

ACTS OF SYNOD WYOMING 2016
TENTH SYNOD OF THE
UNITED REFORMED CHURCHES IN NORTH AMERICA

JUNE 14-17, 2016

Convened and Hosted by
Bethany United Reformed Church
Wyoming, Michigan

Tuesday, June 14, 2016
Morning Session

ARTICLE 1

The chairman *pro tem*, Rev. Casey Freswick, minister of Bethany United Reformed Church in Wyoming, Michigan, calls the meeting to order. Rev. Derrick Vander Meulen, minister from Grace United Reformed Church in Torrance, California, reads Colossians 3:14-17; calls the delegates to sing the hymn, *Praise, My Soul, the King of Heaven*; and leads in prayer.

ARTICLE 2

The chairman *pro tem* welcomes all delegates, guests and visitors.

ARTICLE 3

The chairman *pro tem* calls the roll, which reveals that the following delegates are present:

Abbotsford, BC	Immanuel Covenant Reformed Church	Elder John Van Muyen Elder Richard Meyer
Alto, MI	Grace United Reformed Church	Rev. Michael Schout Elder Kelvin Elzinga
Anaheim, CA	Christ Reformed Church	Dr. Kim Riddlebarger Elder Steve Irons
Apple Valley, CA	High Desert United Reformed Church	Rev. Tom Morrison
Aylmer, ON	Bethel United Reformed Church of Aylmer	Elder Scott De Jong Elder Ken Evens

Beecher, IL	Faith United Reformed Church	Rev. Todd Joling Rev. Andrew Spriensma
Belgrade, MT	Belgrade United Reformed Church	Rev. Paul Lindemulder Elder Darrell De Haan
Bellingham, WA	Bellingham United Reformed Church	Rev. Benjamin Davenport Elder Stephen Veeneman
Boise, ID	Cloverdale United Reformed Church	Rev. Russell Herman Elder Ken Arendse
Boise, ID	Dayspring Reformed Church	Rev. Jonathan Van Hoogen* Dr. Jon Gosche*
Bowmanville, ON	Salem United Reformed Church	Rev. Brian Zegers Elder William Vogel
Brampton, ON	Hope Reformed Church	Rev. Matthew Van Dyken Elder Bruce Vrieling
Brantford, ON	Living Water Reformed Church	Rev. Greg Bylsma* Rev. Daniel Ventura
Brockville, ON	Bethel United Reformed Church	
Burlington, WA	Burlington United Reformed Church	Rev. Mark Stewart Elder Steve Schut
Byron Center, MI	Covenant United Reformed Church	Rev. Greg Lubbers Elder David Ten Haaf
Caledonia, MI	Trinity United Reformed Church	Rev. Brian Vos Elder Edward Wierenga
Calgary, AB	Bethel United Reformed Church	Rev. Keith Davis Elder Jesse Vink
Cape Coral, FL	Trinity Reformed Church	Dr. Cornelius Hegeman Elder Wayne Morosco
Carbondale, PA	Covenant Reformed Church of Carbondale	Rev. Richard J. Miller
Charlottetown, PEI	United Reforme Church of PEI	

Chino, CA	First United Reformed Church	Rev. Quentin Falkena Elder Carl Nagel
Coopersville, MI	Eastmanville United Reformed Church	Rev. Jephthah Nobel Elder Fred Zandstra
DeMotte, IN	Immanuel United Reformed Church	Rev. Thomas Wetselaar Elder Mark Van Der Molen
Des Moines, IA	Providence Reformed Church	Rev. Jody Lucero Elder Thomas Deatsch
Doon, IA	Doon United Reformed Church	Rev. Simon Lievaart Elder Cliff De Kam
Dunnville, ON	Grace Reformed Church	Rev. Henry Van Olst Elder Richard Schotsman
Dutton, MI	Dutton United Reformed Church	Rev. Brian Najapfour Elder James Hutt
Dyer, IN	Redeemer United Reformed Church	Rev. Jacques Roets Elder Donald Hammer
Edmonton, AB	Orthodox Reformed Church of Edmonton	Rev. Bill Pols Elder Peter Wright
Escondido, CA	Escondido United Reformed Church	Rev. Stephen Donovan Elder Huibert den Boer
Fresno, CA	Covenant United Reformed Church	Rev. David Inks Elder Stan Cotta*
Grand Prairie, AB	Covenant Reformed Church	Rev. William Van der Woerd
Grand Rapids, MI	Sovereign Grace United Reformed Church	Rev. Mitchell Dick Elder Dick Byker
Grand Rapids, MI	Walker United Reformed Church	Rev. Cory Dykstra Elder Steve Kuiper
Hamilton, ON	Rehoboth United Reformed Church	Rev. Steven Swets Elder Tony De Weerd
Hills, MN	Hills United Reformed Church	Rev. Alan Camarigg Elder Wendel Buys

Holland, MI	Faith United Reformed Church	Rev. Matthew Nuiver Elder Jon DeJonge
Hudsonville, MI	Cornerstone United Reformed Church	Rev. Phil Vos Elder Doug Ulberg
Jenison, MI	Bethel United Reformed Church	Elder Gary Veldink Elder Paul Wagenmaker
Jordan, ON	Immanuel United Reformed Church	Rev. John A. Bouwers Elder Klaas Stel
Kalamazoo, MI	Covenant United Reformed Church	Rev. Jeremy Veldman Elder Myron Rau
Kansas City, MO	Covenant Reformed Church	Rev. Harold Miller Elder Wil Postma*
Kelowna, BC	Grace Reformed Church in Kelowna	Rev. James Roosma Elder Mark Mack
Kennewick, WA	Grace United Reformed Church	Rev. Craig Davis Elder Steve Miller
Lacombe, AB	Redeemer United Reformed Church	Rev. Barry Beukema Elder Garth Pol
Lancaster, PA	Zeltenreich Reformed Church	Rev. Robert Godfrey Elder Steven Schulz
Lansing, IL	Oak Glen United Reformed Church	Rev. John Vermeer Elder Peter Smith
Leduc, AB	Grace Reformed Church of Leduc	Rev. Hank Van der Woerd
Lethbridge, AB	Trinity Reformed Church	Elder John Bekkering Elder Henry Doeve
Listowel, ON	Immanuel United Reformed Church	Rev. Fred Folkerts
Littleton, CO	Coram Deo Reformation Church	Rev. Tony Phelps Elder Adam Behnen
London, ON	Cornerstone United Reformed Church	Rev. Steve Williamson Elder Henry Nieboer

Loveland, CO	Calvary United Reformed Church	Rev. Charles Tedrick Elder Dan Seese
Lynden, WA	Covenant Grace Reformed	Rev. Dale Van Dyke Elder Chuck DeWaard
Lynden, WA	United Reformed Church of Lynden	Rev. Mark Vander Pol Elder Duane Scholten
Lynwood, IL	Lynwood United Reformed Church	Rev. Nick Alons Elder Bob Iwema
Missoula, MT	Covenant Reformed Church	Rev. Jared Beard
Nampa, ID	United Reformed Church of Nampa	Rev. Nick Smith Elder Case Houweling
Neerlandia, AB	Emmanuel Reformed Church	Rev. Ralph A. Pontier Elder Kevin Tiemstra
New Hampton, NY	Hudson Valley United Reformed Church	Rev. Kevin Hossink Elder Brant Nywening
New Haven, VT	New Haven United Reformed Church	Rev. Andrew Knott Elder Ray Brands
New Westminster, BC	Orthodox Reformed Church of New Westminster	Rev. Gary Zekveld Elder Jack Hummelman
New York, NY	Messiah's Reformed Fellowship	Rev. Paul T. Murphy*
Newton, NJ	Covenant Reformed Church	Rev. Aaron Verhoef*
Nobleton, ON	Immanuel Reformed Church of Nobleton	Rev. Maurice Luimes Elder Curtis Van Dyken
Oak Lawn, IL	First United Reformed Church	Rev. Ted Gray
Oceanside, CA	Oceanside United Reformed Church	
Ontario, CA	Ontario United Reformed Church	Rev. Adam Kaloostian Rev. Taylor Kern
Orange City, IA	Redeemer United Reformed Church	Rev. Todd De Rooy Elder Haryln Jacobsma

Oro-Medonte, ON	Grace United Reformed Church	Rev. Martin Overgaauw
Pantego, NC	Covenant United Reformed Church	Rev. Calvin Tuininga Elder Bernard Van Essendelft
Pasadena, CA	Pasadena United Reformed Church	Rev. Movses Janbazian Elder Joel Richter
Pella, IA	Covenant Reformed Church	Rev. Doug Barnes Rev. Pablo Landazuri
Phoenix, AZ	Phoenix United Reformed Church	Elder Darrel Kuiper Elder Philip Woudenberg
Pompton Plains, NJ	Pompton Plains Reformed Bible Church	Rev. Richard Kuiken Elder Martin Van De Weert
Ponoka, AB	Parkland Reformed Church	Rev. Mitchell Ramkissoon Elder Mark Stolk
Ripon, CA	Zion United Reformed Church	Rev. Angelo Contreras Elder Mark Hoeksema
Rock Valley, IA	Rock Valley United Reformed Church	Rev. Joel Vander Kooi Elder Allan Vande Kamp
Salem, OR	Immanuel's Reformed Church	Rev. Ed Marcusse Elder Gerrit Kroes
Sanborn, IA	Cornerstone United Reformed Church	Rev. Dan Donovan Elder Bob Anema
Santee, CA	Christ United Reformed Church	Dr. Ryan Glomsrud Rev. Andrea Ferrari*
Schererville, IN	Community United Reformed Church	Rev. James Oord Elder Jeff DeBoer
Sheffield, ON	Zion United Reformed Church of Sheffield	Rev. Christo Heiberg Elder Ralph Schuurman
Sioux Center, IA	Sioux Center United Reformed Church	Rev. Bradd L. Nymeyer Elder Harlan Harmelink

Sioux Falls, SD	Christ Reformed Church	Rev. Spencer Aalsburg Elder Mark Hoogwerf
Smithers, BC	Bethel Reformed Church	Rev. Lawrens Slagter Elder Alan Taylor
St. Catharines, ON	Trinity United Reformed Church	Elder Lambert DeGraaf Elder John Boekestyn
Strathroy, ON	Providence United Reformed Church	Rev. Harry Zekveld Elder George Bork
Sunnyside, WA	United Reformed Church of Sunnyside	Rev. Jordan Huff
Surrey, BC	Surrey Covenant Reformed Church	Rev. Dick Moes Elder Harry Ten Haaf
Telkwa, BC	Faith Reformed Church of Telkwa	Rev. James Folkerts Elder Brian Versteeg
Thunder Bay, ON	United Reformed Church of Thunder Bay	Rev. Ancel Merwin Elder Dick Dykstra
Toronto, ON	Covenant Reformed Church of Toronto	Rev. Eric Pennings
Torrance, CA	Grace United Reformed Church	Rev. William C. Godfrey Rev. Derrick Vander Meulen
Twin Falls, ID	New Covenant United Reformed Church	Rev. Christopher Folkerts Elder Rob Wybenga
Vineland, ON	Adoration United Reformed Church	Rev. Norm Van Eeden Petersman Elder Wilf Wikkerink
Visalia, CA	Trinity United Reformed Church	Rev. Adrian Dieleman Elder John Petter
Walnut Creek, CA	Trinity United Reformed Church	Elder Ron Myers
Washington D.C.	Christ Reformed Church	Dr. Brian Lee
Waupun, WI	Grace United Reformed Church	Rev. Talman Wagenmaker Elder Joel Alsum
Wayne, NJ	Preakness Valley United Reformed	Rev. David Klompjen

	Church	
Wellandport, ON	Wellandport United Reformed Church	Rev. Joel Dykstra Elder Jake Veldman
Wellsburg, IA	United Reformed Church of Wellsburg	
West Linn, OR	Grace United Reformed Church	Rev. Steve Oeverman
West Sayville, NY	West Sayville Reformed Bible Church	Rev. Andrew Eenigenburg Elder William Reed
Winnipeg, MB	Providence Reformed Church of Winnipeg	Rev. Richard Anjema Elder Joseph Ruiters
Woodstock, ON	Bethel United Reformed Church of Woodstock	Rev. James Sinke Elder Clarence Markus
Wyoming, MI	Bethany United Reformed Church	Rev. Casey Freswick Elder Dale Suwyn
Wyoming, ON	Covenant Christian Church	Rev. Martin Vogel Elder Paul Wilpstra

Delegates marked with an asterisk* arrived and were seated at a later time. See Articles 15, 31, and 49, below.

ARTICLE 4

The chairman *pro tem* reads the Form of Subscription. The delegates rise to declare their assent to the Form of Subscription.

ARTICLE 5

The chairman *pro tem* declares Synod Wyoming 2016 constituted.

ARTICLE 6

The chairman *pro tem* welcomes the delegates and visitors, including the following fraternal delegates and observers:

Calvinist Reformed Churches of Indonesia	Rev. Yonson Denthan
Canadian Reformed Churches	Rev. Willem den Hollander
	Rev. Clarence VanderVelde
Église Réformée du Québec	Rev. Jean Zoellner

Evangelical Reformed Church of Latvia	Rev. Alvis Sauka
Free Reformed Churches in North America	Rev. Lawrence Bilkes
Free Reformed Church of Australia	Dr. Pete Witten
Die Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika	Dr. Douw Breed
	Rev. Hendrik De Beer
Orthodox Presbyterian Church	Rev. Alan Strange
	Rev. Stephen Tracey
	Rev. Danny Olinger
	Mr. David Winslow
Presbyterian Church in America	Rev. Marvin Padgett
Reformed Churches in Indonesia	Rev. Pila Njuka
Reformed Churches in the Netherlands	Mr. Peter Bakker
Reformed Churches of New Zealand	Rev. Daniel Wilson
Reformed Church of the United States	Rev. Lee Johnson
Reformed Presbyterian Church of N.A.	Rev. Craig Scott
United Reformed Church in Congo	Rev. K.M. Kabongo

The chairman *pro tem* informs the Fraternal Delegates that they have the privilege of the floor.

ARTICLE 7

Election of Officers

- A. The chairman *pro tem* solicits nominations for chairman of Synod. Rev. Bradd L. Nymeyer of Sioux Center United Reformed Church in Sioux Center, Iowa, is elected to serve as chairman.
- B. The chairman *pro tem* solicits nominations for vice-chairman of Synod. Rev. John A. Bouwers of Immanuel United Reformed Church in Jordan, Ontario, is elected to serve as vice-chairman.
- C. The chairman *pro tem* solicits nominations for first clerk of Synod. Rev. Doug Barnes of Covenant United Reformed Church in Pella, Iowa, is elected to serve as first clerk.
- D. The chairman *pro tem* solicits nominations for second clerk of Synod. Rev. Greg Lubbers of Covenant United Reformed Church in Byron Center, Michigan, is elected to serve as second clerk.

ARTICLE 8

Ratification of the provisional acceptance of Article 32 churches.

- A. Motion is made and supported to ratify the reception of the following church, under Article 32 of the Church Order: Immanuel Fellowship Church in Kalamazoo, Michigan.

Adopted

- B. The chairman *pro tem* asks the delegates from this church to rise to declare their assent to the Form of Subscription. The following delegates are present and rise to affirm their assent:
Rev. William Boekestein
Elder Larry Fish

ARTICLE 9

Provisional Agenda

- A. Motion is made and supported to adopt the Provisional Agenda and the previously distributed advisory committee assignments.

1. Motion is made and supported to add to the Agenda an overture from Classis Eastern U.S., entitled: “An Affirmation of URCNA Teaching on Marriage.”
Defeated
2. Motion is made and supported to classify the overture from Classis Eastern U.S. as a communication and refer it to Advisory Committee 3.
Adopted
3. The chairman *pro tem* reads portions of the Supplemental Report of the Convening Consistory and notes the following:
 - i. Point 1, regarding missionaries speaking at synod, is referred to Advisory Committee 5.
 - ii. Point 5, regarding correspondence from the OPC related to the convening of our next synod, is referred to Advisory Committee 1.
 - iii. Point 6, regarding the transition to a new stated clerk, is referred to Advisory Committee 1.
 - iv. Point 9, regarding material submitted with Appeal 3, is referred to Advisory Committee 12.

The Chairman pro tem so rules

4. The amended agenda is: *Adopted*

- B. Motion is made and supported to adopt the advisory committee assignments as listed below.
Adopted

Advisory Committee 1 – Credentials

Materials: Credentials; Convening Consistory Report; Stated Clerk’s Report;
Overtures 2, 4, 19

Chairman: Rev. Barry Beukema

Reporter: Rev. Charles Tedrick

Members: Rev. Nick Alons, Lambert DeGraaf, Jon DeJonge, Rev. Russell Herman, Mark Hoeksema, Gerrit Kroes, Steve Kuiper, Brant Nywening, William Vogel, Rev. Brian Zegers

Advisory Committee 2 – Financial Matters

Materials: Financial Reports (U.S., Canadian, JVA), Board of Directors Reports (U.S. and Canada)

Chairman: Rev. Mark Vander Pol

Reporter: Rev. Steve Williamson

Members: Joel Alsum, John Boekestyn, Larry Fish, Harlan Harmelink, Case Houweling, Darrel Kuiper, Henry Neiboer, Rev. Andrew Spriensma, Alan Taylor, Wilf Wikkerink, Rob Wybenga

Advisory Committee 3 – Overtures

Materials: Overtures 3, 5, 7, 17

Chairman: Rev. Steven Swets

Reporter: Rev. Ralph Pontier

Members: Rev. Spencer Aalsburg, Rev. Benjamin Davenport, Rev. Keith Davis, Scott De Jong, Rev. Todd De Rooy, Rev. Fred Folkerts, Rev. Jordan Huff, Jack Hummelman, Rev. Matthew Nuiver, Rev. Tony Phelps, Garth Pol, Joel Richter, Dale Suwyn, Harry Ten Haaf, Jake Veldman, Rev. Philip Vos

Advisory Committee 4 – Web Site Oversight, PJCO, PRCC

Materials: Web Oversight Committee Report; Oversight Consistory for the Web Oversight Committee Report; Proposed Joint Church Order Report; Presbyterian Reformed Chaplaincy Committee Report; Overtures 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 15, 20

Chairman: Rev. Alan Camarigg

Reporter: Rev. Norman Van Eeden Petersman

Members: David Byker, Rev. Adrian Dieleman, Steve Irons, Rev. Paul Lindemulder, Rev. Ed Marcusse, Richard Meyer, Joseph Ruiten, Duane Scholten, Bruce Vrieling, Philip Woudenberg, Rev. Harry Zekveld

Advisory Committee 5 – Missions

Materials: Missions Committee Report

Chairman: Rev. Quentin Falkena

Reporter: Rev. Steve Oeverman

Members: Rev. Rich Anjema, Rev. Jared Beard, Peter Berlin, Rev. Greg Bylsma, Tony De Weerd, Ken Evans, Rev. Andrea Ferrari, Dr. Ryan Glomsrud, Dr. Cornelius Hegeman, Steve Hiller, Mark Hoogwerf, Rev. Taylor Kern, Rev. Pablo Landazuri, Rev. Jody Lucero, Rev. Paul Murphy, Klaas Stel, Martin Van De Weert, Rev. Matthew Van Dyken, Brian Versteeg, Paul Wagenmaker

Advisory Committee 6 – CERCU

Materials: Report of the Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity; Overtures 1, 13, 14; Communications 1, 2, 4, 5

Chairman: Rev. Todd Joling

Reporter: Rev. William Boekestein

Members: Rev. John Bouwers, Stan Cotta, Rev. Craig Davis, Rev. William Godfrey, Mark Mack, Wayne Morosco, Richard Schotsman, Rev. Calvin Tuininga, Rev. Aaron Verhoef

Advisory Committee 7 – Songbook

Materials: Psalter Hymnal Committee Report

Chairman: Rev. Brian Vos

Reporter: Elder Dan Seese

Members: Wendel Buys, Chuck DeWaard, Rev. Christopher Folkerts, Rev. David Inks, Harlyn Jacobsma, Steven Schulz, Doug Ulberg, Rev. Derrick Vander Meulen, Rev. Jeremy Veldman, Rev. Martin Vogel, Rev. Gary Zekveld

Advisory Committee 8 – Retirement

Materials: Compensation and Retirement Committee Report; Appeal 1

Chairman: Rev. William Van Der Woerd

Reporter: Elder Huibert Den Boer

Members: Ken Arendse, Adam Behnen, John Bekkering, Rev. Ted Gray, Clarence Markus, Kevin Tiemstra, Rev. Hank Van Der Woerd, Bernard Van Essendelft, John Van Muyen, Rev. Henry Van Olst, Allan Vande Kamp

Advisory Committee 9 – Membership Departure

Materials: Membership Departure Committee Report

Chairman: Rev. John Vermeer

Reporter: Rev. Martin Overgaauw

Members: Ray Brands, Jeff DeBoer, Rev. Stephen Donovan, James Hutt, Rev. David Klompien, Rev. Andrew Knott, Rev. Richard Kuiken, Rev. Greg Lubbers, Rev. Bradd Nymeyer, Rev. James Roosma, Ralph Schuurman, Peter Smith, Mark Stolk, Stephen Veeneman

Advisory Committee 10A – Liturgical Forms (Creeds)

Materials: Liturgical Forms Committee Report (Agenda pp. 175-180, 193-195, 201-205)

Chairman: Rev. Mitchell Ramkisson

Reporter: Rev. Maurice Luimes

Members: George Bork, Rev. Robert Godfrey, Bob Iwema, Dr. Brian Lee, Ron Myers, John Petter, Bill Reed, Rev. Jacques Roets, David Ten Haaf, Rev. Jonathan Van Hoogen

Advisory Committee 10B – Liturgical Forms (Confessions)

Materials: Liturgical Forms Committee Report (Agenda pp. 175-176, 181-184, 195-199, 207-291); Overture 18

Chairman: Rev. Bill Pols

Reporter: Rev. Talman Wagenmaker

Members: Rev. Angelo Contreras, Cliff De Kam, Thomas Deatsch, Rev. Dan Donovan, Rev. Kevin Hossink, Rev. Simon Lievaart, Rev. Tom Morrison, Dr. Kim Riddlebarger, Steve Schut, Curtis Van Dyken, Rev. Daniel Ventura

Advisory Committee 10C – Liturgical Forms (Forms)

Materials: Liturgical Forms Committee Report (Agenda pp. 175-176, 184-191, 293-403); Overture 6, 16, 21

Chairman: Rev. Joel Vander Kooi

Reporter: Rev. Michael Schout

Members: Bob Anema, Rev. Douglas Barnes, Darrel DeHaan, Henry Doeve, Dick Dykstra, Rev. Brian Najapfour, Rev. James Oord, Rev. Mark Stewart, Rev. Dale Van Dyke, Jesse Vink, Paul Wilpstra, Fred Zandstra

Advisory Committee 11 – CECCA

Materials: Report of the Committee for Ecumenical Contact with Churches Abroad

Chairman: Rev. Nick Smith

Reporter: Rev. Andrew Eenigenburg

Members: Rev. Corey Dykstra, Rev. James Folkerts, Donald Hammer, Rev. Christo Heiberg, Rev. Movses Janbazian, Rev. Ancel Merwin, Rev. Dick Moes, Carl Nagel, Rev. Eric Pennings, Rev. Lawrens Slagter

Advisory Committee 12 – Appeals

Materials: Appeal 2; Appeal 3; Communication 3

Chairman: Rev. Harold Miller

Reporter: Elder Mark Van Der Molen

Members: Rev. Mitchell Dick, Rev. Joel Dykstra, Kelvin Elzinga, Rev. Casey Freswick, Dr. Jon Gosche, Rev. Adam Kaloostian, Rev. Richard Miller, Rev. Jephthah Nobel, Wil Postma, Myron Rau, Rev. James Sinke, Rev. Thomas Wetselaar, Edward Wierenga, Peter Wright

ARTICLE 10

Motion is made and supported to ask Advisory Committee 12 to review Appeal 3 in order to determine whether new material has been added which should not be admitted for consideration by the assembly.

Adopted

ARTICLE 11

Motion is made and supported to adopt the Time Schedule as printed in the agenda.

A. Motion is made and supported to amend the Time Schedule to conclude the evening schedule at 9 p.m.

Adopted

B. The amended Time Schedule is:

Adopted

ARTICLE 12

The officers of Synod Wyoming 2016 assume their duties. The chairman, Rev. Bradd Nymeyer, speaks a word of encouragement and leads the assembly in prayer.

ARTICLE 13

The chairman gives general instructions and dismisses the delegates to begin the work of the advisory committees.

Tuesday, June 14, 2016 Afternoon Session

ARTICLE 14

Rev. Steve Swets reads Hebrews 11:8-16; calls for the singing of the hymn, *The God of Abraham Praise*; and leads the assembly in prayer.

ARTICLE 15

The chairman welcomes the following delegates, who arrived after the roll call, each of whom rises to signify his assent to the Form of Subscription:

Rev. Jonathan Van Hoogen from Dayspring Reformed Church of Boise, Idaho.

Elder Jon Gosche from Dayspring Reformed Church of Boise, Idaho.

Rev. Greg Bylsma from Living Water Reformed Church of Brantford, Ontario.

Elder Wil Postma from Covenant Reformed Church of Kansas City, Missouri.

Rev. Aaron Verhoef from Covenant Reformed Church of Newton, New Jersey.

Rev. Andrea Ferrari from Christ URC of Santee, California.

ARTICLE 16

Advisory Committee 2 – Financial Matters

Materials: Financial Report from the Canadian Treasurer; JVA Financial Report; Canadian Board of Directors Report

Recommendations:

1. That Synod allow the Canadian Treasurer, Pam Hessels, the privilege of the floor in order to explain questions on the financial statements.

