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# RULES FOR SYNODICAL PROCEDURE

2011



CHRISTIAN  
REFORMED  
CHURCH

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# RULES FOR SYNODICAL PROCEDURE OF THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH

## I. CONVENING AND CONSTITUTING SYNOD

A. Synod shall convene and be constituted as prescribed by the Church Order, Articles 45 and 46, and the decisions of Synod 2000.

B. Each synod shall designate a convening church whose duty it shall be to announce the next succeeding synod in the official publications of the church, three months before the date of meeting. The Synodical Service of Prayer and Praise shall be conducted under the auspices of the convening church in consultation with the executive director. The minister of the convening church shall preach an appropriate sermon and lead in prayer. All members of synod are expected to attend this worship service.

C. The minister of the convening church (or in the event of a vacancy, its counselor) shall officiate as president pro tem. The duties shall be:

1. On the appointed day, and at the appointed time and place, the president pro tem shall call synod to order, and conduct the opening devotions.
2. Thereafter the president pro tem shall call for the prescribed credentials of the delegates. Provided that a quorum, i.e., two-thirds of the membership, is present, the synodical assembly shall be declared to have opened.
3. The officers of synod shall be chosen from a slate of nominees by the delegates from their own number, by ballot, in the following order: president, vice president, first clerk, and second clerk. Whoever receives a majority of the valid votes cast shall be elected.

At each step in the election process the number of votes shall be read, and synod shall decide which numbers shall be included on the next ballot. After that decision has been made, the names corresponding to the numbers shall be read in alphabetical order.

4. The president pro tem shall thereupon request the elected officers to take their places upon the platform and introduce the president and the other officers to the assembly.

D. While synod is in session its members may not leave the assembly without permission from the chair; neither is it permissible for any member to withdraw from the assembly and return home without the consent of the assembly.

## II. DUTIES OF OFFICERS

### A. The President

1. The president shall request the delegates and the advisory members of synod to arise, read the “Public Declaration of Agreement with the Forms of Unity” and request them to express their agreement in unison. A delegate who assumes a seat at a later time shall be requested to express individual agreement at the time of seating.
2. The president shall call the meeting to order at the appointed time, and shall see that each session is properly opened and closed.
3. The president shall see to it that business is transacted in the proper order and expedited as much as possible, and that members observe the rules of order and decorum.
4. The president shall welcome fraternal delegates, or other guests of synod, respond to greetings received, or appoint members of synod for this purpose.
5. The president shall place before synod every motion that is made and seconded. Every question shall be clearly stated before a vote is taken.
6. When the president feels compelled to express an opinion on a pending question, the chair shall be relinquished and given to the vice president for the duration of the president’s remarks. The president may speak, while holding the chair, to state matters of fact or to inform synod regarding points of order.
7. The president shall have, and duly receive, the prerogative of declaring a motion or person out of order. When such a ruling is disputed, synod shall sustain or reject the ruling of the chair by majority vote.
8. When a vote is tie, the president may cast the deciding vote, if the president has not already voted.
9. The president shall not preside in any matter that involves the president personally.
10. The president rules on all points of order. A ruling may be reversed by a majority of synod if any member is dissatisfied with the ruling of the chair and makes an appeal to the floor.
11. The president shall close the synodical assembly with appropriate remarks and with prayer.

### B. The Vice President

1. In the absence of the president the vice president shall assume all the duties and privileges of the president.
2. The vice president shall render all possible assistance to the president as circumstances may require.

### C. The First Clerk and Second Clerk

1. The first clerk shall each day call the roll immediately after the opening devotionals.

2. The clerk shall keep an exact record of the synodical proceedings. This record shall contain:
  - a. Opening and closing of sessions and roll call;
  - b. All main motions whether carried or defeated; all appeals whether sustained or not sustained;
  - c. All reports of advisory committees and all decisions of synod;
  - d. The names of fraternal delegates and others who address synod;
  - e. Any document, any phase of discussion on the floor of synod, or any address that synod by a majority vote decides to insert into the minutes.
3. The record shall not contain:
  - a. Any rejected motion except when it is a main motion;
  - b. Any motion that is withdrawn.
4. The minutes of each day will be examined and proofread by a small committee appointed by the officers of synod. The edited and proofread minutes will be posted in a public place where they can be read by delegates, and copies will be made available to delegates upon request.
5. The second clerk shall serve in the absence of the first clerk. The second clerk shall also render all possible assistance to the first clerk as circumstances may require.

