separation.
3. Redemptive healing is important in the pastor's readiness to accept a new call and the church's readiness to issue a new call.
4. This amendment is in line with the synodical report in 2005 by the Committee to Study Restorative Justice.

Classis Alberta North
Rick Struik, stated clerk

Overture 24: Alter Wording for Church Order Articles Proposed by the Faith Formation Committee

Classis Holland overtures Synod 2011 to alter the following wording proposed by the Faith Formation Committee for Church Order Article 59-c and Supplement, Articles 78-81-b of in its report to Synod 2011 (see phrases underlined):

Proposed Article 59-c

Confessing members receive all the privileges and responsibilities of such membership. Privileges include but are not limited to presentation of children for infant baptism, the right to vote at congregational meetings, and eligibility to hold office. . . .

Proposed Supplement, Articles 78-81-b

A person who persistently rejects the admonition of the consistory shall be suspended from the privileges of membership. The privileges of confessing membership include but are not limited to the right to present children for holy baptism, the right to vote at congregational meetings, and eligibility to hold office.

Both phrases would instead read, "and may include eligibility to hold office."

Grounds:

1. Church Order Article 3-a states that eligibility to hold office is conditional upon meeting "the biblical requirements." Thus not everyone is eligible simply on the basis of communicant membership.
2. The Christian Reformed Church officially holds to two interpretations of Scripture concerning the ordination of women to the offices of the church (*Acts of Synod 1995, Acts of Synod 2000*). By stating that confessing members are eligible to hold office, it would seem to give an automatic "right" and would not account for those congregations who do not ordain women to such offices.
3. The "eligibility to hold office" does not take into account spiritual gifts that are conferred upon individuals in different form and measure. Including the words *may include* would grant church councils the ability to nominate for office those whom they discern possess the appropriate spiritual gifts.

Classis Holland

Anthony L. Louwerse, stated clerk

Overture 25: Do Not Adopt the Proposed Church Order Supplement, Article 59-c within the Faith Formation Committee Report

The council of Owen Sound CRC, Ontario, overtures Synod 2011 to not adopt the proposed Church Order Supplement, Article 59-c. Instead, it should be deleted from the report.

Grounds:

1. The proposed Supplement, Article 59-c is misleading. It is written in vague language and may be misinterpreted as putting an age requirement upon profession of faith.
2. It is contradictory (i.e., the proposed Article 59-a mentions “age- and ability-appropriate” twice; proposed Church Order Supplement, Article 59-c introduces a fixed age). The “age- and ability-appropriate” “rule” should also apply to the “privileges and responsibilities” (proposed Article 59-c).
3. It is divisive. Proposed Church Order Supplement, Article 59-c promotes congregationalism (i.e., it establishes a firm “rule” of age requirement that can lead to disputes within the classis and the denomination).

Council of First CRC, Owen Sound, Ontario
Bill Klingenberg, clerk

Note: This overture was presented to Classis Huron but was not adopted.

Overture 26: Withhold Action on Church Order Changes by Faith Formation Committee

Classis Columbia overtures Synod 2011 to withhold action on the proposed changes to the Church Order submitted by the Faith Formation Committee.

Grounds:

1. The proposed changes give significant leeway to individual churches; however, the celebration of the Lord’s Supper is a core doctrine of the denomination, and its practice should be guided by clear and consistent policies.
2. The proposed changes often use the phrase “age- and ability-appropriate faith,” yet this clause is vague and ambiguous:
 - a. Neither Scripture nor our confessions distinguish between different levels of faith based on the age or ability of the respondent. Romans 10:9 gives very clear guidelines: “If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.”¹
 - b. In addition to not defining this clause, this proposal eliminates the existing mechanism currently used to gauge one’s faith and does not stipulate who determines the appropriateness of one’s faith. Would the elders, the respondent’s parents, or the respondent make this determination? If the elders do, would this be done with “an appropriate examination concerning their motives, faith, and life,” or by some other means? It would not be wise for so many different practices to be in place within the denomination for such an important doctrine.

¹Certainly Paul would not exclude a handicapped person who is unable to speak. The limited instances of such cases within the CRCNA do not warrant an overhaul of Church Order. See Matt. 16:16; 1 Cor. 12:3; Acts 8:37; John 3:16.

3. The use of the phrase *faithful participation* proposed in Church Order Article 63 is confusing. It could mean either “in accordance with Scripture” or “ongoing and consistent.”² If it is the latter, the article does not make clear which children should be encouraged to participate—all children or just those with age- and ability-appropriate faith.