So ordered by the chairman

2. That Synod suspend Regulations for Synodical Procedure section 4.6.4.c. in order to receive the unaudited financial statements of the treasurers.

Grounds:

- a. Synodical Procedure section 4.6.4.c states: “Submit to the Board an audited or independently reviewed financial statement annually, which statement shall be forwarded to Synod.”
- b. The independent review started in 2015.

Adopted

3. That Synod approve the financial statement from the URCNA Canadian Treasurer for the years 2014 (unaudited) and 2015 (reviewed).

Adopted

4. That Synod approve the Joint Venture Account financial statement from the Canadian treasurer for the years 2014 (unaudited) and 2015 (reviewed).

Adopted

5. That Synod accede to the recommendation of the Canadian board to budget for the salary, the retirement contribution, and the payroll expenses of the Missions Coordinator, to be paid in the dollar of the Mission Coordinator’s country of residence.

Grounds:

- a. It will protect our budget from potential currency market fluctuations.
- b. It will provide consistency of pay for the Missions Coordinator.

Adopted

6. That Synod accede to the recommendation of the Canadian board to increase the honorarium of the JVA treasurer to a new amount of \$7,000.00 CAD.

Ground:

Due to the addition of the Missions Coordinator’s role, time commitments have increased dramatically for the JVA treasurer.

Adopted

7. That Synod suspend Regulations for Synodical Procedure section 4.6.2 to allow the Canadian Board to reappoint Pam Hessels as treasurer despite the term limits being exceeded.

Grounds:

- a. The rules are in conflict with Canadian Corporate law, given the fact that they have not given us an alternate appointee.
- b. The duties are such that consistency is critical.

Adopted without dissent

8. That Synod approve the re-appointment of Pam Hessels as the Canadian Treasurer.

Adopted

9. That Synod express its appreciation to Pam Hessels for her work as the Canadian Treasurer.

Adopted

The assembly spontaneously expresses its appreciation via applause.

(Advisory Committee 2 continued in Art. 88.)

ARTICLE 17

Advisory Committee 4 – Web Oversight

Materials: Overture 20 (*Regarding Ministers' Information on the Website*)

Overture 20 states:

Classis Western Canada overtures Synod Wyoming 2016 to instruct the federation website committee to include on the federation website a section detailing important church news relating to Ministers of the Word. This shall include the calling of pastors, the declining of calls, availability for call, the sustaining of candidacy exams, receiving a license to exhort, etc., that take place in our federation. Each consistory who takes an action concerning a minister will be responsible (or encouraged) to inform the webmaster.

Recommendations:

1. That Synod accede to Overture 20 by instructing the federation Web Oversight Committee to include on the federation website a section detailing important church news relating to Ministers of the Word.

Grounds:

- a. This will help build the unity of our federation (Eph. 4:3-6).
- b. This will aid calling committees and vacant churches in the search for new pastors.
- c. This will help our local churches to be better equipped to pray for the churches at large in our federation. Consistories may therefore be better equipped to help out vacant churches with pulpit supply.

Adopted

2. That Synod decide that this ministerial information shall include the calling of pastors, the answer to this call, availability for call, dissolution of ministerial relationship, the sustaining of ordination and candidacy exams, receiving a license to exhort, suspension, reinstatement, deposition, emeritation, and the deaths of ministers that take place in our federation.

Ground:

It is important for the churches of the federation to know these changes in ministerial status.

Adopted

3. That Synod encourage each consistory which takes an action affecting the status of a minister or licentiate or candidate to inform our webmaster.

Adopted

4. That Synod add to Regulations for Synodical Procedure 4.7.4 the following item as 'r'.

Post the ministerial information received from the consistories of the federation, including the calling of pastors, the answer to this call, availability for call, dissolution of ministerial relationship, the sustaining of ordination and candidacy exams, receiving a license to exhort, suspension, reinstatement, deposition, emeritation, and the deaths of ministers that take place in our federation.

Ground:

The webmaster's 'General Responsibilities' are guided by the Regulations for Synodical Procedure (4.7.4.).

Adopted without dissent

5. That this be our answer to Overture 20.

Adopted

ARTICLE 18

Advisory Committee 4 – Web Oversight

Materials: Web Oversight Committee Report, Oversight Consistory for the Web Oversight Committee

Recommendations:

1. That Synod thank Mr. Gary Fisher for his work as Webmaster and re-appoint him for another term until the conclusion of the next Synod.

Adopted

The chairman orders the Stated Clerk to inform Mr. Fisher of his reappointment and of the assembly's appreciation.

2. That Synod encourage each church through its clerk to provide accurate information through the forms on the website for the Archive Directory in a timely manner.

Grounds:

- a. We acknowledge that entering this information is difficult, and that steps are being taken by the WOC to re-examine how the data is being collected on the website in order to make this a more efficient process; but we do require this information for an accurate and useful directory.
- b. The webmaster is available by telephone for any clerk who needs assistance with submitting statistics.

Adopted

3. That Synod set the annual remuneration amount for the Webmaster at \$4,500/year with an additional one-time \$1,000 stipend due to the extra work associated with publishing the 2015 Archive Directory. (This means \$5,500 in 2017, and \$4,500 in the years following.)

Ground:

Due to the lack of participation by the churches in the requests for updated information, the work of creating and disseminating an accurate and updated Archive Directory has become very difficult, and it has required more time to complete the work in a satisfactory way.

Adopted

4. That Synod not accede to Recommendation 4 of the Web Oversight Committee's Report.

Grounds:

- a. New projects have come to light since the committee's report was completed (ministerial news, overhaul of collection of statistics).
- b. This will maintain the Classical askings for the Web Oversight Committee at \$100 per year.

Adopted

5. That Synod revise Regulations for Synodical Procedure 4.7.4.q to replace "Oversight Consistory" with "Web Oversight Committee."

Grounds:

- a. The Oversight Consistory is mandated to work with the Web Oversight Committee, not the Webmaster. The Oversight Consistory has very little (if any) interaction with the Webmaster.
- b. Since the Webmaster serves as an "advisory member of the Web Oversight Committee" (4.7.4.m.), it is more natural for his report to be included as part of the Web Oversight Committee's report.

Adopted without dissent

6. That Synod affirm that the webmaster is expected to submit a report of all the work performed by the webmaster since the previous synod as an addendum to the Web Oversight Committee report.

Grounds:

- a. The report of the webmaster was made part of the Web Oversight Committee Report due to an ambiguity of expectations in Regulations for Synodical Procedure 4.7.4.q.
- b. This is in keeping with the manner in which the Stated Clerk's report is received by Synod as an addendum to the report of the Convening Consistory, as per Regulations for Synodical Procedure 4.5.4.l.

Adopted

7. That this be Synod's answer to the report of the Web Oversight Committee and the report of the Oversight Consistory for the Web Oversight Committee.

Adopted

8. That Synod thank the Web Oversight Committee for its work.

Adopted

The chairman expresses thanks on behalf of the assembly.

9. That Synod thank the Consistory of the Grace United Reformed Church of Waupun for its oversight of the committee and request that this oversight continue until the end of the next Synod.

Adopted

The chairman expresses thanks on behalf of the assembly.

(Advisory Committee 4 continued in Art. 44.)

ARTICLE 19

Advisory Committee 3 – Overtures

Materials: Overture 5 (*Appoint Revised Church Order Committee*)

Overture 5 states:

Classis Central U.S. overtures Synod Wyoming 2016:

1. To appoint a Revised Church Order Committee, with seven nominations from the synodical advisory committee assigned to this overture.
2. To mandate the RCO Committee to focus on revising the current URCNA Church Order for immediate use within our federation, namely:
 - a. That the current Church Order of the URCNA continue to be evaluated in the light of the Scriptural and confessional principles and patterns of church government expressed in the Church Order of Dort;
 - b. That the RCO Committee develop a suitable and agreeable adaptation of the Church Order of Dort, retaining and maintaining its principles, structure, and essential provisions; and
 - c. That the RCO Committee present a recommendation for a Revised Church Order to serve the churches of the URCNA.
3. To mandate the RCO Committee to prepare its recommendations for a Revised Church Order for the URCNA – with a view to presenting the final recommendation to a future synod for consideration of adoption – using the following protocol provisions:
 - a. That the RCO Committee be authorized to receive, collate, and evaluate all official communications regarding its work in developing an RCO recommendation, and use that communication also in formulating its recommendation to the RCO.
 - b. That the RCO Committee inform the churches soon that official communications regarding the development of its RCO recommendation proceed from and through consistories to the RCO Committee. After a first draft of the proposed Revised Church Order is released, then official communications will be received from consistories via classical overture (cf. our current practice of changes to proposed hymnal).
 - c. That the RCO Committee be directed to distribute to the churches its recommendation for the Revised Church Order; along with a 3-column comparison incorporating the Church Order of Dort, the current

URCNA Church Order, and its recommendation for a Revised Church Order.

- d. That the RCO Committee be directed to compile a list of all official communications received after Synod 2016, together with a summary of the content of each communication and an explanation of Committee action relating to the communication; which report is to be sent to the churches in the committee's synodical report.

Recommendations:

1. That Synod not accede to Overture 5.

Grounds:

- a. The overture does not establish the need for a committee to address any alleged problems with the current Church Order. The present Church Order is serving us well. Certainly it can be improved, but there is already a process in place – the way of overture – for amending the Church Order.
- b. The overture's mandate is too broad. It states, *“To mandate the RCO Committee to focus on revising the current URCNA Church Order for immediate use within our federation, namely: That the current Church Order of the URCNA continue to be evaluated in the light of the Scriptural and confessional principles and patterns of church government expressed in the Church Order of Dort.”* This work has already been done in the production of our current Church Order.
- c. The specific changes to the current Church Order suggested by Overture 5 dealing with inconsistencies in language are minor problems which can be handled by overtures from consistories to classis and synod. Harvesting the good fruit of the PJCO can also be handled by overtures.
- d. Items such as “working together in church planting,” “credentials for pulpit supply,” or “adjudicating appeals” (Ground 2 of the overture) which the overture says ought to be in the Church Order can better be placed or addressed in other documents that are supplementary to the Church Order, such as in a missions policy manual and in guidelines for appeals.
- e. The alleged problem of the current Church Order being “sparse and ambiguous” is not a problem but is intentional. The Dort church order tradition, by design, is meant to lay down broad general principles. This allows for consistories to use wisdom in applying those principles to situations that vary from place to place and time to time rather than trying to legislate for every possible contingency.

Adopted

2. That this be declared Synod's answer to Overture 5.

Adopted

(Advisory Committee 3 continued in Art. 34.)

ARTICLE 20

Advisory Committee 6 – Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity

Materials: Report of the Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity, Overture 14 (*Speeches by Fraternal Delegates*)

Recommendations:

1. That Synod accede to Recommendation 1 of the CERCU report, “That Synod grant the privilege of the floor to the committee chairman and secretary when committee matters are being considered (Regulations 5.4.2).”

So ordered by the chairman

2. That Synod accede to Recommendation 2 of the CERCU report, “That Synod re-appoint as a member-at-large Rev. Richard Miller to a second three-year term to commence in July 2016. (Rev. Richard Miller was first appointed by Synod 2012 to a term that began July 1, 2013.) He is eligible for reappointment.”

Adopted

3. That Synod accede to Recommendation 3 of the CERCU report, “That Synod re-appoint as a member-at-large Rev. Steve Swets to a second three-year term to commence July 1, 2017. (He was first appointed by Synod 2014 for a three-year term.) He is eligible for reappointment.”

Adopted

4. That Synod accede to Recommendation 4 of the CERCU report, “That Synod appoint as a member-at-large Rev. William Boekestein to a three-year term to commence July 1, 2016. This is to replace Rev. Bill Pols, who is not eligible for reappointment.”

Adopted

5. That Synod thank Rev. Pols for his years of service on CERCU.

Adopted

The chairman expresses thanks on behalf of the assembly, which also responds with applause.

6. That Synod not accede to Recommendation 5 of the CERCU report, “That Synod appoint as alternate member-at-large Rev. Chris Gordon. There is no current alternate.”

Ground:

Due to ministerial commitments, the nominee is not able to serve on the committee.

Adopted

7. That synod accede to Recommendation 6 of the CERCU report, “That Synod set the budget for CERCU at \$10,000 US per annum.”

Adopted

8. That Synod accede to Recommendation 7 of the CERCU report by adopting the guidelines submitted by the CERCU report below, and that these guidelines be included

in the Regulations for Synodical Procedure, and that these guidelines be forwarded to fraternal delegates by the convening consistory of synod.

Guidelines for speeches of fraternal observers and delegates to our Synod:

We welcome you to address our Synod at an appropriate time which will be made known to you. In order to best serve the purpose of our broadest assembly (Synod), we ask that you follow the following guidelines with regard to time and content of your speeches.

1. We require speeches to be no longer than 10 minutes. After 10 minutes the chairman of Synod will rise, thus indicating to the speaker that they should bring their comments to a close.
2. Suggestions for items to be addressed:
 - a. The history of your denomination/federation if it is relatively unknown to the URCNA.
 - b. Recent decisions or movements in your churches.
 - c. Encouragement and advice to the URCNA, especially in light of their Synod meeting.
 - d. Items of prayer that we may remember on your behalf.
 - e. We would request that you refrain from spending a significant amount of time promoting particular seminaries or other particular ministry causes.

Adopted without dissent

9. That these guidelines for fraternal addresses become effective upon adoption.

Adopted

10. That these guidelines for fraternal addresses be the answer to Overture 14.

Overture 14 states:

Classis Pacific Northwest overtures Synod Wyoming 2016 to ask our URCNA Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity (CERCU) and our Committee for Ecumenical Contact with Churches Abroad (CECCA) to:

1. Draw up clear, well-defined, and appropriate guidelines for speeches given by these fraternal delegates.
2. Present those guidelines to each fraternal delegate who wishes to verbally address our Synod, explaining to them how much time they have for their speech and how they will be notified when that time is up.

At minimum these guidelines will include an appropriate time limit for such talks (five to, at most, ten minutes), appropriate topics on which to speak, and any other guidelines deemed helpful by our ecumenical relations committees.

Grounds:

- a. CERCU and CECCA have been involved in the formation of said guidelines.
- b. The guidelines are consistent with the requests of Overture 14.

Adopted

11. That Synod accede to Recommendation 8 of the CERCU report, “That Synod remind the churches of our mutual responsibility to engage one another in our ecumenical task through prayer, classical dialogue, local efforts and the expression of concerns.”

Adopted

12. That Synod accede to Recommendation 10 of the CERCU report, “That Synod urge the churches to make a regular part of the information they publish in weekly bulletins, church newsletters, church websites and other informational publications, our federation’s membership in NAPARC and the ICRC, providing web addresses for each to encourage our members to learn about these ecumenical organizations and to help foster an awareness of the biblical ecumenical mandate to seek ever greater unity with those of like faith and practice. Just as the local church makes known its affiliation with the federation, so it should make known the federation’s fraternal bonds.”

Adopted

13. That Synod accede to Recommendation 11 of the CERCU report, “That the classes be reminded of their continuing responsibility to appoint or reappoint classical representatives (and alternates) to CERCU in the manner the classes deem appropriate.”

Adopted

(Advisory Committee 6 continued in Art. 37.)

ARTICLE 21

Advisory Committee 1

– Credentials

Materials: Credentials; Convening Consistory Report; Supplemental Report of the Convening Consistory

Recommendations:

1. That Synod take note that the following consistories have not sent a delegation to Synod, but letters of explanation were received:

- a. Brockville, Ontario
- b. Charlottetown, PEI
- ~~c. Newton, New Jersey~~
- d. Oceanside, California
- e. Wellsburg, Iowa

A. Motion is made and supported to amend the recommendation by striking Newton, New Jersey, from this list, since Rev. Aaron Verhoef has arrived.

Adopted

B. The motion, as amended, is:

Adopted

2. That Synod take note that the following consistories have sent only one delegate:

- a. *Apple Valley, California*

- b. Carbondale, Pennsylvania
- c. Grande Prairie, Alberta
- d. Leduc, Alberta
- e. Listowel, Ontario
- f. Missoula, Montana
- g. New York, New York
- h. *Newton, New Jersey*
- i. Oak Lawn, Illinois
- j. Oro-Medonte, Ontario
- k. Portland, Oregon
- l. Sunnyside, Washington
- m. Toronto, Ontario
- n. Walnut Creek, California
- o. Washington, D.C.

A. Motion is made and supported to amend the recommendation by adding Newton, New Jersey, to this list.

Adopted

B. The motion, as amended, is:

Adopted

3. That Synod request verbal explanations for sending only one delegate from the following consistories that have not given written explanations along with their credentials:

- a. Carbondale, Pennsylvania
- b. Grande Prairie, Alberta
- c. Listowel, Ontario
- d. Missoula, Montana
- e. New York, New York
- f. *Newton, New Jersey*
- g. Sunnyside, Washington
- h. Toronto, Ontario
- i. Walnut Creek, California

A. Motion is made and supported to amend the recommendation by adding Newton, New Jersey, to this list.

Adopted

B. The motion, as amended, is:

Adopted

C. The chairman requests the delegate from each of the listed consistories to provide a verbal explanation for sending only one delegate. These explanations are provided.

4. That Synod thank the churches for their explanations given. While understanding that some churches are not always able to have a full delegation, encourage consistories to make it a priority to prevent, as much as possible, scheduling conflicts that impede a full delegation to be present at Synod. In addition, encourage the consistories to submit a written explanation in advance of Synod.

Adopted

5. That Synod receive the Report of the Convening Consistory and the Supplemental Report of the Convening Consistory.

Adopted

6. That Synod express its gratitude to the Consistory and congregation of Bethany United Reformed Church for the work that was done in convening Synod Wyoming 2016.

Adopted

The chairman expresses thanks on behalf of the assembly.

Motion is made and supported to recommit the remaining recommendations to the advisory committee.

Adopted

(**Advisory Committee 1** continued in Art. 33.)

ARTICLE 22

Advisory Committee 10b – Liturgical Forms (confessions)

Materials: Overture 18 (*Adopt Revision Regarding Belgic Confession Article 4*)

Overture 18 states:

Classis Southwestern Ontario (URCNA) overtures Synod Wyoming 2016 to adopt the following revision of the wording of Belgic Confession Article 4 proposed by our Liturgical Forms Committee.

Recommendation:

Accede to Overture 18, with some changes, and revise the wording of Belgic Confession Article 4 to read as follows:

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, Ruth;

the two books of Samuel, the two books of Kings, the two books of Chronicles;

the books of Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther;

the books of Job, the Psalms, the three books of Solomon—Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, the Song of Songs;

the books of the four major prophets—Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel;
the books of the 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, John; the Acts of the Apostles;
the thirteen letters of Paul—to the Romans; the two letters to the Corinthians; to the Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians; the two letters to the Thessalonians; the two letters to Timothy; to Titus, Philemon;
the letter 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.

Grounds:

- a. This revision corrects inaccurate titles for “Ezra” and “the Psalms.” “The Psalms of David” does not agree with the titles for the collection used in the Hebrew Bible, the Septuagint and the Vulgate; nor is it named such in the Scripture itself. Not all the Psalms were written by David. “The first of Ezra” is a designation used in the Vulgate which names “Nehemiah” as “The second of Ezra.” Since we adopt the title “Nehemiah” for the book that follows “Ezra,” the title “The first of Ezra” is, at best, unclear and could be confused with the apocryphal book of a similar name (“I Esdras”).
- b. This revision removes from Article 4 the uncertain claims that Paul wrote the letter to the Hebrews but affirms the traditional view that Solomon wrote Ecclesiastes.
- c. This revision uses “Song of Songs” instead of “Song of Solomon” because this is the title used in the Hebrew Bible.
- d. This revision includes specific mention of the book of Lamentations, which is currently missing from the list. In doing so, the revision also accomplishes what Article 4 promises to do in the opening title and sentence, namely, list the canonical *books*, not just the prophets.
- e. We have modified some of the wording for the sake of cadence and grammatical consistency (e.g. punctuation, removing conjunctions, etc.).
- f. This revision, while seeking to remove inaccuracies, follows closely the translation proposed by our Liturgical Forms Committee.
- g. The translations adopted by the Canadian Reformed Churches and the Reformed Church in the United States make similar changes.

Motion is made and supported to table this recommendation temporarily.

Adopted

(Advisory Committee 10b continued in Art. 43.)

ARTICLE 23

Advisory Committee 5 – Missions Committee

Materials: Missions Committee Report

Recommendations:

1. That Synod approve two hours on Tuesday evening for 21 missionaries, identified and coordinated by the Standing Missions Committee, to update the body on their work.

Adopted

2. That Synod accede to Recommendation 1 to thank Pastor Michael Brown for his work as chairman of the Missions Committee.

Adopted

The chairman directs the stated clerk to send a letter expressing thanks on behalf of the assembly.

3. That Synod accede to Recommendation 2 to receive and express its gratitude for the work of the Missions Coordinator to date.

Adopted

The chairman expresses thanks on behalf of the assembly.

4. That Synod accede to Recommendation 3 to pray for both the ministry of our Missions Coordinator and the ministry of all our missionaries/church planters after receiving his report.

Adopted

5. That Synod accede to Recommendation 4 to add the following italicized and underlined words to point A.1 of the Policies for the Synodical Missions Committee and Missions Coordinator so that the new wording reads as follows.

A. Functions and Tasks of the Synodical Missions Committee, and of the Missions Coordinator

1. The committee would function as an information hub for URCNA missions, encouraging communication *and facilitating cooperation* among URCNA missionaries, church planters, councils, joint venture committees, classis mission committees, and congregations by doing the following:

Grounds:

- a. Our current policies call for us to be, “generally promoting the cause of missions in the URCNA in a way that consistently represents our commitment to function as a covenanted body” (Policies. A.1.c., p. 527 of the Acts of Synod Nyack 2012). To fulfill the Missions Committee’s current calling, the Missions Committee should be facilitating cooperation between the various works in our churches

wherever possible as an expression of our commitment to function together as a covenanted body. This goes beyond merely encouraging communication, and thus it should be clearly stated in the tasks and functions.

- b. Cooperation in missions is of the greatest possible importance if we are to be faithful in using all of our resources as a federation (manpower, finances, giftedness, etc.) for the growth of Christ's kingdom around the world.
- c. The word "facilitating" means to make an action or process easy (or easier). This addition does not give the committee any authoritative power, but it does allow the churches to recognize that the Missions Committee has a synodically-given task to make cooperation in missions easier for all the churches.

Adopted

6. That Synod accede to Recommendation 5 to add the following to our Policies for the Synodical Missions Committee and Missions Coordinator, and to re-number the other points accordingly.

- A new point (d) to section A.1. (Functions and Tasks of the Missions Committee) as follows:

“(d) serving as an advisory committee to local consistories who are considering sending an ordained man to the foreign mission field in a long-term capacity. The advice of the Missions Committee should be sought by local consistories if they are considering sending such missionaries to the field.”

- A new point (e) to section A.2. (Specific Tasks of Committee Members) as follows:

“(e) Committee members shall work with the URCNA Missions Committee in giving advice to missionaries, consistories, joint venture committees or classical Missions Committees as requested by either party.”

- A new point (d) to section A.3. (Specific Tasks of the Missions Coordinator) as follows:

“(d) He shall work with the URCNA Missions Committee to give advice to missionaries, consistories, joint venture committees or classical Missions Committees as requested by either party.”

Grounds:

- a. Sending an ordained man to the mission field in a long term capacity is a significant sacrifice for a local church, the missionary (and his family, if applicable), and the federation (through financial support, etc.). Such an action warrants the importance of seeking advice from a multitude of counsellors. Our federational Missions Committee, with its knowledge of current URCNA missions and the lessons learned from them, is in a unique position to give good advice to local consistories regarding such an action.
- b. Because of the breadth of our federation, local congregations are not always aware of the needs of other works within the URCNA where their cooperation may serve to greatly bless the work of missions within a foreign context. The advice of the Missions Committee might help partner churches with works

already ongoing and allow a stronger presence on the foreign field. Lord willing, this could result in a healthier, more focused missions direction for us as a federation, in which we see local, indigenous churches founded and strengthened for God's glory.

Adopted

7. That Synod accede to Recommendation 6 to add the following point (e) to A.1. of the Policies for the Synodical Missions Committee and Missions Coordinator, and re-number the other points accordingly.

“(e) serving as an advisory committee to foreign missionaries, sending consistories, JVCs, and classical committees (where applicable) to help them develop entrance, continuance, and exit strategies that are in line with our adopted guidelines for foreign missions.”

Grounds:

- a. Our church order recognizes that churches are not to lord it over other churches (Art. 65), but rather are to see Christ's local churches growing and functioning as members of the whole. This applies not only for churches within North America, but also for churches planted by God's grace in a foreign field. Our missions must have a goal of seeing churches on the foreign field growing in sustainability to a point where they exist and extend Christ's church apart from an unhealthy reliance upon the URCNA. Developing strategies for establishing a local, faithful congregation or federation/denomination is important for all of our church planting mission works, and the Missions Committee can greatly aid in this.
- b. An exit strategy keeps missions focused on the task we set out to accomplish, and it allows us to adjust how foreign missionaries remain involved with mission works in a way that promotes a mature congregation on the mission field.
- c. An exit strategy requires steps, however flexible they need be, to arrive at the goal of a mature and faithful local church. For this reason, overseeing consistories and missionaries should be thinking in terms of entrance, continuance, and exit strategies in a way that submits to God's leading over time and yet maintains a biblical goal of an established and faithful local congregation.

Adopted

(Advisory Committee 5 continued in Art. 64.)

ARTICLE 24

The chairman dismisses the delegates to continue the work of the advisory committees and, afterward, to enjoy a fine meal and a time of fellowship.