### III. DUTIES OF NONDELEGATED SYNODICAL FUNCTIONARIES

#### A. Executive Director

The executive director shall:

1. Make the physical arrangements for synod and function as the operations officer during the meetings of synod.
2. Serve synod with information and advice as requested regarding matters that come to the floor of synod.
3. Edit and have printed such official publications the synod or the Board of Trustees shall authorize.
4. Have the privilege of the floor at synodical meetings in all matters relating to the exercise of this office and be present during all executive sessions of synod.

#### B. Seminary Professors

1. At each synod selected members of the seminary faculty shall be required to attend synod in an advisory capacity, with the exception of the president who shall be present at every synod.
2. The seminary advisers shall serve on the advisory committees of synod.
3. The seminary advisers shall be present at synod where they shall have the privilege of the floor for the purpose of advising synod on matters before it, subject to the accepted rules governing discussion. On important questions the chair, or any member of synod, may request their advice.

### C. The Presidents of Calvin Seminary and of Calvin College

1. The president of Calvin Seminary shall advise synod in matters pertaining to the seminary.
2. The president of Calvin College shall advise synod in matters pertaining to Calvin College.

### D. Ethnic Advisers

#### 1. *General considerations*

- a. At each synod up to seven members, but not less than two, from various ethnic communities in the CRC will serve as advisers to synod. By the decision of Synod 2005, the position of ethnic adviser is continued as long as the number of ethnic minority delegates is fewer than twenty-five, after which it shall be discontinued. The Board of Trustees shall appoint as many ethnic advisers as are needed to reach twenty-five, except that no more than seven (and no fewer than two) shall be appointed.
- b. An attempt will be made to appoint some advisers (up to three) who are able to serve two-year terms. This means that there will be some experienced advisers and some new advisers at each synod.
- c. Expenses for travel, lodging, and meals will be paid by synod.
- d. In keeping with the practice of some classes, remuneration (at a rate set by the executive director from time to time) will be available for an ethnic adviser who is financially disadvantaged through service to synod.

#### 2. *Qualification*

Ethnic advisers shall be members in good standing of the Christian Reformed Church with demonstrated leadership capabilities within their church communities.

#### 3. *Responsibilities*

- a. Ethnic advisers shall serve on the advisory committees of synod. They shall have the privilege of the floor but not the right to vote.
- b. Ethnic advisers may appear before any advisory committee for the purpose of speaking to the committee about any matter referred to it.
- c. Ethnic advisers shall be present at the public plenary sessions of synod, where they shall have the privilege of the floor for the purpose of advising synod on matters before it, subject to the accepted rules governing discussion. On important questions the chair or any other members of synod may request their advice.

#### 4. *Appointments*

- a. The Board of Trustees shall appoint the ethnic advisers each year at its February meeting. Nominations for the ethnic adviser positions shall be gathered by the executive director from suggestions offered by the churches and the director of Race Relations.

- b. Ethnic advisers will be assigned their committee assignments by the Program Committee of synod.

## E. Young Adult Representatives

### 1. *General considerations*

- a. At each synod up to seven young adults (between the ages of 18-26) in the CRC will represent the interests of young adults at synod.
- b. An attempt will be made to appoint some representatives (up to three) who are able to serve two-year terms. This means that there will be some experienced representatives and some new representatives at each synod.
- c. Expenses for travel, lodging, and meals will be paid by synod.
- d. In keeping with the practice of some classes, remuneration (at a rate set by the executive director from time to time) will be available for a young adult representative who is financially disadvantaged through service to synod.

### 2. *Qualification*

Young adult representatives shall be members in good standing of the Christian Reformed Church with demonstrated leadership capabilities within their church communities.

### 3. *Responsibilities*

- a. Young adult representatives shall serve on the advisory committees of synod. They shall have the privilege of the floor but not the right to vote.
- b. Young adult representatives may appear before any advisory committee for the purpose of speaking to the committee about any matter referred to it.
- c. Young adult representatives shall be present at plenary sessions of synod, where they shall have the privilege of the floor for the purpose of representing the interests of young adults at synod on matters before it, subject to the accepted rules governing discussion. On important questions the chair or any other members of synod may request their advice.