We do recognize problems within the existing protocol of insisting a full profession of faith prior to admittance to the table. It is quite conceivable that a child could demonstrate extraordinary maturity and faith, and by all measures ought to be invited to participate in communion. Yet the second question of the form for Profession of Faith asks the respondent, “Do you believe that the Bible is the Word of God revealing Christ and his redemption, and that the confessions of this church faithfully reflect this revelation?” Most children, even if their faith is strong and true, cannot positively answer this question, since they have not yet been instructed in our confessions.

Perhaps a solution to this dilemma would be the addition of a third membership category. Building on the recommendation given to Synod 1995,³ a potential communicant could follow all of the current procedures with the exception of answering the second part of question two. This would elevate the status from a “baptized member” to that of a “communicant member” who is welcome at the table. Upon completion of a catechetical and doctrinal curriculum, the communicant member could then publically respond to the second part of question two and become a “corporate member” who takes on the full responsibility of the church including eligibility to hold office.

Pursuing this course would provide a consistent mechanism whereby children who have demonstrated maturity in the faith could be welcomed to the table, while maintaining the important step of an examination and public profession prior to participation.⁴ In addition, it would emphasize and encourage the value of confessional education within our denomination.

Classis Columbia

Howard B. Spaan, stated clerk

Overture 27: Provide Churches with Another Year to Consider Church Order Changes Proposed by the Faith Formation Committee

I. Introduction

Synod 2007 formed a Faith Formation Committee with a five-year mandate to “deepen the integration of biblical teaching; confessional norms; church polity; and liturgical, educational, and pastoral practices in the CRC with respect to (1) participation in the Lord’s Supper and (2) public profession of faith . . .” (*Acts of Synod 2007*, p. 655). After much study, the committee brought forward its third, but most substantial report, in 2010. A draft of the report covers sixty pages in the *Agenda for Synod 2010* (pp. 586-646). The

² In other words, does the proposal mean our children should be encouraged to participate in the supper with faithful adherence to the guidelines given in Scripture, or does it mean that they should faithfully participate in communion each and every time it’s offered?

³ “Clarification of Public Profession of Faith for Covenant Children,” *Agenda for Synod 1995*, pp. 265-285.

most important recommendation to synod was the request to endorse the following “guiding principle”:

All baptized members who come with age- and ability-appropriate faith in Jesus Christ are welcome to the Lord’s Table and called to obey the scriptural commands about participation (e.g., to “examine themselves,” to “discern the body,” to “proclaim the Lord’s death,” to “wait for others”) in an age- and ability-appropriate way, under the supervision of the elders. The elders have responsibility to nurture in the congregation grateful and obedient participation through encouragement, instruction, and accountability.

(*Acts of Synod 2010*, pp. 810-11)

The committee also brought forward two significant documents: Appendix A, titled, “Children at the Table: Toward a Guiding Principle for Biblically Faithful Celebrations of the Lord’s Supper,” and Appendix B, titled, “Affirming Baptism and Forming Faith.” Appendix A, in particular, raises many important questions of a practical nature that require further reflection. On pages 619-21 of the *Agenda for Synod 2010*, for example, the committee asks the following questions:

- Won’t this approach simply further congregationalism?
- What about cases in which young children participate, but then go through a period of time in which they rebel against the church?
- What about the issue of transferring from church to church and having various practices . . . ?
- Is there an age that is too young for “age-appropriate participation”?
- . . . and so forth

The committee provides its own tentative answers to these “difficult” and “complex” questions, but we question if the churches have adequately grappled with them. Synod 2010 received three overtures (two quite long) regarding the Faith Formation Committee. The first two asked synod to *withhold action* on the committee recommendations. The third overture asked synod to *reject* the committee’s “guiding principle.” Not only were these overtures not adequately answered at synod; they were not even analyzed or critiqued. A published survey in the *Agenda for Synod 2007* suggested that we “proceed slowly and sensitively” (*Agenda for Synod 2007*, p. 63). The Faith Formation Committee has repeatedly cautioned the same. We are not convinced that we are doing that—especially in light of a motion from the floor that was adopted at Synod 2010 requesting “that synod instruct the Faith Formation Committee to submit any Church Order changes it will propose according to the study committee schedule so that those changes may be adopted at Synod 2011 instead of being proposed at Synod 2011 for adoption at Synod 2012” (*Acts of Synod 2010*, p. 812)—in effect “fast-tracking” the committee report recommendations.

II. Overture

Hope CRC of Brantford, Ontario, overtures synod not to adopt (*fast-track*) the recommended Church Order changes proposed by the Faith Formation Committee in 2011, but instead to provide the churches with an extra year to reflect critically on the important changes proposed regarding children at the Lord’s Supper and profession of faith.