Tuesday, June 14, 2016
Evening Session

ARTICLE 25

Dr. Brian Lee from Christ Reformed Church of Washington, D.C., opens the session by reading and exhorting from Revelation 21:1-8; leading the assembly in prayer; and calling the delegates to sing Psalm 22, selection D.

ARTICLE 26

The second clerk reads a press release concerning the work of Synod 2016 for the day. Corrections and suggestions are received from the delegates. Motion is made and supported to approve this press release, as corrected.

Adopted

ARTICLE 27

The chairman invites Rev. Lawrence Bilkes to bring greetings to the assembly on behalf of the Free Reformed Churches of North America. Rev. Bilkes offers encouraging reminders of our similar history, our call to mutual love, and our joint hope in the mercy of Christ.

Rev. Bill Boekestein offers a brief response and leads the assembly in prayer for the Free Reformed Churches.

ARTICLE 28

Rev. Greg Bylsma from the Missions Committee introduces a time of missionary updates by some of our URCNA missionaries. These missionaries are listed below.

From Classis Michigan:

- Rev. Bill Green, who labors in Costa Rica.
- Rev. Steve Poelman, who labors in India.

From Classis Eastern U.S.:

- Rev. Neal Hegeman, who labors through MINTS, along with Rev. Allen Vander Pol, Rev. Eric Pennings, Mr. Jose Ramirez, and Mr. Norlan De Groot.
- Rev. Zac Wyse, who labors in Cincinnati, Ohio.
- Rev. Brian Lee, who labors in Washington, D.C.

From Classis Central U.S.:

- Rev. Pablo Landazuri, who labors in Ecuador.
- Rev. Spencer Aalsburg, who labors in Sioux Falls, South Dakota.
- Rev. Ken Anema, who labors in Divine Hope Reformed Bible Seminary.
- Rev. Andrew Spriensma, who labors as a chaplain in the U.S. Army.

From Classis Southeast Ontario:

- Rev. Richard Bultje, who labors in Niagra Falls, Ontario.
- Rev. Brian Zegers, who labors in Ajax, Ontario.

- Rev. Ernie Langendoen, who labors in Honduras.
- Rev. Thabet Magali, who labors in St. Catharines, Ontario.
- Rev. Matt Van Dyken, who labors in Mexico.

From Classis Western Canada:

- Rev. Brian Cochran, who labors in Regina, Saskatchewan.

From Classis Southwest U.S.:

- Rev. Andrea Ferrari, who labors in Italy.
- Rev. Micai Corcea, who labors in Romania.
- Rev. Taylor Kern, who labors in Ontario, California.
- Rev. Tony Phelps, who labors in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

From Classis Pacific Northwest:

- Rev. Nollie Malabuyu, who labors in Big Springs, California.

From Classis Ontario-East:

- Rev. Tony Zekveld, who labors in Toronto, Ontario.
- Rev. Richard Bout, who serves as our Missions Coordinator.

ARTICLE 29

Rev. Richard Bout, Missions Coordinator, leads the assembly in closing devotions. He reads Ephesians 6:12; leads the assembly in prayer; and calls for the singing of the hymn, *How Deep the Father's Love for Us*.

Wednesday, June 15, 2016 Morning Session

ARTICLE 30

Rev. Ed Knott opens the session with devotions. The chairman notes that Rev. Knott was chairman of the organizational meeting of our federation in November 1995, when 27 congregations covenanted to federate together.

Rev. Knott encourages the assembly, stating: "I have believed from the beginning, brethren, that we are not an accident of history or a continuation of a protest movement. I think that God has given us a very special place, by His grace, at this time in history. ... I think that God is investing in us, as churches, a tremendous amount of grace, and we can not only be grateful for that, but respond in obedience." Having read Philippians 1:27 and 2:1-11, he urges the delegates to seek the good of the churches through personal humility and by seeking, together, to glorify God the Father through Jesus, His Son. "Remember, brothers, that we're here to fulfill the joy of the Holy Spirit, to the glory of God the Father."

Rev. Knott leads the assembly in prayer and in singing Psalter Hymnal 264, *My Heart Was Glad to Hear the Welcome Sound*, and Psalter Hymnal 426, *Jesus with Thy Church Abide*.

Afterward, the chairman asks those who were present at the 1995 organizational meeting to stand, prompting 27 delegates to stand – providentially, one for each of the churches which first covenanted together to form the URCNA.

ARTICLE 31

The chairman welcomes Elder Stan Cotta from Covenant URC of Fresno, California, who arrived late to the assembly. Elder Cotta rises to signify his assent to the Form of Subscription.

The chairman also excuses Elder Donald Hammer from Redeemer URC of Dyer, Indiana, who needed to depart early. His alternate delegate is expected to arrive later.

ARTICLE 32

The vice-chairman invites Rev. Clarence VanderVelde to bring greetings to the assembly on behalf of the Canadian Reformed Churches. Rev. VanderVelde brings warm greetings on behalf of his federation, reviews notable actions of the recently-concluded Synod Dunnville 2016, and urges our federation to fervently pursue unity with the Canadian Reformed Churches, aiming to honor and glorify God.

Rev. Steve Swets offers a brief response and leads the assembly in prayer for the Canadian Reformed Churches.

ARTICLE 33

Advisory Committee 1 – Credentials (continued from Art. 21)

Materials: Convening Consistory Report; Stated Clerk's Report; Supplemental Reports from Convening Consistory and Stated Clerk

Recommendations:

1. That Synod request that the three financial matters addressed in the Report of the Convening Consistory be directed to the Finance Committee (reference Advisory Committee Report 1A, recommendations 7-9).

Grounds:

- a. We concur with the Convening Consistory's fundamental concern, recognizing a need for increased financial accountability.
- b. After consulting with Canadian Treasurer Pam Hessels, we noted that there are recognized ambiguities and discrepancies in the way these financial and accounting matters have been addressed in the past, and it would be better addressed by those with specific expertise in the Finance Committee.

Adopted

2. That Synod accede to the recommendation of the Convening Consistory in its Supplemental Report and the stated desire of CERCU to suspend Regulations for Synodical Procedure 1.4: “The meetings shall be convened by a consistory of each of the classes in turn”; and allow a consistory from Classis Central U.S. to convene the next synod.

Grounds:

- a. This action will more easily facilitate a concurrent meeting with the OPC General Assembly on the campus of Wheaton College in Illinois.
- b. This action is aligned with a previous synodical decision to account for special circumstances (see Acts of Synod 2014, Article 93.B.).
- c. This action is aligned with the Report of the Stated Clerk, noting that no consistory has yet volunteered to host the next Synod.

Adopted without dissent

3. That Synod accede to the recommendation of the Convening Consistory that Synod continue the honorarium of \$1,000 (USD) to the outgoing Stated Clerk for the next three months.

Grounds:

- a. Synod needs to appoint a new stated clerk, since our current clerk has served three consecutive terms and is not eligible for reappointment.
- b. This action will allow for a smooth and orderly transition between the outgoing and incoming stated clerks.
- c. This action was taken during the last transition between stated clerks.

A. The chairman temporarily relinquishes the chair to the vice-chairman.

B. The motion is:

Adopted

C. The chairman resumes the chair from the vice-chairman.

4. That Synod receive the Report and the Supplemental Report of the Stated Clerk. The Committee desires to direct attention to the Guidelines for Committee Assignment in the Stated Clerk’s Supplemental Report (reproduced below).

Adopted

COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENT GUIDELINES

1. Give the delegates their first committee preference. (Delegates who register late will be assigned where needed most.)
2. Set the size of the committees so there is an approximately equal distribution of synodical delegates for each committee.
3. Put at least one delegate from each classis on each committee.
4. Avoid putting two delegates from the same church on the same committee, unless they specifically request it.

5. Ensure that each committee has some experienced delegates that can serve as chairman and reporter, being aware of who might be chosen to serve as officers of synod. Chairmen and reporters should have attended at least two previous synods.
 6. Have an even distribution of chairmen and reporters from the various classes.
 7. Don't have more than three delegates from one standing committee on each advisory committee.
 8. Don't have a member of the standing committee serve as chairman or reporter of the advisory committee dealing with the standing committee's own material.
 9. On appeals committees, avoid having more than two delegates from the classis that heard the appeal. Also, be aware of any family connections with parties involved.
5. That Synod thank the Stated Clerk for his years of faithful and excellent service.
- A. The chairman temporarily relinquishes the chair to the vice-chairman.
 - B. The motion is: *Adopted*
 - C. The vice-chairman expresses our gratitude to the Stated Clerk, who also is serving as our chairman. The assembly affirms this sentiment with its applause.
 - D. The chairman resumes the chair from the vice-chairman.

(Advisory Committee 1 continued in Art. 77.)

ARTICLE 34

Advisory Committee 3 – Overtures (continued from Art. 19)

Materials: Overture 7 (*Appoint Study Committee on Culture of Peace*)

Overture 7 states:

Classis Michigan overtures Synod Wyoming 2016 to establish a study committee with a mandate to study how to promote a 'culture of peace' within the URCNA Federation based on applicable Bible-based resources for conflict resolution.

Recommendations:

1. That Synod not accede to Overture 7.

Grounds:

- a. The overture speaks of an increasing number of problems as if this is a new situation. The existence of conflict between church members, including office-bearers, is not a new phenomenon. It is as old as Cain and Abel, Jacob and Esau, Joseph and his brothers, Paul and Barnabas, and many others too numerous to mention. The history of the church for the last 2,000 years is the history of

conflict – not only with the world, but conflict within the church. There is nothing new under the sun. Our situation and experience today is no different than what our fathers in the faith have faced for millennia. 1 Corinthians 10:13, *No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.*

- b. There are a number of ministries, counseling services, and classical church visitors available to the churches which we should make use of more quickly. Some of these ministries and services provide opportunities for training members and office-bearers in conflict resolution.
- c. In the final analysis, the most effective “program” for promoting a culture of peace in the church is the faithful and Spirit-driven preaching of the “message of reconciliation,” 2 Corinthians 5:19. It is the call to humble repentance and faith in the reconciling work of Jesus. Ephesians 2:14, *For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility.*

Adopted

2. That Synod urge consistories to be proactive and to seek out training in conflict resolution for members and office-bearers as part of the regular ministry of the church.

Adopted

3. That Synod declare this to be its answer to Overture 7.

Adopted

(Advisory Committee 3 continued in Art. 70.)

ARTICLE 35

Advisory Committee 8 – Retirement

Materials: Report of the Ad-Hoc Compensation and Retirement Assessment Committee

Recommendations:

1. That Synod refer the Compensation and Retirement Study Committee Report to the churches for study.

Grounds:

- a. The report provides information that can assist the churches in assessing how they may honorably provide for the retirement needs of their ministers.
- b. Referring a Study Committee Report to the churches for study is in accord with the Regulations for Synodical Procedure, Appendix D, 3.2.

Adopted

2. That Synod dismiss the Compensation and Retirement Study Committee and thank them for their work.

Adopted

ARTICLE 36

Advisory Committee 8 – Retirement

Materials: Appeal 1

Recommendation:

As the appeal seeks to “broadly reverse” and “nullify” and “rescind” the work of previous synods, the committee views the appeal as being in contravention of Regulations for Synodical Procedure 6.5.2.d. The committee therefore recommends the appeal be ruled out of order.

Ground:

Regulations for Synodical Procedures 6.5.2.d.: “Rescinding applies to the decisions taken by synod while in session. It does not apply to decisions taken by a previous synod. A succeeding synod may alter the stand of a previous synod or it may reach a conclusion which is at variance with a conclusion reached by an earlier synod. In such cases the most recent decision invalidates all previous decisions in conflict with it.”

A. Motion is made and supported to re-commit this matter to the committee.

Defeated

B. The main recommendation is:

Defeated

C. The chairman rules that Appeal 1 is therefore re-committed to Advisory Committee 8.

(Advisory Committee 8 continued in Art. 71.)

ARTICLE 37

Advisory Committee 6 – CERCU (continued from Art. 20)

Materials: Overture 1 (*Revise CERCU Mandate*)

Overture 1 states:

Classis Central U.S. overtures the next URCNA Synod to make the following revision to the Mandate of CERCU: (**Bold** = additions; ~~Strikethrough~~ = removal)

With a desire to pursue a broader unity with churches that share a common confession and faith, and acknowledging the desirability of union with churches of like faith and practice, where feasible ~~view toward complete church unity~~, the Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity shall pursue and make recommendations regarding the establishment of ecumenical relations with those Reformed and Presbyterian federations selected by synod and in keeping with Article 36 of the Church Order.

The Committee shall execute its task and carry out its mandate by following synod's Guidelines for Ecumenicity and Church Unity. The committee shall keep the churches regularly informed of its work and the progress made, and shall publish reports to synod in the agenda.

Recommendations:

That Synod not accede to Overture 1, asking for a revision of the mandate of the Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity.

Grounds:

- a. While appreciating the concerns raised by the overture, the current language of “with a view toward complete unity” has provided encouragement in our ecumenical pursuit which has borne good fruit.
- b. The proposed language of the overture does not substantially clarify the mandate.
- c. The present language of “with a view toward complete unity” already allows for and reflects our experience: Full, organic, federative unity, though it ought to be a goal, is not always attainable.
- d. Some of the grounds of the overture argue against an application of the mandate rather than against the mandate itself and do not, therefore, necessitate changing the mandate.
- e. Recent recommendations by CERCU concerning the CanRC demonstrate sensitivity to the concerns outlined in the overture.

Adopted

(Advisory Committee 6 continued in Art. 55.)

ARTICLE 38

Advisory Committee 11 – CECCA

Materials: Report of the Committee for Ecumenical Contact with Churches Abroad

Recommendations:

1. That Synod accede to Recommendation 2 that the URCNA remain in Ecumenical Contact (Phase I) with the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (GKv).

Adopted

2. That Synod accede to Recommendation 3 that the URCNA enter into Ecclesiastical Fellowship (Phase II) with the Calvinistic Reformed Church in Indonesia (GGRC-NTT).

Adopted

The chairman notes that this action requires ratification by a majority of the consistories. The chairman rules that Dec. 31, 2016, will be the deadline for this ratification.

3. That Synod accede to Recommendation 4 that the URCNA enter into Ecumenical Fellowship (Phase II) with the Free Church of Scotland Continuing (FCC).

Adopted

The chairman notes that this action requires ratification by a majority of the consistories. The chairman rules that Dec. 31, 2016, will be the deadline for this ratification.

4. That Synod accede to Recommendation 5 that the URCNA remain in Ecumenical Contact (Phase I) with the Evangelical Reformed Church in Latvia (ERCLAT).

Adopted

5. That Synod accede to Recommendation 6 that the URCNA remain in Ecumenical Contact (Phase I) with the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in England and Wales (EPCEW).

Adopted

6. That Synod accede to Recommendation 7 that the URCNA enter into Ecumenical Contact (Phase I) with the Reformed Churches in Indonesia (GGRI-NTT).

Adopted

7. That Synod accede to Recommendation 8 that the URCNA enter into Ecumenical Contact (Phase I) with the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia (PCEA).

Adopted

8. That Synod accede to Recommendation 1 that the URCNA enter into Ecumenical Fellowship (Phase II) with the Reformed Churches of South Africa (GKSA).

Grounds:

- a. The decision of the GKSA January 2016 Synod confirmed by a substantial majority their practice of prohibiting women from the offices of Elder and Minister. This reflects their Scriptural conviction that women should not participate in the governing body of the church.
 - b. With this decision the GKSA clearly distances itself from the CRCNA (with which it is still in fellowship) on this issue. Moreover, the GKSA continues to give a clear witness to the CRCNA regarding matters relating to the authority of Scripture, including the prohibition against ordaining women into the teaching and ruling offices of the church.
 - ~~c. This recommendation is consistent with past synodical decisions regarding other federations such as the RPCNA and the ERQ [which have women in the office of deacon], as well as with the practice of the ICRC, where having women as deacons who are not part of the ruling body of the church does not disqualify churches from becoming members of the ICRC.~~
- A. Motion is made and supported to strike Ground c. of the recommendation.
 - B. The chairman temporarily relinquishes the chair to the vice-chairman.
 - C. After a time of discussion, the assembly takes a brief break for refreshment.

Adopted

(Advisory Committee 11 continued in Art. 41.)

ARTICLE 39

The chairman resumes the chair from the vice-chairman.

Motion is made and supported to approve the concept minutes from the work of Synod on Tuesday, which were distributed previously.

Adopted

The chairman temporarily relinquishes the chair to the vice-chairman.

ARTICLE 40

The vice-chairman invites Rev. Daniel Wilson to bring greetings to the assembly on behalf of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand (RCNZ). Rev. Wilson brings warm greetings on behalf of his federation, describes some developments in the ecumenical efforts and mission works of the RCNZ, and expresses gratitude for the help some of our churches have provided in preparing men for the ministry in New Zealand.

CECCA member Elder Doug Field offers a brief response and leads the assembly in prayer for the Reformed Churches of New Zealand.

ARTICLE 41

Advisory Committee 11 – CECCA (continued from Art. 38)

Materials: Report of the Committee for Ecumenical Contact with Churches Abroad

Recommendations:

8. That Synod accede to Recommendation 1 that the URCNA enter into Ecumenical Fellowship (Phase II) with the Reformed Churches of South Africa (GKSA).

Grounds:

- a. The decision of the GKSA January 2016 Synod confirmed by a substantial majority their practice of prohibiting women from the offices of Elder and Minister. This reflects their Scriptural conviction that women should not participate in the governing body of the church.
- b. With this decision the GKSA clearly distances itself from the CRCNA (with which it is still in fellowship) on this issue. Moreover, the GKSA continues to give a clear witness to the CRCNA regarding matters relating to the authority of Scripture, including the prohibition of ordaining women into the teaching and ruling offices of the church.
- ~~c. This recommendation is consistent with past synodical decisions regarding other federations such as the RPCNA and the ERQ [which have women in the office of deacon], as well as with the practice of the ICRC, where having women as deacons who are not part of the ruling body of the church does not disqualify churches from becoming members of the ICRC.~~

A. After further discussion, this recommendation is:

Adopted

B. The chairman resumes the chair from the vice-chairman.

C. The chairman notes that this action requires ratification by a majority of the consistories. The chairman rules that Dec. 31, 2016, will be the deadline for this ratification.

9. That Synod accede to Recommendation 9 that the URCNA approve the proposed changes to the constitution of the ICRC.

Adopted

10. That Synod accede to Recommendation 10 that Synod reappoint Rev. Dick Moes as member-at-large of CECCA for a new term from 2017-2020.

Adopted

11. That Synod accede to Recommendation 11 that Synod welcome the fraternal delegates present at Synod, extending to them the opportunity to address Synod on behalf of their sending churches.

The chairman so rules

12. That Synod accede to Recommendation 12 that Synod welcome the fraternal observers who may be present, extending to them the opportunity to greet Synod on behalf of their sending churches.

The chairman so rules

13. That Synod set the budget for CECCA at \$7,500 (USD) per annum.

Adopted

Rev. Greg Lubbers leads the assembly in a prayer of thanksgiving for the closer ecumenical unity we have been led to seek. The assembly then stands to sing the Doxology.

ARTICLE 42

Motion is made and supported to change the Time Schedule from 5 until 7 p.m. to 5 until 6 p.m. for the remainder of the week, in order to allow more time for accomplishing work.

Defeated

ARTICLE 43

Advisory Committee 10b – Liturgical Forms (confessions) (continued from Art. 22)

Materials: Overture 18 (*Adopt Revision Regarding Belgic Confession Article 4*)

Recommendation:

A. Motion is made and supported to take up the tabled recommendation from Advisory Committee 10b regarding Overture 18.

Adopted

B. Motion is made and supported to re-commit Overture 18 to Advisory Committee 10b.

Adopted

(Advisory Committee 10b continued in Art. 66.)

ARTICLE 44

Advisory Committee 4 – PJCO (continued from Art. 18)

Materials: Proposed Joint Church Order Report; Overture 8 (*Amend Art. 17 & 19 of PJCO*); Overture 9 (*Change Art. 32a of PJCO*); Overture 10 (*Change Art. 36 of PJCO*); Overture 11 (*Change Art. 40 of PJCO*); Overture 12 (*Change Art. 54 of PJCO*); Overture 15 (*Declaration Regarding PJCO*)

Overture 8 states:

Classis Ontario East overtures Synod to amend Articles 17 & 19 [of the Proposed Joint Church Order] by:

- Beginning each article with the phrase, “The duties belonging to the office of [elder/deacon] consist of continuing in prayer and ...”
- Removing the phrase, “persist in praying for the congregation” from Article 17 and “continuing in prayer” from Article 19.

Overture 9 states:

Classis Ontario East overtures Synod to change Article 32(A) of the PJCO to strike the sentence which states:

“Since local ecumenical relations aim at federative unity, each church must receive the approbation of classis before such ecumenical relations progress to include preaching exchange and fellowship at the Lord’s Supper.”

Overture 10 states:

Classis Ontario East overtures Synod to change Article 36 of the PJCO to read:

“The 150 Psalms shall have the principal place in the singing of the churches. In the worship services, the congregation shall sing faithful lyrical renderings of the Psalms, and hymns which faithfully and fully reflect the teaching of Scripture in harmony with the Three Forms of Unity, provided they are approved by the consistory in accord with a synodically adopted standard.”

Overture 11 states:

Classis Ontario East overtures Synod to change Article 40 of the PJCO to read:

“Baptized members who have been instructed in the faith and who have come to years of understanding shall be encouraged to make public profession of faith in

Jesus Christ. Those who desire to profess their faith shall be evaluated by the consistory regarding their motives, their knowledge of the Three Forms of Unity, and their walk of life. Their public profession of faith shall occur in a public worship service after adequate announcement to the congregation and with the use of the adopted liturgical form. Thereby baptized members are accepted into full communion in the congregation and shall be obligated to persevere in the fellowship of the church, not only in hearing God's Word, but also in partaking of the Lord's Supper.

Overture 12 states:

Classis Ontario East overtures Synod to amend Article 54 [of the PJCO] by replacing the title "No Lording It Over" with "Equality of Office-Bearers."

Overture 15 states:

Classis Pacific Northwest overtures Synod Wyoming 2016 of the United Reformed Churches to declare that the Proposed Joint Church Order (a Church Order proposed for use in the prospective union of the United Reformed Churches with the Canadian Reformed Churches) is unusable for that purpose.

Recommendations:

1. That Synod declare that the Proposed Joint Church Order (PJCO) is in need of further revision in order to comply more fully with our Foundational Principles of Reformed Church Government.

Grounds:

- a. This is evidenced by many overtures requesting changes to the PJCO.
- b. Several requirements in the PJCO conflict with Principle 5, such as synodically approved hymns, synodical deputies, classical approval for table fellowship and pulpit exchanges, and the calling of ministers requiring approval from other churches.
- c. There is still significant concern in our churches about the hierarchical tendencies of a federational seminary.

Adopted

2. That Synod declare that this further revision be undertaken when the federation is ready to enter into Phase 3A with the Canadian Reformed Churches.

Ground:

This work properly belongs in Phase 3A of any ecumenical relationship

Adopted

3. That this be Synod's answer to Overture 15.

Adopted

4. That this be Synod's answer to Overtures 8-12.

Adopted

5. That Synod accede to Recommendation 1 of the PJCO Committee Report to dismiss the PJCO Committee with thanks, including all past members who have worked so diligently.

Ground:

The work of this committee properly belongs to Phase 3A.

Adopted

The chairman instructs the Stated Clerk to express thanks on behalf of the assembly to the present and former members of the committee.

6. That this be Synod's answer to the PJCO Report.

Adopted

(Advisory Committee 4 continued in Art. 54.)

ARTICLE 45

The chairman reads a communication from the 83rd General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, informing the assembly of recent decisions by the OPC with regard to the publication of a proposed Trinity Psalter Hymnal by the OPC and URC. This included:

- Approving for publication the 428 hymns proposed for inclusion in the proposed songbook.
- Approving for publication the proposed Trinity Psalter Hymnal, with the Psalms previously approved and with the inclusion of the Three Forms of Unity and of the Confession of Faith and Catechisms of the OPC.

ARTICLE 46

Advisory Committee 7 – Songbook

Materials: Psalter Hymnal Committee Report

Recommendations:

1. That Synod receive the work of the committee to date.

Adopted

2. That Synod grant the privilege of the floor to members of the URC Psalter Hymnal Committee when this report is being discussed.

The chairman so rules

3. That Synod grant the privilege of the floor to the OPC members serving the OPC's Psalter Hymnal Special Committee when Recommendation 4 is being discussed (namely,

Dr. Alan Stange, Rev. Danny Olinger, and Mr. David Winslow). These three members are fraternal delegates.

The chairman so rules

4. That Synod adopt the submitted hymn proposal to be the hymn portion of the *Trinity Psalter Hymnal*.

Grounds:

- a. Synod 1999 mandated the Psalter Hymnal committee to provide “a recommendation of songs to be included in the new psalter hymnal” (Art. 31 XLI.c.(a)).
- b. This hymn proposal has been approved at this year’s OPC General Assembly as an entire collection.

Adopted without dissent

5. That Synod 2016 approve the proposed *Trinity Psalter Hymnal* with the Psalms approved by Synod 2014 (Visalia) and the hymns approved by Synod 2016; and with the inclusion of the Belgic Confession, Heidelberg Catechism, and Canons of Dort *adopted by the United Reformed Churches in North America*; and the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms adopted by the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

- A. Motion is made and supported to amend the recommendation to include the phrase, “adopted by the United Reformed Churches in North America,” after the word “Dort.”

Adopted

- B. Motion is made to table this recommendation temporarily.