### 4. *Appointments*

- a. The Board of Trustees shall appoint the young adult representatives each year at its February meeting. Nominations for the young adult representative positions shall be gathered by the executive director from suggestions offered by the churches and the CRC-related educational institutions.
- b. Young adult representatives will be assigned their committee assignments by the Program Committee of synod.

(*Acts of Synod 2010*, p. 830)

(*Acts of Synod 2011*, p. 816)

#### IV. FRATERNAL DELEGATES AND REPORTERS OF CHURCH PERIODICALS

A. Fraternal delegates from churches in ecclesiastical fellowship shall be given the privilege of the floor, with the right to speak on matters before synod, and shall also be given the privilege of visiting meetings of advisory committees with the consent of the chairman of the committee.

*(Acts of Synod 1975, p. 39)*

B. The task of the synodical news office is to prepare reports of synodical activities and decisions for the benefit of the churches and members of the Christian Reformed Church.

#### V. MATTERS LEGALLY BEFORE SYNOD

##### A. Definitions

###### 1. Appeal

An appeal is a procedure by which a decision or action of an assembly, board, agency, or committee is brought to the appropriate assembly for review in the light of existing policies and standards of the church.

###### 2. Communication

A communication is a document presenting information, ideas, thoughts, opinions, complaints, or objections for consideration of the assemblies. A communication is distinguished from an overture in that an overture proposes specific action, and a communication does not. One type of communication is a protest, which expresses a complaint or objection to a decision or course of action followed by an assembly. An assembly is not required to take any action with respect to a communication.

###### 3. Overture

An overture is a formal written proposal sent to an assembly requesting adoption or amendment of a policy or other legislative action by the assembly.

###### 4. Report

A report is a document of a board, committee, or agency of an assembly indicating the work performed in response to assembly mandates and presenting recommendations for assembly action.

B. Following is a list of matters legally before synod.

###### 1. Gravamina

(For guidelines and regulations see Supplement, Article 5.)

###### 2. Reports

Reports of committees, including boards, appointed by previous synods.

### 3. Overtures and Communications to Synod

- a. Overtures and communications from a classis (whether originated by or adopted by a classis) or from an assembly organized according to Article 44-b of the Church Order.

*(Acts of Synod 1993, p. 574)*

- b. Overtures and communications which have failed to gain adoption of a council and/or classis but which an individual or council desire to submit for synod's consideration:

- 1) Overtures and communications from a council (whether originated by or adopted by council) which have been submitted to classis but not adopted by classis as its own.
- 2) Overtures and communications of an individual which have been submitted to council and classis but which have not been adopted by either council or classis.
- 3) Overtures and communications of an individual which were submitted to council, adopted by council as its own, and submitted to classis by council, but which classis has not adopted as its own, which council has not submitted to synod, and which the initiating individual submits to synod.

- c. Assemblies and members should refrain from overtures, appeals, or communications which are repetitious or mere expressions of agreement or disagreement with matters already on the agenda of synod.

The executive director is authorized to omit such items from the printed *Agenda*. In such cases they shall merely be listed and accepted as communications. The senders shall be notified, and their materials shall be given to one of the advisory committees of synod to be received as information. Matters received as information will not ordinarily be mentioned in advisory committee reports or the *Acts of Synod*.

### 4. Appeals in Which the Judicial Code Has Not Been Invoked

(For procedural rules governing appeals, see Supplement, Article 30-a- 30-b, Part B.)

### 5. Appeals and Other Matters Properly Presented to Synod under the Provisions of the Judicial Code

(See Supplement, Article 30-c for the Judicial Code.)

### 6. Application for Candidacy by Persons Not Recommended by the Candidacy Committee

(For the applicable procedural rules see Supplement, Article 30-b, Part A.)

### 7. Unprocessed Overtures or Communications

Overtures or communications of an individual when such a person has been unable first to present such to council and classis. Such matters shall be received as information, provided that the executive director receives evidence that it was impossible for the communicant to present the matter to council and classis. Synod shall decide whether to act upon such matters received as information.