Grounds:

1. The changes recommended by the Faith Formation Committee are substantial. Substantial changes should not be rushed.
2. Not all the questions raised in Appendix A of the Faith Formation Committee report to Synod 2010 have been adequately answered.
3. The churches have not had adequate time to digest the Faith Formation Committee report and/or its recommendations.
4. A past survey, and the committee itself, has repeatedly cautioned the denomination to proceed carefully and sensitively.
5. Synod 2007 mandated the Faith Formation Committee to work with a five-year schedule. The five-year period is not over yet.

Council of Hope CRC, Brantford, Ontario
Geoff Dreise, clerk

Communication 1: Classis Central Plains

Synod 2010 requested the denomination

to give particular consideration to how the Form of Subscription or its revision can help encourage officebearers to vitally engage with the Reformed confessions and suggest these to members of the Form of Subscription Revision Committee II.

(Acts of Synod 2010, p. 804)

In response to this request, we wish to express appreciation for certain parts of each document, the original and the revised. We see benefits to retaining some of the original Form of Subscription, while at the same time we recognize the need for revision.

We appreciate the direct tone of language in the original form regarding disagreement or non-compliance with orthodox Christian Reformed doctrine and Church Order. We believe that the stronger language of the original more accurately communicates our desire for purity on the part of leaders and teachers. We deem the softer language of the revision to be less effective, allowing for more possibility of deviation.

At the same time, we praise some of the new elements of the revised form. Most important, we welcome the prominence of Scripture over and above the confessions. We also appreciate the inclusion of the Contemporary Testimony. We see the value of a more succinct, concise Form of Subscription, one that can be referred to more easily. Finally, we appreciate the fact that the proposed revision directs the reader to the Church Order rather than repeating the instructions of the order in the form.

In summary, we wish to communicate our appreciation for the work done to revise the Form of Subscription. We are thankful for a timely reminder to our commitment to unity. We would also like the revision committee to know our appreciation for the strong language of the original form, language that matches our strong commitment to purity and unity.

Classis Central Plains
John Gorter, stated clerk

Communication 2: Classis Northcentral Iowa

We disagree with the recommendation that the Belhar Confession be recognized as being on the same par as the three forms of unity. We have no problem recognizing it as a valuable addition to be used as the *Contemporary*

Testimony: Our World Belongs to God, but we feel that it lacks the deep doctrine and historicity to be made one of our doctrinal standards.

Classis Northcentral Iowa
Thomas J. Vos, Stated Clerk

Communication 3: Council of First CRC, Owen Sound, Ontario

We believe that the Form of Subscription Revision Committee II report does not address the original overture (*Agenda for Synod 2004*, p. 435) and is divisive.

Grounds:

1. The proposed Covenant for Officebearers, although written in much more positive language than the Form of Subscription, remains committed to the three confessions as being the basis of our faith after the Bible. The grounds of the original overture point directly to the theology and language of those confessions. We ask the rhetorical question of why someone who did not want to sign the present Form of Subscription would want to sign the new Covenant for Officebearers, given that the content is almost identical except for the tone? Our God is not very tolerant (Ex. 20; Deut. 11:13-21; Matt. 22:37).
2. The addition of *Our World Belongs to God* promotes a response of not wanting to sign the new Covenant for Officebearers due to ambiguity (i.e., *Our World* was revised in 2008 and no doubt will be again as it is a *contemporary* testimony; therefore, there would be reluctance to sign an ever-changing document until the changes could be reviewed by each prospective council member in every church. *Our World Belongs to God* already has its detractors who will not support its inclusion in the Covenant for Officebearers, causing needless disagreement exacerbating the problem listed in Ground 1 above.

Council of First CRC, Owen Sound, Ontario
Bill Klingenberg, clerk

Note: This communication was presented to Classis Huron but was not adopted.

Communication 4: Council of First CRC, Owen Sound, Ontario

We do not object to the revisions to the Three Reformed Standards; however, biblical accuracy is integral to being Reformed. We do not support the original basis for the revision. Specifically, we do not support the joint RCA/CRC hymnal.

Grounds:

1. Difference—despite synod's mandate to find ways to cooperate with the RCA (*Acts of Synod 2010*, p. 809) there remain substantial differences between the denominations (e.g., see RCA website, Position Papers, "Marriage and Cohabitation," and "Women in Ministry").

2. Divisive—given the differences between the denominations, a joint hymnal will create animosity within classes and churches concerning the adoption of a new hymnal.
3. Monetary—the desire by Faith Alive Christian Resources to save money or increase profits by producing a joint hymnal with the RCA should not control the creation of a new hymnal for the CRC.

Council of First CRC, Owen Sound, Ontario
Bill Klingenberg, clerk

Note: This communication was presented to Classis Huron but was not adopted.