Adopted

6. That Synod budget \$5,000 USD per annum for the continued work of the Psalter Hymnal Committee.

Adopted

7. That Synod approve the publication of the liturgical forms in a stand-alone book as recommended by the Liturgical Forms Committee (Agenda p. 188).

Grounds:

- a. The Psalter Hymnal Committee agrees with this recommendation (Agenda p. 171).
- b. Such a printing will allow greater flexibility and revision of the liturgical forms in the future, as noted by the Liturgical Forms Committee (Agenda p. 188).
- c. Including the liturgical forms would complicate our working agreement with the OPC, increase publication costs, and require a separate volume for each federation/denomination.
- d. Producing one unified *Trinity Psalter Hymnal* expresses ecumenicity: “What a witness to have a continental Reformed federation and a Presbyterian

- denomination unite in this project to produce one book that includes Psalms, hymns, and the best of the Reformation Confessions!” (Agenda p. 171).
- e. A unified *Trinity Psalter Hymnal* will be internationally ecumenical, encouraging its broadest use.

After a time of discussion, the assembly breaks for the order of the day, with advisory committees to meet after dinner.

(**Advisory Committee 7** continued in Art. 53.)

ARTICLE 47

Rev. Keith Davis concludes the session by reading Romans 5:8; calling for the singing of the hymn, *And Can It Be that I Should Gain*; and leading the assembly in prayer.

Wednesday, June 15, 2016 Evening Session

ARTICLE 48

Rev. Chuck Tedrick opens the session by reading Psalm 73 and Psalm 46. He then calls for the singing of the hymn, *A Mighty Fortress Our God*, and leads the assembly in prayer.

ARTICLE 49

The chairman welcomes Rev. Paul Murphy from Messiah’s Reformed Fellowship of New York, New York, who arrived late to the assembly. Rev. Murphy rises to signify his assent to the Form of Subscription.

ARTICLE 50

The chairman invites Rev. Stephen Tracey to bring greetings to the assembly on behalf of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. Rev. Tracey brings warm greetings on behalf of his federation, urging the assembly to celebrate with joy the ecumenical statement that we have the opportunity to make in publishing a joint songbook, unto the glory of God. He offers some updates concerning the life of the OPC and urges us to continue striving to encourage and edify one another.

Rev. Harry Zekveld offers a brief response and leads the assembly in prayer for the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

ARTICLE 51

The chairman invites Rev. Alvis Sauka to bring greetings to the assembly on behalf of the Evangelical Reformed Church of Latvia. Rev. Sauka brings warm greetings on behalf of his

federation, expressing appreciation for our partnership in the gospel, describing some of the work God has done in providing for the ERCL, and asking for continued cooperation in the work of the church.

Rev. Richard Miller offers a brief response and leads the assembly in prayer for the Evangelical Reformed Church of Latvia.

ARTICLE 52

The chairman invites Dr. Douw Breed to bring greetings to the assembly on behalf of Die Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika (GKSA). Dr. Breed brings warm greetings on behalf of his federation, describing the federation's blessings and challenges and seeking our continued support, prayers and cooperation in the Lord.

Rev. Christo Heiberg offers a brief response and leads the assembly in prayer for Die Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika.

ARTICLE 53

Advisory Committee 7 – Songbook (continued from Art. 46)

Materials: Psalter Hymnal Committee Report

Recommendations:

7. That Synod approve the publication of the liturgical forms in a stand-alone book as recommended by the Liturgical Forms Committee (Agenda p. 188).

Grounds:

- a. The Psalter Hymnal Committee agrees with this recommendation (Agenda p. 171).
 - b. Such a printing will allow greater flexibility and revision of the liturgical forms in the future, as noted by the Liturgical Forms Committee (Agenda p. 188).
 - c. Including the liturgical forms would complicate our working agreement with the OPC, increase publication costs, and require a separate volume for each federation/denomination.
 - d. Producing one unified *Trinity Psalter Hymnal* expresses ecumenicity: “What a witness to have a continental Reformed federation and a Presbyterian denomination unite in this project to produce one book that includes Psalms, hymns, and the best of the Reformation Confessions!” (Agenda p. 171).
 - e. A unified *Trinity Psalter Hymnal* will be internationally ecumenical, encouraging its broadest use.
- A. Discussion on Recommendation 7 resumes, after which the assembly votes on Recommendation 7:

Adopted

B. Motion is made and supported to take up the tabled Recommendation 5, as amended.

Adopted

5. That Synod 2016 approve the proposed *Trinity Psalter Hymnal* with the Psalms approved by Synod 2014 (Visalia) and the hymns approved by Synod 2016; and the inclusion of the Belgic Confession, Heidelberg Catechism, Canons of Dort adopted by the United Reformed Churches in North America; and the Westminster Confession of Faith and catechisms adopted by the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

Adopted without dissent

8. That Synod thank the Psalter Hymnal Committee for its work, with a special note of thanks to the Faith URC of West Olive Michigan for its hospitality.

Adopted

The chairman instructs the Stated Clerk to send a note of thanks to the Psalter Hymnal Committee and to Faith URC. He also verbally offers words of sincere appreciation for the work of the committee.

ARTICLE 54

Advisory Committee 4 – PRCC (continued from Art. 44)

Materials: Presbyterian Reformed Chaplaincy Committee Report

Recommendations:

1. That Synod thank the Consistory of Faith URC of Beecher, Illinois, for so ably serving as the URCNA liaison to the PRCC.

Adopted

The chairman offers the assembly's appreciation verbally.

2. That Synod thank Rev. Spriensma for his faithful service and commit him to continued prayer.

Adopted

The chairman verbally expresses the assembly's appreciation.

3. That Synod take note of the prayer items in the PRCC report (page 554), including the need for more chaplains.

Adopted

4. That Synod set the budget for the PRCC Liaison at \$500 USD per annum.

Ground:

These funds are used to cover the travel costs of the PRCC Liaison to attend Commission meetings.

Adopted

5. That Synod set the budget for the cost of the Personal Chaplaincy dues and the PRCC Membership dues at \$1,200 USD for 2017 and \$1,300 USD for 2018.

Grounds:

- a. The PRCC requires dues from their individual chaplains and from its member denominations.
- b. These dues are necessary for our chaplains to be a part of the PRCC, resulting from our decision of 2007 to become associate members of the PRCC.
- c. The dues for Rev. Spriensma are \$400 USD per annum (no annual increase).
- d. The dues for the URCNA to remain as associate members in PRCC are \$800 USD for 2017 and \$900 USD for 2018.

Adopted

6. That this constitutes Synod's response to the PRCC report.

Adopted

ARTICLE 55

Advisory Committee 6 – CERCU (continued from Art. 37)

Materials: Overture 13 (*Direct CERCU Regarding Union with CanRC*); Communication 1; Communication 2; Communication 4; Communication 5

Overture 13 states:

Classis Pacific Northwest overtures Synod Wyoming 2016 to direct CERCU to discontinue all further action, advancement, processes, efforts or steps toward unification with the Canadian Reformed Churches and specifically advancement to Phase Three, Step A.

Recommendations:

1. That Synod not accede to Overture 13.

Grounds:

- a. CERCU has responded to the concerns of the overture by deciding to not make a Phase Three, Step A recommendation for at least six years.
- b. Synod has approved the work of CERCU, including its synodical reports in which an affirmative case for pursuing union has been made.
- c. The overture is inconsistent with our commitment as a member of NAPARC in which we agree with "the desirability and need for organic union of churches that are of like faith and practice."
- d. The communications received by Synod on this issue speak against Overture 13 and articulate the fruit the churches have experienced through the pursuit of unity with the CanRC.
- e. Ground 2 of the Overture inaccurately attributes to CERCU the suggestion that "two-thirds of the federation does not approve of unification with the Canadian

Reformed Churches and is resistant to CERCU's proceedings.” CERCU's report reads as follows: “One third of the URC has discovered that the Canadian Reformed are dear brothers and sisters in the faith. That two thirds of the URC has not had the opportunity to discover this truth firsthand continues to present real challenges, but we pray that the two thirds will accept the testimony and witness born by the one third” (*Acts of Synod 2014*, pp. 166-167; Provisional Agenda, p. 77).

Adopted without dissent

2. That this be Synod's answer to Overture 13.

Adopted without dissent

3. That Synod acknowledge with thanks Communications 1, 2, 4, 5, which address and encourage the pursuit of unity with the Canadian Reformed Churches.

Adopted without dissent

The chairman directs the Stated Clerk to send letters expressing our thanks for these communications.

ARTICLE 56

Advisory Committee 6 – CERCU

Materials: Report of the Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity

Recommendations:

1. That Synod accede to Recommendation 9 with its grounds:

“That Synod continue to encourage each classis and consistory to continue to engage the issue of an eventual merger between the CanRC and the URCNA by inviting Canadian Reformed ministers to fill our pulpits, inviting Canadian Reformed representatives to our classis meetings, seeking open dialogue with Canadian Reformed brothers regarding any outstanding areas of concern, organizing joint events with Canadian Reformed congregations, attending joint conferences, and writing columns to foster our mutual understanding and affection. And that synod encourage the churches to regularly pray for the Lord's guidance and grace that we may know and do his will, and that he might do 'exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think ... to him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations' (Ephesians 3:20-21).”

Grounds:

- a. Those who have been involved in the process of facilitating greater unity have been profoundly impacted with the spirit of unity. Throughout the process, further dialogue has consistently resulted in warm and cordial relationships, and misconceptions have been dispelled.
- b. This would be an encouragement to the Canadian Reformed Churches, who through their synodical communications have expressed their willingness to continue working through the challenges involved in seeking unity.

- c. Our own unity as emerging URCNA churches was formed through these kinds of relations and interactions before our own official start together.
- d. Prayer is needed, for “unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain” (Psalm 127:1).

Grounds:

- a. Although CERCU “does not intend to recommend moving to a Phase 3a relationship with the Canadian Reformed Churches for at least the next six years” (Agenda p. 143), it would be wise to continue to engage the CanRC in the meantime.
 - b. Recommendation 9 repeats and reaffirms the recommendations adopted at Synods 2012 (Art. 59.8) and 2014 (Art. 26.12).
- Adopted*
2. That Synod accede to Recommendation 12 as amended: “That Synod approve the work of the committee without adopting every formulation in its various ~~Phase One~~ dialogues.”
- Adopted*

ARTICLE 57

Rev. Andrew Eenigenburg from West Sayville Reformed Bible Church of West Sayville, New York, leads the assembly in closing devotions. He reads Nehemiah 4:14, 19-23; calls for the singing of the hymn, *Holy God, We Praise Your Name*; and leads the assembly in prayer.

**Thursday, June 16, 2016
Morning Session**

ARTICLE 58

Rev. Rand Lankheet opens the session by reading from 1 Timothy 1:12-17; calling the delegates to sing the hymn, *Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise*; and leading the assembly in prayer.

ARTICLE 59

The chairman recognizes the arrival of Elder Steve Bultema from Redeemer URC of Dyer, Indiana, who is serving as an alternate delegate, replacing Elder Donald Hammer. Elder Bultema rises to signify his assent to the Form of Subscription.

ARTICLE 60

The vice-chairman invites Rev. Marvin Padgett to bring greetings to the assembly on behalf of the Presbyterian Church in America. Rev. Padgett brings warm greetings on behalf of his federation, reports on the state of the PCA, and offers words of encouragement to the brothers. He urges our federation to continue upholding the PCA in prayer, even as the PCA upholds us in prayer.

Rev. Richard Miller offers a brief response and leads the assembly in prayer for the Presbyterian Church in America.

ARTICLE 61

The vice-chairman invites Rev. K. M. Kabongo to bring greetings to the assembly on behalf of the United Reformed Church in Congo. Rev. Kabongo brings warm greetings on behalf of his federation, then updates the assembly on the state of the churches in Congo and of the society in which they labor. He describes challenges that stand before them and asks for prayer for their society, their seminary, and their church life.

Rev. Jason Tuinstra offers a brief response and leads the assembly in prayer for the United Reformed Church in Congo.

ARTICLE 62

Motion is made and supported to approve the concept minutes, which were distributed previously and corrected by the assembly.

Adopted

ARTICLE 63

The second clerk reads a press release concerning the work of Synod 2016 for Wednesday. Corrections and suggestions are received from the delegates. Motion is made and supported to approve this press release, as corrected.

Adopted

ARTICLE 64

Advisory Committee 5 – Missions (continued from Art. 23)

Materials: Missions Committee Report

Recommendations:

1. That Synod schedule and hear the Missions Coordinator's report (see Recommendation 2 & 3).
2. That Synod accede to Recommendation 10 to encourage the churches of the federation to distribute physical copies of *The Trumpet* to each household in their congregations.

Adopted

Ground:

Physical copies of the Trumpet have a greater potential of being read, as digital distribution via email is easily ignored.

Adopted

3. That Synod accede to Recommendation 12 to remind the churches to destroy all first printings of *How to Plant a Reformed Church*. Note: First printing is NOT dated on the cover, i.e. it does not say on the cover, “2015 Edition.”

Ground:

Due to an error with the publisher, the first copy of *How to Plant a Reformed Church* contains a significant copyright infringement.

Adopted

4. That Synod instruct the convening consistory of each synod to arrange, in consultation with the Missions Committee, a two-hour period for URCNA missionaries to address the synod in their areas of service.

Ground:

- a. The work of missions, both foreign and domestic, is a matter of importance that is held in common by all the churches.
- b. Presentations on mission causes allow the synod meeting to be punctuated by constant reminders of our priorities as churches. This strengthens the focus and camaraderie of our deliberations and is a positive influence on the minds of those present as we consider the overtures and reports brought before us.
- c. Synod has historically given time to greetings from sister churches. While the desire of most delegates is to see the time for those greetings kept to a reasonable amount, we give times for these greetings because ecumenicity is important. In the same vein, however, we must recognize the importance of missions and supporting our missions in a practical way in the corporate synod meetings.
- d. Allowing missionaries to report to synod encourages them by showing that they truly belong to the URCNA and have the support of the churches of the URCNA.
- e. Allowing missionaries to report to synod reminds the churches that we have a real and on-going responsibility for our mission works. This reminder would go, via press releases of the work of Synod, to members of the federation at large.
- f. Some missionaries travel significant distances to come to synod. These men have limited opportunities to know and be known by our churches, and it is a shame if we cannot give such men an opportunity to share, however briefly, something of the work of the Lord in their areas.

Adopted

5. That this be Synod’s answer to Missions Committee Recommendations 13 and 14.

Adopted

6. That Synod increase the Missions Committee budget from \$9,000 per annum to \$15,000 per annum USD.

Ground:

- a. The Missions Committee is a fairly labor-intensive committee to be a part of, even should there be no changes made to the Missions Committee's functions and tasks at Synod Wyoming.
- b. The task assigned to the Missions Committee by Synod is greatly facilitated by two face-to-face meetings per year. This increase gives an additional \$3,000 USD for travel.
- c. This includes a \$3,000 USD increase for the printing of the prayer maps, which is new to the committee's work since last synod. The prayer maps have been of great benefit to the churches.
- d. The Missions Committee does not currently have a budget for publications.

Adopted

7. That this be Synod's answer to Recommendations 11 and 18 in the Missions Committee Report.

Adopted

8. Missions advisory committee notes that Recommendation 15 has been answered by the Finance Committee in Report 2A, Recommendation 5.

Adopted

9. That Synod accede to Recommendation 16 to set the Missions Coordinator's pay scale for 2017 at the following Canadian currency numbers: Salary \$62,525; Housing \$22,172; RRSP (pension) \$8,470; Medical Benefits \$6,500.

Ground:

The deacons of Living Water Reformed Church (Pastor Bout's calling church) have recently re-worked their salary grid, taking in to account the decisions of Synod Visalia and changes to local costs of living. These numbers reflect that grid in light of Pastor R. Bout's years of experience in the ministry.

Adopted

10. That Synod accede to Recommendation 17 to instruct the ~~URCNA Board of Directors~~ *JVA Board* (finance committee) to give the Missions Coordinator a yearly raise based on the rate of inflation as announced by the federal government of the nation in which he resides. This raise will affect the Missions Coordinator's housing, salary, pension and benefits. Should the rate of inflation be negative, the Missions Coordinator will receive neither a raise nor a decrease in pay.

Grounds:

- a. We do not currently have any practice for increasing the wages of our Missions Coordinator from year to year when synod is not meeting.
- b. A raise which matches the cost of inflation is reasonable.
- c. Utilizing the federal government's stated rate of inflation is a clear and viable standard for the finance committee to work with.
- d. Decreases in the wages of the Missions Coordinator, in the case of a widespread economic collapse, should be done at a meeting of synod.

- A. Motion is made and supported to amend the recommendation by striking “URCNA Board of Directors” and replacing it with “JVA Board.”

Adopted

- B. The recommendation, as amended, is:

Adopted

11. That Synod accede to Recommendation 8 to adopt the foreign missions manual, *URCNA Foreign Missions Manual*, as helpful guidelines to assist consistories, missionaries and church planters in the day-to-day activity of foreign missions, with the following revisions:

- Revise 1.E to read: “E. The Priority of Strengthening Current Fields.”
- Revise the last sentence of 1.G “Where a sound theological education cannot be attained at home, this education should be sought through a foreign seminary (in North America or elsewhere), though particular challenges are often attached to this scenario.”
- Revise 3.E. to read: “Guidelines for Preparing Young People for Mission Work.”
- Where the Missions Committee mandate has been changed by Synod 2016, these changes will be incorporated.

Ground:

- a. The Missions Committee of the URCNA has written the manual in partial fulfillment of its mandate to develop helpful guidelines for the assistance of consistories and church planters in the work of missions.
 - b. We should assist each other as federated churches in accordance with the Scriptures, our Confessions, and our Church Order (CO Art. 47).
 - c. There is a sense of standing alone that exists among many of our congregations and missionaries in the work of foreign missions.
 - d. The obstacles involved in foreign missions can be many, and guidelines that represent the gathering of our collected wisdom will be tremendously beneficial.
 - e. Our churches, missionaries and prospective missionaries would benefit from the collective wisdom of a unified plan to guide them in their church planting efforts.
 - f. The manual will provide clarity regarding our church planting methods and goals for groups and individuals outside the URCNA who are interested in our federation or cooperating with our federation on the foreign mission field.
- A. Motion is made and supported to amend the proposed manual by replacing the term “indigenous” throughout the manual with the term “national.”

Adopted

- B. Motion is made and supported to amend the second revision, above, by placing parentheses around the phrase, “in North America or elsewhere.”

Adopted

C. The recommendation, as amended, is:

Adopted

12. That Synod accede to Recommendation 7: “that our shared strategy for missions include additional training for foreign missionaries that is above and beyond ordination (where applicable), for all men and women (serving as pastors’ wives or missionary helpers) called to the foreign mission field” by directing the Standing Missions Committee to investigate concrete means by which this can be accomplished.

Grounds:

- a. The work of missions calls for specialized training in cultural understanding, language, and more, which seminaries are not all able to provide for the many cultures of the world.
- b. The work of missions carries unique difficulties and blessings for which additional training would greatly help in preparing people.
- c. Many faithful Reformed denominations require this for all of their missionaries, and their experience has found it to be a great practical benefit for Gospel ministry in a foreign context.

Adopted

13. That Synod accede to Recommendation 9 to rewrite the policy section on the appointment of the Missions Coordinator as follows (new areas underlined and italicized):

2. Missions Coordinator:

(a) Means of appointment:

- i. *Each consistory desiring to nominate a man to the position of Missions Coordinator shall consult with the Missions Committee and then bring its nomination to its classis by means of overture* (see Grounds 1 and 2, below).
- ii. *Each classis, having decided on a nominee, shall forward its nomination to synod by means of overture.*
- iii. [This point is unchanged]
- iv. *When the federation has an elected Missions Coordinator, nominees shall be allowed only when his term is up for reappointment. In such an instance, Synod shall decide first whether to reappoint the current Missions Coordinator. Only if the current Missions Coordinator fails to be reappointed shall nominations for the position be considered by Synod* (see Ground 3, below). When the federation does not have a man currently serving as the Missions Coordinator, synod shall elect a Missions Coordinator from the pool of nominees. The election shall be by a 2/3 majority vote, taken by ballot (see Ground 4, below).

Grounds:

- a. The Missions Committee functions closely with the Missions Coordinator and understands well what the task involves. Its advice would thus be helpful for local consistories in putting together a nomination.

- b. The Missions Committee's positive advice need not be given to a local consistory before it makes a nomination for Missions Coordinator to its classis. This keeps the Missions Coordinator position under the authority of the churches, rather than simply under the authority of the Missions Committee.
- c. Any current Missions Coordinator should not be arbitrarily replaced. Appointing a new Missions Coordinator should only be done when the current coordinator no longer has the support of the churches or has asked to be released from the work.
- d. The Missions Coordinator will be serving the churches in a significant and visible role. Because of this the position requires a 2/3 majority vote for reappointment. Similarly, any man appointed to this position should have the churches strongly behind him as demonstrated through a 2/3 majority vote.

Adopted

14. That Synod accede to Recommendation 19 to receive the work of the Missions Committee to date and thank them for their work.

Adopted

The chairman instructs the Stated Clerk to formally communicate our appreciation to the members of the Missions Committee. He also verbally expresses our gratitude for the immense amount of valuable work which the committee has performed in recent years. The assembly confirms his words with its applause.

ARTICLE 65

The chairman invites the Missions Coordinator, Rev. Richard Bout, to bring a report of his work to the assembly. Rev. Bout reads Psalm 67 and describes the work he has been doing to support, encourage and assist the churches in their missions efforts. He describes some of the ways in which he and the Missions Committee are striving to serve the churches, urging that these resources be employed. He also explains some of the challenges which our missions efforts face, including the reality of missionaries who are working alone, missions efforts that are stretched thin, and the need to replace retiring missionaries. Rev. Bout also announces plans for a URCNA Missions and Pastors Conference, slated for May 15-18, 2017. Further information about all of these matters can be found online at urcnamissions.org.

The chairman asks Rev. John Bouwers to lead the assembly in prayer for the work of Rev. Bout and for the missions of our churches.

ARTICLE 66

Advisory Committee 10b – Liturgical Forms (confessions) (continued from Art. 43)

Materials: Overture 18 (*Adopt Revision Regarding Belgic Confession Article 4*)

Overture 18 states:

Classis Southwestern Ontario (URCNA) overtures Synod Wyoming 2016 to adopt the following revision of the wording of Belgic Confession Article 4 proposed by our Liturgical Forms Committee.

Recommendation:

1. That Synod accede to Overture 18, with some changes, and revise the wording of Belgic Confession Article 4 used in the Liturgical Forms Committee proposal to read as follows:

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, Ruth;
the two books of Samuel, the two books of Kings, the two books of Chronicles;
the books of Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther;
the book of Job, the Psalms, the three books of Solomon—Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, the Song of Songs;
the books of the four major prophets—Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel;
the books of the 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, John;
the Acts of the Apostles;
the thirteen letters of Paul—to the Romans; the two letters to the Corinthians; to the Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians; the two letters to the Thessalonians; the two letters to Timothy; to Titus, Philemon;
the letter 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.

Grounds:

- a. This revision corrects inaccurate titles for “Ezra” and “the Psalms.” “The Psalms of David” does not agree with the titles for the collection used in the Hebrew Bible, the Septuagint and the Vulgate; nor is it named such in the Scripture itself. Not all of the Psalms were written by David. “The first of Ezra” is a designation used in the Vulgate which names “Nehemiah” as “The second of Ezra.” Since we adopt the title “Nehemiah” for the book that follows “Ezra,” the title “The first of

Ezra” is, at best, unclear and could be confused with the apocryphal book of a similar name (“I Esdras”).

- b. This revision removes from Article 4 the uncertain claims that Paul wrote the letter to the Hebrews but affirms the traditional view that Solomon wrote Ecclesiastes. The proposed wording is designed to leave open the matter of the authorship of Hebrews, not forbid the possibility of Pauline authorship of Hebrews.
 - c. This revision uses “Song of Songs” instead of “Song of Solomon” because this is the title used in the Hebrew Bible.
 - d. This revision includes specific mention of the book of Lamentations, which is currently missing from the list. In doing so, the revision also accomplishes what Article 4 promises to do in the opening title and sentence, namely, list the canonical *books*, not just the prophets.
 - e. We have modified some of the wording for the sake of cadence and grammatical consistency (e.g. punctuation, removing conjunctions, etc.).
 - f. This revision, while seeking to remove inaccuracies, follows closely the translation proposed by our Liturgical Forms Committee.
 - g. The translations adopted by the Canadian Reformed Churches and the Reformed Church in the United States make similar changes.
 - h. *This is adopted without prejudice or precedent.*
- A. Motion is made and supported to amend the recommendation to add Ground h., stating: “This is adopted without prejudice or precedent.”

Adopted

- B. After a time of discussion, the assembly takes a brief break for refreshment.

(Advisory Committee 10b continued in Art. 68.)

ARTICLE 67

The vice-chairman invites Rev. Jean Zoellner to bring greetings to the assembly on behalf of L’Eglise Reformee du Quebec (ERQ). Rev. Zoellner briefly describes the churches of the ERQ, describes some of the challenges they are facing, and solicits our prayers for unity and faithfulness. He also expresses appreciation for the work of CERCUC and the encouragement the committee has provided and wishes God’s blessing upon the United Reformed Churches.

Rev. John Bouwers offers a brief response and leads the assembly in prayer for L’Eglise Reformee du Quebec.

ARTICLE 68

Advisory Committee 10b – Liturgical Forms (confessions) (continued from Art. 66)

Materials: Overture 18 (*Adopt Revision Regarding Belgic Confession Article 4*)

Overture 18 states:

Classis Southwestern Ontario (URCNA) overtures Synod Wyoming 2016 to adopt the following revision of the wording of Belgic Confession Article 4 proposed by our Liturgical Forms Committee.