## 8. Late Reports and Overtures

No study reports or recommendations from boards or standing committees which affect doctrinal or ethical statements or Church Order provisions received by the executive director after September 15 or overtures received after March 15 shall be considered by synod, with the exception of overtures which deal with matters relevant to reports found in the printed *Agenda*. Any other overture or study report shall be considered only by special decision of synod on the basis of most weighty grounds.

## 9. The Printed *Agenda* and Study Committee Reports

Study committee reports shall be filed with the executive director on or before September 15, and the executive director shall distribute them to the churches no later than November 1. The *Agenda* shall be published not later than early April. It shall include reports of standing, study, and special committees; overtures of classes, councils, or individuals; printed appeals; notices of non-printed appeals; a list of communications; the name of the delegates; and pertinent announcements, with the understanding, however, that the Board of Trustees, upon recommendation of the executive director, may, for good cause, determine not to print an item or to print an abbreviated version. If an abbreviated version is printed, the entire item shall be forwarded to the appropriate advisory committee of synod. Items not printed shall be listed in the *Agenda*. All such material shall be in the hands of the executive director not later than the following deadlines: September 15 for study committee reports; February 15 for the reports of standing committees and authorized representatives; ten days after conclusion of board meetings for board reports, but not later than March 1; and March 15 for overtures and appeals.

## 10. Supplementary Reports

The Board of Trustees of the CRCNA, the Back to God Ministries International Board, the Board of Trustees of Calvin College, the Board of Trustees of Calvin Theological Seminary, the Christian Reformed Board of Home Missions, the Board of Christian Reformed World Missions, the Board of Christian Reformed World Relief Committee, Faith Alive Christian Resources Board, the Interchurch Relations Committee, and the Candidacy Committee are permitted to file a supplementary report after March 15. These boards are expected to incorporate as much of their materials as possible in the printed *Agenda*, and matters for the supplementary reports must be kept to a minimum.

## 11. Other Matters

All other matters may be considered which synod by a majority vote declares acceptable.

## 12. Nondenominational Organizations

Nondenominational organizations receiving denominational support shall not ordinarily send speakers to synod. They may place displays at synod in designated areas.

## VI. SYNODICAL COMMITTEES

### A. Program Committee

1. Members
  - a. The Program Committee shall be composed of the officers of the previous synod and the executive director of the Christian Reformed Church.
  - b. In case of a vacancy on this committee, the Board of Trustees shall appoint another member.
2. The Appointment of Advisory Committees
  - a. The Program Committee shall meet to make tentative appointment of the various advisory committees prior to May 1.
  - b. The Program Committee shall classify all the reports, overtures, and other communications into various groups, and advise which matters shall be laid directly before synod, and which shall be placed in the hands of advisory committees.
  - c. In the event that a given delegate cannot attend synod, the alternate accepts the appointed assignment subject to revision by synod.
3. The Executive Director Shall:
  - a. Receive and tabulate the information sheet on the synodical delegates.
  - b. Inform the delegates of their tentative assignments prior to May 15.
  - c. Suggest to the chairs and delegates sources of background information relative to their assignment.
  - d. Provide committee members with copies of background materials that are not readily available in previous *Acts of Synod*.
4. Information on Delegates
  - a. The stated clerk of every classis shall forward an information sheet on each synodical delegate to the executive director of the Christian Reformed Church before March 15. Synod encourages suggestions, including biographical information, for those delegates qualified and willing to serve as an officer of synod.
  - b. These information sheets shall give answer to the following questions:

For the minister delegates—

    - 1) To which previous synod(s) were you delegated, if any?
    - 2) At such synod(s), on which committee(s) did you serve?
    - 3) Of what denominational boards, standing committees, or study committees are you or have you been a member?
    - 4) Of what classical and/or local committees are you or have you been a member?
    - 5) What are your areas of special interest in the work of synod?
    - 6) What other data do you wish to submit that will aid in being assigned to an advisory committee of synod?

For the elder delegates—

- 1) The same questions as listed for minister delegates.
  - 7) What is your present occupation?
  - 8) What have been your previous occupations, if any?
5. Report of the Program Committee
- a. A written report of the Program Committee shall be mailed to all synodical delegates before May 25.
  - b. This report shall be submitted for possible change and adoption as one of the initial items of synodical business.