Recommendation:

1. That Synod accede to Overture 18, with some changes, and revise the wording of Belgic Confession Article 4 used in the Liturgical Forms Committee proposal to read as follows:

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, Ruth;
the two books of Samuel, the two books of Kings, the two books of Chronicles;
the books of Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther;
the book of Job, the Psalms, the three books of Solomon—Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, the Song of Songs;
the books of the four major prophets—Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel;
the books of the 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, John;
the Acts of the Apostles;
the thirteen letters of Paul—to the Romans; the two letters to the Corinthians; to the Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians; the two letters to the Thessalonians; the two letters to Timothy; to Titus, Philemon;
the letter 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.

Grounds:

- a. This revision corrects inaccurate titles for “Ezra” and “the Psalms.” “The Psalms of David” does not agree with the titles for the collection used in the Hebrew Bible, the Septuagint and the Vulgate; nor is it named such in the Scripture itself.

Not all the Psalms were written by David. “The first of Ezra” is a designation used in the Vulgate which names “Nehemiah” as “The second of Ezra.” Since we adopt the title “Nehemiah” for the book that follows “Ezra,” the title “The first of Ezra” is, at best, unclear and could be confused with the apocryphal book of a similar name (“I Esdras”).

- b. This revision removes from Article 4 the uncertain claims that Paul wrote the letter to the Hebrews but affirms the traditional view that Solomon wrote Ecclesiastes. The proposed wording is designed to leave open the matter of the authorship of Hebrews, not forbid the possibility of Pauline authorship of Hebrews.
 - c. This revision uses “Song of Songs” instead of “Song of Solomon” because this is the title used in the Hebrew Bible.
 - d. This revision includes specific mention of the book of Lamentations, which is currently missing from the list. In doing so, the revision also accomplishes what Article 4 promises to do in the opening title and sentence, namely, list the canonical *books*, not just the prophets.
 - e. We have modified some of the wording for the sake of cadence and grammatical consistency (e.g. punctuation, removing conjunctions, etc.).
 - f. This revision, while seeking to remove inaccuracies, follows closely the translation proposed by our Liturgical Forms Committee.
 - g. The translations adopted by the Canadian Reformed Churches and the Reformed Church in the United States make similar changes.
 - h. *This is adopted without prejudice or precedent.*
- A. The assembly resumes its discussion of Recommendation 1, as amended.
- B. The recommendation, as amended, is:

Adopted

2. That this be declared to be Synod’s answer to Overture 18.

Adopted

ARTICLE 69

Advisory Committee 10b – Liturgical Forms (Confessions)

Materials: Liturgical Forms Committee Report (Agenda pp. 175-176; 181-184; 195-199; 207-291)

Recommendations:

1. That the sentence which appears in the prefaces to the Belgic Confession and the Canons of Dort, “The translation with minor emendations can be found in *Creeds and Confessions of Faith in the Christian Tradition*, vol. 2 edited by Pelikan and Hotchkiss” be placed in a footnote.

Ground:

This belongs in a footnote, not in the text itself.

Adopted

2. That the Liturgical Forms Committee take note of various perfections in the prefaces, such as:
 - a. Using the adopted translation within the text of the preface (i.e. the first paragraph of the Heidelberg Catechism uses a different translation than that proposed by the committee; this is also the case with some of the five heads of the Canons of Dort that are referenced).
 - b. Change “An old tradition credits Zacharias Ursinus and Casper Olevianus as the co-authors of the new catechism” to “Zacharias Ursinus and Caspar Olevianus are traditionally considered co-authors of the new catechism.”
 - c. Change “Casper” to “Caspar.”
 - d. Change “*The Heidelberg Catechism*, after some introductory questions and answers ...” to “*The Heidelberg Catechism*, after two introductory questions and answers. ...”

Adopted

3. That the Liturgical Forms Committee take note of various perfections in the text of the Confessions:
 - a. American spelling should be used in place of English spelling (e.g. “honour” should be changed to “honor” in Belgic Article 14).
 - b. Erroneous footnotes in the Belgic Confession should be fixed (e.g. a passage for footnote 44 in Article 19 does not appear).

Adopted

4. That the asterisk footnote to Belgic Confession Article 36 be changed from:
Various Reformed Synods in Europe and North America have substituted the above statement, which they judged unbiblical, for the following: “And the government’s task is not limited ...
... to:
Various Reformed Synods in Europe and North America have adopted the preceding four paragraphs as a substitution. These four paragraphs have replaced the following, which these Synods have judged unbiblical: “And the government’s task is not limited ...

Ground:

This makes clear what was changed from the original document.

Adopted

5. That the Synod approve the prefaces to the Heidelberg Catechism, the Belgic Confession, and the Canons of Dort.

Adopted

6. That the Synod adopt the proposed text of the Heidelberg Catechism.

Grounds:

- a. The doctrine contained therein is in full agreement with the Word of God.
- b. This is a faithful translation of the original source document.
- c. The wording is understandable and fluent in modern English.

Adopted without dissent

7. That the Synod adopt the proposed text of the Belgic Confession.

Grounds:

- a. The doctrine contained therein is in full agreement with the Word of God.
- b. This is a faithful translation of the original source document.
- c. The wording is understandable and fluent in modern English.

Adopted without dissent

8. That the Synod adopt the proposed text of the Canons of Dort.

Grounds:

- a. The doctrine contained therein is in full agreement with the Word of God.
- b. This is a faithful translation of the original source document.
- c. The wording is understandable and fluent in modern English.

Adopted without dissent

9. That the Synod thank the Liturgical Forms Committee for its many labors in this work, recognizing that there are perfections that need to be made yet.

Adopted

The chairman instructs the Stated Clerk to formally communicate our appreciation to the members of the Liturgical Forms Committee. He also verbally expresses our gratitude for the important work which the committee has performed for us. The assembly confirms his words with its applause.

10. That the Synod grant \$9,000 per annum to the Liturgical Forms Committee to continue its work.

Adopted

11. That the Synod mandate the Web Oversight Committee to post the adopted versions (*while preserving the current versions*) of the Heidelberg Catechism, the Belgic Confession, and the Canons of Dort, with their respective prefaces, once the texts have been finalized *and copyright permissions have been obtained*.

- A. Motion is made and supported to add this phrase at the end of the recommendation: “and copyright permissions have been obtained.”

Adopted

- B. Motion is made and supported to add the parenthetical comment, between “versions” and “of” in the committee’s recommendation: “(while preserving the current versions).”

Adopted

C. The recommendation, as amended, is:

Adopted

12. That this be declared to be Synod's answer to the Liturgical Forms Committee Report.

Adopted

ARTICLE 70

Advisory Committee 3 – Overtures (continued from Art. 34)

Materials: Overture 17 (*Create Study Committee on Appeals*)

Overture 17 states:

[Classis Southwestern Ontario overtures] That Synod create a study committee on the appeals process to recommend to the next Synod of the URCNA a set of clear, consistent guidelines for adjudicating appeals that can be added to our Synodical Rules.

The study committee's recommendation will:

- a. Take into account the wisdom and experience of our fellow NAPARC churches in handling appeals, with particular focus upon appeals from individuals against the actions of a consistory, classis or synod (or their equivalent).
- b. Ensure that Synod's method of handling personal appeals will be consistent for every appellant.
- c. Help Synod reach just, wise, and timely verdicts on all cases of appeal.
- d. Include how the decisions of Synod are best communicated to both the appellant and those whose decision is being appealed for the well-being and edification of both parties.

Recommendations:

1. That Synod accede to Overture 17 by creating a study committee on the appeals process to develop and recommend to the next synod of the URCNA a set of clear, consistent guidelines *for submitting* and adjudicating appeals that can be added to our Regulations for Synodical Procedure, Appendix B, Guidelines for Appeals; *and as an appendix to our Church Order*.

Grounds:

- a. Our current synodical regulations and guidelines do not answer every question regarding the best way to adjudicate appeals.
- b. Clear guidelines outlining how consistories, classes, and synods should adjudicate appeals will help the churches move forward confidently and consistently in their judgments.

- c. Clear guidelines outlining how consistories, classes, and synods will adjudicate appeals will help those appealing better submit to the decisions of the assemblies regarding their appeals, since clear, public guidelines will allow appellants to know what they can expect from the assemblies and help appellants in knowing that the appeal has been dealt with fairly.
- d. Even a brief survey of procedure from our sister churches reveals many areas from which we could benefit in this area as a federation. (For example: is there a limit on how long a member has for registering an appeal? And if an appeal is defined as a “written request” (as we do define it), should appellants be allowed to speak in defense of their appeals; and if so, under what circumstances?)
- e. The appeal process is worth taking time to improve and strengthen, as it is closely related to upholding righteousness and justice among the churches of Christ represented within our federation, and as our decisions as a church reflect our only Head, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Adopted

- 2. That the study committee be given the following mandate:
 - a. Survey and assess the wisdom and experience of federations in ecclesiastical fellowship (Phase 2) in handling appeals, with particular focus upon appeals from individuals against the actions of a consistory, classis or synod (or their equivalent assemblies).
 - b. Develop and recommend a clear set of guidelines for *submitting and* adjudicating appeals that can be added to our Regulations for Synodical Procedure, Appendix B, Guidelines for Appeals *and as an appendix to our Church Order*.
 - c. The guidelines developed should ensure that the method of handling of appeals will be consistent for all parties.
 - d. The guidelines developed should give attention to the matter of communicating decisions in an edifying manner to the parties involved.

- A. Motion is made and supported to amend Point b. of the mandate by adding to the end the phrase: “and as an appendix to our Church Order.”

Adopted

- B. Motion is made and supported to amend Point b. of the mandate by adding the phrase “submitting and” between the words “for” and “adjudicating.”

Adopted

- C. The chairman rules that these changes shall be applied as perfections to the wording of Recommendation 1.

- 3. That Synod appoint the following persons to the committee (first named being the convener, after which the committee may elect its own officers): Rev. Bradd Nymeyer, Rev. Doug Barnes, Rev. Harold Miller, Rev. James Sinke, Rev. Bill Godfrey, Elder Mark Van Der Molen, Rev. Ralph Pontier.

- A. The chairman temporarily relinquishes the chair to the vice-chairman.

B. The vote on the motion is:

Adopted

C. The chairman resumes the chair from the vice-chairman.

4. That Synod set a budget of \$3,000 US per annum for the work of the committee.

Adopted

5. That synod declare this to be its answer to Overture 17.

Adopted

(Advisory Committee 3 continued in Art. 110.)

ARTICLE 71

Advisory Committee 8 – Retirement (continued from Art. 36)

Materials: Appeal 1

1. The advisory committee presents the background which gave rise to this appeal and summarizes its conclusions.
2. The committee makes the following recommendations with regard to the grounds of the appeal:
 - a. With respect to Ground 1 of Appeal 1, concerning rescinding the decisions of previous synods regarding compensation and retirement recommendations, we find Ground 1 to be invalid.

Ground:

The previous decisions of synods on this matter are guidelines and recommendations which do not infringe upon the authority of elders as given in the Word of God and as outlined in the Church Order.

Adopted

- b. With respect to Ground 2 of Appeal 1, concerning rescinding the decisions of previous synods regarding compensation and retirement recommendations, we find Ground 2 to be invalid.

Ground:

The previous decisions of synods on this matter are guidelines and recommendations which do not infringe upon the authority of elders as given in the Word of God and as outlined in the Church Order.

Adopted

- c. With respect to Ground 3 of Appeal 1, concerning rescinding the decisions of previous synods regarding compensation and retirement recommendations, we find Ground 3 to be invalid.

Ground:

The previous decisions of synods on this matter are guidelines and recommendations which do not infringe upon the authority of elders as given in the Word of God and as outlined in the Church Order. The guidelines and recommendations of previous synods are for the welfare and encouragement of the churches in the federation and its ministers.

Adopted

- d. With respect to Ground 4 of Appeal 1, concerning rescinding the decisions of previous synods regarding compensation and retirement recommendations, we find Ground 4 to be invalid.

Ground:

The previous decisions of synods on this matter are guidelines and recommendations which do not infringe upon the authority of elders as given in the Word of God and as outlined in the Church Order. Foundational Principle 9 states in part: "Member churches meet together in consultation to guard against human imperfections and to benefit from the wisdom of a multitude of counselors in the broader assemblies." Establishing guidelines and recommendations do not contravene Church Order Art. 33. Property rights and financial decisions remain under the control of the consistory.

Adopted

- e. With respect to Ground 5 of Appeal 1, concerning rescinding the decisions of previous synods regarding compensation and retirement recommendations, we find Ground 5 to be invalid.

Ground:

Scripture teaches that giving should be done with a willing and grateful heart. It also compels the people of God to provide adequately for those who labor in the gospel (1 Tim. 5:18; 1 Cor. 9:9-12).

Adopted

- f. With respect to Ground 6 of Appeal 1, concerning rescinding the decisions of previous synods regarding compensation and retirement recommendations, we find Ground 6 to be invalid.

Ground:

This ground accuses ministers of being self-serving and inherently biased, without evidence being given.

Adopted

- g. With respect to Ground 7 of Appeal 1, concerning rescinding the decisions of previous synods regarding compensation and retirement recommendations, we find Ground 7 to be invalid.

Ground:

This ground seeks to prove Ground 6 and bring into question the moral and spiritual integrity of pastors of the federation.

Adopted

- h. With respect to Ground 8 of Appeal 1, concerning rescinding the decisions of previous synods regarding compensation and retirement recommendations, we find Ground 8 to be invalid.

Ground:

All delegates are duly appointed by their consistories. ~~This ground calls into question the moral and spiritual integrity of delegates to Synod.~~

- A. Motion is made and supported to amend the recommendation by striking the final sentence of the ground.

Adopted

- B. The recommendation, as amended, is:

Adopted

- i. With respect to Ground 9 of Appeal 1, concerning rescinding the decisions of previous synods regarding compensation and retirement recommendations, we find Ground 9 to be invalid.

Ground:

All ministers are duly appointed as delegates by their consistories. Synod does not dictate matters of compensation.

Adopted

- j. With respect to Ground 10 of Appeal 1, concerning rescinding the decisions of previous synods regarding compensation and retirement recommendations, we find Ground 10 to be invalid.

Ground:

The appellant has not given evidence that “it is clear that the intent is to require consistories to comply with these decisions.” Article 55 of the Acts of Synod Visalia contains questions for church visitors to engage in discussion with consistories related to matters of compensation. Neither church visitors nor the broader assemblies have authority to enforce compliance with synodical recommendations ~~and/or guidelines.~~

A. Motion is made and supported to amend the recommendation by striking the phrase: “and/or guidelines.”

Adopted

B. The recommendation, as amended, is:

Adopted

k. With respect to Ground 11 of Appeal 1, concerning rescinding the decisions of previous synods regarding compensation and retirement recommendations, we find Ground 11 to be invalid.

Ground:

The guidelines and recommendations are intended to facilitate an open and honest discussion concerning compensation between ministers and their consistories.

Adopted

l. With respect to Ground 12 of Appeal 1, concerning rescinding the decisions of previous synods regarding compensation and retirement recommendations, we find Ground 12 to be invalid.

Ground:

The previous decisions of synods on this matter are guidelines and recommendations which do not infringe upon the authority of elders as given in the Word of God and as outlined in the Church Order.

Adopted

m. With respect to Ground 13 of Appeal 1, concerning rescinding the decisions of previous synods regarding compensation and retirement recommendations, we find Ground 13 to be invalid.

Ground:

Church Order Art. 10 states how ministers are to be supported financially. Principles of the faith also command the people of God to provide adequately for those who labor in the gospel (1 Tim. 5:18; 1 Cor. 9:9-12).

Adopted

3. The committee recommends that Synod not sustain Appeal 1.

Ground:

There are no valid grounds to the appeal.

A. Motion is made to amend the recommendation by adding the ground: “There are no valid grounds to the appeal.”

Adopted

B. The recommendation, as amended, is:

ARTICLE 72

Rev. Phil Grotenhuis from Phoenix URC of Phoenix, Arizona, leads the assembly in closing devotions. He reads Psalm 67; calls the assembly to sing the hymn, *Arise, My Soul, Arise*; and leads the assembly in a closing prayer.

**Thursday, June 16, 2016
Afternoon Session**

ARTICLE 73

Rev. James Sinke from Bethel URC of Woodstock, Ontario, opens the session by reading from Ephesians 2:1-10; leading the assembly in prayer; and calling the delegates to sing the hymn, *Amazing Grace*.

ARTICLE 74

The chairman temporarily relinquishes the chair to the vice-chairman.

ARTICLE 75

The vice-chairman invites Rev. Yonson Dethan to bring greetings to the assembly on behalf of the Calvinist Reformed Churches of Indonesia (GGRC-NTT). Rev. Dethan expresses his joy in the relationship between his federation and ours, describing how God has been working in the midst of the GGRC-NTT. He also presents the chairman of Synod and the chairman of CECCA with handmade scarves.

Elder Huibert De Boer offers a brief response and leads the assembly in prayer for the Calvinist Reformed Churches of Indonesia (GGRC-NTT).

ARTICLE 76

The vice-chairman invites Rev. Lee Johnson to bring greetings to the assembly on behalf of the Reformed Church in the United States. Rev. Johnson reads Eccl. 4:9-12 and reminds the assembly of our mutual need for one another, recalling how our federations of churches have blessed each other and how God has used us to preserve one another in each of our histories. He recounts developments with the recently held 270th Synod of the RCUS and asks for our continued prayers.

Rev. Adrian Dieleman offers a brief response and leads the assembly in prayer for Reformed Church in the United States.

ARTICLE 77

Advisory Committee 1 – Credentials (continued from Art. 33)

Materials: Overture 2 (*Update Regulations for Synodical Procedure*)

Overture 2 states:

Classis Central U.S. overtures Synod Wyoming 2016 to adopt the following proposed updates to the Regulations for Synodical Procedures.

[Recommended changes are specified for nine specific articles in the Regulations for Synodical Procedures.]

Recommendations:

1. That Synod accede to Overture 2 with respect to Regulations for Synodical Procedure 4.5.2, concerning the Term of the Stated Clerk.

This would amend Regulations for Synodical Procedure 4.5.2. to read:

Synod shall elect a stated clerk to serve from that synod until the conclusion of the next synod. An alternate shall be elected for the same term, who shall serve should the stated clerk be unable to do so. The stated clerk shall serve no more than three terms ~~three three-year terms~~ consecutively. Synod shall stipulate his honorarium in the currency of his respective country.

Ground:

Synod does not necessarily convene every three years. This language will reflect that reality.

Adopted

2. That Synod accede to Overture 2 with respect to Regulations for Synodical Procedure 4.6.2, concerning the Term of the Treasurers of the Board of Directors.

This would amend Regulations for Synodical Procedure 4.6.2. to read:

Each Corporation shall appoint its treasurer to serve from one synod until the conclusion of the next synod. Each Corporation shall appoint an alternate for the same term, who shall serve if the treasurer is unable to serve. All appointees shall be approved by synod. A treasurer shall serve no more than three terms ~~three three-year terms~~ consecutively. Each Corporation shall stipulate its treasurer's honorarium subject to the approval of synod.

Ground:

Synod does not necessarily convene every three years. This language will reflect that reality.

Adopted

3. That Synod accede to Overture 2 with respect to Regulations for Synodical Procedure 5.2.2, concerning Advisory Committee Reports.

This would amend Regulations for Synodical Procedure 5.2.2. to read:

Advisory committee reports shall list ~~be signed by~~ the chairman and the reporter of the committee. Where a minority report is presented, both the majority and minority report must list ~~be signed by~~ the members who favor them.

Ground:

Due to changes in technology, reports are no longer signed; they simply list the required names. This change will conform with our current practice.

Adopted

4. That Synod accede to Overture 2 with respect to Regulations for Synodical Procedure 5.2.4, concerning Advisory Committee Recommendations.

This would amend Regulations for Synodical Procedure 5.2.4. to read:

When the recommendation of an advisory committee is substantially different from that proposed by an overture, or the report ~~an overture, an appeal, or the report~~ of a committee of synod, the reporter for such proposed material shall have the privilege to present and defend the proposal prior to synodical deliberation of the advisory committee's recommendation.

Ground:

Past synods have affirmed that an appeal is a *written* request (Regulations for Synodical Procedure Appendix B). The appellant is to submit all materials in writing and does not have the privilege to *verbally* present and defend their position before synod.

Adopted

5. That Synod accede to Overture 2 with respect to Regulations for Synodical Procedure 5.3.2.a, concerning Standing Committee Description.

This would amend Regulations for Synodical Procedure 5.3.2.a. to read:

Description. A standing committee serves the synod under synodical regulations on a continuing basis. Its members are chosen by synod or classis ~~chosen by synod~~ for specified terms and are given a particular mandate. The committee and its mandate continue even though the members of the committee serve only until their terms are completed.

Ground:

Several standing committees (CERCU, CECCA, Missions, etc.) have members appointed by each of the classes, not only by the synod. This language will reflect that reality.

Adopted

6. That Synod accede to Overture 2 with respect to Regulations for Synodical Procedure 5.3.2.c, concerning Standing Committee Terms.

This would amend Regulations for Synodical Procedure 5.3.2.c. to read:

Terms. The synodically-appointed members of a standing committee shall serve no more than three three-year terms consecutively, each term commencing at the time of synodical appointment. Members who have completed three consecutive terms are eligible for reappointment after one year. When the term of a member-at-large ends in a year that synod does not meet, the synod preceding the end of the terms shall appoint or re-appoint a member to that at-large position to a term commencing on July 1 in the year the current term ends. The matter of term limits for classically-appointed members shall be left to the discretion of each individual classis.

Grounds:

- a. Several standing committees (CERCU, CECCA, Missions, etc.) have members appointed by each of the classes, not only by the synod. This language will reflect that reality.
- b. This reflects the decision of Synod London 2010 to give each classis discretion regarding term limits of its representatives (Acts of Synod 2010, Article 68.3).
- c. This is in keeping with the decision of Synod Nyack 2012 regarding terms ending in a non-synod year (Acts of Synod 2012, Article 54.3).

Adopted

7. That Synod accede to Overture 2 with respect to Regulations for Synodical Procedure 6.2.4.c, concerning motions.

This would amend Regulations for Synodical Procedure 6.2.4.c. to read:

to ~~table temporarily~~ table temporarily or indefinitely, or to place again a temporarily tabled motion before the body.

Ground:

This change will make it explicit that either motion to table (temporarily or indefinitely) is not amendable and brings this article into conformity with 6.3.3.b.

Adopted

8. That Synod accede to Overture 2 with respect to Regulations for Synodical Procedure concerning Appendix A.6, Guidelines for Overtures.

This would amend Regulations for Synodical Procedure Appendix A.6, Guidelines for Overtures, to read:

Decisions ~~Judgments~~ of the broader assemblies shall be received with respect and submission, and shall be considered settled and binding, unless it is proven that they are in conflict with the Word of God or the Church Order (see *Church Order*, Article 29).

Ground:

Synod Nyack 2012 adopted “Definitions and Authority of Synodical Actions” (Acts of Synod 2012, Article 45). In doing so, “Judgment” took on a particular meaning. It refers to a decision with regard to an appeal. However, the Church Order article referenced uses the language, “All decisions of a broader assembly.” The recommended language reflects the broader language of the Church Order.

Adopted

9. That Synod accede to Overture 2 with respect to Regulations for Synodical Procedure concerning Appendix B, Guidelines for Appeals.

This would amend Regulations for Synodical Procedure Appendix B, Guidelines for Appeals, to include a new number 7, to read:

7. If a delegate is a party to an appeal (appellant or respondent), the following shall apply:

- a. The delegate may be assigned to the advisory committee dealing with the appeal. However, in the advisory committee, he may not make motions or vote on them. He may state points of fact for clarification.
- b. In the plenary session dealing with the appeal, the delegate may not make motions or vote on them. If the appeal is from the decision of a classis, this shall apply to the delegates from that classis.

Ground:

While it may be useful to have facts clarified by a delegate who is party to an appeal, it undermines the appeal process for that delegate to sit in judgment on a decision which he himself has already made.

Adopted

10. That Synod declare this to be its answer to Overture 2.

Adopted

ARTICLE 78

Advisory Committee 1 – Credentials

Materials: Overture 4 (*Amend Regulations for Synodical Procedure*)

Overture 4 states:

Classis Central U.S. overtures Synod Wyoming 2016 that the following changes be made to the Regulations for Synodical Procedure:

4.5.4.1. General Responsibilities:

Current wording:

Submit a written report of his work to Synod, as part of the written report of the convening consistory.

Recommended wording:

Submit a written report of his work to Synod, as part of the written report of the convening consistory. This report may include proposed changes to the Regulations for Synodical Procedure to bring them into conformity with prior synodical decisions and practices and shall be included in the Provisional Agenda. Any such proposed conforming changes must be supported by citation to the prior decision or practice.

Recommendations:

1. That Synod accede to Overture 4 with respect to Regulations for Synodical Procedure 4.5.4.1., concerning General Responsibilities.

Grounds:

- a. This is a more timely and more efficient method to present conforming changes for the churches' consideration.
- b. The stated clerk's recommendations would only reflect decisions and practices already made by the churches. This would avoid the need to make necessary conforming changes to the Regulations by redundant or cumbersome overtures.
- c. Requiring the stated clerk to provide citation to prior decisions or practices assures objective accountability and assists review by the churches.
- d. Requiring that the recommended changes be included in the provisional agenda provides ample opportunity for the churches to review them prior to synod.
- e. This task is administrative and is best suited to the duties of the stated clerk.

Adopted

2. That Synod declare this to be its answer to Overture 4.

Adopted

ARTICLE 79

Advisory Committee 1 – Credentials

Materials: Overture 19 (*Add Article Titles to Church Order*)

Overture 19 states:

Classis Southwest U.S. overtures Synod Wyoming 2016 to add the article titles below to each of the articles of our Church Order.

Recommendations:

1. That Synod accede to Overture 19 with respect to adding titles to articles in the URCNA Church Order (see titles below).

Grounds:

- a. It appears to be an oversight that article titles were not included in our Church Order as Synod St. Catharines 1997 wished.
- b. Having titles included with the articles allows for quick reference to relevant articles, especially for those not familiar with the Church Order.

Adopted

Ecclesiastical Offices

Article 1 – The Three Offices

Article 2 – The Duties of the Minister

Article 3 – Preparation for the Ministry

Article 4 – The Candidacy Examination

Article 5 – Candidacy from Outside the Federation

Article 6 – Calling a Candidate

Article 7 – Calling a Minister within the Federation

Article 8 – Calling a Minister from Outside the Federation

Article 9 – A Life-Time of Service

Article 10 – Support and Emeritation of Ministers

Article 11 – Exceptional Release of a Minister

Article 12 – The Nomination of Elders and Deacons

Article 13 – The Election, Term, and Ordination / Installation of Elders and Deacons

Article 14 – The Duties of Elders

Article 15 – The Duties of Deacons

Ecclesiastical Assemblies

Article 16 – The Three Assemblies

Article 17 – The Matters and Manner of Assemblies

Article 18 – Prayer in Assemblies

Article 19 – The Officers and Order of Assemblies

Article 20 – The Duties and Supervision of Clerks

Article 21 – The Consistory

Article 22 – Instituting a New Church

Article 23 – The Council

Article 24 – Equality and Unity of Congregations

Article 25 – Delegates and Matters of Broader Assemblies

Article 26 – Classis

Article 27 – Church Visitors

Article 28 – Synod

Article 29 – Appeals by Assemblies

Article 30 – Withdrawing From the Federation

Article 31 – Appeals by Church Members

Article 32 – Admitting a Church

Article 33 – Property

Article 34 – Ecumenical Relations on a Church Level

Article 35 – Ecumenical Relations on a Classis Level

Article 36 – Ecumenical Relations on a Federation Level

Ecclesiastical Functions and Tasks

- Article 37 – Corporate Worship and Special Services
- Article 38 – Regulation and Nature of the Worship Service
- Article 39 – Psalms and Hymns
- Article 40 – Catechetical Preaching
- Article 41 – Baptism of Covenant Children
- Article 42 – Baptism of Adults
- Article 43 – Public Profession of Faith
- Article 44 – Reception from Outside the Federation
- Article 45 – Admission to the Lord’s Supper
- Article 46 – Administration of the Lord’s Supper
- Article 47 – The Church’s Mission Calling
- Article 48 – Marriage
- Article 49 – Funerals
- Article 50 – The Church Records

Ecclesiastical Discipline

- Article 51 – The Nature and Purpose of Discipline
- Article 52 – Addressing Private Sins
- Article 53 – Private Repentance
- Article 54 – Consistory Involvement
- Article 55 – The Discipline of a Member
- Article 56 – The Excommunication of a Member
- Article 57 – The Reconciliation of a Member
- Article 58 – The Readmission of an Excommunicated Person
- Article 59 – The Exclusion of a Mature Baptized Member
- Article 60 – The Reception of an Excluded Person
- Article 61 – The Suspension and Deposition of an Office-Bearer
- Article 62 – Gross Sins
- Article 63 – Mutual Censure
- Article 64 – Departure of Members
- Article 65 – Equality of Churches and Office-Bearers
- Article 66 – The Observance and Revision of the Church Order

2. That Synod declare this to be its answer to Overture 19.

Adopted

(Advisory Committee 1 continued in Art. 87.)

ARTICLE 80

Advisory Committee 10c – Liturgical Forms (Forms)

Materials: Liturgical Forms Committee Report (Agenda pp. 175-176; 184-191; 293-403)

Recommendations:

1. That when referring to a third-person singular generic subject or object, our forms should use: him/her, he/she, his/her; instead of “they,” “them,” and “their” (Agenda p. 188).

Defeated

2. That the new liturgical forms (as amended) be adopted for use in our churches.

- A. Motion is made to amend the recommendation by removing the selection entitled, *Solemnization of Marriage – Form 2*, from the collection of revised forms.

Adopted

- B. Discussion on the recommendation continues until the arrival of the order of the day.

(**Advisory Committee 10c** continued in Art. 86.)

ARTICLE 81

- A. The chairman excuses Elder Joel Alsum from Grace URC in Waupun, Wisconsin, who needs to depart early due to personal reasons.
- B. The assembly recesses for refreshment, followed by time for advisory committees to meet.

Thursday, June 16, 2016 Evening Session

ARTICLE 82

Rev. Christopher Folkerts from New Covenant URC of Twin Falls, Idaho, opens the session by reading from Psalm 131 and Matthew 11:28-30; calling the delegates to sing the hymn, *Be Still My Soul*; and leading the assembly in prayer.

ARTICLE 83

The vice-chairman invites Mr. Peter Bakker to bring greetings to the assembly on behalf of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands – Liberated (De Gereformeerde Kerken Vrijgemaakt). Mr. Bakker provides an overview of the life and history of the Liberated Reformed churches and the context in which they minister. He encourages us to continue serving in faithfulness and to continue interceding with the Lord in prayer.

Rev. Dick Moes offers a brief response and leads the assembly in prayer for the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands.

ARTICLE 84

Rev. Dick Moes, on behalf of CECCA, reads a speech sent on behalf of Rev. Pila Njuka, the representative from the Reformed Churches in Indonesia (GGRI-NTT). Rev. Njuka intended to be present, but he was prevented by last-minute complications with his visa.

Rev. Moes leads the assembly in prayer for the GGRI-NTT.

ARTICLE 85

The chairman notes the departure of Rev. Mitchell Dick from Sovereign Grace URC of Grand Rapids, Michigan, due to a death in his family.

The chairman notes the departure of Elder Lambert De Graaf from Trinity URC of St. Catharines, Ontario, for personal reasons.

The chairman notes the impending departure of Elder Stan Cotta from Covenant URC of Fresno, California, for personal reasons.

ARTICLE 86

Advisory Committee 10c – Liturgical Forms (Forms) (continued from Art. 80)

Materials: Liturgical Forms Committee Report (Agenda pp. 175-176; 184-191; 293-403)

Recommendations:

2. That the new liturgical forms (as amended) be adopted for use in our churches.
 - A. The assembly resumes discussion of the recommendation, as amended (by the removal of Form 2 for the Solemnization of Marriage).
 - B. The chairman temporarily relinquishes the chair to the vice-chairman.
 - C. Motion is made and supported to rescind the decision to amend this recommendation by removing Form 2 for the Solemnization of Marriage.

Adopted by a 2/3 majority
 - D. Motion is made and supported to re-commit this report to Advisory Committee 10c.

Adopted
 - E. The chairman resumes the chair from the vice-chairman.

(**Advisory Committee 10c** continued in Art. 92.)

ARTICLE 87

Advisory Committee 1 – Credentials (continued from Art. 79)

Materials: Credentials

Recommendation:

That Article 21.2 of the Acts of Synod be amended to include Apple Valley, California, as a church with only one delegate present at Synod Wyoming

Ground:

The original report failed to make note of this situation. The oversight was brought to the attention of the Committee. The Committee now seeks to rectify the situation and set the record straight.

Adopted

ARTICLE 88

Advisory Committee 2 – Financial Matters (continued from Art. 16)

Materials: Convening Consistory Recommendations

Recommendations:

1. That Synod note that Recommendation 7 from Advisory Committee Report 1A, which was sent to Advisory Committee 2, was judged to not be a valid recommendation from the Convening Consistory.

Ground:

This item is in a list of actions already taken by the Convening Consistory to prepare for Synod and was not included in their list of recommendations.

Adopted

2. That Synod revise Regulations for Synodical Procedure 1.5 by adding “appointment of a synodical treasurer” before the line, “and all other necessary items to facilitate the synod.”

Ground:

The current synodical regulation is unclear: “Expenses incurred in connection with these duties shall be reimbursed by the synodical treasurer(s).”

Adopted

3. That Synod revise Regulations for Synodical Procedure 1.5 by moving the last sentence into a new sub point 1.5.1: “The convening consistory shall give preference to experienced delegates to serve as chairmen and reporters of Advisory Committees and shall provide them with the material and the rules of procedure for their tasks.”

Ground:

Moving this sentence into a sub point provides more clarity.

The chairman rules this recommendation out of order

4. That Synod add to Regulations for Synodical Procedure section 1.5.2:
“The synodical treasurer will give a detailed financial statement to the next convening consistory by the end of the calendar year of synod, which shall then be reported to the following synod in the provisional agenda.”

Grounds:

- a. This is the spirit of Recommendation 1 given by the convening consistory.
- b. This still allows for some flexibility on the part of convening consistories in how to implement the day-to-day expenses and income and at the same time be accountable to the federation for the synodical funds received and distributed.
- c. Up until this Synod, there have been no financial reports for synodical expenses given to synod.

Adopted

5. That Synod add to the Regulations for Synodical Procedure section 1.5.3:
“The synodical treasurer will forward any excess funds to the next convening consistory, for the purpose of hosting the next synod.”

Ground:

Excess income over expenses for past synods has been handled in very different ways. It is important to have excess funds be available from one convening consistory to another. This procedure would facilitate this.

Adopted

ARTICLE 89

Advisory Committee 2 – Financial Matters

Materials: U.S. Board of Directors Report; Canadian Board of Directors Report

Recommendations:

1. That Synod accede to Recommendation 2 to expand the U.S. Board of Directors size from five to seven members.

Grounds:

- a. The current board is looking for more continuity. Increasing the number would help with the transition as board members leave.
- b. This would give us the opportunity to add members from different parts of the country.

Adopted

2. That Synod accede to Recommendation 5: that Synod reappoint the current U.S. Board of Directors.

Adopted

3. That Synod appoint the following new member to the U.S. Board of Directors.
Mark Van Der Molen, Immanuel URC of DeMotte, Indiana.

Adopted

4. That Synod appoint the following new member to the U.S. Board of Directors.
Wil Postma, Covenant URC of Kansas City, Missouri.

Adopted

5. That Synod recommend that the Missions Coordinator remain under the payroll of the JVA. For added protection, the U.S. and Canadian boards should obtain directors and liability insurance.

Grounds:

- a. We maintain that the position is still under the calling and the oversight of the local consistory (Article 47 of the Church Order). He is therefore financially supported by all the churches.
- b. This satisfies Canadian Charity Law, so that if the Missions Coordinator was called by an American church, then the Canadian churches could still support him.

Adopted

6. That Synod authorize the expenses arising from the printing of the separate liturgical forms booklet be paid for by the Psalter Hymnal Fund.

Adopted

7. That Synod thank the U.S. and Canadian boards for their work for the federation.

Adopted

The chairman asks the Stated Clerk to send letters to the members of the boards expressing our appreciation, which the chairman expresses verbally and the assembly emphasizes with its applause.

ARTICLE 90

Advisory Committee 2 – Financial Matters

Materials: Financial Report from the U.S. Treasurer; Financial Report from the Canadian Treasurer; JVA Financial Report; U.S. Board of Directors Report; Canadian Board of Directors Report

Recommendation:

That Synod modify the Regulations for Synod Procedure by adding section 5.1.4, “The committee chairmen must receive pre-approval from the JVA board if expenses are going to exceed 125% of their approved budget.”

Grounds:

- a. When reviewing the annual statements, it was observed that certain committees were over budget by up to 160% in past years.
- b. This is intended to provide loving accountability to the committee chairmen.

The chairman rules this recommendation out of order

ARTICLE 91

Advisory Committee 2 – Financial Matters

Materials: Financial Report from the U.S. Treasurer; U.S. Board of Directors Report

Recommendations:

1. That Synod allow the U.S. Treasurer, Robert Huisjen, the privilege of the floor in order to explain questions on the financial statements.

The chairman so orders

2. That Synod suspend Regulations for Synodical Procedure section 4.6.4.c in order to receive the unaudited financial statements of the treasurer.

Ground:

Synodical Procedure section 4.6.4.c states: “Submit to the Board an audited or independently reviewed financial statement annually, which statement shall be forwarded to Synod.”

Adopted

3. That Synod approve the financial statement from the URCNA U.S. Treasurer for the years 2014 (unaudited) and 2015 (unaudited).

Adopted

The chairman orders that these be added to the Acts of Synod.

4. That Synod appoint Mr. Robert Huisjen to be U.S. Treasurer for a third full term.

Ground:

Three full terms have not been served in accordance with Rules of Synodical Procedure 4.6.2

Adopted

5. That Synod appoint Mr. Rick Blauw as the alternate U.S. Treasurer.

Adopted

6. That Synod accede to Recommendation 3 from the U.S. Board’s report to increase the U.S. Treasurer’s stipend from \$3,000 to \$4,000 USD.

Ground:

Due to the increase in workload.

Adopted

7. That Synod heartily thank Mr. Robert Huisjen for the work that he does.

Adopted

The chairman verbally expresses our hearty thanks for the work that Mr. Huisjen does on our behalf. The assembly confirms this appreciation with its applause.

(Advisory Committee 2 continued in Art. 102.)

ARTICLE 92

Advisory Committee 10c – Liturgical Forms (Forms) (continued from Art. 86)

Materials: Overture 6 (*Adopt Revisions of Proposed Liturgical Forms*); Overture 16 (*Amend Shortened Lord's Supper Form*); Overture 21 (*Capitalize Pronouns for God*)

Overture 6 states:

Classis Central U.S. overtures Synod Wyoming 2016 to adopt the following revisions to the Liturgical Forms Proposal which was submitted to the churches in November 2015.

Revision 1 – All Forms

We ask Synod Wyoming 2016 to instruct the Liturgical Forms Committee to revise all of the forms to ensure that pronouns referring to God in our liturgical forms are always capitalized.

Revision 2 – Infant Baptism, Forms 1 and 2

We ask Synod Wyoming 2016 to instruct the Liturgical Forms Committee to amend *Form Number 1 – Baptism of Infants* and *Form 2 – Baptism of Children* by changing the second question to the parents to read: “Do you acknowledge that the teaching of the Old and New Testaments, summarized in the articles of the Christian faith and taught in this Christian church, is the true and complete doctrine of salvation?” (This replaces “summarized in the Apostles’ Creed” with “summarized in the articles of the Christian faith.”)

Revision 3 – Short Form for the Celebration of the Lord's Supper, Form 1

We ask Synod Wyoming 2016 to instruct the Liturgical Forms Committee to revise the instruction for partaking of the wine to read: “The cup of blessing which we bless is a communion of the blood of Christ. Take, drink, remember, and believe that the precious blood of our Lord Jesus Christ was shed for a complete forgiveness of all our sins.”

Revision 4 – Form for Readmission, Form 1 and Form 2

We ask Synod Wyoming 2016 to instruct the Liturgical Forms Committee to revise the “Declaration” section of the form by replacing “only” (in the phrase, “through his only Son Jesus Christ”) with “only-begotten.”

Overture 16 states:

Classis Southwestern Ontario (URCNA) overtures Synod Wyoming 2016 to amend the shortened form of the Lord's Supper in the first paragraph of the preparation by adding the words, "through faith," as follows:

While remaining bread and wine, through faith these sacred elements nevertheless become so united to the reality they signify ..."

Overture 21 states:

The Classis of Western Canada overtures Synod Wyoming 2016 to instruct the Liturgical Forms Committee to capitalize the definite pronouns relating to God in all the liturgical forms, creeds, confessions, and prayers.

Recommendations:

1. That Synod accede to Overture 21, which recommends capitalizing pronouns for God.

Grounds:

- a. This would be in continuity with the creeds, confessions, liturgical forms, and prayers found in the Psalter-Hymnal (1959/1976) used in the vast majority of our churches.
- b. Changing what is a familiar and widely-used practice in our churches will unnecessarily trouble many of God's people.

Adopted

Rev. Ralph Pontier requests that his negative vote be recorded, explaining:

"This decision is contrary to Scripture (Col. 2:20-23), imposing the burden of man-made law upon the conscience of the believer."

2. That this be Synod's answer to Overture 21, as well as Overture 6, Revision 1.

Adopted

3. That Synod not accede to Overture 6, Revision 2, which seeks to amend the infant baptism form.

Ground:

Heidelberg Catechism Lord's Day 7 (Q&A 22-23) states that the Apostles' Creed is "the articles of the Christian faith."

A. Discussion is held on this recommendation, which is then:

Defeated

B. Motion is made and supported to bring Overture 6, Revision 2, before the assembly

Adopted

C. Motion is made and supported to amend Overture 6 by striking Ground 1, Ground 2, Ground 3, and Ground 5.

Adopted

The remaining ground reads:

This change would provide uniformity in all of the forms. As submitted to the churches in November 2015, the two Forms for Profession of Faith, the Form for Household Baptism, and the Form for Reception of Families all ask: “Do you wholeheartedly believe the doctrine contained in the Old and the New Testament, *and in the articles of the Christian faith*, and taught in this Christian church, to be the true and complete doctrine of salvation, and do you promise by the grace of God steadfastly to continue in this profession?”

D. Discussion is held on acceding to Overture 6, as amended, which is then:

Adopted

4. That Synod accede to Overture 6, Revision 3, which seeks to amend the short form for the celebration of the Lord's Supper.

Grounds:

- a. This instruction – in the form of: “take, drink, remember, and believe” – is used in both of the long proposed forms for the celebration of the Lord's Supper, as well as in our existing Form 2 and Form 3.
- b. The addition of the phrase, “drink all of it,” seems to have been an attempt to more fully echo the words of Jesus. However, it seems to be an attempted modernization of the rendering found in our existing Form 1 – “Take, drink ye all of it, remember, and believe” – which itself reflects the KJV and ASV Bible translations of Matt. 26:27. However, “drink ye all of it” is properly modernized to “drink of it, all of you” (ESV). In other words, “all” refers to those to whom the drink was given – not to the object that is consumed. In no Bible passage or church form are the disciples instructed to “drink all of it,” as though it would be wrong to leave some of the wine in the glass.

Adopted

5. That Synod accede to Overture 6, Revision 4, which seeks to amend the form for readmission.

Ground:

This revision accords with what we confess in Lord's Day 13, QA 33, of our Catechism:

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. We, however, are adopted children of God – adopted by grace through Christ.

Adopted

6. That this be Synod's answer to Overture 6, Revisions 2, 3, and 4.

Adopted

7. That Synod not accede to Overture 16, which requests to amend the Lord's Supper short form.

Grounds:

- a. The proposed form already includes “through faith” in the same paragraph, and therefore adding another “through faith” is redundant.
- b. Adding “through faith” where suggested is also theologically confusing, as if our faith renders the elements holy; when they have already been sanctified by our Lord in the institution of the Supper.

Adopted

8. That this be Synod's answer to Overture 16.

Adopted

(Advisory Committee 10c continued in Art. 103.)

ARTICLE 93

The second clerk reads a press release concerning the work of Synod 2016 for the day. Corrections and suggestions are received from the delegates. Motion is made and supported to approve this press release, as corrected.

Adopted

ARTICLE 94

Rev. Talman Wagenmaker from Grace URC of Waupun, Wisconsin, leads the assembly in closing devotions. He reads from Psalm 16; calls the assembly to sing the hymn, *Be Thou My Vision*; and leads the assembly in a closing prayer.

**Friday, June 17, 2016
Morning Session**

ARTICLE 95

Rev. Bill Pols from the Orthodox Reformed Church of Edmonton, Alberta, opens the session by reading from Ephesians 3:1-8; calling the delegates to sing the hymn, *O God Beyond All Praising*; and leading the assembly in prayer.

ARTICLE 96

Motion is made and supported to approve the concept minutes from the work of Synod on Thursday, which were distributed previously.

Adopted

ARTICLE 97

A. Motion is made and supported to suspend Regulations for Synodical Procedure 6.5.1.b.
Adopted by a 2/3 majority

B. Motion is made and supported to reconsider the adoption of Overture 21, which calls for capitalizing pronouns relating to God.

Adopted

C. Motion is made and supported to accede to Overture 21:
“The Classis of Western Canada overtures Synod Wyoming 2016 to instruct the Liturgical Forms Committee to capitalize the definite pronouns relating to God in all the liturgical forms, ~~creeds, confessions,~~ and prayers.”

a. Motion is made and supported to amend the overture by removing the words:
“creeds, confessions.”

b. Motion is made and supported to divide the question, voting on each of the words separately.

Adopted

c. On the motion to amend by striking the word “creeds”:

Adopted

d. On the motion to amend by striking the word “confessions”:

Adopted

e. On the motion to accede to Overture 21, as amended:

Adopted

ARTICLE 98

Advisory Committee 10a – Liturgical Forms (Creeds)

Materials: Liturgical Forms Committee Report (Agenda pp. 175-180; 193-195; 201-205)

Recommendations:

1. That Synod grant the privilege of the floor to members of URC Liturgical Forms Committee when the reports are being discussed.

The chairman so orders

2. That Synod grant the privilege of the floor to the OPC members when the following recommendations are being discussed (Dr. Alan Strange, Rev. Danny Olinger, and Mr. David Winslow). These three members are fraternal delegates.

The chairman so orders

3. That Synod approve and adopt for use in the churches the introductions to the creeds as proposed by the Liturgical Forms Committee with the following changes (Agenda pp. 193-24 195):
- Replace “This forms” with “These forms” in second paragraph on page 193.
 - Replace capital “E” in ‘Ecumenical’ with lowercase “e.”
 - In the final paragraph of the introduction to the Athanasian Creed (p. 195) change:
The Godhead is altogether one — one divine substance or essence, yet each distinct person has a particular property by virtue of which He differs and is distinct from the other, namely the distinctiveness of the Father is that he is neither generated nor begotten, the Son’s particularity is that he is generated or begotten, and the particularity of the Holy Spirit is that he proceeds or is sent.

to:

The Godhead is altogether one — one divine substance or essence, yet each distinct person has a particular property by virtue of which He differs and is distinct from the other. Namely the distinctiveness of the Father is that he is not generated (nor begotten), the Son’s particularity is that he is generated (or begotten), and the particularity of the Holy Spirit is that he proceeds (or is sent).

Grounds:

- a. These introductions adequately introduce and explain the history and purpose of the creeds.
- b. We believe they will greatly benefit the churches.

Adopted

4. That Synod approve and adopt the text of the Nicene Creed as proposed by the Liturgical Forms Committee for use in the churches (p.202).

Ground:

The removal of archaic forms from the creed clarifies the meaning and is therefore edifying for the churches.

Adopted

5. That the footnote on the word ‘catholic’ in the Nicene Creed, Apostles’ Creed, and Athanasian Creed include appropriate reference(s) to the Westminster Standards (e.g. Westminster Confession of Faith, 25.2), to be confirmed in consultation with representatives of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

The Nicene Creed

I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds; God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God;

begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made.

Who, for us men and for our salvation, came down from heaven and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary, and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; he suffered and was buried; and the third day he rose again, according to the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven, and sits on the right hand of the Father; and he shall come again, with glory, to judge the living and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end.

And I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life; who proceeds from the Father and the Son; who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified; who spoke by the prophets.

And I believe one holy catholic¹ and apostolic Church. I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins; and I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

¹ “Catholic” means universal, that is, that there is one Church across all times, places, and peoples (Belgic Confession Art. 27; Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 54)

Grounds:

- a. This recognizes the joint printing of the creed with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.
- b. This illustrates our agreement with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church on the “catholic” church.

Adopted

6. That Synod approve and adopt the text of the Apostles’ Creed for use in the churches as proposed by the Liturgical Forms Committee (p. 201) with the following correction: The punctuation should be consistent with that proposed by the Liturgical Forms Committee on Agenda p. 178 (a semi-colon following “the holy catholic church”).

Grounds:

- a. The removal of archaic forms from the creed clarifies the meaning and is therefore edifying for the churches.
- b. The three-fold repetition of “I believe” highlights the trinitarian nature of the Creed as taught in Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 24.
- c. The removal of the “I believe” before “the holy catholic church” clarifies that the holy catholic church; the communion of the saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting are all works of the Holy Spirit.
- d. The “I believe” in front of “the holy catholic church” is a latter addition to the creed: There is no “credo” at this point in the original text of the creed.
- e. Retaining a fourth “I believe” would give the impression that there are four parts to the Creed, instead of three parts as taught in Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 24.
- f. Using the definite article for “the” holy catholic Church clearly indicates that there is in fact only one holy catholic Church, in agreement with Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 54; Belgic Confession Article 27 and the Canons of Dort, Second Head, Rejection of Errors #1.

- g. While we recognize that this change is not insignificant, it is a practical necessity to bring us into agreement with the Orthodox Presbyterian Churches on the text of the Apostles' Creed.

Adopted

7. That Synod amend the footnote regarding “descended into hell” in both the Apostles' Creed and Athanasian Creed to include only the confessional references. Additional references to the Westminster Standards (e.g. WLC Q.& A. 50) should be added in consultation with representatives of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

The Apostles' Creed

I believe in God the Father, Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only begotten Son, our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary; suffered under Pontius Pilate; was crucified, dead, and buried; he descended into hell;¹ the third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from there he shall come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit; the holy catholic² Church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen.

¹Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 44; Canons of Dort 2.4.

²“Catholic” means universal, that is, that there is one Church across all times, places, and peoples (Belgic Confession Art. 27; Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 54).

Ground:

The two traditions have slightly different explanations of the descent into hell. Rather than crafting a joint statement, it is advisable to include only the confessional references.