*(Acts of Synod 1970, pp. 56-57; 1972, p. 14)*

## B. The Advisory Committees

1. *Status* of these committees. Advisory committees (except for the Judicial Code Committee) serve only for the duration of synod for the purpose of facilitating the work of synod. The advisory committees shall summarize matters before them and formulate recommendations with respect to these matters.
2. *Organization and rules* governing these committees:
  - a. The person first named at the appointment of the committee shall be its chairperson, and the one named second its reporter. An alternate chairperson and an alternate reporter will be appointed for each committee except the Judicial Code Committee.
  - b. The chairperson shall call the committee together, preside at its meetings, and see that it functions properly.
  - c. Any member of synod may appear before any committee for the purpose of speaking to the committee about any matter referred to it.
  - d. Committee reports shall be signed by the chairperson and the reporter of the committee. If there is both a majority and minority report from the committee, each report must be signed by the members who favor it.

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

- e. The report of the majority shall be considered the report of the committee. After the committee's report has been read and the motion to adopt has been made and seconded, the minority report shall be read and received as information.

*(Acts of Synod 1955, p. 58)*

- f. When the report of a committee has been previously distributed to synod in printed form, and the members of synod have had sufficient time to examine it, the first reading of the report is not required. In such case the reporter, when the president calls for the report, shall state that the report has been placed in the hands of synod in printed form and shall move that the report be accepted for consideration.

g. During the discussion the task of defending the report shall rest primarily upon the chairperson and the reporter of the committee. These shall have precedence over every other speaker and shall not be limited as to the number and length of their speeches. Other committee members shall be subject to the accepted rules.

h. Recommendation of a committee may be recommitted whenever the work of synod can be thus expedited.

### 3. *Recess of Synod for Study*

After the advisory committees have been appointed, synod may recess at specified times to enable these committees to perform their work.

## C. Special Committees

Besides the advisory committees, each synod should have:

1. *A Hospitality Committee*, appointed by the president, which shall attend to the proper reception of fraternal delegates. It can advise synod, and synod must decide whether the representatives of various organizations should be received on the floor of synod.
2. Special committees appointed by the president that serve during the synodical sessions.

## D. Rules for Appointments to Boards and Committees

1. All study committees shall be appointed by synod from a nomination made by the advisory committee which drafted the mandate, with the advice of the officers of synod. Delegates to synod will be given opportunity to suggest nominees to the advisory committee, but no new nominees will be accepted from the floor when a committee is recommended. The reporter of the advisory committee shall present the nominations on the floor of synod.

*(Acts of Synod 1979, p. 15; 1980, p. 21; 1997, p. 634)*

2. All board and committee members shall be elected from nominations presented to synod. Boards and committees in which vacancies must be filled shall normally present a slate of multiple nominees for election to membership for a first term, but may present a single nominee (an incumbent) for a second term.

*(Acts of Synod 1976, p. 16; updated in Acts of Synod 1998, p. 406-7)*

3. All standing boards and committees of synod, as well as stated clerks of classes, shall present their nominations to the executive director immediately after the meeting at which nominations are made.

*(Acts of Synod 1979, p. 16)*

4. Nominations of officers, functionaries, synodical deputies, boards, and standing committees shall be compiled through the office of the executive director.

*(Acts of Synod 1979, p. 15)*

5. The president of synod shall call on the executive director to present all ballots, nominations, and other matters pertaining to appointments to the floor of synod, with the exception of the appointments of study committees (cf. point 1 above).
6. Rules for Eligibility and Term of Office
  - a. A person whose work is regulated by a board shall not be delegated to that particular board.

*(Acts of Synod 1966, p. 87)*

- b. Synodical board and committee members who have served two three-year terms shall not be eligible for reelection except when a specific exemption to this rule has been approved by synod.
- c. The terms of office for representatives to denominational boards and committees begin and terminate on July 1 of the year of appointment or termination.

*(Acts of Synod 1972, p. 14; amended Acts of Synod 1996, p. 536)*

- d. Synod requests all classes, when nominating members of denominational boards or committees, to designate the term of the alternate to coincide with the term of the delegate. When an alternate replaces a delegate, or when a new delegate is nominated by a classis, the term of office shall begin the year a delegate assumes the office and shall terminate on July 1 three years later.