Adopted

8. That Synod approve and adopt the text of the Athanasian Creed as proposed by the Liturgical Forms Committee (Agenda pp. 203-205) for use in the churches.

Grounds:

- a. The proposed translation contains modern language more suited for instruction and use in our churches.
- b. The removal of archaic forms (“uncreate” in line 8; “sitteth” in line 39; “thence” in line 40) clarifies the meaning and is therefore edifying for the churches.
- c. “Immeasurable” is a more accurate translation than “incomprehensible” for the Latin “immensus.”

Adopted

9. That Synod remove footnotes 2 and 3 (see below) from the proposed Athanasian Creed.

²“Each person,” means that each person of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are divine, not that each human person is divine.

³A “rational soul” means that Jesus had a true human soul like ours.

Grounds:

- a. Footnote 2 is unnecessary because the context clearly indicates that the creed is referring to the divine persons.
- b. Footnote 3 is unnecessary because the statement “rational soul” does not lead to confusion.

Adopted

10. That Synod mandate the Web Oversight Committee to post the adopted versions ~~(while preserving currently posted versions)~~ of the Nicene Creed, Apostles’ Creed, and Athanasian Creed with their respective prefaces, once the texts have been finalized.

- A. Motion is made and supported to amend the recommendation by striking the parenthetical remark: “(while preserving currently posted versions).”

Adopted

- B. On the recommendation, as amended:

Adopted

11. That Synod authorize the production of a softcover *and hardcover* stand-alone book suitable for use in catechetical instruction that includes the versions of the Apostles’ Creed, the Nicene Creed, the Athanasian Creed, the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort adopted for inclusion in the *Trinity Psalter Hymnal*. This book should be ready for publication by the next synod, subject to ~~funding~~ *approval* by Synod 2018.

Grounds:

- a. A stand-alone book of the Ecumenical Creeds and the Three Forms of Unity will facilitate the catechetical instruction of baptized and professing members alike and help overcome the commonly experienced discontinuity between versions used in catechetical instruction and those used in corporate worship.
- b. A softcover book will help keep costs down and encourage broad use in the churches
- c. This authorization will allow the Liturgical Forms Committee to have such a book prepared for release by the time of the next synod.

A. The chairman rules this recommendation out of order.

B. The ruling of the chairman is challenged.

- a. The chairman temporarily relinquishes the chair to the vice-chairman.
- b. The ruling of the chairman is not sustained.
- c. The chairman resumes the chair from the vice-chairman.

Adopted

C. Motion is made and supported to amend the recommendation to add the phrase, “and hard,” between “soft” and “cover.”

Adopted

D. Motion is made and supported to amend the recommendation to strike the word “funding” and replace it with the word “approval.”

Adopted

E. On the motion as amended:

Adopted

12. That the Synod thank the Liturgical Forms Committee for its many labors in this work, recognizing that there are perfections that need to be made yet.

Adopted

The chairman directs the Stated Clerk to send a letter of appreciation to the members of this committee. He also verbally thanks those who are present, the assembly affirming his words with its applause.

13. That this be declared to be Synod’s answer to the creeds section of the Liturgical Forms Committee’s report.

Adopted

With gratitude, the assembly rises to sing stanza 4 of Psalter Hymnal 317, *Come Thou Almighty King*.

ARTICLE 99

Advisory Committee 12 – Appeals

Materials: Appeal 2

1. The advisory committee presents the background which gave rise to this appeal and summarizes its conclusions. The committee notes that it considers this matter as containing four distinct appeals and one request:
 - a. Appeal 2.1: That the Consistory of Covenant URC erred by requesting of me that I forsake my view of Communion, which they have viewed as being Unbiblical and Unreformed.
 - b. Appeal 2.2: That the Consistory of Covenant URC erred by allowing those of a different doctrine to participate in Communion.
 - c. Appeal 2.3: That the Consistory of Covenant URC erred by violating their own requirements for admission to Communion.
 - d. Appeal 2.3: That the Consistory of Covenant URC erred in maintaining a double standard for participation in Communion.
 - e. Appellant’s Request: That Classis establish a committee to further study the issue of who should be admitted and who should not be admitted.

The committee further notes that it believes the appeal is properly before Synod. It also notes that when the appellant uses the term, “biblically justified,” the committee understands the appellant to mean, “scripturally defended.”

After a time of discussion concerning the advisory committee’s recommendations, the assembly briefly recesses for refreshment.

(Advisory Committee 12 continued in Art. 101.)

ARTICLE 100

- A. The chairman announces that a number of delegates must depart, including the following:
- Elder Mark Mack of Grace Reformed Church in Kelowna, British Columbia.
 - Elder Chuck DeWaard of Covenant Grace Reformed Church in Lynden, Washington.
 - Rev. Dale Van Dyke of Covenant Grace Reformed Church in Lynden, Washington.
 - Rev. Mark Vander Pol of the United Reformed Church in Lynden, Washington.
 - Rev. Benjamin Davenport of Bellingham URC in Bellingham, Washington.
- B. The chairman announces that Elder Paul Wagenmaker of Bethel URC in Jenison, Michigan, must depart and is being replaced by his alternate delegate, Rev. Jason Tuinstra. Rev. Tuinstra rises to signify his assent to the Form of Subscription

ARTICLE 101

Advisory Committee 12 – Appeals (continued from Art. 99)

Materials: Appeal 2

- A. The assembly returns to its consideration of the advisory committee’s recommendations.
- B. Motion is made and supported to re-commit the remainder of this report to the advisory committee.

Adopted

(Advisory Committee 12 continued in Art. 111.)

ARTICLE 102

Advisory Committee 2 – Financial Matters (continued from Art. 91)

Materials: Financial Report from the U.S. Treasurer; Financial Report from the Canadian Treasurer; JVA Financial Report; U.S. Board of Directors Report; Canadian Board of Directors Report

Recommendation:

That synod approve the proposed budget for 2017 and 2018 (see below).

Adopted without dissent

Comments: The 2017 budget as presented is \$20,627 less than the approved budget for 2016. The estimated askings for 2017 are less by \$5.08 for the Canadian Churches and \$4.59 for the US Churches compared to 2016.

The estimated askings are based on the following number of member families which are to be considered approximate given that a number of churches haven't updated their information in some time.

Canadian Families: 2,192

US Families: 3,925

Total URCNA: 6,117

Synod Wyoming 2016

Budget: Combined US and Canadian

In USD (amounts budgeted in Cdn\$ converted at 1.2587 - Cdn\$ items identified with **)

<i>Item</i>	<i>Report</i>	<i>2017</i>	<i>2018</i>	<i>Notes</i>
Acts of Synod		250		
Bank charges		40	40	
Committee Expenses				
Appeals	3Crev1	3,000	3,000	1
CECCA	11A	7,500	7,500	
CERCU	6A	10,000	10,000	
Liturgical Forms	10B-A	9,000	9,000	
Missions Committee	5Brev1	15,000	15,000	
PRCC liaison	4D	500	500	
Psalter Hymnal	7A	5,000	5,000	
Directors & Liability Insurance	2Crev1			
Canadian board		874	** 874	**
US board		1,000	1,000	
Dues				
ICRC		2,500	2,500	2
MNA / PRCC	4D	1,200	1,300	
NAPARC		700	700	2
Government filing fee				
Canadian churches				**

		24	**	24	
	US churches	25		25	
Missions Coordinator					
	Salary + benefits	5Brev1	79,182	** 80,426	** 3
	Mileage	Synod2014	5,000	5,000	4
	Book fund	Synod2014	1,500	1,500	4
	Office supply	Synod2014	2,000	2,000	4
	Travel	Synod2014	15,000	15,000	4
	Communication / Telephone	Synod2014	4,000	4,000	4
	Postage / supplies		100	100	
	Professional fees		1,827	** 1,827	** 5
	Synod			2,000	
Stipends					
	Treasurer(s)				
	Canadian		3,000	3,000	6
	Joint	2A	5,561	** 5,561	**
	US		4,000	4,000	
	Clerk		4,000	4,000	
	Web Master	4B	5,500	4,500	
			187,283	189,377	

	Estimated "askings" / family	Cdn	39.91	40.34
		US	30.51	30.85

Notes for the budget

- 1 A new committee
- 2 No budget requests were given for ICRC and NAPARC dues. The amount presented is from the most recent dues paid. CERCU and CECCA representatives did not project any increases.
- 3 Salary and benefits increased at current rate of inflation of 1.57% and converted into US\$

- 4 No budget request has been provided for these items. We have assumed the amounts budgeted at 2014 are sufficient.
- 5 Professional fees as indicated in the Canadian Board Report that these financial statements are being reviewed.
- 6 Is in US Dollars and continues from Synod 2014 due to no request from the Canadian Board for an increase.

ARTICLE 103

Advisory Committee 10c – Liturgical Forms (Forms) (continued from Art. 92)

Materials: Liturgical Forms Committee Report (Agenda pp. 175-176; 184-191; 293-403)

Recommendations:

1. That Synod amend Vow B in Form 2 (p. 402) by replacing it with the marriage vows from Form 1 (p. 396).

Grounds:

- a. This better reflects Paul's teaching in Ephesians 5.
- b. This will preserve the solemnization forms reported by the Liturgical Forms Committee.

Adopted

2. That Synod amend Baptism of Infants Form Number 1 (p. 321) to say, “When we are baptized into the Name of the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit assures us by this holy sacrament that he ~~makes~~ *will make* his home within us and will sanctify ...”

Grounds:

- a. This language of “will” is consistent with our current forms.
- ~~b. This also guards against a potential perception of baptismal regeneration.~~

A. Motion is made and supported to amend the recommendation by striking Ground b.

Adopted

B. The recommendation, as amended, is:

Adopted

3. That Synod adopt the new liturgical forms (as amended) for use in our churches.

Adopted

4. That the Liturgical Forms Committee further refine the language of the Twenty-One Meditations to Instruct in Faith and the Way of Salvation and Prepare Believers to Die Willingly (p. 310-320).

Ground:

The translation as proposed is wooden and could use some improvement.

Adopted

5. That Synod advise the Liturgical Forms Committee to consider a hardcover edition of the liturgical forms book.

Adopted

6. That Synod instruct the Liturgical Forms Committee to come up with a title for the liturgical forms book.

Adopted

7. That Synod encourage the continuation of the Liturgical Forms Committee to accomplish all that still needs to be done.

Adopted

8. That Synod thank the Liturgical Forms Committee for its excellent work thus far.

Adopted

The chairman reiterates the thanks already expressed to the committee.

ARTICLE 104

- A. In response to an inquiry, the chairman rules that – for the purposes of this Synod – Appendix B, Guideline 6.b., will be understood to mean that an appeal may be sustained only on the basis of the grounds submitted by an appellant, not on the basis of additional grounds from the advisory committee.
- B. The chairman’s ruling is challenged.
 - a. The chairman temporarily relinquishes the chair to the vice-chairman.
 - b. The chairman’s ruling is overturned by a majority vote of the assembly.
 - c. The chairman resumes the chair from the vice-chairman.

ARTICLE 105

Rev. Ed Marcusse from Immanuel’s Reformed Church of Salem, Oregon, leads the assembly in closing devotions. He reads from 2 Corinthians 5:21; calls the assembly to sing the hymn, *My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less*; then leads the assembly in a closing prayer.

Friday, June 17, 2016 Afternoon Session

ARTICLE 106

Elder Mark Van Der Molen from Immanuel URC of DeMotte, Indiana, opens the session by reading from Hebrews 4:14-16; calling the delegates to sing the hymn, *Before the Throne of God Above*; and leading the assembly in prayer.

ARTICLE 107

The chairman announces that a number of delegates must depart, including the following:

- Rev. William Godfrey of Grace URC in Torrance, California.
- Rev. Eric Pennings of Covenant Reformed Church in Toronto, Ontario.
- Elder Jesse Vink of Bethel URC in Calgary, Alberta.
- Rev. Keith Davis of Bethel URC in Calgary, Alberta.
- Elder Carl Nagel of First URC in Chino, California.
- Elder Rob Wybenga of New Covenant URC in Twin Falls, Idaho.
- Rev. Lawrens Slagter of Bethel Reformed Church in Smithers, British Columbia.
- Elder Alan Taylor of Bethel Reformed Church in Smithers, British Columbia.
- Rev. James Folkerts of Faith Reformed Church in Telkwa, British Columbia.
- Rev. William Van der Woerd of Covenant Reformed Church in Grande Prairie, Alberta.

ARTICLE 108

Motion is made and supported to approve the concept minutes, which were distributed previously and corrected by the assembly.

Adopted

ARTICLE 109

The vice-chairman invites Rev. Craig Scott to bring greetings to the assembly on behalf of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America. Rev. Scott recalls our unity in Christ, informs the assembly of ecumenical activities among the Reformed Presbyterian churches throughout the world, and provides updates concerning the work of the Lord in the RPCNA. He urges our federation to remain zealous for the spread of the gospel and for the glory of God.

Rev. Ralph Pontier offers a brief response and leads the assembly in prayer for the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America.

ARTICLE 110

Advisory Committee 3 – Overtures (continued from Art. 70)

Materials: Overture 3 (*Adopt Appeal and Gospel Testimony*); Communication from Classis Eastern U.S.

Overture 3 states:

Classis Central U.S. overtures Synod Wyoming 2016 to take the following actions as a gospel testimony regarding marriage and religious liberty:

1. Adopt the following “Appeal & Gospel Testimony to Governing Authorities.”
2. Direct the Stated Clerk to send the “Appeal & Gospel Testimony” to the President of the United States, the United States Supreme Court, the United States Senate Majority Leader, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

3. Encourage the churches of the federation to send the “Appeal & Gospel Testimony” to federal, state, and local governing authorities within a local church’s jurisdiction as each church deems appropriate.
4. Direct the Stated Clerk to send the “Appeal & Gospel Testimony” to the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC) for the member churches’ consideration and edification.

Recommendations:

1. That Synod affirm the following gospel testimony to governing authorities regarding marriage and religious liberty:

Appeal and Gospel Testimony to Governing Authorities:

Whereas various legislative, judicial, and administrative actions have enacted policies that recognize same-sex conduct as a legitimate practice protected by force of law;

Whereas on June 26, 2015, the Supreme Court of the United States of America decided by a vote of 5-4 to declare “same-sex marriage” as a fundamental constitutional right in our country;

Whereas these prior legal actions and this Supreme Court decision contravene nature and nature’s God and set this nation on a course of societal upheaval in its rejection of the God-ordained institution of marriage as a foundation of a healthy society;

Whereas this decision and others like it may set the nation on a course of conflict with the religious liberties of its citizens guaranteed by the very Constitution our governing authorities have sworn to uphold, thereby making it imperative that our testimony to our religious convictions be made clear;

Whereas in reality God created man male and female with the call to be fruitful and multiply (Genesis 1:22), giving the woman to the man as a helper in marriage for all the days of their lives (Genesis 2:18);

Whereas our Lord Jesus declared that the one-flesh union of one man and one woman in marriage is rooted in creation (Matthew 19:4-6) and reflected in the mystery of the gospel (Ephesians 5:22–33);

Whereas any form of sexual immorality, such as adultery, fornication, homosexuality, bisexual conduct, bestiality, incest, pornography or any attempt to change one’s sex, or disagreement with one’s biological sex, is disobedient to God’s will for humanity (Leviticus 18:22-23; Romans 1:26–27; 1 Timothy 1:10);

Whereas all the aforesaid sins of sexual immorality including homosexuality are sins from which Scripture mercifully calls those who practice them to repent; and from which, by God's grace, they can repent, receive forgiveness, and be renewed to a new life of obedience by the power of the Spirit of God (1 Corinthians 6:9-11);

Whereas, since governing authorities are appointed as ministers of God, their authority is derivative and must be in subjection to the will of the Lord God Almighty who created the heavens, the earth, and the institution of marriage (Genesis 1-2, Romans 13; Belgic Confession Article 36);

Whereas, even as all citizens are to honor governing authorities, such governing authorities cannot compel Christians, religious organizations, or churches to obey commands, rules, rulings, or statutes that are repugnant to the Word of God, since the church is the Bride of Christ, bought and redeemed by His blood on the cross, and as members of His precious Church, we must remain faithful to Him and His Word even if illegitimately commanded by secular powers to disobey Him and His Word (1 Peter 2:17; Belgic Confession Article 36);

IT IS THEREFORE RESOLVED that We, the United Reformed Churches in North America, in the name of the One and Only True and Living God, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the ultimate King, Governor, Judge and Savior of all nations, as revealed in the 66 Books of the Holy Scriptures consisting of the Old and New Testaments, do call upon all State and Federal legislators, governors, congress, judges, courts, and the President of the United States to repent, repeal, overturn, and cease any legalizing of “same-sex marriage” or any related policies which would infringe upon our Christian conscience to obey the Word of God. This moral evil can bring the temporal judgment of God Almighty both upon individuals and the nation now and will certainly bring God’s final judgment on individuals on Judgment Day.

Let all be assured that the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is a God “merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children’s children, to the third and the fourth generation” (Exodus 34:6–7).

Let all also be assured that God does not desire that any should perish, but that all would repent and come to a knowledge of the truth (1 Timothy 2:4). And so we speak to the world not as those who are without sin, but rather we speak as fellow sinners who were lost and ruined by our original parent Adam’s fall and by our own sins and sinfulness. We confess with sorrow that too often the Christian church has muted and marred its witness to this glorious gospel by our own failure to uphold marriage vows, by embracing worldliness, and by moral compromise. In these failings, we have not provided a clear Christian witness to our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, thereby inciting God’s displeasure with both us and the world. Yet, as repentant sinners, we can testify that the only true and everlasting joy and freedom is found in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We pray that by the power of the Holy Spirit all persons, including our governing authorities, can experience repentance, the forgiveness of sin, and the delight of walking with our God in the beauty of holiness, which includes upholding the only natural marriage ordinance created by God.

(Federation signatory)

Grounds:

- a. The church exercises the keys of the kingdom by witnessing to the gospel truth to the world, calling all men everywhere to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. In certain circumstances, this witness includes the use of spiritual means to exhort and rebuke our rulers where they may contravene God’s moral law which binds them (Heidelberg Catechism Q. 83, 84; URCNA Church Order Articles 2, 47; Synod 2010 Letter of Concern; Calvin’s Commentary on Jeremiah 1:9-10).

- b. The church exercises the keys of the kingdom through Christian discipline, which includes calling its members and officers to repent of sin, which would include the sin of homosexual practice (Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 85; Foundational Principles of Reformed Church Government 16; URCNA Church Order Articles 55, 59, 61, and 62).
- c. The Supreme Court decision threatens the religious liberty of the church in the exercise of the keys of the kingdom, as well as the right of individual Christians and associations to declare and practice the truth of God, which includes respect for God’s institution of marriage and not countenancing sexual immorality among us.
- d. This *Appeal and Gospel Testimony* is an opportunity for the churches to witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ by way of the confession of sin and the joy found by living in the beauty of holiness, as well as to pray that our civil rulers fulfill their task in a manner that God may rule over them and us and that they contribute to the advancement of a society pleasing to God (Romans 13; Belgic Confession Article 36; URCNA “Prayer for the Needs of Christendom”).
- e. While we pray this *Appeal and Testimony* would be heeded, it may be disregarded and coercive actions against our religious convictions may be a future cross to bear. In that case, this *Appeal and Testimony* can serve to strengthen, comfort, and guide the flocks entrusted to our care even amid persecution, and can remain a witness to the truth regardless of whether the world will hear it (1 Peter 4:12).
- f. This *Appeal and Testimony* answers the call to join our voice with other Christians against this transgression against the will of Almighty God (*Resolution on Same-Sex Marriage*, Reformed Presbyterian Church U.S., April 19, 2013).

A. Motion is made and supported to require a two-thirds majority for the adoption of this recommendation.

Adopted by a 2/3 majority

B. On the approval of Recommendation 1:

Defeated

The chairman rules that Recommendations 2, 3 and 4 are now out of order.

2. Direct the Stated Clerk to send the *Appeal and Gospel Testimony to Governing Authorities* to the President of the United States, the United States Supreme Court, the United States Senate Majority Leader, and Speaker of the House of Representatives.

Grounds:

- a. These offices are the highest executive, judicial, and legislative branches of the national government to whom our federation’s broadest assembly can most appropriately communicate.
 - b. These federal offices are significantly involved on a national level with the policy matters addressed in the *Appeal and Gospel Testimony*.
3. Encourage the churches of the federation to send the *Appeal and Gospel Testimony* to federal, state, and local governing authorities within a local church’s jurisdiction as each church deems appropriate.

Grounds:

- a. In the various states, there are varying degrees of involvement by the lower federal, state, and local authorities with the policy matters addressed in the *Appeal and Gospel Testimony*.
 - b. The local churches can best assess the most effective means of communicating the *Appeal and Gospel Testimony* to the lower governing authorities in each church's jurisdiction.
4. Direct the Stated Clerk to send the *Appeal and Gospel Testimony to Governing Authorities* to the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC) for the member churches' consideration and edification.

Grounds:

- a. The URCNA is a member of NAPARC.
 - b. One purpose of NAPARC is to “[f]acilitate discussion, consultation, and the sharing of insights among Member Churches on those issues and problems which divide them as well as on those which they face in common” (NAPARC Constitution, Article IV, 1.).
 - c. Sending the *Appeal and Gospel Testimony* to NAPARC advances the purpose of sharing our insights on these issues which we face in common with NAPARC churches.
5. That Synod declare this to be our answer to Overture 3. *Adopted*
6. That in response to the communication from Classis Eastern US, Synod refer to the churches the following pastoral advice regarding marriage:
1. The holy bond of marriage was instituted by God himself at the very beginning of history (Solemnization of Marriage: Form 1).
 2. Since husbands and wives are united by the Lord's hand (Genesis 2:18 - 24), nothing should separate them in this life (Solemnization of Marriage: Form 1).
 3. Since the Lord forbids immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband (1 Cor. 7:2) (Solemnization of Marriage: Form 1).
 4. The first purpose of marriage is that husband and wife shall live together in sincere love and holiness, helping each other faithfully in all things that belong to this life and to the life to come (Solemnization of Marriage: Form 1).
 5. The second purpose of marriage is procreation, that by marriage the human race is to be continued and increased (Solemnization of Marriage: Form 1).
 6. The third purpose of marriage, particularly within the church, is that by marriage the advancement of the kingdom of God is to be promoted. This purpose calls for loving devotion to each other, and a common responsibility for the nurture of children in true knowledge and fear of the Lord, which the

Lord may give them as his heritage and as parties to his covenant (Solemnization of Marriage: Form 1).

7. Marriage is a divine ordinance intended to be a source of happiness to man, an institution of the highest significance to the human race, and a symbol of the union of Christ and his Church (Solemnization of Marriage: Form 1).
8. Scripture teaches that marriage is designed to be a lifelong, monogamous, covenantal union between one man and one woman (Church Order of the URCNA, Sixth Edition, Article 48).
9. Consistories shall instruct and admonish those under their spiritual care who are considering marriage to marry in the Lord (Church Order of the URCNA, Sixth Edition, Article 48).
10. Christian marriages shall be solemnized with appropriate admonitions, promises, and prayers, under the regulation of the consistory, with the use of the appropriate liturgical form (Church Order of the URCNA, Sixth Edition, Article 48).
11. URCNA ministers shall not solemnize marriages that conflict with the Word of God (Church Order of the URCNA, Sixth Edition, Article 48).

Grounds:

- a. Although Synod is not required to make a decision in response to communications (Synodical Regulations 3.5), neither is it forbidden to make a decision in response.
- b. It is timely for the URCNA reaffirm its teaching on the nature of marriage due to the great upheaval we are witnessing in the nature, morality, and legal understanding of marriage, as our culture and legal structures become increasingly unmoored from God's law and opposed to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
- c. It is needful to exhort officers and members of the URCNA that in times of cultural and legal opposition we must heed the Apostolic command: "We must obey God rather than man" (Acts 183 5:29), and be willing to peaceably disobey the civil magistrate, suffering all consequences, when man's law conflicts with God's law.
- d. It is necessary to clearly establish before the civil magistrate that ministers in United Reformed Churches are constrained to not solemnize marriages that conflict with the Word of God, both by their ordination vows and over five hundred years of consistent faith and practice.
- e. It is necessary for the URCNA to reaffirm and make explicit its teaching on the nature of marriage due to the relative silence of our Ecumenical Creeds and Reformed Confessions on this matter.
- f. The Church speaks most powerfully to a world in turmoil when she speaks in a timeless fashion. A reaffirmation of our churches faith and practice as reflected in our historic liturgical forms and church order most powerfully reflects both our continuity with the past and the enduring nature of our witness.
- g. It is appropriate for the URCNA to confess a teaching of marriage that is not only faithful to the Scriptures but also faithful to the faith and practice of the Reformed tradition.

- h. Our liturgical forms reflect our continuity with two thousand years of faithful interpretation of Scripture. While our Three Forms of Unity are silent on the nature of marriage, our liturgical forms and church order are abundantly clear summaries of God’s word. Many professing Christians today deny the clarity of Scripture’s teaching on marriage; this affirmation reflects our commitment to maintain the unity of the faith and read God’s Word in common with the saints through the ages.
- i. The teaching of God’s Word as summarized in our traditional forms of solemnization and Church Order is wholly sufficient to address the errors of our age.
- j. Reaffirming our historic teaching in the universal language of our tradition best preserves the freedom of local consistories to address their civil magistrate and cultural context in an appropriate fashion. We acknowledge the need for this affirmation has been precipitated by particular events in the United States, namely, the new legal regime brought about by the Supreme Court ruling in *Obergefell v. Hodges* (2015). However, as a church that spans multiple jurisdictions in North America and supports missionary efforts around the world, it is important that we affirm our understanding of the nature of marriage in the most catholic and universal manner available to us.

The chairman rules this recommendation out of order, on the following grounds:

Grounds:

- a. The chairman *pro tem* erred in entertaining the motion “to classify the overture from Classis Eastern U.S. as a communication and refer it to Advisory Committee 3” (Art. 9.A.2). It *may* be classified as a communication, but it may not be referred to Advisory Committee 3. The deadline for communications is the same as the deadline for overtures. This communication clearly arrived after the deadline for the synodical agenda. Since the motion to place it on the agenda as an overture failed, the motion to place it on the agenda as a communication should have had the same fate.
- b. This is how synod handled a similar matter in the past. At Synod Nyack 2012, a communication was received on the night before synod. It was ruled out of order for its lateness (Acts of Synod Nyack 2012, Article 46).
- c. While it is true that synod is not “forbidden to make a decision in response” to a communication, to act upon the communication in the manner suggested by Advisory Committee 3 is to functionally ignore the ruling of the Convening Consistory, whose work was already received by this synod (Art. 21.5).
- d. To act upon the communication in this manner it not the proper method to adopt pastoral advice for the churches.
- e. This communication has not been submitted to the consistories of the federation.

Therefore, on the basis of the Regulations for Synodical Procedure, our historical practice, and good order, Recommendation 6 is ruled out of order.

Advisory Committee 12 – Appeals (continued from Art. 101)

Materials: Appeal 2

Recommendation:

That Synod declare the appeal to be out of order.

Grounds:

- a. The Regulations for Synodical Procedure, Appendix B provide guidelines for the submission of an appeal. We are unable to determine from the documentation provided what is the substance of the appeal. This prevents Synod from capably adjudicating the appeal.
 - b. This action still leaves the appellant in a position where he may pursue an appeal to ~~a future synod~~ *his consistory*, while refining his appeal according to the Regulations for Synodical Procedure. *This properly-written appeal then could be advanced for adjudication, if necessary, to classis and synod.*
- A. Motion is made and supported to amend Ground b. by striking the phrase, “a future synod,” and inserting the phrase, “his consistory.”
- Adopted*
- B. Motion is made and supported to amend Ground b. by inserting at the end the sentence: “This properly-written appeal then could be advanced for adjudication, if necessary, to classis and synod.”
- Adopted*
- C. Motion is made and supported to amend by adding Ground c., stating:
“Synod notes that two practices are accepted within the federation with regard to admitting visitors to the Lord’s Table:
1. Admitting only those who have publicly professed the Reformed faith;
2. Admitting non-Reformed professing visitors.”
- The chairman rules this motion out of order*
- D. The recommendation, as amended, is:
- Adopted*
- E. Motion is made and supported that Synod declare:
“Synod notes that ~~there are two practices current~~ ~~two practices are currently permitted~~ within the federation with regard to admitting visitors to the Lord’s Table:
1. Admitting only those who have publicly professed the Reformed faith;
2. Admitting non-Reformed professing visitors.”
- a. Motion is made and supported to amend the motion by replacing the phrase, “two practices are currently permitted,” and inserting the phrase: “there are two practices current.”

Adopted

b. On the motion as amended:

Adopted

(Advisory Committee 12 continued in Art. 114.)

ARTICLE 112

The chairman announces that a number of delegates must depart, including the following:

- Rev. Dick Moes of Surrey Covenant Reformed Church in Surrey, British Columbia.
- Elder Harry Ten Haaf of Surrey Covenant Reformed Church in Surrey, British Columbia.
- Rev. Jason Tuinstra of Bethel URC in Jenison, Michigan.
- Rev. Adam Kaloostian of Ontario URC in Ontario, California.
- Rev. Taylor Kern of Ontario URC in Ontario, California.
- Rev. Craig Davis of Grace URC in Kennewick, Washington.
- Elder Steve Miller of Grace URC in Kennewick, Washington.

ARTICLE 113

- A. The chairman temporarily relinquishes the chair to the vice-chairman.
- B. Motion is made and supported to enter into executive session, in preparation for dealing with Appeal 3.
Adopted
- C. Rev. Harold Miller, chairman of Advisory Committee 12, leads the assembly in prayer.

ARTICLE 114

Advisory Committee 12 – Appeals (continued from Art. 111)

Materials: Appeal 3

1. The advisory committee presents the background which gave rise to this appeal and summarizes its conclusions.
2. Since this advisory committee brought both a Majority and a Minority report, after reading the Majority Report, the Minority Report is read for information. This report notes agreement with the Majority Report in all of its recommendations – and, therefore, in its essential understanding of the facts of the case – except in the final disposition of the appeal.
3. The committee makes the following recommendations with regard to the grounds of the appeal:
 - a. With respect to Ground 1 of Appeal 3, we find Ground 1 to be invalid. Ground 1 states: “The Trinity Elders made no attempt to discuss the charges they

made against me before seeking concurring advice from two consistories to suspend my ministerial credentials.”

Grounds:

- i. Both the Consistory of Trinity URC of Lethbridge and br. Oord provided evidence that the substance of what would become the charges was discussed with br. Oord prior to Trinity URC’s decision to suspend (cf. p.6, 28-30, 33).
- ii. Once the consistory decided to proceed with suspension, the consistory was not required by the Church Order to have dialogue with br. Oord concerning the charges prior to seeking concurring advice from two neighboring consistories.

Adopted

- b. With respect to Ground 2 of Appeal 3, we find Ground 2 to be invalid. Ground 2 states: “The elders intentionally chose to meet with the consistories giving concurring advice at a time they knew I could not be present.”

Ground:

There is no Church Order requirement that the consistory schedule the meeting with the neighboring consistories at a time when br. Oord could attend.

Adopted

- c. With respect to Ground 3 of Appeal 3, we find Ground 3 to be invalid. Ground 3 states: “Both consistories giving concurring advice and Classis Western Canada made their decision without following due process by giving me an opportunity to defend myself against the allegations that were made against me.”

Ground:

- i. There is no Church Order requirement that consistories or classes giving concurring advice must give br. Oord an opportunity to defend himself.
- ii. *In both of these instances, br. Oord’s defense was given in written form.*

- A. Motion is made and supported to amend Recommendation 2.c. by adding a second ground: “In both of these instances, br. Oord’s defense was given in written form.”

Adopted

- B. Recommendation 2.c., as amended, is:

Adopted

Executive Session is ended, and the chairman resumes the chair from the vice-chairman.

(Advisory Committee 12 continued in Art. 119.)

Rev. Matthew Nuiver from Faith URC in Holland, Michigan, leads the assembly in closing devotions. He reads from Exodus 12:1-13 and 21-28; calls the assembly to sing the hymn, *Lamb, Precious Lamb*; then leads the assembly in a closing prayer.

Friday, June 17, 2016
Evening Session

ARTICLE 116

Rev. Nick Smith from the URC of Nampa, Idaho, opens the session by reading from Psalm 22:21-28; leading the assembly in prayer; and calling the delegates to sing the hymn, *Come, Ye Sinners, Poor and Needy*.

ARTICLE 117

The chairman announces that a number of delegates must depart, including the following:

- Rev. Norm Van Eeden Petersman of Adoration URC in Vineland, Ontario.
- Elder Wilf Wikkerink of Adoration URC in Vineland, Ontario.
- Rev. Keith Davis of Bethel URC in Calgary, Alberta.
- Rev. Talman Wagenmaker of Grace URC in Waupun, Wisconsin.
- Rev. Jacques Roets of Redeemer URC in Dyer, Indiana.
- Elder Steve Bultema of Redeemer URC in Dyer, Indiana.
- Rev. Ted Gray of First URC in Oak Lawn, Illinois.
- Elder Ray Brands of New Haven URC in New Haven, Vermont.
- Rev. Christo Heiberg of Zion URC in Sheffield, Ontario.
- Elder Ralph Schuurman of Zion URC in Sheffield, Ontario.

ARTICLE 118

- A. The chairman temporarily relinquishes the chair to the vice-chairman.
- B. Synod again enters into executive session, in preparation for returning to Appeal 3.

ARTICLE 119

Advisory Committee 12 – Appeals (continued from Art. 114)

Materials: Appeal 3

Synod resumes consideration of the committee’s recommendations with regard to the grounds of the appeal.

- d. With respect to Ground 4 of Appeal 3, we find Ground 4 to be invalid.
Ground 4 states: “The charges presented by the Trinity Elders to the two

concurring consistories, and possibly to Classis Western Canada, had grounds that were clearly different than those presented to me in the Letter of Admonition.”

Grounds:

- i. Br. Oord was made aware of the specific charges with their grounds that had been presented to the neighboring consistories (cf. Appeal pp. 134 ff.).
- ii. The consistory was not required to maintain the grounds listed in the Letter of Admonition in their request for concurring advice.
- iii. One admonition listed in the Letter of Admonition (cf. Appeal pp. 124-125) was judged by the consistory to no longer require proceeding with suspension, so this admonition and its grounds were not included in the further proceedings (cf. p. 8). However, there is no substantive difference between the remaining grounds listed in the Letter of Admonition and the grounds listed under the charges presented to the neighboring consistories.

Adopted

- e. With respect to the charge, “Slander of a fellow minister,” in Ground 5 of Appeal 3, we find Ground 5 to be valid.

Ground 5 states: “The allegations made by the Trinity Elders are false and do not accurately reflect the events that took place.”

Grounds:

- i. While br. Oord did raise significant concerns about the preaching of another minister, he regularly addressed those concerns with the other minister and with the Consistory of TURC. When br. Oord presented his concerns with supporting evidence to be judged by the consistory, he did not commit slander.
- ii. The evidence provided by the consistory does not rise to the level of slander (cf. Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 112).
- iii. When members of the congregation of TURC addressed their concerns to br. Oord about the preaching of another minister, he directed them to communicate their concerns to the consistory.

Adopted

- f. With respect to the charge, “Support and encouragement of the secession of a schismatic group,” in Ground 5 of Appeal 3, we find Ground 5 to be valid.

Ground 5 states: “The allegations made by the Trinity Elders are false and do not accurately reflect the events that took place.”

Grounds:

There is no evidence that br. Oord supported and encouraged the secession of a schismatic group prior to the Consistory of TURC deciding to lay this charge against him to suspend him.

- i. Attendance at the steering committee meetings does not prove that br. Oord supported and encouraged schismatic activity prior to the consistory’s decision to suspend him.

- ii. Their definition of a schismatic group (“When people leave a church and cannot cite any biblical or confessional grounds, their leaving is the sin of schism,” p.136) is too broad.

Adopted

- g. With respect to the charge, “Refusal to heed the admonitions of Consistory,” in Ground 5 of Appeal 3, we find Ground 5 to be invalid.
Ground 5 states: “The allegations made by the Trinity Elders are false and do not accurately reflect the events that took place.”

Ground:

Br. Oord preached at Grace Reformed Church on March 15, 2015, despite having been instructed by the consistory that he was not to engage in any ministerial duties (cf. pp. 114, 168). This violates Article 31 of the Church Order, which requires that a church member “conform to the determination and judgment already passed,” until a decision is made on an appeal.

Adopted

- h. With respect to Ground 6 of Appeal 3, we find Ground 6 to be valid.
Ground 6 states: “The Elders (sic) attempt at reconciliation appeared very insincere.”

Ground:

On a number of occasions, the consistory indicated a desire to be reconciled while their actions indicated a commitment to suspend creating the appearance of insincerity. For example, the consistory was within its rights to pursue reconciliation with the aid of a counsellor and suspension concurrently (cf. pp. 14-15). However, their failure to communicate with br. Oord regarding their dual actions created the appearance of insincerity (cf. pp. 57-59).

Adopted

- i. With respect to Ground 7 of Appeal 3, we find Ground 7 has been answered by Synod’s response to Ground 5.
Ground 7 states: “My activities with Grace Reformed Church were not schismatic in nature.”

Ground:

The substance of Ground 7 is contained within Ground 5.

Adopted

- 4. The committee recommends that Synod declare that Appeal 3 has been sustained.

Grounds:

- a. Article 61 of the Church Order provides two grounds for the suspension and deposition of office-bearers: gross sins and refusal to heed the admonitions of the

consistory. The admonition of the consistory to br. Oord included the call to repent of the sins of schism and slander, which we have found invalid.

- b. In the ground for deposition, the consistory defined the failure to heed their admonition as related to br. Oord visiting a person in the hospital, teaching a Bible study, and preaching one time while on his leave of absence (pp. 12-13, 137, 138 appeal material; also found in classis material). We do not believe that these actions warranted suspension or deposition.
 - c. It is inappropriate to consider any actions or grounds beyond the written official grounds given by consistory and adjudicated by classis that have occurred since the deposition.
- A. Motion is made and supported to table the Advisory Committee 12 Majority Report in order to take up the Advisory Committee 12 Minority Report.

Adopted

- B. The Advisory Committee 12 Minority Report comes before the assembly:
That Synod rule that the appeal has not been sustained.

Grounds:

- a. Article 61 of the Church Order provides two grounds for the suspension and deposition of office-bearers: gross sins and refusal to heed the admonitions of the Consistory. Since br. Oord refused to heed the admonition of the Consistory, especially with regard to ministerial duties, the Consistory of TURC was within the bounds of the Church Order to pursue suspension and deposition.
- b. Though some of br. Oord's grounds were deemed valid, those particular grounds are not sufficient to sustain his appeal.

Adopted

Prior to the vote, the chairman asks Rev. Greg Lubbers to lead the assembly in prayer.

Rev. Talman Wagenmaker requests that his negative vote be recorded, explaining: "I register my negative vote on the basis of this decision violating the Scriptural principles of love and justice that reveal themselves in due process."

The following delegates also request that their negative votes be recorded: Elder Myron Rau, Rev. Derrick Vander Meulen, and Rev. Jonathan Van Hoogen.

- C. Motion is made and supported to take the Advisory Committee 12 Majority Report off the table.

Adopted

5. That Synod declare it laments the unbiblical disharmony that brought this appeal before us, and Synod appeals to all involved parties to seek biblical reconciliation beyond ~~the legal dispensation of this appeal~~ *this synodical decision.* ("I, therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain

the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit – just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call” – Ephesians 4:1-4.)

A. Motion is made and supported to amend the recommendation by striking the phrase, “the legal dispensation of this appeal,” and inserting: “this synodical decision.”

Adopted

B. The recommendation, as amended, is:

Adopted

6. That Synod acknowledge Communication 3.

Adopted

7. The vice-chairman asks Rev. Bradd Nymeyer to lead the assembly in prayer for the appellant, the involved consistory, and all of those involved in this appeal.

ARTICLE 120

A. Executive session is ended.

B. The chairman resumes the chair from the vice-chairman.

ARTICLE 121

Advisory Committee 9 – Membership Departure

Materials: Report of the Membership Departures Study Committee

Recommendations:

1. That Synod grant the privilege of the floor to the committee chairman and secretary when committee matters are being considered (*Regulations for Synodical Procedure* 5.4.2).

The chairman so rules

2. That Synod receive Section 6 of the majority report, as herein amended, as pastoral advice (*Regulations For Synodical Procedure*, Appendix D. 2).

6.1 Membership Transfer

A consistory may transfer a person’s membership only to churches with whom the URCNA has established Ecclesiastical Fellowship¹ or with whom we share membership in NAPARC.² Therefore, when a member asks the consistory

¹ Acts of Synod London 2010, Art. 68.1, pp. 31, 213-215

² See *NAPARC Agreement on Transfer of Members and Congregations*; adopted at the 13th (1987) meeting of NAPARC (North American Presbyterian & Reformed Council); <http://www.naparc.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/InfoDoc-10-NAPARC-Agreement-on-Transfer.pdf>.

for transfer to such a church, he or she should clearly identify the receiving church (see URCNA Church Order Article 64).

When the consistory accedes to the member's request, it should send appropriate membership information (i.e. the dates for birth, baptism, profession of faith, and/or marriage, as applicable) directly to the elders of the receiving church, including an attestation to the member's good standing or disciplinary status. Attestations should be written to orient the receiving elders to the member we are asking them to receive and oversee.³

The consistory should request the elders of the receiving church to provide confirmation that the person has been received into their membership by use of the synodically approved Certificate of Membership.⁴ The consistory should not consider the member transferred until it has received the requested confirmation. Once confirmed, the consistory should inform the congregation that the member has been transferred to another church, giving the name of the church.

6.2 Membership Release

A consistory may release a person's membership to churches that have neither Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the URCNA nor membership in NAPARC. Apart from Synodical actions (see URCNA Church Order Articles 34, 35 and 36), a consistory may charitably consider another church to be a true church (Belgic Confession Article 29) if therein the gospel of Jesus Christ is preached and the two sacraments Christ instituted are administered under the oversight of elders who exercise church discipline. Therefore, a member who asks the consistory for release to affiliate with such a church should not only identify the particular church (see URCNA Church Order Article 64), but also should allow time for the consistory to carefully consider it. The consistory should then act in the way it is convinced will best serve the Lord's honor, the purity of the church, and the member's welfare.

If the consistory accedes to the member's request, it should send appropriate membership information (i.e. the dates for birth, baptism, profession of faith, and/or marriage, as applicable) directly to the elders of the receiving church, including an attestation to the member's good standing or disciplinary status.

A member should be disciplined rather than released if he or she has embraced heretical doctrines or is seeking to join a false church.

Many churches not in Ecclesiastical Fellowship function with a different understanding of church membership, and these may not acknowledge the reception of members released to their care. Even so, the consistory should request the elders of the receiving church to provide confirmation of the person's affiliation there. The consistory need not await a confirmation before informing the congregation that the member "has been released in order to affiliate" with another church, giving the name of the church.

³ Scripture provides many examples of such attestation by the apostles; e.g. 1 Corinthians 16:10-11, Ephesians 6:21-22, Colossians 4:7-9, 2 Timothy 4:10-15, 1 Peter 5:12, and 3 John 12.

⁴ Acts of Synod 1997, Article LB.3, synodically approved Certificate of Membership, p.53.

If the consistory has publicly announced the name of a member under discipline, prior to releasing them, then the consistory should not only inform the congregation that the member “has been released under discipline in order to affiliate” with the named church, but also urge the congregation to continue to pray for his or her repentance.

In the event that a member becomes affiliated with a church without first asking the consistory to release his or her membership, the consistory should initiate correspondence with the other church to confirm whether the elders there have assumed, or are willing to assume, responsibility for the person’s spiritual care. Upon confirmation, the consistory should release the member to affiliate and inform the congregation.

6.3 Membership Exclusion

Consistories may exclude from membership those who persist in separating from the church by way of resignation, recognizing them to be outside the communion of the saints.

A member seeking resignation is taking premeditated and deliberate action. It is a grievous sin to forsake Christ’s church by resigning one’s membership in order to escape church discipline or to openly reject Jesus Christ and/or his church. The Heidelberg Catechism (Lord’s Day 21) and the Belgic Confession (Articles 28 and 29) rightly condemn this sinful attempt to escape the spiritual oversight of elders and mutual accountability in the communion of saints.⁵ The consistory must warn members against it, not encourage anyone to resign in order to avoid church discipline, and not infer from one’s mere absence that a member has resigned.

Church members cannot escape the authority and oversight of the consistory by an act of resignation. Jesus Christ gave the keys of the kingdom to the church.⁶ He ordains elders to establish and terminate membership in the church, welcoming believers to commune with Christ at his table and excommunicating those bound by unbelief or hypocrisy. Therefore, the consistory should not refer to resignation as “self-excommunication.”

Some may seek to resign membership in the church for very clear reasons: e.g. to escape the discipline of the church for what they profess and/or how they live; or to openly reject Jesus Christ and/or his church. Others may do so because they lack understanding and/or maturity to recognize their obligation to join and unite with the true church (see Belgic Confession Articles 28 and 29) and/or to recognize the ramifications of resignation.

Those acting out of ignorance and/or immaturity should be instructed in the doctrine of the church and warned at least twice (Titus 3:10) against the grievous sin of separating from Christ’s body. Members that heed the consistory and desist from resignation should continue to receive appropriate instruction and care. Those who persist in resignation by refusing and/or disregarding the consistory

⁵ Acts 2:42, 20:28; 1 Corinthians 12; Hebrews 10:24-25, 13:7; 1 Peter 5:1-5

⁶ Isaiah 22:22; Matthew 16:19, 18:18

should be treated in the same manner as those who resign in order to escape church discipline or who openly reject Jesus Christ and/or his church.

If a member seeks to resign while under church discipline, the consistory needs not advance in the discipline process while warning the member against resignation. If the member remains impenitent and persists in resigning, the consistory should seek the advice of classis before acting to exclude him or her from membership. The consistory needs not seek advice if classis has previously advised it to proceed to the second step of public discipline.

Having been advised by classis, the consistory may proceed to exclude from membership someone who forsakes Christ's church. The consistory should notify the person of this action, admonishing him or her and urging repentance. The consistory should also inform the congregation of this action and solicit their prayers for the former member. In this way, the congregation is also warned against this grievous sin.

6.4 Membership Erasure

Consistories may erase the membership of those with whom they have had no contact for at least two years, thus rendering consistories unable to assess that member's doctrine or life. Lack of contact must not be for lack of effort on the part of the consistory, but may be because the consistory cannot locate the member, or because the member is too distant to visit and will not respond to communication attempts. The consistory should seek the advice of classis before acting to erase a membership, demonstrating due diligence in its efforts to contact and give pastoral care to the member. The consistory should inform the congregation of this action and the reasons for it.

Grounds:

- a. The churches have asked for advice on this subject.
- b. Synod Visalia mandated such advice.
- c. The advice will assist the churches in dealing with membership departures.
- d. The Dort Church Order tradition, by design, is meant to lay down broad general principles. This allows for consistories to use wisdom in applying those principles to situations that vary from place to place and time to time rather than trying to legislate for every possible contingency (*Synod Wyoming 2016, Committee report 3A, Recommendation 1, Ground e*).

Adopted

3. That Synod not accede to Recommendation 8.3 of the majority report.

Recommendation 8.3 states:

That the Synod adopt and refer to the churches the Pastoral Advice of this report.

Ground:

Recommendation 2 of this advisory committee accomplishes the purpose of Recommendation 8.3 of the majority report in a more appropriate manner.

Adopted

4. That Synod encourage the churches to employ these four categories (i.e. transfer, release, exclusion, erasure), in submitting overtures to amend the Church Order with regard to membership departure.

Grounds:

- a. Overtures in regard to Church Order should arise from consistories (*Regulations for Synodical Procedure, Appendix A*).
- b. These categories provide a common vocabulary for the churches to use in such overtures.
- c. Codifying the Pastoral Advice by appropriate changes to the Church Order will clarify the matter and lead to a more consistent dealing with membership departures among the churches.

Adopted

5. That Synod not accede to Recommendation 8.2 of the Majority Report.

Recommendation 8.2 states:

That Synod refer to the churches for consideration the Church Order information (Section 7 of this report) for consideration and possible future action by way of overture.

Ground:

Recommendation 4 of this advisory committee will better facilitate the work of consistories envisioned in Recommendation 8.2 of the Majority Report.

Adopted

6. That the *Stated Clerk* ~~Synod~~ provide this pastoral advice to the consistories in a publishable format.

- A. Motion is made and supported to amend the recommendation by replacing “Synod” with “Stated Clerk.”

Adopted

- B. The motion, as amended, is:

Adopted

7. That Synod accede to Recommendation 8.4 of the majority report to dismiss the Membership Departures Committee and thank its members for their work.

Adopted

The chairman asks the Stated Clerk to send a letter to the members of the committee to express Synod’s appreciation. He also verbally expresses appreciation to those present, which is confirmed by the applause of the assembly.

Elections of Functionaries

A. Election of Stated Clerk:

- a. Rev. Adrian Dieleman, Rev. Ralph Pontier, Rev. William Van der Woerd, and Rev. Talman Wagenmaker are nominated.
- b. Rev. Talman Wagenmaker is elected.

B. Election of Alternate Stated Clerk:

- a. Rev. Ralph Pontier is nominated.
- b. As the sole nominee, Rev. Ralph Pontier is elected.

ARTICLE 123

Convening the Next Synod

- A. Motion is made and supported to hold Synod on June 11-15, 2018, at Wheaton College.

Adopted

- B. Motion is made and supported to appoint Oak Glen United Reformed Church of Lansing, Illinois, as Convening Consistory.

Adopted

ARTICLE 124

- A. Motion is made and supported to ask the officers of Synod to review and approve the final section of concept minutes.

Adopted

- B. Motion is made and supported to ask the officers of Synod to review and approve the final press release.

Adopted

ARTICLE 125

The vice-chairman rises to express the assembly's appreciation for our chairman, Rev. Bradd Nymeyer, who has shown wisdom and humility as our chairman.

The assembly rises with applause to affirm the vice-chairman's words.

ARTICLE 126

The chairman expresses the appreciation of the assembly for the many volunteers who exerted themselves to make Synod run smoothly via administrative and technological support, musical gifts, and provision of food. He speaks words of thanks for the officers of Synod, who exercised their gifts on behalf of the assembly. And he speaks words of gratitude for the willing delegates of Synod Wyoming 2016, who gave a week of time in order prayerfully and carefully to serve the churches.

The chairman further expresses his thanks, as the out-going Stated Clerk, for the opportunity to serve the churches in that manner.

Above all, the chairman expresses the assembly's thanks to God for His blessing upon Synod Wyoming 2016.

ARTICLE 127

Rev. Harry Zekveld from Providence URC of Strathroy, Ontario, leads the assembly in closing devotions. He reads from Psalm 103:15-18, calls the assembly to sing Psalm 134, and then leads the assembly in a closing prayer.

ARTICLE 128

Synod stands adjourned.