*(Acts of Synod 1973, p. 19; amended Acts of Synod 1996, p. 536)*

#### E. Rules for Committees Appointed by Previous Synods

These committees include those appointed to study and to report concerning matters that concern the whole denomination, to carry out certain resolutions of past synods, or to supervise the missionary, educational, journalistic, or benevolent activities of the denomination.

1. These committees have the right of elucidating and defending their reports on the floor of synod. The spokesperson of these committees shall have the same privileges during the discussion as the chair and reporters of the advisory committees.
2. With respect to the reports submitted to synod that are given into the hands of advisory committees, the recommendations of these synodical committees shall have precedence if the recommendations of the advisory committee are substantially different.

#### F. Judicial Code Committee

1. Mandate: Appeals under the Judicial Code and such other matters requiring formal adjudication as synod shall undertake shall be referred to the Judicial Code Committee for consideration and advice.
2. Membership: The Judicial Code Committee shall be composed of nine members. Some of the members shall be ministers, and some shall be laypersons. Members of this committee may be, but need not be, delegates to the synod which the committee advises. There need be

no regional representation, but a fair denominational representation is desirable.

3. Meetings: The Judicial Code Committee shall meet between synods as frequently as its business requires.
4. Organization and rules governing this committee:
  - a. The Judicial Code Committee shall function as a normal advisory committee of synod with the following exceptions:
    - 1) The committee shall select a chairperson and reporter from its membership.
    - 2) Individual delegates to synod shall not have the privilege of addressing the Judicial Code Committee as is normally permitted with other advisory committees.
    - 3) During synodical discussions, the committee shall be represented by up to two spokespersons who will have the privilege of the floor. These spokespersons shall have precedence over every other speaker and shall not be limited as to the number and length of their speeches.
  - b. Recommendations of the Judicial Code Committee shall be presented to synod in writing, shall be accompanied with grounds, and shall be openly discussed in plenary sessions of synod. An executive or strict executive session of synod can be declared as per normal synodical rules.
5. Synodical disposition of a judicial matter:
  - a. Synod may dispose of a judicial matter in one of the following ways:
    - 1) By deciding the matter;
    - 2) By referring it to one of its committees for settlement or reconciliation;
    - 3) By remanding it with advice to the appropriate classis or consistory; or
    - 4) By conducting its own hearing.
  - b. If synod conducts its own hearing, it shall follow the hearing procedure described in the Judicial Code.
6. Guidelines for synod's handling of recommendations from the Judicial Code Committee:
  - a. The written report from the Judicial Code Committee to synod must set forth the significant facts as found by the Judicial Code Committee and adequate rationale for the committee's recommendation. This will generally require more than a brief statement of grounds for each recommendation. The Judicial Code Committee must give copies of its report and recommendation to the parties or their representatives as promptly as possible.
  - b. Synod should accept the findings of fact as presented by the Judicial Code Committee unless synod is persuaded that
    - 1) One or more parties were not given the opportunity by the hearing body to present important and relevant evidence, or

- 2) After the Judicial Code Committee hearing new evidence which is important and relevant has been discovered by one or more parties.
- c. If synod is persuaded of b, 1) or 2), it will decide either to
  - 1) Conduct its own Judicial Code hearing pursuant to the code rules, particularly Article 10, or
  - 2) Refer the matter back to the Judicial Code Committee for a rehearing before the initial hearing body.
- d. Procedure for requesting rehearing under Guidelines b and c
  - 1) Any party who seeks to have synod conduct its own hearing or refer the matter back for a rehearing should submit such request in writing to the executive director for distribution to the delegates of synod with a copy to the Judicial Code Committee. The writing should include a summary of the evidence which that party was not allowed to present at the evidentiary hearing and a short statement of how this opportunity was denied, or the statement should include a summary of the newly discovered evidence and an explanation of why it was not discovered earlier.
  - 2) All parties and the Judicial Code Committee representative(s) should be allowed a very brief time to address synod on such request.
- e. When recommendations involve interpretations and applications of governing principles, such as the Church Order, to the facts involved in the matter, synod should allow the parties and representatives of the Judicial Code Committee a reasonable amount of time, set by the president of synod upon recommendation of the Judicial Code Committee, to argue for or against such interpretations and applications.

*(Acts of Synod 1993, pp. 500-1)*

*Note:* For a complete description of Judicial Code of rights and procedures, see Church Order Supplement, Article 30-c.

## VII. PENSION MATTERS AT SYNOD

That synod defer action on overtures, minority reports, and motions from the floor of synod that involve substantive matters concerning the denomination's retirement plans until advised by the U.S. and Canadian pension trustees. The same is requested for actions that may be initiated by synod's advisory committee on finance or by any other of synod's advisory committees that is at variance with recommendations made by the pension trustees or is independent of any action recommended by them. Advice to synod will be in the form of a memorandum or other materials directed to synod's advisory committee on finance, which is the committee normally designated for processing matters related to the denomination's benefit plans.

*(Acts of Synod 2004, pp. 623-24)*

## VIII. RULES OF ORDER

In our ecclesiastical assemblies, "ecclesiastical matters only shall be transacted *and that in an ecclesiastical manner,*" as Article 28 of our Church

Order stipulates. Our synods should therefore not be bound to observe detailed parliamentary rules. These may be proper in other gatherings, but they do not fit into the pattern of ecclesiastical assemblies which demand a large measure of freedom in discussion and action. However, a few general rules of order may serve a good purpose.

#### A. Closed Sessions of Synod

1. *Executive Session:* Synod may enter an executive session in unusual or delicate situations. In such sessions, only the delegates, the staff consultants, the seminary advisers, the ethnic advisers, and the young adult representatives shall be present. If delegates from fully recognized churches in ecclesiastical fellowship are at synod, they also may remain in this session.
2. *Strict Executive Session:* Synod may enter a strict executive session in very unusual situations when such a course is dictated by due regard for personal honor or for the welfare of the church. In such sessions, only the delegates, the staff consultants, the seminary faculty advisers, the ethnic advisers, and the young adult representatives shall be present. If any of the above mentioned persons are personally involved in the matter under discussion, they will absent themselves voluntarily or by synodical ruling.

#### B. A Main Motion

This is a motion that presents a matter to synod for its consideration or action.

1. A main motion is acceptable under the following conditions:
  - a. If the mover has been recognized by the president;
  - b. If it is seconded by a member of synod;
  - c. If the motion has been recognized as acceptable by the president;
  - d. If, at the request of the president, the motion has been presented in written form.
2. A main motion is not acceptable under the following conditions:
  - a. If it conflicts with the Church Order or is contrary to Scripture as interpreted in our forms of unity;
  - b. If another motion is before synod or if it conflicts with any decision already made by synod;
  - c. If it is verbally or substantially the same as a motion already rejected by synod or if it interferes with the freedom of action by synod in a matter that was previously introduced but of which no disposal was made.

#### C. A Motion to Amend

This is a proposal to alter a main motion in language or in meaning before final action is taken on the motion.

1. A motion to amend may propose any of the following: to strike out, to insert, or to substitute certain words, phrases, sentences, or paragraphs.
2. A motion to amend is not a proper motion if it nullifies the main motion or is not germane to it.
3. A motion to amend is permissible and is called a secondary motion. (Only one motion to amend a pending amendment is in order at one time.)

#### D. A Motion to Defer or Withhold Action

1. When synod deems it advisable, it may decide to table a motion temporarily. Tabling a motion implies that the assembly will resume consideration on the motion at a later hour or date.
2. If a matter has been deferred to a definite time and synod is at that time busy with an undecided question, synod need not be disturbed or interrupted in its work by the consideration of postponed matters, if this matter can wait until the question before synod has been disposed of.
3. If synod prefers not to take action regarding a matter, it may adopt a motion to withhold action.

#### E. Objection to a Ruling of the President

If any member is not satisfied with the ruling of the president, the matter is referred to synod for decision.

#### F. Right of Protest

It is the right of any member to protest against any decision of synod. Protests should be registered immediately, or during the session in which the matter concerned was acted upon. Protests must be registered individually and not in groups. Members may, if they feel the need, ask to have their negative vote recorded. Such requests must be made immediately after the vote is taken. The reasons given for recording a negative vote will not normally be printed in the *Acts of Synod* unless otherwise specifically decided by synod.

#### G. Call for a Division of the Question

At the request of one or more members of synod, a motion consisting of more than one part must be divided and voted upon separately, unless synod decides that this is not necessary.

#### H. Procedural Inquiry

Any member of synod may request advice of the president as to how to accomplish a purpose for which that delegate does not know the proper means.

#### I. Motions to Bring Matters Once Decided Again Before Synod

If any member of synod for weighty reasons desires reconsideration of a matter once decided, the following course may be pursued:

1. A motion may be offered to *reconsider* the matter. The purpose of this motion is to propose a new discussion and a new vote. (The motion

must be made by one who voted with the prevailing side when the decision was made.)

2. A motion may be made to rescind a previous decision. The purpose of this motion is to annul or reverse a previous decision. (Rescinding applies to decisions taken by the synod in session; it does not apply to decisions taken by previous synods. A succeeding synod may alter the stand of a previous synod; 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.)

#### J. Discussion

1. A speaker to obtain the floor must be recognized by the president.
2. If a member having the floor should fail to adhere to the point under discussion or should make unnecessarily lengthy remarks, the president shall call attention to these faults and insist that the main point be made and that brevity be achieved.
3. If any member has spoken twice on a pending issue, others who have not yet spoken twice shall ordinarily be given priority by the president.
4. The officers of synod may assign a time limit for debate on issues they think will be debated longer than one hour. This time limit will be announced prior to the presentation of the report. The delegates may vote to extend debate for half-hour intervals when the time limit has been reached.
5. When it is believed that a motion under consideration has been debated sufficiently, the president may propose cessation of debate. If a majority of synod sustains this proposal, discussion shall cease and the vote shall be taken.
6. When any member of synod deems a matter to have been debated sufficiently, that delegate may move to close the discussion. Those who call the question shall be recognized in the same manner as others who gain the floor of synod, i.e., by taking their turn on the list of those who have requested the privilege of the floor. The vote on the motion to cease debate shall be taken at once. Should a majority be in favor of ceasing debate, the vote on the matter before synod shall be taken only after those who had previously requested the floor have had the opportunity to address the motion that is being discussed. However, once the motion to cease debate has been adopted by synod no motion to amend the main motion will be permitted.

#### K. Voting

The various methods of voting are:

1. *By voice* (Yes or No). This is a frequent method of voting.
2. *By electronic balloting*.
  - a. Whenever the president is unable to determine from the yes and no votes which opinion has prevailed, or if the president's judgment is questioned by any member of synod, the president shall request

the delegates to re-vote electronically. The outcome of the electronic vote shall constitute the official decision of synod on the matter.

- b. This method may be used for any vote and at any time, but it is advisable that electronic voting be used in delicate cases of discipline and other matters that are of a critical nature and of great importance.

L. These Rules for Synodical Procedure may be suspended, amended, revised, or abrogated by a majority vote of synod.

Revised and updated in 2010

#### PUBLIC DECLARATION OF AGREEMENT WITH THE FORMS OF UNITY

Of all the marks by which the true church distinguishes itself from all human societies, the confession of the truth must be mentioned in the first place. The Savior therefore said, John 8:31, "If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples." And again, "Every one who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven," Matthew 10:32. In obedience to the Lord and for the instruction of all, the assembly of elders, delegated by the congregations of the Christian Reformed Church, deem it proper that they publicly declare what the confession is of the church here mentioned and of every one of its churches.

All the congregations of this church believe all the books of the Old and of the New Testaments to be the Word of God, and confess as the true expression of their faith the Thirty-Seven Articles of the Confession of the Netherlands, formulated by the Synod of 1618-19, and also the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of the Synod of Dort against the Remonstrants.

In conformity with the belief of all these congregations, we, as members of their synod, declare that from the heart we feel and believe that all articles and expressions of doctrine, contained in the three above-named confessions, jointly called the three formulas of unity, in all respects agree with the Word of God, whence we reject all doctrines repugnant thereto; that we desire to conform all our actions to them, agreeably to the accepted Church Order, and desire to receive into our church communion everyone that agrees to our confession.

May the King of the church work this faith in the hearts of many and increase it, and may those that have received a like precious faith with us show the grace shown them in fellowship to the glory of him who prayed that all his own be one in him.